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## Attitudes of Lower Secondary School Students Toward Social Studies at an Independent School : A Case Study

Diane M. Hobbs  
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# **Attitudes of lower secondary school students toward social studies at an Independent school: A case study.**

by

**Diane M. Hobbs**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
Bachelor of Education (Honours) at the School of Community Services,  
Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley.

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## ABSTRACT

There is a dearth of research on student attitudes toward social studies, especially in Western Australian secondary schools. The purpose of this case study was twofold. Firstly it was to determine the attitudes of lower secondary school students toward social studies at one Independent high school in the Perth metropolitan area. Secondly, it was to investigate the factors that influence student attitudes toward social studies.

The case study school was selected as a convenience sample. A total of 203 students from Years 8, 9, and 10 completed a questionnaire designed to determine attitudes toward social studies and to identify factors that contribute to student attitudes. There were 79 Year 8 students, 60 Year 9 students and 63 Year 10 students who took part in the case study. Over the three lower secondary year levels there were 100 female students and 103 male students. Nine students from each year level also participated in the focus group interviews. Three focus group interviews, one for each year level, were conducted. The quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire, and the focus group interviews provided the qualitative data.

The quantitative data was collected through a modified version of *Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies*, an existing questionnaire designed, tested and validated by Moroz (1996). The modified questionnaire was *Secondary Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies (SSATSS)*. The data provided information about student attitudes toward social studies through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the students' responses to the items on the questionnaire. Two open-ended questions were included in SSATSS and in conjunction with the focus group interviews for each year level, qualitative data was collected to validate the results of the quantitative data and to explain the reasons for student attitudes toward social studies.

The variables considered in determining student attitudes toward social studies were student perceptions of the classroom learning environment and activities, student's own ability, the social studies teacher and parental support. All of these variables were considered in terms of student

gender and year level. Learning activities in social studies lessons were also considered as factors that contribute to student attitudes toward social studies. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the data collection.

The results of this case study show that social studies has a low status at the school and the subject was not well liked by the students; social studies ranked last from fourteen school subjects. The factors that contribute to the low status and students' dislike for social studies centre on the teaching/learning methods most commonly used in social studies lessons. The most common teaching/learning methods depended heavily on text book and seat work, and students were given few opportunities to actively participate in their learning. Students claimed social studies was 'boring', not because of the content, but because of the way the subject was taught. Year 8 students were positive toward social studies, but Year 10 students were not. The status of social studies declined by 15.9% between the two years. Although male and female students preferred different subjects, there was no significant difference in their liking of social studies.

## 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 education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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Signature

Date 01-02-00

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been little research regarding the attitudes of students to their learning, especially secondary school student attitudes toward social studies in Western Australia. This chapter provides an explanation of the purpose and significance of a case study into lower secondary student attitudes toward social studies, and provides a description of the developments in the learning area as background for this research. The limitations of this case study are discussed, and the research questions, which guide the study, are presented along with the definition of terms used throughout the thesis.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the case study was to determine lower secondary school student attitudes toward social studies, and the status of the subject in an Independent secondary school. The research used quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the student attitudes and explain the factors that influenced student attitudes. The student's gender and year level were also studied to see if either had an impact on student attitudes.

### **Significance of the study**

The case study is significant because it provides preliminary information about student attitudes toward social studies in the lower secondary years of school. There has been no research conducted in this area in Western Australian secondary schools. Although the findings are specific to the case study school, the research provides a base for further research.

Student attitudes are significant because, according to Fraser (1987, p.416), focusing on the attitudes and perceptions of students will help education be more productive as student attitudes are 'the mediators between instruction and student outcomes'. Student attitudes can effect student's ability and inclination to learn and be successful in the future (Haladyna and Thomas, 1979, p.18-19). Thus, teaching social studies, and using teaching/learning activities which students are positive toward, will increase the benefits not only to the students, but later the community in general.

Because of the increasing pressures being placed on schools and teachers to deliver quality and purposeful education, an understanding of the attitudes of students is necessary if education and educators are to be successful (Yamamoto, Thomas, and Karns, 1969. p.190). However, failure to deliver purposeful education to students may have a negative impact on students' attitudes toward social studies.

### **Background of the study**

In his comprehensive study of primary school student attitudes toward social studies in Western Australian government schools, Moroz (1996) surveyed more than three thousand students in Years 4 to 7. He found that students were generally positive toward school and social studies but the students' liking for the subject area declined between Year 4 and Year 7. Year 7 students were negative toward social studies. Students in upper primary school ranked social studies second lowest on a list of thirteen subjects: religion was the lowest (Moroz, 1995, p.46).



It is of concern that a 'core' learning area should rank so poorly especially considering Goals 7 and 8 of the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*:

- Goal 7: 'To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context'; and
- Goal 8: 'To provide students with an understanding and respect for our cultural heritage including the particular cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups' (The Hobart Declaration on Schooling, 1989).

Social studies has a key role in ensuring that Goals 7 and 8 are achieved because the goals specifically refer to the content and scope of the subject.

Moroz concluded that a major cause for the significant decline in student attitudes toward social studies was the 'continuing trend for teacher-centred, text-based delivery of the subject' and 'a lack of the appropriate instructional strategies we should expect to see in social studies classrooms' (Moroz, 1997, p.45 & 46). Although the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* was popular with teachers, students are still passive recipients in primary school social studies lessons (Moroz, 1995, p.47).

The literature review in Chapter Two will show that there are no comparable studies at the secondary school level in Western Australia. This dearth of research partly motivates this case study, in which the intention is to investigate lower secondary student attitudes toward social studies, and to try to establish what factors impact on student attitudes toward the subject.

## Definition of social studies

Social studies is an amalgam of social sciences and humanities that provide a foundation of knowledge, skills and values considered essential in Australian society. Since the 1960s, social studies has been a 'core' subject in Western Australian secondary schools. Developments in education since the late 1980s, which are discussed later, provided the impetus for social studies to be renamed Society and Environment. The name Society and Environment was introduced to schools in Western Australia in 1998 through the *Curriculum Framework*, however social studies is used in this case study, primarily because the literature refers to social studies, and the participating school still uses the term.

Social studies, can be defined as 'the study of people as social beings, as they have existed and interacted with each other and the environment, in time and place' (Curriculum Branch: Education Department of Western Australia, 1981, p.1). The definition of Society and Environment reflects contemporary issues by including 'a respect for cultural heritage and a commitment to social justice, the democratic process and ecological sustainability' (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1997, p.249). There is also a shift from a content driven, traditional transmission of information style of teaching to outcomes-based education, which emphasises the process of learning. In Society and Environment, this includes the introduction of a learning strand called Investigation, Communication and Participation (ICP) as a recognisable and assessable part of the learning process and not just as a means to achieve a final assessment based on content. ICP aims to help students develop not only knowledge and skills necessary for learning, but intra-personal and interpersonal skills, which will help students to better understand themselves and society as a whole.

Social studies aims to develop students' self-confidence, self worth and identity; communication, decision-making and cognitive skills; and to promote moral growth, social competence, and socially acceptable values (Curriculum Branch: Education Department of Western Australia, 1981, p.1-4; Carter, 1991, p.8-9). The re-introduction of civics and citizenship education to the Western Australian curriculum in the Society and Environment learning area not only requires the teaching of socially accepted values, but requires students to demonstrate the behaviours congruous with those values. Through the achievement of the aims, and with the knowledge and skills base of the social sciences, students should be able to 'develop not only personal value systems but also citizenship responsibilities' (Kennedy, 1998, p.9). Ultimately the aim of social studies/Society and Environment is to develop in students the knowledge, commitment, and willingness to be active citizens, who fully participate in Australian society.

### **Social studies in Western Australia**

As already stated social studies has been one of the 'core' subjects in Western Australian Government schools since the 1960s. It developed from Junior history and Junior geography, the two subjects that dominated social studies until the 'new Social Studies' movement influenced how social studies should be taught (Print, 1990, p27). The 'new Social Studies' movement brought about a disciplines approach to social studies. It encouraged the inclusion of other social science disciplines besides history and geography and greater emphasis was placed on processes and the structure of the social science disciplines than on the actual content (Kennedy, 1998, p.5-6).

The growing momentum of the disciplines approach to social studies, and the lack of structure in the subject, created a situation in which social studies was reviewed, and in

1981 the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* was introduced to Western Australian schools. The syllabus was 'a showpiece of curriculum development' (Print, 1990, p.27) and changed the way social studies was taught. The social science disciplines were integrated into five themes that formed the base for the sequential development and scaffolding of students' skills and knowledge from the pre-primary year to the end of Year 10. The syllabus encouraged the active participation of students in the learning process (Curriculum Branch: Education Department of Western Australia, 1981, p. 4), and was readily accepted by teachers partly because the supporting resources and *Teachers' Guides* were user friendly and easily accessed (Print, 1990, p.29).

Shortly after the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* was introduced, *Unit Curriculum* was developed in response to the *Committee of Enquiry into Education in Western Australia* (1984) (the *Beazley Report*), which was chaired by the State Labor Government's Minister for Education, Kim Beazley Snr. The *Beazley Report* emphasised the need for students to have a broader depth of knowledge in the areas they studied (Beazley, 1984, p.7), more choice in selecting what they studied, and a need for schools to cater more to the changing needs of students by providing vocational subjects and courses, rather than the traditional emphasis on academic subjects that focused on preparing students for tertiary education (Beazley, 1984, p.47). Because of the changes made to the education curriculum, the design of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* was affected.

Although the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* still provided the base for social studies, the changes introduced by *Unit Curriculum* had adverse effects on the content sequence and the skills sequence of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*. Some of the major effects outlined by Print (1990, p.60-63, 73-75) are listed below:

1. The sequential development and scaffolding of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* was lost because the order of units were changed, new units were introduced, and the number of units taught per year was reduced because of the four-term year. However, the time allocation per unit increased so the unit could be studied in greater depth. In reality students could study between eight and twelve units in social studies from Year 8 to Year 10, whereas prior to *Unit Curriculum* students studied a minimum of fifteen units in social studies during the same period;
2. Teachers claimed they no longer had as much flexibility to teach outside the mandatory content of a unit because teachers originally had to teach 80% of the objectives of a unit;
3. Individual schools selected which units would be taught so students changing schools could never study some units and so be 'behind' their new peers, or have to repeat units previously studied;
4. The introduction of grade related descriptors caused many teachers to over-evaluate, and became a source of confusion for teachers, many of whom continued using normative assessments instead of standards based assessments.

At the end of the 1990s and into the new decade, the Western Australian education system is again undergoing changes as the whole nation adopts new curricula with student-centred, outcome based learning and teaching as the foundation.

Growing economic pressure, both globally and nationally, eventuated in an Australian federal government initiative to improve education and to develop a standardised national curriculum (Kennedy, 1998, p.2; Marsh, 1998, p.168). In 1988, the *National Council of Ministers of Education Conference* released *The Hobart Declaration on Schooling (Hobart Declaration)* (Marsh, 1998, p.168). The *Hobart Declaration*

outlined the goals of *National Curriculum* and identified eight learning areas: Mathematics, English, Science, Technology, The Arts, Languages Other Than English, Health and Physical Education, and Studies of Society and Environment, which replaces social studies. Due to political interests, and divergent state politics, the standardised *National Curriculum* never eventuated; however, each state was committed to introducing a curriculum document based on the recommendations of the *National Curriculum* and the *Hobart Declaration*.

In response to these developments, the *Western Australian Curriculum Council* developed and released the *Curriculum Framework* in 1998. The *Curriculum Framework* espouses outcome-based education, and the *Outcomes and Standards Framework: Society and Environment Student Outcome Statements (Student Outcome Statements)* developed by the state's Education Department were mandated for all Education Department (Government) schools. Outcomes based education is framed around student-centred learning/teaching methods. Mastery learning and competency-based education provide the foundation for the outcomes approach to education (Marsh, 1995, p.35).

Non-Government schools are not committed to use the *Student Outcome Statements*, but must demonstrate how they have implemented the *Curriculum Framework* by 2004. Student-centred education, which is purposeful and relevant, and allows students to take responsibility for their own learning has become the focus of education and is positioned to replace the traditional inputs based or content driven education that focused on evaluation at the end of each unit of study.

## **Limitations**

This research was conducted as a case study of one Independent secondary school in the Perth metropolitan area. The school was selected because the researcher was easily able to visit the school and had an existing relationship with the school. Being a case study, the findings of the research are specific to the participating school and generalisations to the broader educational community can not be made. However, this study could be taken as a preliminary or pilot investigation.

The time of the data collection may also impact on the results. Data collection was conducted during week six of the first school term in 1999. Although students were well established in the programs for their year cohort, their attitudes may have been influenced by their experiences in the previous year. This is especially true of the Year 8 students, who had completed only six weeks in secondary school. Ideally, the survey should have been undertaken toward the end of a school year however, this was not possible.

## **Research questions**

The following questions were used to guide the research and determine the attitudes of lower secondary school students attending an Independent secondary school in the Perth metropolitan area:

1. What are the attitudes of students toward social studies?
2. What factors contribute to the attitudes of students toward social studies?

In order to answer these research questions, quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire and analysed in terms of the overall results, and the impact of gender and year level. Two open-ended questions were included on the questionnaire and, in

conjunction with focus group interviews, provided qualitative data to provide student insight into why they held particular views on social studies.

### **Definition of terms**

- **Attitude:** The Oxford School Dictionary defines attitude as a 'settled opinion or way of thinking' (1985, p.19), whereas Webster's Dictionary gives the definition 'behaviour, relation of persons expressing thought, feeling etc' (1989, p.41).
- **Independent Schools:** As opposed to Government schools, which provide primarily government funded education equally to all children of school age, Independent schools are operated on the basis of fee payment and usually have a religious or community group affiliation. Independent schools should not be confused with Catholic schools, which operate primarily under the guidelines of the Catholic Education Office.
- **Social Studies:** One of the four core subjects taught in Western Australian schools until 1997. Social studies drew essentially on the content of the social science disciplines to teach knowledge and skills and develop values considered necessary for the development of active and informed citizens in Australian society.
- ***Social Studies K-10 Syllabus:*** A social studies syllabus introduced to Western Australian schools in 1981. The syllabus was innovative in its structuring of social science disciplines into five themes to achieve the aims of social studies. Its main strength was the sequential development and scaffolding of knowledge, skills, and values while encouraging students' active participation in the learning process.
- **Society and Environment Learning Area:** The new title for social studies, which was introduced to the Western Australian education system in the



*Curriculum Framework* in 1998, but as indicated earlier the learning area has a wider scope than social studies.

- **Unit Curriculum:** Western Australian secondary school curriculum introduced in 1988 as a result of the *Beazley Report*. Students were given greater choice in their selection of units, the emphasis on vocational education increased, and students could progress through school according to ability rather than age.

## Summary

This chapter provides a background for this case study of student attitudes toward social studies in one Independent secondary school. The knowledge, skills and values taught in social studies are considered an important vehicle for training active citizens able to participate in Western Australia and in a global society. However, since the inception of social studies in Western Australian schools, and the introduction of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* there has been very little research on student attitudes toward social studies, or its status in Western Australian secondary schools.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the attitudes of lower secondary school students toward social studies, and assess the impact of student gender and year level on student attitudes and the status of social studies. The research is significant because it outlines the attitudes of lower secondary school students at an Independent school and the students' reasons for their attitudes. The study provides a foundation for further research to be conducted. The following chapter reviews some of the literature concerning student attitudes toward social studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the findings of previous research about student attitudes toward social studies. The research findings, mostly from the United States, reveals that: social studies is not a well liked subject, numerous factors contribute to its low status among students, and three researchers posit a theoretical framework that endeavours to amplify the findings.

Student attitudes toward school subjects are an under-researched area in educational research. Most investigations about student attitudes have focused on the area of science. This is especially true of attitude studies at the secondary level. Despite the lack of research conducted, interest in the attitudes of students to school subjects has a history dating back to the middle of this century (Shaughnessy and Haladyna, 1985, p.692). However, Australia lacked a comprehensive study on student attitudes toward social studies until the research of Moroz (1996) which was conducted in Western Australian primary schools and Print's (1990) report into primary and secondary social studies.

#### **Attitudes of students toward social studies**

Inskeep and Rowland (1965) studied school subject preferences of students in Grades 4 to 6 in the United States. They found social studies scored lowly compared to most of the other selected subjects, only handwriting and language had lower scores, and that students' performance had no relationship with their preferences for subjects (Inskeep

and Rowland, 1965, p.226). Haladyna and Thomas (1979) studied the attitudes of elementary school students in the United States. From the data collected, they concluded student attitudes became more negative as students progressed through elementary school. Haladyna and Thomas (1979, p.20) found students' negative attitudes toward school are not subject dependent yet social studies was consistently ranked amongst the lowest.

Fraser (1981) conducted research in the Eastern States of Australia, on the attitudes of secondary students toward school. He included four school subjects, one of which was social studies. From the research, Fraser (1981, p.133) concluded student attitudes toward school become more negative in successive year levels. Compared with the other three subjects (English, mathematics and art), student attitudes toward social studies declined more between Years 9 and 10. The research (Fraser, 1981, p.134) found student attitudes toward social studies were the third less favourable, art being the least favoured subject.

Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982a), designed their study to determine whether teacher, student, or the environmental aspect of the learning area was the most influential in forming student attitudes. Shaughnessy and Haladyna (1982a, p.42), who included one secondary year in their research, reported that 'student and teacher variables may be more responsible for individual attitudes' and environmental variables more influential at the class level. Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b, p.36) stated that social studies is one of the least liked subjects in schools in the United States. Shaughnessy and Haladyna (1985, p.694) claimed that students in secondary schools in the United States felt social studies had no relevance to their lives or future employment

potential. They contended that it is not the subject matter that is the cause for the student's negative attitudes, but both teacher quality and the student's previous experience in the area are responsible.

Stodolsky (1988, p.126), based her research on the comparison of classroom activities in mathematics and social studies classrooms in Grade 5 classes in the United States. Although she noted more diversity of activities in social studies classrooms (Stodolsky, 1988, p.104), she found that students' attitudes were more negative toward social studies, but unlike other subjects it was not because the content of the subject gets harder. Stodolsky (1988, p.126) posited that students negative attitudes were the result of past experience with teaching methods, which predisposes them to learn and enjoy various subjects more than other subjects.

