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What do primary school principals from the Yamaji region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Background: Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are over represented in poor health and education outcomes. Little is known about the bullying experiences of Aboriginal school age children and young people. This Master's study aimed to investigate the policies and practises school principals use for bullying prevention and management in primary schools located in the Yamaji region or Midwest Education District of Western Australia.

This study was conducted in conjunction with the Child Health Promotion Research Centre's *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project. *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* is a four-year study that aimed to contextualise the bullying experiences of Yamaji school-age children and young people; and develop a locally relevant and culturally secure bullying prevention and management resource.

Method: Thirty-one principals and four deputy principals of primary school aged students participated in either a semi-structured telephone interview or survey. Instrument items asked principals: how often staff at their school used 12 bullying management strategies; to describe and rate the effectiveness of 25 bullying prevention guidelines and strategies; and to describe enablers and barriers to working with Aboriginal students who are bullied or who bully others.

Participant responses were matched for compliance with evidence-based recommendations (Cross, Pintabona, Hall, Hamilton, & Erceg, 2004, p. 11) and national policy as set out in the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF)

(Department of Education Science and Training; DEST, 2003) for school bullying prevention and management. Participant responses were also compared to a culturally secure bullying prevention and management model to determine if their guidelines and strategies are culturally secure and could respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students.

Results: Overall, participant reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices are compliant with evidence-based recommendations and the NSSF. Despite their best efforts to prevent and manage bullying involving Aboriginal students from the Yamaji region, participants often reported external issues such as family violence, family feuding and 'payback', substance use problems and racism as reasons for the limited effectiveness of their school's guidelines and strategies.

Discussion: Even with compliance to evidence-based recommendations and the NSSF, participant reports showed there are very few programs and strategies available to guide schools and staff when working with Aboriginal students who are bullied and who bully others. This study recommended a review of the role of Aboriginal non-teaching staff, across all sectors, to ensure they receive the necessary systemic support and time to develop relationships with students, families and community members; and a review of the NSSF to include more specific guidelines regarding working with Aboriginal students.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) Incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis;

(iii) Contain any defamatory material; or

(iv) Contain any data that has not been collected in a manner consistent with ethics approval.

The Ethics Committee may refer any incidents involving requests for ethics approval after data collection to the relevant Faculty for action.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

The purpose of this Masters study was to learn what policies and practices school principals report are in place for bullying prevention and management in primary schools located within the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District (MWED) of Western Australia (WA). In particular, this study was interested in how MWED schools responded to the strengths and needs of their Yamaji students in bullying prevention and management.

This study was funded by Healthway (WA Health Promotion Foundation) and conducted in conjunction with Edith Cowan University's (ECU) Child Health Promotion Research Centre's (CHPRC) *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project. *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* is a four year Healthway funded research project that aimed to contextualise the bullying experiences of Yamaji school age children and young people; and develop a locally relevant and culturally secure bullying prevention and management resource. This study was undertaken with the approval and direction of a Steering Committee comprised of Yamaji community members with expertise in working with and teaching Aboriginal school children.

A literature review was conducted to explore: school bullying prevention and management policies in Australia; the current state of Aboriginal health, mental health and educational achievement; and 'Whiteness' in Australian education. An instrument was developed using Questions 22 and 32 of the FSFF Teacher Questionnaire (Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research, 2003)

were adapted to discuss school bullying prevention and management guidelines and strategies with MWED primary school principals.

It was anticipated that the findings of this study could be used in conjunction with those from *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* to inform the development of a bullying prevention and management resource that aligns the NSSF recommendations with the cultural values of Yamaji students and their families.

1.1 Research question

The research question for this study was: *"What do primary school principals from the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?"*

1.2 Sub questions

The sub questions for this study were:

1. Are MWED primary school principals' reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices consistent with evidence based recommendations and compliant with the national policy for school bullying prevention and management?

2. Do the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices reported by MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security?

1.3 Definition of terms

School bullying

School bullying is when one or more students attempt to exert power over another student/s; this power imbalance is repeated and premeditated with intentional nastiness (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Lyznicki, McCaffree, & Robinowitz, 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Bullying can be direct, overt aggression such as teasing or hitting or indirect, covert aggression such as rumour spreading and/or exclusion (Drake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2004; Lyznicki et al., 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

More recently this social relationship phenomenon among students has evolved from 'traditional' face-to-face incidents in schools to non-face-to-face incidents using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This type of bullying is commonly referred to as cyber bullying (Smith et al., 2008). Like face-to-face bullying, cyber bullying is when an individual or group use ICT, over time to intentionally harm a person, who cannot stop this bullying from occurring (Pearce et al., 2010).

There are a plethora of ways students can engage in cyber bullying, these actions can range from sending "mean, nasty or threatening text messages/instant messages/pictures/video-clips/emails etc" to "pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person or to damage their friendships" (Pearce et al., 2010). As such the impact of this type of bullying in terms of humiliation, abuse and fear resulting from bullying is no longer confined to school hours and school peers. In line with

the *Solid Kids* project, the primary focus of this study was on 'traditional' forms of school bullying among Yamaji students.

Aboriginal and Indigenous Australians, and Yamaji people

Australia's native inhabitants are commonly referred to as Aboriginal (those from the main continent) and/or Torres Strait Islander (those from the Torres Strait Islands between Queensland's Cape York Peninsula and New Guinea) peoples; both groups may also be referred to individually or collectively as Indigenous (AIATSIS & Pascoe, 2008, p.6). For the purpose of this study the term Indigenous is used when speaking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples collectively (Pyett, Waples-Crowe, & van der Sterren, 2008).

The term Aboriginal is used when referring to Indigenous Western Australians because the majority (47%) of Torres Strait Islanders reside in Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). Aboriginal people often refer to themselves according their clans, tribes or 'country' (geographical area to which they have family ties) (Pyett et al., 2008). In the MWED where this study was conducted, the Aboriginal people are known as Yamaji.

Whiteness and white privilege

This study aimed to learn the ways in which school bullying policy responded to the strengths and needs of Indigenous students. More often than not, policies that (directly or indirectly) affect Indigenous people are developed and written by non-Indigenous people. Whiteness is a "socio-historical construct ... with various

manifestations of power" that limits access to potential societal progress for specific groups within the dominant culture (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 2). In other words, Whiteness refers to social structures that are geared to advantage and advance one group, usually people not of colour, over another group, usually people of colour. White privilege refers to the benefits that the advantaged group receive by virtue of their ethnicity (Wise, 2008b).

Historically, Whiteness and White privilege were constructed by the social elite and reinforced by popular discourse (Dyer, 2005; McIntosh, no date; Wise, 2008a). Today, these constructs are perpetuated through the media of the dominant society as being the 'common experience' or 'normal' (Dyer, 2005; McIntosh, no date; Wise, 2008a). McIntosh (no date) poignantly describes White privilege as "unearned assets which I can count on cashing in everyday … [it] is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks". Haviland (2008) and Wise (2008b) suggest that when the concept of Whiteness and White privilege are 'unveiled' to its beneficiaries it is often promptly rejected and therefore permitted to remain powerful, invisible and unchallenged (Haviland, 2008; Wise, 2008b).

The current education system has origins in colonisation, the very beginning of Whiteness in Australia (de Plevitz, 2007a). Policies, governance, curriculum content and delivery, and outcome measures of education all promote the values and aspirations of the dominant non-Aboriginal culture. As a premise of this study, Whiteness asserts the Australian education system advances non-Indigenous students and perpetuates Indigenous disadvantage.

Cultural security

Cultural security recognises the "legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal people" (Western Australian Health Department, no date). Essentially, cultural security acknowledges Indigenous worldviews of "an ancient relationship with some geographical place and ethnic distinctiveness from others living alongside them" (Durie, 2004, p. 181). In the context of this study culturally secure school bullying prevention and management policies and practices would address the strengths and needs of Yamaji school children. Furthermore, policies and practices would be developed in consultation and negotiation with the Yamaji community to ensure respect for local culture and relevancy to community needs. Coffin (2007) postulates that achieving cultural security is a gradual process developed through cultural awareness and cultural safety; the degree to which cultural security is attained or maintained is facilitated by the presence of protocol and brokerage. This study presents a culturally secure model for bullying prevention and management that can assist non-Indigenous education staff to reduce racism towards Indigenous Australians in their school.

AIEOs, ATAs and AEWs

In Western Australian education sectors Indigenous staff not in teaching, administration or maintenance positions have the specific role to support Indigenous students. This group of staff are referred to as Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEO; Government schools), Aboriginal Teacher Assistant (ATA; non-Government schools) and Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW; Government schools, former term for AIEOs).

Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this thesis:

Table 1 Thesis acronyms

AEW	Aboriginal Education Worker (Government schools)
AIEO	Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (Government Schools)
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia
ATA	Aboriginal Teacher Assistant (non-Government Schools)
BMIS	Behaviour Management in Schools
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CHPRC	Child Health Promotion Research Centre
CS	Community School
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (National)
DET	Department of Education and Training (Western Australia)
DHS	District High School
IM	Implementation Manual (NSSF)
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MWED	Mid West Education District
NSSF	National Safe Schools Framework
PS	Primary School
RS	Remote School
WAACHS	Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey

1.4 Significance

Over the last 500 years Western colonisation has displaced Indigenous people around the world of their land and their cultural, religious and economic structures. As a result, Indigenous peoples have experienced steady declines in their physical and mental health. In the area of mental health, Australia's Indigenous people struggle with overrepresentation in: mental illness, prevalence of violence, incarceration, substance dependency and suicide incidents (Freemantle, Officer, McAullay, & Anderson, 2007; Wise, 2008a). In Australia, contemporary government policies for Aboriginal health, education, and welfare perpetuate the effects of early colonisation strategies. A lack of inter-sectoral collaboration

between non-government organisations and government departments that operate in isolation from one another can continue to exacerbate poor mental health outcomes.

The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Research Survey (WAACHS) (Zubrick et al., 2006a, p. 5) reported that current education systems fail to improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal students because they do not address their social and emotional wellbeing. Conduct and peer problems were the most common specific emotional behavioural problems experienced by Aboriginal children and young people (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 50). Volume Two of the WAACHS, *The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People* (Zubrick et al., 2005, p. 249) reported that approximately one third of Aboriginal students who participated in the survey indicated they experienced bullying or being 'picked on' at school. School bullying has the potential to create social, emotional and mental health problems; nearly two thirds of WAACHS participants involved in school bullying reported having feelings of anger or sadness as a result of being bullied (Zubrick et al., 2005, p. 249). The WAACHS (Zubrick et al., 2005, p. 249) further found that participant reports of involvement in bullying or being picked on increased according to levels of isolation from a metropolitan area.

The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is the national policy for school safety and aims to assist Australian school communities to provide and maintain emotionally, psychologically and physically safe learning environments for their students (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003). The six Key Elements underpinning the NSSF are:

1. "School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare … that [are] committed to a shared vision of a positive and inclusive school" (DEST, 2003, p. 9);

2. "Establishment of agreed policies, programs and procedures [that are] accessible by all members of the school community" (DEST, 2003, p. 9);

3. "Provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents to empower students, increase safety and enhance relationship and citizenship skills" (DEST, 2003, p. 10);

4. "Managing incidents of abuse and victimisation" (DEST, 2003, p. 11);

5. "Providing support for students … involved in bullying" (DEST, 2003, p. 11); and

6. "Working closely with parents in key aspects of the school's program to provide a safe and supportive learning environment in ways which enable them to reinforce safety concepts and strategies at home" (DEST, 2003, p. 12).

At the commencement of this study it was unknown to what extent the recommendations of the NSSF (DEST, 2003) respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students. It was anticipated that this study could collect and 'share' bullying prevention and management strategies that MWED primary school principals identified as being successful with their Aboriginal students.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

> *… school communities can make an effective contribution to assisting young [Indigenous] people to make a healthy transition into adulthood, thereby reducing the risks for mental health problems. Protective factors include: a sense of belonging; development of problem solving skills; and contributing to an individual's academic/sporting success.*
>
> *(National ATSI Mental Health Working Group, 2004, p. 17)*

2.1 Introduction

School environments are sorting grounds in establishing student belongingness to a greater society; outside of family, schools have the greatest influence in negotiating social connectedness for young people (Constable, 1996 cited in Cameron, 2006). Anti-social behaviour such as school bullying threatens academic performance, mental health and well being, and social connection for **all** students involved (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). For the past two centuries, belongingness for Aboriginal Australians to non-Aboriginal society has been tenuous at best. The schooling experiences of young Aboriginal students have compounded social disconnection and today, many Aboriginal students perform well below their non-Aboriginal counterparts in both educational and health outcomes.

This study aimed to learn what strategies were being used in Western Australian rural primary schools to respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students who bully and/or are bullied. A literature review was conducted with two aims, firstly to review the health, mental health and education outcomes of Aboriginal Australians. The second aim was to provide an overview of Australia's current national policy on school bullying prevention and management with particular

interest in the way in which Whiteness has contributed to exclusionary policies for Aboriginal Australians that perpetuate poor educational and mental health outcomes. For example, at the time of this study there were no compliance measures in place to ensure schools engaged Aboriginal families when developing bullying prevention and management strategies.

2.2 Aboriginal Australian health and education

Any conversation about Aboriginal health and education must be embedded in an acknowledgement of the contribution of colonisation to the current state of these issues (Eckermann, 1999). Arrival of Europeans was accompanied with disease, war, death (Diamond, 1997), and dispossession of land, culture and law. For more than 200 years 'new' laws caused discrimination, exclusion and segregation, loss of family ties and relationships, and poverty (Zubrick et al., 2004). Intergenerational marginalisation resulted in Aboriginal people generally experiencing poorer health and educational outcomes that in turn limit Aboriginal possibilities in economic, social and political participation in the 'new' dominant society. Despite the devastation and loss endured as a result of colonisation, many Aboriginal Australians are strong, united and proud (Milroy, cited in Zubrick et al., 2005, p. xii)

Given the complex interrelationship of social indicators it is almost impossible to discuss the condition of Aboriginal education in isolation from health; employment and welfare; housing; history and racism; poverty and social class; culture and country; and policy (Carson, Dunbar, Chenhall, & Bailie, 2007). The scope of this study is limited however, to a review of education policies and school guidelines and

practices for bullying prevention and management that impact the mental health of Aboriginal students.

2.2.1 Current status of Aboriginal health in Australia

Australia's Aboriginal people are over represented in health issues causing premature death due to low infant mortality; suicide; chronic disease; injury; family violence; and deaths in custody. Currently, the average life expectancy (LE) for Aboriginal Australians is on average 17 years less than that of non-Aboriginal Australians (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2008). Australia trails behind New Zealand, Canada and the United States in the LE of their Indigenous peoples. In New Zealand, the LE of Maori is eight years less than non-Maori; Canada's First Nations experience a LE gap of seven years; and in the United States, Native Americans have an LE of six years less than non-Native Americans (Anderson, Crengle, Kamaka, Chen et al., 2006; Freemantle et al., 2007).

Close the Gap –

The past several years has seen an increased effort to call governments to act on the poor health and educational outcomes experienced by Australia's Aboriginal people. In 2005 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Commissioner (2005), Tom Calma, reported the health and social injustices experienced by Aboriginal Australians were in stark contrast to the national economic prosperity of the time. The *2005 Social Justice Report* then called for all Australian governments to work towards reducing the gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal life expectancy within 25 years (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2005). Two years later, in follow up to this charge, a policy briefing titled *Close the*

Gap (Oxfam Australia, 2007) was released with recommendations for improving Aboriginal health and increasing life expectancy. This collaborative effort between Oxfam and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation identified that improvement of Aboriginal health had been traditionally hindered by: a **lack of culturally appropriate health care**; **inadequate numbers of health practitioners** in Aboriginal health settings and training opportunities to progress Aboriginal health workers; **lack of communication and collaboration** between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal services and programs; and a **mismatch of funding** to Aboriginal health needs (Oxfam Australia, 2007).

Since its nation-wide release, the *Close the Gap* campaign has gained large national public support. At a 2007 *Close the Gap* rally held at Parliament House in Perth, Western Australia Ken Williams (2007, Director – Office of Aboriginal Health) categorised health and education improvements for Aboriginal people as equal priorities. In his speech, Williams (2007) claimed "that within 10 years the gap in Aboriginal life expectancy could be reduced if mums and bubs were supported to choose to work in health … Not only would Aboriginal people be Health [and Education] liaison officers but they could also be General Practitioners, nurses and eventually the Minister for Health [and Education]". Williams (2007) further stated that "health and education are a springboard for social change", meaning Aboriginal people are better able to advocate for themselves when they are strong and smart. Both international and domestic research suggests that solutions to improving Aboriginal health outcomes lies in inter-sectoral collaboration (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008; Bell, Boughton, & Bartlett, 2007, p. 40).

Additionally, there is growing support for Aboriginal health programs to consider the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities rather than isolating their physical wellbeing (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2007; Tsey, 1997). Mooney (2008) asserts that a change of heart, in conjunction with equitable funding, is required to 'close the gap' in Aboriginal health. Among other approaches, he points to cultural security as a means of ensuring that better services are provided to meet the social and emotional needs of the Aboriginal people who experience poor health (Mooney, 2008). The change of heart is required in anticipation of the costs associated with providing culturally secure health services; equity can appear to be expensive with an estimated 50 percent increase in existing consultation fees (Mooney, 2008).

Mental health and wellbeing

The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research undertook the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS), a state wide investigation into the health, wellbeing and education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people throughout Western Australia from 2001-2002. The WAACHS collected data from 1,999 Western Australian Aboriginal families with more than 5,000 children aged from 0-17 years and is the first study of this magnitude on the health Indigenous children. To date, four volumes have been released providing a comprehensive overview of the physical, social, emotional, academic and vocational health of WA's Aboriginal children and young people.

In addition to the high risk levels of poor physical and mental health among Aboriginal people, the WAACHS reported that Aboriginal children whose primary

carers were forcibly removed from their family by former government policies were more likely to experience problematic social and emotional conditions when compared with Aboriginal children whose primary carer was not forcibly removed (Zubrick et al., 2004). Exact numbers of children who were forcibly removed from their families under government policies up until the late 1960s is unknown, conservative estimates are approximately 50,000 Aboriginal people Australia wide (House of Representatives, 2008). Relevant to this study is the WAACHS finding that Aboriginal children whose parents were forcibly removed were:

- up to 10 percent more likely to suffer from high risk of clinically significant emotional problems;

- up to 10 percent more likely to suffer from high risk of clinically significant conduct problems; and

- approximately 8 percent more likely to suffer from high risk of significant hyperactivity (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 485-486).

Mental health and wellbeing is concerned with an individual's ability to positively respond to life stress and meet their family, employment, cultural and social or community potential (Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group, 2004, p. 3). According to this definition, the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians has been challenged since colonisation. The WAACHS reports Aboriginal children aged 4-11 years are nine percent more likely to be at high risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 485-486). Young Aboriginal people aged 12-17 years have greater likelihood of developing clinically significant

emotional or behavioural difficulties when compared with non-Aboriginal young people in the same age group (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 485-486). Furthermore, "rates of mental illness, intentional injury and deaths from suicide [among Aboriginal Australians are] more than twice … other Australians" (The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Agenda Working Group (RAWG) of the NHMRC, 2002).

The *Social and Emotional Well Being Framework* prepared by the Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group (National ATSI Mental Health Working Group) (2004) is the current national guide for responding to the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The *Social and Emotional Well Being Framework* facilitates inter-sectoral collaboration to strengthen the efforts of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health in providing culturally appropriate, holistic responses to Aboriginal health issues (National ATSI Mental Health Working Group, 2004). In particular, the *Social and Emotional Well Being Framework* lists education as a government sector capable of making a positive contribution to improved mental health outcomes among Aboriginal people (National ATSI Mental Health Working Group, 2004). The *Social and Emotional Well Being Framework* promotes community and inter-sectoral partnerships to ameliorate the mental health experiences of Aboriginal people.

2.2.2 Current status of Aboriginal education in Australia

As with measures of health outcomes, Aboriginal Australians rate poorly in educational outcomes and are underrepresented in school enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion (MCEETYA, 2008, p.

15). Low levels of education completion contribute to delayed or non-existent workforce participation that limit opportunities for 'success' and perpetuate intergenerational poverty in Aboriginal communities. The creation of welcoming, supportive education settings that encourage school attendance and retention has the potential to provide unlimited benefits to Aboriginal students, their families and their communities.

Over the last 30 years Aboriginal participation in formal schooling has increased in all education sectors of pre-primary, primary, secondary (junior and senior), vocation training and tertiary studies (Bell et al., 2007). Despite these successes, Aboriginal participation remains well below that of non-Aboriginal participation rates (Bell et al., 2007). In Western Australia, the WAACHS reported that in 2002, 87 percent of Aboriginal children participate in formal education compared with 98 percent of non-Aboriginal children (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 49). This drops significantly for Aboriginal students in Years 10-12 to 24 percent compared with 78 percent among non-Aboriginal young people in the same age group (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 51).

Low education achievement, poor attendance and completion rates among Aboriginal students should be given national and state priority. De Plevitz (2007a) identifies three contributors to low attendance rates among Aboriginal students, which are overlooked by education policy makers:

- *Criminal justice and unemployment* − Aboriginal students are up to 20 times more likely to have a parent who is incarcerated and three times more likely to come from a welfare dependant home compared to non-Aboriginal students. De

Plevitz (2007a) suggests there is little accommodation in policy to respond to social challenges such as incarceration and unemployment that Aboriginal students are overexposed to.

▪ *Cultural obligations* – Aboriginal cultural obligations require attendance at funeral services for family *and* some community members (de Plevitz, 2007a). Given the low life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal children are more likely to need time away from school compared to non-Aboriginal children. De Plevitz (2007a) suggests that allowances need to be made in education policy (as is the case in other sectors) to support Aboriginal students in fulfilling their cultural obligations.

▪ *Student health* – Aboriginal students are over represented in childhood illnesses that lead to unusually high absentee levels. The WAACHS (Zubrick et al., 2004) reported that approximately 18 percent of Aboriginal children experienced recurring ear infections and problems that would further frustrate learning experiences.

The above factors are compounded when parents' educational experiences are of marginalisation and social isolation. Parents are more likely to be unwilling and/or unable to offer support for their child's academic endeavours (de Plevitz, 2007a). As such, high absenteeism and social disconnection at school becomes an intergenerational phenomenon.

National and state Aboriginal education policy

Education policies reflect the culture of the society that created them. Since Western education institutions were established in this country, Aboriginal people have contended with a system that does not acknowledge the validity of their culture or

their educational traditions. The impact of past assimilation policies on Aboriginal families and children are mentioned in other areas of this literature review. Policy and curriculum were developed under the assumption that Aboriginal people living in urban locations were no longer bound by 'traditional' culture and therefore had the 'same' aspirations as non-Aboriginal Australians (de Plevitz, 2007a, p. 60). This type of assumption or failure to recognise the cultural diversity among Aboriginal people is a typical example of 'difference blindness' (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). Behrendt (1994) asserts that like herself, many of her people aspire to academic success that includes a strong cultural identity and connection. In his work in the United States, Kincheloe (1999) defines treating students of colour the same as students not of colour despite the differences in their cultural histories as 'colour blindness' and therefore is a form of racism.

Volume three of the WAACHS focuses on *Improving the Educational Experiences of Aboriginal Children and Young People* (Zubrick et al., 2006b) and recommended several actions to improve readiness to learn at school including: engage carers and communities; improve educational outcomes of Aboriginal children; improve culturally inclusive schooling; and changes to programs and funding arrangements. Of the 15 recommended actions made by the WAACHS to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students, three were considered to be relevant to this study. Actions 1, 3 and 7 call for system-wide response in addressing the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students through: evidence based practices in schools; promote the engagement of parents and carers; and advocate for the elimination of racist policy and practice. These Actions are detailed below:

- "Action 1: Education systems should implement educational programs and curricula based on developmentally appropriate, evidence-based practices that support Aboriginal children in the early primary school years" (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 497).

- "Action 3: Education systems should set strategic directions to address the disengagement and alienation from schools of carers of Aboriginal children in order to improve their involvement in their child's educational progress and their capacity to support their child's schooling. Schools must reach out to carers and communities proactively to:

  o Establish a relationship of trust with the community based on shared values, shared decision-making and expectations

  o Address issues surrounding carers' own poor experiences at school

  o Demonstrate the value and positive culture of schools

  o Actively promote the benefits education can provide to children

  o Provide opportunities for carers to obtain positive educational experiences

  o Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal people and culture

  o Eliminate racism in schools" (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 498).

- "Action 7: Practical steps that would represent meaningful progress in improving culturally inclusive schooling require:

  o Further development and implementation of a meaningful Aboriginal studies curriculum to increase the knowledge of all Australians about Aboriginal culture and history

  o Setting the educational agenda for the development of a tolerant and inclusive society that is knowledgeable about, and respectful of, cultural difference

o Actively addressing racism in educational settings and institutions"
(Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 498).

Unfortunately no evidence was found of actions taken to address the WAACHS recommendations.

Summary of Aboriginal health and education

When compared to non-Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal children and young people currently experience unacceptably low levels of achievement and success in health and education. Action is required in policy, research, funding and practice to close the gap.

2.3 School bullying prevention and management

Bullying is when one or more individuals attempt to exert power over another; it is repeated, premeditated and intentionally nasty (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Lyznicki et al., 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Bullying can be direct, overt aggression such as teasing or hitting; or indirect, covert aggression such as rumour spreading and/or exclusion (Drake et al., 2004; Lyznicki et al., 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Bullying impacts academic achievement, social connectedness and has serious potential health consequences (Drake et al., 2004; Mishna, 2004). Since the pioneering research of Olweus more than 20 years ago, the phenomenon of school bullying has steadily gained increased global attention (Haws & Tennille, 2008). School bullying research has found that students who are bullied regularly are at higher risk of mental health problems (Craig, 1998; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela,

Marttunen, Rimpali, & Rantanen, 1999; Slee, 1995a, 1995b), suicide ideation (Rigby & Slee, 1999) and low self esteem (Rigby & Slee, 1991; Slee & Rigby, 1993). Given these experiences, it is no surprise that Australian students who are bullied report they dislike school and are less likely to attend school when compared to students who are not bullied (Forero, McLellan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1999; Rigby, 1997).

