

Teachers' Perspectives on Acculturation and Wellbeing for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
Children from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds

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Abstract

Research has emphasised the importance of post-settlement factors in increasing the wellbeing outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children from refugee and migrant backgrounds when resettling in Australia, particularly in the school context. Berry's acculturation framework (1997) proposes that the resettlement outcomes of refugee and migrant individuals – including their wellbeing outcomes – can be predicted based upon their valuing of cultural maintenance and/or cultural adaptation. This framework has been used extensively with adults and young people, but there is very little research considering acculturation – and the impact of cultural maintenance vs. cultural adaptation – for pre-adolescent children. As such, this study qualitatively explored teachers' perspectives on acculturation and wellbeing for CALD children with the aim of increasing understandings of acculturation processes for children, and the impact of these processes on their wellbeing outcomes within the context of their schooling. Twelve teachers from South Australian primary schools and Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs) were interviewed, and thematic analysis was applied to the data within a critical-realist paradigm. Six themes were identified, with the major findings being that participants expressed endorsement for both cultural maintenance and adaptation – in particular, stating that maintenance was linked to wellbeing outcomes – but in a more practical sense participants appeared to orient towards helping CALD students to 'become Australian'. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via the University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library Search and through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children from refugee and migrant backgrounds are faced with numerous challenges upon resettlement in countries such as Australia, including language barriers, difficulties making friends, experiences of discrimination, and the challenge of negotiating new social and cultural environments (Brough, Gorman, Ramirez & Westoby, 2003; de Heer, Due, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2016; Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012). Despite these challenges, research has highlighted how positive contextual factors in relation to resettlement can increase wellbeing outcomes for CALD children – particularly in the context of their education within Australian schools (Fazel et al., 2012). As such, it is imperative that both individual schools and education departments work to enact policies that focus on improving the wellbeing of CALD children (Matthews, 2008; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). Acculturation could provide a useful framework for examining the wellbeing outcomes of CALD children in Australian schools. Measures of acculturation have been used extensively in predicting adaptive outcomes for refugee and migrant groups, based on the extent to which they value cultural maintenance and/or cultural adaptation – yet there is a current lack of research examining acculturation processes and outcomes for pre-adolescent children (Brown & Zagefka, 2011, Raman, 2006). As such, this study aimed to examine acculturation and wellbeing for CALD children from migrant or refugee backgrounds from the perspectives of their teachers, in order to contribute to the literature on acculturation for children as well to understand how acculturation processes might impact upon wellbeing outcomes for CALD children in Australian primary schools.

1.2. A Note on Terminology

1.2.1. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

The term ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ (CALD) will be used in this study to refer to recently arrived refugee or migrant pre-adolescent children, from backgrounds in which English is not the dominant language (Khawaja, Ibrahim & Schweitzer, 2017)

1.2.2. Refugee and Migrant

In Australia, refugees are generally classified in relation to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 1951 convention – as someone who “...is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951). Children with refugee backgrounds resettled in Australia receive a visa as part of Australia’s refugee and humanitarian programme (Home Affairs, n.d.). As noted by Woods (2009), within Australia’s schooling system, many children who arrived through a migration scheme may have had ‘refugee like experiences’ – that is, they may have arrived on migrant visas but in order to escape persecution. This is particularly the case for children considered to fit the ‘CALD’ definition, many of whom will have come from countries also represented in the Australian refugee intake such as those from the Middle East or parts of Africa (Woods, 2009). Therefore, this study will consider both refugee and migrant children inclusively.

1.2.3. Wellbeing

Wellbeing is generally defined according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) – that is, a state of wellbeing is one in which an “...individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a

contribution to her or his community” (2014). As identified by McFarlane, Kaplan, and Lawrence (2010), this definition needs to be considered within the developmental constraints of children. Additionally, understandings of wellbeing can differ cross-culturally (McFarlane et al., 2010). As such, the concept of wellbeing, as it applies for CALD migrant children, will be outlined in the literature review.

1.3. Previous literature concerning wellbeing and resettlement

Research regarding the mental health and wellbeing of CALD children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds has continually highlighted the importance of moving beyond a deficit paradigm when considering their needs and experiences (Brough et al., 2003; Keddie, 2012; Porter & Haslam, 2005). Instead, studies have highlighted the importance of contextual factors in their resettlement – in particular, social connections and social belonging have been demonstrated as crucial elements relating to their wellbeing (Beirens, Hughes, Hek & Spicer, 2007; Brough et al., 2003; Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010; McFarlane et al., 2011). An important area in which this becomes apparent is in schooling, as outlined below.

1.3.1. School Experiences and Wellbeing for CALD children

Numerous studies have highlighted the pivotal role that schools play in ‘successful’ resettlement of refugee and migrant young people (Hek, 2005; Matthews, 2008; Miller, Ziaian, & Esterman, 2018), in terms of providing a stable environment, facilitating connections with the local community through English language education, and building social networks (Christie & Sidhu, 2002). Additionally, a sense of school belonging has been recognised as an important aspect of wellbeing for refugee children and young people (Fazel et al., 2012). Although these findings have largely been based on research with adolescents, a number of studies focussing on children have demonstrated similar findings. For example, Due, Riggs, and Augoustinos (2016),

found that school belonging for refugee children (aged five - 13) was enhanced by seeing their identities reflected within the school context and by positive peer and teacher relationships. Similarly, Due and Riggs (2016), in a qualitative study focussed on refugee children within South Australian Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs), highlighted how positive relationships with teachers increased students' feelings of safety at school. De Heer et al. (2016) similarly found that, within the context of IELCs, and during transitions into mainstream schooling, migrant children valued friendships as an important aspect of their wellbeing. From these studies, it appears that wellbeing and resettlement outcomes for CALD children from migrant and refugee backgrounds is linked to school experiences through issues such as positive relationships and a sense of belonging.

While schools provide positive experiences for CALD children and young people with migrant backgrounds, research has also highlighted the risk of schools and the education system reproducing existing power dynamics that perpetuate inequality and disadvantage for marginalised groups, including for CALD children, and especially those arrived as refugees (Christie & Sidhu, 2002). Researchers have therefore identified the critical importance of whole-school approaches to the education of CALD students from migrant or refugee backgrounds (Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2013; Hek, 2005; Matthews, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). As outlined by Matthews (2008), whole school approaches centre around principles of inclusion and on the provision of welcoming environments in which students feel a sense of safety and belonging. Other factors comprising a whole school approach include an ethos of anti-discrimination, community and family links, and teacher attitudes (Hek, 2005).

1.4. Acculturation Theory

Acculturation is a term used to describe the mutual processes of cultural change and adaptation which occur for different cultural groups when they come into prolonged contact with each other – for example, through the resettlement of refugee and migrant groups (Brown & Zagefka, 2011). Acculturation, as a concept, has proliferated cross-cultural research for much of the 20th Century (Rudmin, 2003). Based on the assumption that culture is a ‘powerful shaper of behaviour’ (Berry, 1997), acculturation theories have attempted to gain an understanding of how individuals raised in a certain cultural context adapt – in terms of attitudes, identities, social behaviours and customs – when they attempt to live in a new one (Berry, 1997).

Berry’s bidimensional model (1997) has been the most widely used and enduring framework for acculturation research (Brown & Zagefka, 2011). The bidimensional approach proposes that two dimensions underlie the process of acculturation: the extent to which an individual seeks to maintain their cultural background (cultural maintenance), and the extent to which they seek involvement and identification with the host society (cultural adaptation) (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). The bidimensional approach assumes that the two dimensions of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation vary independently (Vijver, Helms-Lorenz, & Feltzer, 1999). As such, and based on the extent to which individuals value either or both cultural maintenance or adaptation, four acculturative strategies are possible: *integration* (both dimensions are valued), *separation* (maintenance is prioritised), *assimilation* (adaptation is prioritised), and *marginalization* (neither dimensions are valued) (Berry, 1997). Based upon an individual’s classification within one of these four domains, their adjustment within the new cultural context can purportedly be predicted – in terms of psychological constructs such as self-

esteem, life-satisfaction and wellbeing, or in relation to sociocultural variables including school adjustment and behaviour (Berry et al., 2006).