Moroz's research (1996) included more than three thousand students attending Education Department of Western Australia primary schools in the Perth metropolitan area. Moroz (1996, p.62) contended that students in primary schools in Western Australia found the subject 'too easy, not challenging and that both topics and activities were boring'. Moroz found students were positive toward social studies until Year 7. Moroz's study found that the attitudes of students toward social studies declined by 23% between Year 4 and Year 7, whereas student attitudes toward the other twelve subjects declined by only 8.7% (Moroz, 1995, p.46; Moroz, 1996, p.62). Baker and Moroz (1996, p.3) reported that 'the longer students stay at school the less they like the subject [social studies]'. Despite the evidence that primary school students do not particularly like social studies, teachers perceive that their students enjoy social studies (Moroz, 1996, p.64).

The Moroz findings, as reported by Moroz and Baker (1997, p.44), concluded that upper primary students in Western Australia felt social studies was useful to them and

would be beneficial in gaining future employment. However research from the United States indicates students find social studies to be irrelevant and of little value. Western Australian employers and the community in general reflect this same attitude (Print, 1990, p. 101). This is despite the fact that social studies provides a framework for students to learn cognitive skills; develop independent learning and problem solving skills; social and communication skills; and values and knowledge considered essential in Australian society (Print, 1990, p. 101-105).

Murray (1981) claimed that due to social and economic pressures, social studies was out of touch with students, and consequently had no relevance. Murray stated that at the 'teacher level there [were] indications of aimlessness and low moral' (Murray, 1981, p.18). Bennett (1978, p.13) believed the lack of concern with 'broader perspectives [communication and investigation skills and the development of values] of social studies can only be detrimental to the development of global citizens in the coming generation of decision makers'. Hornstein (1990, p.18), also claimed that the social studies curriculum and teaching methods in the United States focused almost solely on the transfer of information rather than the acquiring of communication skills and personal development. The same views are also supported by Barth and Mizque (1991) who concluded from their comparative study of social studies in four countries that teachers lacked clarity about what social studies is, and therefore the result is confusion and poor teaching.

*The Curriculum Review of Social Studies and Social Sciences Education* (Print, 1990, p.51) gathered information from informal interviews with students, observations, and case studies in Western Australian schools. The review stated that students were relatively positive toward social studies and found it interesting and useful. The review did acknowledge however that social studies 'suffers from an image problem with

students, its status being rated the lowest of the former core subjects' (Print, 1990, p.80).

Schug, Todd and Beery (1984, p.385) found that students' comments regarding social studies lessons focused on teaching methods, with very few students being able to recall methods that should single out a social studies lesson, such as investigative learning, field trips and group activities. However students believed teachers think social studies is important, but teachers 'do not do a very good job in communicating why social studies knowledge and skills are valuable' (Schug, Todd and Beery, 1984, p.387). This is supported by Bowman, who claimed students should think of social studies as guiding them to be independent learners, equipped to participate in society through knowledge, skills and a positive self-image (Bowman, 1988, p.2). However, according to *The Assessment of Social Studies in British Columbia* (1989, p.102), students believed the most important reason for studying social studies was to learn history and geography.

Welton and Mallan (1976), in their analysis of why students do not like social studies, concluded the reasons for teaching social studies, the way it is taught and the lack of practical application of knowledge seen by students are all responsible. Welton and Mallan (1976, p. 16) suggested social studies be taught as 'something children do rather than something they're supposed to know'.

Jarolimek (1977) conducted case studies of social studies at the primary and secondary levels, in six states of the United States. From these case studies, he concluded that poor teaching of social studies was a result of no clear systematic program from which to approach the teaching of social studies. In Western Australia though the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* has provided a systematic approach to teaching social studies since the beginning of the 1980s. However, despite the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*

advocating teaching and learning methods that require a high degree of student participation, teachers in Western Australian secondary schools still depend heavily on textbooks. Baker and Moroz concluded that:

... the teaching/learning needs of the students in social studies classrooms [in Western Australia] are not being taken into account by the teachers who ... continue to utilise teacher-centred, text-based instructional practices the students find uninteresting and boring (Baker and Moroz, 1996, p.16-17).

Shaver, Davis and Helburn, (1979), in their review of three reports concerning the status of social studies, found teachers in the United States relied heavily on texts in social studies lessons. Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1979, p.151) claimed the reason for the lack of investigative learning was teachers' inexperience because of their own educational background and teachers' concerns about classroom management and students' abilities. They concluded that this reliance on texts at the expense of investigative learning resulted in student apathy (Shaver, Davis, and Helburn, 1979, p.152). Lowe (1983) found teachers relied heavily on textbooks because they felt there was a lack of support available. Morris (1989, p.313) reported that several other studies agreed that textbooks occupied most of the instructional time of lessons, yet students receive no instruction on how to use textbooks efficiently. Textbooks are particularly daunting for students entering secondary schools as they have had very little experience with textbooks (Morris, 1989, p.312).

Fouts (1989, p.137) believes that certain classroom environments are more conducive to the development of a positive attitude in students and a heavy reliance on textbooks in social studies lessons does not create a desirable classroom climate. The reliance of Western Australian secondary social studies teachers on commercially produced or school-made texts could influence student perceptions, and therefore their attitudes, toward social studies. Moroz (1995, p.47; 1996, p.62) found the most common teaching

methods employed by teachers in Western Australian government primary schools relied heavily on seat-work, and textbook work is characteristic of this, rather than requiring the active participation and engagement of students in learning.

A report by the American National Council for Social Studies (1989), which investigated the subject in early childhood and primary school age groups in the United States found that students perceived social studies to be pointless and irrelevant. The report also claims the teaching and learning activities, which include little student-centred learning, did not prepare students to be good citizens, which is one of the primary goals of social studies and social education as a whole. This is supported by Levstik (1988, p.320) who described social studies lessons in elementary schools in the United States as dull and teaching methods as tedious.

According to other research already discussed, negative experiences in social studies prior to secondary school will predispose secondary school students to have negative attitudes to social studies in future grades. The Print Report (1990) and the study by Moroz (1996) found that the teaching methods and student activities in Western Australian schools are unsuccessful in achieving the aims of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*.

Although 'teachers consider their school's social studies program to be somewhat successful' (Betres, 1981, p.24), Atwood and Finkelstein (1987, p.526) claimed social studies was given less time in schools and was often incorporated into other learning areas (Atwood and Finkelstein, p.531). Both Kennedy (1988, p.9) and Print (1990, p.23) agreed that time allocation is an indicator of the status of a subject in schools. In Australian secondary schools, between 120 and 160 hours per year are devoted to social education in the form of compulsory social studies classes (Kennedy, 1988, p.7; Print, 1990, p.25). The report by the American National Council for Social Studies (1989)



also noted the reduced time allocation to social studies at the primary level in the United States.

Hahn (1985, p.220), reporting on the findings of Gross (1977), noted that despite the 'increase in requirements, social studies electives [in secondary schools in the United States] were on the decline'. However Hahn (1985, p. 223) claimed the trend had begun to reverse by the time of her research. Atwood and Finkelstein (1987) noted the decline began in kindergartens in the United States and reported that 66% of teachers did not allocate a specific time to social studies, but integrated it with other subjects (Atwood and Finkelstein, 1987. p. 531). Bennett (1997, p.1) claims that social studies in Western Australian schools is under pressure because of crowding of the timetable due to a greater range of subjects being introduced. A decline in the time students spend in social studies lessons is concerning especially since, according to Anderson (1984, p.3), 'students learned more in subject areas to which greater amounts of time were allocated'.

Hahn (1985, p.222) noted that a significant proportion of social studies teachers in secondary school were male. She believed this was troubling because students were 'unable to observe female teachers who are knowledgeable about political and economic issues' (Hahn, 1985, p.222). Lowe (1983) developed a teacher profile of social studies teachers in the United States. From his research, Lowe concluded that social studies teachers tended to be conservative middle class men in their thirties, who were married with children and regularly attended church. Moroz's study found that female teachers accounted for approximately two-thirds of the teaching population in Western Australian primary schools, and the average age of Western Australian teachers was forty-four. However, teacher gender did not impact significantly on whether or not students liked social studies (Moroz, 1995, p.42; Moroz, 1996, p. 63).

The research on the impact of student gender however, is inconclusive and often contradictory.

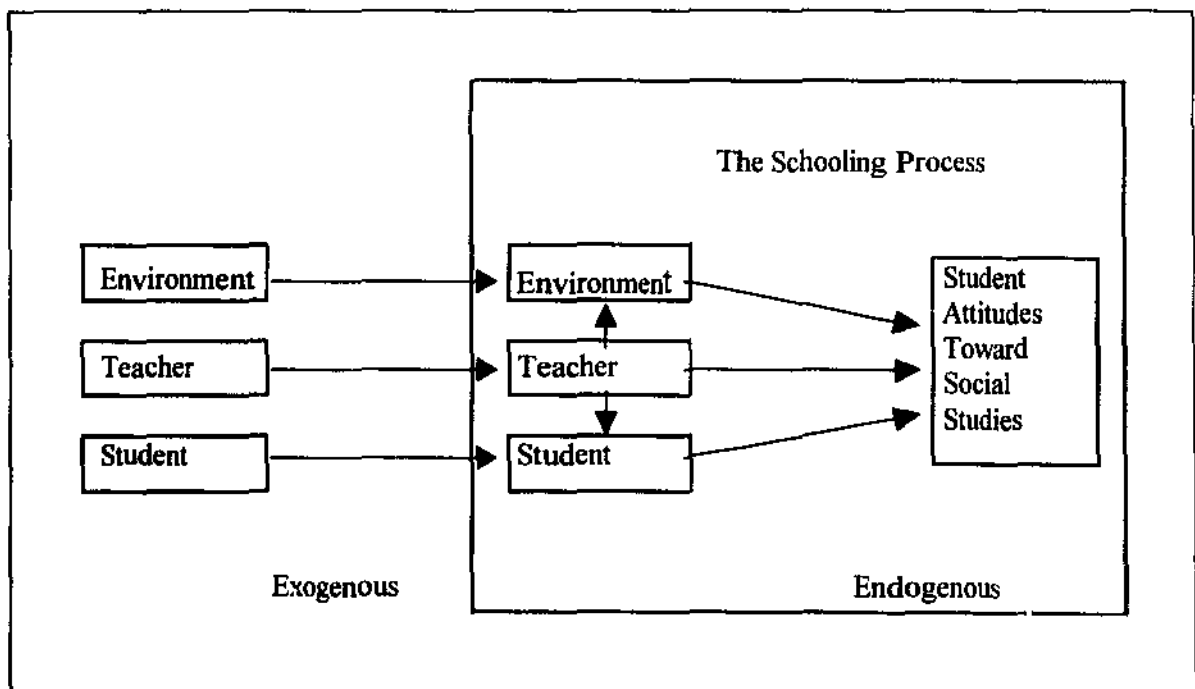
McTeer (1979, p.58) concluded that boys in the United States were more interested in social studies than girls, the research found that girls preferred sociology whereas sociology was boys' least preferred area. Haladyna and Thomas (1979, p.22) found there was no difference between the attitudes of male and female students toward social studies: both sexes rated the subject poorly. However, Fraser's study (1981, p.134) in Australian secondary schools concluded girls had more favourable attitudes toward social studies than boys did. Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b, p.37) found that boys in the secondary year included in their study, tended to like social studies (Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun, 1982b, p.40; Shaughnessy and Haladyna, 1985, p.693). Despite Hahn's concern about the effects of predominantly male teachers (1985, p.222) mentioned above, McTeer found there was no difference between the preferences of male and female students toward geography, economics and government. Fouts (1990, p.418-419) claimed that generally girls had less interest in social studies than boys did, although girls preferred the culturally oriented subjects including geography and sociology. Baker and Moroz (1996, p.10) reported that primary school girls in Western Australia were more positive toward social studies than boys. It would appear from the research that generally, female students in Australia like social studies more than their male peers while the opposite seems to be true in the United States.

### **Theoretical framework**

Haladyna, Shaughnessy, and Redsun (1982a, p.2-4) provide the theoretical framework for the study. Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun categorised factors affecting students' attitudes into three sets of variables: environment, teacher and student. Each of these variables was grouped into two categories, which Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun called endogenous and exogenous (Figure 2.1).

Endogenous variables relate to the interaction of student, teacher and learning environment variables within the schooling process, whereas exogenous variables relate to student, teacher and environment variables outside of the schooling process.

The endogenous variables are directly influenced by the teacher and school administration and as such can be manipulated or controlled. Examples include classroom environment, teaching/learning methods, teacher/student relationships, lesson content and difficulty, and year level of students. Each of these variables has an influence on the attitudes of students toward social studies, because the combination of these variables creates student attitudes. However, exogenous variables are constant and do not interact, nor can they be manipulated. That is, exogenous variables are what students and teachers bring with them to the classroom, and include experiences and values, socio-economic background, age and gender.



**Figure 2.1: Factors affecting student attitudes toward social studies**

The relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables and student attitudes toward social studies.

This case study sought to determine the student attitudes toward social studies by investigating their attitudes to, or perception of, a number of endogenous variables and two exogenous variables. Student attitudes toward social studies are a complex area and time and cost restrictions of research prevent all the exogenous and endogenous variables from being studied. The two exogenous variables considered in this case study were student gender and year level and the research sought to determine the impact of both on student attitudes. The student attitudes were determined through their perceptions of: the usefulness of social studies, the learning environment, the teaching/learning methods, the teacher and his/her attitudes toward social studies and toward the learners and parental support for social studies. Another key issue was student attitude toward school. These provided the independent variables to determine the attitudes of secondary students toward social studies, and whether these variables contribute to a positive or negative attitude of the students toward the learning area.

### **Summary**

It is apparent from the research that social studies is not highly regarded or enjoyed by most students in the United States. However in Western Australian Government primary schools, Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6 students are positive toward social studies. It is not until Year 7 that student attitudes toward social studies decline markedly and are negative. The young adolescent in the upper primary years of schooling do not like social studies.

In the research reviewed, the main reason for the negative attitudes toward social studies appears to be the way the subject is delivered to students by teachers rather than the content of the subject itself. It is suggested in the research that the failure of

teachers to use student-centred learning activities may be due to the teachers lack of ability and understanding in the learning area rather than an unwillingness to use more interesting and appropriate teaching/learning activities. Some educators suggest that, in primary schools, the overcrowded curriculum creates the problems for the learning area. From the research conducted in the United States, it appears that, in general, students do not see the relevance of social studies and therefore attach little importance on the need for social studies lessons. However, Western Australian primary school students do think social studies is important and useful, and so their opinion differs to their American counterparts.

There is though a dearth of research in the area of students' attitudes to social studies in secondary schools, particularly in Western Australia. This study aimed to provide a base for further research on the attitudes of secondary school students in Western Australia through a case study of students at one Independent secondary school. The following chapter gives a description of the school and the sample that participated in the case study as well as an account of the methods used to collect the data and the data analysis.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHOD**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the design of the research is discussed and the sample population in the case study is described. It includes a brief description of the cohort of students, as well as the characteristics of the participating school. Ethical concerns of the case study, and how they were dealt with are considered before the research design is outlined. The questionnaire, which provided the quantitative data, and the procedure for obtaining the qualitative information from the focus group discussions are also described. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

A case study approach was used in this investigation of student attitudes toward social studies. The research was conducted as a case study of one Independent secondary school in the Perth metropolitan area. The data was collected in a single school, which is a bounded system and therefore qualifies the research as a case study (Burns, 1997, p.364). The purpose of the research was to discover the attitudes of the students toward social studies at one Independent secondary school and the impact of factors such as year level and gender on these attitudes. As discovery rather than confirmatory information was the goal of the research, a case study was well suited for the collection of data and provides preliminary information on which further research can be based (Burns, 1997, p.365).

In this case study of student attitudes toward social studies, there were two parts. Firstly, quantitative data was collected from students through the completion of a questionnaire, which used a five-point Likert Scale. The responses were analysed using *Statistical Packages for Social Sciences for Windows Student Version 7.5* (1996), a commercially produced statistical analysis software package for the social sciences. The second part of the research was qualitative, involving the students in focus group interviews, where they were encouraged to openly discuss their likes and dislikes about social studies. As the research is concerned with the thoughts and attitudes of human subjects, it is appropriate the participants be given a voice in the research (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.274) since this is what the research itself is based on.

Being a case study, the results are the interpretation of responses in a particular place and time (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.277). Because of this the study is 'context dependent' (Mishler, 1979, p.2), that is the results are true and correct for the school being studied at the time of the research. However, by selecting a school that is representative of other similar schools, it can be posited that similar results would be found in similar schools (Burns, 1997, p.366). Although the research is a case study, the diversity of the information gathered (both quantitative and qualitative) allowed for crosschecking the data, thus improving the reliability and validity of the results (Burns, 1997, p.374). Because the data from the questionnaire and the focus groups were combined, the qualitative information can not only stand on its own but also help support and validate the quantitative research findings. The greater the reliability and validity of the results the more able the study is to be generalised (Cheritz and Swanson, 1986, p.13).

## **The case study school**

Criterion based sampling was used to select the participating school. The researcher was easily able to visit the school because of the school's location. The researcher also had an existing relationship with the school and was acquainted with the principal and the some school staff. The school has the general characteristics of an Independent secondary school. These characteristics include curriculum and financial management, decision-making bodies, religious affiliations, socio-economic location and composition, and small student population. The school is representative of Independent secondary schools in the Perth metropolitan area.

The decision making body is the school board, which is comprised of members of the school community including the principal, church, staff and parent representatives. However, the school is overseen directly by the founding religious organisation. There is no affiliation with either the Catholic Education Office or the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. The school has been established since the beginning of this century, and remains on its original location.

The location of the school was also a considering factor in the selection criteria. It is located in a middle socio-economic area. According to the *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (1996 Census), the average household income of the suburb is \$129 per week more than the Australian average household income. Although the school is located in the outer suburban area of the Perth metropolitan area, it draws students from across the Perth metropolitan area, as well as providing boarding facilities for otherwise isolated students, and overseas students.