Students who bully other students

Stereotypically, students who bully regularly (every few weeks or more often) are typically described as individuals who: more often than not have limited problem solving skills; struggle more frequently with attention-deficit disorder; underperform academically; have a greater propensity to participate in risky health behaviours, such as drinking and smoking; generally have a higher tolerance of violence; are ignorant to their own level of aggression; and are inclined to externalise their problems as a coping method (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p.102-103).

Recent studies into youth aggression (Gini, 2006; Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003) suggest that aggressive behaviour may also be used to manipulate social hierarchy. Breaking from the above stereotype these students are highly social and, although not necessarily well liked, they tend to be popular among their peers (Gini, 2006; Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003). This second type of bully illustrates some of the 'payoffs' (i.e. popularity) afforded students who bully other students.

Students who are bullied

There are generally two types of students who are bullied; those who are passive and those who are aggressive (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). The first group comprises students who are bullied are generally described as individuals who: are perceived to be physically weak; lack social confidence leading to withdrawal; possess limited communication skills; often underachieve in sports and physical activities; are unattached to any particular group among their school peers; and tend to struggle to maintain average academic outcomes by the end of primary school (Carney & Merrell, 2001, p.368; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p.103-104).

Aggressive students are those who bully others and are bullied and are sometimes referred to as 'bully-victims' (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). These students are characterised as having "low self esteem, high neuroticism, and serious deficits in problem solving" (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p. 105). Because these students tend to antagonise bullies, inciting a physical altercation and then plead self defence for their behaviour, they tend to be unpopular with both their peers **and their teachers** (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Carney and Merrell (2001) claim that regardless of the 'type' of students who are bullied, most suffer from low self esteem.

Bystanders

The third group of students involved in a bullying incident are referred to as the bystanders. Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2004) define this group as those who repeatedly participate in the victimisation of another student. Bystanders can fuel or diminish a bullying incident. Bystanders appear in various forms such as: the aggressive bystander; the puppet-master bystander (an individual who orchestrates

the incident but does not execute the actions); the passive bystander; the avoidant bystander; the abdicating bystander; the sham bystander; and the altruistic bystander (Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 218). Whether directly or indirectly involved in a bullying incident, these students have a powerful influence among their peers. Salmivalli (1999, p. 455) suggests that bullying interventions in school would be both easier and more successful if non-aggressive students were supported in a stand against bullying through: "general awareness-raising, chance for self reflection and possibilities to rehearse behaviours different from previous ones".

The characteristic traits described above do not occur in isolation from the home environment of the student. In his review of the emotional and behavioural disorders among Australian students, Conway (2006) found a correlation between students with mental health problems and: socioeconomic status; level of employment in the home; divorce or separation of parents; blended or step families; family conflict; presence of mental illness; and alcohol or drug use that affect parenting. Bullying can create a cycle of social disconnectedness that once solidified in the education setting continues for life.

As illustrated, Figure 1 students who struggle to develop positive social connections at school can go on to experience emotional and social difficulties including: harmful drug and alcohol use; crime and violence; or mental illness leading to suicide.
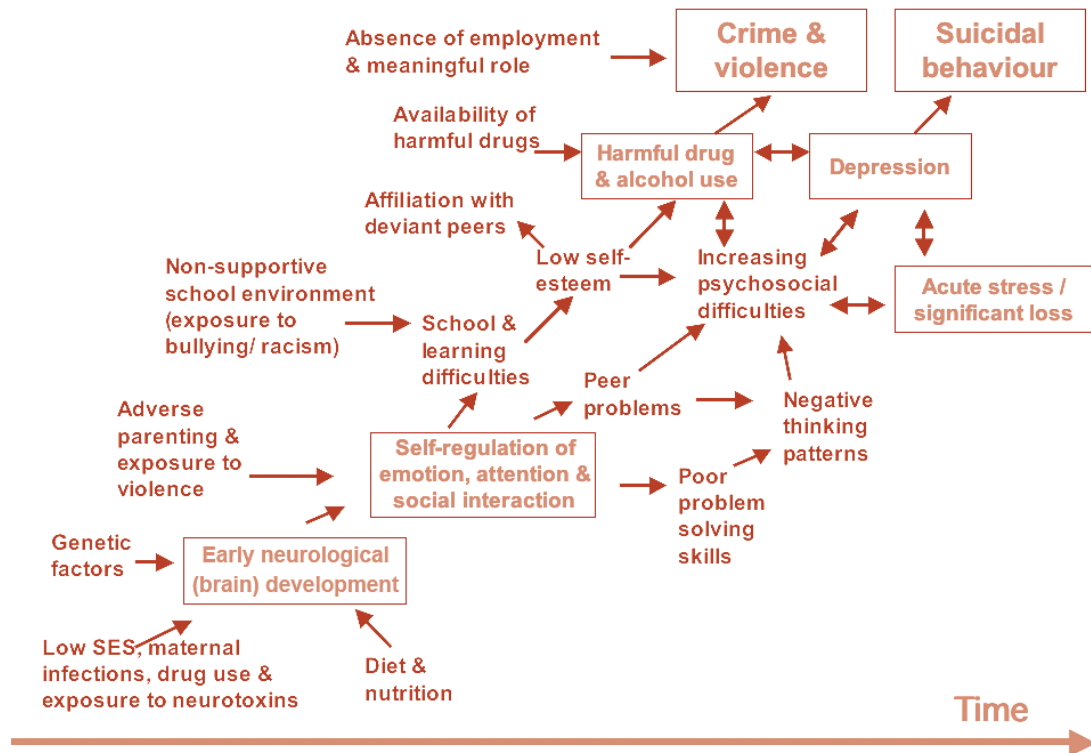
Figure 1 Cumulative risk pathways to suicide, violence and crime (Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2003 cited in Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005, p. 7)

Given the above undesirable outcomes for students involved in bullying, it is imperative for schools to consider and implement school bullying prevention interventions that respond to the strengths and needs of their students.

Bullying experiences of Aboriginal students

Little research has been undertaken investigating bullying among Australia's Aboriginal primary and secondary students. Kids Help Line (KHL) provides a small insight into incident rates of bullying among Aboriginal children and young people. KHL is a free 24-hour telephone and on-line counselling service available throughout Australia for children as young as five years through to young adults up to 25 years of age. KHL collects client data on one third of their counselling sessions and suggest approximately five percent of contact came from Aboriginal

young people, an estimated increase of 70 percent on the previous year (Boystown, 2007). In 2005, KHL reported calls from Aboriginal young people about bullying (8.5%) were 0.6 percent higher than calls from non-Aboriginal young people; 39 percent of these calls were related to repeated or continual incidents (KHL, 2005).

School bullying prevention programs specific to Aboriginal students

The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project was conducted by Edith Cowan University's Child Health Promotion Research Centre (CHPRC) to respond the dearth of intervention and evaluation literature and capture perspectives of Aboriginal students involved in bullying in Mid West Education District (MWED) largely covered by the Yamaji region. Data were collected from Aboriginal school age children and young people, Elders, parents and carers, and Aboriginal staff. *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* is funded by Healthway, Western Australia's Health Promotion Foundation. Preliminary findings from *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* (CHPRC, 2007) suggested:

- *Aboriginal students* use a range of unique terms when referring to 'bullying'; many students involved in bullying at school are burdened with issues associated with grief and loss and there is an increase in mobile phones (texting) in connection to bullying incidents (CHPRC, 2007).

- *Aboriginal Elders* are concerned about bullying among Aboriginal young people and some described bullying incidents (race-related) that have affected them throughout their lives (CHPRC, 2007).

- *Aboriginal parents and carers* felt unsure about how to respond to reports from their children about bullying and perceived some bullying behaviours to be 'normal' relationship dynamics. They felt that schools could do more to involve

them in the development of prevention and management strategies to best respond to bullying among their children (CHPRC, 2007).

▪ *Aboriginal staff* felt that non-Aboriginal staff did not understand issues behind bullying among Aboriginal students and believed school bullying prevention and management strategies were effective, but that community members were unaware of the programs. Aboriginal staff also felt that non-Aboriginal colleagues sometimes reduced their role to management of problem cases rather than building community relationships (CHPRC, 2007).

The WAACHS reported that almost a fifth (19%) of the Aboriginal young people from the Yamaji region were bullied at school (Zubrick et al., 2005). The prevalence of school bullying in the Yamaji region or MWED was however lower than regional or state figures. In 2008 the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project obtained permission from the WAACHS Steering Committee to analysis the WAACHS bullying data. The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* analysis found Aboriginal students in the MWED were bullied less than regional WA; for example, 19 percent of Aboriginal students in the MWED reported they had been bullied at least once, 10 percent below prevalence reports for regional WA (29%) (CHPRC, no date). Reports on 'recent' (3 months prior to the survey) bullying incidents at school were three percent less for the Yamaji region in a regional and state comparison (11%) (CHPRC, no date).

Repeated exposure to bullying and racism in the school environment is a major contributor to poor performance and retention of Aboriginal students (Howard, 2002). A formative study of the issues related to bullying behaviours of Aboriginal

students in remote Western Australian schools setting found the existence of difference blindness (Trevaskis, 2003). Trevaskis (2003) found a common theme of disinterest and disconnectedness between non-Aboriginal staff and their Aboriginal students, and reported that before efforts to adapt bullying prevention programs could be successfully attempted staff would first need to improve their understanding of Aboriginal behaviour and management. In other words, school staff did not recognise the different strengths and needs of their Aboriginal students when responding to bullying incidents (Trevaskis, 2003). Poorly developed guidelines and practices regarding bullying among Aboriginal students do little to support their strengths and needs, perpetuate student and family experiences of institutional racism, and can cause further alienation of Aboriginal students (Howard, 2002; Lawrence, 1994; Partington, Godfrey, & Richer, 2001).

Poor systemic and poor local school support that results in the alienation of Aboriginal students is not isolated to bullying prevention and management guidelines in rural areas. Partington et al. (2001) report on the racism experienced by urban Aboriginal families in a Western Australian school that left both the Aboriginal students and their families believing staff at the school deliberately disadvantaged them because they were Aboriginal (Partington et al., 2001). Partington et al. (2001) describe the racism at their case study school in terms of

> *… the absence of unequal treatment … [with] the defining characteristic [being] … the failure to acknowledge that Aboriginal students have … needs that cannot be met using the processes appropriate to the general population.*
> *(Partington et al., 2001, p. 3)*

In her exploration into the impact of schooling on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal students, Malin (2003) asserts that the positive effects of education can be negated by the presence of colonisation attitudes in contemporary classrooms. Malin (2003) suggests learning centres designed in response to Aboriginal culture appear to assist students to achieve academic success while almost eliminating anti-social behaviour. When systemic and local school policies and guidelines are consistent with Aboriginal cultural or worldviews student's performance is high; conversely, polices and guidelines inconsistent with Aboriginal cultural or world views are detrimental to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal students.

Summary of school bullying prevention and management

In summary, bullying impacts the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of students who bully (including bystanders) and are bullied, and in turn affects academic performance and social success. In Australia, there are currently no programs specifically designed to support Aboriginal students who bully other students or are bullied.

2.3.1 Australian policies on school bullying prevention and management

Given the potential long-term outcomes for students involved in bullying (see Figure 1) it is imperative that schools create safe learning environments. Inaction could perpetuate: low academic performance, low self esteem, harmful drug and alcohol use, psychosocial difficulties, depression, crime and violence, limited employment opportunities, and suicidal ideation (Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2003 cited in Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005, p. 7). Individually and

collectively these possibilities place a huge burden on Australia's public health system. However, schools cannot be held solely responsible for ensuring student safety. Education systems can provide support and guidance. This section reviews the national and state bullying policies for Australian schools.

National policy for school bullying prevention and management

The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is the guiding policy for creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments in Australian schools (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003). The NSSF was created to assist schools in developing locally relevant safety guidelines and strategies to address bullying, violence, harassment, and child abuse and neglect (DEST, 2003). The NSSF was developed under the direction of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in inter-sectoral collaboration with national, state and territory stake holders (Student Learning and Support Services Taskforce of the MCEETYA, 2003a). At the time of writing this study, the NSSF was under review to respond to the growing concern of cyber bullying. It is expected that the new version of the NSSF will not provide any further guidance to schools with Aboriginal students about developing locally relevant strategies for bullying prevention and management.

The NSSF is made up of three tiers. The first tier and central to the NSSF is a goal that "All Australian schools are safe and supportive environments" (DEST, 2003, p. 2). The NSSF asserts that the vision of safe and supportive school environments is an expectation that is both "the fundamental right of all students and fundamental to effective learning" (DEST, 2003, p. 4). The second tier of the NSSF is made up of

11 Guiding Principles for schools to use in the creation of learning environments that:

1. "**affirm the right** of all school community members to feel safe at school;

2. "**promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity**" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

3. "**implement policies, programs and processes** to nurture a safe and supportive school environment" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

4. "recognise that **quality leadership** is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive environment" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

5. "**develop and implement policies and programs** through processes that engage the **whole school community**" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

6. "ensure that **roles and responsibilities** of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are **explicit, clearly understood and disseminated**" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

7. "recognise the critical importance of **pre-service and ongoing professional development** in creating a save and supportive school environment" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

8. "have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal **curriculum the knowledge**, skills and dispositions needed **for positive relationships**;

9. "focus on **policies that are proactive** and oriented towards **prevention** and intervention" (DEST, 2003, p. 2);

10. "regularly **monitor and evaluate** their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements" (DEST, 2003, p. 2); and

11. "take action to protect children from all forms of **child abuse and neglect**" (DEST, 2003, p. 2).

The top tier of the NSSF is represented in the **six Key Elements of good practice** (DEST, 2003). These Key Elements direct schools in target areas for the development of safe and supportive schools through:

- *School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare* – the intended outcome of this element is that school leadership would express their commitment to a safe school environment with appropriate policies, programs and procedures in place (DEST, 2003, p. 9). MCEETYA (2003a, p. 6) recommended that implementation of their suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11. Suggested approaches for this principle include:

  o "Leadership is committed to a shared vision of a positive and inclusive school. Such commitment includes resourcing and endorsement of policies, programs and procedures" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6).

  o "Parent, student, teacher and school community commitment is established and ongoing" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6).

  o "The school develops programs and strategies to empower students to participate in a positive school culture, e.g. peer support systems" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6).

  o "Positive relations are established between schools, agencies and community groups with a related or complementary function" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6).

- *Establishment of agreed policies, programs and procedures* – this element was designed with the intention for the above policies, programs and procedures to be developed and reviewed through whole school community (students, staff and parents) consultation (DEST, 2003, p. 9). Implementation of the suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11 (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6). Suggested approaches for this principle include:

  o "Policies, programs and procedures are developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents, and include a statement of rights and responsibilities of members of the school community, including visitors." (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 6).

  o "Policies, programs and procedures are developed, disseminated and promoted across the whole school community in a way that is sensitive to parents, students and community members from diverse backgrounds" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 7).

  o "Risk assessment procedures, within and outside school, are in place. For example, risk minimisation through appropriate supervision, environmental design and targeted programs for students at risk (e.g. pro-social skills development)" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 7).

- *Provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents* – the intended outcome of this element is to assist in the continued growth of student relationship (including citizenship) skills through whole school education and training (DEST, 2003, p. 10). MCEETYA (2003a, p. 7) recommend that implementation of their suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally

relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. Suggested approaches include:

- o "School Staff – Appropriate pre-service and in-service training is conducted for all staff about bullying, violence, harassment and child protection issues" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 7).

- o "Students – Effective curricula, programs and pedagogy enable students to make use of empowering processes that increase safety and provide students with the means to solve their own problems and learn important lifelong relationship and citizenship skills" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 8).

- o "Parents – Parents have an increased knowledge of strategies, options and ideas…" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 9).

- *Managing incidents of abuse and victimisation* – the intention of this element was to assist school staff in the case management of bullying, harassment, violence and abuse (DEST, 2003, p. 11). Implementation of the suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 9). Suggested approaches for this principle include:

- o "Steps and outcomes for managing incidents are clearly documented in order to facilitate evaluation and justify possible modification in approaches" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10).

- o "The support of relevant specialists is enlisted, including support for staff dealing with child abuse cases" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10).

- *Providing support for students* - this element was intended to assist schools with the formation of an adequate support network in responding to bullying, harassment, violence and child abuse (DEST, 2003, p. 11). Implementation of

the suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 1, 3, 4, 10 (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10). A suggested approach for this Key Element is:

- o "Support is provided for students involved in bullying, harassment and violence and who have experienced abuse or neglect…" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10).

- *Working closely with parents* – the intention of this final element was to encourage school-parent relationships that provide opportunities for parents to reinforce school policy, programs and procedures at home. MCEETYA (2003a, p. 10) recommend that implementation of their suggested approaches (in conjunction with locally relevant initiatives) for this element would demonstrate guiding principles 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11. Suggested recommendations for this principle include:

  - o "Schools work closely with parents to prevent bullying, harassment and violence, informing and consulting with them on relevant issues, especially when their children become involved incidents either as perpetrators, victims or both" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10).

  - o "There is an emphasis on increasing students' confidence and more open child-parent relationships" (MCEETYA, 2003a, p. 10).

NSSF Implementation Manual

In later stages of this study, the Implementation Manual (IM) was used as the primary NSSF resource for data collection and analyses; with this in mind a review of the IM will be presented forthwith (DEST, 2003). The IM is predominantly designed to assist in the self-assessment of school policy, programs and procedures

against the NSSF, with a significant portion of the document devoted to auditing guidelines. For example, the six Key Elements of the NSSF are presented in the IM as a series of Key Questions, ready for auditing. The IM was deliberately structured to facilitate school implementation of the NSSF in conjunction with existing systemic or infrastructure support and avoids any prescriptive recommendations for implementation of the NSSF with the following caveat:

> *A key function of the manual is to encourage schools serving geographically, culturally and socio-economically diverse communities to develop policies and practices around bullying and child protection which are informed by deep knowledge of their communities and which respond explicitly to local contexts.*
>
> *(DEST, 2003, p. iii)*

In the context of this study, a document design such as the IM is limited in its effectiveness when working with Aboriginal students for several reasons. Firstly, throughout the IM there is no mention of how to best support Aboriginal students involved in bullying, given the priority of Aboriginal education and the likelihood of this group's over-exposure to contributing factors (such as problems from substance misuse and family violence as the result of inter-generational poverty) for anti-social behaviour. Secondly, the IM is presented on the premise that school staff engage with the whole school community. Building relationships of trust with students, parents and community members requires time (Malin, 2003). Efforts to initiate and develop school-community relationships are undermined if non-Aboriginal educators appear to be disinterested in the long term wellbeing or success of students (Trevaskis, 2003). For example, repeated short-term assignments result in high staff turnover where teachers and administrators move to another school or town before school community members develop relationships of trust. Time is also needed for

Aboriginal staff to build relationships with students and their families. Both efforts are necessary to enable 'deep' community knowledge by school leadership.

Thirdly, some of the wording in the IM is ambiguous or contradictory. For example, the recommendations described in the IM for 'Key Element 5' are not consistent in terms of providing support to students involved in bullying; in this recommendation the 'suggestion' shifts from supporting **all** students involved in a bullying incident to the **victims** of bullying. This contradiction could be misinterpreted in the development of school guidelines and result in the students who bully receiving inadequate support for behaviour change. Fourthly, Aboriginal families are not constrained by non-Aboriginal familial relationships. It is not uncommon for extended family members to fulfil the role of primary carer and there is no acknowledgement or allowance of this within the IM which refers to 'parents' only. Finally, adherence to the suggested recommendations potentially disadvantages Aboriginal communities. Both the NSSF and the IM do not adequately hold schools accountable to community engagement in the development of bullying prevention and management strategies that effect Aboriginal students. Engaging in a community consultation process is imperative in the development of locally relevant and culturally secure guidelines and practices that reflect Aboriginal values.

Not providing specific strategies for addressing safe school issues among Aboriginal students potentially makes it more difficult for "schools serving geographically, culturally and socio-economically diverse communities" to create safe learning environments as well as build relationships of trust with families and communities (DEST, 2003, p. iii). It is worth mentioning the NSSF is accompanied by 140 pages

of Appendices that contain case studies, amongst other examples, to assist in the development of safe schools (2003b). 'Case Study A' describes the experience of a school community that undertook the task of developing community respect for Aboriginal and other cultures (MCEETYA, 2003b, p. 112). The case study provides examples of ways Aboriginal culture was recognised and celebrated through: the provision of a parents' room; participation in the NAIDOC (National Aboriginal Islander Day of Celebration) celebrations; and providing learning experiences through including Dreaming and Creation stories, bush tucker and medicine activities (MCEETYA, 2003b, p. 112). The case study reports a reduction in bullying, harassment and suspensions and an increase in literacy and numeracy outcomes (MCEETYA, 2003b, p. 112). It is possible that this single example is not specific enough to help Australia's overwhelming majority of non-Aboriginal education staff to work effectively with Aboriginal students involved in school bullying (Santoro & Reid, 2006). The NSSF and IM fail to provide guidance to schools on how to create safe and supportive learning environments for Aboriginal students.

At a national level, the lack of focus on ways to support Aboriginal students in the NSSF (MCEETYA, 2003a) could be more effectively addressed if used with MCEETYA's (2000) model to facilitate Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective (Model) schools. The Model was designed in response to the *1999 Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century* with the intention of establishing key principles and standards that could ameliorate Aboriginal educational under-achievement (MCEETYA, 2000). Of particular relevance to this study is the Model's aim that school environments are such that Aboriginal students:

- feel valued and welcomed at their school of choice

- trust that their expectations for equitable educational achievement can be realised

- have access to Aboriginal staff members and/or community members who are actively engaged in the school

- experience learning opportunities through curriculum that enables them to celebrate their culture and language while developing their confidence and ability to be successful in a non-Aboriginal environment

- trust their family to feel valued and welcomed in the school community (MCEETYA, 2000)

By comparison, recommended Actions 1, 3 and 7 of Volume three of the WAACHS (Zubrick et al., 2006b) as presented earlier, are far more strategic and empowering for Aboriginal students, their families and their communities than existing national policies and guidelines.

Behaviour management policies for Western Australian schools

At a state level, the Western Australian policy for bullying prevention and management in government schools can be found within the Behaviour Management in Schools (BMIS) policy (Department of Education and Training, 2008). As with the NSSF, the BMIS (DET, 2008) is a general policy document that designates responsibility for the safe and supportive learning environments with the principal to develop and implement approaches that:

- "are preventative in nature" (DET, 2008, p. 4)

- "promote pro-social behaviour, student well-being and the development of self discipline" (DET, 2008, p. 4)

- "focus on early intervention" (DET, 2008, p. 4)

- "outline procedures for the management of ongoing or serious behaviour" (DET, 2008, p. 4)

The BMIS (DET, 2008) comprises seven guiding principles:

- "Student wellbeing and the prevention of inappropriate behaviour will be enhanced through a focus on <u>early intervention and prevention</u>" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "The use of appropriate <u>curriculum and learning programs</u> will encourage engagement by students" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "Student behaviour is best managed in ways that <u>promote restorative practices</u> and are educative in nature" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "All decisions relating to the management of student behaviour and the implementation of policy are made according to the principles of <u>procedural fairness</u>" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "Teachers' <u>behaviour management</u> process will acknowledge the duty to take reasonable care for the <u>safety</u> of staff and students" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "Student behaviour must not be viewed in isolation but as part of an <u>interaction</u> between the student, staff and the school community" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

- "School staff will demonstrate accountability for <u>evidence based</u> decision making, reporting and referral to appropriate support, and record keeping" (DET, 2008, p. 8).

Under the BMIS every Government school throughout Western Australia is required to develop a bullying prevention and management plan to facilitate a whole school community effort that supports students in the development and demonstration of responsible social behaviour. According to the Department of Education and Training (DET) website (no date), school support is available for this task in the document '*Preventing and Managing Bullying – Draft Template'* (Template) (DET, no date). Schools can use the step-by-step guide within the Template to create a bullying prevention and management plan in conjunction with the Behaviour Management Plan. It is recommended that the step-by-step structure of the Template is used in conjunction with the school's behaviour management plan to identify and develop locally relevant strategies that encourage planning, monitoring and review (Department Education and Training, no date).

Unfortunately, as with the NSSF, both the BMIS and Template fail to incorporate behaviour management or bullying prevention strategies that value cultural diversity. There appears to be no accountability for the principal and/or the school to implement bullying prevention and management strategies that respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students. That said, within the DET's policy on racism there is specific instructions for school principals to "integrate knowledge and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people… into teaching and learning programs [and] establish partnerships with community groups to foster an understanding of and respect for cultural diversity" (DET, 2003, p. 7).

As presented above, there are ample policy frameworks to ameliorate the disparity in Aboriginal educational and health outcomes. The NSSF and BMIS (in WA) are

both examples of policies that aim to facilitate safe and supportive learning environments in Australian schools. With the plethora of policies to which school principals must comply, it is possible that some policies are implemented to a greater degree than others. In line with Malin's (2003) recommendations that schools would benefit from an internet based directory of Aboriginal controlled schools, it is proposed that schools would equally benefit from an information website describing education policies and their application to the academic success of Aboriginal students, including safe and supportive learning environments. In support of this, Bell, Boughton and Bartlett (2007, p. 41) assert that rather than a lack of supportive education policies at national and state levels, poor educational outcomes among Aboriginal students are perpetuated by lack of compliance with 'policy' at the local school level.

