2000

Lower Secondary Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies in a Catholic School

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Lower Secondary Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies in a Catholic School

by

Ekaterina Thiveos

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Bachelor of Education with Honours at the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley.

January 2000
USE OF THESIS

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

This case study examined lower secondary student attitudes towards social studies and identified the factors that influenced attitudes in one Catholic secondary school located in the Perth metropolitan area. A total of 475 students were enrolled in Years 8 to 10 at the school in 1999.

A modified version of Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies (Moroz 1996) questionnaire with 94 items, was utilised to gauge secondary student attitudes towards the learning area. A total of 421 lower secondary students participated in the survey.

The data was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS 9.0 for Windows, where descriptive statistics were the primary statistical analysis method used for the study. Numerical responses were summarised in the form of means, standard deviations and frequencies. Formal statistical tests (Independent T-tests and Analysis of variance, ANOVA) were used to explore the statistical significance of variable relationships in the data. The open-ended questions of the student questionnaire were analysed by identifying and coding common and frequent responses by students.

The survey results showed that from 14 school subjects social studies was the eleventh most liked subject. It also showed that student attitudes towards social studies were positive, however, liking for the learning area declined significantly by 13.30% from Years 8 to 10. Female students were more positive towards the learning area compared to male students. The results of the study show that the reasons for the low status and the magnitude of deterioration in student attitudes towards social studies was because students disliked the delivery of the subject, its repetitive content and the learning activities undertaken in social studies lessons.
DECLARATION

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

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement 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

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature: [Redacted]
Date: 07. 01. 00
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I sincerely thank Dr. Wally Moroz from Edith Cowan University, for his constant support and professional assistance throughout the duration of the study and during the preparation of this thesis. His insight, knowledge and guidance have been invaluable to me.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance and participation of the principal, teachers and students at the school in making this study possible. Special thanks also to Leah Hansberry and Diane Hobbs for their assistance in the collection of the research data and for their ongoing friendship, support and encouragement.

To my parents John and Margaret, brother George and my Yia Yia Zoe, I thank you for your love, patience and enduring belief in me.
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Chapter One
Introduction

Overview

It has been three years since Moroz (1996) conducted his study to investigate Western Australian Government primary school students’ (Years 4 to 7) and their teachers’ attitudes towards social studies. The purpose of his study was to determine the status of social studies in middle and upper primary school and to identify the factors contributing to its status. Moroz’s study, showed that students’ liking for social studies, declined from Years 4 to 7 by 23.22%, three times more than other school subjects.

Moroz’s study provided the motivation for this case study where the aim was to investigate the attitudes of lower secondary students towards the social studies learning area and to find out if the support for social studies from Years 4 to 7 continued in the lower secondary years (8, 9 & 10) of a Catholic school.

This case study entailed a survey of all lower secondary students at one Catholic school. An existing instrument Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies (Moroz, 1996) was modified and utilised to gauge student attitudes towards the learning area. The study investigated student attitudes towards social studies over the lower secondary years of schooling and it sought to determine which factors influenced student attitudes towards the learning area.

Introduction

The introductory chapter sets the scene for the case study, by providing an outline of the important developments that have occurred in the teaching of social studies, over the last two decades in Western Australia. The chapter also outlines the case
study's significance and purpose, details the research questions underpinning the study, describes the limitations of this study and provides definitions and terms used in the thesis. An outline and brief description of the thesis chapters is then provided.

Social studies in Western Australia

Social studies was, until 1997, one of the 'four core' subjects (English, mathematics, science and social studies) taught in Western Australian schools. Today, it is one of the eight mandated learning areas (Curriculum Framework, 1998) and is now called Society and Environment (The terms social studies and Society and Environment will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis). The learning area has changed significantly over the last two decades.

In the mid 1970s, a Social Studies K-10 Syllabus Committee formed in an endeavour to develop a social studies curriculum from Kindergarten to the Year 10. This became known as the K-10 concept. The K-10 committee sought to develop a curriculum which would provide a coherent and sequential treatment of knowledge, skills and values to ease the transition from the primary to the secondary years of schooling. Knowledge, skills and values were sequenced to incorporate the complex stages of concept development in children and adolescents, to recognise and build from developmental stages in the student's emotional and intellectual growth and enable interesting, relevant subject matter to be treated without repetition (Education Department of Western Australia, 1992, p.1). The K-10 Syllabus outlined that students would complete 15 units of study from Years 8 to 10. Selection of content for each year level was organised by five major themes (Environment, Resources, Society and Culture, Change and Decision Making) and each theme was linked to at least one social science discipline. This organisation of the K-10 Syllabus also provided the fundamental
basis for the study of social science disciplines (Geography, Economics, Anthropology and Sociology, History and Political and Legal Studies) in upper secondary.

The *Social Studies K-10 Syllabus* approach was content driven and essentially an inputs based approach to the teaching-learning process. Within this structure, student centred approaches to learning were emphasised. Social studies sought to: contribute to students' understanding of contemporary society, develop academic and social skills, foster personal value stances and enrich students' social competence (Education Department of Western Australia, 1992, p.1). In 1981, the *K-10 Syllabus* was accepted as a curriculum for Government and non-Government primary and secondary schools throughout Western Australia.

In the mid 1980s, the *K-10 Syllabus* was reviewed by the *Beazley Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in Western Australia*. Development and implementation of *Unit Curriculum* in 1988, was a result of the *Beazley Report*. Under *Unit Curriculum*, changes occurred to the structure, type and progression of units taught, the sequence of skills development and assessment and grading procedures.

The *Unit Curriculum* saw the introduction of new units of work, and the modification and integration of some existing *K-10 Syllabus* units. Units were to be taught over 10 weeks and a minimum of six units were to be completed by students from Years 8 to 10. The choice of units taught, as a part of *Unit Curriculum*, depended on school decision as to the number of units on offer, timetabling and pathways. The sequence of skills developed under *Unit Curriculum*, was also dependent on the number of units studied. *Unit Curriculum* focused on the use of grades and Grade Related Descriptors (GRD) for assessment purposes.
In April of 1989 the Australian Education Council (AEC), a body comprising the Federal and State Ministers of Education, at ‘The Hobart Declaration on Schooling’, produced the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*. ‘Ten national goals for schooling [provided] a framework for cooperation between schools, States and Territories and the Commonwealth. The goals intended to assist schools and systems to develop specific objectives and strategies, particularly in the areas of curriculum and assessment’ (Australian Education Council, 1989).

As a result of the Hobart Declaration, a National Curriculum was mooted, and in 1990 social studies was renamed as Studies of Society and Environment. However, in 1997 in Western Australia (as a result of a Curriculum Council directive) the words ‘Studies of’ were dropped and Society and Environment became one of eight mandated learning areas. The eight learning areas which are mandated for all schools in Western Australia are: the arts, English, languages other than English, mathematics, physical and health education, science, society and environment and technology and enterprise.

Today, *Unit Curriculum* is still used in most secondary Government and non-Government schools. Recent curriculum development and the introduction of the *Curriculum Framework* in 1998 will eventually see the *Unit Curriculum* replaced with an outcomes based approach to teaching. At present, Government and non-Government Western Australian schools are in the process of implementing the *Curriculum Framework* and the *Outcomes and Standards Framework Student Outcome Statements* to report student performance. The *Curriculum Framework* is to be fully implemented in all primary and secondary schools by 2004. By this date only Government schools are expected to be reporting student performances using the *Outcomes and Standards Framework*
Student Outcome Statements. The non-Government sector schools have not committed to the Outcomes and Standards Framework.

As a result of these forces of change, learning environments in Western Australian schools are now entering a transition phase where teachers are expected to shift from an inputs, content driven approach to an outcomes based approach to learning. As outlined in this section on social studies in Western Australia, social studies curriculum development in Australia over the past 20 years or so has been subject to a range of social, economic, educational, professional, political and bureaucratic forces (Maye, 1998, p.1). The social studies learning area is a significant part of the Western Australian school curriculum at both primary and secondary school levels and research into this learning area would serve to inform the Curriculum Framework implementation process.

Significance of the study

This case study is significant because electronic searches of library databases had failed to identify any research into the attitudes of Years 8, 9 and 10 students towards the social studies learning area. In particular, no research into lower secondary Catholic school student attitudes towards social studies was found. This study will provide the case study school with a data base of information about the learning area. Findings from the study will provide useful knowledge about a learning area not extensively researched and may provide an impetus for other studies.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study was to identify the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 students towards social studies and the factors that influence these attitudes, in
one Catholic secondary school located in the Perth metropolitan area. The overall aim of the study was to investigate whether the negative trend in the attitudes towards social studies found in primary schools, was evident in a lower secondary Catholic school. The case study also focused on whether gender and/or year level differences affected students' perception of the learning area.

**Research questions**

The aim of the case study research was to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?
2. What factors influence the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?

The main aim of this research was to ascertain the status of social studies and the factors that affect this status at one secondary Catholic school. Research into student attitudes towards social studies have been investigated in a limited capacity by educators in Australia and the United States. Literature related to this study is explored further in chapter two.

**Limitations of the study**

A limitation of this case study was that it was a convenience sample of a metropolitan Catholic school. The school was chosen on the basis of its location, the number of students enrolled in lower secondary, the researcher's knowledge of the school and the access granted to conduct the research. This means the findings cannot be generalised across the lower secondary years of Catholic schools in Western Australia.
A larger study of randomly selected schools, would allow conclusions to be generalised across the Catholic secondary school sector. Nevertheless, the case study approach will provide a useful insight into what student attitudes towards social studies at the school are and will further validate the instrument utilised by Moroz (1996), *Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies (SATSS)*. Further research could include rural Catholic schools, and in time, the impact of the *Curriculum Framework* and outcomes based education on the learning area could be studied to determine if these variables impact in any way on the status of the learning area.

**Definition and terms**

**Attitude:**

A relatively stable predisposition or readiness to react in a specific way to a person, group, idea or situation. Attitudes are complex products of learning, experience and emotional processes (Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry, 1984, p. 71).

**Catholic school:**

Western Australian primary and secondary fee paying schools that are constructed and funded by Catholic parishes, the Commonwealth, the Western Australian State Government, student’s parents and communities.

**Curriculum Council of Western Australia:**

In 1997 the State Government identified a need and was committed to establish the Curriculum Council to take over the work of the Secondary Education Authority. The functions and powers of the Curriculum Council include:
1. development of the *Curriculum Framework*;
2. implementation of the *Curriculum Framework*;
3. exemption from the *Curriculum Framework*;
4. post compulsory schools (TAFE - vocational training) and;
5. supercede the role of the SEA.