Students attending the school are from a range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds. There are a number of students from Aboriginal, South American and Asian backgrounds, and for many of these students English is a second language. Payment plans, means-tested fees and reduced rates for families are also available which makes the school a viable alternative to a wider population. However the majority of the student population attending the school is from an Anglo-European, middle to high socio-economic background, who travel to school each day by private transport or the school buses.

With a population that averages between 300 and 350 students per year, from Year 8 to Year 12, the school is considerably smaller than most other secondary schools in the Perth metropolitan area. Each year is streamed into three form groups. Social studies, maths, science, computer, Bible, and English are completed in the form groups. Students are mixed for optional classes such as design and technology, home economics and art. Most classes have 20 students or less and the range of optional classes available to students is restricted because of the number of students and staff. At the time the research was conducted there were four social studies teachers for Years 8, 9 and 10, all of who were male. All of the lower secondary students who were present on the day, and willing to participate in the study were included. A total of 203 students made up the respondent group for this case study.

### **Research instrument**

To gather the quantitative data for the research, a questionnaire developed, tested, and validated by Moroz (1996) in his study of primary school students, *Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies (SATSS)*, was modified for use with the lower secondary students

at the school. Minor changes to *SATSS* resulted in a slightly modified instrument, which was called *Secondary Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies (SSATSS)* (see Appendix 1).

*SSATSS* was divided into a number of parts. The initial three items dealt with demographics, that is, the student's gender and year level, and the gender of his/her social studies teacher. These three items provided the information on the exogenous variables of the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two.

The remainder of the questionnaire dealt with the endogenous variables, which are discussed in the theoretical framework. The endogenous variables included in the questionnaire were the key issues about classroom/learning environment, the learning activities in social studies lessons, and the student's preferences for school subjects.

There were 45 items on *SSATSS* that dealt with the key issues. Each of the items related to one of nine variables, which provided the constructs for the analysis. These were not modified from the original instrument. The constructs were:

1. Student attitudes toward school
2. Student attitudes toward social studies
3. Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies
4. Student perceptions of the teacher's attitude to social studies
5. Student perceptions of the teacher's attitude to students
6. Student perceptions of the classroom environment in social studies
7. Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies
8. Student perceptions of own ability in social studies
9. Student perceptions of parental support for social studies

Each of the constructs contained five items, which were cycled through *SSATSS* from items 4 to 48. Cycling the items was done to avoid set responses from students.

Students indicated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the items on a five point Likert Scale (1 = "Strongly agree", 3 = "Neither agree or disagree", and 5 = "Strongly disagree"). The response scales changed throughout the questionnaire, however because of the students reading abilities and levels of comprehension this did not appear to pose a problem.

There were 28 activities listed in the learning activities section in *SSATSS*, including activities that are teacher centred and student centred. The items that dealt with what students perceive they learn in social studies lessons were removed because they were not relevant to lower secondary social studies lessons. The total number of items was reduced from 137 on *SATSS* to 94 on *SSATSS*. Students were able to complete *SSATSS* during one school period of fifty minutes.

The scale for learning activities required students to indicate how often students perceived they participated in the range of activities in social studies lessons (1 = "Hardly ever", 2 = "Once a term", 3 = "Once a month", 4 = "Every two weeks", and 5 = "At least once a week").

The subjects on *SATSS* were changed for *SSATSS*. The changes are shown in Table 3.1. This section was headed 'How much do you like your school subjects?' and students used a five point Likert Scale to indicate how much they liked or disliked fourteen subjects (1 = Dislike a lot, 3 = Neither like or dislike and 5 = Like a lot).

There were also two stand-alone items on *SSATSS*. These two items dealt with the student's liking for his/her social studies teacher and social studies. The item dealing with student's liking for the social studies teacher was included because the teacher is an important determinant of student attitude toward school, the learning environment and toward subjects. The final item on *SSATSS* required the student to indicate on a five point scale, how they ranked their liking of social studies (1 = "Social studies is my favourite subject", 2 = "I like social studies a lot", 3 = "Social studies is okay", 4 = "I do not like social studies", and 5 = "I don't like anything about social studies at all"). This item provided a crosscheck and was used for validation of the student's responses in the questionnaire.

**Table 3.1: Subject Changes**

SATSS Primary subjects	SSATSS Lower secondary subjects
Writing	English
Spelling	Maths
Creative writing	Science
Health	Social studies
Science	Physical education
Computing	Computing
Social studies	Home economics
Sport	Drama
Maths	Media studies
Reading	Art
Music	Health
Religion	Design and technology
Library	Music
	Photography

Finally, *SSATSS* included two open-ended questions for the student to respond to. The two questions asked the student to comment on what features of his/her social studies lessons he/she liked and disliked most.

The qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews, which were conducted for each of the three lower secondary years of schooling. As was the case with the questionnaire, students were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could decline to participate. Nine students from each year (three from each form group) were randomly selected and asked to participate in the focus groups and all of them accepted the offer.

The purpose of the qualitative research was to give 'attention to the social context in which events occur' (Cobb and Hagemaster, 1987). Because of the time restriction of the study it was impossible to interview all the students who participated in the questionnaire. The focus group discussions for each year level were useful in gaining an overall impression of student attitudes toward social studies and their reasons for these attitudes; thus, they provided the social context and explanation of student attitudes, which could not be achieved through the questionnaire.

### **Reliability estimates**

The questionnaire used in this study was a modified version of *Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies (SATSS)*, a questionnaire designed by Moroz (1996). Reliability estimates for Moroz's pilot SATSS, final version of SATSS, and the modified version SSATSS used in the current study are given in Table 3.2 below.

The internal consistency and reliability for each of the nine constructs were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. An alpha coefficient of 0.700 for a construct is considered highly reliable. The standardised alpha coefficients reported in Table 3.2 show that the relationships within each of the constructs on SSATSS improved compared

to final *SATSS*. This could be because literacy and comprehension skills of lower secondary students are better than those of primary students.

**Table 3.2: *SATSS/SSATSS* constructs and reliability estimates**

Constructs	Standardised Alpha Coefficients		
	Pilot	Final	Current Study
	<i>SATSS</i>	<i>SATSS</i>	<i>SSATSS</i>
Student attitudes toward school	0.793	0.795	0.869
Student attitude toward social studies	0.852	0.842	0.901
Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies	0.696	0.758	0.852
Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies	0.615	0.554	0.716
Student perceptions teacher attitudes to students	0.505	0.673	0.865
Student perceptions of the classroom environment in social studies	0.225	0.450	0.572
Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies	0.679	0.641	0.718
Student perceptions of own ability in social studies	-0.275	0.767	0.847
Student perceptions of parental support for social studies	0.694	0.713	0.770

The highest standardised alpha coefficient obtained for the constructs on *SSATSS* was 0.901 for “Student attitude to social studies”, which is a very high reliability. On the other hand, “Student perceptions of the classroom environment in social studies” had a standardised alpha coefficient of 0.572, which is marginally reliable. Although the reliability of the latter is questionable, it shows an improvement of the internal consistency for this construct from *SATSS* to *SSATSS*. The results of each individual item in this construct are still valid and relevant to the overall results of this case study.

## **Ethical considerations of the study**

Clearance to undertake the study was first obtained from *Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee* (see Appendix 4). In compliance with the ethical standards for conducting research the school principal was contacted and a letter was written outlining the purpose of the study, how it would be conducted, and requested permission to conduct the study at the school principal (see Appendix 2). The school teachers and students were assured of anonymity. After the principal and the school board had consented to the study, parent consent forms (see Appendix 3) were given to the school for distribution to the parents. On the day of the survey, students were given the option of not participating in the survey or in the focus group sessions.

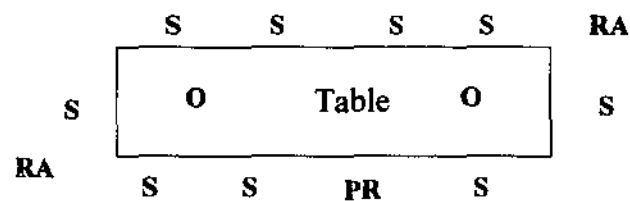
## **Data collection**

The participating school was visited on one day, in the middle of the sixth week of first term 1999. The researcher and two assistants used a rehearsed introduction and instructions to explain to students the purpose of the survey and how to complete the questionnaire. The day prior to the data collection the teachers had been prepared for the research by the principal, and had informed the students that the research would be conducted. This had given the students time to think about their involvement, but neither the teachers nor the students saw the survey until it was administered.

All lower secondary students who attended school on the day the survey was conducted, voluntary participated in the research and no teachers refused to allow their classes to complete the survey. The total number of students participating in the research was 203. Each year level was surveyed at the same time, and they completed the questionnaire in their form classes.

On average classes took twenty minutes to complete the survey. At the conclusion of the survey three students were randomly selected from each form class to participate in the focus groups. In order to achieve a random sample every seventh student, counted across the rows, was selected. No students declined the invitation to participate though it was made clear to them that participation was voluntary.

The focus groups were conducted in the second half of the lesson. Prior to the lesson, the chairs and tape recorders were set up ready for use as shown in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: Arrangement for focus group Interviews**

Seating plan for the focus groups (PR: position of the principal researcher; S: positions of the students; O: position of the microphones; RA: positions of the research assistants)

The students were encouraged to discuss what they thought of social studies, and the researcher asked open-ended questions to stimulate discussion, encourage students to develop a comment further and kept the discussion focussed. Students' comments from the focus groups were used to support the findings of the quantitative data and to give the students a voice in the research. The discussions were recorded and the two research assistants made notes for the researcher's later reference and for validation purposes. For example, the discussions allowed students to explain their likes and dislikes about social studies, which were identified, but not explained in *SSATSS*.



## **Data analysis**

*Statistical Packages for Social Sciences for Windows Student Version 7.5* (1996) was used to analyse the quantitative data. Initially descriptive statistics (frequency of responses, means, and standard deviations) for each item on the survey were calculated and students' attitudes toward social studies were determined using the results for each of the constructs in the key issues section of *SSATSS*. All of the social studies teachers at the school were male, so teachers' gender was not included as a variable in this study.

Secondly, *t*-tests were used to determine the statistically significant differences of the responses between student gender and year levels. An independent samples two-tailed *t*-test was used, to establish if there were significant differences. Because multiple *t*-tests were performed, the levels of significance were adjusted to avoid a Type 1 error. The adjustment required the level of significance for year level differences to be divided by the number of *t*-tests conducted. Therefore, because two *t*-tests were conducted to find the year level differences, the level of significance was divided by two. For example, if the difference between year levels was significant at the 0.05 level it was adjusted to 0.025. The levels of significance are reproduced in Appendix 5.

The frequencies of the learning activities were ranked according to the total percentage of students who responded to 4 and 5 on the scale. To determine the status of school subjects the mean responses were ranked. The overall means, year levels means, and student gender means were calculated and significant differences determined.

The open-ended section was not analysed using statistical analysis but were classified according to groups of comments regarding what was most commonly liked and disliked about social studies, for example the teaching/learning activities,

teacher/student relationships, and the content of social studies lessons. Recurring themes were also noted and the students comments were categorised accordingly in order to find patterns. The comments were also used in conjunction with the focus group data to support the quantitative data and provide reasons for the student attitudes toward social studies.

## Summary

To conduct this research two methods were used. Quantitative data was collected using an existing questionnaire (*SATSS*), which was modified to suit secondary students (*SSATSS*). The reliability estimates for the constructs in *SSATSS* compare favourably to the reliability estimates achieved for the original instrument. In order to validate and support the results of the questionnaire, qualitative data was collected through two open-ended questions and focus group discussions for each year level. The qualitative data provided information about students' reasons for their attitudes, which could not be gathered through the questionnaire. The quantitative data was analysed using *SPSS for Windows Student Version 7.5*, which allowed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to be used. The qualitative data from the two open-ended questions and the focus group interviews was collated and analysed through recurring patterns and allowed the researcher to find the reasons for student attitudes that were evident from the quantitative data. The following chapter reports the results of the research and includes the overall results as well as differences between genders and year levels.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The results of the research are reported in this chapter. The chapter begins with summaries of the demographics of the students who participated in the case study, and the findings of student attitudes toward social studies according to the constructs. This is followed by information about the activities that students perceive they participate in during social studies lessons. The students' ranking of social studies against other school subjects is discussed. All the findings are reported first as overall results and then according to student gender and year level differences. The levels at which the differences are significant are recorded in the corresponding tables. The results from the two open-ended questions on the research instrument and the focus group interviews are presented to conclude the findings.

#### **Demographics**

A total of 203 students participated in the case study. The total number of female and male students were 100 and 103 respectively (see Table 4.1).

Of the 203 students, 79 were in Year 8, 60 students were in Year 9 and 64 students were in Year 10. The teachers' gender was not considered in this case study, because all of the social studies teachers were male.

**Table 4.1: Number of students – Gender and year level**

Year	Females	Males	Total
8	39	40	79
9	26	34	60
10	35	29	64
Total	100	103	203

**Key issues associated with student attitudes toward social studies**

The data from the key issues about classroom and learning environment were categorised and analysed according to the nine constructs discussed in the previous chapter. The results of each construct, and the stand alone item dealing with the student's liking for his/her social studies teacher, are discussed below according to the overall results, student gender and year level.

**Construct 1: Student attitudes toward school**

A high standardised alpha coefficient of 0.869 indicates this construct is very reliable in assessing student attitudes toward school. The overall results show students are generally positive toward their school, although their attitudes are in the lower range of the positive scale as shown in Table 4.2. Students' response to the statement "We have good rules in our school" was the only overall slightly negative response in this construct with a mean of 2.50.

When the responses are compared on the basis of gender (see Table 4.3), it is evident that male students are less positive toward school than female students. The means for females was consistently higher than the means for males, and there was a significant difference between the male students' and female students' responses to the statement

“I like school” (0.004). Male students did not like school. Although female students liked school, both female and male students were negative about the school rules.

**Table 4.2: Construct 1 - Student attitudes toward school - Overall**

	Mean	SD
I am happy to come to this school	3.45	1.07
At school I find most subjects interesting	3.41	1.07
I like school	3.08	1.24
I like most of the teachers in this school	3.27	1.26
We have good rules in our school	2.50	1.32
Overall	3.14	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.869  
 SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.3: Construct 1 - Student attitudes toward school – Gender differences**

	Females		Males		Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
I am happy to come to this school	3.57	1.02	3.33	1.07	ns
At school I find most subjects interesting	3.53	1.03	3.30	1.07	ns
I like school	3.33	1.12	2.83	1.24	**
I like most of the teachers in this school	3.38	1.23	3.16	1.26	ns
We have good rules in our school	2.65	1.33	2.63	1.32	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 Sig = level of significance: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.005; \*\*\* = 0.001  
 SD = Standard deviation  
 ns = not significant

Year level responses showed a number of significant differences between Year 9 students and the other two year levels. When comparing Year 8 and Year 9 mean responses, Year 9 students were significantly more negative toward school, their liking of the teachers, and how good they thought the school rules were. Although the mean response of Year 9 students to the statement “I am happy to come to this school” was positive, it was significantly different to Year 8 students response.

Table 4.4 shows that student attitudes toward school declined between Years 8 and 9, but improved between Years 9 and 10. The only significant difference between Years 9 and 10 was to the statement ‘At school I find most subjects interesting’. Over the three years there was a decline in students’ overall attitude toward school, the means for all five statements being lower in Year 10 than in Year 8.

**Table 4.4: Construct 1 –Student attitudes toward school – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8&9	Year 9&10
I am happy to come to this school	3.71	1.01	3.22	1.11	3.35	1.05	*	ns
At school I find most subjects interesting	3.56	1.12	3.18	1.20	3.44	0.84	ns	*
I like school	3.30	1.29	2.77	1.29	3.10	1.06	*	ns
I like most of the teachers in this school	3.73	1.25	2.75	1.26	3.17	1.09	***	ns
We have good rules in our school	2.99	1.33	2.07	1.26	2.31	1.20	***	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005  
SD = Standard deviation  
ns = not significant

**Construct 2: Student attitudes toward social studies**

Overall, students were negative toward social studies and they did not like the social studies activities or the topics (Table 4.5). However, a mean of 4.15 indicates students were very positive to the statement “In social studies I try to do as well as I can”, and students thought what they learned in social studies was interesting. This construct was highly reliable in assessing student attitudes toward social studies, having a very high standardised alpha coefficient of 0.901.

The comparison of the responses of female and male students represents the same pattern as the overall findings. The only difference, and it was not significant, was that

female students were positive in their liking of the topics in social studies, however a mean of 3.09 is a marginally positive response, and male students were marginally negative toward the topics. This did not represent a significant difference. As illustrated by the responses in Table 4.6, females were more negative toward social studies than males, yet were less negative toward the activities and were positive toward the topics in social studies. Male students however were more positive than female students toward the last item in this construct: ‘The things we learn in social studies are interesting’. The only response with a significant difference was to the statement “In social studies I try to do as well as I can”, which had a mean of 4.29 for female students and a mean of 4.03 for male students.

**Table 4.5: Construct 2 - Student attitudes toward social studies - Overall**

	Mean	SD
I enjoy the activities we do in social studies	2.92	1.08
I like social studies	2.93	1.18
I like the topics we do in social studies	2.99	1.13
In social studies I try to do as well as I can	4.15	0.08
The things we learn in social studies are interesting	3.15	1.22
Overall	3.22	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree;; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.901  
SD = Standard deviation

Year 8 students were positive toward social studies, but by Year 9, this attitude had declined significantly, and Year 9 students were negative. The only positive response given by Year 9 students was to the statement “In social studies I try to do as well as I can”, which had a mean of 3.95. There was a significant difference between Year 8 and Year 9 students’ enjoyment of the activities they do in social studies, their liking of the topics, how much they try, and how interesting they find their learning in social studies.

Although Year 10 students' responses were less negative than Year 9 students were, there were no significant differences. The Year 10 means do not return to the same levels as Year 8 (see Table 4.7).