Numerous studies utilising Berry's model have indicated the superiority of the integration strategy for refugee and migrant individuals (Brown & Zagefka, 2011) in terms of both psychological and sociocultural outcomes (Berry et al., 2006). As identified by Bowskill, Lyons, and Coyle (2007), the proliferation of such findings has meant that integration has become privileged within discourse surrounding immigration and resettlement – to such an extent that it has become imbued with the "...self-evident moral weight of common sense" in policy goals and research agendas (Bowskill et al., 2007, p. 801).

Despite its pervasiveness, the bidimensional approach has been subject to a number of criticisms – both in terms of its psychometric properties (see Rudmin, 2003), and its theoretical implications (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). For example, theorists have questioned the assumption of universality inherent in the model – that is, the idea that the same psychological processes underpin the acculturation experiences of all individuals (Tardif-Williams & Fisher, 2009). Schwartz et al. (2010) highlighted the need to consider the influence of contextual factors, in terms of individual characteristics, socio-economic status, country of origin and the country of resettlement. Additionally, Bhatia & Ram (2009) highlighted how broader socio-political and historical processes can differentially impact upon acculturation processes for certain groups – for example, for non-European cultural groups resettling in Western countries, there can be racialized discourses and existing power dynamics which can impact upon their experiences of acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). Based on these criticisms, researchers have highlighted the need for acculturation research which is exploratory rather than

confirmatory (Chirkov, 2009), and which considers contextual factors (Tardiff-Williams & Fisher, 2009).

1.5. Acculturation for Children

An identified gap in the acculturation literature has been the relatively few studies examining acculturation for children (Brown & Zagefka, 2011). Studies utilising the bidimensional approach to focus on acculturation for children will now be outlined.

Nigbur et al. (2008) developed an acculturation scale for children, based on Berry's framework. Children's orientations towards cultural maintenance were measured in terms of how involved they thought other children should be in their ethnic backgrounds (in terms of language use, celebrations of cultural festivals, or eating traditional food), while cultural adaptation was conceived of in terms of their desire for inter-group contact with white British children. In a cohort of white British and second generation British-Asian immigrant children aged between five and 11, a preference for integration was found, along with some predictive utility of the model in terms of a link between desire for integration and higher levels of self-esteem (as an indicator of wellbeing). Utilising Nigbur's adapted bidimensional scale, Brown et al. (2013) examined acculturation and wellbeing longitudinally for children. Again, children were aged between five and 11 and were mostly second or later generation South-Asian immigrants in Britain. As in previous studies, children appeared to favour integration, and this attitude was positively linked to social competence and peer acceptance. A preference for integration was similarly found by Vijver et al. (1999), again using an adapted form of Berry's model among Dutch migrant children (aged between seven and 12) in the context of their schooling. From these studies, children appear to favour an 'integrationist' approach – in terms of the extent to which

they wish to maintain their cultural background whilst also seeking contact with members of the 'host' society – and this appears to be linked to some wellbeing outcomes.

1.6. Teachers' Perspectives on Acculturation

Schools have been recognised as important and often distinct domains of acculturation for migrant and refugee young people (Trickett & Birman, 2005), particularly since they act as a means of 'inducting' CALD students into the language, history and culture of the resettlement country (Matthews, 2008). Additionally, teachers play an important role in this process (Vedder, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Nickmans, 2006). As identified by Horenczyk and Tatar (2002), for migrant students, teachers can be seen to epitomize the expectations held by the new society in terms of acceptable behaviour and attitudes – as such, they wield considerable power in the acculturation processes of their students (Van Praag, Stevens, & Houtte, 2016).

Makarova & Herzog (2013) examined the influence of primary school teachers' acculturation attitudes on their classroom management techniques within culturally diverse classrooms in Switzerland. Results suggested that teachers who endorsed either integrationist or assimilationist approaches to acculturation for their students were more willing to punish perceived transgressions of behavioural norms in the classroom than those who favoured separationist approaches. Similarly, Van Praag et al. (2016) qualitatively examined both teacher and student attitudes towards acculturation in Belgian schools. In this study, students were aged between 16 and 23 years of age, and were largely first or second-generation immigrants from 33 different countries. Results indicated that students and teachers held discrepant attitudes towards acculturation, with teachers largely emphasising the importance of socialising students to become part of the dominant society, and students placing more emphasis on cultural maintenance and intergroup contact (Van Praag et al., 2016). Similar research has emphasised

that teachers can act as ‘social mirrors’ for ethnic and cultural minority students, affirming their positive sense of cultural identity (Brown, 2017), and legitimizing students’ integrationist orientation (Vedder et al., 2006). In this sense, it can be determined that teachers’ attitudes and practices are impactful on the acculturation processes of their students – but this remains under-researched in terms of primary school teachers and students.

1.7. The Current Research

This study explored teachers’ perspectives on acculturation and wellbeing for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Despite limitations identified with the bidimensional approach, it remains a dominant and widely used model in the field– as such, it was used as a framework for this study. However, as has been previously done (see Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Van Praag et al., 2016), rather than examining acculturation in terms of the four strategies (integration, separation, marginalization and assimilation), this study considered acculturation in terms of the two dimensions of the framework – that is, cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation.

Through examining teachers’ perspectives, this study aimed to contribute knowledge concerning teachers’ understandings of acculturation processes for children, as an under-researched area in the field. In addition, it aimed to increase understandings of factors contributing to the wellbeing of CALD children in South Australian primary schools and intensive English Language Centres (IELCs) - particularly concerning the relative importance of cultural maintenance as compared to cultural adaptation for their wellbeing outcomes.

Chapter 2: Method

2.1. Participants

In order to satisfy the inclusion criteria for this study, participants were required to have taught for least one year, and to have taught at least one student from either a refugee or migrant background, from a primarily non-English speaking country. The inclusion criteria additionally stipulated that participants had to be over 18 years of age, and fluent English speakers (see Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet).

In total, 12 participants were recruited. All participants were female, and were currently or had previously been, based in South Australian state-run primary schools or Intensive English Language Centres (IELC) (centres attached to primary schools, providing English language assistance for students of primary school age – that is typically five to 12 years). Five of the participants were teachers within IELC programs. Two participants, at the time of the interview, occupied leadership positions within an IELC, but had many years of teaching experience, and therefore met the inclusion criteria. In total, six different schools were represented (although in interviews participants drew widely upon their experiences within their current and past schools).

Participants ranged from three to 68 years of age ($M = 52$ years). Identified teaching experience ranged between three to 44 years ($M = 25$ years). Due to the focus of the project and the fact that migration experiences or cultural background may be salient to the interview questions and responses, participants were asked to identify their cultural background. Nine participants identified with an ‘Australian’ cultural background (interestingly, some participants stated that they did not identify with a particular cultural background when initially asked, but clarified with a general statement such as ‘born and bred South Australian’). Of the remaining

participants, one identified as Vietnamese, one as Greek and one as Italian. Two participants had a migrant background. None of the participants came from a refugee background.