*(Curriculum Framework, 1998)*

**Curriculum Framework:**

The *Curriculum Framework* sets out what all students should know, value and be able to do as a result of the programs they undertake in schools in Western Australia from Kindergarten through to Year 12. Its fundamental purpose is to provide a structure around which schools can build curriculum. It is neither a curriculum nor a syllabus, but a framework to direct the provision of learning opportunities for students attending government or non-Government schools or home schooling. It is aimed at giving schools and teachers flexibility and ownership over curriculum in a dynamic and rapidly changing world environment *(Curriculum Framework, 1998, p.1)*.

**Dependent variable:**

The dependent variable is the variable that is being measured and is expected to vary depending upon the level of the independent variable *(Blackmore, 1994, p.190)*. For this study the dependent variable measured is student attitudes to social studies.

**Government school:**

Western Australian primary and secondary schools that are constructed, maintained and funded by the Western Australian State Government.
Independent variable:

The independent variable in a study is the variable, the levels of which are manipulated or selected by the investigator (Blackmore, 1994, p. 190). Independent variables in this study include student, teacher and learning environment variables.

Likert scale:

The procedure involves the researcher selecting a set of attitude statements, to which subjects are asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement along a five-point (or sometimes longer) scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (Burns, 1997, p. 460).

Perception:

The awareness of objects, relationships, and events via the senses, including such activities as recognizing, observing, and discriminating. These activities enable us to organize and interpret the stimuli we receive into meaningful knowledge of the world (Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry, 1984, p. 543).

Social studies:

Is the study of people as social beings, as they have existed and interacted with each other and the environment, in time and in place (Education Department of Western Australia, 1992, p. 1).

Social Studies K-10 Syllabus:

The Social Studies K-10 Syllabus was accepted as a curriculum for Government and most non-Government schools in 1981. The syllabus provided a coherent and
sequential treatment of knowledge, skills and values. It was revised in 1985 and continues to be used at the time of this study.

Society and Environment Learning Area:

The Society and Environment Learning Area enables students to understand how individuals and groups live together and interact with their environment. It encourages them to actively explore, make sense of and contribute to improving the world around them (Curriculum Framework, 1998).

Outcomes and Standards Framework - Student Outcome Statements:

Student Outcome Statements are a framework (for Western Australian Government schools, primary and secondary) to describe student's learning achievements in each of the eight mandated learning areas.

Unit Curriculum:

A result of the Beazley Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in Western Australia in 1988, was the development and implementation of the Unit Curriculum in Western Australia. Today, Unit Curriculum is used in secondary Government and non-Government schools.

Plan of the thesis

The following outlines the structure of the thesis:

Chapter two

Chapter two offers a review of the literature associated with previous studies of student attitudes towards the social studies learning area. It provides a description
of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the study and identifies the variables impacting on student attitudes towards the learning area.

Chapter three
Chapter three begins with an account of the selection of subjects and the instrument utilised to gather data to answer the proposed research questions. A description of the questionnaire design and its validity and reliability follows. The chapter concludes by describing procedures used to complete the data collection.

Chapter four
Chapter four provides a description of the procedures used to conduct the analysis of data and the results of the survey are reported and discussed. It concludes with a summary of the key findings.

Chapter five
Chapter five provides a general discussion of the findings and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the findings of this case study may have implications for classroom practices and future research.
Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter two provides a review of the literature related to student attitudes towards social studies and the theoretical model adopted for the case study research. The review of the literature describes the status of social studies in various school contexts. Particular emphasis is placed on research findings from Australian and United States school settings.

Previous studies

Little research has been conducted to identify student attitudes towards social studies in Western Australian secondary schools, particularly in the Catholic sector. Research though has been conducted in Western Australian primary schools, (Moroz, 1997 & 1996a/b; Print, 1990; Moroz & Washbourne, 1989; Fraser, 1981 & 1980) and in the United States elementary and high schools (Corbin, 1994; Hutchen, 1993; McGowan 1990; Fouts, 1990 & 1989; McTeer, 1986; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985; McGowan, 1984; Schug, Todd & Berry, 1984; Haladyna, Shaughnessy & Redsun, 1982; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Fernandez, Massey & Dornbusch, 1976; McTeer, 1975; McTeer, Blanton & Lee, 1974; Kaoru, Thomas and Karns, 1969; Curry & Hughes, 1965). The findings of these studies will provide a background for this case study.

The literature shows that in the United States, over the last three decades, research findings at the high school level have found student attitudes to be consistently negative towards social studies. Haladyna and Thomas (1979) in their study of approximately 3000 elementary school (referred to as primary school in Western
Australia) student attitudes towards school and subject areas found that the data unmistakably suggested students were somewhat positive and enthusiastic about school but grew ‘increasingly disenchanted as a function of grade level’. Students in Grades 7 and 8 appeared to be the most negative. While students sampled were negative about school, this did not carry over to subject matter nor did more positive attitudes towards subject matter carry over to attitudes towards school (Haladyna & Thomas, 1979, p. 20).

Haladyna and Thomas (1979) did not explore the factors influencing students’ declining attitudes towards school and school subject matters, especially social studies. Thus, though the data provided evidence of an ‘alarming trend’ (Haladyna & Thomas, 1979, p. 22), it was not conclusive. Other studies sought to determine the factors that contributed to the year level decline.

A study conducted by Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun (1982a) explored the relationship of student, teacher and learning environment variables to attitudes towards social studies. Data was collected by surveying students in Grades 4, 7 and 9. Emphasis of the study was placed on whether the differences in attitudes were a function of gender and which of the set of variables (student, teacher and classroom learning environment) was most related to attitudes towards social studies. Results indicated that student motivation, teacher quality/traits and classroom organisation variables were most consistently related to social studies attitudes for each grade level and gender (Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun, 1982a, p. 36).

Teacher quality/traits included, ‘enthusiasm for the subject, a willingness to help students at a personal level, use of praise and reinforcement, fairness to students and a commitment to help students learn’ (Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun, 1982a, p. 22-23). The study found that, consistently, the relation of overall teacher
quality to attitudes was strong enough to suggest that teachers did indeed make a
direct difference in classroom attitudes (Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun,
1982a, p. 36). The study found that aspects of the classroom learning environment
were also determinants of student attitudes.

In relation to the classroom learning environment, social-psychological (refers to
an emotional perception of the class and the school) and management-organisation
(refers to the teacher's direct control over the class and instruction) were the main
factors (Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun, 1982a, p. 23). The results clearly
indicated that the learning environment along with the teacher variables played a
significant role in accounting for the variance of class social studies attitude scores
across the three grade levels studied.

Other studies conducted supported these findings. Hornstein's study (1990)
involved interviewing elementary school children to obtain descriptions about what
happened during their social studies lessons. A major focus of the study was on
what the children enjoyed and disliked about the subject area and what they would
like to do more and less of during their lessons. Students were also given the
opportunity to state what they would like to change about the subject area.

From the interviews, eight distinct protocols for social studies instruction emerged:
(1) 'teacher reads'; (2) 'students read'; (3) 'lecture/discussion'; (4) 'correct, read,
complete'; (5) 'packets'; (6) 'outlining'; (7) 'copy the notes'; and (8) 'varied
activities' (Hornstein, 1990, p. 1). Findings suggested that the learning environments
(protocols for instruction) were predominately teacher-centred and not at all
inquiry based. Thus, it was not unexpected, that almost half of the elementary
school children interviewed stated they disliked social studies.
Schug, Todd and Berry (1984) used open ended interviews to investigate what elementary and high school students thought about the social studies curriculum. The study showed students did not perceive social studies to be enjoyable nor important. A common response by students was that 'social studies was boring'. Many students found social studies content to be uninteresting because the information is too far removed from their own experiences, too detailed for clear understanding or because it repeats information learned earlier (Schug, Todd and Berry, 1984, p.386). In 1985, Shaughnessy and Haladyna also found that most students they surveyed suggested that social studies was boring and irrelevant. The findings suggested that social studies content, repetition of social studies programs and teaching methods contributed to the 'boring' tag applied to the learning area.

A major concern for social studies educators that arose from this study was that teachers had failed to communicate to students the importance of the subject area. Schug, Todd and Berry (1984, p.387), described that student attitudes towards social studies might be more accurately described as an indifference. They concluded that the pattern of student responses clearly suggests that more active learning experiences and greater variety in teaching methods are ways social studies instructions could be improved (Schug, Todd & Berry, 1984, p.387). The results indicated that students' perception of the usefulness and importance of social studies was not as positive as with other school subjects.

Fernandez, Massey and Dornbusch (1976, p.56) investigated approximately 700 high school students' perception of social studies and found that social studies was regarded differently from the other academic subjects. Students perceived that social studies high school courses were not as important when compared to mathematics and English for their future occupations. Students believed that the basic skills they encountered in mathematics and English classes were important for
entry into almost any job or college they aspired to (Fernandez, Massey and Dornbusch, 1976, p. 56). An explanation given was that the basic skills meant to be taught in social studies classes were obviously 'not being communicated to the students or the students were not perceiving them as important for the future' (Fernandez, Massey and Dornbusch, 1976, p. 56). Thus, students were less likely to relate their personal experiences in social studies lessons to their adult lives. The study suggested that the status of social studies among students, teachers and their parents, in the United States was not at all positive.

Research into student attitudes towards social studies conducted in Western Australia (Moroz, 1996 and Print, 1990) found two major concerns in the area of social studies education. Firstly, the status of social studies when compared to other school subjects was considerably low and secondly, research findings suggest that students liking for (or its status) social studies declined as students progressed from middle to upper primary school.

Moroz (1996), in his study of 3132 Western Australian Government primary school students found there was a 23.22% decline in the status of social studies as students progressed through years 4 to 7. This was approximately three times greater than the overall decline in attitude towards the other 12 subjects studied by students in the primary years of schooling. The study showed students were moderately positive about social studies in Year 4, 5 and 6, however, they held negative attitudes in Year 7. Of the thirteen school subjects, social studies ranked twelfth most popular by the students, ahead only of religion. Moroz's (1996b) study confirmed not only that there was a poor status of social studies in the city primary school environment but, found an alarming rate of year level decline in student attitudes towards the subject. Research into country students' perceptions of the learning area showed that the students also perceived social studies to be one of the least liked learning areas (Moroz, 1997). Country students ranked social studies twelfth from a list of thirteen school subjects. Both studies found
that as students progressed through the primary years of schooling, the lack of enthusiasm towards the subject area became increasingly greater.