**Table 4.6: Construct 2 – Student attitudes toward social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males		Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
I enjoy the activities we do in social studies	2.94	1.02	2.90	1.14	ns
I like social studies	2.91	1.10	2.94	1.26	ns
I like the topics we do in social studies	3.09	1.12	2.89	1.14	ns
In social studies I try to do as well as I can	4.29	0.63	4.03	0.92	*
The things we learn in social studies are interesting	3.10	1.21	3.19	1.23	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig = level of significance: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.005; \*\*\* = 0.001

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant

**Table 4.7: Construct 2 – Student attitudes toward social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8&9	Year 9&10
I enjoy the activities we do in social studies	3.32	1.02	2.65	1.09	2.68	1.01	***	ns
I like social studies	3.15	1.14	2.77	1.24	2.79	1.14	ns	ns
I like the topics we do in social studies	3.32	1.12	2.77	1.14	2.79	1.05	*	ns
In social studies I try to do as well as I can	4.41	0.71	3.95	0.89	4.03	0.74	**	ns
The things we learn in social studies are interesting	3.54	1.13	2.87	1.16	2.92	1.26	**	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant



**Construct 3: Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies**

The standardised alpha coefficient obtained for this construct (0.852) is high indicating the construct is very reliable in determining student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies. Students generally believed social studies was useful. Overall, students thought that doing social studies was important, they learned a lot, they would use the information they learned and that it would help them understand the world more. However, students did not believe social studies would help them get a job, although the mean response for this statement was only just negative (mean of 2.98) as shown in Table 4.8. Female students did give a positive response to the statement “If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job”, however it was only marginally positive at 3.03, and male students had a negative mean response of 2.23. This was not a significant difference though.

**Table 4.8: Construct 3 – Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies – Overall**

	Mean	SD
What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me	3.56	1.02
I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies	3.45	1.02
If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	3.03	1.14
Doing social studies is important	3.51	1.00
I learn a lot in social studies	3.28	1.16
Overall	3.29	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.852  
SD = Standard deviation

The only significant difference between the genders in this construct was to the importance of doing social studies. Both male and female students were positive to the importance of doing social studies, female students were significantly more positive than male students. Female students were also more positive about the usefulness of

social studies than male students were (see Table 4.9), but there were no significant differences between the mean gender scores.

**Table 4.9: Construct 3: Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males		Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me	3.55	0.99	3.56	1.05	ns
I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies	3.45	0.98	3.23	1.09	ns
If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	3.03	1.10	2.93	1.17	ns
Doing social studies is important	3.51	0.85	3.17	1.11	*
I learn a lot in social studies	3.28	1.14	3.23	1.17	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig = level of significance: \* = .005; \*\* = 0.005; \*\*\* = 0.001

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant

**Table 4.10: Construct 3 – Student perceptions of the usefulness of social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	8 & 9	9 & 10
What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me	3.92	0.69	3.21	1.14	3.41	1.12	***	ns
I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies	3.63	0.92	3.12	1.01	3.19	1.06	**	ns
If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	3.33	1.09	2.62	1.08	2.98	1.14	***	ns
Doing social studies is important	3.63	0.85	2.93	0.99	3.33	1.08	***	*
I learn a lot in social studies	3.58	1.10	3.00	1.19	3.26	1.10	*	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant

Students' perceptions of the usefulness of social studies declined significantly for all the items in this construct between Years 8 and 9. But as was the case with the previous

constructs, perceptions improved slightly in Year 10 although they did not return to the Year 8 levels.

**Construct 4: Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies**

This construct was reliable: the standardised alpha coefficient was 0.716. Students perceived their social studies teachers to be positive toward the subject. But the mean response to the statement “My teacher likes to display our work in social studies” is disappointing, being the only negative response in this construct with a mean of 2.35. The highest overall mean score was to the statement “My teacher is interested in social studies” with a mean of 3.84. As shown by the data in Table 4.11, students perceive their teachers think social studies is important (an overall mean of 3.82), but their perception of the teachers’ enjoyment of social studies lessons is not particularly high (an overall mean of 3.40).

**Table 4.11: Construct 4 - Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies - Overall**

	Mean	SD
My teacher is interested in social studies	3.84	1.08
My teacher enjoys social studies lessons	3.40	1.03
My teacher thinks that social studies is important	3.82	0.94
In social studies lessons my teacher often talks about world news	3.19	1.31
My teacher likes to display our work in social studies	2.35	1.05
Overall	3.32	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.716  
SD = Standard deviation

Students’ perceptions of their teachers’ attitudes toward social studies varied very little when compared according to the means of each gender as shown in Table 4.12. Female

students did think their social studies teachers enjoyed social studies and talked about world news more than male students did, but this difference was not significant.

**Table 4.12: Construct 4 - Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
My teacher is interested in social studies	3.81	1.05	3.87	1.11
My teacher enjoys social studies lessons	3.47	0.95	3.34	1.10
My teacher thinks that social studies is important	3.83	0.93	3.81	0.95
In social studies lessons my teacher often talks about world news	3.32	1.29	3.06	1.31
My teacher likes to display our work in social studies	2.34	0.97	2.36	1.13

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.716  
 SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.13: Construct 4 - Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
My teacher is interested in social studies	4.11	0.99	3.59	0.89	3.73	1.27	**	ns
My teacher enjoys social studies lessons	3.86	0.83	3.08	1.08	3.14	1.01	***	ns
My teacher thinks that social studies is important	4.01	0.93	3.60	0.89	3.78	0.96	*	ns
In social studies lessons my teacher often talks about world news	3.15	1.26	2.62	1.24	3.78	1.18	*	***
My teacher likes to display our work in social studies	2.90	1.07	1.97	0.88	2.03	0.88	***	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005  
 SD = Standard deviation  
 ns = not significant

Again, the significant differences were between the mean responses of Year 8 and Year 9 students as shown in Table 4.13. Year 9 students' attitudes were significantly different to Year 8 students. The mean response to the statement "In social studies my

teacher often talks about world news” was negative at the Year 9 level, but the mean increased by more than one point at the Year 10 level. This represented the only significant difference between Year 9 and Year 10 (0.0000). Students’ responses to this statement are also interesting because it changes the general pattern of mean responses by year levels and the Year 10 mean response is actually higher than the mean response of the Year 8 students. The lowest mean response in this construct was the Year 9 students’ response to the statement “My teacher likes to display our work in social studies” (mean of 1.97), which represented an absolute decline of nearly one point from Year 8.

#### **Construct 5: Student perceptions of teacher attitudes to students**

The standardised alpha coefficient for this construct was 0.865, which was high and the construct was a very reliable assessment of student perceptions of teacher attitudes to students. Overall, students were positive about their teachers’ attitudes toward students. Students perceived their social studies teachers to be fair, encouraging, and interested in student opinions, which is evident from the means in Table 4.14. No one gender could be isolated as more or less positive about teachers’ attitudes to students. Although male students were more positive in their perception of teachers interest in their opinions and encouraging them to do well than were the female students. The mean gender responses are shown in Table 4.15.

Year level mean differences, shown in Table 4.16, indicated that Year 8 students were more positive than the Year 9 and Year 10 students about their teachers’ attitudes to students. As is the case with the previous constructs, there was a significant difference

between all the mean responses of Year 8 and Year 9 students in this construct as shown in Table 4.16.

**Table 4.14: Construct 5 – Student perceptions of teacher attitudes to students – Overall**

	Mean	SD
In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion	3.21	1.04
In social studies lessons my teacher tells me when my work is good	3.46	1.23
In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students	3.36	1.14
In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us	3.43	1.24
In social studies lessons my teacher encourages me to do well	3.30	1.18
Overall	3.35	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.15: Construct 5 - Student perceptions of teacher attitudes to students – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion	3.15	1.09	3.27	1.04
In social studies lessons my teacher tells me when my work is good	3.43	1.31	3.48	1.23
In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students	3.37	1.17	3.36	1.14
In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us	3.38	1.30	3.48	1.24
In social studies lessons my teacher encourages me to do well	3.19	1.18	3.40	1.18

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

There was also a general decline in the students’ perceptions of the teachers’ attitudes toward students between Years 9 and 10. The only statement to which the Year 10 students mean response was higher than the Year 9 students mean response was to the statement ‘In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students’. Year 9 students responded negatively to this statement, the mean being 2.97, but Year 10 students were marginally positive with a mean response of 3.05. Year 10 students did

not think their social studies teachers were interested in their opinions, did not tell them when their work was good, or had encouraged them to do well in social studies lessons. Although Year 10 students were more negative to the teachers’ attitudes toward students, there were no significant differences between Year 10 mean responses and Year 9 mean responses.

**Table 4.16: Construct 5 - Student perceptions of teacher attitudes to students – Year level difference**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion	3.54	0.89	3.08	1.05	2.94	1.11	**	ns
In social studies lessons my teacher tells me when my work is good	4.18	1.00	3.00	1.04	2.98	1.24	***	ns
In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students	3.91	0.82	2.97	1.03	3.05	1.30	***	ns
In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us	4.01	0.82	3.08	1.21	3.03	1.44	***	ns
In social studies lessons my teacher encourages me to do well	3.87	0.96	3.10	1.02	2.98	1.27	***	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.00005  
SD = Standard deviation  
ns = not significant

**Construct 6: Student perceptions of classroom environment in social studies**

This construct had the lowest standardised alpha coefficient of 0.572, which is marginally reliable. This means the items in this construct may assess other factors more than student perceptions of the classroom environment in social studies. However, the results of each item were still relevant and informative. Overall, students did not look forward to their next social studies lessons and believed students wasted time in social studies lessons. The positive mean responses in Table 4.17 indicate

students work well together in social studies, the lessons are not noisy and students are slightly competitive with each other (mean scores of 3.43, 3.07 and 3.11 respectively).

The results in Table 4.18 show both female and male students had positive and negative mean responses to the same statements, except for the statement “In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends”. Although there was no significant difference in the responses of the genders, female students had a negative mean response of 2.99, and male students had a positive mean response of 3.23, indicating male students were more competitive in social studies lessons than female students.

**Table 4.17: Construct 6 - Student perceptions of classroom environment in social studies – Overall**

	Mean	SD
I look forward to my next social studies lesson	2.43	1.16
In social studies lessons the students work well together	3.43	1.02
Social studies lessons are not noisy	3.07	1.17
Students do not waste time in social studies lessons	2.55	1.08
In social studies lessons I try to get a higher mark than my friends	3.11	1.21
Overall	2.91	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.572  
SD = Standard deviation

Year level differences again indicate Year 9 students were generally more negative in their perceptions than the other year levels and Year 8 students were the most positive cohort. There were significant differences between Year 8 and Year 9 mean responses for the first four statements in this construct as listed in Table 4.19. Year 9 students had an approximately equal mean response to the Year 8 students to the final statement in



this construct, which dealt with students' competitiveness. The mean responses for each year being 3.25 and 3.24 respectively.

**Table 4.18: Construct 6 - Student perceptions of classroom environment in social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I look forward to my next social studies lesson	2.48	1.15	2.40	1.16
In social studies lessons the students work well together	3.49	1.04	3.37	1.00
Social studies lessons are not noisy	3.10	1.19	3.04	1.15
Students do not waste time in social studies lessons	2.65	1.12	2.46	1.04
In social studies lessons I try to get a higher mark than my friends	2.99	1.15	3.23	1.25

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.19: Construct 6 - Student perceptions of classroom environment in social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
I look forward to my next social studies lesson	2.75	1.11	2.23	1.13	2.23	1.17	*	ns
In social studies lessons the students work well together	3.71	0.87	3.03	1.12	3.46	0.98	***	ns
Social studies lessons are not noisy	3.43	1.02	2.57	1.29	3.09	1.05	***	*
Students do not waste time in social studies lessons	3.01	1.00	1.93	1.01	2.57	0.96	***	***
In social studies lessons I try to get a higher mark than my friends	3.24	1.24	3.25	1.23	2.83	1.10	ns	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant

Year 10 students were less competitive than the other two year levels, their mean response being negative at 2.23, However this was not significant. The significant differences between the mean responses of Year 9 and Year 10 related to the noise level

in social studies lessons, and whether students wasted time in social studies. In each case, Year 10 students' mean responses were significantly higher.

Year 9 students mean response to the fourth statement, concerning the wasting of time, is extremely low at 1.93. This indicated students in this year level wasted time in their social studies lessons.

#### **Construct 7: Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies**

The standardised alpha coefficient was 0.718 for this construct, therefore it is a reliable assessment of student perceptions of classroom management in social studies. The overall results of this construct indicated students are positive to classroom management, except to the fourth statement, 'In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early'. The results reported in Table 4.20 show students were negative to this statement. Students' perceptions of the teachers' abilities to control the students during social studies lessons had the most positive mean response (3.64).

Although students perceived social studies lessons to be well organised, a mean response of 3.14 is low, but nevertheless positive.

There were no significant gender differences in this construct. The mean responses reported in Table 4.21 show female and male students agreed that the teacher was able to control the class, the materials in social studies lessons were good, the class was organised, and the teacher clearly explained what to do. Both genders disagreed that there was a lot to do in social studies when they finished their work early.

**Table 4.20: Construct 7 - Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies – Overall**

	Mean	SD
In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students	3.64	1.05
We have good materials to read and use in social studies	3.20	1.15
In social studies lessons the class is well organised	3.14	0.98
In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early	2.65	1.06
In social studies lessons the teacher clearly explains what we have to do	3.51	1.12
Overall	3.22	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.21: Construct 7: Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students	3.71	1.04	3.58	1.05
We have good materials to read and use in social studies	3.13	1.12	3.27	1.18
In social studies lessons the class is well organised	3.18	0.98	3.11	0.99
In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early	2.72	1.00	2.59	1.11
In social studies lessons the teacher clearly explains what we have to do	3.46	1.20	3.56	1.04

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

There were however, significant differences between Year 8 and Year 9 on each of the statements in this construct. Year 8 students' mean responses were very positive to teachers' abilities to control students and teachers' explanations with mean responses of 4.18 and 4.04 respectively. Except for the statement "In social studies lessons the class is well organised", to which Year 8 students were positive (3.53), but Year 9 students

were negative (2.73), both year levels gave positive and negative responses toward the same statements.

**Table 4.22: Construct 7 - Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students	4.18	0.80	3.10	1.05	3.49	1.01	***	ns
We have good materials to read and use in social studies	3.46	1.16	3.05	1.19	3.03	1.05	*	ns
In social studies lessons the class is well organised	3.53	0.89	2.73	0.92	3.05	0.98	***	ns
In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early	2.83	1.07	2.37	1.03	2.70	1.03	*	ns
In social studies lessons the teacher clearly explains what we have to do	4.04	0.96	3.33	1.04	3.03	1.14	***	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree

Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.005; \*\*\* = 0.0005

SD = Standard deviation

ns = not significant

The same pattern is true of the comparison between Year 9 and Year 10 mean responses. Student perceptions of how good the materials used in social studies are, and how well teachers explained what students have to do continue to decline between Years 9 and 10. Student attitudes to how well the social studies classes are organised improved between Year 9, the mean response being 2.73, and Year 10 when the mean response is positive at 3.05. However, this does not represent a significant difference

#### **Construct 8: Student perceptions of own ability in social studies**

The results reported in Table 4.23 show that, overall, students were positive about their own ability in social studies. There was a standard alpha coefficient of 0.847 for this

construct, which indicates the construct is very reliable. They perceived themselves to be successful, easily doing their best and able to do well in social studies lessons. Students did not find the work too difficult and believed they could do all the work in social studies lessons. There were no overall negative responses in this construct.

Like the overall results, both genders perceived themselves to be successful students in social studies. There were no significant differences between genders, although Table 4.24 shows female students were marginally more positive to all but one statement in this construct. The only statement to which male students had a mean response that was more positive than female students concerned the ease they could do their best in social studies. The mean response for male students to the statement was 3.47, only slightly higher than the female students' mean response of 3.32, however this was not significant.

**Table 4.23: Construct 8 - Student perceptions of own ability in social studies - Overall**

	Mean	SD
I am able to well in social studies	3.20	0.96
I can do all the work in social studies	3.51	1.08
Social studies is not too hard for me	3.67	0.96
It is easy for me to do my best in social studies	3.40	1.07
I am a successful student in social studies	3.19	1.03
Overall	3.39	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.847  
SD = Standard deviation

Comparisons of year levels in Table 4.25 show that students in all year levels were positive in their perceptions of their own abilities. Year 8 students continued to be the most positive cohort and there were significant differences between some of the

responses of Year 8 and Year 9 students. Year 8 students were significantly more positive about their ability to do their best, how easily they can do their best and their success as a student in social studies.

**Table 4.24: Construct 8 - Student perceptions of own ability in social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I am able to well in social studies	3.26	0.93	3.14	0.99
I can do all the work in social studies	3.57	0.96	3.46	1.18
Social studies is not too hard for me	3.71	0.89	3.62	1.03
It is easy for me to do my best in social studies	3.32	1.06	3.47	1.07
I am a successful student in social studies	3.22	1.03	3.16	1.04

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.847  
SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.25: Construct 8 - Student perceptions of own ability in social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
I am able to well in social studies	3.30	0.92	3.12	1.03	3.14	0.95	ns	ns
I can do all the work in social studies	3.80	1.05	3.32	1.07	3.33	1.05	*	ns
Social studies is not too hard for me	3.89	0.91	3.58	0.95	3.47	1.00	ns	ns
It is easy for me to do my best in social studies	3.67	0.97	3.30	1.17	3.14	1.01	ns	ns
I am a successful student in social studies	3.44	0.93	3.03	1.10	3.03	1.03	*	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.005; \*\*\* = 0.0005  
SD = Standard deviation  
ns = not significant

There were no significant differences between Year 9 and Year 10 in this construct.

Year 9 students were more positive than Year 10 students in regard to the difficulty of

social studies, and how easily they can do their best. Year 10 students were more positive about their ability to do well, and whether they could do all the work in social studies. However, the mean responses were almost equal, Year 10's means were 3.14 and 3.33 respectively and Year 9's mean responses were 3.12 and 3.32 respectively. The mean responses for both year levels to the final statement, regarding their success in social studies, were equal (3.03).

#### **Construct 9: Student perceptions of parental support for social studies**

Parents were encouraging and supported students with regard to social studies. The overall students' mean responses to all items in Table 4.26 were positive. The highest mean of 3.90 was to the statement "My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies" which indicates parents place some value on social studies. However, there was a lower mean (3.31) for how important parents think social studies is. Parents were encouraging and helpful with homework, but a mean of 3.12 indicates they were moderately interested in the work their children do in social studies. This construct is a reliable measure of student perceptions of parental support for social studies. The standardised alpha coefficient was 0.770.