Summary of Australian policies on school bullying prevention and management

Despite providing an extensive national policy for safer learning environments, the NSSF is limited because it offers little guidance in working with specific student groups, such as Aboriginal communities. Hence state and district polices and school guidelines that comply with the NSSF are unlikely to provide adequate support for the prevention and management of school bullying for Aboriginal students.

2.4 Whiteness

As part of investigating what 'could' support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students involved in school bullying, one must first consider what is <u>not</u> supporting Aboriginal students. When reflecting on the aims of this study, the literature overwhelmingly points to Whiteness as a key element hindering the development of

safe, supportive learning environments for Aboriginal students; the fact that across the nation, the number of Aboriginal students completing Year 12 is nearly 40 percent less than non-Aboriginal students affirms this (Behrendt & McCausland, 2008). Acknowledging Whiteness in Australia is crucial to setting the scene for identifying Whiteness in education.

The concept of Whiteness is dynamic and ever changing but is fundamentally based on structural oppression created by a dominant culture. Whiteness is more about power and social advantage than racism but results in denying people of colour access to social and economic benefits (Haviland, 2008). Despite this, over the past 400 years European society has categorised various ethnic groups as 'non White', including Irish, Italians and Jewish, in order to subjugate them (Kincheloe, 1999). MacIntosh's (no date) landmark writing on *'Invisible Knapsack of White Privilege'* illustrates the advantages that are automatically afforded to people not of colour in Western society. Haviland (2008) and Wise (2008b) suggest that when the concept of Whiteness is 'unveiled' to its beneficiaries it is often promptly rejected and therefore permitted to remain powerful, invisible and unchallenged (Haviland, 2008; Wise, 2008b).

2.4.1 Whiteness in Australia

Australian history since colonisation is replete with easily identifiable examples of Whiteness. It was Whiteness that claimed this continent was open for settlement by virtue of 'Terra Nullius', a land inhabited and owned by no one (Behrendt, 2003). It was Whiteness that introduced a new social structure which promptly devalued Aboriginal culture and dismissed Aboriginal knowledge about this continent. It was

Whiteness that excluded Aboriginal Australians from Commonwealth responsibility in the Federal Constitution of 1901 and thus established a pattern for policy marginalisation (Anderson, 2007). It was Whiteness that created and implemented government policy for the 'betterment' of fairer skinned Aboriginal children by removing them from their families (ReconciliAction, 2007). It was Whiteness that created an exemption program, which insisted fairer skinned Aboriginal people had to continually qualify for the privileges of their superior non-Aboriginal potential by demonstrating "exemplary behaviour in European terms and to cease all contact with 'non-exempt' filial relatives" (Hollinsworth, 1998, p. 142). It is Whiteness that ignored the recommendation of a formal government apology for the pain and suffering caused by removal policies; in February, 2008 healing and reconciliation were celebrated as Prime Minister Rudd offered the *Apology* (Australian Parliament, 2008).

Today, it is Whiteness that permits negative stereotyping of Aboriginal Australians in news media as: negligent parents; social delinquents; unruly juveniles who have no boundaries; and a people who possess little educational aptitude or career ambition (Coffin, 2007; Dyer, 2005; Pyett et al., 2008). It is Whiteness that omits acknowledgement in education curriculum and structure of history, culture and law in this country prior to 1788. It is Whiteness that allowed the sensationalised media coverage of the *Little Children are Sacred* report (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007) to create a ground swell of support by many Australians for police and military intervention. It is Whiteness that permitted the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act in order to carry out 'special measures', such as "amend[ing] the

Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 so that the Commonwealth could take control of communities, through compulsory acquisition of town leases for five years" (Hinkson, 2007, p. 3-4) as part of the *NT Intervention* in 2007. It is Whiteness that continues to permit such a breach of Aboriginal human rights three years after the commencement of the Intervention.

2.4.2 Whiteness in Australian education

> *Our current education system ... rewards the student who can provide immediate and precise answers in the dialect of the educator. The student who looks the teacher in the eye is believed to be honest, forthright and implicitly trustworthy.*
> *(de Plevitz, 2007a, p. 62)*

Education systems

Aboriginal students are disadvantaged by the current education structure because advancement through a non-Aboriginal system is determined by an understanding or knowledge of non-Aboriginal values, cues and social morés (Haviland, 2008). De Plevitz (2007a, p. 60) asserts that the very structure of a competitive, hierarchical model of contemporary education systems is in opposition to the cultural structure of Aboriginal home and family life. Thus, Aboriginal students who are not able to successfully adapt to a non-Aboriginal education setting struggle to meet achievement benchmarks.

Educational settings are heavily influenced by the social context within which they occur and typically mirror the values and aspirations of the greater society through policy, administration and curriculum (Bell et al., 2007). Consequently, educational settings influence the way students "behave, value, interact, think, believe, speak and read and write" about their social constructs (Haviland, 2008, p. 44). Educational

settings that transmit negative social ideology and discourse regarding Aboriginal peoples and culture are detrimental to the mental and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal students (Malin, 2003). The practice of excluding Aboriginal culture from educational policy and Aboriginal history from curriculum was equivalent to denying Aboriginal peoples existed and induced feelings of self and cultural loathing (Malin, 2003).

The failure of Aboriginal students to successfully replicate foreign values and beliefs was interpreted by the dominant society to be the result of intellectual weakness. Additionally, over a period of time many Aboriginal people accepted a false reality, created by an oppressive system, that poor education outcomes among Aboriginal students were the result of a racial inaptitude toward academic performance (Bell et al., 2007). To participate in the education system of the dominant society, Aboriginal students were expected to set aside their core values and understandings (de Plevitz, 2007a). Bell et al (2007) propose that a lack of commitment to participate in non-Aboriginal educational settings may be an expression of resistance to educational assimilation.

Despite these challenges, the Cherbourg State School in regional Queensland demonstrated educational success as a 'new' Aboriginal reality. Chris Sarra, the school's first Aboriginal principal, instilled in his students that academic success **does not mean students swapping** Aboriginal culture for non-Aboriginal culture (Maza, 2003). Upon arrival, Sarra introduced the 'Strong and Smart' motto, challenging Aboriginal students to be Strong in their heart and Smart in their head. Aboriginal students were given daily opportunities to celebrate their culture as

descendants of Australia's first inhabitants and confidently prepare to compete against students from other schools (Maza, 2003). Being Strong in heart enables Cherbourg's students to overcome feelings of worthlessness associated with intergenerational expectations of low achievement in a White dominated society. Sarra's determination for a whole school approach to Aboriginal pride resulted in a 94 percent improvement in school attendance over an 18 month period (Hones, 2005, p. 10).

Staff attitudes

Partington et al.'s (2001) work in urban Western Australian primary schools, demonstrates Whiteness in the attitudes of school staff to 'equalise' the educational experiences of Aboriginal students. In their case study school, Partington et al. (2001) found that despite claims that the school promoted 'inclusivity' and 'tolerance', the principal alienated herself from her Aboriginal students and their families in various ways. Despite exhibiting a sound understanding of Aboriginal culture and family structures in conversation, the principal was quick to state that the school treated all their students the same way (Partington et al., 2001, p. 4). The principal failed to see or acknowledge differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and felt the school's behaviour management programs responded equally to student needs (Partington et al., 2001, p. 4).

Notwithstanding the principal's expression of valuing the work of the school's Aboriginal Islander Education Officer (AIEO), following an 'incident' with a parent she insisted that all parent communication be directly with her and only on school grounds (Partington et al., 2001, p. 5). This decision resulted in two things; firstly, it

disempowered the AIEO and undermined his/her ability to act on behalf of the Aboriginal students (Partington et al., 2001, p. 4). Secondly, the decision ostracised parents who were potentially more receptive to home visits than meetings in the principal's office (Partington et al., 2001, p. 4). This example is not isolated, Malin (2003) and de Plevitz (2007a) also identified negative staff attitudes about Aboriginal worldviews as damaging to student and family relationships.

According to studies conducted in the United States, perceptions by African American students and their families of teacher fairness toward students were related to educational outcomes (Mattison & Aber, 2007). This supports Malin's (2003) work among urban Aboriginal students that student access to social and emotional resources such as understanding and supportive staff improved the overall experiences of Aboriginal students and therefore created a mentally healthy environment conducive to educational achievement. It is therefore no surprise that, given the low performance levels of many Aboriginal students, they and their families expect or are accustomed to feeling disadvantaged in educational settings because they are Aboriginal (Bell et al., 2007).

Parent indifference towards their child's educational participation was identified as a mediator to high absenteeism among Aboriginal students (Bell et al., 2007; Partington et al., 2001). Bell et al (2007) suggest that apathy from Aboriginal parents regarding their child's educational participation and completion may be due to limited opportunities, in some areas, for employment outside of the Government's

Community Development and Employment Program[1], offering little, if any, incentive for achievement at school. It is also possible that many Aboriginal parents carry residual emotions as the result of their own negative experiences in the education system, particularly those who were taken from their families and sent to boarding schools or missions far from home (Bell et al., 2007). Interestingly, racism was not identified as a primary reason for parent apathy, because it was so common place (Bell et al., 2007). This is a poignant demonstration of the pervasiveness, power and invisibility of Whiteness, where members of the disadvantaged group become 'numb' to sensing the strategies used to oppress them.

De Plevitz (2007a, p. 67) calls for transparent goals with real accountabilities rather that the rhetoric of culturally inclusive and supportive learning environments that to date have done little to ameliorate the poor educational experiences of Aboriginal students. Education is the platform whereby cultural ideals, values and priorities are transmitted and taught as 'normal'. As such, Western education is steeped in Whiteness so that despite good intentions, educators become unconscious assassins of Aboriginal possibility. De Plevitz (2007a, p. 67) claims that educators are not required to make conscious decisions as to whether or not they wish to oppress Aboriginal students. Rather "the [educator] only has to conform to the operating norms of the organisation and the institution will do the discriminating for him [or her]" (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969 cited in de Plevitz, 2007a, p. 67).

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[1] The Community Development and Employment Program is a transitionary welfare program whereby Aboriginal people are given opportunities to develop skills while receiving their unemployment benefit.

Summary of Whiteness

Education systems provide a poignant example of how, since colonisation, Western culture has aimed to dominate and subdue, and sometimes eradicate, Aboriginal culture. In this way Whiteness is invisible because the 'unearned privileges'(McIntosh, no date) of prosperity, health and safety it offers to non-Aboriginal Australians seem 'normal'. Equally, the poor education and health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people are considered to be normal. Whiteness perpetuates the disadvantages in health and education outcomes experienced by Aboriginal Australians.

2.5 Cultural security as a means of developing school guidelines and practices for working with Aboriginal students

According to Houston (2001, cited in Wilkes, Houston, & Mooney, 2002, p. 13) cultural security is a process whereby Aboriginal values, expectations and aspirations are maintained through cultural protocol and brokerage. Furthermore, cultural security "is a recognition, appreciation and response to the impact of cultural diversity on the utilisation and provision of effective … care … and … systems administration" (Houston, 2001 cited in Wilkes et al., 2002, p. 13). When schools fail to have culturally secure guidelines and practices in place they risk both alienating the student and perpetuating perceptions of racist government institutions (Howard, 2002; Lawrence, 1994).

Acknowledging that Aboriginal people have unique cultural rights, values and expectations (Western Australian Health Department, no date) could be a basis to redress the impact of past health and education policies. In the field of health

research guidelines within the *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* were established to assist researchers in respecting and honouring the values and expectations of the Aboriginal communities within which they work (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). These values are: **Reciprocity, Respect, Equality, Survival and Protection, Responsibility,** and **Spirit and Integrity**. A similar set of guidelines were not found for research conducted in the education sector.

Dunbar and Scrimgeour (2007, p. 136) postulate that relevant frameworks already exist within formal Aboriginal education practices that could facilitate culturally secure practices in a non-Aboriginal setting. Pre-colonial education among Aboriginal Australians was conducted through the sharing of songs and stories with the aim of preserving life and culture (Brooks, 2007). Post colonial education ostracised Aboriginal Australians from their land and culture and reinforced foreign societal structures introduced by colonisation whereby Aboriginal children "were taught to believe in their inherent inferiority" (Brooks, 2007, p. 137). Bell et al. (2007, p. 49) assert that opportunities resulting in systemic and site leadership would ensure continuation of cultural transfer that was both supported and led by the community. The identification and implementation of such frameworks would require education policy makers and practitioners, to undertake cultural security training at a system level.

2.5.1 Application of cultural security to school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices

According to Barboza et al. (2009) school **bullying is more likely to result from environmental deficits** rather than race or culture. They recommend that improving the atmosphere of the school could ameliorate bullying incidents. For Aboriginal students, this would mean that 'generic solutions' and school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices were culturally secure (Department of Health - Government of Western Australia, no date; Durie, 2004; Wilkes et al., 2002).

Cultural security in Aboriginal health as described in Coffin's (2007, p. 22) model has five principles that build upon and strengthen each other.   Coffin (2007) asserts that only when **cultural awareness** and **cultural safety** are achieved can **cultural security** be offered. Coffin's (2007, p. 22) model is dynamic, such that **community brokerage** and **protocol** are the principles that actually facilitate the achievement and/or maintenance of cultural security.

Cultural Security

An application of Coffin's (2007) cultural security model was developed for bullying prevention and management in an education setting (Figure 2). Based on Coffin's (2007) model, for school bullying prevention and management strategies to be culturally secure they must be developed in harmony with Aboriginal culture and customs but should be distinct from culturally safe practices, because they are **formalised in school guidelines and practices**. An example of culturally secure

bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices would include school principals committing to regular **consultation** with Aboriginal Islander Education Officers (AIEO), Aboriginal parents/carers and Elders to form bullying prevention and management policy that ensures culturally relevant practice (Mooney, 2008).

Culturally secure guidelines would state that Aboriginal students involved in bullying incidents would be given an opportunity to choose to have an AIEO (or another Aboriginal staff member) **included in the management process**. Furthermore, because culturally secure guidelines were formalised, **all** staff would be informed of these bully prevention and management procedures and regularly participate in **cultural awareness programs** to increase their understanding of the need for this policy and their commitment to implementing it. Importantly, the school **principal would ensure the guidelines are adhered to**.

Cultural Safety

For school bullying prevention and management strategies to be culturally safe they must be developed in line with Aboriginal culture and customs (Coffin, 2007; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007). An example of culturally safe bullying prevention and management guidelines would be when the school principal enlists Aboriginal staff such as AIEOs to **build and strengthen school-community relationships**. The school principal would be aware that school-community relationships are strengthened through the **celebration of local Aboriginal culture** such as NAIDOC (National Aboriginal Islander Day of Celebration) week and would invite Aboriginal staff to lead learning about local Aboriginal culture and customs. Furthermore, the school principal would also enlist Aboriginal staff to

assist in addressing bullying prevention and management among Aboriginal students. Cultural safety includes all aspects of cultural awareness.

Cultural Awareness

Guidelines and practices within cultural awareness are developed **with little or no regard of Aboriginal culture and customs** (Coffin, 2007). In the matter of bullying prevention and management, the school principal's knowledge of the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures would have little to no impact on school practice (Coffin, 2007; DET, 2003). For example, despite acknowledging the importance of having Aboriginal staff such as AIEOs on site, the principal underutilises these roles in bullying management and prevention. Instead of having the autonomy to develop relationships of trust with students and their families (that could assist with bullying prevention and management among Aboriginal students) AIEOs may be assigned to monitor Aboriginal students with behavioural problems.

Protocols

Failure to engage in local brokerage and protocols limits the possibility of achieving and maintaining cultural security (Coffin, 2007). Local Aboriginal Elders and community members who have knowledge of local Aboriginal culture and customs become stakeholders in developing school bullying prevention and management policy and programs (Coffin, 2007). These community members guide the protocols that are established for the school strategy.

Brokerage

Understanding of local Aboriginal culture and customs is applied to bullying prevention and management and strengthened with assistance from local Aboriginal Elders and AIEOs who are considered invaluable resources in family and community communication, consultation and negotiation (Coffin, 2007). These local Aboriginal people are the brokers in the development of school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices; they may also be involved in the management of bullying incidents involving Aboriginal students and provide culturally secure brokerage.

Summary of Application of cultural security to school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices

The literature indicates that Aboriginal students, families and communities often feel disconnected from their culture and values when interacting with Western frameworks such as the education and health systems. Community engagement and consultation is essential to the process of achieving cultural security and is missing in both education curriculum and health programs. The application of a cultural security model (Figure 2) was considered to be a first in many steps to supporting the mental health and wellbeing and academic success of Aboriginal students.

Protocols

Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs is informed by local Aboriginal Elders and community members who become stakeholders in developing school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practice (Coffin, 2007).

Brokerage

Understanding of local Aboriginal culture and customs is applied to bullying prevention and management and strengthened by utilising local Aboriginal Elders and AIEOs who are considered invaluable resources in family and community communication, consultation, and negotiation (Coffin, 2007).

Cultural Security

Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs are <u>formalised</u> in school guidelines and practice for managing and reducing bullying among Aboriginal students (Coffin, 2007).

Eg. School principals commit to regular consultation with AIEOs, Aboriginal parents/carers and Elders to form bullying prevention and management policy that ensures culturally relevant practice occurs.

Protocols

Brokerage

Cultural Safety

Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs <u>informally influences</u> school guidelines and practice for managing and reducing bullying among Aboriginal students (Coffin, 2007).

Eg. School principals enlist Aboriginal staff such as AIEOs to build and strengthen school – community relationships by learning and celebrating Aboriginal culture and to assist in addressing bullying prevention and management with Aboriginal students and their families.

Cultural Awareness

Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs are general with <u>little or no application</u> to school guidelines or practice for managing and reducing bullying among Aboriginal students (Coffin, 2007).

Eg. The school principal acknowledges Aboriginal culture is diverse and different to their own but fails to enlist Aboriginal staff such as Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer/s (AIEOs) to assist with bullying prevention and management among Aboriginal students.

Figure 2 Coffin's (2007) Cultural Security model, applied to bullying prevention and management in an education setting

2.6 Conclusion

With an average life expectancy of 17 years less than non-Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal Australians are over represented in chronic disease and illness, injury, suicide and poor mental health. There are a disproportionate number of Aboriginal students who participate in and complete secondary schooling. These rates suggest that Aboriginal students do not feel engaged or connected to their school or the education system. Priority needs to be given to the development of education policies that support the cultural values of Aboriginal students, their families and their communities. School bullying threatens the educational achievement and the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of all students involved. It is imperative that policies are in place to support schools in implementing appropriate responses to manage and prevent bullying among their students.

Numerous policies were presented in this literature review that directly and indirectly impact Aboriginal people. The combined efforts of these policies have done little to improve Aboriginal health and educational outcomes; new approaches must be undertaken in addressing Aboriginal issues. Cultural security is one such method that is considered to empower Aboriginal people by incorporating their rights, values and aspirations in the achievement of physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

The literature review established the role and impact of health and education policies on Aboriginal Australians. National policies, inform State policies which in turn guide District or Regional policies and guidelines. This study aimed to learn what bullying prevention and management strategies the Western Australian, Mid West Education District (MWED) primary school principals report are in place in their schools, and to what extent they respond to the strengths and needs of their Aboriginal students. This study is based on the hypothesis that current school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices are inadequate in meeting the cultural strengths and needs of Aboriginal students.

This study was conducted in conjunction with the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project which aims to contextualise and reduce the bullying experiences of Yamaji students throughout the MWED. The focus of this study, and that of the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project, was the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in an education setting. As such it was important that the research agenda was positioned within a framework that valued Indigenous world views; without which it would be nearly impossible to hope for the development of future interventions that are culturally secure (Coffin, 2007; Resnicow, Braithwaite, Dilorio, & Glanz, 2002).

3.1 Social ecology

The environment can operate as a stressor, exerting detrimental effects on people's mood, performance, and physiology as the result of their exposure to uncontrollable demands such as noise, political upheaval, or interpersonal conflict.

(Stokols, 1996, p. 284)

Social ecology was considered an ideal framework in understanding the social, organisational, community and cultural factors influencing bullying among Aboriginal students throughout the MWED because it functions on the premise that individual and external variables are interrelated (McAdams III & Foster, 2002; Sallis & Owen, 2002; Stokols, 1992, 1996). Furthermore, within the framework of a social ecology perspective, external and internal contributors to health behaviour occur concurrently and have a direct and indirect influence on the expression of the behaviour (Sallis & Owen, 2002). With this in mind the social ecology framework is conducive to taking a multilevel approach (Sallis & Owen, 2002) to addressing school bullying among Yamaji students as was attempted in the parallel work of the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project with this Masters study. It was anticipated that an investigation into the external variables influencing bullying among Aboriginal students would assist in the production of a resource that was community relevant and could be systemically supported (Sallis & Owen, 2002; Stokols, 1996, p. 289).

Thus, social ecology works with several health promotion assumptions, firstly that the *social determinants* of health (Stokols, 1992) such as past government policies of dispossession and assimilation, impact on how Aboriginal people make decisions about their health. Social ecology also recognises the power of *perceived and real environmental conditions* (Stokols, 1992). In the context of this study it could be that education policies (e.g. bullying-related school guidelines) or curriculum

content and delivery are often inconsistent with Aboriginal worldviews. Social ecology harnesses *coordinated interdisciplinary approaches* to bring about change in health behaviour (Stokols, 1992). In a rural community this may include the involvement of school staff, parents, local health service officers, community Elders, and police. Finally, social ecology takes into account the *combination of the preceding three assumptions* (Stokols, 1992) in working towards improved Aboriginal health and education outcomes.

Using a social ecological model, this study asserts that National health and education policies must be developed in consultation with Aboriginal Australians. Failure to do so would likely perpetuate the poor health and education outcomes experienced by Aboriginal Australians. Consideration must be given to transferability of national policies in an Aboriginal context; without this, schools are limited in their ability to adequately respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students.

In the context of school bullying among Aboriginal students in a rural primary school setting the following organisational, community and individual variables were identified: national, state and district education policies; school policies; the whole school; school staff; the student (and his/her family and community). These variables are explored in the following description of Figure 3:

- *National, state, district education policies* are credited as an overarching influence regarding bullying prevention and management in an education setting. As the national policy for the creation of safe learning environments, the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) (DEST, 2003) has a waterfall

effect in the development of state and district policies. For example, gaps in the NSSF regarding bullying prevention and management directives specific to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students would support the assumption that at 'lower' level, state and district directives also fail to address this.

- The next level of influence is *school policies and practices* (Figure 3), developed within district policies, that steer 'local' guidelines and practice; determine staff participation in professional development; and set the foundation for school responses to bullying among students (McAdams III & Foster, 2002, p. 45).

- This study regarded the *school setting* (Figure 3), or the site where the bullying incident may take place, in the context of the Health Promoting School (HPS) domains (World Health Organisation, 1997) as framed by Cross et al (2004). This study considered the influence of: classroom management and curriculum; school ethos; school-home, community link; student services team; and physical environment (Booth & Samdal, 1997) as contributors to what happens in a bullying incident at school. The HPS domain of 'policy and practice' is not listed here due to its previous distinction as a separate variable.

- The variable of *staff* is nested within the 'school setting' as a distinct variable in recognition that inside the school's policies, staff responses to bullying among Aboriginal students is impacted by: their level of self awareness; their demographic factors; and their education training (McAdams III & Foster, 2002, p. 40). While Clark (2002, p. 21) designates the primary responsibility for early detection of students with problematic behaviour to teachers, this study focused

on school principals as 'local' participants because of their influence over their school's action (or inaction) for bullying prevention and management.

▪ The *bullying incident* is presented as being separate from the education system to illustrate that the student's experience occurs parallel with bullying prevention and management policies. This is not to say that bullying incidents are not influenced by guidelines and practices that aim to prevent and/or manage bullying within a school setting. Rather, the large and small arrows in between the bullying incident and the education system demonstrate the layered interactions that take place between the student (their family and community) and the staff and school. This is consistent with Stokols (1992, p. 8) explanation of "dynamic interactions between people and their environments" or "mutual influence" whereby individuals interpret and respond to their environment/setting while concurrently causing a systemic reaction to their choices and actions.

▪ The *student/s (and his/her family and community)* variable in is located within the bullying incident. McAdams III and Foster (2002, p. 39) postulate that students who perpetuate violence are influenced by their: history of violence; experience of substance use; level of self control; and demographics. The student is representative of both students who bully, students who are bullied and bystanders, as described previously in the literature review and these are referred to as *student/s*. Furthermore, the student/s is also depicted with graduated shading at the centre to represent his/her seamless connection to values, attitudes and behaviour of their family and community.

- *Peers* are placed within the 'incident' circle to acknowledge their potential contribution to a bullying incident. The literature clearly identifies the influence bystanders have in the outcome and continuation of a bullying incident (Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 218). A 'softer' grey border is used to separate peers from the student/s doing the bullying and the student/s being bullied; at the same time it acknowledges that although most students do not bully many are aware that bullying happens or is happening (Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 218).

- This study also acknowledges that education is dynamic, its importance and meaning is contextual to the society, culture and time in which it occurs (Bell et al., 2007, p. 37). Contemporary outcomes for Aboriginal social indicators are directly related to past health, education and social policies (Anderson & Thomson, 2002); for this reason the education structure and bullying incident are nested within a greater social, economic, cultural, health and environmental setting (Askell-Williams et al., 2007, p. 67).

- Figure 3 highlights the potential for collaboration with individuals and organisations in the social, economic, cultural, health and environmental sectors for the development of community wide responses to bullying among Aboriginal students (Stokols, 1996, p. 286). The relationship between these external sectors and education is not one way.