Print’s statewide survey (1990) involved primary and secondary students in Western Australian Government and non-Government schools. Print (1990, p. 50) found that primary students appeared to be ‘quite positive towards social studies and generally regard it as a useful and interesting subject at school.’ Print (1990) also found moderate student support for social studies at the secondary school level.

Research shows student attitudes towards social studies as they progressed through the years of schooling become increasingly negative. One explanation suggests that the lack of interest in social studies amongst high school students is explained by gender (Corbin, 1994, p. 4). Curry and Hughes (1965) study of female students’ perception of social studies found that when girls were compared with boys, girls tended to show a greater interest and liking towards the subject area. Fraser’s study of secondary students found ‘girls expressed significantly more favourable attitudes towards English, social studies and art, but significantly less favourable attitudes towards mathematics’ (1981, p. 128). McTeer, Blanton and Lee (1974) also found females more positive towards social studies than males.

On the other hand, McTeer’s studies (1975 & 1986) found that males were more positive than females towards social studies. Of the high school seniors sampled (McTeer, 1986) 24.9% of the males compared to 18.6% of the females selected social studies as the most liked subject area (Corbin, 1994, p. 4). Less males (16.4%) than females (23.2%) suggested they disliked social studies. According to McTeer (1986: cited in Corbin, 1994, p. 4), ‘a possible reason for gender differences in attitudes towards social studies was the dominant role of males in subjects such as history and government.’
Haladyna and Thomas (1979) examined if sex differences contributed to different attitudes towards school subjects. The most significant finding was that the decline in attitudes towards school was greater for males than it was for females. However, Haladyna and Thomas found that no significant differences existed in student attitudes towards social studies, as most students regardless of their sex, rated the subject in very low positions.

Fouts (1990) study of female students' perception of social studies showed that girls viewed social studies in a less favourable manner than boys. However, Fouts (1990) stated that girls liked and enjoyed social studies more than boys, when they had a female teacher. In comparison, Moroz and Washbourne (1989) found that there were no significant gender differences in the way students perceived the usefulness, degree of difficulty or appeal of social studies (Ministry of Education, 1990, p.5). Moroz (1997) found male country students liked social studies significantly more than female country students.

Studies conducted in both Australia and the United States to investigate attitudes towards the subject area, all confirmed that one of the reasons for the decline in attitudes towards the learning area is due to the topic taught not being interesting to students. Moroz (1996) found that students preferred social studies when it was treated in a more active learning mode. Fouts (1990) study of female students perception of social studies found that students preferred social studies lessons which were cooperative and collaborative learning environments. Hutchen's (1993) study identified that students were 'hooked' on social studies when they were involved in cooperative learning and inquiry tasks. Teacher reliance on the use of predominately teacher-centred learning activities was found to be an influence on student attitudes towards social studies.

The literature shows that teachers are one of the reasons for the decline in student attitude towards social studies. The findings repeatedly suggest that most teachers
conduct social studies lessons in a similar didactic way and that little has changed over the years, that is, they continue to use teacher-centred delivery rather than student-centred inquiry strategies (Moroz & Baker, 1996, p.13). McGowan's (1990) study concluded that teacher style more than teaching practices were more influential upon student attitudes towards social studies. Hornstein (1990) in his study found that curriculum and instruction was focused only on the transfer of information and that inquiry (of any sort) was absent from the learning environment. The findings indicate that the teacher is a determinant of student attitudes towards the subject area.

Moroz and Baker (1996) argue if the learning area is to regain status in schools, 'profound changes are required, particularly in the area of teacher development.' Fouts (1989) hypothesises that changing the classroom environment by introducing diverse teaching strategies, active student participation in the lesson, cooperative learning and better positive interpersonal relations, would result in a positive change in attitude towards social studies at junior and senior high school levels. 'Studies conducted where the teaching practices are interactive, inductive and student-centred reveal the development of positive student attitudes towards this important subject area' (Moroz & Baker, 1996, p.17).

Research in the United States suggests that students do not like social studies. Students in Western Australian Government primary schools are positive about the learning area, except in Year 7. Research conducted by Kaoru, Thomas and Karns (1969), Haladyna and Thomas (1979), Fraser (1981) and Moroz and Washbourne (1989) found significant year level deterioration in student attitudes towards social studies from middle to upper primary school year levels. Moroz (1996b) Fouts (1990) and Hutchens (1993) assert that students prefer social studies classrooms when an active and cooperative learning environment exists. Fouts (1990) hypothesises ways in changing the classroom environment, while
Moroz and Baker (1997) argue that in order to regain status, focus needs to be placed on the area of teacher development. The studies cited indicate student attitudes are influenced by a range of student, teacher and learning environment factors. Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b) devised a model that identified factors that impacted on student attitudes towards the learning area which will be adopted for this case study research.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical basis for this case study research into student attitudes towards social studies adopts the model developed by Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b). This model proposed that students' attitudes towards the learning area related to the interaction of a set of factors linked to student, teacher and learning environment variables, which are exogenous and endogenous to the schooling process (Figure 2.1).

Exogenous variables exist outside of the schooling process and include: the student's home environment, demographics such as age and gender of the student and teacher, teacher qualifications, the social studies syllabus taught and student, teacher and school socio-economic factors. These variables are referred to as 'givens' by Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b) in the schooling process, as they cannot be manipulated within the classroom learning environment.

Endogenous variables are those that may be manipulated and are powerful determinants of attitude. Such variables are embedded in the schooling process and are controlled by teachers, school administrators and personnel. Variables include, teacher style and use of strategies (i.e. using positive reinforcement, providing feedback and student centred inquiry based tasks), school
implementation of curriculum, classroom structure and student attitudes towards school and the subjects.

THE SCHOOLING PROCESS

Student ➔ Student
Teacher ➔ Teacher
Learning Environment ➔ Learning Environment

EXOGENOUS VARIABLES

ENDOGENOUS VARIABLES

Figure 2.1: Factors affecting student attitudes towards social studies

The model shows the role of exogenous and endogenous variables on students' attitudes towards social studies. The factors or correlates of attitude in the model include all independent variables grouped under student variables, teacher variables and learning environment variables, which may in any combination influence the dependent variable of student attitude.

Student attitudes may be influenced by variables including, the teacher’s age and gender, student’s age and gender, location or the socio-economic status of the school, student’s home environment and size and gender mix of classes. The model shows that teacher and learning environment variables are significantly related to student attitudes towards social studies. The learning environment is directly influenced by the teacher and directly influences the student’s attitude towards social studies (Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun, 1982, p.3).
**Student variables**

Student variables consist of pre-existing student tendencies such as student gender and age (as represented by year level), student motivation and their perception of own ability, student perception of subject matter’s importance and home/community environments. These are all possible influences on student attitudes towards school and school subjects. This case study focused on the variables of age, as reflected by year level and gender to determine whether or not gender and or year level differences are factors that play a role in shaping student attitudes. Attention was also placed on whether student’s perception of their own ability, usefulness of the subject matter, their teacher’s attitude towards social studies and students, aspects of the classroom learning environment and parental support for the subject area are factors affecting attitudes to social studies. The learning environment section of the questionnaire, explores the nine key issues or constructs associated with student attitudes towards social studies.

**Teacher variables**

Teacher variables incorporate teacher age and gender, years of experience, qualifications, and instructional style and practices. Instructional style and practices refers to teacher motivation and enthusiasm towards the subject matter, praise and reinforcement, fairness to students, respect for individual student needs and commitment to teaching and the subject area. The above mentioned teacher variables are not specifically investigated in this research due to time and cost constraints and because of the case study approach adopted it would mean only eleven social studies teachers’ attitudes would be investigated. Future research could investigate teacher attitudes towards social studies and the factors that influence these attitudes.

**Learning environment variables**

Learning or classroom learning environment variables include school locality and socioeconomic factors, population of the school, size and gender mix of classes
and classroom climate and organisation. Learning environment variables are important factors that influence student attitudes and perceptions of the learning area. The learning environment section of the questionnaire explores student's perception of aspects of the classroom learning environment. Due to the limited size and scope of this case study not all of the above mentioned learning environment variables were investigated.

The model developed by Haladyna, Shaughnessy and Redsun (1982b) demonstrates that the teacher and learning environment plays a 'key' role in the formation of student attitudes towards the social studies learning area. Essentially, teacher behaviour (instruction and attitude) can influence students and the classroom environment and as a consequence affect attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects.

**Summary**

Chapter two serves to demonstrate previous studies conducted, both in Australian and United States school contexts, to determine student attitudes towards social studies and the factors that influence these attitudes. The findings of these studies provide the background for this case study. The review of the literature demonstrates that the status of social studies when compared with other school subjects is low, and that liking for the subject area declines as students progress from middle primary through upper primary, to the lower secondary years of schooling. The theoretical basis for the study which examines student attitudes towards social studies in one Catholic secondary school is grounded on the model developed by Haladyna and Shaughnessy (1982). The model proposed all independent variables (classed as student, teacher and learning environment) could influence the dependent variable of student attitudes. The case study placed particular focus on the student variables of: student perception of their own
ability, the usefulness of the subject matter, the classroom learning environment, teacher attitudes to social studies and students and parental support for the subject area.

Chapter three outlines the method in which the case study research was undertaken.
Chapter Three
Method

Introduction

Chapter three outlines the method in which this case study was undertaken. It begins with an account of the study's design, a description of the target population for the study, and an outline of the instrument used to gather the data. A description of the questionnaire design and its validity and reliability follows. Details of how the data was collected and analysed is provided. The chapter concludes by addressing the ethical considerations of this case study.

The study has two purposes: firstly, to investigate lower secondary student attitudes towards the social studies learning area in one Catholic school located in the Perth metropolitan area; and secondly, to try to determine which factors influence these attitudes.

The dependent variable (student attitude) is significantly influenced by independent variables (student, teacher and learning environment variables). The interplay between the two sets of variables is shown in Figure 2.1. Particular focus was placed on the independent variables of student age (as represented by year level) and student gender in determining student attitudes.

Two questions guided the case study:

1. What are the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?
2. What factors influence the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?
The research design involved all students in Years 8, 9 and 10 at the selected school completing a questionnaire developed to determine their attitudes towards social studies.

**School population and sample size**

The sample was derived from the lower secondary years of schooling at a selected Catholic school in the Perth metropolitan area. This school was selected on the basis of convenience, and therefore is not representative of Western Australian metropolitan Catholic secondary schools.

The school is a Catholic co-educational day school (Years 8 to 12) with 728 students enrolled in 1999. Eighty staff members are employed at the school. A total of 475 students were enrolled in Years 8 to 10 at the school.