From the results in Table 4.27, it can be seen that the mean responses for each of the five items in this construct ranked in the same order for female and male students. The items ranked from the highest mean (most positive) to the lowest mean (least positive) were: parental encouragement to their best in social studies; parental encouragement to do their social studies homework; parental help with social studies home work; how important parents think social studies is; and finally parental interest in students' work in social studies. Male students were more positive to parental encouragement to do

homework, encouraging students to do their best and the importance parents placed on social studies. Female students, however, had more positive means for parental help with homework and parents interest in their social studies work.

**Table 4.26: Construct 9 - Student perceptions of parental support for social studies - Overall**

	Mean	SD
My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework	3.74	0.96
My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help	3.54	1.18
My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies	3.90	1.01
My parents are interested in the social studies work I do	3.12	1.05
My parents think that social studies is an important school subject	3.31	0.86
Overall	3.52	

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 Standardised Alpha Coefficient = 0.770  
 SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.27: Construct 9- Student perceptions of parental support for social studies – Gender differences**

	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework	3.70	0.95	3.78	0.96
My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help	3.62	1.25	3.48	1.10
My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies	3.84	1.03	3.96	0.98
My parents are interested in the social studies work I do	3.13	1.04	3.11	1.07
My parents think that social studies is an important school subject	3.28	0.78	3.35	0.94

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
 SD = Standard deviation

The only negative mean response in this construct was the Year 9 mean of 2.93 for parental interest in social studies work. Again, the mean responses declined between Year 8 and Year 9, but it was not significant. The mean response for parental encouragement to do their best, parental interest in social studies work and how



important parents think social studies is improved between Year 9 and Year 10, as shown in Table 4.28. However there were a declines in the mean responses for parental encouragement to do homework and parental help with homework, but they were not significant. Although the mean responses to the first two statements declined significantly in Year 10, Year 10 students were positive about parental support toward social studies.

**Table 4.28: Construct 9 - Student perception of parental support for social studies – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework	3.97	0.92	3.80	0.96	3.40	0.91	ns	*
My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help	3.81	1.12	3.63	1.02	3.13	1.28	ns	*
My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies	4.13	0.99	3.75	0.99	3.76	1.01	ns	ns
My parents are interested in the social studies work I do	3.33	1.06	2.93	1.07	3.03	0.98	ns	ns
My parents think that social studies is an important school subject	3.52	0.73	3.08	0.96	3.27	0.87	*	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005  
SD = Standard deviation  
ns = not significant

**Students’ liking of their social studies teachers**

The final item in the key issues about the classroom and learning environment in SSATSS was a stand-alone item. It was included because student attitudes toward social studies can be affected by the student’s liking of his/her social studies teacher.

**Table 4.29: Student’s liking of teacher – Overall**

	Overall	
	Mean	SD
I like my social studies teacher	3.05	1.33

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.30: Students' liking of their social studies teacher – Gender differences**

	Female		Male	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I like my social studies teacher	3.02	1.32	3.09	1.34

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
SD = Standard deviation

The overall response to this statement was marginally positive (3.05). Male students' mean response of 3.09 was more positive than female students mean response of 3.02, but it was not significant. Year 8 students were the most positive about their liking for their social studies teachers with a mean of 3.62. The Year 9 students were negative about liking their social studies teachers, the mean being 2.82, which represented a significant difference to the Year 8 response. The results in Table 4.31 show the decline in students' liking for their social studies teachers continued in Year 10 when the mean was 2.57, however this did not represent a significant difference to Year 9.

**Table 4.31: Students' liking of their social studies teacher – Year level differences**

	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Sig*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Year 8 & 9	Year 9 & 10
I like my social studies teacher	3.62	1.16	2.82	1.28	2.57	1.33	***	ns

5= Strongly agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neither agree or disagree; 2= Disagree; 1= Strongly disagree  
Sig\* = Adjusted level of significance: \* = 0.025; \*\* = 0.0025; \*\*\* = 0.0005  
SD = Standard deviation  
ns = not significant

Although the overall mean was positive, neither Year 9 nor Year 10 students liked their social studies teachers. This could explain, in part, why students do not like social studies, and do not look forward to their next social studies class.

## **Learning activities in social studies**

As described in the previous chapter, the second part of the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with the types of activities students perceived they participated in during social studies lessons. The activities were then ranked by adding the percentages of students' responses to "At least once a week" (5) and "Every two weeks" (4).

### **Frequency of learning activities in social studies lessons**

Table 4.32 lists the activities from the most frequent to the least frequent. Activities such as text book work, reading and copying from the board ranked high on the list, whereas activities that are student-centred such as small group work and problem solving are ranked in the lower half. The most common activities that students participate in during social studies are textbook work (91.5%), homework (82%) and reading (80.8%), and the least common are excursions (3.2%), roleplays (3.3%), and guest speakers (8.1%).

Because excursions and guest speakers are time consuming to organise and conduct, and can be costly, it is understandable that they rank very low. However, activities such as small group work, library, problem solving, newspaper activities and roleplays, which should characterise social studies lessons, are ranked as the least common activities. Skills based activities are distributed throughout the rank. The most common skills activities are pictures and diagrams, and map work. The activities ranked as the most common do not require students' active participation or interaction, but for them to work independently and quietly in their seats.

**Table 4.32: Frequency of learning activities in social studies- Overall**

Activity	Every two weeks or more (%)
Text book work	91.5
Homework	82.0
Reading	80.8
Copying from the blackboard	67.5
Research	64.5
Whole Class Discussions	61.5
Reading aloud to the class	58.0
Pictures and diagrams	51.2
Map work	47.4
Essays (a page of writing)	44.8
Social studies project	42.8
Atlas work	34.7
Colouring-in	32.5
Current events (News)	30.7
Graphs	28.5
Films	27.6
Tests	27.0
Small group activities	26.0
Library	24.8
Problem solving	23.5
Video or TV programs	20.2
Computer	17.7
Tables (not maths tables)	17.5
Tracing	11.6
Newspaper activities	10.7
Guest speakers	8.1
Roleplays	3.3
Excursions	3.2

Frequency of activities in social studies lessons, ranked from most common to least common, as a percentage of students responses to 1 = "At least once a week" and 2 = "Every two weeks".

When the activities are compared by year level (see Table 4.33), the results are similar. Year 8 students are primarily occupied with copying from the blackboard or working from the textbook (frequencies: 87.2% and 85.7% respectively). Textbook work ranked highest among Year 9 students (98.4%), whereas Year 10 students ranked textbook work second (92.1%), and homework first (95.2%). Reading ranked in the top five activities for all Years; Year 8 students ranked reading fourth (78.6%), Year 9 students

ranked reading second (78.3%) and Year 10 students ranked it third (85.7%). Copying from the blackboard ranked highest with Year 8 students (87.2%) and fourth with Year 10 students (71%), but Year 9 students ranked it tenth (38.3%).

**Table 4.33: Frequency of learning activities in social studies - Year level differences**

Year 8		Year 9		Year 10	
Activity	Every two weeks or more (%)	Activity	Every two weeks or more (%)	Activity	Every two weeks or more (%)
Copying from the blackboard	87.2	Textbook work	98.4	Homework	95.2
Textbook work	85.7	Reading	78.3	Textbook work	92.1
Pictures and diagrams	81.1	Reading aloud to the class	66.6	Reading	85.7
Reading	78.6	Whole class discussion	65.0	Copying from the blackboard	71.0
Homework	87.1	Research	65.0	Reading aloud to the class	65.7
Map work	77.3	Homework	61.0	Essays (a page of writing)	61.9
Colouring-in	71.8	Social studies project	45.0	Whole class discussion	59.7
Research	68.9	Map work	40.0	Research	58.7
Whole class discussion	60.3	Tests	39.0	Guest speakers	48.0
Atlas Work	54.0	Copying from the blackboard	38.3	Social studies project	46.9
Reading aloud to the class	44.6	Library	37.3	Current events	46.0
Essays (a page of writing)	44.3	Atlas Work	37.3	Pictures and diagrams	44.5
Films	44.1	Essays (a page of writing)	27.1	Small group activities	31.8
Social studies project	37.7	Problem solving	21.7	Graphs	28.6
Graphs	37.5	Pictures and diagrams	18.7	Newspaper activities	23.0
Tables (not maths tables)	35.5	Graphs	18.7	Video and TV programs	22.6
Computer activities	34.3	Current events	16.7	Films	21.3
Small group activities	31.3	Films	15.3	Tables (not maths tables)	22.2
Video and TV programs	30.5	Small group activities	13.6	Map work	19.0
Problem solving	29.4	Computer activities	12.0	Problem solving	19.0
Current events	28.6	Tables (not maths tables)	10.3	Tests	17.4
Tests	25.7	Colouring-in	6.8	Library	14.5
Library	23.7	Video and TV programs	5.1	Colouring-in	9.6
Tracing	22.1	Tracing	5.1	Atlas Work	9.5
Guest speakers	20.7	Guest speakers	0	Tracing	2.4
Newspaper activities	8.6	Newspaper activities	0	Computer activities	4.7
Excursions	8.4	Roleplays	0	Roleplays	1.6
Roleplays	4.8	Excursions	0	Excursions	1.6

Frequency of activities in social studies lessons, ranked from most common to least common, as a percentage of students responses to 1 = "At least once a week" and 2 = "Every two weeks".

**Status of social studies and other school subjects**

The mean for each subject was used to rank the fourteen subjects listed on the questionnaire. Overall, social studies ranked the lowest of the fourteen subjects and art ranked the highest (see Table 4.34). Art also had the lowest standard deviation (0.99), indicating the students' responses were not widely dispersed. Health however, had a standard deviation of 3.27 indicating the responses were widely dispersed across the scale. Students were not negative toward any of their school subjects. The mean response for social studies is marginally positive (3.05).

**Table 4.34: Students' ranking of school subjects - Overall**

Subject	Mean	SD
Art	4.19	0.99
Photography	4.02	1.13
Design and technology	3.75	1.24
Physical education	3.74	1.37
Computing	3.68	1.17
<i>Science</i>	3.62	1.12
Health	3.62	3.27
Home economics	3.59	1.19
Drama	3.43	1.38
<i>Maths</i>	3.37	1.27
Music	3.28	1.44
<i>English</i>	3.18	1.15
Media studies	3.13	1.02
<i>Social studies</i>	3.05	1.17

5 = Like a lot; 4 = Like; 3 = Not sure; 2 = Dislike; 1 = Dislike a lot  
The 'core' subjects are shown in italics.  
SD = Standard deviation

There were a number of differences between the genders in ranking school subjects. Male students ranked traditionally male subjects highest and female students ranked traditionally female subjects highest. Male students also preferred physical education and ranked it first compared with a ranking of tenth by female students. Music ranked in the top five subjects for females whereas males ranked it last. Art was ranked high

by both genders, but females preferred the language-oriented subjects such as English and drama. Social studies was the least liked subject by females, and the fourth least liked subject for males, although the mean responses for both genders are similar (see Table 4.35). Overall females were not negative toward any school subjects but males were negative toward English and music.

A comparison of the year level differences in the ranking of school subjects (Table 4.36) shows a number of differences in students' liking of subjects between year levels.

**Table 4.35: Students' ranking of school subjects – Gender differences**

Subject	Female		Subject	Male	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Art	4.16	0.99	Physical education	4.51	1.14
Photography	4.10	1.12	Art	4.21	0.99
Home economics	3.85	1.06	Design and technology	4.13	1.14
Drama	3.85	1.32	Photography	3.95	1.15
Music	3.72	1.31	Computing	3.86	1.14
<i>Science</i>	3.71	1.03	Health	3.80	4.21
Computing	3.48	1.16	<i>Science</i>	3.53	1.19
<i>English</i>	3.47	1.04	<i>Maths</i>	3.51	1.27
Health	3.38	1.04	Home economics	3.33	1.26
Physical education	3.32	1.46	Media studies	3.09	1.04
<i>Maths</i>	3.22	1.27	<i>Social studies</i>	3.06	1.22
Media studies	3.19	1.01	Drama	3.02	1.34
Design and technology	3.13	1.15	<i>English</i>	2.90	1.19
<i>Social studies</i>	3.04	1.13	Music	2.88	1.44

5 = Like a lot; 4 = Like; 3 = Not sure; 2 = Dislike; 1 = Dislike a lot  
The 'core' subjects are shown in Italics.  
SD = Standard deviation

Students' ranking of social studies falls from fifth last in Year 8 to second last in Year 9 and last in Year 10, although Year 9 students are slightly more negative toward the subject with a mean of 2.83 where as the Year 10 mean was 2.84. Of the core subjects, maths was the only one to improve its ranking from eleventh in Year 8, to sixth in Year

9 and declined to twelfth in Year 10. Of the former core subjects science was the most preferred by Year 8 and Year 10 students, and the second preferred subject by Year 9 students. Optional subjects were the most liked, except in Year 8 where science ranked fourth. Students' ranking of music dropped considerably between Year 8 where it ranked eighth and Year 9 where it was ranked the lowest. Year 10 students liked music more, ranking it sixth.

Year 8 students were not negative toward any of the school subjects on the list. Their least liked subject was English, which had a mean of 3.04, and their most liked subject was art with a mean of 4.33. Science ranked considerably higher than any of the other former core subjects, the other three subjects ranking in the bottom five of the subjects listed.

The most negative year level was Year 9, who gave a negative response to two subjects; social studies had a mean of 2.83 and music had a mean of 2.72. The mean for the highest ranking subject, photography (4.13), was lower than the means of the highest ranked subjects in both Years 8 and 10 (art had a mean of 4.33 and photography had a mean of 4.29 in Years 8 and 10 respectively).

The Year 10 students ranked all of the former core subjects in the lowest six subjects, although, only social studies had a negative mean (2.84). Drama and media studies were the other two subjects that ranked poorly, and both of these subjects are taught as part of the English curriculum at the school rather than subjects in their own right.



**Table 4.36: Students' ranking of school subjects – Year level differences**

Subject	Year 8		Subject	Year 9		Subject	Year 10	
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Art	4.33	0.84	Photography	4.13	1.06	Photography	4.29	1.03
Health	4.15	5.27	Art	4.12	1.06	Art	4.13	1.05
Physical education	4.04	1.21	Design and technology	3.77	1.43	Home economics	3.91	1.14
<i>Science</i>	3.85	0.96	Computing	3.70	1.37	Physical education	3.90	1.23
Computing	3.82	1.11	Home economics	3.55	1.20	Design and technology	3.85	1.13
Design and technology	3.63	1.16	<i>Maths</i>	3.50	1.19	Music	3.57	1.25
Drama	3.59	1.28	<i>Science</i>	3.48	1.14	Health	3.52	0.99
Music	3.53	1.41	Drama	3.38	1.44	Computing	3.48	1.03
Photography	3.50	1.23	Health	3.22	1.53	<i>Science</i>	3.47	1.23
<i>Social studies</i>	3.38	1.02	Physical education	3.18	1.53	<i>English</i>	3.39	1.08
<i>Maths</i>	3.34	1.32	<i>English</i>	3.15	1.05	Drama	3.30	1.46
Home economics	3.33	1.17	Media studies	3.14	1.19	<i>Maths</i>	3.30	1.31
Media studies	3.04	0.73	<i>Social studies</i>	2.83	1.25	Media studies	3.22	1.06
<i>English</i>	3.04	1.27	Music	2.72	1.49	<i>Social studies</i>	2.84	1.20

5 = Like a lot; 4 = Like; 3 = Not sure; 2 = Dislike; 1 = Dislike a lot

The 'core' subjects are shown in *italics*

SD = Standard deviation

**Table 4.37: Percentage decline of students' liking for their school subjects**

School Subject	Overall	Mean			% Decline
		Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	
<i>English</i>	3.18	3.04	3.15	3.39	-11.5
<i>Maths</i>	3.37	3.34	3.50	3.30	1.2
<i>Science</i>	3.62	3.85	3.48	3.47	9.8
<i>Social studies</i>	3.05	3.38	2.83	2.84	15.9
Physical education	3.74	4.04	3.18	3.90	3.4
Computing	3.68	3.82	3.70	3.48	8.9
Home economics	3.59	3.33	3.55	3.91	-17.4
Drama	3.43	3.59	3.38	3.30	8.0
Media studies	3.13	3.04	3.14	3.22	-5.9
Art	4.19	4.33	4.12	4.13	4.6
Health	3.62	4.15	3.22	3.52	15.0
Design and technology	3.75	3.63	3.77	3.85	-6.0
Music	3.28	3.54	2.72	3.57	0.8
Photography	4.02	3.50	4.13	4.29	-22.5

5 = Like a lot; 4 = Like; 3 = Not sure; 2 = Dislike; 1 = Dislike a lot

The 'core' subjects are shown in *italics*

The percentage declines of students' liking for their school subjects are shown in Table 4.37. Students' liking for social studies declined the most (15.9%) and students' liking for photography was the most improved (-22.5%). Over the three year levels, students' liking for English, home economics and media studies also improved (-11.5%, -17.4% and -6.0% respectively). Overall, social studies had the lowest status of all the fourteen school subjects listed on *SSATSS*.

### **Students likes and dislikes about social studies**

The responses students gave to the two open-ended questions in *SSATSS* could be divided into three main categories: the teacher, the teaching/learning activities, and the content of the subject.

Students' responses about the teacher varied according to which teacher they had.

Students described only one teacher as capable of adequately teaching social studies, and students questioned the qualifications and training of the other three teachers. Most of the social studies teachers were seen by the students to be inconsistent in their treatment of students, moody, and unpredictable. In response to the question "What do you like most about social studies?" five students in one class described their teacher as being organised, having good classroom management skills and clearly explaining his expectations to the students. Other positive comments about the teacher were the teacher's sense of humour, and the teacher "not taking himself too seriously".

Students also commented about the teacher in response to the question "What don't you like about social studies?" In answering this question one student wrote "The teacher, he's boring" and another student wrote "The teacher doesn't make it interesting". A

number of students claimed the teacher talked too much during social studies, while they just wanted to get started on the work. This was seen as positive in some regard because the teacher explained things clearly to the students, but half the students who commented on the teacher talking too much agreed they “got bored and didn’t listen”. Several students also made specific references to the teacher favouring some students over others.