2.2.Procedure

Ethics approval for the research was granted from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Sub Committee () and the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) in South Australia (2018-0054). The study was initially advertised through a Facebook post (containing the study Flyer – see Appendix B) from the South Australian based company Teachers On Net. This avenue was chosen due to the large audience of teachers (the page currently has 22,000 followers). Additionally, emails containing the study flyer were also sent out to schools that mentioned IELC or English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) in their profiles, and schools in suburbs in which there are demographically high populations of refugee and migrant groups. In total, 35 schools were emailed. Additionally, the study also appeared in a DECD departmental EALD Program Newsletter (Week 9, Term 2, 2018). Passive snowball sampling was also utilised as required. No participants were approached directly by the researchers.

Interested participants were advised to email researchers, after which they were sent a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A) outlining the study in further detail. Consent was obtained via the consent form prior to the commencement of interviews.

Initially, in order to achieve triangulation, it was decided that two separate samples would be recruited – teachers, and Bilingual School Services Officers (BSSOs). BSSOs have a unique role in the provision of education to CALD children, assisting with cultural and language translation between students and teachers (DECD, 2017). However, due to a lack of BSSO

volunteers, and the time constraints of the project, triangulation was not achieved and only teachers were recruited.

In total, 12 participants – all teachers – were recruited to take part in individual, semi-structured interviews. Participants could choose to be interviewed over the phone or in person (at a location convenient to participants). Two interviews were conducted over the phone, with the rest conducted face-to-face, either at the participant's school or at the University of Adelaide. Interviews ranged from 24 minutes to 63 minutes ($M = 50$ minutes).

In keeping with the study aims, interview questions were centred around the two dimensions of Berry's (1997) acculturation framework (for example, whether participants felt that students should be encouraged to maintain or adopt cultural values, and the connection of both these dimensions with wellbeing). Appendix B contains interview questions, however interviews were semi-structured as it was hoped that allowing participants to talk freely would provide further information about the research questions.

In order to test the suitability of the questions, a pilot interview was conducted with an acquaintance of researcher AM – a secondary school teacher in Adelaide. Changes to the interview guide were subsequently made – for example, restructuring the order of the questions for more clarity. Data from the pilot interview was not included in analysis due to both the changes in interview questions and the fact that the participant, as a secondary teacher, didn't fully meet the criteria for inclusion.

A recursive approach was utilised during the phases of data collection and analysis. As outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), a recursive approach involves movement back and forth between the different phases as needed. This allows changes to be made to the interview schedule in response to difficulties or lack of clarity with questions. In order to assist with this

process, and in line with recommended good practice by Tracy (2010) an audit trail was kept to record changes made to the interview schedule. Additionally, the audit trail assisted with self-reflexivity, another important aspect of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Tracy, 2010) as it allowed the researcher AM to record observations in relation to her reactions to aspects of the interviews, to identify any biases, and to keep track of ideas in relation to the interview content to assist with data-analysis. In keeping with reflexivity, the researcher AM does not have personal experience with migration – forced or voluntary – however, she has contact with refugee young people through volunteering work, and this may have influenced the data analysis. Data analysis was crosschecked with the second researcher, CD.

Interviews were transcribed orthographically. As analysis was focussed on what was said, rather than how it was said, non-semantic information was not included in transcriptions. Pseudonyms were given to participants, and interviews were anonymised. Three participants asked for copies of their transcripts, but no changes were requested.

2.3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was utilised to analyse the interview data. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), TA is a flexible method of “...identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes)” (p. 79) across a set of data. TA is a method of data analysis which can be positioned within a number of different epistemological and ontological frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The current study was undertaken within a critical realist framework. This approach posits that although an objective reality may exist, in terms of underlying and enduring social, economic or biological structures (Willig, 1999), researchers can only ever have partial access to this through subjective and socially situated accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Such an approach is linked with a contextualist epistemology, which assumes that there are multiple realities and

affirms the importance of local, situated knowledge in which ‘truth’ is subjective and context bound (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Data analysis was undertaken theoretically, in terms of Berry’s framework and the dimensions of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation and links to wellbeing outcomes. This entailed initially separating data based on whether participants were talking about either construct, and coding accordingly. Analysis was undertaken with an interest in latent themes – that is, analysis moved beyond the semantic content of the data in order to examine the underlying ideas, ideologies and conceptualisations informing them (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis was undertaken in reference to Braun’s & Clarke’s (2006) six phases of data analysis. Phase 1 involves transcribing and becoming familiar with the data, after which initial ‘codes’ (aspects of the data which are interesting on a semantic or latent level) are generated in Phase 2. Phase 3 involves searching for themes in the coded data, and compiling coded extracts under candidate themes, after which a process of reviewing, recoding and refining the candidate themes commences in Phase 4. In Phase 5, analysis and further refinement continue, and themes are given names. Finally, the report is produced in Phase 6, with the selection of vivid extracts that provide a cohesive narrative in reference to the selected themes. This process, as already noted, is recursive rather than fixed and linear (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

It should be noted that while the initial triangulation attempt was not achieved, with data analysis it became apparent that there were differences in approach based on whether the teachers were situated within IELC or within mainstream classrooms. Although there was not an even split, and data was analysed together, this was an interesting feature, and one which will be discussed in further depth in the Results section. Extracts will clearly indicate whether the participant was from a mainstream (MS) or IELC classroom.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1. Overview of themes

Six themes were identified within the two domains of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation. Within cultural maintenance, these included: *Cultural maintenance is important for CALD children*, *A school focus on celebrating diversity encourages cultural maintenance*, and *Teachers are mindful of opportunities to support cultural maintenance*. Within cultural adaptation, themes included: *Cultural adaptation is about being 'aware' of Australian norms and values*, and *School is where CALD children learn how to adapt* and *There should be a balance between adaptation and maintenance*.

3.2. Themes

3.2.1. Cultural maintenance is important for CALD children

Without exception, participants all indicated that connection to cultural background was important for CALD students with refugee or migrant backgrounds. This was seen in statements such as *'one hundred percent, its important being able to continue to have their culture'* (Bridget), and *'I think that it's important for them to maintain their cultural background'* (Laura). The word 'important' was pervasive across interviews in response to questions about cultural maintenance, yet the exact reasons why participants believed it was important for children to maintain a connection to their cultural background were less clear. In order to capture the predominant aspects of this theme, two sub-themes are presented— *Culture is linked with identity for CALD children*, and *Teachers conflated culture and language*.

Culture is linked with identity for CALD children

In discussions concerning culture and cultural maintenance for CALD children from refugee and migrant backgrounds, participants often drew on concepts of identity to position their arguments:

...that's part of them feeling safe and part of their obviously their identity, you can't change someone's identity without causing them harm (██████ - MS)

In this extract, ██████ links identity with safety, presumably in the context of the students' migrant or refugee status. In this sense, attempting to 'change someone's identity' is characterised as being damaging to the individual. A similar sentiment was expressed by ██████ again speaking with regards to CALD children maintaining their cultural background:

I think it's really important especially when they've come to a new place where everything is so foreign and so different, if they are then expected to completely disengage with their own individuality and identity, I think it's very, very traumatising for them. (██████ - MS)

In this quote, ██████ implicitly characterises the importance of cultural maintenance in terms of individuality and identity, and as being particularly important for CALD children in the context of resettlement. Like ██████ ██████ links loss of identity to negative outcomes – in this case, the concept of trauma is drawn upon.