- Finally, this study presents a platform whereby holistic policy and practices for bullying prevention and management could ameliorate the poor mental health outcomes of Aboriginal people.
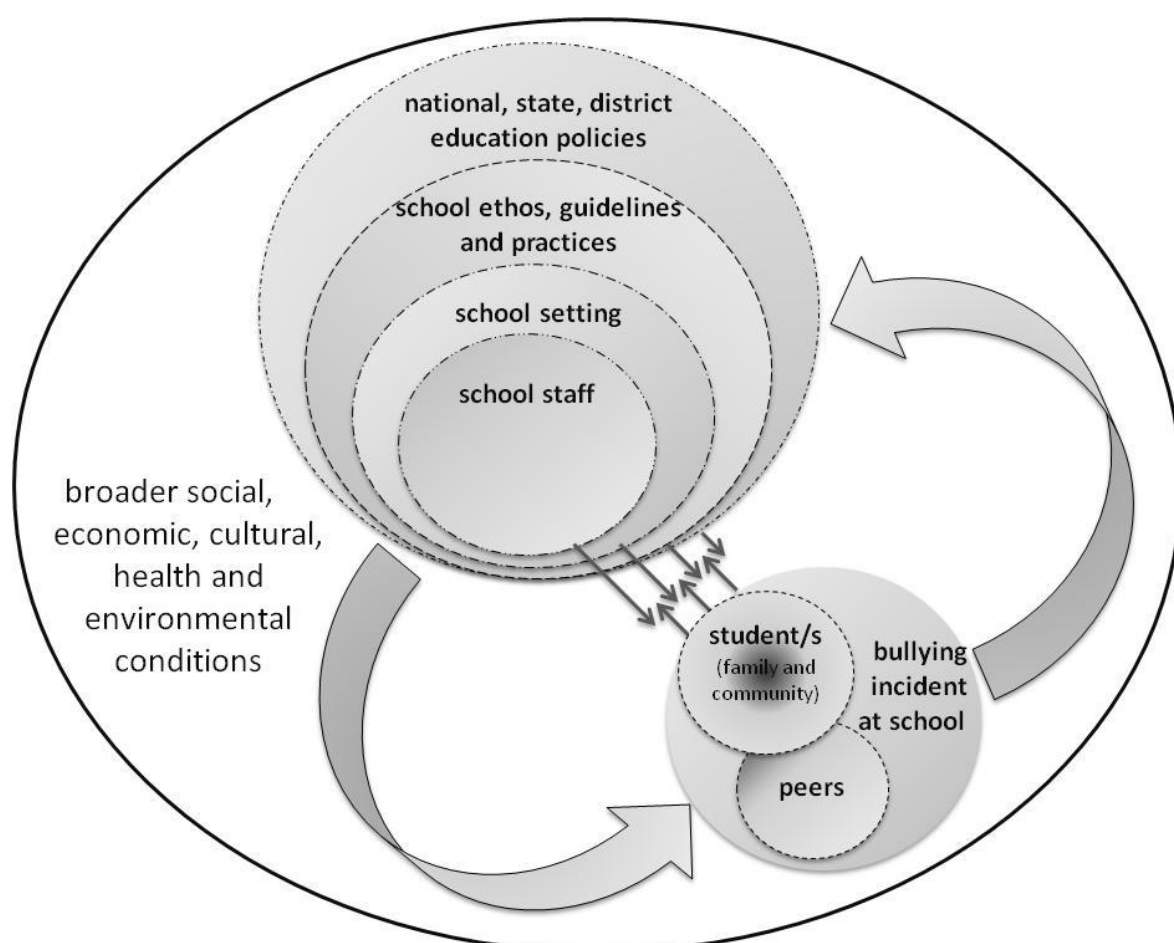
Figure 3 Application of the social ecological model to school bullying (Askell-Williams et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2007; S. L. Booth, Mayer, Sallis, Ritenbaugh, & et al, 2001; McAdams III & Foster, 2002; Stokols, 1992, 1996).

In light of the social ecological variables illustrated in Figure 3, this study proposed that *national, state, district education policies* and *school policy and practice* are the most efficacious levels to explore to what extent schools and systems are responding to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students involved in school bullying.

CHAPTER FOUR
Method

There are serious implications for the mental health and wellbeing and long term social experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students involved in school bullying. Institutional and systemic policies can mediate or moderate the bullying experiences of Aboriginal school students. National bullying prevention and management policies that fail to provide specific directives for Aboriginal students risk increasing the negative impact of bullying experiences as school staff attempt to comply with 'mainstream' recommendations that are not necessarily culturally secure.

This Masters research was conducted from 2007-2009 in the Mid West Education District (MWED) of Western Australia and was designed within the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project. The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project collected scoping data from Yamaji school age children and young people, parents and carers, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs), Aboriginal teachers and Elders throughout the MWED to contextualise the bullying experiences of Yamaji people. The development of culturally secure responses to bullying of or by Yamaji school age young people was a primary interest of both the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project and this Masters study.

4.1 Study design

The research question for this study was: *"What do primary school principals from the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying*

prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?"

The sub questions for this study were:

1. Are MWED primary school principals' reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices consistent with evidence based recommendations and compliant with the national policy for school bullying prevention and management?

2. Do the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices reported by MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security?

This mixed-method descriptive study used a cross-sectional study design to collect data from MWED primary school principals. Theoretical thematic analyses were used to learn *what* bullying prevention and management strategies are reportedly used in MWED primary schools and to understand *if* and *how* these strategies support the cultural strengths and needs of Aboriginal students.

4.2 Ethics

The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project was approved by the Edith Cowan University (ECU) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the WA Aboriginal Health Information and Ethics Committee (WAAHIEC). Additionally, applications were submitted to and approved by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Catholic Education Office (CEO) for approval to collect information from students, parents, AIEOs and Aboriginal teachers. An ethics application to conduct

research in the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) is not required prior to conducting research; as such, prospective participants were approached to be involved in this study using an ethics clearance obtained from ECU.

A separate application was made and approval received for this Masters research from the ECU HREC and the DET Ethics Committees prior to inviting schools within their respective sectors to participate in this study. Application to the CEO Ethics Committee for this Masters study was combined with the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* application.

Each instrument developed for this study was submitted along with the information letter and consent form to the ECU HREC for clearance prior to administration to the target sample.

Consent to participate

Potential participants were recruited for this study using an information letter (Appendix 1). Each potential participant was given an opportunity to accept or decline the invitation to be involved in this research (Appendix 1).

Consent to audio record

Data were collected in face-to-face or telephone meetings with participants. All participants were asked for their consent to have the interview audio recorded prior to the interview taking place (Appendix 1). The student researcher also took interview notes as a precautionary measure against mechanical failure. Interview

data were transcribed verbatim by either the researcher or a professional transcriptionist directly into an NVivo (QSR, 2006-2008) template (Appendix 2).

Data storage

In accordance with the ethical obligations to conduct this study the following storage procedures were adhered to:

- interview data were de-identified for confidentiality;

- all study management records, faxback or consent forms, participant data (including audio recordings) were stored in a locked cabinet in the research student's ECU office;

- all electronic documents related to this study were stored on the student researcher's access-only drive; and

- all electronic documents were backed up on an external drive stored in the locked cabinet.

  Identifiable information such as contact lists, consent forms, and interview transcripts were stored separately to ensure participant confidentiality.

4.3 Sample

To complement the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project, this Masters research aimed to learn what strategies MWED primary school principals reported they used to respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal primary school students involved in bullying. Where the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project collected 'community' data, this study collected data that could be used to create a systems view of school bullying in the MWED. Primary schools were chosen to capture which strategies are being used before bullying peaks among older, high-school aged, students

(Drake et al., 2004). Principals and deputy principals were selected as study participants because they are the gate keepers for school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices. Data were collected in both studies with the intention of developing a locally relevant and culturally secure bullying prevention and management resource for Yamaji communities.

The primary schools in the study are located within the Yamaji region and MWED of WA (Figure 4). The Yamaji region runs along the west coast from Leeman in the south to Exmouth in the north and Meekatharra in the east. The most populated towns in the district are Geraldton (20, 233 people with 11% Aboriginal residents) and Carnarvon (6,159 people with 20% Aboriginal residents). The Yamaji region and the MWED cover the same geographical areas except where the MWED extends in the northeast up to Newman. The MWED is one of 14 education districts in WA.

Figure 4 Education Districts for Western Australia

The sample pool was made up of 67 schools in the MWED that teach students from Year 1 - 7. Seven schools were excluded from participation because they were either: a special education centre; a 'school of the air' distance education school where classes are conducted by radio or video correspondence; or a high school or college with only high school age students. The principal or another senior administrative staff member from the 60 qualifying schools was invited to participate in this study to discuss the strategies their school uses to address bullying.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Instrument development

In accordance with the mixed method design of this study, a semi-structured instrument was developed for data collection from MWED principals. The instrument was prepared in an interview (Appendix 3) and paper survey (Appendix 4) format to allow flexible participation. The instrument aimed to collect information about:

- Demographic characteristics of study participants and their school (question 1 – 11; nominal responses);

- What bullying *management* guidelines and principles MWED primary school principals use at their school (questions 12.a – 12.n; ordinal responses);

- What bullying *prevention* guidelines and practices MWED primary school principals use at their school (questions 13.a – 13.y; ordinal responses);

- How do the bullying management and prevention guidelines and principles used by MWED primary school principals match up to National Policy (National Safe Schools Framework (DEST, 2003) and evidence based research

(Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management, (Cross et al., 2004); and

- What bullying prevention guidelines and practices do MWED primary school principals use to respond to the strengths and needs of their Aboriginal students who are bullied or bully others (questions 12.a – 13.y; ordinal responses and 12.m – 18; open ended responses)?

This study was driven by the desire to understand MWED principal perceptions of their school's bullying prevention and management strategies concerning Aboriginal students. The *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003) and the *Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management* (Guidelines) (Cross et al., 2004) were the overarching documents used to create the 'picture' for ideal strategies in school bullying prevention and management. These documents were matched to each other (Appendix 5) to identify the areas of strength and weaknesses in firstly, empowering schools, education staff, students, families and communities to work together in bullying prevention and management; and secondly, in guiding education staff to respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students who are bullied and who bully others. When matched, the Health Promotion Schools Domains of the Guidelines (Cross et al., 2004) can be used to demonstrate the Key Elements of the NSSF (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003). The match-up of these two documents (Appendix 5) was presented to an expert panel of school bullying prevention and management researchers for validation.

Quantitative questions

Nominal questions were used to collect demographic information about the participant and his/her school (questions 1 – 11). Ordinal responses were presented in a Likert scale for participants to indicate their frequency in using bullying management/prevention strategies and in rating the effectiveness of their school's bullying prevention and management strategies (questions 12 and 13).

Question 13 comprised 25 quantitative items adapted from the FSFF (Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research, 2003) questionnaire used in two previous bullying prevention research studies conducted by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre, formerly located at the WA Centre for Health Promotion Research. The questions aimed to determine if and/or how participants implemented bullying prevention and management strategies in their school.

Qualitative items

Qualitative items were included in three of the four sections of the instrument (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4). Question 12.n was an open ended question that asked participants what, if any, of the bullying management strategies that were discussed appeared to be more effective when working with Aboriginal students. After each quantitative question in 13.a – 13.y (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4), participants were asked two open-ended questions: **how** bullying prevention and management strategies were implemented in their school *and* **what** issues participants faced regarding **bullying involving their Aboriginal students**. Questions 14 – 18 (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4) used open-ended questions to capture in-depth

responses from participants regarding issues they faced concerning bullying involving their Aboriginal students.

Instrument validity

Experienced child health promotion, education, research methods and Aboriginal child health researchers from the CHPRC were invited to make comment on the validity of the instrument. An iterative process was followed to incorporate feedback in the development of this instrument. The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project has a Steering Committee made up of Yamaji people with experience in education, health and Yamaji community matters. To establish content validity, the Steering Committee members were also invited to comment on the instrument before it was used in data collection. No changes were recommended by the Steering Committee.

Pilot testing

Two metropolitan principals known to the research student agreed to participate in a pilot test of the interview. The first interview (Pilot A) was conducted face-to-face; the second interview (Pilot B) was a telephone interview. Participants were sent a thank you certificate and a Coles/Myer gift voucher valued at $30 and advised they would receive a summary of the project findings at the completion of this study (Appendix 6).

An 'interview pilot review sheet' (Appendix 7) was developed to collect pilot testing feedback regarding the interview process (Hawe, Degeling, & Hall, 1990). Due to time constraints, Pilot B was not able to provide any feedback on the interview

process; the review sheet (Appendix 7) however, was used with Pilot A. The majority of feedback related to bullying and the difficulty around speaking about managing incidents generally. Pilot A also commented on the multi-layered questioning style of the interview; i.e. *"Do you use this strategy at your school?"* followed by *"How would you rate the effectiveness of this strategy?"* and finally, *"How does your school implement this strategy?"* Pilot A suggested simplifying the interview by using <u>nominal questions only</u> (i.e. "Do you use this strategy at your school?") to determine what strategies were used. In keeping with the objectives of the instrument, minor changes were made using Pilot A's feedback.

4.4.2 Data collection

Interview timeline

The MWED primary school principal interview process was conducted over an 18 month period from July 2007 to February 2009 as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 MWED primary school principal interview timetable

Month	Task
2007	
July – August	Instrument development
August – September	Ethics approval
October – November	Recruitment
November – December	Data collection – principal interviews/surveys (n=27)
December	Interview transcript development
2008	
January – February	Interview transcription
February – March	Data collection – principal interviews/surveys (n=8)
June	Interview transcription
July	Data cleaning
April – August	Respondent validation of interview transcripts
August	Data coding
September – December	Data analysis

Recruitment

At the beginning of Term 4 (October), 2007 the 60 eligible MWED primary and district high schools were invited (Appendix 8) to participate in a telephone or face-to-face interview as part of this study of the *'Strategies that Address Bullying for Aboriginal Children in WA Rural Primary Schools'* project. Schools were asked to confirm their 'willingness to participate' and nominate either the principal or a senior administrative staff member using a faxback form included in the invitation letter (Appendix 8). If schools did not respond by the due date on the faxback form, agreement to participate was followed up by telephone and/or, when directed by reception staff, email.

To compensate principals somewhat for their time, participants were offered entry into a draw to win one of two Coles/Myer gift vouchers valued at $100 when they returned either a 'willingness to participate' form or a consent form. **All** returned forms, including those expressing a wish **not** to participate, were included in the draw. Similar to the instrument pilot group, participants who completed an interview or a survey were promised a summary of findings at the completion of this study (Appendix 6).

All eligible schools were assigned an identification code (0701-0763)[2] prior to recruitment. Faxback forms containing school names and codes were stored separately to the study management sheet.

Interview data collection

As outlined in Table 2, most of the principal interviews took place towards the end of Term 4 (November and December), 2007. The remaining data were collected in Term 1 (February and March), 2008. In the 2007 data collection all but one of the interviews was conducted by telephone. One face-to-face interview was conducted as a group interview with the Deputy Principal and two AIEOs at their school.

Duration of individual interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 90 minutes. The group interview was 90 minutes in duration. During the first few interviews it became apparent that the average interview time was approximately 45 minutes which was more than double what was stated on the original invitation (Appendix 8) and

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[2] Three schools that taught only high school students were incorrectly included in the recruitment process. When this error was discovered, the schools concerned were immediately removed from recruitment in the study.

thereafter participants were informed in the invitation that the interview would be 45 minutes duration. Participants previously recruited for a 20 minute interview were advised of the new average interview time and were given the option to: reschedule the phone call; conduct the interview with multiple appointments; or do as much as possible in an interview and complete the questions independently using the survey.

Survey data collection

Of the 35 participants, four chose to complete a survey rather than be interviewed. Where surveys were sent to participants by post, they were provided with a reply paid envelope. Surveys sent out by email were returned by email or fax. Follow up for late returns were conducted by telephone and email. One survey was returned in Term 4 (December), 2007; the remaining three surveys were returned in Term 1 (March), 2008.

Summary of findings for participants

Upon completion of data analyses a brief summary of findings (Appendix 9) was prepared and distributed to participants by post and email. The *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* Steering Committee was regularly updated on the progress of this study and was also sent a summary of the findings.

4.5 Data analyses

Quantitative data entry and cleaning

Quantitative data were entered into SPSS Inc. (2006) and cleaned by the research student. Transcripts were checked against interview notes and surveys to ensure data were entered correctly.

Quantitative data analyses

Quantitative data collected in this study were managed using SPSS Inc. (2006) software and were analysed to learn: participant demographics; participants' school's demographics; reports on the use of bullying management strategies used by their school; and participant ratings of the effectiveness of bullying prevention strategies used by their school. Descriptive data analyses were conducted using SPSS 15 Inc. (2006) to identify frequencies in responses; cross tabulations were also conducted for comparative frequencies among schools with **less than 50 per cent** Aboriginal students against schools with **more than 50 per cent** Aboriginal students.

Qualitative data entry and cleaning

Qualitative data analyses were transcript and note based. An NVivo 7 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2006-2008) transcript template (Appendix 2) was developed by the research student for interview and survey data entry. Participant responses were entered into a de-identified transcript template. Audio recording for three interviews (id: 0720, 0707, 0717) did not take place due to an undetected equipment malfunction. Data entry for these interviews was completed by the research student using her interview notes.

After transcription, interviews were cleaned by the research student. This involved listening to each interview while reading the transcript to make sure it was correct. Transcripts were also cleaned for any identifiable information and replaced with more generic wording. For example, in one school AIEOs are referred to as 'Mardu Education Workers' or MEWs, which is unique to a specific language group and

could lead to school identification. The identifiable wording was replaced with Aboriginal Education Worker/AEW. Similarly, if a participant named another school in their town the transcript was replaced with, "[another school in this town]".

Qualitative data analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting … themes within data", more specifically a 'theoretical' thematic analysis is one that is "driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Despite thematic analysis being regarded by some as a 'process' within broader qualitative research approaches, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) contest it is more a foundational method and hence qualifies for application as an approach rather than a process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Braun and Clarke (2006) promote a theoretical analysis as one of the more flexible qualitative methods. Given this was a mixed quantitative/qualitative study, a theoretical analysis was considered to be more suitable in meeting the objectives of this study than a more traditional qualitative methodology. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81) aptly describe theoretical analysis as a 'lite' approach for analyses as opposed to the 'full-fat' methodological techniques found within more traditional approaches such as grounded theory.

As illustrated in *Application of the social ecological model to school bullying* (Figure 3) a theoretical thematic approach was applied at the *national, state, district education policies* and at the *school policies and practices*. Data were collected

from MWED primary school principals regarding their school's guidelines and practices for bullying prevention and management, using an instrument developed from the NSSF (DEST, 2003) and the Guidelines (Cross et al., 2004). Interview data were coded and analysed to learn:

- If and how MWED principals' responses comply with national, state and district education policies and evidence based school bullying prevention and management recommendations.

- If MWED principal's reports on their school's bullying prevention and management strategies responded to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students (Hansen, 2006, p.63) as outlined by Coffin's (2007) cultural security model.

An a priori group of themes were generated by the semi-structured interview/survey (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4) items in questions 12 – 18. Interview data were coded for relevance to **bullying prevention and management programs, strategies and techniques.** Each time a participant cited programs, strategies or techniques in response to instrument questions it was highlighted with **bold** font. A coding list (Appendix 10) was created to isolate developing themes within each participant's school and across the MWED. Codes from participant responses were then collapsed into preliminary themes (Table 3) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify school guidelines and practices that meet the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students (sub-question 2).

Table 3 Preliminary qualitative data themes

Themes
If/how their school focussed on bullying prevention and management
If/how their school developed student social skills
If/how their school used non-teaching staff (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to support students
If/how their school provided Aboriginal cultural training for (non-Aboriginal) school staff
If/how their school rewarded positive student behaviour
If/how their school promoted student leadership
If/how their school acknowledged and/or managed social and health issues that negatively impact on Aboriginal education outcomes
If/how their school developed or maintained student and family connectedness (e.g. school-community communication) to MWED schools
If/how their school promoted cultural security among their Aboriginal students

Respondent validation

As transcripts were cleaned they underwent respondent validation. The aim of this procedure was to create a more interactive interview process and give participants an opportunity to make sure their experiences and opinions were correctly represented (Hansen, 2006, p. 56-57). Respondent validation involved a hard copy of each transcript being sent to participants asking them to use a faxback form (Appendix 9) or reply-paid envelope to confirm their satisfaction with interview representation. Participants were informed that the absence of returned faxback forms or transcript feedback by a specified date would be considered passive consent that they were satisfied with the representation of their interview and that no changes would be made.

Transcripts were sent to 34 of the 35 participants; no response was received to an email requesting the postal address of one participant's new school. Fifteen participants returned a 'respondent validation' form, two of which provided feedback for changes; one participant highlighted a typing error, the other participant

contextualised his response to question 12.m (*Do adults in the school community model positive social behaviour to students?*).

4.6 Analysing MWED primary school principals' reports on their school's bullying prevention and management strategies for cultural security

Coffin's (2007) cultural security model was reviewed and adapted from a health setting to an education setting with particular attention to bullying prevention and management. As outlined earlier in the Literature Review, Coffin (2007) describes the achievement and maintenance of cultural security as a gradual process that moves from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Safety and then Cultural Security.

Throughout the MWED primary school principal's interviews, participants were asked about what their school had in place at their school to respond to the strengths and needs of their Yamaji students involved in bullying. According to Coffin (2007) achieving and maintaining cultural security is a process whereby organisations such as schools interact with Aboriginal students, their families and their community in reference to their cultural strengths and needs.

- Coffin's (2007) *Cultural awareness* would be when school staff acknowledge Aboriginal culture and/or customs although this has **little bearing** on school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices.

- Coffin's (2007) *Cultural safety* would be when school staff knowledge of Aboriginal culture and/or customs has an **informal influence** on school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices.

- Coffin's (2007) *Cultural security* would be when knowledge of Aboriginal culture and/or customs **informs the development** of school bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices.

Movement through the above stages is mediated or moderated by local protocol and brokerage.

Responses from MWED primary school principals regarding their bullying prevention and management guidelines were measured using the *Application of Coffin's (2007) Cultural Security model to bullying prevention and management in an education setting* (Figure 2) to determine a proposed level of cultural security in MWED primary school principal's responses to bullying among Yamaji students as determined by the student researcher. This involved considering the level to which principal's responses involved Aboriginal staff, parents and carers, and community members in forming strategies or guidelines for their schools response to working with Aboriginal students who are bullied or bully others.

4.7 Research preparation

The student researcher was presented with and undertook many opportunities to increase her understanding of research practices, bullying prevention and management, mental health promotion, and Indigenous health and education outcomes.

Mid-way through this study the research student attended a week long course on *Qualitative Research: Design, Analysis and Representation* to further her understanding of qualitative research methods. From this experience the student

researcher embraced the concept that "if you start writing early in your research –
before you have all your data, for instance – you can begin cleaning up your thinking
sooner" (Becker, 2007, p. 17). In keeping with general post graduate student advice
and more particularly with knowledge gained through participation in the Qualitative
Research course, the research student commenced a research journal with the
expectation that it would serve three purposes:

- Provide a structured method to store seminar, conference, presentation notes;

- Facilitate tracking of project progress; and

- Create a platform for personal reflection on literature, research methods and
  data analysis.

In a seminar on Indigenous research methodologies, Kovach (2008) endorsed
journal keeping to create organic processes to find questions and allow emergent
themes to settle. Personal research journal writing aided the student to critique the
literature, articulate ideas, formulate possibilities of early themes, and create a space
for reflection.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of researcher preparation for this study was the
personal journey that was undertaken in recalling the student researcher's own
childhood experiences of bullying and racism while attending a Western Australian
primary school. The process of exploring systemic racism was both cathartic and
confronting. Cathartic in learning that personal experiences of racism were
facilitated by a social structure that was set up in such a way that compliance "to the
operating norms of the organisation and the institution will do the discriminating"
(Knowles & Prewitt cited in de Plevitz, 2007a, p. 67). The preparation process was

confronting in coming to terms with the fact that racism is a social construct to usurp domination of one group over another (Kincheloe, 1999; McIntosh; Wise, 2008a). What was equally challenging was the knowledge that despite colonisation and its consequential displacement in the student researcher's family history in New Zealand, migration to Australia as a child had provided her and her family with access to 'unearned privileges' that are not as easily accessible to Australia's Indigenous people.

The researcher's emotional attachment to her childhood memories and newly acquired knowledge compounded the already difficult task of shaping a literature review to demonstrate the Western Australian education systems weaknesses in supporting Aboriginal school children. Maintaining an objective position in this study was difficult at times and talking about issues of racism with non-coloured Australians sometimes presented feelings of discomfort for the student researcher. In response to the discomfort experienced in parts of the personal journey of this study the term 'racism' was replaced with the more comfortable term of 'Whiteness'. This effort to ease the research student's discomfort in discussing racism is consistent with Allen's (2007) sentiment that, "you can't talk about racism without doing one of two things: offending White people, and embarrassing Black people. That is, you can't do it… *if you're going to tell the truth*".

CHAPTER FIVE
Results

Earlier chapters have established the need for culturally secure bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices that respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students. It is unknown what bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices are in place in rural primary schools throughout Western Australia (WA) and how they comply with evidence-based recommendations and National and State policy.

This study was conducted alongside the *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* project to identify the strategies that schools in the Mid West Education District (MWED) of Western Australia (WA) have in place to support the strengths and needs of Yamaji students.

Throughout the MWED, Indigenous people are generally referred to as being Aboriginal or Yamaji. In order to correctly represent the data collected, Indigenous Australians will be referred to as Aboriginal or Yamaji for the remainder of this thesis.