How the teacher taught the subject was commented on in the second question more than in the first. Teaching/learning activities enjoyed by students and being what they liked about social studies included videos, discussions and talking with friends. Eleven students from one class named the European lunch day, which the class had the week prior to the research, as their favourite aspect of social studies.

Most students wrote comments about social studies being “boring” because all they do is write notes from the board or read and work from the textbooks. There were more than twenty students who made comments in relation to the latter, however nearly as many students did not like the fact that the teacher did not give them notes to use for studying, and so students were unsure of what they should study for unit tests.

Students did not like the textbooks, which they agreed were “decrepit and out of date”, and “useless with no good information”. As seen from the activities students perceive they participate in during social studies lessons, textbook work dominates the learning activities in social studies classes, but students do not like the textbooks and do not find them useful, interesting or relevant. Other frequent activities include copying from the

board, which most students do not like, but many find useful for later study and as a guide for deciding what information is irrelevant.

Students' comments on the content of their social studies lessons varied from negative to positive. More than a quarter of the students commented that social studies was boring and irrelevant to their lives. They did not see the purpose in learning about the past, which is what they seemed to think social studies was about. Students did not like "repeating the same thing year after year", a reference to the Australian history and society units in the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*. A similar number of students wrote that social studies helped them to "understand the world better" and made them realise that the "environment and the world need to be looked after better". Students commented that they liked to learn about the other cultures and countries, and Year 10 students enjoyed studying the environment. Most of the students who wrote positive comments about the content of social studies also wrote that the way the subject was taught was boring, or the teacher took too much time talking and they did not "do enough work" in social studies.

### **Students' ranking of how much they like social studies**

The final item on the questionnaire asked students to rank how much they liked social studies on a five point scale. The total mean response (see Table 4.38) for this question was positive (3.24), thus students think social studies is "okay". There were no significant differences between genders or year levels. The lowest mean was for Year 8 (3.10) and Year 10 students had the highest mean response (3.46).

**Table 4.38: Students' liking of social studies**

	Female		Male		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
How much do you like social studies?	3.23	0.89	3.25	0.96	3.10	0.82	3.19	0.91	3.46	1.04	3.24	0.93

5 = I don't like anything at all about social studies; 4 = I do not like social studies; 3 = Social studies is okay; 2 = I like social studies a lot.  
 1 = Social studies is my favourite subject  
 SD = Standard deviation

## Focus group interviews

As explained earlier, there were three focus group interviews, one for each year level, and nine students participated in each focus group. During each focus group interview, students were asked what they liked most about social studies, what they liked least about social studies, and encouraged to explain their reasons for their answers.

### Year 8: Focus group interview results

Year 8 students were positive about their teachers, except one “talks too much, which is boring because he spends too much time explaining everything and [the students] just want to get down and do something”. They also find videos interesting and like to hear one teacher’s “stories about things that happened”.

The three different classes perceive they participated in different teaching/learning activities in their classes. In one class students “mostly talk to each other”, which a female student thought was good because “it’s the only way [she can] get ideas”.

Students from another class said they mostly did mapping work and that there were “too many pictures, mostly drawing”. One of the students said “I hate mapping work – it’s easy”. Students from the third social studies class agreed that writing “notes off the board is all we’ve been doing, and it’s boring, it’s not something you look forward to”.

Students in the focus group identified mapping skills, the world and the solar system as what they learned in social studies classes. The students agreed that mapping was useful because if “someone asks where something is you can get a map and just show them”. Although they agreed social studies “does teach you a lot”, students did not agree that it could help them to get a job, because they thought, “it depends on what you want to be”.

All of the students in the focus group agreed that social studies was useful, but felt that teachers have “got to make it interesting, because at the moment it’s not that interesting”. Students made comparisons with interesting activities they had done in primary school and their high school experiences. They agreed that they should have excursions “because then you really want to do it”. One student responded that “even in class you can . . . instead of writing notes like . . . you could actually see . . . like half the notes we’ve written down we haven’t actually taken in”.

One of the classes has been using a star system for rewarding students when they have “been good, and the person who gets the most stars gets something at the end”.

Students thought the star system was good because it motivated them to participate and behave in class. A female student commented that the teachers “need to like . . . say is . . . if you get this done then you get this and try to get you to take an interest in it because at the moment you’re kind of sitting there like . . . not turned on”.

The Year eight students had been participating in a program called *Students' Success* during social studies lessons. Student’s thought the program was designed to encourage them to recognise the importance of trying their hardest and setting themselves goals.

Students did not see that it had much to do with social studies, but was relevant for other subjects. When asked if they found the program useful, students gave various responses. One student said “Yeah, if you really take it in”, another replied “It just goes over my head”, and a male student said “If you can be bothered listening to the teacher it might help, but not many people do listen”.

### **Year 9: Focus group interview results**

Videos and class discussions were the most liked teaching/learning activities of the Year 9 students who participated in the focus group; although “the videos are so old” “they suck”. The students could not see the relevance of social studies to their future employment, generally they did not like the teachers, or the activities they participated in during social studies lessons.

The students agreed that it was important to know about their past and Australia’s heritage, but said that because they had been learning about the “colonisation of Australia since Year 2 or 3 it is boring”. One female student said “it’s important to know about our past, but we don’t need to go into that much depth, we just keep repeating the same things over and over, year after year”. A male student replied to the previous statement with “yeah right, like you go to a job interview and their going to ask ‘How do you build a squatter’s hut?’ It’s irrelevant”.

Students said the teachers were boring and did not try to make the subject interesting. One teacher, when asked if he chose to teach social studies this year replied “What do you think?” (student used a disgruntled tone). Generally students gave the impression that their teachers did not like the subject, were bored by it and “can’t be bothered”

during social studies lessons. Students complained that there was no variety during social studies lessons: they just read and summarised from the textbook, which was “sometimes hard to understand”, and did the activities at the end of each section.

Students saw the focus on textbook work as apathy on the teachers’ part. They thought the teacher was not interested or organised. Several of the students agreed that the teachers “can’t be bothered giving . . . notes” and “explaining things” to them. Students expected to come into class to find information written on the board, handouts prepared, and the teacher to be interesting.

Some students complained they did not participate in group activities during social studies lessons. They were not allowed to talk, but were expected to work from their textbooks in silence. “There is nothing social about social studies” was the summative comment of one male student.

When asked what they thought social studies was, students made comments such as “looking at other places”, “what’s going on in the world” and “learning about people and society today”. Students were “tired of” learning about Australia and wanted to know more about their world and how other people in other places lived. They felt they should learn how to interact with others “after all it is social studies” (stress was on the word social) and current events. The most important skill students thought they should learn in social studies was how to solve problems, whether they be social problems encountered during everyday life, community problems, or problems in the broader community such as international conflicts, environmental issues, and resource management.



Year 9 students in the focus group interview were disenchanted with schooling, and their teachers. Their attitudes and comments reflected the perception that the teachers were not interested in them or the subject. One teacher was excluded from this because he tried “to make it interesting” through activities such as the European lunch day. Students thought he was a good teacher because his classes were not always based on the textbook and he seemed to like social studies so “he made it more interesting”.

#### **Year 10: Focus group interview results**

Students who participated in the focus group interview for the Year 10 cohort, agreed that each teacher was different, and used different strategies to teach social studies. The consensus was that videos were good and one student said he thought “it’s great how the teacher can teach from the video”. Students were also pleased that they participated in more class discussions than they had the previous year.

Year 10 students thought the purpose of social studies is to gain general knowledge about the world and their society. The students thought social studies was “about things around [them] . . . learning about what [they] need to do when [they] grow up” and it was “good for issues around the world” and to “know about the world”. However, students did not think social studies was relevant for their future employment unless they were going to “do stock market or something”. Although one student thought it would help him gain employment because he admitted he would “be heaps dumber if [he] didn’t do social studies”, to which another boy responded “I’ve learnt nothing”.

When asked if they enjoyed social studies lessons students gave various responses.

Several students thought social studies lessons were interesting, especially

environmental studies, while one student said he “was sick of hearing about the end of the world” and social studies lessons turning into Bible classes. Students agreed that it was “interesting learning new things” and it was not the content of the lessons that was interesting but “the way the teacher teaches it” that makes social studies interesting. There was agreement among the students that they should have more excursions, videos, and types of demonstrations. Through these activities students thought they could “learn heaps more about stuff” by actually seeing things and being able to witness places and events.

Students perceived the activities they participated in during social studies lessons (such as research and essay and report writing) were preparing them for Year 12 because they thought research and writing skills have “nothing to do with social studies”. Students also felt that their teachers were “average” and encouraged them to think for themselves and develop their own opinions. Other qualities students thought were important in social studies teachers were consistent and predictable behaviour, being well organised and not being distracted from the topic. They respect teachers who give clear instructions and take the time to ensure “every student knows exactly what to do”, who have good classroom management skills, who demonstrate they are prepared and organised for the lesson, and who are relaxed and have a good sense of humour. Teachers who lack these characteristics “make lessons boring” and students think the lessons are “a waste of time”.

## **Summary**

The analysis of the constructs in the questionnaire indicates students are most positive toward social studies in Year 8, but Year 9 students are the least positive and have the

most negative means. Attitudes improve in Year 10 but do not return to the same level as the Year 8 means. There are significant differences between the attitudes of Years 8 and 9 students but few significant differences between Years 9 and 10 students.

Significant differences are uncommon between genders at the school, however the ranking of subjects according to how much students like them showed different subject preferences between male and female students.

Social studies was ranked amongst the bottom five subjects by all year levels, and students found social studies boring and irrelevant. The most common activities in social studies lessons were textbook work and copying from the board. Student centred activities such as group work and research, and activities that should single out social studies lessons were the least common.

Students said social studies was boring, mainly because of the way the teacher taught the subject. Yet, despite this students thought it was important to learn about their world although they questioned the role of social studies in helping them to gain employment. Most students agreed that the content of social studies lessons is irrelevant and repetitious and they should spend more time learning about current social and world issues.

The following chapter is the conclusion and discusses the results and possible implications of the results of the research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this case study was to determine the attitudes of lower secondary school students toward social studies at one Independent school in the Perth metropolitan area. This chapter discusses the results of the case study. The two questions, which guided the study, provide the basis for the discussion. Firstly, the attitudes of the students are discussed followed by the factors that influence student attitudes toward social studies. Finally, the possible implications of the results are presented.

### **Discussion**

As stated in Chapter One, two questions were used to guide the research and determine the attitudes of lower secondary school students at one Independent secondary school, toward social studies. The questions were:

1. What are the attitudes of students toward social studies?
2. What factors contribute to the attitudes of students toward social studies?

In order to answer the two research questions the theoretical framework given in Haladyna, Shaughnessy, and Redsun (1982a, p.2-4) was used. Haladyna, Shaughnessy, and Redsun divided the variables that influence student attitudes toward social studies into exogenous and endogenous variables. In this case study, the exogenous variables were student's gender and year level. The endogenous variables included student attitudes toward school and perceptions of the usefulness of social studies, the

teaching/learning environment of social studies lessons, the student's social studies teacher and the support of parents for social studies. To determine the student attitudes toward social studies, data were collected about the endogenous variables through nine constructs in a questionnaire called *SSATSS*.

*SSATSS* also contained items to ascertain the status of social studies at the school, and the learning activities that students perceived they participate in during their social studies lessons. Although the questionnaire provided some insight into the factors that influence student attitudes toward social studies, focus group interviews were also conducted with each lower secondary year at the school. The focus groups allowed students to discuss and explain their attitudes toward social studies and the factors that influence their attitudes. This information provided a better understanding of the factors that influence student attitudes toward social studies at the school.

The research found that student attitudes toward social studies were only just positive, with a mean of 3.05. When compared to other school subjects, the status of social studies was very low, it ranked the lowest from a list of fourteen school subjects.

Overall, male students ranked social studies higher than female students did (eleventh and fourteenth respectively), however males were only marginally more positive with a mean of 3.06 compared with a mean of 3.04 for female students. Year 8 students were the most positive toward social studies and the only cohort to give a positive mean response to the subject (3.38). Both Years 9 and 10 were negative toward social studies with means of 2.83 and 2.84 respectively. Although Year 10 students ranked social

studies last, they were slightly more positive than Year 9 students who ranked the subject second last (the means were 2.84 and 2.83 respectively).

The perceived difficulty level of social studies is not responsible for the low status of the subject because students did not think social studies was too hard for them, and they thought they were capable of being successful in social studies. Even though Year 10 students did find the subject more difficult than the other two year levels, they still had positive means to each of the items in Construct 5, which dealt with student perceptions of their own ability in social studies. The lower status of social studies in Year 10 could be because of students' perception of the importance of the subject.

Students did not think social studies was very important for their future employment, but in both the Year 9 and Year 10 focus group interviews, students also questioned the relevance of science for future employment. Students did not see the generalisability of the skills learned in either subject to their lives, but thought the skills and knowledge were specific to a field of employment, such as geology, economics, or anthropology.

At only one point in the research did any of the students refer to values education: one student wrote the comment that she liked social studies because "it teaches us what to do when we grow up". Generally, students who acknowledged a purpose for doing social studies, and placed some importance on doing social studies, believed it was to learn general knowledge about the world: its structure, history and people, rather than to learn skills and values essential for active participation in Australian society. This view of social studies may be a reflection of the way social studies is taught at the school.

The teaching/learning activities that are most common in social studies lessons at the school, such as summarising from the textbook, copying from the board and reading, emphasise the knowledge and content of social studies. Students have little opportunity to participate in activities that develop the skills and values central to the social studies curriculum. Such an emphasis fails to convey to students the relevance and importance of the skills and values that should develop through social studies lessons.

The most prominent comment made by students was that social studies was boring. Students thought social studies was boring because of the activities they participated in during social studies lessons. In both the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, and during the focus group interviews, students complained that social studies was boring, however most students enjoyed the content of the subject, especially learning about other cultures, and discussing current world issues. The latter was most dominant in the responses of Year 9 and Year 10 students.

The activities listed as most frequent in social studies lessons were working from the textbook and copying from the board. Most of the students commented that the teacher talked too much during social studies lessons and although the content of the subject was interesting, the teacher did not make it interesting. This helps to explain why students do not look forward to social studies lessons and perhaps why students were not very positive about how much they liked their social studies teachers (mean: 3.05).

In both the open-ended section of the questionnaire and the focus groups, students complained that they wanted to have more excursions, because “you learn a hell of a lot more from actually seeing the stuff” and when the “teacher just rambles you just

switch off". Of course excursions present problems of planning, time and cost, but students enjoy watching videos, which are "the next best thing because [students] actually see what [they] are supposed to be learning". The manner in which teachers present social studies: the selected teaching methods and learning activities, do not motivate students and fail to convey to students a purpose for doing social studies.

Students who participated in this case study did not realise that writing skills such as essay and report writing were central to the social studies curriculum. Students did identify mapping skills, climatic graphs and reading tables as the types of skills they learn in social studies, but complained there was too much mapping and drawing in social studies lessons, especially by students who did not think they were very good at drawing. Although the majority of students who commented on research activities claimed to enjoy the activities, students did not seem to recognise that the purpose of the research was to develop skills and not just knowledge about a topic.

Students also found social studies boring because of the sequencing and scaffolding of the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*. A common complaint made by students, especially in Year 9 and Year 10, was that they kept learning the same information each year. Students agreed that "every year all you get is the colonisation of Australia" and they did not identify the scaffolding of knowledge, skills, and values, but rather focused on the repetition of the same content. One student said they "just keep doing the same stuff over and over . . . every year it's the same" and another student stated "how much depth do you need to know, the British came to Australia with convicts, they killed some Aborigines . . . there's been a lot of blood and guts, and now we're here".



Students were more positive toward social studies (overall mean: 3.22) than they were towards school (overall mean: 3.14). Although students were happy to come to the school, found most subjects interesting and liked most of the teachers, students were not very positive about liking school and they did not agree that the school had good rules. Female students liked school but male students did not. Year 9 students, most of whom were male, were the most negative and did not like school (mean: 2.77), or the teachers (mean: 2.75) and did not agree that the school had good rules (mean: 2.07). The negative responses of the Year 9 cohort, and the overall negative response about the school rules, reduced the overall mean for this construct. However, students did respond positively to the item “I like school” (mean: 3.08) but were negative to the item “I like social studies” (mean: 2.93).

Parents’ attitudes may also influence student attitudes toward social studies. Although students perceived their parents were encouraging and supportive of the students’ work in social studies, (the overall mean for the construct was 3.52), parents were not very interested in the work students did in social studies (mean: 3.12). Parental encouragement, support, and belief that social studies is important may be because the parents want their children to do well at school generally.

As discussed in the Chapter Two, the teacher can be a strong influence on student attitudes toward social studies. Students perceived the teachers to be interested in social studies and the students, but did not think the teachers taught social studies well. The main reason students gave for thinking social studies was boring was the way teachers taught the subject, and as already discussed the selected teaching/learning activities did not motivate or interest the students. The positive overall means for the teachers’

attitudes toward social studies (3.32) and the students (3.35) may be due to one teacher, who teaches several social studies classes at the school. He was the only teacher students thought was a “good” social studies teacher, and during the focus group interviews several students from each of the year levels commented that they wished they were in his social studies class.

From the two open-ended questions and the focus group interviews, it was evident that the students’ perception of their social studies teachers influenced students’ attitudes toward social studies. Students who were positive about the teachers’ classroom management and the learning environment during social studies lessons also liked social studies more. Students who liked their social studies teacher also liked the subject more than students who did not like their social studies teacher.

### **Implications of the results**

The attitudes of students toward social studies explains the low status of the subject at the school. Similarly, the teacher-centred learning activities, which require very little from the student, explain why students are negative toward the subject. Given the aims of social studies outlined in the *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus*, and the *Curriculum Framework*, and Goals 7 and 8 of the *Hobart Declaration* the results of this research are of concern.

Student attitudes toward social studies has implications for the successful learning and development of essential skills and values, which are central to the social studies syllabus at the case study school. As discussed in Chapter One, social studies aims to instil in students the knowledge, skills and values important for responsible and active

participation in Australian society. If students are not learning in social studies lessons, because the teaching methods have caused them to “switch off”, there is a high probability that the aims of social studies are not being fully achieved.