A total of 421 lower secondary students participated in the survey. Fifty four students did not complete the survey due to their absence from school. No students who were present on the day of the survey declined to participate. The survey was undertaken on one day in the final week of term one of the 1999 school year. This may be considered as a limitation because the students were reporting their perceptions about the social studies learning area based only on having completed the first nine weeks of schooling in 1999. Time constraints of this study did not permit the collection of data at the end of a school year.

**Instrument used in the collection of data**

An existing attitude scale instrument, developed and validated by Moroz (1996), *Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies* (*SATSS*), was utilised for this study. Originally the instrument was used to gauge the attitudes of 3132 students towards social studies in metropolitan Government primary schools.
For this case study SA7SS was modified by deleting sections not relevant to secondary students and all items relating to subjects specifically offered in primary school were altered to accommodate a range of school subjects undertaken in lower secondary. A pilot study to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument was not conducted as the original instrument was trialed and validated by Moroz.

The modified instrument, *Secondary Student Attitudes Toward Social Studies (SSATSS)*, with 94 items, utilised a five point Likert-type scale to measure attitudes towards social studies. On the scale, five was positive, one was negative and the neutral point was three. Different response formats or scales were utilised in the student questionnaire. The varying response formats did not hinder the respondents as no difficulties in answering the questionnaire were observed or reported. SSATSS included demographics (student and teacher gender and student year level), statements about the classroom learning environment, frequency of learning activities in social studies, status of social studies and other school subjects, an open-ended question section and two-stand alone items. A copy of the student questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

**Learning Environment**

The instrument included scales or constructs which attempted to measure variables of the learning environment identified from the literature as having an impact on attitudes towards social studies. In this section, 45 items (statements about the learning environment) addressed nine issues which were organised as constructs. There were five items for each construct, which collectively were thought to measure the construct variable or key issues. These were cycled throughout the list of 45 items to minimise the patterning of responses by the students.
The nine constructs were:

- Attitudes to school
- Attitudes to social studies
- Usefulness of social studies
- Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies
- Perceived teacher attitudes to students
- Classroom environment
- Classroom management
- Perception of own ability
- Parental support for social studies

Student responses ranged from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1). Of the 45 items, 17 items were reversed (negative statements) to provide greater reliability and to minimise the probability of set responses. The validity of the constructs, as tested by Moroz (1996), is reported in Table 3.1.

Frequency of learning activities in social studies
This section of the questionnaire dealt with instructional practices. Students were asked to indicate the frequency of participation in various learning activities during social studies lessons. The scale ranged from 'at least once a week' (5) to 'hardly ever' (1). It was included in the questionnaire to gain insight into the 'range or variety and the frequency of occurrence of instructional practices' (Moroz, 1996, p.45).

Status of social studies and other school subjects
The instrument asked students to state their liking for 14 school subjects. Included in the list were academic subject areas (also referred to as core subjects) such as English, mathematics, science and social studies. Elective subjects included were
physical education, computing, home economics, drama, media studies, art, health, design and technology, music and photography (Elective subjects studied by students were chosen on the basis of student preference). Student responses ranged from ‘like a lot’ (5) to ‘dislike a lot’ (1). This was a significant section of the questionnaire as it would answer the research question ‘What are the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?’.

**Open-ended questions**

The open-ended question section adds a qualitative dimension to the questionnaire. The two questions (items 92 & 93) asked students to state their likes and dislikes about social studies.

**Stand-alone items**

Two stand-alone items (49 & 94) were included in the questionnaire. Item 49 required students to state their liking for their social studies teacher. Responding on a five point Likert scale, responses ranged from ‘strongly agree’ (5) to ‘strongly disagree’ (1). Item 94 dealt with students’ liking for social studies. Student responses ranged from ‘Social studies is my favourite subject’ (1), to ‘I don’t like anything about social studies at all’ (5). ‘Social studies is OK’ (3), was the neutral response on the scale.

**Reliability values**

The consistency of each SSATSS construct was measured using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. A correlation coefficient indicates the direction and the strength of a linear association (relationship) between two equal variables. The direction of the relationship is indicated by the sign (+ or -) and the strength of the relationship is represented by the absolute size of the coefficient (Burns, 1997, p. 198). The closer
the coefficient to 1 (whether positive or negative) the stronger the association (relationship) between the variables. The relationship between each of the items for each construct, is indicated by the size of the coefficient (whether these are positive or negative):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alpha Coefficient</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.90 - 1.00</td>
<td>Very high correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.70 - 0.90</td>
<td>High correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.40 - 0.70</td>
<td>Moderate correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.20 - 0.40</td>
<td>Low correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 0.20</td>
<td>Slight correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Burns, 1997, p. 198)

Table 3.1 shows the standardised alpha coefficient for both Moroz's pilot and final study and reliability estimates for this case study. The reliability estimates for the final survey (SATSS) ranged from 0.450 to 0.842 and for the case study (SSATSS), values ranged from 0.364 to 0.858. The data shows an improvement in the alpha coefficients for all nine constructs, except for the construct dealing with ‘classroom environment’. A possible reason for the improved alpha for each construct, is that the literacy levels of the SSATSS respondent group was higher.

Table 3.1: SATSS/SSATSS constructs and reliability estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Pilot SATSS</th>
<th>Final Survey SATSS</th>
<th>Case Study SSATSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to school</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to social studies</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>0.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of social studies</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies</td>
<td>0.615</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>0.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived teacher attitudes to students</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>0.679</td>
<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of own ability</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived parental support for social studies</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data collection

The researcher and two research assistants administered the questionnaires to the 421 lower secondary students who were present on the day of the survey and were willing to participate. The research assistants were Bachelor of Education students in their final year. Both research assistants received instruction on the procedures of the data collection.

Standardised introductions were adhered to when administering the survey to avoid prompting or tainting of the data. The research assistants were required to outline the different response formats within the questionnaire and how students were to complete the survey. The research assistants answered any questions students had and collected completed surveys.

A majority of the teachers, while given the option of staying in their classrooms, were absent from the room while the survey was administered to their students. Students were given a 30 minute time frame to complete the survey which proved to be more than adequate.

Analysis of Data

Research data was analysed using the computer software package, SPSS 9.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc, 1999).

Descriptive statistics were the primary statistical analysis method used for the study (items 1-91, & 94). Numerical responses were summarised in the form of means, standard deviation and frequencies. Formal statistical tests (Independent T-test and Analysis of variance, ANOVA) were used to explore the statistical significance of variable relationships in the data. In the open-ended question
section, both questions were analysed by identifying and coding common and frequent responses by students.

**Ethics**

The research proposal was approved by the School Postgraduate Studies Committee and clearance was granted by the Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University to undertake the research. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Principal and Head of the Society and Environment Department at the case study school. Letters seeking consent from parents for student participation was made available to the Principal who undertook the task of informing students and their parents. Students were given the option of not participating in the survey however, none refused. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the investigation and procedures to be followed. Anonymity and confidentiality of the school and all participants was guaranteed. Documents of relevance are contained in Appendix B.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine student attitudes towards social studies and the factors that influence these attitudes. The respondent group included a total of 421 students present on the day of the survey at the case study school. The modified instrument SSATSS was utilised to measure the responses of lower secondary students. SSATSS included demographics, learning environment, frequency of learning activities in social studies, status of social studies and other school subjects, open-ended questions and stand-alone items. Data was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS 9.0 for Windows, where descriptive statistics were the primary statistical procedures used in the analysis of the research
data. Formal statistical tests were used to investigate if any significant variable relationships existed. The results from the survey are discussed in chapter four.
Chapter Four
Findings

Introduction

Data was analysed using the 1999 statistical package *SPSS 9.0 for Windows*. Primary statistical analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequency, means and standard deviations), while formal statistical operations such as T-tests and Analysis of variance (ANOVA), were used to identify any relationships between the independent variables (student, teacher & learning environment) and the dependent variable, student attitude towards social studies. Particular interest was placed on whether year level and gender differences contributed to student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects. Open-ended questions were analysed by identifying and classifying common and frequent responses by students.

Demographics

A total of 728 students were enrolled at the school in 1999. At the time of the survey there were 475 students in lower secondary, 179 students in Year 8, 154 students in Year 9 and 142 students in Year 10. The respondent group of 421 included all lower secondary students present on the day of the survey. This proportion of students made up 58.6% of the school population and 1% of the total number of students enrolled in Catholic schools in Western Australia in 1999. Of the 421 students surveyed, 39% were in Year 8, 33% were in Year 9 and 28% of lower secondary students were in Year 10 (see Table 4.1). There were slightly more males than females in the survey sample, male students comprising 50.6% of the respondent group.
Table 4.1: Number of female and male students surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 208 213 421

The total number of classes surveyed was 17. There were six classes in both Year 8 and 9 and five classes in Year 10. Year 8 class numbers ranged from 22 to 31 students, 22 to 32 students in Year 9 and 24 to 32 students per class in Year 10 (see Table 4.2). Most classes had slightly more boys than girls. Of the 17 classes surveyed, all were taught by female teachers except for one Year 10 class.

Table 4.2: Number and gender of students in each class surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class No</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 421 208 213

Percentage of students in lower secondary 88.6% 43.8% 44.8%
Key issues associated with student attitudes towards social studies

The learning environment section of the student questionnaire, identified student attitudes to nine key issues or constructs associated with social studies:

- Attitudes to school
- Attitudes to social studies
- Usefulness of social studies
- Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies
- Perceived teacher attitudes to students
- Classroom environment
- Classroom management
- Perception of own ability
- Parental support for social studies

Each construct contains five items. Student responses on a five point Likert scale, ranged from ‘strongly agree’ (5) to ‘strongly disagree’ (1). In the proceeding tables, results are provided for each item in each construct and standardised alpha coefficients obtained for the constructs are reported. Results are presented by discussing the overall construct and then gender and year level differences that exist. Results of the data analysis are found in Appendix C, D, E, F, G and H.

Differences in responses to the constructs based on student demographics

Differences in attitudes between the genders and across year levels were evident for almost every item comprising the nine constructs. For a number of items, these differences in attitudes were significant beyond the 0.001 level.
In the following tables, results from the analyses (T-test and ANOVA) for each item are reported. Cells which contain one to three asterisks, represent a significant difference in responses based upon the following key:

* = significant difference at the 0.05 level  
** = significant difference at the 0.01 level  
*** = significant difference at the 0.001 level

If there is no significant difference in responses between the groups for the items, the cell will contain 'ns'.