5.1 Research question

The research question for this study was: *"What do primary school principals from the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?"*

5.2 Sub questions

The sub questions for this study were:

1. Are MWED primary school principals' reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices consistent with evidence based recommendations and complicit with the national policy for school bullying prevention and management?

2. Do the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices reported by MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security?

Data were collected in survey and interviews with MWED school principals and are presented in this chapter according to the sub-questions of this study.

5.3 Response rates

The MWED is made up of three education sectors. The Department of Education (DET) is the largest, followed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO), and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA). In total there are 67 schools in the MWED. The DET sector is made up of 30 primary schools (PS), 10 district high schools (DHS), six remote schools (RS), three Senior High Schools and two DET Schools of the Air. The non-government sectors in the MWED are represented with six CEO primary schools, two CEO high schools, five AISWA, primary schools or community schools (CS), and three AISWA remote schools. Sixty schools qualified for inclusion in this study.

Nineteen school principals declined the invitation to participate in this study. The most common reasons given can be grouped into three categories of heavy work

load, lack of familiarity with school guidelines and study not being relevant. Recruitment and data collection took place in term 4, 2007 and term 1, 2008. These terms are usually busy periods for school administration; some principals with teaching schedules were left with little time to participate in extra administrative activities such as this study. Unfamiliarity with their school's bullying management and prevention guidelines and practices was also a reason that principals who were new to their school gave for not participating. These principals felt they couldn't comment on the effectiveness of their new school's behaviour management strategies. Where schools had low Aboriginal student enrolment, some principals felt a study with a strong Aboriginal focus was not relevant to their school.

Initially 41 principals (61%) of the 60 qualifying schools agreed to be involved in this study, however six withdrew their consent to participate citing time constraints as their reason. Hence, the final response rate for principals from MWED primary schools was 58% (35). More than half (57%) of the participants were from DET primary schools (Table 4).

Table 4 Education sector and school type of MWED principals who participated in this study

School type n=35	DET	CEO	AISWA	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Primary schools	20 (57)	4 (11)	-	24 (69)
District high schools	5 (14)	-	-	5 (14)
Remote schools	3 (9)	-	2* (6)	5 (14)
Community schools	-	-	1 (3)	1 (3)

*one boarding school

All but five principals participated in this study by telephone interview. Telephone interviews varied in duration from 25 – 78 minutes (Table 5). Four participants chose to complete and return a survey version (Appendix 4) of the interview. One

participant chose to meet face-to-face for the interview and invited two Aboriginal

Islander Education Officers (AIEOs) to participate which created a group interview.

Table 5 Duration of interviews with school principals

Duration of telephone interview n=35	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PSˆ n=20	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	CSˇ n=1	RS˜ n=1	Total
Missing data	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
< 40 minutes	3	1	-	-	-	1	5
41 – 60 minutes	14	3	3	2	-	-	22
> 60 minutes	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Duration of group interview	**DET**			**CEO**	**AISWA**		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˇ	RS˜	Total
> 90 minutes	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gender n=35	**DET**			**CEO**	**AISWA**		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˇ	RS˜	Total
Survey	-	1	1	1	1	-	4

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˇCS = community school; ˜RS = remote school

5.4 Characteristics of the sample

Thirty-one participants (89%) in this study were principals; the remaining four

participants (11%) were deputy principals (Table 6). Most participants (21 or 60%)

were female (Table 6). One principal (3%) identified as being Aboriginal (Table 6).

Table 6 School principal demographics

School roles n=35	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˀ	RS˜	Total
Principals	17	5	3	3	1	2	31
Deputy principals	3	-	-	1	-	-	4
Identifying as Aboriginal n=35	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˀ	RS˜	Total
Aboriginal	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gender n=35	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˀ	RS˜	Total
Male	6	3	1	3	-	1	14
Female	14	2	2	1	1	1	21

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˀCS = community school; ˜RS = remote school

Twenty-four participants (67%) had worked in the field of education for more than 20 years; six participants (17%) had between 10 and 20 years experience; and five participants (14%) had less than 10 years experience in education. At the time of participating in this study just over half of the participants (18 or 51%) had worked in their school for less than two years; ten participants (29%) had worked at their school between two and half and five years; six participants (17%) worked at their school between five and a half and 10 years; only one participant (3%) had worked in their school for more than 10 years. Most participants (20 or 57%) had been in their role as principal or deputy principal for two years or less; nine participants (25%) were in their role for two and a half to five years; and five participants (14%) were in their role for five and half to 10 years. Only one participant (3%) had worked at their school more than 10 years (Table 7).

Table 7 School principals' education sector experience

Years of education experience n=35	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˇ	RS˜	Total
5 – 9.5 years	2	1	1	-	-	1	5
10 – 19.5 years	3	0	1	1	-	1	6
>20 years	15	4	1	3	1	-	24
Years at current school n=35	**DET**			**CEO**	**AISWA**		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˇ	RS˜	Total
6 months – 2 years	10	3	2	2	1	-	18
2.5 – 5 years	5	2	1	-	-	2	10
5.5 - 10 years	4	-	-	2	-	-	6
>10.5 years	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Years in current role n=35	**DET**			**CEO**	**AISWA**		
	PSˆ	DHSˇ	RS˜	PSˆ	CSˇ	RS˜	Total
6 months – 2 years	11	3	2	2	1	1	20
2.5 – 5 years	5	2	1	-	-	1	9
5.5 - 10 years	3	-	-	2	-	-	5
>10.5 years	1	-	-	-	-	-	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˠCS = community school; ˜RS = remote school

Student enrolments in participants' schools (Table 8) varied according to geographic location and education sector of the school. Enrolments ranged from 14 students in two DET regional primary schools to 537 students in a CEO primary school located in Geraldton. The majority of participants' (21 or 60%) had less than 100 students enrolled at their school. Five participants (14%) had between 100 and 199 students enrolled at their school and nine participants (25%) had more than 200 students (Table 8).

Thirty-one participants reported having Aboriginal students at their school. The remaining four participants (11%) with no Aboriginal students were recruited and agreed to participate in this study in an effort to develop a regional picture of bullying prevention and management strategies in MWED primary schools. The

percentage of Aboriginal students (Table 8) enrolled in MWED primary schools varied according to geographic location and education sector. Five participants (16%) reported an Aboriginal student population of less than 10 percent; 14 participants (40%) reported having between 10 and 49 percent; and five participants (16%) reported between 50 and 75 percent Aboriginal student population. None of the participants reported having between 76 and 89 percent Aboriginal student populations. Two participants (6%) reported having between 90 and 99 percent Aboriginal student enrolment and five participants (16%) reported 100 percent.

Table 8 Student enrolments in study schools

Total number of students	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PS^	DHS˅	RS˜	PS^	CS˅	RS˜	Total
<20	4	-	1	-	-	-	5
21 – 50	5	-	1	-	1	-	7
51 – 99	5	-	1	1	-	2	9
100-199	2	3	-	-	-	-	5
200 – 449	3	2	-	2	-	-	7
> 450	1	-	-	1	-	-	2

Aboriginal students	DET			CEO	AISWA		
	PS^	DHS˅	RS˜	PS^	CS˅	RS˜	Total
No Aboriginal students	3	-	-	-	1	-	4
<10%	1	2	-	2	-	-	5
10 – 49%	11	1	-	2	-	-	14
50 – 75%	4	1	-	-	-	-	5
90-99%^	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
100%	1	-	2	-	-	2	5

^PS = primary school; ˅DHS = district high school; ˅CS = community school; ˜RS = remote school; ^None of the participants with Aboriginal students at their school reported between 76-89%

The level of Aboriginal staffing (teaching and non-teaching) also varied according to school size (Table 9). Of the 31 participants who reported having Aboriginal students at their school, five (16%) reported having no Aboriginal <u>non-teaching staff</u> (Table 9). The remaining participants with non-teaching Aboriginal staff said these

staff were mostly employed as grounds maintenance person/s, school administration officer/s, Aboriginal Islander Education Officer/s (AIEOs - DET), Aboriginal Teacher Assistant/s (ATAs – CEO) and Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW – AISWA). The number of Aboriginal non-teaching staff was greater in schools with higher Aboriginal student enrolments. One AISWA RS with 100% Aboriginal student population reported 91 percent (or 21) Aboriginal non-teaching staff.

The number of non-teaching Aboriginal staff contrasts with low numbers of Aboriginal teaching staff at schools (Table 9). Of the 11 principals that reported having Aboriginal teachers at their school, ten were from DET schools. Nine (29%) DET PS principals reported they had no Aboriginal teachers compared with two (6%) AISWA principals and four (13%) CEO principals. Participant 32 (DET PS, 37% Aboriginal student population) reported the highest number of Aboriginal teaching staff (n=3). These low numbers are reflective of national levels of Aboriginal teachers (Santoro & Reid, 2006).

Table 9 MWED principals' reports of Aboriginal staff by education sector (n=31)

Aboriginal non-teaching staff	DET			CEO	AISWA	
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	Total (n=31)
No Aboriginal non-teaching staff	3	2	-	-	-	5
1 Aboriginal non-teaching staff	6	-	-	3	-	9
2 Aboriginal non-teaching staff	2	1	1	1	-	5
4-9 Aboriginal non-teaching staff	6	1	2	-	1	10
12 Aboriginal non-teaching staff	-	1	-	-	-	1
21 Aboriginal non-teaching staff	-	-	1	-	-	1
Aboriginal teaching staff	**DET**			**CEO**	**AISWA**	
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	Total (n=31)
No Aboriginal teaching staff	9	3	4	4	-	20
1 Aboriginal teaching staff	6	2	-	-	1	9
2 Aboriginal teaching staff	1	-	-	-	-	1
3 Aboriginal teaching staff	1	-	-	-	-	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school

5.5 School guidelines and practices in place for bullying management and prevention

The research question of this study asks *"What do primary school principals from the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?"* The principal instrument asked if 11 specific **bullying management strategies** (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 12.a-l) were in place at the participant's school and how often they were used (Table 10); ten[3] of these questions are presented below.

b. Nearly all of the participants (97%) said their school *acknowledged bullying as a social relationship problem*. The majority of participants (26 or 74%)

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[3] Findings for question **13.a** are presented in Table 15 with results to Aboriginal specific questions.

reported they did so 'most times', the remaining eight participants (23%) used this strategy 'some times'.

c. All participants (100%) said their school *managed bullying incidents immediately*, only one participant (3%) said this happened 'sometimes' rather than 'most times'.

d. The majority of the participants (n=29 or 83%) said their school *provided follow-up to ensure the long-term safety of student/s <u>who are bullied</u>* 'most times'; the remaining six participants (17%) said their school practised this strategy 'sometimes'.

e. *Follow-up to ensure the long-term safety of student/s <u>who bully others</u>* was used by 23 participants (66%) 'most times' and 11 participants (31%) 'sometimes'. One participant (3%) was 'unsure' how their school followed up on the safety of students who bullied others.

f. Almost all participants (34 or 97%) said staff at their school *managed a bullying incident without using threat, humiliation, sarcasm, aggression or manipulation* 'most times'. The remaining participant (3%) reported staff at their school used this strategy 'sometimes'.

g. All participants reported their school *ensured the immediate safety of the student being bullied*. Thirty four participants (97%) reported they did this 'most times' and one participant (3%) said their school did this 'sometimes'.

h. Thirty two (91%) participants said management of bullying incidents at their school *involved meeting with all students involved in the incident* 'most times'; the remaining three (9%) participants said their school did this 'sometimes'.

i. The majority of participants (n=31 or 87%) said that their school *promoted students' sense of concern and responsibility* 'most times'; one participant (3%)

was 'unsure' if their school incorporated this strategy into their bullying management.

j. *Encouragement of students to problem solve* was used less frequently, 23 participants (66%) said their school did this 'most times', the remaining 12 participants (34%) said their school encouraged students to problem solve bullying incidents 'sometimes'.

k. All participants reported their school *involved parents in the management of bullying incidents*; most participants (n=30 or 88%) said their school did this 'most times'. The remaining five participants (14%) involved parents 'some times'.

l. Nearly all participants (n=33 or 94%) said their school *used clear recording of bullying incident as a management strategy* to varying degrees; 25 participants (71%) did this most of the time, eight participants (23%) did this some of the time, and one participant (3%) said their school did not use this strategy at all.

m. When asked *which of the above practices seem to be more effective to help manage bullying among **Aboriginal** students only nine participants* (26%) referred to one or a combination of the 12 management strategies within the instrument (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 12.a-l). The remaining participant responses gave qualitative descriptions of what worked generally rather than nominating strategies listed in the instrument (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 12.a-l).

Summary of MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying management strategies at their school

Principal responses about the bullying *management* strategies used in their schools indicate a strong focus on creating a school environment that supports students to stop bullying or seek help if they are being bullied. Principals reported using all but two bullying management strategies (Table 10, 12.b & l.). Overall, strategies were used 'most times' when managing school bullying incidents. Strategies to *ensure long-term safety of student(s) who bully others* (Table 10, 12.e.) and *encouraging students to problem* solve (Table 10, 12.j.) were used least frequently.

Table 10 MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying management strategies at their school

Use of bullying management strategies	Principals' report n = 35			
	Most times	Sometimes	Unsure	Not used
b. Acknowledges bullying as a social relationship problem	26 (74)	8 (23)	-	1 (3)
c. Immediate management of the incident	34 (97)	1 (3)	-	-
d. Allows for follow-up to ensure long-term safety of student being bullied	29 (83)	6 (17)	-	-
e. Allows for follow-up to ensure long-term safety of student(s) who bully others	23 (66)	11 (31)	1 (3)	-
f. Does not use threat, humiliation, sarcasm, aggression or manipulation	34 (97)	1 (3)	-	-
g. Ensures the immediate safety of the student being bullied	34 (97)	1 (3)	-	-
h. Involves meeting with students involved	32 (91)	3 (9)	-	-
i. Promotes students' sense of concern and responsibility	31 (89)	3 (9)	1 (3)	-
j. Encourages students to problem solve	23 (66)	12 (34)	-	-
k. Informs and involves parents where appropriate	30 (86)	5 (14)	-	-
l. Involves clear recording of what has happened, who was involved and what action was taken*	25 (71)	8 (23)	-	1 (3)

*Question l. missing one response (n=34)

The principal instrument asked participants if their school used 25 **bullying prevention strategies** (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.a-y) and if so, how they would rate the effectiveness of each strategy in reducing bullying at their school (Table 11):

a. Almost half the participants (14 or 40%) rated their school's consultation process in finding out *culturally secure ways to prevent bullying of or by (Aboriginal) students* as 'very or moderately' effective in reducing or preventing bullying; at the same time nearly as many participants (13 or 37%) reported that their school did not conduct community consultation regarding bullying prevention.

b. Nearly all participants (31 or 89%) rated having a *school ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour* as a 'very or moderately' effective strategy in bullying prevention at their school.

c. Most participants (27 or 77%) reported *incorporating bullying management into their school's Behaviour Management Plan (BMP)* as 'very or moderately' effective; five participants (14%) reported their school did not incorporate their bullying management policy into their BMP.

d. Nearly all participants (30 or 86%) rated *an ethos that encouraged students to talk about bullying with an adult* as a 'very or moderately' effective strategy in bullying prevention.

e. The majority of participants (25 or 71%) rated their school's *bullying reporting system* as 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying; six participants (17%) reported their school did not have this strategy in place.

f. Most participants (28 or 80%) reported that *consistent, positive action by staff following bullying reports* as 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying

at their school. One participant (3%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' and one participant (3%) was 'unsure of the effectiveness' of this strategy. Three participants (9%) **did not** practise *consistent, positive action by staff following bullying reports.*

g. The majority of participants (26 or 74%) reported that when staff at their school used *supervision strategies during recess and lunch to immediately respond to bullying* it was 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying incidents. Four participants (11%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' and three participants (9%) reported their staff **did not** use *supervision strategies during recess and lunch to immediately respond to bullying*.

h. Most participants (27 or 77%) also rated their school's bullying awareness raising activities as 'very or moderately' effective in bullying reduction. Three participants (9%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective'. Three participants (9%) reported their school **did not** implement *bullying awareness raising activities*.

i. A little more than half of the participants (19 or 54%) reported their school *staff were committed to using culturally secure bullying prevention strategies for their (Aboriginal) students* and that it was 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying at their school. Four participants (11%) were 'unsure' of the effectiveness of this strategy in their school.

j. The majority of participants (22 or 63%) reported their school **did not** undertake *consultation with (Aboriginal) students or their family to identify where bullying commonly occurred at school*; of the eight participants (23%) that said their school did use this strategy, six (17%) rated it as 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying.

k. The majority of participants (23 or 66%) said their school **did not** *provide areas where (Aboriginal) students felt safer from bullying*; seven participants (20%) rated the provision of a 'safer' area as 'very or moderately' effective strategy in bullying reduction.

l. The majority of participants (26 or 74%) said the *involvement of support staff to help children involved in bullying incidents* was 'very or moderately' effective in reducing bullying at their school.

m. Most participants (n=30 or 86%) reported their school *encouraged adults in the school community to model positive social behaviour*; 22 participants (63%) rated this strategy as 'very or moderately effective' in bullying reduction, five participants (14%) rated it as 'slightly or ineffective', and three participants (9%) were unsure of the effectiveness of this strategy.

n. The majority of participants (n=24 or 69%) rated *mobilisation of students to discourage bullying behaviour* as 'very or moderately effective' in reducing bullying at their school.

o. Fewer participants (n=21 or 60%) said their school *involved their students in a peer support program to assist students who are bullied*, although 18 participants (51%) reported this as a 'very or moderately effective' strategy in bullying reduction.

p. The majority of participants (n=27 or 77%) reported their school *provided learning activities for students addressing bullying*. Twenty-four participants (69%) rated this strategy as 'very or moderately effective' in bullying reduction and one participant (3%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective'. Two participants (6%) were unable to rate its effectiveness of their school's learning activities for students addressing bullying.

q. Most participants (n=29 or 83%) reported their school *provided curriculum learning activities about social skills and peer relations*. Twenty-six participants (74%) rated this strategy as 'very or moderately effective' in reducing bullying and two participants (6%) rated it as 'slightly or ineffective. One participant (3%) was unsure of the effectiveness of curriculum learning activities about social skills and peer relations in the prevention of bullying.

r. The majority of participants (n=28 or 80%) reported staff at their school *provided a wide range of activities to keep all/most students occupied during recess or lunch time*. Twenty-six participants (74%) rated this strategy as 'very or moderately effective' and two participants (6%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' in bullying prevention.

s. Nine participants (26%) said that their school provided *targeted programs for (Aboriginal) students who are bullied or who bully and those at higher risk*. Of this group six participants (67%) rated this as 'very or moderately effective' and three participants (33%) said this strategy was 'slightly or ineffective' in reducing bullying at their school.

t. Less than half of the participants (n=15 or 43%) said their school *provided appropriate referrals for (Aboriginal) students who are bullied and those who bully others*. Of this group of 15, 13 participants (87%) rated this strategy as either 'very or moderately effective', one participant (3%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' and one participant (3%) was unsure on the effectiveness of this bullying prevention strategy. Reasons were not sought for the nine participants (26%) who responded that this strategy was not applicable to their school.

u. Ten participants (29%) reported their school *formed a behaviour management group (BMG) representing the whole school community including (Aboriginal) families*. Of this group, seven participants (70%) rated it as 'very or moderately effective', three participants (43%) rated it as 'slightly or ineffective' and one (14%) was unsure as to how this strategy reduced bullying at their school. Nineteen participants (55%) reported their school did not have a BMG representing the whole school community including (Aboriginal) families.

v. Of the majority of participants (n=22 or 63%) who said their school *incorporated bullying prevention into planning processes*, only one participant (3%) rated this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' in reducing bullying at their school. Nine participants (26%) responses were missing for this question.

w. Almost half the participants (n=16 or 46%) said their school **did not** *provide learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for Aboriginal students*. Of the participants (n=12 or 34%) that said this strategy was used in their school, five (14%) rated it as 'slightly or ineffective' and one (3%) was unsure to what level this reduced bullying.

x. Less than half the participants (n=13 or 37%) said their school *assisted (Aboriginal) parents to address bullying issues with their children*, with five of these participants (14%) rating this strategy as 'slightly or ineffective' in bullying reduction. Nine participants (26%) said their school **did not** use this strategy and 12 participant (34%) responses were missing for this question.

Summary of MWED primary school principals' reports on the effectiveness of their school's bullying prevention strategies

Approximately half of the principals from MWED who participated in this study **do not**: *use consultation with (Aboriginal) students to identify where bullying is happening* (Table 11, j.); *provide safer areas for (Aboriginal) students who are bullied or bully others* (Table 11, k.); *provide targeted programs for (Aboriginal) students* (Table 11, s); *have formed a behaviour management group* (Table 11, u.); and *provide learning opportunities or training for staff* (Table 11, w). Prevention strategies that were **less used** include: *consultation with the whole school community* (Table 11, a.); *commitment of senior staff to use culturally safe strategies* (Table 11, i.); *active involvement of peers to support students* (Table 11, o.); *provision of appropriate referrals for (Aboriginal) students* (Table 11, t.); and *assist (Aboriginal) parents to address bullying* (Table 11, x.).

Importantly, the following ten strategies were rated by **more than 70 percent** of participants as being **very or moderately effective** for bullying prevention: *an ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour* (Table 11, b.); *the incorporation of bullying management procedures into the Behaviour Management Plan (BMP)* (Table 11, c.); *an ethos of encouraging students to talk about bullying with an adult* (Table 11, d.); *opportunity or a system for students to report bullying incidents to parents and teachers* (Table 11, e.); *consistent positive action by staff following reports or observations of bullying of or by students* (Table 11, f.); *supervision strategies (e.g. During recess and lunch) that duty staff can use immediately to respond to bullying in the playground of or by Aboriginal and other students* (Table 11, g.); *awareness raising activities to promote the school's stance and action on bullying of or by*

students (Table 11, h.); *consistent involvement of support school staff (e.g. AIEO, school psychologist, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents* (Table 11, l.); *provision of curriculum learning activities about social skills and peer relations* (Table 11, q.); and *provision of a wide range of out of class time (e.g. Recess and lunch) activities to keep all/most students occupied.*

The following six strategies were rated by **more than 10 percent** of participants as being **slightly or ineffective** in bullying prevention: *consultation with the whole school community (e.g. Staff. Students, parents) to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by (Aboriginal) students can be prevented* (Table 11, a.); *supervision strategies (e.g. During recess and lunch) that duty staff can use immediately to respond to bullying in the playground of or by Aboriginal and other students* (Table 11, g.); *encouragement of adults in the school community to model positive social behaviour to students* (Table 11, m.); *mobilising all students to discourage bullying behaviour* (Table 11, n.); *provision of learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for (Aboriginal) students* (Table 11, w.); and *assist (Aboriginal) parents to address bullying issues with their children* (Table 11, x.).

Table 11 MWED primary school principals' reports on the effectiveness of their school's bullying *prevention* strategies

Effectiveness of bullying *prevention* strategies in place at schools	Principals' report n = 35					
	Very/moderately effective	Slightly/ ineffective	Not sure of effectiveness	Not in place	Not applicable	Missing
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
a. Consultation with the whole school community (e.g. Staff, students, parents) to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by (**Aboriginal**) students can be prevented	14 (40)	5 (14)	2 (6)	13 (37)	1 (3)	-
b. An ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour	31 (89)	2 (6)	1 (3)	1 (3)	-	-
c. The incorporation of bullying management procedures into the Behaviour Management Plan (BMP)	27 (77)	-	1 (3)	5 (14)	-	2 (6)
d. An ethos of encouraging students to talk about bullying with an adult	30 (86)	-	4 (11)	1 (3)	-	-
e. Opportunity or a system for students to report bullying incidents to parents and teachers	25 (71)	1 (3)	1 (3)	6 (17)	-	2 (6)
f. Consistent positive action by staff following reports or observations of bullying of or by students	28 (80)	1 (3)	1 (3)	3 (9)	-	2 (6)
g. Supervision strategies (e.g. During recess and lunch) that duty staff can use immediately to respond to bullying in the playground of or by Aboriginal and other students	26 (74)	4 (11)	-	3 (9)	-	2 (6)
h. Awareness raising activities to promote the school's stance and action on bullying of or by students	27 (77)	3 (9)	-	3 (9)	-	2 (6)
i. Commitment of senior staff to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies for (**Aboriginal**) students	19 (54)	-	4 (11)	8 (23)	1 (3)	3 (9)
j. Identification of places where bullying of (**Aboriginal**) students commonly occurs through consultation with (**Aboriginal**) students	6 (17)	-	2 (6)	22 (63)	1 (3)	4 (11)
k. Provision of areas where (**Aboriginal**) students feel safer from bullying	7 (20)	1 (3)	2 (6)	23 (66)	-	2 (6)
l. Consistent involvement of support school staff (e.g. **AIEO**, school psychologist, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents	26 (74)	-	1 (3)	5 (14)	-	3 (9)

Table 11 continued

Effectiveness of bullying prevention strategies in place at schools	Principals' report n = 35					
	Very/moderately effective	Slightly/ ineffective	Not sure of effectiveness	Not in place	Not applicable	Missing
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
m. Encouragement of adults in the school community to model positive social behaviours to students	22 (63)	5 (14)	3 (9)	2 (6)	-	3 (9)
n. Mobilising all students to discourage bullying behaviour	24 (69)	5 (14)	-	3 (9)	-	3 (9)
o. Active involvement of peers to support students who are bullied	18 (51)	3 (9)	-	10 (29)	-	4 (11)
p. Active involvement of students in learning activities addressing bullying	24 (69)	1 (3)	2 (6)	6 (17)	-	2 (6)
q. Provision of curriculum learning activities about social skills and peer relations	26 (74)	2 (6)	1 (3)	3 (9)	-	3 (9)
r. Provision of a wide range of out of class time (e.g. Recess and lunch) activities to keep all/most students occupied	26 (74)	2 (6)	-	3 (9)	-	4 (11)
s. Provision of targeted programs for (**Aboriginal**) students who are bullied and those who bully others or those at higher risk	6 (17)	3 (9)	-	18 (51)	2 (6)	6 (17)
t. Provision of appropriate referrals for (**Aboriginal**) students who are bullied and those who bully others	13 (37)	1 (3)	1 (3)	10 (29)	9 (26)	1 (3)
u. Formation of a behaviour management group (BMG) representing the whole school community (including **Aboriginal** families)	7 (20)	2 (6)	1 (3)	19 (54)	1 (3)	5 (14)
v. Incorporation of bullying prevention into the school planning processes	21 (60)	1 (3)	-	4 (11)	-	9 (26)
w. Provision of learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for (**Aboriginal**) students	6 (17)	5 (14)	1 (3)	16 (46)	1 (3)	6 (17)
x. Assist (**Aboriginal**) parents to address bullying issues with their children	8 (23)	5 (14)	-	9 (26)	1 (3)	12 (34)

5.6 Comparison of school responses to bullying prevention and management strategies with national policy and evidence-based practice

Sub-question 1 asks *Are MWED primary school principals' reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices consistent with evidence based recommendations and complicit with the national policy for school bullying prevention and management?* In order to identify whether participant responses were complicit with evidence-based recommendations and national policies, principals' reports were matched to the Elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003) and to the Domains of the Guidelines for School-based Bullying Prevention and Management (Guidelines) (Cross et al., 2004). The findings presented in Table 12 and Table 13 illustrates areas of strength and weakness in participant bullying prevention reports according to the NSSF and Guidelines.