Students at the school are not motivated to learn in social studies lessons because the common teaching/learning activities require them to be passive, and simply learn information, rather than active learning with the opportunity to apply the knowledge, skills and values they learn. Students hold the belief that social studies lessons are boring, and although some of the information is interesting, it is largely irrelevant to their everyday lives. Students in Years 9 and 10 did not think social studies would help them to get a job, which indicates that teachers have not taught students to use the skills and values they learn in social studies.

### **Implications for further research**

This case study provides preliminary findings that can provide a basis for further research to be undertaken. Further research in Independent secondary schools, which includes both quantitative and qualitative approaches, could determine whether the findings of this case study apply to other Independent secondary schools. Such a study would obtain system wide generalisable results. A survey of teacher attitudes would help to inform further research, as the teacher factor is very important in shaping student attitudes.

The types of teaching/learning activities commonly used in social studies lessons at the school focused on the learning of content rather than the development of essential skills and values. Students perceived that the learning of the content in social studies is

important because the activities they identify most with social studies lessons emphasise the learning of content rather than the development of skills and values. This being the case, students may not develop 'an understanding and respect for our cultural heritage', it is also possible that the students may leave school without the 'knowledge, skills and values which will enable them to participate as active and informed citizens' in Australian society (*The Hobart Declaration on Schooling*, 1989).

Students have very little perception of the purpose for doing social studies, except to learn general knowledge about their environment and society. Because of this, students think social studies is important, though not as important as other subjects are. This could be because students can see the practical application of subjects such as maths, English and vocational subjects. The application and purpose of social studies is more ambiguous.

The knowledge students' gain in social studies lessons should be used as a vehicle to provide practical opportunities for students to use and demonstrate the skills and values they learn. By doing this students can see the purpose of social studies, generalise the skills and values they learn, and then the aims of social studies can be achieved.

The findings of this case study support the general assertions of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The students at the case study school did not like social studies very much and the subject had the lowest status of fourteen school subjects. Students' liking for social studies declined by 15.9%, the greatest decline of the fourteen subjects. Students did not like social studies because they thought the subject was boring and not very important to their future job prospects. However, it was not the content of their

social studies lessons that students found boring, but the selected teaching/learning activities, which did not require students to actively participate in their own learning. Both female and male students had the same attitudes toward social studies, and Year 9 students were the most negative toward social studies and school. Further research will determine if the results of this case study can be applied to Independent secondary schools in general.

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## **APPENDIX 1:**

### *Secondary Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies*

## SECONDARY STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIAL STUDIES

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS PAPER

ANSWER NUMBERS 1-3 BEFORE YOU START ON PART A

### CIRCLE YOUR ANSWERS

1. GIRL (1)  
BOY (2)
2. WHAT YEAR LEVEL ARE YOU IN? (8) or (9) or (10)
3. MY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER IS - MALE (1) FEMALE (2)

### PART A

This questionnaire has statements about Social Studies and the attitudes of students. I would like to find out how you feel about Social Studies as a school subject. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Your opinion is what is wanted. Think about how well each statement describes what you think or feel.

Place a circle around:

- 5 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement.
- 4 if you **AGREE** with the statement.
- 3 if you **NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE** about the statement.
- 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement.
- 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement.

### SAMPLE

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I LIKE WATCHING SOUTH PARK	5	4	3	2	1

*If you strongly agree with this statement you would circle the 5.*

**BE SURE TO GIVE AN ANSWER FOR EVERY ITEM. IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT AN ANSWER DON'T WORRY, JUST CROSS IT OUT AND CIRCLE ANOTHER NUMBER.**

*Please turn to the next page*

**PART A**  
**START HERE:**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
4. I am happy to come to this school.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I enjoy the activities we do in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
6. What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My teacher is interested in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
8. In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I look forward to my next social studies lesson.	5	4	3	2	1
10. In social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I am the type to do well in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
12. My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework.	5	4	3	2	1
13. At school I find most subjects interesting.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I like social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
16. My teacher enjoys social studies lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
17. In social studies lessons the teacher tells me when my work is good.	5	4	3	2	1
18. In social studies lessons the students work well together.	5	4	3	2	1
19. We have good materials to read and use in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I can do all the work in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
21. My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I like school.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I like the topics we do in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
24. If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	5	4	3	2	1
25. My teacher thinks that social studies is important.	5	4	3	2	1
25. In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Social studies lessons are not noisy.	5	4	3	2	1
27. In social studies lessons the class is well organised.	5	4	3	2	1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
28. Social studies is not too hard for me.	5	4	3	2	1
29. My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I like most of the teachers in this school.	5	4	3	2	1
31. In social studies I try to as well as I can.	5	4	3	2	1
32. Doing social studies is important.	5	4	3	2	1
33. In social studies my teacher often talks about world news.	5	4	3	2	1
34. In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us.	5	4	3	2	1
35. Students do not waste time in social studies lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
36. In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early.	5	4	3	2	1
37. It is easy for me to do my best in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
38. My parents are interested in the social studies work I do.	5	4	3	2	1
39. We have good rules in our school.	5	4	3	2	1
40. The things we learn in social studies are interesting.	5	4	3	2	1
41. I learn a lot in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
42. My teacher likes to display our work in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
43. In social studies lessons the teacher encourages me to do well.	5	4	3	2	1
44. In social studies I try to get higher marks than my friends.	5	4	3	2	1
45. In social studies the teacher clearly explains what we have to do.	5	4	3	2	1
46. I am a successful student in social studies.	5	4	3	2	1
47. My parents think that social studies is an important school subject.	5	4	3	2	1
48. I like my social studies teacher.	5	4	3	2	1

*Please turn to the next page*

**PART B**

**STOP! THE SCALES ARE DIFFERENT ON THIS PAGE. PLEASE CHECK THEM BEFORE YOU START**

*Think about your social studies lessons.  
How often do you have each of the following?*

	At least once a week	Every two weeks	Once a month	Once a term	Hardly ever
49. Computer activities	5	4	3	2	1
50. Atlas work	5	4	3	2	1
51. Homework	5	4	3	2	1
52. Problem solving	5	4	3	2	1
53. Social studies projects	5	4	3	2	1
54. Copying from the blackboard	5	4	3	2	1
55. Library	5	4	3	2	1
56. News paper activities	5	4	3	2	1
57. Whole class discussions	5	4	3	2	1
58. Roleplays	5	4	3	2	1
59. Small group activities	5	4	3	2	1
60. Excursions	5	4	3	2	1
61. Guest speakers	5	4	3	2	1
62. Films	5	4	3	2	1
63. Video or T.V. Programmes	5	4	3	2	1
64. Text book work	5	4	3	2	1
65. Tests	5	4	3	2	1
66. Current events (News)	5	4	3	2	1
67. Essays (a page of writing)	5	4	3	2	1
68. Pictures and diagrams	5	4	3	2	1
69. Colouring-in	5	4	3	2	1
70. Tracing	5	4	3	2	1
71. Reading	5	4	3	2	1
72. Research	5	4	3	2	1
73. Reading aloud to the class	5	4	3	2	1
74. Graphs	5	4	3	2	1
75. Tables (not maths tables)	5	4	3	2	1
76. Map work	5	4	3	2	1

**HOW MUCH DO YOU  
LIKE YOUR SCHOOL  
SUBJECTS?**

	Like A lot	Like	Not Sure	Dislike	Dislike A Lot
77. English	5	4	3	2	1
78. Maths	5	4	3	2	1
79. Science	5	4	3	2	1
80. Social Studies	5	4	3	2	1
81. Physical Education	5	4	3	2	1
82. Computing	5	4	3	2	1
83. Home Economics	5	4	3	2	1
84. Drama	5	4	3	2	1



85. Media Studies	5	4	3	2	1
86. Art	5	4	3	2	1
87. Health	5	4	3	2	1
88. Design and Technology	5	4	3	2	1
89. Music	5	4	3	2	1
90. Photography	5	4	3	2	1

**PART C**  
**OPEN ENDED SECTION**

91. What DO YOU LIKE about social studies?

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92. What DON'T YOU LIKE about social studies?

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93. How much do you like social studies? *Circle only one*

- Social studies is my favourite subject (1)
- I like social studies a lot (2)
- Social studies is okay (3)
- I do not like social studies (4)
- I don't like anything about social studies at all (5)

**THAT ALL FOLKS!**

**MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP**

**APPENDIX 2:**

Letter to the principal

*School's postal address*

Dear *Principal's name*,

I would like to take this opportunity to request the cooperation of your school in a research project I am undertaking as part of my university studies. I am currently studying a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree at Edith Cowan University. As part of my studies I am conducting a case study on the attitudes of lower secondary school students to Society and Environment (Social Studies) at an Independent school.

The research will involve all lower secondary school students, present on the day, completing a questionnaire. Nine students from each year group will be randomly selected from the class rolls and asked to participate in a focus group interview. There will be a focus group interview for each lower secondary school year group. The findings of the research will be made available to you and will also form the basis of my thesis.

The questionnaire should not take any longer than thirty minutes to complete, and the focus group interviews should also be about thirty minutes each.

The anonymity of both the school and students is assured.

I seek your permission to conduct this research at *School's name*. I can be contacted at the above address to answer any queries you may have regarding the research. My research supervisor, Dr Wally Moroz, may be contacted on *Contact number* for additional information if required.  
Sincerely,

Signed .

Diane Hobbs

**APPENDIX 3:**  
**Parent consent form**

To whom it may concern,

I am a student at Edith Cowan University and I am completing my fourth year of a Bachelor of Education (Honours). In cooperation with *School's name* I am undertaking study of the attitudes toward the Society and Environment (Social Studies) learning area. The purpose of the study is to find out what lower secondary students think about the learning area. The results of the research will be made available to the school, teachers and curriculum planners. The results may also be published in a journal article.

All students in Years 8 to 10 will be asked to complete a questionnaire during a Social Studies lesson. This should take about twenty-five minutes. After this a small group of students from each year level will be asked to participate in a focus group interview, where they will talk about why they like/dislike the subject. The focus group interviews will be recorded and should take no more than sixty minutes. The experience will provide your son/daughter first hand experience of the research process.

Anonymity of the school and the individual students is assured. At no time will names be recorded, and no-one besides the researcher and the research supervisor will have access to the records. When the research is completed, all materials will be destroyed.

I seek your assistance by requesting that you grant permission for your son/daughter to participate in this research project.

Any questions concerning the project entitled "Independent secondary school students' attitudes toward the Society and Environment learning area" can be directed to Diane Hobbs, Honours student, Edith Cowan University School of Education, or to the research supervisor, Dr Wally Moroz (*Contact number*).

If you are willing to approve your son's/daughter's participation in this research project please complete the consent form below and return it through the school.

Thank you,

Signed  
Diane Hobbs  
*Contact number (Home)*

### Participation in Research Project Consent Form

I have read the information above and I agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in this activity, realising he/she may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided my son/daughter is not identifiable.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 4:**

### **Ethics Clearance**



**APPENDIX 5:**

**Levels of significance and frequency tables**



## Levels of significance

### Construct 1: Student attitudes toward school

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
I am happy to come to this school	0.123	0.008	0.497
At school I find most subjects interesting	0.137	0.061	0.020
I like school	0.004	0.017	0.125
I like most of the teachers in this school	0.200	0.000	0.047
We have good rules in our school	0.129	0.000	0.596

### Construct 2: Student attitude toward social studies

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
I enjoy the activities we do in social studies	0.811	0.000	0.864
I like social studies	0.845	0.60	0.900
I like the topics we do in social studies	0.214	0.005	0.892
In social studies I try to do as well as I can	0.023	0.001	0.580
The things we learn in social studies are interesting	0.592	0.001	0.810

### Construct 3: Student perception of the usefulness of social studies

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me	0.896	0.000	0.317
I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies	0.122	0.002	0.694
If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	0.541	0.000	0.176
Doing social studies is important	0.016	0.000	0.034
I learn a lot in social studies	0.760	0.003	0.646

### Construct 4: Student perceptions of teacher attitudes toward social studies

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
My teacher is interested in social studies	0.658	0.002	0.495
My teacher enjoys social studies lessons	0.374	0.000	0.753
My teacher thinks that social studies is important	0.865	0.009	0.288
In social studies lessons my teacher often talks about world news	0.150	0.014	0.000
My teacher likes to display our work in social studies	0.915	0.000	0.683

**Construct 5: Student perceptions of teachers attitudes to students**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion	0.419	0.007	0.451
In social studies lessons my teacher tells me when my work is good	0.812	0.000	0.939
In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students	0.960	0.000	0.703
In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us	0.601	0.000	0.830
In social studies lessons my teacher encourages me to do well	0.513	0.000	0.144

**Construct 6: Student perceptions of the classroom environment in social studies**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9 Year 10
I look forward to my next social studies lesson	0.702	0.008	0.971
In social studies lessons the students work well together	0.401	0.000	0.026
Social studies lessons are not noisy	0.710	0.000	0.014
Students do not waste time in social studies lessons	0.198	0.000	0.000
In social studies lessons I try to get a higher mark than my friends	0.153	0.964	0.046

**Construct 7: Student perceptions of classroom management in social studies**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9 Year 10
In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students	0.399	0.000	0.037
We have good materials to read and use in social studies	0.381	0.045	0.926
In social studies lessons the class is well organised	0.597	0.000	0.69
In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early	0.375	0.013	0.083
In social studies lessons the teacher clearly explains what we have to do	0.513	0.000	0.127

**Construct 8: Student perceptions of own ability in social studies**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
I am able to well in social studies	0.351	0.262	0.883
I can do all the work in social studies	0.471	0.009	0.930
Social studies is not too hard for me	0.479	0.054	0.543
It is easy for me to do my best in social studies	0.342	0.043	0.427
I am a successful student in social studies	0.636	0.022	0.993

**Construct 9: Student perceptions of parental support for social studies**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework	0.591	0.272	0.020
My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help	0.398	0.341	0.017
My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies	0.389	0.027	0.947
My parents are interested in the social studies work I do	0.869	0.032	0.596
My parents think that social studies is an important school subject	0.545	0.003	0.253

**I like my social studies teacher**

Item	Female/Male	Significance (2 tailed)	
		Year 8/Year 9	Year 9/Year 10
I like my social studies teacher	0.720	0.000	0.300

**Frequency of responses****Item 4**

I am happy to come to this school	Frequency					
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	4	7	5	6	10	16
Disagree	4	5	6	6	9	15
Neither agree or disagree	18	21	20	28	31	58
Agree	37	22	26	44	41	85
Strongly agree	15	5	6	15	11	26

**Item 5**

I enjoy the activities we do in social studies	Frequency					
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	5	11	10	11	15	26
Disagree	10	13	14	18	19	37
Neither agree or disagree	26	25	26	39	38	77
Agree	31	8	12	28	23	51
Strongly agree	7	3	1	3	8	11

**Item 6**

What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me	Frequency					
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	2	7	7	7	7	14
Disagree	16	7	2	3	8	11
Neither agree or disagree	47	15	20	30	21	51
Agree	14	25	26	47	51	98
Strongly agree	79	4	8	12	14	26

**Item 7**

My teacher is interested in social studies	Frequency					
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	1	2	7	3	6	9
Disagree	6	3	3	7	5	13
Neither agree or disagree	13	19	20	23	16	39
Agree	25	28	26	35	42	77
Strongly agree	35	7	8	29	33	62

## Item 8

In social studies lessons the teacher is interested in my opinion	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	2	6	6	9	7	16
Disagree	5	9	6	15	11	26
Neither agree or disagree	30	22	7	35	40	75
Agree	31	20	24	30	37	67
Strongly agree	10	3	20	9	8	17

## Item 9

I look forward to my next social studies lesson	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	13	18	23	24	30	54
Disagree	18	21	14	29	24	53
Neither agree or disagree	28	13	14	27	28	55
Agree	16	5	10	14	17	31
Strongly agree	4	3	1	5	3	8

## Item 10

In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	7	1	4	5	9
Disagree	2	5	11	8	10	18
Neither agree or disagree	7	27	17	24	27	51
Agree	41	17	24	40	42	82
Strongly agree	28	4	10	23	19	42

## Item 11

I am able to well in social studies	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	3	5	5	4	9	13
Disagree	7	9	7	13	10	23
Neither agree or disagree	41	24	27	43	49	92
Agree	19	18	22	31	28	53
Strongly agree	9	4	2	8	7	15

## Item 12

My parents encourage me to do my social studies homework	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	1	2	3	1	4
Disagree	2	4	7	4	9	13
Neither agree or disagree	22	16	23	33	28	61
Agree	27	23	26	37	39	76
Strongly agree	27	15	5	21	26	47

## Item 13

At school I find most subjects interesting	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	6	7	10	6	7	13
Disagree	7	10	19	8	19	27
Neither agree or disagree	17	15	30	27	24	51
Agree	35	21	4	44	42	86
Strongly agree	14	7	63	14	11	25

## Item 14

I like social studies	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	9	12	11	12	20	32
Disagree	11	11	12	21	13	34
Neither agree or disagree	26	23	22	37	34	71
Agree	25	7	15	22	25	47
Strongly agree	8	7	3	7	11	18

## Item 15

I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	3	6	3	3	9	12
Disagree	5	8	14	11	16	27
Neither agree or disagree	20	20	21	33	28	61
Agree	41	25	18	42	42	84
Strongly agree	10	1	7	10	8	18

## Item 16

My teacher enjoys social studies lessons	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	0	6	5	3	8	11
Disagree	4	9	11	12	12	24
Neither agree or disagree	21	24	19	30	34	64
Agree	35	16	26	42	35	77
Strongly agree	18	5	2	11	14	25

## Item 17

In social studies lessons my teacher tells me when my work is good	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	2	6	11	13	6	19
Disagree	5	12	10	11	16	27
Neither agree or disagree	6	20	16	17	25	42
Agree	30	20	21	36	35	71
Strongly agree	36	2	5	22	21	43

## Item 18

In social studies lessons the students work well together	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	5	3	5	4	9
Disagree	3	15	6	10	14	24
Neither agree or disagree	25	19	20	30	38	68
Agree	30	15	27	38	34	72
Strongly agree	15	6	7	15	13	28