**Construct One - Student attitudes to school**

Table 4.3 shows the results for those items measuring student attitudes towards school. Overall, lower secondary student attitudes towards school were moderate. Students indicated that they were 'happy to go to school', (with a mean of 1.41) however, students' 'liking for school' was not as positive. Though the results indicate that students were only moderately positive towards school, students stated that they found most subjects they learnt at school to be interesting. Approximately 40% of students did not agree with the statement 'We have good rules in our school' and a further 24% were undecided about their opinion towards the statement. Just over one third of the students in the lower secondary years agreed that the school rules were good.

A comparison of male and female responses to items in this construct found no significant differences. Nevertheless, when female students are compared to males, females indicated that they were more 'happy to come to school'. However, female students' 'liking for school' (with a mean of 3.18) was not as positive when compared with male students (mean 3.28).
Significant differences in student attitudes towards school were evident when comparing year level responses. Year 8 students were more positive (significant at the 0.001 level) towards the statement 'I am happy to come to school' when compared with Year 9 and 10 students (see Table 4.4). Students 'liking for school' (item 22) showed a similar result where Year 8 responses were significantly more positive (at the 0.001 level) than that of students in other year levels. A comparison of responses to item 40, showed that Year 8 students were most positive towards the statement 'We have good rules in our school.'

Table 4.3: Construct One: Student attitudes to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am not happy to come to this school,*</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>At school I find most subjects interesting.</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I don't like school.*</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I like most of the teachers in this</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>We have good rules in our school.</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the data showed students liked most of the teachers at the school and were most favourable towards their social studies teacher. However, a comparison of year level responses, found students liking for teachers became significantly more negative as they progressed through the lower secondary years of schooling, at the 0.001 level. A high standardised alpha coefficient of 0.827 was obtained for
the construct measuring student attitudes towards school, meaning that there is a high correlation between the items that make up the construct.

**Table 4.4: Construct One: Student attitudes to school - year level differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am not happy to come to this school.*</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>At school I find most subjects interesting.</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I don't like school.*</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I like most of the teachers in this school.</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>We have good rules in our school.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively-phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed. Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001

**Construct Two - Student attitudes to social studies**

The correlation between the items that formed this construct, ‘Student attitudes to social studies’ is considered to be high and therefore is a valid construct. The results show students generally liked social studies. While more than 44% of students indicated that they liked the subject area, 30% of students were unsure whether they liked social studies. With a low mean of 3.06, students were marginal in their support for the statement ‘I enjoy the activities we do in social studies’ which indicates that students barely liked the learning activities undertaken in social studies lessons. In addition, students indicated that they found the things they learnt in social studies to be interesting (see Table 4.5). An interesting result in the data was that students indicated they had a strong positive perception about their own achievement in social studies. With a mean of 4.20, more than 85% of
students strongly agreed with the statement 'In social studies I try to do as well as I can'.

Female students (mean 4.22) were more positive about their achievement in social studies than males (mean 4.19), however, there was no significant difference in attitudes between the genders (see Appendix F).

Table 4.5: Construct Two: Student attitudes to social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I enjoy the activities we do in social studies.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I do not like social studies.*</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I like the topics we do in social studies.</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>In social studies I try to do as well as I can.</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>The things we learn in social studies are not interesting.*</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of year level responses found Year 8 students were more positive about their achievement in social studies than Year 9 and 10 students. With a mean of 4.39 for the item in Year 8, it dropped significantly with an absolute decline of 0.42 to 3.97 in Year 10 (see Table 4.6). Overall, Year 8 students with a mean of 3.54 (item 14) were significantly more positive towards the subject area, at the 0.001 level, when compared with Year 9 and 10 students (both with a mean
of 3.05). Figure 4.1 shows year level decline in student attitudes towards school and social studies.

Table 4.6: Construct Two: Student attitudes to social studies - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I enjoy the activities we do in social studies.</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I do not like social studies.*</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I like the topics we do in social studies.</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>In social studies I try to do as well as I can.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>The things we learn in social studies are not interesting.*</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed.
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001

Figure 4.1: Year level decline - Student attitudes to school and social studies
Construct Three - Usefulness of social studies

Construct three which assessed students perception of the usefulness of social studies, obtained a high standardised alpha coefficient of 0.826, indicating a high correlation between the items that make up the construct. The results for each item pertaining to this construct are set out in Table 4.7. Students perceived social studies to be a useful and an important subject. More than 77% of students felt that it would help them with an understanding of the world around them and 56% of students indicated that they expected to make use of what they learnt in social studies. Thirty five percent of students were positive that social studies would help them gain future employment, while 36.8% indicated they were unsure. Overall, 63% of students indicated that doing social studies was important and disagreed that they did not learn much in social studies.

Table 4.7: Construct Three: Usefulness of social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me.</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies.</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job.</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Doing social studies is not important.*</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>I don't learn much in social studies.*</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standardised alpha coefficient = 0.826
Scale: 5 = Strongly agree, 3 = Unsure, 1 = Strongly disagree
* Negatively-phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Due to rounding, raw totals may not sum to 100%
SD = Standard deviation
Significant differences in student responses were evident when a comparison of year level responses was conducted (see Table 4.8). Year 9 and 10 students were most negative towards item 24, ‘If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job’, disagreeing that social studies would help them gain future employment. Year 8 students, with a moderately positive mean of 3.44 were most supportive towards the statement. Student responses to item 33 found significant differences, at the 0.001 level, amongst the year levels. Year 9 students with a mean score of 3.46, when compared with the means for Year 8 and 10 students, was significantly lower.

The data shows that students liked and believed social studies to be important. They valued the learning area in terms of it being important, useful and helpful in understanding the world around them, but were only marginally positive about its job value.

Table 4.8: Construct Three: Usefulness of social studies - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What we do in social studies will help me understand more of the world around me.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I expect to make use of what I learn in social studies.</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>If I do well in social studies it will help me get a job.</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Doing social studies is not important.*</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>I don't learn much in social studies.*</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001
Construct Four - Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies

Students generally perceived that their teachers enjoyed and were interested in social studies. Over 80% of students indicated that their teachers perceived social studies to be an important subject area and 81% stated that their teacher was interested in social studies.

Table 4.9: Construct Four: Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My teacher is interested in social studies.</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My teacher does not enjoy social studies lessons.*</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>My teacher thinks that social studies is not important.*</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>In social studies my teacher often talks about world news.</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>My teacher likes to display our social studies work.</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences at the 0.001 level were found between year levels for item 34, ‘In social studies my teacher often talks about world news’ (see Table 4.10). Year 10 students responded more positively with a mean of 3.76 than Year 8.
(mean 3.28) and Year 9 students (mean 3.17). A possible reason for this difference could be that in both the *Social Studies K to 10 Syllabus* and *Unit Curriculum*, units of study completed in Year 10 focus on current and past world events and issues. The open ended question section also found that the discussion of current world events and issues, was frequently mentioned by students as one of the most liked aspects of social studies lessons. Year 10 students (mean 3.66) were most positive (significant difference at the 0.001 level) that their teacher liked to display work when compared with Year 8 (mean 3.45) and Year 9 (mean 3.29) students. A moderate correlation of 0.659 was obtained for the items contributing to the ‘Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies’ construct.

Table 4.10: Construct Four: Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My teacher is interested in social studies.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My teacher does not enjoy social studies lessons.*</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>My teacher thinks that social studies is not important.*</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>In social studies my teacher often talks about world news.</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>My teacher likes to display our social studies work.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively-phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001

Construct Five - Perceived teacher attitudes to students

An alpha coefficient of 0.784 was gained for this construct. This means the correlation between the items for this construct is considered to be high and
therefore is a valid construct. Generally, students felt their teachers were fair and liked all students. Fewer than 65% of students disagreed that during social studies lessons their teacher was unfair, while 20.7% of students were unsure. Item 26 which investigated student perception of their teacher's liking for students found 59% indicated that they agreed with the statement, while more than a quarter of the students indicated they were unsure (see Table 4.11).

As a group, students thought that their social studies teacher encouraged them to do well during lessons and would reinforce good work completed by students in class. Approximately 69% of students suggested that their social studies teacher was interested in student opinion, while 17.5% indicated they were unsure about the statement.

Table 4.11: Construct Five: Perceived teacher attitudes to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentages of total students</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is not interested in my opinion.*</td>
<td>4.1 6.7 19.5 38.2 31.5 3.86 1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher tells me when my work is good.</td>
<td>21.9 47.1 16.0 11.0 4.0 3.72 1.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students.</td>
<td>18.7 41.1 25.1 9.1 6.0 3.57 1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is unfair.*</td>
<td>5.8 8.9 20.7 40.9 23.8 3.68 1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher encourages me to do well.</td>
<td>20.0 44.8 22.6 8.6 4.0 3.68 1.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standardised alpha coefficient = 0.704
Scale: 5 = Strongly agree, 3 = Unsure, 1 = Strongly disagree
* Negatively-phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Due to rounding, row totals may not sum to 100%
SD = Standard deviation
From Years 8 to 10 significant differences (at the 0.001 level) were evident for item 35, with an absolute decline from 3.99 in Year 8 to 3.48 in Year 10. Year 8 students were strongest in agreement with the statement ‘In social studies lessons the teacher is unfair,’ with a mean score of 3.99 however, this declined by 0.51 to 3.48 in Year 10. Significant differences were found at the 0.001 level for other items in the construct (see Table 4.12). Overall, the data shows a high percentage of students were unsure whether their teacher liked most of their students, were fair or encouraged students to do well. This suggests the teacher-student relationship needs building.

Table 4.12: Construct Five: Perceived teacher attitudes to students - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is not interested in my opinion.*</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher tells me when my work is good.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher likes most of the students.</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is unfair *</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher encourages me to do well.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively-phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001
ns = no significance

Construct six - Classroom environment

An alpha coefficient of 0.364 was obtained for this construct. This shows a low correlation exists between the items that make up this construct and therefore, items must be considered on an individual basis. The data (see Table 4.13) shows
that students liked and believed social studies to be important. Fewer than 21% of students looked forward to their next social studies lesson, while just over 41% of students disagreed with the statement 'I look forward to my next social studies lesson', approximately 38% of students were undecided. Students agreed that in social studies lessons students worked well together and that lessons were not too noisy. More than 44% of students stated that many students wasted time during social studies lessons, while 29.8% indicated they were unsure. About 50% of students stated they tried to get a higher mark in social studies than their friends (see Table 4.13).

A comparison of male and female responses for item 10 and 36 found no significant difference between the two genders, however females were more positive towards the statement than males. A significant difference (at the 0.05 level) was evident between female and male responses for item 45, where males showed to be more positive towards the statement 'In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends'(see Table 4.15).