5.6.1 MWED primary school principals' reports on implementing National Policy (National Safe Schools Framework)

The NSSF is underpinned by Six Key Elements (Elements) of good practice in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and programs for bullying, violence, harassment, and abuse and neglect. In Table 12, instrument items (Appendix 3, 13. a-x) about school bullying <u>prevention</u> are grouped according to their representation of the NSSF Elements. Participant responses are presented to show a) the number of principals who said their school practised the strategy and b) the overall mean for group compliance to the NSSF Element. Figures are bolded where the number of schools implementing the strategies matched to this element is **less than 50 percent**.

School values, ethos, structures and student welfare

Three items were identified as representative of this NSSF Element, with a mean of 33 participants (94%) implementing strategies consistent with this element:

▪ Thirty-four participants (97%) reported their school had an *ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour*;

▪ Thirty-four participants (97%) reported their school had an *ethos of encouraging students to talk about bullying with an adult*; and

▪ Thirty participants (86%) said their school *used awareness raising activities to promote the school's stance and action on bullying*.

Policies, programs and procedures

Nine items were matched to this NSSF Element. A mean of 22 participants (63%) use bullying prevention strategies at their school that demonstrate this element:

▪ Twenty-one participants (60%) said their school *conducted consultation with the whole school community*;

▪ Twenty-eight participants (80%) reported their school *incorporated bullying management procedures into their BMP*;

▪ Thirty participants (86%) said their school has *supervision strategies in place during recess and lunch*;

▪ Twenty-three participants (66%) reported that *their senior staff were committed to using culturally safe bullying prevention strategies*;

▪ Eight participants (23%), the lowest response rate of all the items, said they had *identified places where bullying commonly occurs through consultation*;

▪ Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported *consistent involvement of support school staff to help children involved in bullying incidents*;

- Twenty-eight participants (80%) reported *providing a wide range of out of class time activities*;

- Ten participants (29%) said their school had *formed a BMG representing the whole school community*; and

- Twenty-two participants (63%) said they had *incorporated bullying prevention into their school's planning processes*.

Provision of education/training

Five items were matched to this NSSF Element with a mean of 23 participants (66%) reporting their school practised bullying prevention strategies consistent with this element:

- Twenty-nine participants (83%) reported their school *mobilised all students to discourage bullying*;

- Twenty-one participants (60%) said they *actively involved peers to support students who are bullied*;

- Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported that their school *actively involved students in learning activities addressing bullying and provided curriculum learning activities about social skills*; and

- Twelve participants (34%) said their school *provided learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues*.

Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation

Two items were matched to this NSSF Element with a mean of 28 participants (80%) indicating they implemented strategies consistent with this element:

- Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported their school *provided an opportunity/system for students to report bullying*; and

- Thirty participants (86%) said that *staff at their school undertook consistent positive action following reports or observations of bullying*.

Providing support for students

Participant responses to the three items matched to this NSSF Element of had the lowest overall mean of 11 (31%):

- Ten participants (29%) said their school *provided areas where student feel safer from bullying*;

- Nine participants (26%) reported they *provided targeted programs for students were are bullied and/or bully others*; and

- Fifteen participants (42%) said they *provided appropriate referrals for students who are bullied and/or bully others*.

Working closely with parents

When the final two items were matched to the NSSF Element of *Working closely with parents* a mean of 22 participants (63%) reported they demonstrate this element:

- Thirty participants (86%) said their school *encouraged adults to model positive social behaviour to students*; and

- Thirteen participants (37%) reported they *assist parents to address bullying issues with their children*.

Summary of MWED primary school principal compliance with the Key Elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF)

Participant responses indicate an overall implementation of the Key Elements of the NSSF in participating MWED schools. The NSSF Element with the highest group

compliance (94%) from participants was *1. School values, ethos, structures and student* welfare. In contradiction to a reportedly strong focus on ethos and student welfare, the NSSF Element with the least group compliance (31%) was *5. Providing support for students*.

Table 12 MWED primary school principal compliance with the Key Elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) (n=35)

Bullying prevention strategies and Key Elements of the NSSF	MWED principals responded that strategy is in place	
	n (%)	mean n (%)
1. School values, ethos, structures and student welfare -		
b. An <u>ethos</u> that does not accept bullying behaviour	34 (97)	
d. An ethos of <u>encouraging students to talk</u> about bullying with an adult	34 (97)	33 (94)
h. <u>Awareness raising activities</u> to promote the school's stance and action on bullying of or by students	30 (86)	
2. Policies, programs and procedures -		
a. <u>Consultation</u> with the whole school community to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by **Aboriginal** students can be prevented	19 (61)*	
c. The incorporation of bullying management <u>procedures</u> into the behaviour management plan	28 (80)	
g. <u>Supervision strategies</u> (during recess and lunch) that duty staff can use immediately to respond to bullying in the playground of or by **Aboriginal** students	30 (86)	
i. <u>Commitment of senior staff</u> to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies for **Aboriginal** students	21 (68)*	22 (63)
j. Identification of places where bullying of **Aboriginal** students commonly occurs through <u>consultation</u> with **Aboriginal** students	**7 (23)***	
l. Consistent involvement of <u>support school staff</u> (e.g. **AIEO,** school psychologist, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents	24 (77)*	
r. Provision of a wide range of out of class time (e.g. recess and lunch) <u>activities</u> to keep all/most students occupied	28 (80)	
u. Formation of a behaviour management group representing the <u>whole school community</u> including **Aboriginal** families	**9 (29)***	
v. Incorporation of bullying prevention into the <u>school planning processes</u>	22 (63)	
3. Provision of education/training -		
n. Mobilising <u>all students to discourage</u> bullying behaviour	29 (83)	
o. Active involvement of <u>peers</u> to support students who are bullied	21 (60)	
p. Active involvement of students in <u>learning activities</u> addressing bullying	27 (77)	23 (66)
q. Provision of curriculum learning activities about <u>social skills</u> and peer relations	27 (77)	
w. Provision of learning opportunities or <u>training for staff</u> to address bullying issues for **Aboriginal** students	**11 (35)***	
4. Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation -		
e. Opportunity/system for students to <u>report bullying</u> incidents to parents and teachers	27 (77)	28 (80)
f. Consistent positive <u>action by staff following reports/observations</u> of bullying of or by students	30 (86)	

Mean represents overall group compliance to NSSF Element; bold used to indicate response rates less than 50%; *strategy specific to participants with Aboriginal students at their school (n=31)

Table 12 continued

Bullying prevention strategies and Key Elements of the NSSF	MWED principals responded that strategy is in place	
	n (%)	mean n (%)
5. Providing support for students - **k.** Provision of <u>areas</u> where **Aboriginal** students feel safer from bullying	**7 (23)***	
s. Provision of <u>targeted programs</u> for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and/or bully others	**8 (26)***	**11 (31)**
t. Provision of <u>appropriate referrals</u> for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and/or bully others	**12 (39)***	
6. Working closely with parents - **m.** Encouragement of adults in the school community to <u>model</u> positive social behaviour to students	30 (86)	22 (63)
x. <u>Assist **Aboriginal** parents</u> to address bullying issues with their children	**12 (39)***	

Mean represents overall group compliance to NSSF Element; bold used to indicate response rates less than 50%; *strategy specific to participants with Aboriginal students at their school (n=31)

5.6.2 MWED primary school principals reports for implementing evidence-based practice (Health Promoting School Domains of the Guidelines)

The *Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management* (Cross et al., 2004) use the six Health Promoting Schools Domains (HPS Domains) to recommend a whole-school approach for the development and implementation of successful bullying prevention and management strategies. In Table 13 instrument items (Appendix 3; 13. a-x) about school bullying <u>prevention</u> are grouped according to their representation of the HPS Domains. Participant responses are presented to show a) the number of principals who said their school practised the strategy and b) the overall mean for group compliance to the HPS Domains. Figures are bolded where response rates for the implementation of items is **less than 50 percent**.

Policy and practice

Five items were matched to this Domain. From participant reports a mean of 23 participants (66%) demonstrated strategies consistent with this domain at their school:

- Twenty-eight participants (80%) reported their school *incorporated bullying management procedures into their BMP*;

- Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported their school *provided an opportunity/system for students to report bullying*;

- Thirty participants (86%) said that staff at their school undertook *consistent positive action following reports or observations of bullying*;

- Ten participants (29%) said their school had *formed a BMG representing the whole school community*; and

- Twenty-two participants (63%) said they had *incorporated bullying prevention into their school's planning processes*.

Classroom management and curriculum

Four items were matched to the Domain of Classroom management and curriculum with a mean of 24 participants (66%) demonstrating this domain:

- Thirty participants (86%) said their school *used awareness raising activities to promote the school's stance and action on bullying*;

- Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported that their school *actively involved students in learning activities addressing bullying and provided curriculum learning activities about social skills*; and

- Twelve participants (34%) said their school *provided learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues*.

School ethos

Six instrument items were matched to this Domain. From principal responses a mean of 28 participants (80%) demonstrated this domain in their school's bullying prevention strategies:

- Twenty-one participants (60%) said their school *conducted consultation with the whole school community*;

- Thirty-four participants (97%) reported their school had an *ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour*;

- Thirty-four participants (97%) reported their school had an *ethos of encouraging students to talk about bullying with an adult;*

- Thirty participants (86%) said their school *encouraged adults to model positive social behaviour to students;*

- Twenty-nine participants (83%) reported their school *mobilised all students to discourage bullying*; and

- Twenty-one participants (60%) said they *actively involved peers to support students who are bullied*.

Student services team

Three items were matched to the Domain of *Student services team* with a mean of 21 participants (60%) indicating their school demonstrated this domain:

- Twenty-three participants (66%) reported that their *senior staff were committed to using culturally safe bullying prevention strategies*;

- Twenty-seven participants (77%) reported *consistent involvement of support school staff to help children involved in bullying incidents*; and

- Fifteen participants (42%) said they provided *appropriate referrals for students who are bullied and/or bully others*.

Physical environment

Four items were matched to this Domain. A mean of 19 participants (54%) reported their school practised bullying prevention strategies consistent with this domain:

- Thirty participants (86%) said their school has *supervision strategies in place during recess and lunch*;

- Eight participants (23%), the lowest response rate of all the items, said they had *identified places where bullying commonly occurs through consultation*;

- Ten participants (29%) said their school *provided areas where students feel safer from bullying*; and

- Twenty-eight participants (80%) reported *providing a wide range of out of class time activities*.

Summary of MWED primary school principal compliance with the HPS Domains of the Guidelines

When participant responses were matched to the HPS Domains, they provided a less favourable overview of bullying prevention and management efforts of principals from MWED when compared to the Key Elements of the NSSF. Three HPS Domains *school-home, community link*; *student services team*; and *physical environment* received group compliance of approximately **50 percent or less** and indicate that these domains require strengthening and focus.

Table 13 MWED primary school principal compliance with the HPS Domains of the Guidelines (n=35)

Bullying prevention strategies and HPS Domains of the Guidelines	MWED principals responded that strategy is in place	
	n (%)	mean n (%)
1. Policy and practice -		
c. The incorporation of bullying management <u>procedures</u> into the behaviour management plan	28 (80)	
e. Opportunity/system for students to <u>report bullying</u> incidents to parents and teachers	27 (77)	
f. Consistent positive <u>action by staff following reports/observations</u> of bullying of or by students	30 (86)	23 (67)
u. Formation of a behaviour management group representing the <u>whole school community</u> including **Aboriginal** families	**9 (29)***	
v. Incorporation of bullying prevention into the <u>school planning processes</u>	22 (63)	
2. Classroom management and curriculum -		
h. <u>Awareness raising activities</u> to promote the school's stance and action on bullying of or by students	30 (86)	
p. Active involvement of students in <u>learning activities</u> addressing bullying	27 (77)	24 (69)
q. Provision of curriculum learning activities about <u>social skills</u> and peer relations	27 (77)	
w. Provision of learning opportunities or <u>training for staff</u> to address bullying issues for **Aboriginal** students	**11 (35)***	
3. School ethos -		
a. <u>Consultation</u> with the whole school community to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by **Aboriginal** students can be prevented	21 (60)*	
b. An <u>ethos</u> that does not accept bullying behaviour	34 (97)	
d. An ethos of <u>encouraging students to talk</u> about bullying with an adult	34 (97)	28 (80)
m. Encouragement of adults in the school community to <u>model</u> positive social behaviour to students	30 (86)	
n. Mobilising <u>all students to discourage</u> bullying behaviour	29 (83)	
o. Active involvement of <u>peers</u> to support students who are bullied	21 (60)	
4. School-home, community link -		
x. <u>Assist **Aboriginal** parents</u> to address bullying issues with their children	**12 (39)***	**12 (39)**
5. Student services team -		
i. <u>Commitment of senior staff</u> to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies for **Aboriginal** students	21 (68)*	
l. Consistent involvement of <u>support school staff</u> (e.g. **AIEO,** school psychologist, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents	24 (77)*	16 (52)*
s. Provision of <u>targeted programs</u> for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and/or bully others	**8 (26)***	
t. Provision of <u>appropriate referrals</u> for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and/or bully others	**12 (39)***	
6. Physical environment -		
g. <u>Supervision strategies</u> (during recess and lunch) that duty staff can use immediately to respond to bullying in the playground of or by **Aboriginal** students	30 (86)*	
j. Identification of places where bullying of **Aboriginal** students commonly occurs through <u>consultation</u> with **Aboriginal** students	**7 (23)***	18 (53)
k. Provision of <u>areas</u> where **Aboriginal** students feel safer from bullying	**7 (23)***	
r. Provision of a wide range of out of class time (e.g. recess and lunch) <u>activities</u> to keep all/most students occupied	28 (80)	

Mean represents overall group compliance to the HPS Domain within the Guidelines; bold used to indicate response rates less than 50%; *strategy specific to participants with Aboriginal students at their school (n=31)

5.7 Responding to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and cultural security

Sub-question 2 asked *"Do the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practises reported by MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security?"* The findings presented in response to this sub-question were taken from those participants (n=31) who reported having Aboriginal students at their school.

5.7.1 Primary school principals' reports on the guidelines and practices for <u>managing</u> bullying among Aboriginal students at their school

Three instrument items (Appendix 3, Q.12.a & 12.m-n) regarding bullying management were specific to Aboriginal students. Of the 31 schools with Aboriginal students, 30 participants (97%) reported they believed their school's bullying management strategies were culturally secure (Table 14). Participant 33 (DET PS Principal – 40 students, 10% Aboriginal) reported he did not manage bullying incidents in a culturally secure manner (e.g. involving an AIEO when a bullying incident involves an Aboriginal student) as he believed this question (Appendix 3, 12.a) was not applicable to his school. No reason was given for this response and further investigation into this was not sought by the researcher.

Table 14 Comparing principals' reports on bullying management by percentage of Aboriginal students

Bullying management strategies	All schools with strategy in place n = 31	Schools with strategy in place with	
		<50% Aboriginal population n = 19	**50%** or more Aboriginal population n = 12
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
a. Cultural security (involving an AIEO when a bullying incident involves an Aboriginal student)	30 (97)	19 (100)	11 (92)

After participants reported how often they used the 11 **bullying management strategies,** they were asked to nominate the strategies they found to be more effective to help manage bullying among Aboriginal students (Appendix 3, Q.12.m). This question received the lowest response rate (18 or 58%) of all items presented in the instrument. A possible explanation for this could be the difficulty for participants to recall the 12 preceding items; more than one participant commented similarly to Participant 27 (DET PS Principal – 16 students, 20% Aboriginal) "…it's hard to remember what they all were". Participants could nominate more than one strategy as the most effective for managing bullying incidents (Table 15):

- Eight participants nominated *cultural security (involving an AIEO when a bullying incident involves an Aboriginal student)*;

- Six participants nominated *acknowledging bullying as a social relationship problem*;

- Eleven participants nominated *immediate management of the incident*;

- Eight participants nominated *following-up to ensure long-term safety of student being bullied*;

- Seven participants nominated *allows for follow-up to ensure long-term safety of student(s) who bully others*;

- Ten participants nominated *not using threat, humiliation, sarcasm, aggression or manipulation*;

- Seven participants nominated *ensuring the immediate safety of the student being bullied*;

- Eleven participants nominated that *meeting with students involved* in the incident;

- Five participants nominated *promoting students' sense of concern and responsibility*;

- Six participants nominated *encouraging students to problem solve*;

- Eight participants nominated *informing and involving parents where appropriate* were effective strategies;

- Four participants nominated *clear recording of what has happened, who was involved and what action was taken* as the most effective management strategy.

Summary of MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying management strategies that are most effective when working with Aboriginal students

In summary, participants who reported having **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students, acknowledge bullying as a social relationship problem (Table 15, b.); immediately manage the situation (Table 15, c.); do not use threat, humiliation, sarcasm, aggression or manipulation (Table 15, f.); promote students' sense of concern and responsibility for others (Table 15, i.) and encourage problem solving (Table 15, j.); and inform and involve parents more than participants with **less than 50 percent** Aboriginal students in school bullying prevention. Immediate management (Table 15, c.) and meeting with the students involved (Table 15, h.) received the most overall nominations from participants (n=11).

Table 15 MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying *management* strategies that are most effective when working with Aboriginal students (n = 18)

Bullying *management* strategies specific to Aboriginal students	Nominated as most effective* strategy by participants with		
	<50% Aboriginal students n = 19	50% or more Aboriginal students n = 12	total
	n (%)	n (%)	
a. Cultural security (involving an AIEO when a bullying incident involves an **Aboriginal** student)	5 (26)	3 (25)	8
b. Acknowledges bullying as a social relationship problem	3 (16)	3 (25)	6
c. Immediate management of the incident	6 (32)	5 (42)	11
d. Allows for follow-up to ensure long-term safety of student being bullied	7 (37)	1 (8)	8
e. Allows for follow-up to ensure long-term safety of student(s) who bully others	6 (32)	1 (8)	7
f. Does not use threat, humiliation, sarcasm, aggression or manipulation	5 (26)	5 (42)	10
g. Ensures the immediate safety of the student being bullied	5 (26)	2 (17)	7
h. Involves meeting with students involved	7 (37)	4 (33)	11
i. Promotes students' sense of concern and responsibility	3 (16)	2 (17)	5
j. Encourages students to problem solve	3 (16)	3 (25)	6
k. Informs and involves parents where appropriate	4 (21)	4 (33)	8
l. Involves clear recording of what has happened, who was involved and what action was taken	3 (16)	1 (8)	4

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school; *Respondents could nominate more than one strategy.

5.7.2 Primary school principals' reports on the guidelines and practices for <u>preventing</u> bullying involving Aboriginal students at their school

Of the 25 instrument items on bullying prevention, nine were specifically about bullying involving Aboriginal students (Appendix 3 - 13.a., i., j., k., l., s., t., u., w., x.). Table 16 describes responses to these items by two categories: participants who reported having less than 50 percent of Aboriginal students at their school and participants who reported having more than 50 percent of Aboriginal students at their school.

a. Nineteen participants (61%) reported their school *conducted consultation with the whole school community to find culturally safe ways bullying of or by Aboriginal students can be prevented*. Of the participants with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school ten (53%) reported using this strategy; of the participants who reported **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students nine (75%) reported using this strategy at their school.

i. Twenty-one participants (68%) said their *staff were committed to using culturally safe bullying prevention strategies*. Of the participants who reported having **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school, 12 (63%) said they used this strategy; nine participants (75%) with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school also reported using this strategy.

j. Seven participants (23%) reported their *school identified places where bullying takes place through consultation with Aboriginal students*. Six of these responses (32%) came from participants with **less than 50 percent** and one response (8%) was from a participant with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school.

k. Seven participants (23%) said their school *provided areas where Aboriginal students feel safer from bullying*. Four participants (21%) who reported using this strategy had **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students and three participants (25%) who use this strategy had **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school.

l. Twenty-four participants (77%) reported their school *consistently involved support staff (such as AIEOs, school psychologists or the school nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents*. Fourteen participants (74%) with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school reported using this

strategy. Ten participants (83%) with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students also reported using this strategy at their school.

s. Eight participants (26%) reported their school *provided targeted programs for Aboriginal students who are bullied and those who are at higher risk*. Of the participants with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school, four (21%) reported using this strategy; of the participants with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students four (33%) also reported using this strategy at their school.

t. Twelve participants (39%) felt their school *provided appropriate referrals for Aboriginal students who are bullied and who bully others*. Eight participants (42%) with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school reported using this strategy. Four participants (33%) with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students said their school used this strategy. Nine participants (29%) reported their school had *formed a behaviour management group that represented the whole school community, including Aboriginal families*. Of the participants with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school, six (32%) reported using this strategy. Of the participants with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students, three (25%) said their school used this strategy.Eleven participants (35%) said their school *provided learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for Aboriginal students*. Seven participants (37%) with **less than 50 percent** and four participants (33%) with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school reported using this strategy.Twelve participants (39%) reported their school *assisted Aboriginal parents to address bullying issues with their children*. Of the participants with **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school, seven (37%) said they used this strategy.

Of the participants with **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students at their school, five (42%) reported using this strategy.

Summary of MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying prevention strategies specific to Aboriginal students

Participants who reported having **more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students, engaged in community consultation (Table 16, a.); were committed to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies (Table 16, i.); provide areas where Aboriginal students feel safer (Table 16, k.); consistently involve support staff (e.g. AIEOs) (Table 16, l.); provide targeted programs for Aboriginal students (Table 16, s.); and assist Aboriginal parents more than participants with **less than 50 percent** Aboriginal students in school bullying prevention.

Table 16 MWED primary school principals' reports on bullying prevention strategies specific to Aboriginal students (n=31)

Bullying *prevention* strategies specific to Aboriginal students	Schools with strategy in place	Schools with strategy in place with	
		<50% Aboriginal students n = 19	50% or more Aboriginal students n = 12
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
a. Consultation with the whole school community (e.g. Staff, students, parents) to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by **Aboriginal** students can be prevented	19 (61)	10 (53)	9 (75)
i. Commitment of senior staff to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies for **Aboriginal** students	21 (68)	12 (63)*	9 (75)
j. Identification of places where bullying of **Aboriginal** students commonly occurs through consultation with **Aboriginal** students	7 (23)	6 (32)*	1 (8)*
k. Provision of areas where **Aboriginal** students feel safer from bullying	7 (23)	4 (21)*	3 (25)
l. Consistent involvement of support school staff (e.g. **AIEO**, school psychologist, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents	24 (77)	14 (74)*	10 (83)
s. Provision of targeted programs for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and those who bully others or those at higher risk	8 (26)	4 (21)*	4 (33)
t. Provision of appropriate referrals for **Aboriginal** students who are bullied and those who bully others	12 (39)	8 (42)*	4 (33)
u. Formation of a behaviour management group (BMG) representing the whole school community (including **Aboriginal** families)	9 (29)	6 (32)*	3 (25)
w. Provision of learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for **Aboriginal** students	11 (35)	7 (37)*	4 (33)
x. Assist **Aboriginal** parents to address bullying issues with their children	12 (39)	7 (37)*	5 (42)

*one or more responses missing to this question in this category

Throughout the interview, participants were invited to discuss bullying prevention and management programs and strategies they utilised that reflected their school's guidelines and practices. Questions were asked about these programs to consider if they contributed to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students. Generally, programs

and strategies identified by participants were broad behaviour management programs rather than specific bullying prevention and management approaches.

Table 17 presents a frequency list, by sector and school type, of programs and strategies participants with Aboriginal students reported using at their school. Programs and strategies specific to Aboriginal students are indicated with bold font. Notable programs or strategies are:

- Involving Aboriginal staff in resolving bullying incidents with Aboriginal students was the most frequently mentioned *strategy* among MWED primary school principals who participated in this study. The majority of participants who reported using this strategy were from the DET sector (PS n=5; DHS n=3; and RS n=1), the remaining three participants were from CEO sector.

- The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools was the most frequently mentioned *program* from participants. Ten participants (32%) reported using this program, eight were from DET PS, one participant was from a DHS and one from an AISWA RS. Most of these participants (n=8 or 80%) had less than 50 percent Aboriginal students.