## Item 19

We have good materials to read and use in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	6	6	6	7	11	18
Disagree	12	16	13	25	16	41
Neither agree or disagree	14	13	21	26	22	48
Agree	34	19	21	32	42	74
Strongly agree	13	6	3	10	12	22

## Item 20

I can do all the work in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	4	4	4	3	9	12
Disagree	4	8	9	8	13	21
Neither agree or disagree	17	20	18	34	21	55
Agree	33	21	26	38	42	80
Strongly agree	21	7	6	16	18	34

## Item 21

My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	5	2	9	10	6	16
Disagree	4	6	12	8	14	22
Neither agree or disagree	16	16	12	19	25	44
Agree	30	24	22	35	41	76
Strongly agree	24	12	8	27	17	44

## Item 22

I like school	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	12	15	7	8	26	34
Disagree	7	8	7	12	10	22
Neither agree or disagree	19	18	26	32	31	63
Agree	27	14	19	33	27	60
Strongly agree	14	5	4	14	9	23

## Item 23

I like the topics we do in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	6	11	9	11	15	26
Disagree	12	11	15	16	22	38
Neither agree or disagree	22	22	19	33	30	63
Agree	29	13	20	31	31	62
Strongly agree	10	3	0	8	5	13

Item 24

If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	5	11	0	11	15	26
Disagree	10	15	12	18	19	37
Neither agree or disagree	25	22	24	34	37	71
Agree	28	10	39	29	22	51
Strongly agree	10	2	5	7	10	17

Item 25

My teacher thinks that social studies is important	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	1	1	1	2	3
Disagree	4	4	7	8	7	15
Neither agree or disagree	15	22	10	22	25	47
Agree	32	24	32	44	44	88
Strongly agree	27	9	13	24	25	49

Item 26

In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	7	9	10	7	17
Disagree	0	7	16	9	14	23
Neither agree or disagree	24	30	9	30	33	63
Agree	34	11	21	33	33	66
Strongly agree	20	4	8	16	16	32

Item 27

Social studies lessons are not noisy	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	3	15	5	11	12	23
Disagree	11	16	12	20	19	39
Neither agree or disagree	25	16	24	30	35	65
Agree	29	6	18	26	27	53
Strongly agree	11	7	5	13	10	23

Item 28

In social studies lessons the class is well organised	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	5	5	4	7	11
Disagree	8	18	12	20	18	38
Neither agree or disagree	28	27	24	38	41	79
Agree	32	8	21	30	31	61
Strongly agree	10	2	2	8	6	14

Item 29

Social studies is not too hard for me	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	2	3	3	3	5	8
Disagree	3	1	8	3	9	12
Neither agree or disagree	16	23	14	29	24	53
Agree	39	23	31	47	46	93
Strongly agree	19	9	16	16	18	34

Item 30

My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	1	2	3	1	4
Disagree	4	4	5	6	7	13
Neither agree or disagree	15	20	14	25	24	49
Agree	22	19	27	35	33	68
Strongly agree	36	16	15	30	37	67

Item 31

I like most of the teachers in this school	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	6	13	6	12	13	25
Disagree	9	12	8	12	17	29
Neither agree or disagree	11	17	24	24	28	52
Agree	27	13	19	28	31	59
Strongly agree	26	5	6	23	14	37

## Item 32

In social studies I try to do as well as I can	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	2	2
Disagree	0	1	4	0	5	5
Neither agree or disagree	4	10	10	9	15	24
Agree	32	32	35	52	47	99
Strongly agree	40	15	16	37	34	71

## Item 33

Doing social studies is important	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	7	5	3	10	13
Disagree	5	9	6	6	14	20
Neither agree or disagree	27	26	23	36	40	76
Agree	35	17	21	46	27	73
Strongly agree	11	1	9	8	12	20

## Item 34

In social studies my teacher often talks about world news	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	10	13	15	12	16	28
Disagree	12	18	4	12	22	34
Neither agree or disagree	28	12	10	30	20	50
Agree	14	13	25	22	30	52
Strongly agree	15	4	19	23	15	38

## Item 35

In social studies lessons the teacher is fair to us	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	6	9	7	13	9	22
Disagree	17	6	0	12	11	23
Neither agree or disagree	28	18	1	18	27	45
Agree	24	19	27	36	34	70
Strongly agree	3	6	33	20	22	42

## Item 36

Students do not waste time in social studies lessons	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	9	25	17	19	22	41
Disagree	20	20	14	24	30	54
Neither agree or disagree	27	10	28	30	35	65
Agree	17	4	15	22	14	36
Strongly agree	4	1	0	3	2	5

## Item 37

In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	9	13	7	13	16	29
Disagree	20	20	20	22	38	60
Neither agree or disagree	27	19	25	45	26	71
Agree	17	5	10	13	16	29
Strongly agree	4	2	4	4	6	10

## Item 38

It is easy for me to do my best in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	2	4	4	5	5	10
Disagree	6	11	12	17	12	29
Neither agree or disagree	24	19	19	30	35	65
Agree	31	15	21	35	32	67
Strongly agree	16	11	4	12	19	31

## Item 39

My parents are interested in the social studies work I do	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	3	6	5	6	8	14
Disagree	13	13	12	19	19	38
Neither agree or disagree	20	25	35	40	40	80
Agree	20	11	19	24	26	50
Strongly agree	11	5	5	10	10	20

## Item 40

We have good rules in our school	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	15	28	19	24	38	62
Disagree	13	14	19	25	21	46
Neither agree or disagree	20	7	14	23	18	41
Agree	20	8	6	16	18	34
Strongly agree	11	3	4	11	7	18

## Item 41

The things we learn in social studies are interesting	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	5	9	11	13	12	25
Disagree	10	12	13	17	18	35
Neither agree or disagree	16	22	13	25	26	51
Agree	33	12	20	33	32	65
Strongly agree	15	5	5	10	15	25

## Item 42

I learn a lot in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	5	3	14	10	12	22
Disagree	6	10	7	12	11	23
Neither agree or disagree	23	18	23	29	35	64
Agree	28	18	21	36	31	67
Strongly agree	17	5	4	12	14	26

## Item 43

My teacher likes to display our work in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	9	20	19	22	26	48
Disagree	17	25	27	33	36	69
Neither agree or disagree	31	13	13	33	24	57
Agree	17	1	4	10	12	22
Strongly agree	5	1	0	1	5	6

## Item 44

In social studies lessons my teacher encourages me to do well	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	2	6	14	14	8	22
Disagree	4	7	11	8	14	22
Neither agree or disagree	17	25	17	31	28	59
Agree	33	19	16	35	33	68
Strongly agree	21	3	5	10	19	29

## Item 45

In social studies lessons I try to get a higher mark than my friends	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	8	5	9	11	11	22
Disagree	14	13	13	21	19	40
Neither agree or disagree	23	15	25	36	27	63
Agree	19	16	12	20	27	47
Strongly agree	15	11	4	11	19	30

## Item 46

In social studies lessons the teacher clearly explains what we have to do	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	1	3	9	8	5	13
Disagree	5	10	8	14	9	23
Neither agree or disagree	13	17	22	21	31	52
Agree	30	24	20	35	39	74
Strongly agree	29	6	4	20	19	39

## Item 47

I am a successful student in social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Strongly disagree	4	7	7	8	10	18
Disagree	3	9	7	9	10	19
Neither agree or disagree	35	24	30	44	45	89
Agree	27	15	15	27	30	57
Strongly agree	9	5	4	10	8	18



## Item 48

My parents think that social studies is an important school subject	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Strongly disagree	0	5	3	3	5	8
Disagree	4	5	4	6	7	13
Neither agree or disagree	37	35	32	55	49	104
Agree	31	10	19	29	31	60
Strongly agree	7	5	4	5	11	16

## Item 49

I like my social studies teacher	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Strongly disagree	5	14	19	18	20	38
Disagree	8	7	12	14	13	27
Neither agree or disagree	19	21	14	31	23	54
Agree	27	12	13	20	32	52
Strongly agree	20	6	3	16	15	31

## Item 50

Computer activities	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	43	47	57	79	68	147
Once a term	3	4	4	6	5	11
Once a month	0	0	0	0	0	0
Every two weeks	4	1	1	1	5	6
At least once a week	20	6	2	9	19	28

## Item 51

Atlas work	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	17	17	25	31	28	59
Once a term	3	6	21	16	14	30
Once a month	14	14	11	20	19	39
Every two weeks	10	14	2	9	17	26
At least once a week	30	8	4	20	22	42

## Item 52

Homework	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	6	112	0	9	8	17
Once a term	2	10	0	2	5	7
Once a month	2	14	3	4	8	12
Every two weeks	15	22	6	17	18	35
At least once a week	53	59	54	66	63	129

## Item 53

Problem solving	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	33	35	25	57	36	93
Once a term	7	6	10	10	13	23
Once a month	8	6	16	10	20	30
Every two weeks	12	9	6	9	18	27
At least once a week	8	4	6	11	7	18

## Item 54

Social studies project	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	10	3	2	7	8	15
Once a term	12	11	9	18	14	32
Once a month	26	19	23	34	34	68
Every two weeks	13	16	17	18	28	46
At least once a week	16	11	13	22	18	40

## Item 55

Copying from the blackboard	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	4	27	9	18	22	40
Once a term	2	3	4	4	5	9
Once a month	4	7	5	8	8	16
Every two weeks	10	21	8	12	18	30
At least once a week	58	11	36	57	48	105

## Item 56

Library	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	30	5	13	25	23	48
Once a term	6	5	18	14	15	29
Once a month	22	27	22	39	32	71
Every two weeks	16	21	8	17	28	45
At least once a week	2	1	1	1	3	4

## Item 57

Newspaper activities	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	47	43	5	51	44	95
Once a term	7	10	20	22	15	37
Once a month	9	5	22	11	25	36
Every two weeks	3	0	9	6	6	12
At least once a week	3	0	5	2	6	8

## Item 58

Whole class discussion	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	21	15	15	24	27	51
Once a term	2	4	4	3	7	10
Once a month	6	2	6	8	6	14
Every two weeks	14	6	7	14	13	27
At least once a week	30	33	30	47	46	93

## Item 9

Roleplays	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	4	49	59	84	72	156
Once a term	4	7	2	5	8	13
Once a month	3	3	2	1	8	9
Every two weeks	2	0	1	1	3	4
At least once a week	1	0	0	1	1	2

## Item 60

Small group activities	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	32	28	26	45	41	86
Once a term	4	11	8	12	11	23
Once a month	10	12	9	14	17	31
Every two weeks	13	7	10	12	18	30
At least once a week	8	1	10	11	8	19

## Item 61

Excursions	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	50	54	56	88	72	160
Once a term	3	4	5	2	10	12
Once a month	2	1	1	1	3	4
Every two weeks	1	0	0	0	1	1
At least once a week	4	0	1	1	4	5

## Item 62

Guest speakers	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	37	49	59	78	67	145
Once a term	8	5	1	6	8	14
Once a month	5	5	1	1	10	11
Every two weeks	2	0	2	2	2	4
At least once a week	11	0	0	5	6	11

## Item 63

Films	Frequency			Female	Male	Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10			
Hardly ever	17	33	30	43	37	80
Once a term	11	13	13	17	20	37
Once a month	10	4	5	10	9	19
Every two weeks	19	9	11	16	23	39
At least once a week	11	0	2	5	8	13

## Item 64

Video or TV programs	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	20	36	26	42	40	82
Once a term	13	13	11	13	24	37
Once a month	17	7	10	17	17	34
Every two weeks	7	2	7	10	6	16
At least once a week	15	1	7	11	12	23

## Item 65

Text book activities	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	6	0	1	4	3	7
Once a term	1	0	2	3	0	3
Once a month	4	1	2	1	6	7
Every two weeks	10	7	3	6	14	20
At least once a week	56	52	55	85	78	163

## Item 66

Tests	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	15	3	2	13	7	20
Once a term	20	8	23	26	25	51
Once a month	20	25	27	34	38	72
Every two weeks	12	20	7	15	24	39
At least once a week	7	3	4	7	7	14

## Item 67

Current events	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	30	37	13	42	38	80
Once a term	5	3	6	10	4	14
Once a month	10	10	15	16	19	35
Every two weeks	8	7	14	11	18	29
At least once a week	10	3	15	13	15	28

## Item 68

Essays (a page of writing)	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	17	20	2	19	20	39
Once a term	7	11	8	11	15	26
Once a month	15	12	14	21	20	41
Every two weeks	15	10	15	16	24	40
At least once a week	16	6	24	27	19	46

## Item 69

Pictures and diagrams	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	6	23	16	24	21	45
Once a term	2	11	7	8	12	20
Once a month	7	14	12	13	20	33
Every two weeks	13	8	19	19	21	40
At least once a week	51	3	9	34	29	63

## Item 70

Colouring-in	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	8	44	33	35	50	85
Once a term	2	4	9	9	6	15
Once a month	12	7	14	18	15	33
Every two weeks	13	3	3	9	10	19
At least once a week	43	1	3	26	21	47

## Item 71

Tracing	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Hardly ever	29	49	52	61	69	130
Once a term	5	2	4	4	7	11
Once a month	18	5	3	14	12	26
Every two weeks	7	3	2	7	5	12
At least once a week	8	0	2	6	4	10

## Item 72

Reading	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	7	8	5	6	14	20
Once a term	3	2	1	3	3	6
Once a month	6	3	3	5	7	12
Every two weeks	10	9	9	11	17	28
At least once a week	49	38	45	73	59	132

## Item 73

Research	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	9	3	3	6	9	15
Once a term	1	1	4	3	3	6
Once a month	13	17	19	20	29	49
Every two weeks	20	24	21	32	33	65
At least once a week	31	15	16	36	26	62

## Item 74

Reading aloud to class	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	22	16	10	20	28	48
Once a term	10	1	7	7	11	18
Once a month	9	3	5	12	5	17
Every two weeks	12	5	9	9	17	26
At least once a week	21	35	33	49	40	89

## Item 75

Graphs	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	27	27	10	31	33	64
Once a term	7	8	16	16	15	31
Once a month	6	13	19	19	19	38
Every two weeks	15	9	10	17	17	34
At least once a week	9	2	8	9	10	19

## Item 76

Tables (not maths tables)	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	30	27	26	40	43	86
Once a term	8	10	13	14	17	31
Once a month	12	15	10	17	20	37
Every two weeks	10	5	8	14	9	23
At least once a week	2	1	6	5	4	9

## Item 77

Map work	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Hardly ever	9	20	23	22	30	52
Once a term	1	5	14	12	8	20
Once a month	7	11	14	16	16	32
Every two weeks	24	14	8	24	22	46
At least once a week	34	10	4	25	23	48

## Item 78

English	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	12	6	5	7	17	24
Dislike	15	6	8	8	21	29
Not sure	20	26	8	28	25	54
Like	22	17	39	45	33	78
Like a lot	10	5	3	12	6	18

## Item 79

Maths	Frequency					Total
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	11	5	8	15	10	25
Dislike	15	7	9	13	12	25
Not sure	20	11	11	17	23	40
Like	22	24	24	41	31	72
Like a lot	10	11	11	12	27	39

## Item 80

Science	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	2	5	5	3	9	12
Dislike	6	6	10	11	11	22
Not sure	13	14	14	20	21	41
Like	39	25	20	44	40	84
Like a lot	19	10	14	22	22	44

## Item 81

Social studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	4	13	12	15	14	29
Dislike	9	7	10	9	18	27
Not sure	29	23	20	40	32	72
Like	27	11	17	29	26	55
Like a lot	10	6	4	7	13	20

## Item 82

Physical education	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	5	15	7	21	6	27
Dislike	5	5	1	7	4	11
Not sure	11	9	5	13	12	25
Like	19	16	28	35	28	63
Like a lot	39	15	21	23	53	76

## Item 83

Computing	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	3	7	1	8	4	12
Dislike	6	5	10	11	10	21
Not sure	19	10	16	26	19	45
Like	23	15	26	33	31	64
Like a lot	26	23	9	21	37	58

## Item 84

Home economics	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	4	4	2	3	7	10
Dislike	5	15	3	1	7	8
Not sure	20	9	9	21	23	44
Like	9	10	13	19	12	31
Like a lot	10	38	16	22	15	37

## Item 85

Drama	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	3	7	6	5	11	16
Dislike	4	3	0	2	5	7
Not sure	10	10	7	13	15	28
Like	8	8	6	8	14	22
Like a lot	12	12	7	24	7	31

## Item 86

Media studies	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	2	4	1	2	5	7
Dislike	18	4	2	3	3	6
Not sure	5	16	9	17	27	44
Like	25	5	2	5	7	12
Like a lot	54	6	3	4	5	9

## Item 87

Art	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	1	2	2	2	3	5
Dislike	1	1	1	3	1	4
Not sure	2	11	4	10	7	17
Like	20	13	18	25	26	51
Like a lot	22	25	20	34	33	67

## Item 88

Health	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	1	5	1	3	4	7
Dislike	6	4	1	3	9	12
Not sure	13	12	7	13	19	32
Like	8	10	10	16	12	28
Like a lot	4	6	3	4	9	13

## Item 89

Design and technology	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	3	5	1	6	3	9
Dislike	2	4	4	5	6	11
Not sure	13	7	8	18	10	28
Like	12	7	12	13	18	31
Like a lot	11	20	15	5	41	46

## Item 90

Music	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	6	11	0	5	14	19
Dislike	6	6	4	5	11	16
Not sure	8	7	0	10	13	23
Like	11	6	0	14	10	24
Like a lot	16	6	9	20	11	31

## Item 91

Photography	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Dislike a lot	2	2	1	2	3	5
Dislike	3	0	2	3	2	5
Not sure	10	10	2	9	13	22
Like	5	11	10	12	14	26
Like a lot	8	22	19	26	23	49

## Item 94

How much do you like social studies?	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Frequency		Total
				Female	Male	
Social studies is my favourite subject	2	3	1	2	4	6
I like social studies a lot	11	3	8	11	11	22
Social studies is okay	47	39	28	58	56	114
I do not like social studies	13	6	10	13	16	29
I don't like anything about social studies at all	5	7	14	12	14	26