A significant difference was evident between year group responses for item 9 (see Table 4.14). With a moderate positive mean of 3.85 in Year 8, an absolute decline of 0.83 to 3.02 was evident by Year 10. Year 10 students, with a mean of 2.39, were significantly more negative towards the statement 'Many of the students waste time in social studies lessons' than students in other years.

**Construct seven - Classroom management**

The high correlation 0.726 that exits between the items for this construct 'Classroom management' validates the construct. About 56% of students perceived that their teacher was able to control students in their classrooms, while 23% indicated they were unsure.
### Table 4.13: Construct Six: Classroom environment

#### Percentages of total students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I look forward to my next social studies lesson.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the students work well together.</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Social studies lessons are too noisy.*</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Many of the students waste time in social studies lessons.*</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends.</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standardised alpha coefficient = 0.381

Scale: 5 = Strongly agree, 3 = Unsure, 1 = Strongly disagree

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed

Due to rounding, raw totals may not sum to 100%

SD = Standard deviation

### Table 4.14: Construct Six: Classroom environment - year level differences

#### Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I look forward to my next social studies lesson.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the students work well together.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Social studies lessons are too noisy.*</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Many of the students waste time in social studies lessons.*</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends.</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed

Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001

ns = no significance
Only 37% of students indicated that during social studies lesson the class was well organised while a high proportion of students (40.3%) indicated they were unsure about their opinion towards the statement. Overall, 67.3% of students thought that their teacher’s explanation of ideas and instructions were clear and that they used good resource materials during social studies lessons. Student attitudes were barely positive towards the statement, ‘In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early’, with 34% in agreement and 33% indicating they were unsure (see Table 4.16). Significant differences (at the 0.05/0.01 levels) were found between gender and year level responses towards this item (37). The mean for male students was significantly higher and more positive when compared to female students (see Table 4.15). Across the year levels the mean declined by 0.59 in Year 8 to 2.73 in Year 10 (see Table 4.17).

Table 4.15: Gender differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I can do all the work in social studies.</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends.</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and ratings have been reversed.
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001
ns = no significance

Construct eight - Perception of own ability

Construct eight which assessed students perception of their own ability in social studies obtained a high coefficient of 0.858 and therefore is a valid construct.
Table 4.16: Construct Seven: Classroom management

Percentages of total students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students.</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>We have good materials to read and use in social studies.</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the class is well organised.</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early.</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>In social studies the teacher clearly explains what we have to do.</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standardized alpha coefficient = 0.726
Scale: 5 = Strongly agree, 3 = Unsure, 1 = Strongly disagree
* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Due to rounding, row totals may not sum to 100%.

Table 4.17: Construct Seven: Classroom management - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the teacher is able to control students.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>We have good materials to read and use in social studies.</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In social studies lessons the class is well organised.</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early.</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>In social studies the teacher clearly explains what we have to do.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed
Level of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001
ns = no significance
Overall, students had a positive perception of their own ability to be successful in social studies. Over 50% of students indicated they were the type to do well in social studies. Students also felt that they could complete all the work tasks set during social studies lessons with 47% indicating it was easy for students to achieve success in social studies, while 74% of students suggested that social studies was not too hard for them (see Table 4.18). In the open-ended section of the questionnaire, students suggested that what they liked about social studies was that it was easy for them to complete the work and gain good marks for project work.

Table 4.18: Construct Eight: Student perception of their own ability in social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am not the type to do well in social studies.*</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I can do all the work in social studies.</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Social studies is too hard for me.*</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>It is easy for me to do my best in social studies.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>I am a successful student in social studies.</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant difference (at the 0.05 level) was found between male and female responses to item 20 (see Table 4.15). Males were more positive about their ability by 0.21, with a mean of 3.73 when compared to females. No significant differences were found between year level responses.
Construct nine - Parental support for social studies

As the results indicate (see Table 4.19), there was strong parental support for students to do well in social studies. More than 60% of students agreed that their parents encouraged them to do well in social studies and that they thought social studies was an important subject for students to do well in. More than 80% of students suggested parents encouraged them to complete social studies homework and that they were interested in their childrens’ social studies work.

Table 4.19: Construct Nine: Perceived parental support for social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My parents do not encourage me to do my social studies homework.*</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help.</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies.</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>My parents are not interested in the social studies work I do.*</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>My parents think that social studies is not an important school subject.*</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standardised alpha coefficient = 0.858
Scale: 5 = Strongly agree, 3 = Unsure, 1 = Strongly disagree
* Negatively-phrased survey items and scores have been reversed
Due to rounding, raw totals may not sum to 100%
SD = Standard deviation

No significant differences in student responses towards items for this construct was evident between the two genders. However, differences (at the 0.05/0.001 level of significance) were found between year level responses. Year 8 students with a mean of 4.24 for the item ‘My parents think social studies is not an important subject’ was significantly greater (at the 0.01 level) than that of student responses
in Year 9 and Year 10 (see Table 4.20). For items 21 and 30 (see Table 4.20) Year 8 students indicated to be most positive towards the statements than students in other year levels.

Table 2.20: Construct Nine: Perceived parental support for social studies - year level differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My parents do not encourage me to do my social studies homework.*</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>My parents help me with my social studies homework if I need help.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>My parents are not interested in the social studies work I do.*</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>My parents think that social studies is not an important school subject.*</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Negatively phrased survey items and scoring have been reversed

Levels of significance: * = 0.05, ** = 0.01, *** = 0.001
ns = no significance

Student responses to the constructs

Nine key issues or constructs associated with social studies were used to determine student attitudes towards aspects of school and social studies. The overall mean results for each construct are reported in Table 4.21.

Overall, student attitudes towards school and social studies were moderate. For the construct ‘Attitudes to school’ the mean score was 3.27 and 3.38 for the construct dealing with student ‘Attitudes to social studies’. Students perceived social studies to be a useful subject, with an overall mean score of 3.60 for the
construct ‘Usefulness of social studies’ and perceived that their teachers were also positive towards the subject area and their students. Attitudes towards the classroom learning environment in social studies lessons overall were barely positive (see Table 4.21) and with an alpha coefficient of 0.364 the construct was not a valid construct in eliciting student attitudes towards the classroom environment. The results also indicated that students had a positive perception of their own ability in the subject area and parental support for social studies was perceived to be high.

Table 4.21: Overall student response to each construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Standardised alpha coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to school</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to social studies</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of social studies</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived teacher attitudes to social studies</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived teacher attitudes to students</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of own ability</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental support for social studies</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning activities in social studies**

Students were asked to indicate the frequency of twenty eight learning activities (instructional practices) undertaken during social studies lessons. The data for all lower secondary year levels was grouped together and the frequency of learning activities was considered as a whole. Learning activities were ranked in order (see Table 4.22), from most common to the least common learning activities undertaken in social studies. The rank order of learning activities was based on the combined percentages of students who indicated they undertook the learning activities either once a week or every fortnight.
The results showed that the most frequent learning activities conducted in social studies lessons were:

- Homework (96% of students undertook this at least every two weeks);
- Textbook work (91% of students undertook this at least every two weeks);
- Reading (81% of students undertook this at least every two weeks);
- Copying from the blackboard (71% of students undertook this at least every two weeks); and
- Map work (63% of students undertook this at least every two weeks).

The data shows that the most common learning activities experienced by students during social studies lessons were predominately teacher-centred activities. The least frequent activities experienced in social studies were student-centred and inquiry based approaches such as:

- Problem solving;
- Small group activities;
- Computer activities;
- Newspaper activities;
- Whole class discussions;
- Role-plays;
- Guest speakers; and
- Excursions.

The results are interesting. At a time when student centred learning and inquiry based approaches are commonly recommended for learning in social studies and other school subjects, the data shows that social studies lessons at the case study school adopt teacher centred approaches (that predominately focus only on the transfer of information) and that diverse teaching strategies that involve active student participation and cooperative learning were absent from or infrequently used in the classroom learning environment.
Table 4.22: Frequency of learning activities undertaken in social studies lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>At least once a week</th>
<th>Every two weeks</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Once a term</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>5+4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text book work</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying from the blackboard</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map work</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas work</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures &amp; Diagrams</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud to class</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current events (News)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colouring In</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphs</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays (a page of writing)</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies projects</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video or T.V. programmes</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group activities</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer activities</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper activities</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole class discussions</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-plays</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursions</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to rounding, row totals may not sum to 100%.
Note: Items have been ranked on the basis of the two most frequent categories (5+4)
The status of social studies and other school subjects

Students attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

Students were asked to state their liking for 14 school subjects on a five point scale ranging from 'like a lot' (5) to 'dislike a lot' (1). Mean scores were calculated for student responses and subject areas were ranked in accordance to their mean score. Subjects are ordered from most liked to least liked. All lower secondary students completed academic (English, mathematics, science and social studies) and the compulsory subjects of physical education and health education at the case study school. Elective subjects studied were chosen on the basis of student preference. Media studies was not offered at the school, and consequently students were instructed not to respond to this item in the questionnaire. The results for media studies are provided however, they are not discussed. Students were also instructed not to respond to school subjects they did not study. The data clearly shows that students were positive about social studies however, the learning area was perceived as one of the least favoured subject areas.

All

Of the 14 school subjects examined, overall social studies ranked eleventh, ahead of English, media studies and music education. The most liked subjects were physical education and art. Physical education and art, along with design and technology and photography were rated positively by students, with all means above 4.00 (see Table 4.23). Elective subjects such as home economics, computing and drama also rated positively by students, ranking as three of the seven most liked school subjects. Of the academic subjects, science ranked the highest in eighth position with a moderately positive mean of 3.55. Mathematics (mean 3.30) followed in ninth position while English ranked the lowest of the
academic subjects in twelfth position. The data shows that students were most positive towards those subjects which focus on performance, rather than written type assessments.

Table 4.23: Overall student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 5 = Like a bit, 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a bit  
SD = Standard deviation

Gender Differences

A comparison of male and female attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects was interesting. Females ranked social studies a low twelfth, with a mean of 3.24. On the other hand, male students ranked social studies higher in eleventh position but, they were not as positive towards social studies (with a mean of 3.17). However, no significant differences were found between male and female student attitudes towards social studies.

Females student attitudes were most favourable towards art and home economics. Males favoured physical education and design and technology out of the school subjects. When comparing female and male attitudes towards school subject areas,
significant differences (at the 0.01/0.001 levels) were found in students' liking for home economics, art and design and technology (see Appendix F).