- The next most frequently mentioned program used to assist in bullying prevention and management as reported by MWED primary school principals was the You Can Do It program. Seven participants (23%) said their school used this program; five were from DET PS, one from a DHS and one from a CEO PS. Again, the majority of participants (n=5 or 71%) who used this program had less than 50 percent Aboriginal students.

- Restorative Justice techniques were mentioned by six participants (19%) as part of their bullying prevention and management strategies. Almost all participants

reporting using this strategy were from DET schools (PS n=2; DHS n=1; RS n=2) the remaining school was a DET RS. The majority of participants (n=4 or 80%) who reported using this strategy had more than 50 percent Aboriginal students; this strategy received the highest number of mentions for any program or strategy from participants with this student population.

- Five participants (16%) reported using their school's Pastoral Care program as a bullying prevention and management strategy; these participants came from three DET PS, one DHS and one CEO PS. Almost all participants (n=4 or 80%) who said they did this had less than 50 percent Aboriginal students.

- Of the 25 DET participants with Aboriginal students at their school, only four said they used the Department's guidelines for Classroom or Behaviour Management in Schools (CMIS or BMIS). Two participants were from PS, one from a DHS and one from a RS; almost all of these participants (n=3 or 75%) had less than 50 percent Aboriginal students on their enrolment records.

- Of the eleven participants with more than 50 percent Aboriginal student enrolment, only three (10%) reported using an Aboriginal student mentor strategy, all these participants worked in DET PS.

- Two participants (6%) said their school used the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) or the National Safe Schools Week (NSSW) to inform their bully prevention and management programs and strategies. One participant worked in a DET PS and one in a CEO PS; both participants reported having less than 50 percent Aboriginal student enrolment.

- The Friendly Schools and Families program is a whole of school bullying prevention and management program, only two participants (6%) both from

DET PS with less than 50 percent Aboriginal students at their school reported

using this program.

Table 17 MWED primary school principals' reports of bullying prevention and management programs and strategies (a) (n=31)

Bullying prevention and management programs and strategies	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Using Aboriginal staff to assist in resolving incidents with Aboriginal students	5	3	1	3	-	7	5	12
National Framework for Values Education	8	1	1	-	-	8	2	10
You Can Do It program	5	1	-	1	-	5	2	7
Restorative Justice	2	1	2	-	1	2	4	6
Pastoral Care program	3	1	-	1	-	4	1	5
Rock and Water	3	1	-	-	-	4	-	4
Fruits of the Spirit / Christian Values program	-	-	-	3	1	3	1	4
Community or Talking Circle strategy	3	-	-	1	-	3	1	4
Classroom or Behaviour Management in Schools strategy	2	1	1	-	-	3	1	4
Zero Tolerance	-	1	-	1	1	1	2	3
Happy Kids (Aboriginal education) program	3	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Aboriginal student mentoring strategy	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms	3	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
'Y' Chart strategy	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	2
NSSF/NSSW	1	-	-	1	-	2	-	2
Games Factory	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Shared Concern	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Friendly Schools and Families	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Student Buddy program	1	-	-	2	-	1	1	2

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school; bold indicates Aboriginal specific program

Table 18 presents another list by sector and school type, of <u>single mentioned</u>

programs and strategies that participants with Aboriginal students reported using at

their school. Programs specific to Aboriginal students are indicated with bold font. Of the 14 'single' programs or strategies, the majority (n=10 or 77%) of these were implemented in DET PS, two were practiced in a DHS, one in a CEO PS and two in AISWA RS. A little over half of the participants (n=8 or 53%) were in schools with **less than 50 percent** Aboriginal student enrolment.

Table 18 MWED primary school principals' reports of bullying prevention and management programs and strategies (b) (n=31)

Bullying prevention and management programs and strategies	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
Stop, Think, Do	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Constable Care	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Strong and Smart	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Duck and Sponge	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Choose Respect	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Aussie Optimism	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Bumps program	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Red Card strategy	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
School Security Guard	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Bullying, No Way	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Mooditj program	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Home Links (Meerilinga) Program	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Aboriginal literacy strategy	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Establishing kinship relationships between staff and students	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school; bold indicates Aboriginal specific program

Throughout the interviews participants also mentioned strategies they used to motivate or encourage their students to develop and maintain pro-social behaviour at school. These strategies included: leadership programs for senior students; school behaviour tracking chart; bike program; public acknowledgement of positive

behaviour such as weekly awards, newsletter and PA announcements, phone calls to parents and end of term certificates; end of year camps in either a culture trip or a 'Value of Education' trip; extra-curricular activities; and end of term rewards.

When asked how their school demonstrated an ethos that did not accept bullying, Participant 20 (Deputy Principal, DET PS; 69 students and 14% Aboriginal) described how her school used a proactive approach to bullying prevent by focussing on and rewarding positive behaviour with their students (Table 19).

Table 19 Consequences of unacceptable behaviour and practice of rewarding positive behaviour (a)

> "With **Friendly Schools and Families** [whole school bullying prevention program] we have various initiatives in the school: we have the **shared concern**; we have **good behaviour raffle tickets**; we have **encouraging leadership** within the student; we've got a program running this year (and last year) called the **Super Kids** - when students display certain behaviours they get to wear a badge acknowledging them as a **Super Student**."
>
> Participant 20 – Deputy Principal, DET PS
> 69 students, **14%** Aboriginal

In contrast, and despite the warnings that conduct codes with strong deterrents having a potentially negative effect on student behaviour and school attendance (Cameron, 2006; Partington & Gray, 2003), Participant 07 (Principal, DHS; 178 students, 98% Aboriginal) cited their 'no school, no pool' policy as an effective, albeit punitive, behaviour management strategy (Table 20).

Table 20 Consequences of unacceptable behaviour and practice of rewarding positive behaviour (b)

> "During the summer months we've got a **'No school, no pool'** policy that we run here. At the end of each day a kid will get **stamped on their wrist** … If the kids don't have a stamp on their wrist they don't get entry to the pool. Now it's forty odd degrees up here at the moment so the kids hang out to get to the pool. So if the kids come to school and they do the wrong thing and get suspended they will not get that stamp; they will not go to the pool."
>
> Participant 07 – Principal, DHS
> 178 students, **95%** Aboriginal

5.7.3 Qualitative findings exploring culturally secure bullying prevention and management

Nine preliminary themes were developed during qualitative data analyses (Table 3) to learn how MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security. Data related to **cultural security**, **providing Aboriginal cultural training to (non-Aboriginal) school staff**, and **student and family connectedness to MWED schools** were considered to best describe participant efforts to support Yamaji students who are bullied and/or bully others (sub-question 2).

5.8 Cultural security

There are three stages of cultural security within the *Coffin's (2007) Cultural Security model applied to bullying prevention and management in an education setting* (Figure 2). During the interview MWED primary school principals were asked how their school practised culturally secure or culturally safe bullying prevention and management when working with Aboriginal students (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, Q.12.a, 13.a, 13.i). Participant answers to these questions varied in their demonstration of responding to the strengths and needs of their Aboriginal students and therefore the level of cultural security.

When asked if *whole school community consultation takes place to find culturally safe ways bullying of or by Aboriginal students* (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, Q.13.a), Participant 11 (remote AISWA boarding school, 100% Aboriginal student population) explained that because they didn't have access to parents, their consultation was more of a cultural awareness training for staff (Table 21).

Table 21 Culturally *aware* bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices

"We have a cross **cultural awareness** program that's run yearly for new staff and for other staff who need to come in and be reminded about it. So we try to educate the staff about the **family relationships and cultural relationships** which can lead to bullying … and **family conflicts** that carry over to the school."

Participant 11 – Principal, AISWA RS (boarding school)
60 students, **100%** Aboriginal

Despite having only Aboriginal students at her school, Participant 11's response would be categorised in the **Cultural Awareness** phase and lacking cultural safety or security because the information shared by the school is not translated into practice or formalised into guidelines

Participant 11 is not alone. A common theme across sectors and school types throughout the interviews was that **all students were treated the same**. When asked if staff were committed to use culturally safe bullying prevention strategies for their Aboriginal students (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.i) Participant 35 (Principal, DET PS; 320 Students, 15% Aboriginal) responded "I think the Aboriginal students are dealt with exactly the same as the other children in terms of our policy". Participant 15's (Principal, CEO PS; 537 students, 1% Aboriginal) final remarks demonstrate a lack of cultural awareness *"With only a few Aboriginal students **it is easy to treat them the same as other students"**.

In contrast, Participant 02 (Principal, RS; 24 students, 92% Aboriginal student population) responded to item 13.i (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4) by recounting how an understanding of the Aboriginal culture of her students enabled her to adapt strategies to their strengths and needs (Table 22).

Table 22 Culturally *safe* bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices

"I wouldn't say that our approach is based on culture, but I guess it is because the culture of our children is totally Aboriginal. That's a hard one, because **our behaviour management strategy would work in any school but our approach to it is culturally appropriate**. So there's nothing specific about this that isn't appropriate to a main stream school.

"With Aboriginal students it's really important that you're **not confrontational** whereas a non-Indigenous student may accept that confrontation as being appropriate because they've been doing the wrong thing. An Aboriginal student needs to see that you are being very **fair** in your approach.

"I'm getting a little bit away from bullying and more into behaviour management here; for instance if a student has picked up a chair and thrown it, as a dramatic example, it's very often there's an underlying reason for that student to have done that. So from his perspective its okay to do that because … something else caused it to happen. So it's really important in your management of it that you allow that child the opportunity to explain why; why he's done that and what's actually happened. Then they need to **see that you are considering** that, you're not just throwing that information aside or putting it aside you're considering that, so you call the other student in. Now once you've gone through the process of this **justice**, each party has an opportunity to say something, then in a conversation with the student you start talking about the appropriateness of throwing a chair as a response to the behaviour. But if you just speak to the student straightaway about throwing the chair, "Now stop that [student's name], you've thrown a chair, straight to the office!" the student is arced up very quickly and is totally unable to reason or have any logical approach to that problem.

"So the key idea is to **address the problem from both sides**, make sure that all parties have that opportunity … and then work on the child that needs some understanding of appropriate behaviour. It's a very long winded process. So I find that being the difference with Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students. A non-Aboriginal student will say, "Yep, I chucked the chair I shouldn't have done that" and then perhaps deal with the other problem ... they see the immediate consequence as being okay".

Participant 02 – Principal, RS
24 students, **92%** Aboriginal

As outlined in the *Coffin's (2007) Cultural Security model applied to bullying prevention and management in an education setting* (Figure 2) the above response is a demonstration of **Cultural Safety** because knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs informally influence school guidelines and practices for managing and reducing bullying.

Using the *Coffin's (2007) Cultural Security model applied to bullying prevention and management in an education setting* model (Figure 2), Participant 02's school

needed to have formalised prevention guidelines, developed in conjunction with local protocols and brokerage, to be categorised as **Culturally Secure**. An example of how this can be accomplished is found in Participant 01's (Principal, AISWA RS; 84 students, 100% Aboriginal student population) response to the same question could be classified as being culturally secure (Table 23).

Table 23 Culturally *secure* bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices

"All of our staff have undertaken **two days of cultural awareness training** before they begin teaching out here and … we would usually use **direct carers** of the children.

"We work out **relationships and kinships before the child's disciplined** [to make sure its done] by the right person within the community, if need be; or one of the [**AIEOs**] or staff that can discipline or growl [at] that child. I think it's **imperative in forming solid relationships with the kids**.

"I think that's the whole platform from which [the students] exist, their **social technology is just profound** so if we don't have an understanding of that then we're not really going to get anywhere beyond the surface with our students..."

Participant 01 – Principal, AISWA RS
84 students, **100%** Aboriginal

When further questioned on how it came about that Participant 01's school practiced this unique level of cultural security, the Principal replied that *"if you can't appreciate their culture and [won't] understand it then your tenure here in the community and as a school teacher would be really invalid"*.

An important component of Cultural Security is **enlisting Aboriginal staff to support Aboriginal students.** Twenty-six participants (84%) with Aboriginal students reported having non-teaching Aboriginal staff employed at their school (Table 9). Participants reported enlisting their non-teaching Aboriginal staff to undertake various duties including: make home visits (with or without teaching or senior staff where appropriate); mentor Aboriginal students; resolve behaviour

incidents involving Aboriginal students; provide time or space to develop relationships with Aboriginal students; and encourage local community members to participate in school programs. Participants spoke of their Aboriginal staff generally and did not elaborate as to whether their Aboriginal teaching staff assisted in the duties/responsibilities listed in Table 24.

Table 24 MWED principals' reports of ways Aboriginal staff are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (a) (n=31)

Ways Aboriginal staff support Aboriginal students	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Make home visits	3	2	-	1	-	3	3	6
Mentor Aboriginal students	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Resolve behaviour incidents with Aboriginal students	6	3	1	3	-	7	5	12

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school

Participants often described the benefits of Aboriginal staff's knowledge of cultural and community issues as stated by Participant 12 (CEO PS, 90 students, 17% Aboriginal) when asked about senior staff commitment to cultural safety (Table 25).

Table 25 MWED principals' reports of ways Aboriginal staff are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (b)

> "We're so blessed with a **brilliant Aboriginal Teacher Assistant** [ATA]. When Indigenous issues arise I'll get her straight away and that goes beyond … food issues and absentee issues and all that sort of stuff…
>
> "She is priceless … she helps us so much. Sometimes boys have come to me for being naughty and I think I've had no impact whatsoever so I'll get her to come in and it has an impact, because she knows how to get through…
>
> "It's about right staffing choices, and gosh, brilliant, absolutely brilliant!"
>
> Participant 12 – Principal, CEO PS
> 90 students, **17%** Aboriginal

Toward the end of the interview, when asked what works best to help Aboriginal families help their children (Appendix 3, Q.15) Participant 12 again referred to the

ATA as an essential element in ensuring a welcoming environment in the school

(Table 26).

Table 26 MWED principals' reports of ways Aboriginal staff are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (c)

"I think the involvement of our **Aboriginal teachers' assistant** is the single best thing we've got here because she is just held in such esteem and she can just communicate with the [kids] at a level we can't. For example, I've had Aboriginal parents … enrol their kids and they'll say, "Look because you've got that lady we want our kids in your school … we know she's going to look after them; they'll be safe here, there's someone we can talk to". So her presence is just amazing … they can come here and not feel like an outsider, they can feel "There's someone here that we can trust and communicate with". Participant 12 – Principal, CEO PS 90 students, **17%** Aboriginal

Furthermore, as community mediators (or brokers, see Figure 2) Aboriginal staff are

invaluable for their feedback to the school about community events that can

influence what happens at school as described by Participant 05 (Principal, DHS;

140 students, 29% Aboriginal) (Table 27).

Table 27 MWED principals' reports of ways Aboriginal staff are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (d)

"I think the **AIEOs** that we have in our school are very conscious or very aware of what goes on outside in the community … some issues do come in from outside the community into our school but the bullying within our school is predominantly from what is happening in our school which is not a great deal." Participant 05 – Principal, DHS 140 students, **29%** Aboriginal

Adults in positions of authority in the community were also utilised in the

prevention and management of bullying in some of the MWED school communities.

When asked if there was an opportunity for students to report a bullying incident to a

parent or teacher (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.e) Participant 16 (Principal DET

PS; 30 students, 100% Aboriginal) described how school community relationships

are utilised to strengthen existing support networks for students at their school

(Table 28).

Table 28 MWED principals' reports of ways community members are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (a)

> "We also work very closely with our **police** and the children trust our police. One of the police officers is Aboriginal; he's on site every morning and helps his partner prepare **breakfast** for the kids. The other two police officers … would be up at school, if not every day, every second day; they come and play sport with them, worked on their bikes with them, [and] ran **AusKick** with them. So the kids know that they can trust the police. So in terms of that, we've also got the **local community nurse** and the kids are very comfortable with her as well".
>
> Participant 16 – Principal, DET PS
> 30 students, **100%** Aboriginal

Developing relationships of trust and improving school community communication

with home/community came up frequently in the interviews. Early in the interview

when asked how whole school consultation took place to find culturally secure ways

bullying of, or by Aboriginal students (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.a) Participant

06 (Principal DHS; 160 students, 75% Aboriginal) acknowledged the importance of

community brokerage (Table 29).

Table 29 MWED principals' reports of ways community members are enlisted to support Aboriginal students (b)

> "We've … got brilliant **AIEOs** who act as **advocates** in the community; we've got two school cars so we do a lot of **home visits** in bringing staff members in and two or three **Elders** who are very **proactive** currently.
>
> Participant 06 – Principal, DHS
> 160 students, **75%** Aboriginal

This type of brokerage is the key to linking Aboriginal families to their child's

school and facilitates parent and carer partnerships with the school to support

Aboriginal students. Data in Table 30 further illustrates this.

5.8.1 Providing Aboriginal cultural training for (non-Aboriginal) school staff

Item 12.w (Appendix 3) asked participants about the *provision of learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for Aboriginal students*. In response to this question and throughout the interview participants identified the following programs and strategies they believed strengthen staff understanding of Aboriginal culture (Table 30): Using Aboriginal staff to assist in resolving incidents with Aboriginal students; staff cultural awareness training; culturally informed school motto; mentoring for Aboriginal students; Quest 4 Values program; Deadly Ways to Learn program; Dare to Lead; Use of Aboriginal English at school; My Story; Department of Child Protection Professional Development; Establishing kinship relationships between staff and students; Home Links (Meerilinga) program; Aboriginal flag at school; Strong and Smart; Aboriginal literacy strategy; Choose Respect; and Informal staff training.

Participant responses indicate that throughout the MWED there is little uniformity in the content or availability of programs to assist non-Aboriginal staff develop their understanding of Aboriginal culture. Of the 17 programs or strategies identified as *learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for Aboriginal students*; only five of these programs were mentioned more than once. Most commonly non-Aboriginal participants (11 or 42%) reported that 'using their Aboriginal staff to assist in resolving incidents with Aboriginal students' strengthened their knowledge of Aboriginal culture. Of this group of respondents, six (55%) reported having **less than 50 percent** of Aboriginal student enrolment at their school.

Four participants (15%) said non-Aboriginal staff at their school developed their knowledge of Aboriginal culture through cultural awareness training; the majority (3 or 75%) of these respondents **had more than 50 percent** of Aboriginal students.

Three programs or strategies were each nominated by two participants as strategies that strengthen non-Aboriginal staff knowledge of Aboriginal culture: using a culturally informed school motto; matching Aboriginal students up with Aboriginal adults in a mentoring program; and the 'Quest 4 Values' program.

Table 30 MWED principals' reports of strategies that strengthen non-Aboriginal staff knowledge of Aboriginal culture (a) (n=31)

Cultural awareness programs and strategies	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Using Aboriginal staff to assist in resolving incidents with Aboriginal students	5	3	1	3	-	7	5	12
Staff cultural awareness training	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	4
Culturally informed school motto	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	2
Mentoring for Aboriginal students	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Quest 4 Values program	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Deadly Ways to Learn	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Dare to Lead	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Use of Aboriginal English at school	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
My Story	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Department of Child Protection PD	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Establishing kinship relationships between staff and students	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
Home Links program (Meerilinga)	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Aboriginal flag at school	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Strong and Smart	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school

Table 30 continued

Cultural awareness programs and strategies	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Aboriginal literacy strategy	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Choose Respect	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Informal training with staff	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school

In response to being asked if their school had an ethos that does not accept bullying behaviour, Participant 03 (principal of a DET remote school, 18 students – 100% Aboriginal student population) cited their school rules and motto to illustrate her school's efforts to include culturally relevant themes in the promotion of positive social behaviour (Table 31).

Table 31 MWED principals' reports of strategies that strengthen non-Aboriginal staff knowledge of Aboriginal culture (b)

> "The rules do, everything's safe, you know the school is a **happy and safe** place. So we **look at the positives**, never the negatives. And the school motto is **'Living country, learn language and respect elders'**"
>
> Participant 03 – Principal, DET RS
> 18 students, **100%** Aboriginal

When asked if their school provided areas where Aboriginal students feel safer from bullying, Participant 21 (Aboriginal principal of a DET primary school, 64% Aboriginal student population) explained the use of Aboriginal English by all students to illustrate their school's uniquely positive Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal student dynamic (Table 32).

Table 32 MWED principals' reports of strategies that strengthen non-Aboriginal staff knowledge of Aboriginal culture (c)

> "There's not enough non-Aboriginal kids for that to be an issue because the non-Aboriginal kids want to be friends with the Aboriginal kids … we've got **all the non-Aboriginal kids speaking Aboriginal English** here"
>
> Participant 21 – Aboriginal Principal, DET PS
> 14 students, **64%** Aboriginal

5.8.2 Student and family connectedness to MWED schools

Participants with Aboriginal students also discussed the difficulty of achieving and maintaining open communication between the school and Aboriginal families and/or communities. The importance of student and family connectedness to the school was a common theme across the interviews. Participant responses relating to student or family connectedness were grouped into the following six categories (Table 33): *utilising Aboriginal staff*; *school community events*; *staff developing and maintaining relationships of trust*; *principal maintaining regular contact*; *parent information sessions*; and *student mentoring*.

- Within the category of *utilising Aboriginal staff* the most frequently reported strategy (n=12 or 39%) was assistance in resolving bullying incidents involving Aboriginal students.

- Three participants (10%) hosted a *school community event* to develop and improve the attitudes of students and their families towards their school.

- Of the nine participants (29%) that said their *staff developed relationships of trust* with their Aboriginal students and families; the most common strategies were informal conversations (n=3 or 10%) and long term tenure (n=3 or 10%).

- Using newsletters was cited as the most common response from participants (n=11 or 35%) regarding how they *maintained contact with parents*.

- Only four participants (13%) reported they conducted some type of *parent information session* that was either a workshop or forum (n=3 or 10%) or a parent-teacher meeting (n=1 or 3%).

- Two participants (6%) said their school conducted a *mentor program for Aboriginal students* as a strategy to develop student and family connectedness to their school.

Table 33 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (a) (n=31)

Strategies to connect Aboriginal students and families to schools	DET			CEO	AISWA	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RSˉ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RSˉ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Utilising Aboriginal staff to:								
▪ make home visits	3	2	-	1	-	3	3	6
▪ mentor Aboriginal students	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
▪ resolve bullying incidents involving Aboriginal students	5	3	1	3	-	7	5	12
School community events such as:								
▪ BBQ and staff meet & greet	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
▪ P&C market day	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
▪ 'Happy Kids' expo	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Staff develop and maintain relationships of trust through:								
▪ informal conversations at school or in the community	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	3
▪ long term tenure at the school	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	3
▪ accompanying home visits, where appropriate	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
▪ organising an Aboriginal flag for the school	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Principal maintains regular contact with parents through:								
▪ newsletters	7	-	-	4	-	9	2	11
▪ home visits	3	2	-	1	-	3	3	3
Parent information sessions such as:								
▪ parent workshops/forums	3	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
▪ parent teacher meetings	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˉRS = remote school

When asked what works best to help Aboriginal families help their children (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 16.) Participant 16 (Principal of DET Primary school; 30 students, 100% Aboriginal) quickly identified the importance of developing relationships of trust to have parental support for the school, school staff and school curriculum (Table 34).

Table 34 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (b)

"One of the things you also have to do here is **take time**. Things don't happen easily. So the first thing you have to **build up is trust**; they have to trust you. Until you develop that you're not going to get anywhere … But once the trust develops then you will get some support from parents."

<div align="right">

Participant 16 – Principal, DET PS
30 students, **100%** Aboriginal

</div>

The theme of making time to build relationships with students and their families was frequently mentioned by MWED principals. Participant 13 (Principal CEO primary school; 302 students, 9% Aboriginal) answered similarly to the same question (Table 35).

Table 35 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (c)

"I think dealing with [students and their families] on a **personal level** and **sitting down and talking through things** … and **really listening** to them and where they're coming from and the **background stories** behind where these children are at. I find if they feel that you're **willing to listen** and to understand them it's easier for them to work with you and for you to work with them."

<div align="right">

Participant 13 – Principal, CEO PS
302 students, **9%** Aboriginal

</div>

Building relationships of trust was threatened by high rates of staff turnover. Some participants identified this as a contributor to tenuous relationships between schools and communities. At the time of the interview Participant 26 (Deputy Principal, DET PS; 318 students, 38% Aboriginal) had worked at her school for 14 years and occupied the role of deputy principal for 11 years. When asked about consistent involvement of support staff (e.g. AIEO, school psych, nurse) to help children involved in bullying incidents (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.l) she described how her credibility increased because she had established long-term relationships with the students, their families and their communities (Table 36).

Table 36 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (d)

> "… [*the*] **AIEOs have been in the school as long as I have** … so we know all the families. And you know we've seen these kids come through (some second generation kids). So it kind of helps because sometimes it's good before you talk about what the kid's really done you get that little common ground. You know, "I remember when your brother was here or when your uncle was here or your aunt or your mum" (for some kids we've had) and then "how do you think they'd feel about you bullying?" You try and get to their better nature sometimes; the fact that they know that you **know their parents** it means a lot more. I think if they knew you didn't even know their parents and you said, "I'm going to go and tell your mum" and they're like, "Oh well she doesn't even know who you are, so it doesn't matter".
>
> Participant 26 – Deputy Principal, DET PS
> 318 students, **38%** Aboriginal

A similar response was given by Participant 05 (DHS, 140 students, 29% Aboriginal) when asked how their school encourages students to talk about bullying with adults (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 13.d) (Table 37).