An additional aspect of this sub-theme centred around connections to family and country as aspects of identity. For example:

They've got a really close connection to their family and therefore through that to their culture and their history so to take that away is like taking away self if you know what I mean (■■■■ - IELC)

Similarly, ■■■■ states:

...there's a bit of a loss of identity then you know our background is part of what makes us who we are yeah and there's that connection to your family and things like that (■■■■ - MS)

Both ■■■■ and ■■■■ draw upon concepts of identity to illustrate the importance of cultural maintenance for their students, with reference to connections to both family and home country as key aspects of this. Again, their positions are framed in terms of the negative consequences of their identity being lost or 'taken away' within the context of their resettlement. Statements similar to these were prevalent across the interviews, yet when some participants were asked to elaborate on the meaning of cultural identity for their students – particularly in relation to their age – they were less certain about its relevance:

I think it becomes when they get older...I think the older they get the more they think about where they've come from, why they've come. Maybe this year level don't as much, they're still in – you know, maybe they came when they were very young so they remember certain things but not enough to be able to validate...so yeah this year level probably not as much (■■■■ - IELC)

Where they occurred, these accounts appeared to be somewhat contradictory in nature – on the one hand, cultural background was characterised as an intrinsic aspect of identity for CALD children who have arrived in Australia as refugees or migrants, but in a more practical

sense it was not seen to be a salient concept for them in relation to their age – that is, they were too young to have a developed sense of cultural identity.

Cultural identity is generally termed ‘ethnic identity’ in the literature – separate from ascribed ethnicity, but related to identification with and commitment to a group with a shared language, culture, religion or place of origin (Phinney, Horenezyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). According to developmental models, the formation of ethnic identity can begin in childhood but becomes a focus during adolescence (Phinney et al., 2001). Therefore, while some participants might recognise that, developmentally, their students aren’t thinking about their cultural background as an aspect of their identity, they also recognise that having moved to Australia from another country – being a refugee or migrant – *is* important for CALD children and their identity, particularly in relation to connection to their country, family and to their lives prior to their migration to Australia. This suggests that it is the fact of being separated from their countries which makes cultural maintenance important for CALD children, even if they don’t have a developed sense of cultural and/or ethnic identity.

Teachers conflated culture and language

A corresponding aspect of the discussions surrounding the importance of cultural maintenance for CALD children was the way in which many participants conflated culture with language. For example, and in response to a question regarding cultural maintenance for CALD children, ■■■ states:

...in our class it’s English focussed but we always say never forget who you are where you came from it’s really, really important, speak in your own language at home, we try to tell the parents “don’t let them lose who they are” you know that’s part of what makes them up, it’s their connection to their

family, it's their connection to their home country and I don't think it's good to take that away (████ - IELC)

As in the previous sub-theme, █████ links in concepts such as family, country and identity (that is, as 'part of what makes them up'), yet positions this within the context of an English language focus in the classroom, and a belief in the need for students to retain their first language. Many of the participants expressed a similar belief in the value of maintaining first language, and highlighted how they would encourage parents to support this at home:

...parents often ask the question 'should we be reading with the student because my accent is there and I can't say the words' and I say 'yeah you do that but then you talk to them maybe in the first language to get the comprehension' so that first language is very important (████ - IELC)

Interestingly, first language maintenance was often also spoken about in terms of its importance as a framework for learning English, despite initial assertions that it was important in terms of cultural maintenance. For example, and in direct response to a question about cultural maintenance for CALD children, █████ states:

...yeah in fact I think there's research to show that with children of five to six years old, if they with regards to the language for example, if they do not continue with their first language and it's just pulled from them, they haven't developed in their first language yet so they're grammatically all of the things that come into language they haven't learnt yet so if they try to learn a second language without that framework of the first it's much harder (████ - IELC)

This focus on the importance of first language maintenance as a framework for learning English appears to contradict the assumption that cultural maintenance was seen as important in and of itself – rather, it suggests that the focus for participants is on the provision of English education. This focus was more common among participants who worked within Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs), which could be taken as an indication of their embeddedness within the framework of the program, in terms of preparing students for mainstream schooling.

While learning English is evidently an important aspect of schooling for CALD migrant children – in terms of their gaining social capital and succeeding academically (Christie & Sidhu, 2002; Woods, 2009) – research has emphasised the ‘power laden’ aspects of English language education (Riggs & Due, 2011). As noted by Due and Riggs (2009), the acquisition of English is often framed as a term of inclusion for refugee and migrant groups in Australia – that is, learning English is seen to be indicative of ‘successful’ integration. If such power dynamics are replicated within the classroom, this can create an environment in which children are made responsible for their own inclusion (Due & Riggs, 2009; Miller, 2000) despite the possibility of their having differential investments in learning English (Riggs & Due, 2011). Therefore, while the focus on helping students to learn English is perhaps necessary – particularly given the framework of the IELC program – what appears to be missing in participant accounts is an examination of the value of first language maintenance in and of itself. As identified by Miller (2000), schools play an important role in challenging power dynamics which constitute marginalization in society, and part of this is recognising and validating the linguistic resources which CALD students bring.

3.2.2. A school focus on celebrating diversity encourages cultural maintenance

Having identified the importance of cultural background and cultural maintenance as seen in the previous themes, participants often discussed the ways in which their schools

focussed on promoting cultural diversity. This was generally positioned within an understanding that schools should be ‘accepting’ and ‘celebrating’ their students’ cultural backgrounds:

It shouldn't be they come to a new country and everything's wiped away, it should be embraced and society and school and teachers should be embracing it, and work with it. I think it's something that needs to be celebrated, not thrown away. (██████ - IELC)

In keeping with this idea, many participants detailed the cultural festivals celebrated at their schools, as well as events such as Harmony Day:

Harmony Day is a huge, huge thing at our school and lots of cultures celebrated, you know Chinese New Year, St Patrick's day, Diwali festival, Ramadan and Eid you know it's all celebrated, this last week of school they had a big thing about NAIDOC week for the you know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids... (██████ - MS)

Participants generally spoke about these events inclusively, highlighting them as celebrations of diversity on a whole school level:

...Harmony Day is fairly much a day that we look at and celebrate, we talk about diversity and coming from different cultures and celebrating that plus also NAIDOC week...also do sometimes things like for Eid and different celebrations that the children bring...we'll do the henna painting as well too and things like that I've done that in the past when we've had students that have come from different cultures (██████ - IELC)

In addition to cultural festivals, participants discussed the ways in which children were involved in celebrating their cultural backgrounds at school – for example, through dances, or through sharing food from their countries:

We had refugee week, so we had girls that did Nepali dances, girls that did Burmese dances, African dance, Afghani dance, they did songs you know, so yeah and today we had a shared lunch and the theme was, not all of them did it, was that they were to bring a plate from their country to share with other children. (██████ - IELC)

In these extracts, it could be argued that the focus on culture is somewhat superficial - that is, it appears to be centred on an all-inclusive celebration of ‘diversity’, as represented by external cultural signifiers such as food, dances and ‘henna painting’. Indeed, the superficial nature of these celebrations was highlighted by one participant (interestingly, the only participant who didn’t identify with a ‘white’ European or Australian background – a point which will be returned to in Chapter 4):

...we do the tokenistic things like we have Harmony Day, we celebrate that and we talk about the importance of how we come from all different places and how we live in harmony and that kind of message (██████ - MS)

Here, ██████ highlights how events such as Harmony Day are ‘tokenistic’, and goes on to detail how students dress up in their ‘cultural costumes’, before stating:

...(I) find that it’s a bit you know tokenistic and things so it’s not really embraced all the time (██████ – MS)

Hanh highlights that the celebration of diversity, encapsulated in the event ‘Harmony Day’, is not always a focus within the school – thus implying that it is limited to these specific days, in which the representation is somewhat tokenistic. In keeping with this idea, researchers have highlighted how celebrations of diversity within a school context can be limited to a celebration of essentialized ‘difference’ – wherein cultural ‘difference’ is constituted in terms of a normatively ‘white’ Australia (Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Fox, & Paradies, 2018). Such tendencies can serve to exoticize and ‘other’ the cultural backgrounds of CALD students (Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Brickwood, Fox, & Paradies, 2014), and to foster intergroup discrimination (Vedder et al., 2006). Although such critiques could be pertinent to this situation, it is important to note that [REDACTED] was the only participant to highlight the tokenistic aspect of school celebrations. Interestingly, at another point in her interview, she stated:

Sometimes like to try and involve the children in to celebrate their diversity we try and say hello in different language, so kind of tokenistic things but still like at this age group and you know with the start of school that’s the way that we try and tie in the involvement of them and how important they are ([REDACTED] - MS)

In this extract, Hanh again acknowledges the tokenistic aspects of this particular tradition but states that it has relevance for the age group she teaches (that is, primary school children), and helps to involve them and make them feel important within the context of starting school in a new country. Other participants similarly highlighted the positive effects of a school focus on celebrating diversity, for example:

...we have lots of children stand up and talk about their story and how they got here and it's really lovely that the other children in the school feel that and see that and also they value it and they you know these children stand up and say "this is who I am, this is what I did, this is how I got here" and the other kids go "that's awesome" (■■■■ - IELC)

Thus, by providing students with the means to express themselves, participants appeared to believe that this helped them to become visible and to be valued within the context of the school. Similarly, ■■■■ states:

...I would see new kids that have just started at school, some had absolutely no English and you could see just how bewildered they were, they'd just walked into this foreign place, some had never even been to a school let alone a fairly mainstream school in the middle of the suburbs in Adelaide Australia and watching them grow and develop over time in the school yard...I saw kids that wouldn't smile for months and then all of a sudden you'd see them laughing and smiling so I think it does certainly help them to feel a sense of wellbeing knowing that they can bring some of themselves to school (■■■■ – MS)

In this way, ■■■■ details how students feeling like they could 'bring some of themselves to school' contributes to their wellbeing when newly arrived. Indeed, in terms of recognised 'best practice' for the education of CALD children from refugee backgrounds (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), the literature has emphasised 'whole school approaches' to encourage cultural maintenance, a positive sense of identity and self-worth (Matthews, 2008). The challenge for schools appears to lie in providing a welcoming environment, as a key aspect of whole school

approaches, without ‘othering’ the cultural backgrounds of its students (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), and without reducing celebrations to a tokenistic display of diversity (Woods, 2009).

3.2.3. Teachers are mindful of opportunities to encourage cultural maintenance

Participants often spoke about ways in which they worked to tie different aspects of their students’ cultural backgrounds into their classroom practices. This appeared to centre on recognising opportunities in which children could contribute – for example:

I think you know we do incorporate a bit of the culture into our curriculum where we can ... if we’re learning about Australian animals we might say ‘well what animals do you see in your country’ or you know we might be talking about Australian versus not Australian animals and we might say ‘well there’s a panda bear’ and then someone says ‘we have pandas in our country’ and then we talk about ‘have you seen them’ you know yeah ‘where do you see them’, so we do bring it into general conversation, not so much it’s not so much planned (██████ – IELC)

In this quote, ██████ identifies that there are instances in which culture is made a focus within the classroom and that are spontaneous, and done mainly in the context of general conversation. It is interesting to note how ‘bringing culture in the curriculum’, in this account, takes the form of identifying animals from students’ countries of origin and comparing them to Australian animals – an approach which was mirrored by other participants:

...they very much enjoy that to bring um be it a story they will share an experience of what they’ve done in their country and we try to link it as much as we can you know with our enquiry units that we do, we’re looking at

animals so we're looking also at native animals from Australia but in your country which animals can you find so you know we sort of build that into the curriculum as much as we can (██████ – IELC)

Here, ██████ highlights how children enjoy discussing aspects of their country, such as animals, and that this is therefore built into the curriculum. In this sense, participants appear to be responding to their students and being mindful of opportunities in which aspects of their lives can be made a focus in the classroom. This was explicitly outlined by ██████

...keep at the front of your mind or the back - somewhere tucked away: 'how do I include an Aboriginal kid or an Indian kid or a or whatever child how do I do that in as I deliver the curriculum that they need to learn' and that's really not that hard (██████ – MS)

In this case, ██████ emphasises that teachers should always be mindful of opportunities in which CALD children can be included. She goes on to detail how this can be done:

...for example if you're doing art or if you're doing music you would include in your planning some music that would be relevant to individual kids... So don't just do music that's generic ... put Indian music, Aboriginal music into your curriculum planning and same with visual arts, same thing do some you know look at Indian and Aboriginal art as part of your art curriculum (██████ – MS)

In this sense, bringing culture into the curriculum is framed in terms of inclusion. The use of music from children's cultural backgrounds was mirrored by ██████

...in teaching use a lot of world music so we can enjoy it and it's amazing when the Arabic kids, coz I like Arabic music, Arabic kids will go 'oh it's our

music' 'yeah you can get it here' 'can you?' And then some of it they'll go 'oh I know those words tell me the words' you know that sort of stuff so using music from different cultures different lands (██████ – MS)

In this quote, ██████ details how the use of music from students' home countries engages them, and appears to be of interest to them. A similar scenario was highlighted by ██████ this time in the context of the school library:

...when we can bring say the five and six-year-olds in and they can borrow a book like for example – let me think about which ones in particular that we've got, I know Spot, you know the books about Spot? Yeah, we've also got them in Arabic and so they borrow them, they can take them home and they can have them read to them that night you know as well so they love that, they love that they can go and get books from their own language as well as books in English you know (██████ – MS)

In these extracts, it is apparent that participants feel students enjoy recognising aspects of their culture within their classrooms and elsewhere in the school. It could be argued that the way in which participants detail 'bringing culture into the curriculum' in these extracts is largely centred on superficial representations of cultural 'difference' – for example, talking about animals in reference to Australian animals, or using music from countries other than the 'generic' or from 'different lands'. In such statements, participants are again using as a referent an unspoken Australian 'norm'. In keeping with this idea, theorists have highlighted how a critical approach to examining cultural difference in Australian classrooms should centre on disrupting assumptions of a core 'white' hegemonic centre, rather than just examining difference as something embodied by CALD students (Walton et al., 2018). Interestingly, throughout the

interviews, there appeared to be little critical reflection on how children's cultural backgrounds were constituted as 'other' in reference to this norm. However, as in the previous theme, participants appeared to believe that the ways in which they focussed on culture in the classroom were linked to wellbeing for CALD children:

...it's all about "this is okay for me here, maybe I can't always go to a restaurant where I'm normally able to eat, maybe I can't get to Aunty or grandma's house because they're in China but at school at least there's some aspect of me that's being represented in the unit that we're doing (█████ - IELC)

In this sense, █████ highlights how representation in the classroom is important for CALD students because they are separated from familiar things which might have previously affirmed their sense of belonging or identity. This was also referenced by █████ in terms of ensuring their sense of belonging, as an aspect of their wellbeing:

We do try and make links like when they first come to school we make a little book where they at the beginning of the year 'my name is, I come from, I am five years old' so yeah trying to create that sense of belonging (█████ - IELC)

Additionally, a number of participants mentioned the importance of ensuring that students felt that they were valued, as an aspect of their wellbeing. For example:

wellbeing for kids at school to be able to learn they've got to be happy and feel safe and a part of that happiness thing is having you know their identity valued so yeah we try and work on that (█████ - MS)

Here, Hanh links happiness for CALD children with feeling like their ‘identities’ are valued. Additionally, Cathy, in discussing a class focusing on learning about India with a newly arrived migrant boy from India, states that this focus was important in ensuring he felt valued, and that he felt “... *that his background is of importance to others and interest to others*”. This idea is consistent with research suggesting that CALD children feel a sense of connection when their identities as refugees or migrants are reflected in the context of the school (Due & Riggs, 2016), or when they can showcase their skills through non-English based subjects such as art and sport (de Heer et al., 2016). Therefore, while it could be argued that participants focused on fairly superficial cultural signifiers within the context of the classroom, and perhaps did so opportunistically rather than with a more focussed and critical perspective, participants also recognised the importance of providing opportunities for students to maintain their cultural backgrounds, as a means of increasing their positive wellbeing.