Table 4.24: Female and male student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Females (n = 208)</th>
<th>Males (n = 213)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 5 = Like a lot, 3 = Neither, 1 = Dislike a lot
SD = Standard Deviation

Females were more positive towards home economics (mean 4.24) when compared to males (mean 3.53). This was also the case for art. Males on the other hand, were significantly more positive towards design and technology than females (see Table 4.24). A possible reason for such a significant difference between the genders is that predominately design and technology has been considered a male orientated subject and home economics a female orientated subject area.

When comparing gender differences in attitudes towards academic subjects, both ranked science as the highest of the academic subjects, females in eighth and males in sixth position. Males were more positive towards the subject area with a mean of 3.64, while females scored a mean of 3.45. Females ranked English (mean
3.31) second highest of the academic subjects, while males were least favourable towards the subject area, scoring a low mean of 2.99. Males were more favourable towards mathematics than females, with mathematics ranking the lowest of the academic subjects for females.

**Year level differences**

Significant differences (at the 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 levels) in student attitudes towards computing, social studies, health education and design and technology were found when responses were compared on the basis of year levels (see Appendix F and G).

**Year 8**

Year 8 students ranked social studies a low eleventh, with a mean of 3.46. The most liked subjects were physical education and design and technology. Students were moderately positive towards mathematics, ranking it the highest of the academic subjects. Science followed in tenth position, while English was the least favoured academic subject (see Table 4.25).

**Year 9**

The data showed that Year 9 students were barely positive (mean 3.09) towards social studies. It ranked in twelfth position, ahead of only English and music education. Clearly, the most liked subjects were physical education, photography and art where all subjects scored means well above 4.00 (see Table 4.26). Elective (or optional) subjects clearly dominated as the most liked subjects (art, home economics, drama, design and technology and computing). Year 9 students were most positive towards science, with a mean of 3.70, however were barely positive towards the other academic subject areas. Mathematics and English ranked low with means below 3.10.
Table 4.25: Year 8 student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 5 = Like a lot, 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a lot
SD = Standard deviation

Year 10

Year 10 students were barely positive towards social studies. Ranking ahead of media studies, health and music, social studies was a low eleventh. The most liked subjects were art and physical education (see Table 4.27). Out of the academic subjects student attitudes were most favourable towards science, next most favoured subject was English (this is most interesting as in other year levels English has rated the lowest of academic subjects) followed by mathematics, with a barely positive mean of 3.03 and least favoured was social studies.

Social studies ranked twelfth in Year 8 and 9 and eleventh in Year 10. Students liking towards social studies dropped from 3.46 in Year 8 to 3.00 in Year 10. An overall decline of 13.30% in students’ liking for the subject area was calculated.
### Table 4.26: Year 9 student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scale:** 5 = Like a bit, 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a bit
**SD** = Standard deviation

### Table 4.27: Year 10 student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scale:** 5 = Like a bit, 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a bit
**SD** = Standard deviation
Year Level and Gender Differences

Year 8 females

Of the academic subjects, Year 8 student attitudes were most favourable towards mathematics, next most favourable towards social studies (ranked ninth, with a mean of 3.46), then English and were least favourable towards science (see Table 4.28). This is a most interesting result, because when compared to overall and year level responses towards science, science consistently rated high amongst the academic subjects. Clearly the most liked subjects were physical education, art and home economics. The seven most like subjects were subjects that predominately involved active student participation and cooperative learning strategies.

Table 4.28: Year 8 female and male student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Females Mean</th>
<th>Females SD</th>
<th>Males Subject</th>
<th>Males Mean</th>
<th>Males SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 5 = Like a lot; 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a lot
SD = Standard deviation

Year 8 males

Of the academic subjects students were more positive towards mathematics (ranked in sixth position), next science and were least positive towards English.
The most liked subjects were design and technology (mean 4.41) and physical education, with a mean score of 4.40. As with females, music was the least liked subject for males, though males with a mean of 3.24 were more positive towards the subject area than females (mean 3.13).

When comparing Year 8 male and female student attitudes towards the school subjects, males were more positive towards most of the subject areas (design and technology, physical education, computing, maths, drama, health, science and music) than females (see Table 4.28).

**Year 9 females**

Of the 14 school subjects, social studies ranked eleventh most popular by students, ahead of English, music and mathematics. Females were most favourable towards the subjects of home economics and photography with both subjects scoring a mean of 4.38. Though students rated physical education positively (with a high mean of 4.33) it ranked as the fourth most favoured subject.

Science was the highest ranked (see Table 4.29) of the academic subjects with a mean of 3.70. English was the third most favoured academic subject with a barely positive mean of 3.09. The most interesting result was students liking for mathematics. When compared with Year 8 female students, liking towards mathematics had dropped into the negative area of the scale by Year 9, moving from 3.53 in Year 8 to 2.99.

**Year 9 males**

The data clearly shows Year 9 male student attitudes are negative towards social studies (see Table 4.29). Students were most positive towards the subject area of physical education, ranking it first.
Table 4.29: Year 9 female and male student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Science was the most favoured of the academic subjects and next to design and technology (mean 3.92) it ranked fourth. Mathematics, with a low mean of 3.20 was the second most favoured of the academic subjects. English was the least favoured academic subject with a negative mean of 2.77.

**Year 10 females**

Social studies was ranked the tenth most popular subject by Year 10 female students. With a mean of 3.09 students were barely positive towards the social studies subject area. Art with a mean of 4.43 and showing the least variance (SD = 0.90) was the most liked subject, while photography, home economics and drama were subjects favoured by students, scoring means above 4.00 (see Table 4.30). English ranked the highest of the academic subjects with a moderately positive mean of 3.41. Next most favoured was science. Students were most
negative towards mathematics (mean of 2.81). The subjects of health and music education all scored negative mean scores.

Table 4.30: Year 10 female and male students attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Females Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Males Subject</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale: 6 = Like a bit, 3 = Not sure, 1 = Dislike a bit
SD = Standard deviation

**Year 10 males**

Students attitudes towards school subjects were most favourable towards the subject of design and technology and physical education. Science ranked fifth, with a mean of 3.59, was the most liked of the academic subjects. Mathematics the second most favoured subject ranked seventh ahead of social studies. Students liking for social studies (with a mean of 2.96) was not at all positive, as was the case for English, which ranked eleventh most popular. Students least favoured the subjects of health education (mean 2.19) and music (mean 2.13) which had negative mean scores. Overall Year 10 male students were not as positive towards social studies and other school subjects when compared to male and female students in Year 8 and 9 (see Table 4.30).
Rate of decline: social studies and other school subjects

Year Level Changes

The data shows a significant difference in student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects (see Table 4.31). Students liking for social studies showed a significant decline of 13.30%, over the lower secondary years of schooling. From Years 8 to 9 students liking for the subject declined by 10.69%. This percentage decline was far greater from Year 8 to 9 than from Year 9 to 10, where students liking for the subject only declined by 2.91%. When social studies is compared to other school subjects, students liking for the other subjects across the lower secondary years of schooling showed an average decline of 9.6%, which was significantly lower than the percentage change in students liking for social studies (see Figure 4.2). The magnitude of the deterioration of student attitudes towards social studies over the lower secondary years of schooling was greater for male students than for females (see Figure 4.5).

The status of photography and art was interesting. They were the only two subjects to improve its rating across year levels. Students liking for art improved by 0.73% and 10.20% from photography from Years 8 to 10.

The decline of the academic subjects science and English was relatively small and steady from Years 8 to 10, ranging from a 2% to 9% decline (see Table 4.31). For both subjects, mean scores improved from Years 8 to 9 and declined in Year 10. Science improved by 0.18 in Year 9, however declined by 0.28 to 3.42 in Year 10. Decline in attitudes towards science from Year 9 to 10 (7.57%) was greater than the overall decline of 2.84%.

Students liking for drama, physical education, design and technology and home economics declined steadily across the lower secondary years of schooling, ranging
from a 2% to 7% decline. Like for science, students’ liking for drama and physical education improved from Year 8 to 9, however, declined by Year 10.

Table 4.31: Year level changes in attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>YEAR 8</th>
<th>YEAR 9</th>
<th>YEAR 10</th>
<th>%CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>-2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>-4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>-6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>-6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>-6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL STUDIES</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>-13.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>-14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATHS</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>-17.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>-22.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>-23.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>-30.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>-9.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For drama the decline in student attitudes from Year 9 to 10 (4.47%) was marginally greater than the overall change in student attitudes towards the subject across the lower secondary years of schooling (2.68%). Students’ liking for physical education declined the greatest from Years 9 to 10 when compared to the overall change in attitudes from Years 8 to 10. The rate of decline from Year 9 to 10 was 2% greater than the overall change of 4.10%. Students’ liking for design and technology though highly positive from Years 8 to 10, declined significantly (at the 0.05 level) by 6.84%.
The subject areas of mathematics, music and health education showed the greatest decline in student attitudes from Year 8 to 10. Students were most negative towards music and health education in Year 10. Mathematics was the most drastic in decline amongst the academic subjects (see Figure 4.3), with an overall decline in liking for the subject of 17.66%.

![Status decline: Social studies (-13.30%) & other subjects (-9.60%)](image)

**Figure 4.2: Year level decline - social studies & other subjects**

Music also suffered a similar rate of decline as mathematics. Music rating moderately positive in Year 8 with a mean of 3.19, dropped significantly to a mean of 2.46 by Year 10, an overall drop of 22.88%. The status of health was the most negative. Across the year levels, student liking towards the subject declined significantly (at the 0.001 level) by 30.42%.

**Female Year level changes**

The data showed female students' liking for social studies declined by 12.43% across the lower secondary years of schooling (see Figure 4.4). From Years 8 to
9 a decline of 7.51% was evident however, changes in attitudes towards social studies from Years 9 to 10 decreased only by 5.31%.

The change in attitude towards social studies over the lower secondary years of school was significantly greater than it was for other school subjects. Overall, the other subjects showed an average decline of 4.10%.

Of the elective subjects, photography, drama, art and home economics were the only subjects to improve ratings across the year levels (see Table 4.32). In the case of photography and home economics, female students were most favourable towards the subject area in Year 9. Liking for photography declined 1.84% by Year 10 and from Year 9 to 10 liking for home economics declined 4.57%.

The status of health, although it became negative (declining overall by 14.41%), the data showed students liking for the subject area improved in Year 9 by 1.18% however, drastically declined by 15.4% from Years 9 to 10.
towards physical education and computing, like health improved in Year 9 (ranging from 4% to 6%) however, declined in the final year of lower secondary (see Table 4.32).