Table 37 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (e)

> "… I think it's the **interaction between the teachers and the students**, because all our teachers are experienced campaigners or experienced teachers who live in the community, who've been here for quite a long time. **They would know most of the kids, they know how to deal with them the best and they know their families.** And that enables them to deal effectively with the kids [when they] come to them; they know [each] kid well enough to sort of understand what the situation is".
>
> Participant 05 – Principal, DHS
> 140 students, **29%** Aboriginal

Informal conversations with family/community members were also frequently identified across interviews as an important strategy in developing relationships of trust. When asked what they thought worked best to help Aboriginal families help their children (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 16.) Participant 33 (principal of a DET primary school, 40 students, 10% Aboriginal) identified the importance of allowing 'out-of-school' relationships to occur naturally (Table 38).

Table 38 MWED principals' reports of strategies that connect Aboriginal students and families to MWED schools (f)

"**Getting to know the parents, meeting them, talking to them and it doesn't have to be formal**. I've never been to [the] community and my theory on that is (because I get drilled by the District Director on how to build that up), I haven't been invited out there. I haven't been to any of the farms here so why should I invite myself out there? But when I get a chance, I might see them down at the corner store or they come in and drop the kids off; I actually make it so I have a chat with them. If I see them in Geraldton, I go over "Hi, how's it going?" and just have a quick chat to build up that relationship.

"And the less formal the better because you forget that some are scared about coming to school. They don't want to talk to a teacher because traditionally it's because they're in trouble. It's just **a smile and a hello**; I know it's definitely opened it up."

Participant 33 – Principal, DET PS
40 students, **10%** Aboriginal

5.8.3 Challenges to responding to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students who are bullied or bully others

The open ended questioning at the end of the interview provided participants with an opportunity to elaborate on issues regarding bullying among their Aboriginal students. When asked what their greatest area of concern regarding bullying of or by Aboriginal students at their school (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 18.) elicited new data from participants. Overall participant responses to this question was related to social issues such as (Table 39): racism; family violence; family feuding and 'pay back'; effects of substance use problems; intergenerational disparities in educational outcomes; cultural misunderstandings; misalignment of curriculum delivery and Aboriginal culture; and government policies regarding Aboriginal people.

Table 39 MWED principals' reports on areas of concern regarding Aboriginal students who bully or are bullied (a)

Areas of concern regarding Aboriginal students who bully or are bullied	DET			CEO	AISWA ˇ	% Aboriginal students		
	PSˆ n=17	DHSˇ n=5	RS˜ n=4	PSˆ n=4	RS˜ n=1	<50% n=19	>50% n=12	total
Family feuding and 'pay back'	5	1	-	-	-	2	4	6
Effects of substance misuse	3	1	1	1	-	3	3	6
Racism	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Educating adults/parents	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	2
School attendance	1	-	-	1	-	2	-	2
Government policies regarding Aboriginal people	1	-	-	1	-	2	-	2
Intergenerational disparities in educational outcomes	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Cultural misunderstandings	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
Misalignment of curriculum delivery and Aboriginal culture	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
Family violence	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1

ˆPS = primary school; ˇDHS = district high school; ˜RS = remote school

Participant 12 (Principal, CEO PS; 90 students, 17% Aboriginal) provided an in-depth response (Table 40) to item 18 (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4) expressing his concerns on matters relating to poor attendance among Aboriginal students.

Table 40 MWED principals' reports on areas of concern regarding Aboriginal students who bully or are bullied (b)

> "To be honest my greatest concern is their **lack of attendance** at school, that's my single biggest concern because they miss so much, and they're behind and all the work the teachers do to catch them up simply gets undone because they go and take another two or three weeks off. I've got one boy on my books now, took three weeks off the end of last year and hasn't turned up yet this year [Week 4, Term 1, 2008] … So he's got no hope and that's the problem, they then **leave our school system with no real hope of employment or … being able to get on in the world we live in** and then they just spiral into this negative [cycle] of unemployment, all the other problems that go with it.
>
> "At the end of last year Johnny Howard was talking about **linking** their **welfare payments to school attendance** and they've got to do it! They seriously have to do it, and I was told that if the kids don't come to school 'X' number of days, bang - fifty percent of their income is taken and of the other fifty percent they're not given money but they're given like food vouchers or vouchers to pay their bills or something. **A lot of them around here use the money on drugs, alcohol** and you know the basic necessities like the kids aren't being fed, aren't being clothed properly, they're real **social problems**; that's what we have to address.

"Once we get them here and you know they're **in our care** and they're being **well fed** and looked after and all the rest, well **then they've got an equal chance**. But a lot of them are starting behind the eight ball; if we can get them here on a consistent basis we've got a chance of helping them but some of them just don't help themselves, and it's extremely frustrating.

Do you think there are any strategies of promise in regards to this concern?

I don't know, I mean Mr Rudd's making a lot of noise, and hopefully he can deliver something; no one's been able to deliver anything for a long, long time. But you know like something's got to be done, there's no question about that. **Something has to be done to raise the esteem of these people and you know get them having meaningful lives where they can contribute to society.**

Participant 12 – Principal, CEO PS
90 students, **17%** Aboriginal

While Participant 12 has a sense of hopelessness without Government intervention in addressing school attendance, Participant 13 (Principal, CEO PS; 302 students, 9% Aboriginal) described how this type of 'town' attitude by non-Aboriginal people impacts the educational experiences of Aboriginal students (Table 41).

Table 41 MWED principals' reports on areas of concern regarding Aboriginal students who bully or are bullied (c)

"I think **cultural misunderstanding** [is an area of concern] and I think it's something to do with the town as well, just the attitudes that are out there in the community to[*ward*] Aboriginal people. That makes it very difficult to work with Aboriginal students who might have difficulties with bullying, and I think it certainly can fuel bullying incidents in the school. **So definitely our [*non-Aboriginal*] students and the homes they come from, the perceptions and understandings they have of Aboriginal children can make it difficult**.

And I think teachers need to know how to handle Aboriginal students, as I said, being able to step back from the situation [and] not confront them too soon. They also need to sit down and appreciate they have to **take time to talk things through** with [their students] and the same with their parents. Those things are very important."

Participant 13 – Principal, CEO PS
302 students, **9%** Aboriginal

When asked about his greatest concern regarding bullying of or by Aboriginal students at his school (Appendix 3 & Appendix 4, 18.) Participant 05 (Principal,

DHS; 140 students, 29% Aboriginal) responded with the importance of developing

social skills in students (Table 42).

Table 42 MWED principals' reports on areas of concern regarding Aboriginal students who bully or are bullied (d)

> "… I'm just worried about the kids' self esteem ... We need to encourage them to develop their own skills in dealing with these issues. That's why we're going to go with the **Rock and Water** approach … What we're about is building their life skills so they can deal with most of the issues they're going to face in the future … as a high school we lose a number of our students to other places but we do offer them a very **caring environment**. **We offer an environment which offers them lots of good skills and learning.** We're not as academic as what we once were. We're providing programs which meet the kids' needs and that's one of our great strengths I think and the fact, the other great strength we have is **we know the kids pretty well**.
>
> Participant 05 – Principal, DHS
> 140 students, 29% Aboriginal

5.9   Summary of results

The data in this chapter presented MWED principals' reports of the bullying

prevention and management guidelines and practices used in their school. The

following summary is in accordance with the research questions of this study.

5.9.1 What principals say

Principals were asked how often staff at their school used 12 bullying *management*

strategies. Seven strategies were used by all participants (n=35) either 'sometimes'

or 'most times'. There was uncertainty about the implementation of strategies that

are *culturally secure* (Table 10, a.), *follow-up on long-term safety* (Table 10, e.) and

promote student sense responsibility (Table 10, i.). Two strategies relating to

acknowledging bullying as a social relationship issue (Table 10, b.) and *clear*

recording of bullying incidents (Table 10, l.) were reportedly not used. Principals'

reports on 25 bullying *prevention* strategies suggest that most are used with varying

levels of effectiveness. More than half of the strategies (Table 11, b-i., l- r., and v.)

were considered to be moderately or very effective by half of the participants. Strategies that were not as well used were the whole school community consultation (Table 11, a.), identifying areas where bullying takes place (Table 11, j.) and areas where students can feel safer (Table 11, k.), peer support for students (Table 11, o.), targeted bullying programs for students (Table 11, s.), student referrals (Table 11, t.), and the formation of a behaviour management group (Table 11, u.).

5.9.2 National policy and evidence-based recommendations

When matched to national policy and evidence-based recommendations the findings of this study showed that overall, participant bullying prevention guidelines and practices are compliant with the NSSF and the Guidelines. Participating MWED principals least practised strategies that represent the NSSF Key Element of *providing support for (Aboriginal) students* (Table 12, 5.). The HPS Domain of *school-home, community link* (Table 13, 3.) in the Guidelines was also practised least by participants.

5.9.3 Addressing the strengths and needs of Yamaji students

Participant reports indicate that much is being done to prevent and manage bullying involving Yamaji students. Despite their best efforts, participants cited issues external to the school environment as reasons for the limited effectiveness of their prevention and management strategies. Adequately responding to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students involved in school bullying is not always a priority when

education staff must also focus on issues such as family violence, family feuding and

payback, substance use problems and racism.

CHAPTER SIX
Discussion

This chapter discusses MWED primary school principals' reports on the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices used at their school. The discussion is presented in accordance with the research questions for this study.

6.1 Research question

The research question for this study was *"What do primary school principals from the Yamaji Region or Mid West Education District say about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices and how they support the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students and their families?"*

6.2 Sub questions

The sub questions for this study were:

1. Are MWED primary school principals' reports of their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices consistent with evidence based recommendations and compliant with the national policy for school bullying prevention and management?

2. Do the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices reported by MWED primary school principals respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students and maintain cultural security?

6.3 Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. Firstly, the responses of 35 MWED principals/deputy principals (58% response rate) may not be representative of the entire district. As such, participant reports of strategies and guidelines regarding bullying prevention and management cannot be generalised across the MWED. Strategies reported by participants to successfully support Yamaji students involved in bullying should not be used with Aboriginal students in other geographical areas without first consulting local Aboriginal Elders and community members.

Secondly, participant reports on the successes of their bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices may be biased accounts of successful strategies that support their Yamaji students. The findings do not capture the experiences of Yamaji students and their families as intervention targets; nor are they representative of the views of Aboriginal staff working to support Yamaji students to have positive educational experiences. Additionally, the data collected in this study were subject to participant recollection of programs and strategies in which they may not necessarily be directly involved.

Thirdly, the semi-structured interview used to collect data produced an inconsistency in the depth of responses. With an average duration of 45 minutes, time constraints meant some participants who started an interview chose to complete the final interview questions by survey. On these occasions, and in the instances where participants chose the survey option entirely, a rich description of bullying prevention and management strategies or guidelines was not captured. While the survey option may have been more convenient for participants it was limited in its

ability to identify and explore bullying prevention and management strategies in participants' schools.

Finally, one of the main advantages to conducting a mixed method study is the potential for an increased scope of data in complex issues (Hansen, 2006, p. 10 & 13) such as bullying among Aboriginal students in rural and remote schools. Despite this, analysing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study can also present difficult challenges (Hansen, 2006, p. 11). Choosing a 'lite' theoretical approach to analyse qualitative data resulted in a lack of analyses rigor and is therefore a limitation of this study.

6.4 Sub-question 1: Compliance with national policy and evidence-based recommendations

National Safe Schools Framework

Principals' reports about their school's bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices were matched to each of the six Key Elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) (DEST, 2003). Overall, participant responses indicated varying levels of group compliance to the Key Elements.

Participant responses to strategies representative of the Element of **School values, ethos, structures and student welfare** (Table 12) demonstrated that almost every school (n=33) discouraged bullying, supported students and raised awareness about bullying. In contrast, strategies matched to the Element of **Providing support for students** (Table 12) shows that just under a third (n=11) of participants' schools supported students through the provision of targeted bullying programs, appropriate

referrals and 'safer' areas, receiving the lowest overall group compliance. This suggests that although bullying prevention was important, the majority of participants were not aware of strategies they could employ to demonstrate their school's commitment to discourage bullying, support students and raise awareness (School values, ethos, structures and student welfare, Table 12).

Principals' reports indicate that more than half the schools used strategies demonstrating the Elements of: **Policies, programs and procedures** (Table 12, n=22), **Working closely with parents** (Table 12, n=22), and **Provision of education/training** (Table 12, n=23). A strong majority (n=28) of participants reported using strategies demonstrating the Element of **Managing incidents of abuse/victimization** (Table 12). Overall, participants' reports suggest there is a medium to high level of implementation on all but one of the NSSF Elements (Providing support for students, Table 12).

Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management (Evidence-based practice)

When the same strategies were matched to evidence-based recommendations as outlined in the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) Domains of the Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management (Guidelines) (Cross et al., 2004)[4] overall group compliance was higher in three HPS domains. Participant reports on implementing strategies matched to the HPS Domain **Student services team** (Table 13) were more favourable (n=16) than strategies matched to a similar NSSF Element

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[4] The Guidelines were developed out of evidence-based research conducted in Western Australian primary schools called *Friendly Schools and Families* (Cross et al., 2004).

of **Providing support for students** (Table 12, n=11). The Domains of **Policy and practice** (Table 13) and **Classroom management and curriculum** (Table 13) had an overall group compliance of 23 and 24 participants, respectively. These results were just one participant more than the comparative Elements of **Policies, programs and procedures** and **Provision of education and training** (Table 12, n=24). The HPS Domain of **School-home, community link** received the lowest group compliance of 12 participants reporting they *assisted Aboriginal parents to address bullying issues with their children* (Table 13, x.). The HPS Domain of **School ethos** (Table 13) received the highest overall group compliance of 28 participants.

There is no HPS Domain specific to 'management'; as such, this is an area of weakness in the Guidelines when held up next to the NSSF Elements. However, unlike the NSSF Elements, the HPS Domains acknowledge the importance of the **Physical environment** in bullying prevention; overall, approximately half the participants (Table 13, n=18) reported having strategies in place that comply with this Domain.

These findings suggest the current level of guidance within the NSSF and the Guidelines is insufficient for participants of this study to confidently implement and report on strategies that are compliant with national policy and evidence based research.

6.5 Sub-question 2: Bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices used in some MWED schools to respond to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students

Surprisingly, 'values' programs received the second highest mention (Table 15) from participants when talking about the bullying prevention and management *programs* used at their school. The national values program endorsed by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) is the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Values Framework) (DEST, 2005). The overarching philosophy of the Values Framework is that schools engage in community consultation and develop partnerships that identify and promote locally relevant values (DEST, 2005).

More than a third (n=9) of participants from DET sector cited using the Values Framework (Table 15).   Four participants in the CEO (n=3) and AISWA (n=1) sectors cited similar faith-based values programs, such as *The Fruits of the Spirit* (Table 15). By comparison, only two participants mentioned either the NSSF or the National Safe Schools Week (Table 15), and the Friendly Schools and Families program (Table 15) as programs they use to respond to bullying. It is possible that in the DET sector at least, participants find the Values Framework (DEST, 2005) easier to implement than the NSSF; it was not unusual in the interviews to have participants, who use the Values Framework, mention one or more of the following nine values as representative of their school's ethos:

1. Care and compassion

2. Doing your best

3. Fair go

4. Freedom

5. Honesty and Trustworthiness

6. Integrity

7. Respect

8. Responsibility

9. Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion (DEST, 2005, p. 4).

Of the eight guiding principles in the Values Framework three are relevant to this study for their promotion of safe and supportive learning environments, teacher training and curriculum that meets student needs (DEST, 2005, p. 5). Interestingly, participant reports for overall implementation of strategies that demonstrated these three principles were generally low. When '*consultation ... to find out culturally safe ways bullying of or by (Aboriginal) students can be prevented*' (Table 12, a.) is matched to the Values Framework, participant reports show that just over half of the participants (n=19) practise the principle of **safe and supportive learning environments that explore school and community value** (Principle 5; DEST, 2005, p. 5). When '*provision of learning opportunities or training for staff to address bullying issues for (Aboriginal) students*' (Table 12, w.) was matched to the Values Framework, participant reports indicate that less than half of the participants (n=11) practise the principle of **training for teachers that enables them to use a variety of models and strategies** (Principle 6; DEST, 2005, p. 5). When '*targeted programs for (Aboriginal) students who are bullied and those who bully others*' (Table 12, s.) was matched to the Values Framework, only nine participants **provide**

curriculum that meets the individual needs of students (Principle 7; DEST, 2005, p. 5).

These findings raise two points of concern. Firstly, that in using non-specific bullying prevention and management programs, such as the Values Framework, education staff are not developing strategies that could assist them to directly respond to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students involved in bullying. Secondly, research in violence prevention programs with First Nation students in Canada (Crooks, 2008, p. 202), found that while behaviour management principles that are effective with non-Indigenous students are necessary, they are not sufficient for creating culturally secure strategies. As presented in the Literature Review, Volume three of the WAACHS (Zubrick et al., 2006b, p. 498) expressly states that culturally relevant curriculum and programs are required to assist parents and carers to support their students. De Plevitz (2007b) extends this second concern by claiming that "treating everyone the same does not take into account situations where apparently neutral and equal treatment actually adversely impacts on some groups in our community."

Programs and strategies to support Aboriginal students

Participant reports indicate that much is being done to prevent and manage bullying involving Yamaji students. Despite this, of the 17 strategies or programs identified by participants to assist non-Aboriginal staff learn about Aboriginal culture (Table 30), only six programs or strategies specific to working with Aboriginal students and their families about bullying prevention and management (Table 17 & Table 18) were mentioned. According to Coffin (2007) as demonstrated in Figure 2

concentrated efforts in 'cultural awareness' are superficial in terms of their ability to address bullying prevention and management. Participant reports on their bullying prevention and management programs (Table 30) show, that at a program level at least, there is limited support available for Aboriginal students who do not identify with 'general bullying prevention programs'. It is therefore no surprise that participants reported limited effectiveness of bullying prevention strategies used with Aboriginal students (Table 11; a., i., j., k., l., s., t., u., w., x.).

Consistent with theories in Aboriginal violence (Snowball & Weatherburn, 2008), participants in this study cited external issues such as family feuding, substance use problems, and government policies regarding Aboriginal people (Table 39), among others, to explain the behaviour of their students and to justify the limited effectiveness of their prevention and management strategies. These issues are likely to reduce the priority or attention of school staff to address bullying. Hence, adequately responding to the strengths and needs of Yamaji students involved in school bullying would require strong, positive relationships between school staff, parents and carers, and community members. Consistent with this, Trevaskis (2003) urged education staff to address bullying involving Aboriginal students by increasing: their understanding and management of bullying behaviours, Aboriginal family involvement in the school community, and improving the management of racism.

At the time of data collection, more than half the participants (n=18, Table 7) had been at their school for less than two years. Staff in this position can then either forge their own relationships or obtain assistance from Aboriginal staff in building

student, family and community relationships (Santoro & Reid, 2006). Participants were administrative staff (principal or deputy principal; Table 6) and as such community brokerage (see Figure 2) would be essential for school-family-community relationships to be created. Aboriginal staff often can perform a number of roles as they provide community brokerage, including "role models for [Aboriginal] students, … cultural experts, … fill the gaps in knowledge of [non-Aboriginal] teachers about [Aboriginal] education and take responsibility for the implementation of [Aboriginal] education policies and initiatives at a school level" (Santoro & Reid, 2006, p. 293). However, participant reports on the way they utilise their Aboriginal staff in bullying prevention and management (Table 16 & Table 24), connecting students and families to the school (Table 33 & Table 24) and raising cultural awareness (Table 30 & Table 24) demonstrates limited engagement, from participants, with their local Aboriginal community. For example, less than half the participants (n=12; Table 17, Table 30, Table 33 & Table 24) reported including Aboriginal staff in resolving bullying incidents involving Aboriginal students. Only six participants (Table 33 & Table 24) reported that their Aboriginal staff make home visits and even fewer (n=3; Table 33 & Table 24) reported enlisting Aboriginal staff to be student mentors. As described by several participants in Table 31 to Table 35, these three strategies are insufficient to build relationships between staff, students and their families.

It is also troubling that, consistent with national levels (Santoro & Reid, 2006), the reported numbers of Aboriginal staff in MWED schools (Table 9) was relatively low. Less than half (n=11) of the 26 participants who reported having Aboriginal staff said they had Aboriginal teaching staff (Table 9). Of those participants that

reported having Aboriginal staff most appear to be under utilising them in bullying prevention and management (Table 24 & Table 33). In short, not enough schools have adequate Aboriginal staff to support Aboriginal students. Unfortunately, this contributes to Aboriginal students remaining disconnected from their class, teacher or school thus continuing a cycle of absenteeism and educational underachievement (Partington et al., 2001; Santoro & Reid, 2006).

Participants mentioned other approaches they used to connect students and families to their school (Table 33) such as school-community events, informal conversations and parent workshops or forums. Unfortunately, participant reports indicate that these strategies were implemented in a sparse and inconsistent manner across the MWED. The most reported strategy for building or maintaining contact with families as reported by participants was the use of newsletters (Table 33). Unfortunately the use of impersonal strategies, such as newsletters, for relationship building reinforces community perceptions that school administration and staff are not interested in communities (Partington et al., 2001).

According to participant accounts (Table 23 & Table 32) Aboriginal culture and language has a stronger presence in school guidelines and practices when Aboriginal students are in the majority. In line with this, participants with **more than 50 per cent** of Aboriginal students generally reported higher levels of implementation of bullying prevention strategies specific to Aboriginal students (Table 16) than participants with **less than 50 per cent of** Aboriginal students at their school.

As with their responses to bully *prevention* strategies (Table 12 & Table 13), participant reports about the ways they *manage* incidents indicate minimal focus on supporting students who are bullied or who bully others. Less than 20 per cent of participants reported they *acknowledge bullying as a social relationship problem* (Table 15, b.). It is therefore no surprise that overall participant reports demonstrate poor levels of implementation for bullying management strategies. Again, it is possible that over-reliance on non-specific bullying programs, such as the Values Framework, does not help users to adequately address the management of bullying incidents.

Strategies that reported the most discrepancy between participants with **more than 50 per cent** and participants with **less than 50 per cent** Aboriginal students were in the area of student support. It is concerning that only a quarter of the participants (n=3) with **more than 50 per cent** Aboriginal students reported having developed culturally secure ways of responding to bullying. Equally alarming are the number of participants that reported **not** having strategies in place to *follow up [on] the long-term safety of students who are bullied or bully others* (Table 15; d., e.). These reports contradict the perception that compliance with policy and evidence based recommendations creates safer learning environments. Compliance to policy based on non-Aboriginal beliefs, values and expectations perpetuates policy, not human rights to freedom from racism (de Plevitz, 2007a).

6.6 Recommendations of this study

The data presented in this study indicates that despite complying with national policies and evidence based research there is limited systemic and cultural support

available to Aboriginal students from the MWED of WA who bully or are bullied. As such this study makes the following recommendations:

1. A review of the National Safe Schools Framework to be undertaken that includes more specific guidance regarding working with Aboriginal students who are bullied or bully others.

2. A review of the role of Aboriginal Islander Education Officers (Aboriginal Teacher Assistant and Aboriginal Education Workers) across all sectors to ensure they receive the necessary systemic support, time and resources to develop relationships with students, parents and carers and other community members.

3. An increase in promotion of policy and programs for bullying management strategies as an essential means to creating safer and more supportive learning environments.

4. Increased development and promotion of culturally secure professional development sessions, which specifically address working with behaviour management issues such as bullying and Aboriginal students, across all education sectors.

5. More Aboriginal staff in primary schools across all sectors with accompanying training opportunities to raise the skill level of their role in the school.

6. Conduct a similar study in a regional and urban area of Western Australia to compare what enablers and barriers principals in other regions experience when working with Aboriginal students who are bullied or bully others.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Conclusion

The purpose of this Masters study was twofold; firstly to learn how the bullying prevention and management guidelines and practices of MWED primary schools comply with the NSSF. Secondly, this study was interested in how principals of MWED primary schools responded to the strengths and needs of their Yamaji students involved in bullying incidents.

As described in the literature review, Aboriginal people are over represented in poor outcomes in both education and health. An overview of education policies that inform school guidelines and practices in bullying prevention and safety was also presented. The concept of Whiteness was reviewed to highlight the ways institutions, such as education systems, dismiss Aboriginal values, beliefs and expectations. The ramifications of this include the perpetuation of Aboriginal students and their families feeling disconnected from the education system, increased absenteeism, educational underachievement leading to limited employment opportunities with the increased likelihood for poor physical and mental health and wellbeing.

National policy, as outlined in the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003), and the evidence based strategies of the *Guidelines for School Bullying Prevention and Management* (Guidelines) (Cross et al., 2004) were reviewed for their guidance in responding to the strengths and needs of Aboriginal students who are bullied and who bully others.

When matched to each other, the Health Promotion Schools Domains of the Guidelines can be used to demonstrate the Key Elements of the NSSF. However, neither of these documents provides clear, strong guidance for working with Aboriginal students. A model for cultural security was presented as a strategy for enabling the processes schools use to engage Aboriginal students, their families and communities, in finding relevant ways to address bullying.

The data presented in this study identified that *providing support for students* (including services teams), *school-home and community links*, and *physical environments* were areas within national policy and evidence-based research of greatest need for participants. Participant reports also showed there are very few programs available that guide schools and staff when working with Aboriginal students who are bullied or who bully other students. Furthermore, the data found that less than half the participants who reported having Aboriginal non-teaching staff enlist these staff to develop relationships between the school and parents or carers away from school grounds. Finally, participant reports about what concerns them most about Aboriginal students involved in bullying were mostly related to external issues, such as family feuding or substance use problems, that are beyond the scope of their role as principal or deputy principal, but important in maintaining links to community agencies.

The findings of this study were used with data from *Solid Kids, Solid Schools* to inform the development of a bullying prevention and management resource. The web-based resource (www.solidkids.net.au) was released to Yamaji students and their families in April, 2010.

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