3.2.4. Cultural adaptation is about being ‘aware’ of Australian norms and values

In discussing the question of cultural adaptation for CALD children, participants were mostly equivocal. While they did all agree that some adaptation was necessary, this was often framed in terms of children needing to ‘be aware’ of certain norms and values, such as social conventions. For example, as stated by [REDACTED]

I think there's parts that you need to be aware of, it's kind of like when you talk to different people you have to talk to them in certain ways like you know like when you talk to your friends you can be more relaxed and things and when you talk to someone older or when you talk to a boss or whatever like I think you just need to be aware ([REDACTED] - MS)

Additionally, participants centred the need for an awareness of social codes and norms in terms of students being permanent citizens in Australia:

...if they are going to live in Australia and it's a permanent thing and they're going to do schooling in Australia and go into the workforce they really need to understand at least a little bit about our culture and the way Australians are

(██████ – IELC)

In this extract, ██████ describes the need for children to understand a bit about 'our culture' in terms of their becoming equipped for school and for entering the workforce in Australia. It is interesting to note that, when discussing cultural maintenance for CALD children, participants oriented towards essentialist notions of 'identity' which schools could nurture and help children express. Cultural adaptation, on the other hand, was largely discussed in terms of the external forces dictating appropriate ways of being. In this sense, cultural adaptation was framed as being necessary in order to meet the expectations of society:

...manners for example, some cultural groups do that very differently to what we do, but if they are in Australia and our society is about 'good morning, please, thank you' ...if you go out and buy something you know help, please

and thank you is kind of expected (██████ – IELC)

In this sense, an awareness of cultural adaptation was predicated on the idea of helping CALD children to 'fit in' and 'be functional in society':

...you want them to have things that are going to make them fit in, be functional in society, not have them ostracised...you want them to be able to make friends and form other social groups and things like that (██████ – IELC)

While recognising the importance of some cultural adaptation – in terms of awareness of social conventions and ‘norms’ – participants were also careful to stress that it was the choice of individual children as to when, or how, they chose to adapt:

I think you know it's good for them to know and understand it rather more than to you know take it on, you know it's there if they feel that they need to use it if it's appropriate for them and they want to use it it's there (██████ - IELC)

Therefore, while knowledge about Australian norms and practices was deemed to be important, the extent to which adaptation occurred was framed as being an individual choice.

3.2.5. School is where CALD children learn how to adapt

While adaptation was framed as a choice, participants also frequently spoke about the schoolyard and classroom as being spaces in which children would learn to adapt. For example, as stated by Cathy, schools are where CALD children “...will become accepted and socialised to become Australian more than anywhere else”. In this sense, participants framed it as partly their responsibility to teach CALD children about ‘Australian norms’ or ‘Australian values’. This viewpoint was particularly apparent among participants based in IELCs, who stated explicitly that they believed it was their job to assist children with certain aspects of adaptation in the context of their education:

...we just model the correct ways and they're in Intensive English Language, it's something that's on our kind of checklist...not that we assess it, but we make sure that the children are doing a lot of those normal things that we would expect them to be doing in our society or in Australia (██████ – IELC)

In this sense, participants' discussions regarding their role in helping children adapt directly contradicted their assertions of 'choice' outlined in the previous theme. Contradictory accounts of this nature could be taken to suggest that participants are aware of conveying within interviews what they consider to be socially desirable – that is, based on the specific context of the culturally diverse school setting, foregrounding 'choice' in relation to cultural adaptation could be considered the more appropriate response. Egalitarian beliefs of this kind, however, appear to be less important within the practical domain of the classroom, in which participants discussed how they would focus on specific 'problem' behaviours:

...some kids will go to the toilet in a different way...and it can be quite public and it can be in the sandpit so those things that are going to make life really difficult for them I'll encourage them to do whatever it is we do in Australia just because it's gonna be really difficult if you don't (██████ – IELC)

Additionally, participants focussed on practical aspects of adaptation, such as food:

...you know that's our job is to tell them 'in Australia we do it this way, in Australia' you know, lots of children bring sandwiches to school because they that's easier for them to take out at lunch if it's the child who might be a slow eater or something, say you know 'this is the way we do it in Australia, and this is why' (██████ – IELC)

Here, ████████ focusses on how children might bring sandwiches to school, perhaps based on the child (or parents) having been taught about 'the way we do it in Australia' (that is, having sandwiches for lunch) as being more practical. As in the previous extract in which ██████ identifies

that it will be ‘really hard’ for students if they don’t change some of their behaviours, in this extract [REDACTED] frames this form of adaptation in terms of making things easier.

Such an approach reflects research by Van Praag et al. (2016) which highlighted that teachers in Belgium were focussed on acculturating migrant students in terms of conforming to the behaviours of a perceived ‘homogenous’ Belgian society. Similarly, Walton (et al., 2018) in examining discussions of culture and national identity in Australian primary schools, highlighted how teachers would refer to a core Australian national identity in discussions with CALD children about cultural differences. This could be seen to be reflected in Camille’s reference to children bringing sandwiches for lunch as being ‘the way we do it in Australia’. The use of language in this statement could also be seen to implicitly exclude CALD children as ‘other’ to the normative ‘we’. For example, in statements such as ‘the way we do things’, it is evident that participants are orienting towards a normative idea of an ‘Australian’ student, and in doing so implicitly constructing CALD children as existing outside of this norm.

While participants focussed on practical aspects of socialising CALD children – ostensibly, to help them ‘fit in’ and to ‘make things easier’ – there were also more complex discussions of cultural adaptation in terms of values. For example, participants highlighted areas in which cultural values held by students or families might clash with their own values. This was particularly apparent in discussions of gender roles:

...my group of girls really are still seen to be the domestics at home and we have had quite a few issues with the brothers’ attitudes to the girls...the brothers treating the sisters as basically servants, slaves so you know being a bit of a feminist myself it just irks so much ([REDACTED] – MS)

When faced with these situations, participants appeared to define the classroom as a space in which different cultural values give way to overarching classroom values. For example,

█ goes on to state:

(I) just stop them say “look what happens at home happens at home but at our school we have respect and responsibility, your responsibility is to carry your own bag not force your sister to carry your bag” “but my dad said I could order her around” “not in school you won’t” ...I just see it if I’m at school and I’m a teacher we follow the school rules at school (█ – MS)

A similar scenario was outlined by Vera:

...the sisters do everything for the brothers, they carry their bag, they open their lunch boxes, and it’s like ‘mmm no, nope not happening in my classroom’ and the first day I actually made one of the little boys carry a bag he just bawled his eyes out he was so upset he goes ‘I not do this’ he goes ‘I boy’ it’s like ‘mm no you’re a child, pick your bag up, let’s do it’ (█ – IELC)

In these cases, participants clearly demarcate the space of the classroom as one in which certain behaviours or beliefs are not acceptable. As identified by Due and Riggs (2009), the control of spaces by teachers can serve to enforce norms and values of the ‘dominant group’. In these extracts, this appears to be the case, and highlights how teachers hold considerable power in these situations. In construing a ‘norm’ to which CALD children should adhere, participants are then able to identify behaviours or values which exist outside of this, and which can then be justifiably targeted for change. In some cases, these could be seen as critical within society – for example, equality with gender roles. However, in other cases the focus appears to be somewhat

arbitrary, for example in highlighting sandwiches as a more practical lunch choice. The implications of this will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2.6. There should be a balance between adaptation and maintenance

Despite highlighting the importance of ‘socialising’ CALD children, participants also frequently oriented to the concept of ‘balance’ in terms of cultural maintenance and adaptation. This generally entailed participants supplementing a claim about cultural adaptation with a statement pertaining to the importance of cultural maintenance. For example:

...they're in Australia, they've got to integrate, but you can do both...do stuff with their own cultures and share it with Australians as well, because we want to try their yummy food and we want to see their beautiful dances and whatever they do, but then make friends (██████ – IELC)

In terms of cultural norms, a number of participants appeared to be negotiating the different areas in their contact with CALD children, in which a cultural norm or related behaviour becomes appropriate or inappropriate:

...I mean I've worked with people before who you know have insisted on children eating with a knife and fork when they'd normally eat with their fingers, I would certainly never suggest that that was something I want to impose on those children, but when we go on camp for example and we're all sitting there with our knives and forks then we have to practice using our knives and forks so that children are equipped with the skills...but if we're every day at school when they're eating their rice they can eat with their fingers you know it's you know, "this is the Australian way and while we're on

camp we're going to do it that way" but you know that's fine you can do you know and food and things like that some teachers go "oh that rice makes such a mess in the classroom I just want them to have a sandwich" well no, as long as they're eating healthy food that's fine (██████ – IELC)

These appeared to be complicated negotiations, and ones which were resolved with an appeal to a balance between maintenance and adaptation. The idea of 'balance' was also apparent in participants discussions surrounding language use within the classroom. For example:

...I like them to talk English but also like allowing them time just to be maybe a little Syrian kid in the corner...I say to them you can talk in your own language that's okay but if someone else comes up stop because that's rude because the other person might not understand you' (██████ – IELC)

Additionally, 'balance' was also discussed in more abstract terms with regards to participants' views about the adaptation of CALD children within the schools:

...they have to become part of society but becoming part of society does not mean that you exclude your own culture and background, you can bring the whole lot (██████ – MS)

Here, Cathy highlights how becoming part of society can also involve CALD children maintaining their own cultural background. A similar statement was expressed by ██████

I think they do need to practise some of ours but I also think that should keep some of theirs and just have a balance (██████ – IELC)

In these statements participants appear to support CALD children in maintaining their cultural background – however, it should be noted that this is framed with a proviso of them ‘becoming part of society’ – that is, as long as they ‘practise some of ours’, they can keep ‘some of theirs’. Interestingly, as outlined in previous themes relating to cultural maintenance, the ‘some of theirs’ appears to be limited to specific and often quite superficial aspects of cultural ‘difference’ (such as food, dances and music). Horenczyk & Tatar (2002) in examining teacher attitudes to multiculturalism in Israel, identified that while teachers held positive attitudes about pluralistic societies, in classroom practice with immigrant students they strongly favoured assimilation. An offered explanation was the difference between ‘pluralistic rhetoric’ on the one hand and its ‘problematic implementations in concrete settings.’ (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002, p442). While in the current study the ‘pluralistic rhetoric’ did translate into practices which were aimed at acknowledging the cultural backgrounds of CALD children, this appeared to occupy a fairly superficial place within the school context, while in a more concrete way participants targeted for change the behaviours, norms and values of their students.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This project examined teachers' perspectives on acculturation and wellbeing for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children from refugee and migrant backgrounds in South Australian primary schools and Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs). In doing so, this project aimed to increase understandings of acculturation processes for CALD children from the perspectives of their teachers, and in terms of the perceived impact of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation on their wellbeing outcomes. Findings suggest that participants endorsed an integrationist approach to acculturation – that is, they expressed a belief in the importance of both cultural maintenance and adaptation for CALD children within the context of their resettlement and education in Australian schools.

In discussing cultural maintenance, participants detailed school and classroom practices aimed at celebrating diversity and acknowledging and valuing the cultural backgrounds of CALD children. Participants appeared to believe that these practices encouraged CALD children to maintain their cultural background, and that the maintenance of cultural backgrounds was linked to the wellbeing outcomes, in terms of indicators such as self-esteem, belonging and pride. School belonging is a recognised aspect of wellbeing for CALD children within Australian primary schools (Fazel et al., 2012), and the findings from this study suggest that it might be enhanced through school and teacher practices which support CALD children to maintain their cultural background. Additionally, participants discussed the importance of cultural adaptation for their students. Previous research has suggested that an integrationist approach to acculturation is related to positive wellbeing outcomes for children (Brown et al., 2013; Nigbur et al., 2008; van de Vijver et al., 1999), and participants appeared to support this by highlighting the importance of balance – that is, while they expressed that CALD students should be

encouraged to maintain their cultural background, they also highlighted the importance of some amount of cultural adaptation, in terms of their ‘fitting in’ and being ‘functional’ in society.

However, while participants expressed support for both cultural adaptation and maintenance, critical analysis of themes suggests that these dimensions were not valued equally in the everyday context of the school. For example, participants’ conceptualisations of cultural maintenance appeared to be focussed on superficial elements of culture such as food, celebrations, and music. On a more fundamental level, participants appeared to focus on cultural adaptation in terms of language use, behaviours and values. Such findings support previous research indicating that teachers orient towards more assimilationist approaches in order to prepare students for the expectations of society (Van Praag et al., 2016). A point of difference in the current study is that participants appeared to believe that they were supporting cultural maintenance, and consequently seemed unaware of the extent to which their focus on cultural adaptation subverted their discussions and shaped their focus.

4.1. Implications

As has been outlined, although participants express support for an integrationist approach to acculturation, and appear to believe that this approach is linked to wellbeing outcomes for CALD children, in more concrete terms they appear to orient towards helping CALD children ‘become Australian’. It is unclear whether this finding indicates that participants actually believe some form of assimilation is better for their students or whether this points towards an unexamined discrepancy between participants’ beliefs and practices. However, if wellbeing is indeed linked to integration, as suggested by participants and supported in previous studies (Brown et al., 2013; Nigbur et al., 2008; van de Vijver et al., 1999), it is conceivable that an uneven focus on cultural maintenance and adaptation by teachers might impact on wellbeing

outcomes of CALD children. This study therefore highlights the importance of teacher development in terms of encouraging a more critical understanding of culture – for example, disrupting the ways in which CALD children are constituted as ‘other’ in reference to an unexamined Australian cultural ‘norm’ (Walton, et al., 2014) – as well as a deeper understanding of the power dynamics inherent in English language education (Due & Riggs, 2009; Miller, 2000; Riggs & Due, 2011). Additionally, while school practices aimed at celebrating and valuing cultural diversity are undoubtedly positive, this study highlights how these can be based on cultural essentialism. This therefore suggests that schools should focus on more holistic approach to celebrating cultural diversity (Sidhu & Taylor, 2012).

Additionally, the findings from this study indicate that teachers hold considerable power in shaping the acculturation processes of their students, supporting previous research (Due & Riggs, 2009). This finding highlights the importance of considering contextual factors when examining the acculturation processes of refugee and migrant children (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Tardiff-Williams & Fisher, 2009), as well as examining the perspectives of those from the ‘dominant’ group (Van Praag et al., 2016). Australia is ostensibly a multicultural society, with schools that appear to endorse cultural maintenance. Based on observation of these factors, it could be concluded that children are free to choose how they wish to acculturate (that is, there are no obvious assimilationist policies in place curtailing their choices). As has been demonstrated, however, their choices appear to be considerably regulated by teachers. Such findings suggest the need for further research which can explore the relational aspects of acculturation in order to increase knowledge about how CALD children experience their resettlement, and whether they feel able to freely explore both maintenance and adaptation.

4.2. Strengths

This study was based on a number of identified gaps in the acculturation literature, including the lack of research examining acculturation for children (Brown & Zagefka, 2011), and based on calls within the literature for acculturation research that is exploratory (Chirkov, 2009) and which considers contextual factors (Tardiff-Williams & Fisher, 2009). As such, the findings from this study offer insights into undeveloped areas of the acculturation literature. Additionally, the use of a qualitative methodology allowed for the viewpoints of teachers to be highlighted – which, while providing insight into the acculturation processes of CALD refugee and migrant children, were also able to be critically examined in order to elucidate the particular conditions of the primary school or IELC classroom in which students experience acculturation. Additionally, this study aimed to increase knowledge of the contextual factors contributing to wellbeing outcomes for CALD children during their resettlement, with preliminary support being found to suggest that cultural maintenance may play a role in this

4.3. Limitations and Future Research

The sample for this study was homogenous, in that all participants were female, and all but one participant (Hanh) came from a white European or Australian background. While homogeneity is not necessarily a limitation in qualitative research, and in fact can be beneficial (Braun & Clarke, 2013), in this study the latter factor is likely to be important in that there was an identified difference in how Hanh conceptualised some of the school practices in terms of their ‘tokenistic’ representation of culture. This suggests that teachers’ cultural backgrounds may influence the way they construe certain school practices. Future qualitative research might therefore benefit from sampling for diversity of experience (Braun & Clarke, 2013), to further explore this influence.

An additional limitation of this study was in the unequal representation of participants from IELCs and from mainstream classrooms. Some differences in positions were highlighted in the context of the results – for example, participants from IELCs appeared to be more focussed on English language education and the socialisation of CALD children than participants from mainstream schools. Therefore, the larger number of participants within IELCs could have impacted on the findings from this study – as such, future research could benefit from including a broader range of teachers, such as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) teachers within mainstream schools, mainstream classroom teachers, and subject teachers working with CALD children.

4.4. Conclusion

This is one of the few studies to qualitatively examine teachers' perspectives on the acculturation processes of CALD children, particularly in the context of their resettlement and education in Australian schools, and in terms of their wellbeing outcomes. This study suggests that while teachers express abstract support for integration for their students - in particular, endorsing the idea of cultural maintenance as being positively connected to their wellbeing outcomes – their main focus appeared to be on helping CALD children to 'become Australian' in terms of language use, behaviours and values. These findings highlight the complex acculturation dynamics of the primary school and IELC setting, and in particular provide insight into areas in which teacher development could be enhanced in order to increase the wellbeing outcomes of CALD children from refugee and migrant backgrounds when resettling in Australia.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PROJECT TITLE: Understanding Cultural Background and Wellbeing for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children with Refugee or Migrant Backgrounds

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: [REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Clemence Due

STUDENT RESEARCHER: #

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Bachelor of Psychological Sciences (Honours)

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This study will engage with teachers, bicultural workers and other school support staff who have worked with culturally and linguistically diverse students from refugee and migrant backgrounds in order to explore their understandings about the cultural and psychological changes which these students may experience during resettlement.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Aerlie McGuire. This research will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Psychological Sciences (Honours) at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Dr Clemence Due.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You are being asked to participate if you have worked with refugee or migrant background children.

Primary school teachers from mainstream schools must:

- Have taught at least one student with an identified refugee or migrant background
- Have taught in a mainstream Australian primary school for at least one year

ESL Teachers or Bicultural Workers/School Support Staff must:

- Must have worked with at least one student with a refugee and/or migrant background from a non-English speaking country

What am I being invited to do?

You are being invited to share your experiences of teaching or working with primary school aged children with a refugee or migrant background. Specifically, you will be interviewed about your understandings of the impact of cultural identity on social/emotional wellbeing

Interviews can take place at the University of Adelaide, over the phone or via Skype. The interview will be audio recorded so that an anonymous transcript can be made of the interview.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

Interviews are expected to last between 30 – 60 minutes.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

We do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in an interview for this project.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

This study will highlight the experiences of teachers or support workers who have worked (or who are currently working) with refugee or migrant background students. In doing so, this study will provide teachers with the unique opportunity to contribute their specialist knowledge.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time until the start of data analysis.

What will happen to my information?

Your name and any identifying information will remain confidential and will not appear in any subsequent publications or reports that arise from the data. Confidential interview transcriptions will be made from the audio recordings, and only the named investigators above will have access to the interview transcripts for the purpose of analysis.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you would like to participate in this research, please contact Miss. McGuire or Dr. Due. They will be able to provide you with further information about the study, and you will be able to organise a for the interview.

Miss Aerlie McGuire

Dr. Clemence Due

Email:

Email: clemence.due@adelaide.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Sub Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number 18/31). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the School of Psychology Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee's Secretariat on +61 8 8313 4936 or by email to hrec@adelaide.edu.au if you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

Please contact Aerlie (details above). You will receive a consent form and be able to arrange a time for an interview.

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

1. **To start with, could you tell me a bit about your experience as a (teacher/support worker)?**
 - a. For example, how many years you have taught/worked, your main subject areas etc.?
2. **Specifically, could you tell me anything about your years teaching/working with CALD refugee and/or migrant background children?**
 - a. Approximately how many children from these groups have you taught/worked with?
 - b. What kind of cultural backgrounds have they come from?
 - c. Has it always been made clear to you that these students were from either of these backgrounds?
3. **Could you tell me, in your own words, how you define or understand the concept of wellbeing?**
 - a. Is wellbeing something you think about in your role as a teacher/support worker?
Why, why not?
4. **Are there any differences in your definition of wellbeing for students based on their cultural backgrounds?**
 - a. For example, do you believe that wellbeing for students born in Australia and for recently arrived refugee/migrant students differs any way?
5. **Do you believe that students from CALD refugee/migrant backgrounds should be encouraged to maintain a connection to their cultural background?**

- a. What type of practices (if any) do you use to encourage students to maintain this connection?
 - b. Do you think that maintaining a connection to cultural background contributes to wellbeing for these students?
 - c. Do you think that this connection to cultural background is equally important for both refugee and migrant children – do you see any differences in regards to this?
6. **Do you believe that CALD students from refugee or migrant backgrounds should be encouraged to adopt the cultural practices of their resettlement country?**
- a. What type of practices (if any) do you use to help with this?
 - b. Do you think that cultural changes to do with adopting aspects of the resettlement countries culture impact the wellbeing of these students? Why/why not?
 - c. *if they identify striking a balance* how do you work to create a balance in your classroom between assimilating where necessary and also maintaining a connection to culture background?
 - d. Do you think that this is different for children with refugee backgrounds compared to those with migrant backgrounds? Why/why not?
7. **In term of what we've just discussed (the impact of cultural change or maintenance on wellbeing) do you think there are any differences for CALD students based on demographic variables:**
- a. Gender?
 - b. Age?
 - c. Religious Background?
 - d. Specific Cultural background?

- 8. Can you tell me what kind of challenges you have seen CALD refugee or migrant background students face at school in resettlement countries like Australia?**
- a. Do you think there are any specific challenges based on demographic variables (again: age, gender, religious background, cultural background)?
 - b. Any differences based on whether they were migrant or refugee background?
- 9. As a teacher, can you identify any challenges that you face in teaching students from CALD refugee and or migrant backgrounds?**
- a. Do you feel equipped to manage these challenges?
- 10. What would your ideal primary school classroom look like?**
- a. In terms of support or school practices relating to maintaining cultural identity or otherwise helping these children to ‘fit in’ or adapt
- 11. Would you be comfortable answering some demographic questions?**
- a. Gender you identify as
 - b. Age
 - c. Years of experience
 - d. If you identify with a particular cultural background?
 - e. Do you yourself come from a migrant or refugee background (if you are comfortable sharing)?
- 12. Is there anything else you wish to share or talk about in relation to the topics covered?**