Table 2.32: Female year level changes in attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>YEAR 8</th>
<th>YEAR 9</th>
<th>YEAR 10</th>
<th>%CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>17.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>9.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>7.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>-1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>-4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>-6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>-7.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL STUDIES</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>-12.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>-14.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>-18.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>-18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATHS</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>-20.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERALL</strong></td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>-4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The status of science and English is interesting. From Years 8 to 10 for both subjects students liking declined by less than 2%. However, in the case for English students liking towards the subject decreased by 10.17% from Year 8 to 9, however, improved from Year 9 to 10 by 10.35%. Science saw the reverse situation. Liking for the subject area improved from Year 8 to 9 by 9.79% and declined by 12.43% from Year 9 to 10 (see Figure 4.4).

Students attitudes towards mathematics declined the greatest out of the academic subjects. Mathematics rated moderately in Year 8 with a mean of 3.53 but dropped
by 0.72 to 2.81 in Year 10, an overall drop of 20.4%. Overall Year 9 students were most positive towards school subjects with an overall mean of 3.73.

![Status decline: Social studies & academic subjects](image)

**Figure 4.4: Female year level decline - social studies & academic subjects**

![Status of SS: Female (-12.43%) & male (-14.20%) differences](image)

**Figure 4.5: Female and male year level changes in attitudes towards social studies**
Male Year Level Changes

Male students liking for social studies showed a 14.20% decline (see Figure 4.6) from Years 8 to 10. Social studies rated moderately in Year 8 with a mean of 3.45, however dropped to the negative end of the scale with an absolute decline of 0.5 to 2.95 in Year 9 (14.49% decline) and improved by 0.01 in Year 10. When liking for social studies was compared to other school subjects, liking for school subjects showed an average of 13.91% decline. Thus, the findings permit the conclusion that male student attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects became increasingly negative over the lower secondary years of schooling.

The status of Photography was unique. The only subject to improve its rating over Years 8 to 10, students liking for the subject increased by 9.97%. The decline in liking towards the subjects of physical education, drama, art, design and technology and science were relatively small and steady, ranging between 1% and 7%.

Mathematics and English were most negative out of the academic subjects. Mathematics with an overall decline of 14.96%, rated positive in Year 8 with a mean of 3.81 but dropped 0.57 by Year 10 to 3.24. English declined by 14.96% over the lower secondary years of schooling (see Table 4.33).

The status of health was the most negative of all the school subjects. Declining by 39.67%, the mean varied by 1.44 from Year 8 (mean 3.66) to Year 10 (mean 2.19). Male students were negative towards school subjects (13.91%) when compared with females (4.10%).
Table 4.33: Male year level changes in attitudes towards social studies and other school subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>YEAR 8</th>
<th>YEAR 9</th>
<th>YEAR 10</th>
<th>%CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>9.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>-4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>-5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>-6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>-13.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL STUDIES</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>-14.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>-14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATHS</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>-14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>-16.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>-20.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>-26.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>-34.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>-39.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERALL</strong></td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>-13.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.6: Male year level decline - social studies and academic subjects
Students' liking for social studies

Students were asked to state how much they liked social studies (item 94). Responding on a five point scale student responses ranged from 'Social studies is my favourite subject' (1), 'Social studies is okay' (3) to 'I don’t like anything about social studies at all' (5).

Overall, 56% of lower school students agreed with the statement 'Social studies is okay.' Twenty one percent of students were most favourable towards the subject area, while 23% stated that they did not like social studies. The overall mean score was 3.09.

Gender differences

Almost no variation in student attitudes towards social studies was evident when comparing gender differences. Male and female students both strongly agreed with the statement 'Social studies is okay'. Female student liking for social studies was greater by 0.1 (with a mean of 3.08), when compared to males (see Table 4.34).

Table 4.34: Gender differences - Students' liking for social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Year level differences

Year 8
A comparison of year level responses to item 94, found a significant difference in student attitudes at the 0.001 level and results are reported in Tables 4.35 and 4.36. Year 8 students were most favourable towards the social studies subject area. With a positive mean of 2.87, 54% of students indicated they agreed with the statement ‘Social studies is okay’. Forty five percent of students responded that they ‘liked social studies’ or that ‘Social studies was their favourite subject’, while 18% stated they ‘did not like social studies.’

Year 9
Year 9 student attitudes were positive towards social studies. Scoring a lower mean of 3.26, than the other years, 59% of students in Year 9 responded to the statement ‘Social studies is okay’. Fifteen percent of students indicated social studies was their favourite subject, while 26% of students agreed they did not like social studies. Year 9 students were not as positive towards social studies when compared to Year 8 student attitudes.

Table 2.35: Students' liking for social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views of social studies</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is my favorite subject</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like social studies a lot</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is OK</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not like social studies</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like anything about social studies</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to rounding scores may not equal to 100%
Year 10

Year 10 students were more favourable towards social studies than students in Year 9. Sixty-five out of 116 student responses agreed that social studies was okay. Seventeen percent of students indicated that they liked social studies, while 27% did not.

Table 2.36: Year level differences - Students’ liking for social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender and year level differences

When comparing genders in Years 8, 9 and 10 the results indicated that females were more positive towards the subject area across the year levels, except in Year 8. The results are reported in Table 4.37.

Year 8 females and males

Year 8 male students were most favourable towards social studies when compared with female students. The results showed that male students agreed with the statement ‘I like social studies a lot’, scoring a mean of 2.82. Females on the other hand, even though they agreed with the same statement, were not as positive towards social studies with a mean of 3.92.
Year 9 females and males

Year 9 students agreed with the statement ‘Social studies is okay’. Both genders scored means well above 3.00 (see Table 4.37) however, the data shows that females were more positive towards social studies than males. No significant differences were found between male and female responses to item 94. An interesting result of the data was that both male and female students were least favourable towards social studies when compared with males and females from other years.

Year 10 females and males

A comparison of Year 10 male and female student responses was interesting. Both males and females indicated that ‘Social studies was okay’ however, female students showed to be more favourable towards the subject area than males (see Table 4.37).

Table 4.37: Gender and year level differences - Students’ liking for social studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male students liking for the subject area declined greater than female students over the lower secondary years of schooling, with an overall drop of 13.23%. From Year 8 to 9 male students’ liking for the subject declined by 14.80% and liking for the subject area improved from Year 9 to 10 by 1.85%.
Overall the data showed that female students across the lower secondary years of schooling indicated that they were most favourable towards social studies. Female students liking for social studies showed a 7% decline from Year 8 to 10. Social studies rated positively in Year 8 with a mean of 2.92 but dropped by 0.29 in Year 9 to 3.21, a 9.03% decline. The data showed that female students’ liking for social studies improved from Year 9 to 10 by 2.23%.

Students’ liking for their social studies teacher

Item 49 (stand-alone item) asked students to state their liking for their social studies teacher. Responses ranged from ‘strongly agree’ (5) to ‘strongly disagree’ (1). Results for the item will be presented by discussing the overall responses, then gender and year level differences follow.

All

Overall, lower secondary student attitudes towards their social studies teacher was moderate. Approximately 54% of students agreed that they liked their social studies teacher, 21% were undecided and 25% of lower secondary students did not like their social studies teacher. The overall mean score for the item was 3.38.

Gender differences

There was no significant difference in responses for item 49 when comparing student genders. Female students however were more positive towards the statement ‘I like my social studies teacher’ when compared with male students. Females scored an overall mean of 3.50, greater by 0.23 than the mean for male students (see Table 4.38).
Table 4.38: Gender differences - Students' liking for their social studies teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year level differences**

**Year 8**
Year level responses to item 49 are reported in Table 4.39. With an overall positive mean of 3.84, approximately 68% of Year 8 students agreed with the statement 'I like my social studies teacher', 20% of students indicated that they were unsure, while 12% suggested they did not like their social studies teacher.

**Year 9**
Year 9 students were moderate in their liking for their social studies teacher. Scoring a mean of 3.19, almost 49% of students like their teacher, 21% were undecided and 32% stated that they did not like their social studies teacher.

**Year 10**
Year 10 students did not like their social studies teacher. With an overall mean score of 2.97, approximately 36% of students disagreed with the statement, 40% were in agreement, while 24% of students indicated they were unsure.
Table 4.39: Year level differences - Students' liking for their social studies teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender and year level differences

When comparing gender responses in Years 8, 9 and 10, the results showed that female students were most positive towards the statement ‘I like my social studies teacher’ over the lower secondary years of schooling. The results are reported in Table 4.40.

Year 8 females and males

Both genders scored means well above 3.50 for this item, however, female students were more positive towards their teacher when compared with male students (see Table 4.40).

Table 4.40: Gender and year level differences - Students' liking for their social studies teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Year 9 females and males

The results showed that for both genders, students liking for their social studies teacher declined in Year 9 (see Table 4.40). Female students with a mean of 3.42 were more positive towards the statement, while male students scored a negative mean score of 2.94.

Year 10 females and males

A comparison of Year 10 female and male responses to item 49 found female students (with a mean of 3.07) were marginally positive towards the statement. Males on the other hand stated that they did not like their social studies teacher, scoring a mean of 2.86.

Students' likes and dislikes

The open-ended questions, item 92 and 93 of the student questionnaire were designed to determine what students liked and disliked about social studies.

Likes

Aspects of social studies which were liked by the students were matters dealing with the teaching-learning practices undertaken in lessons, the topics learnt, their classroom teacher's instructional practices, the usefulness of the subject and student's perception of their own achievement in social studies.

Overall, 45% of students indicated that they enjoyed and preferred social studies activities which were more interactive and student centred inquiry tasks.

- I like it when we go onto the Internet to look up things about space.
- I like it when we go to the library for social studies lessons.
- I like to do lots of map work and discussion in class.
- I like working in groups to make posters and watching films.
• I like group activities.
• I like the fact that we are allowed to work with other students in the class.
• I like doing group work and class discussions, I like watching film, T.V, programs and videos. I like drawing maps and colouring them in, labeling them and I like going to the library.

Across the lower secondary year levels 15% of students commented that they liked social studies when they were engaged in group work and class discussions. Another 4.5% of students emphasised that they enjoyed and liked social studies when they discussed world and controversial issues during lessons.

• I like it when we get to have class discussions.
• I like having discussions about your own opinion on a topic the teacher gives us.
• Discussing issues and getting the opinions of the others.
• I like having discussions about things happening in the world and watching videos.

Thirty seven percent of students emphasised that they enjoyed learning about certain topics in social studies. Students were most favourable towards learning about world issues, the solar system, the earth’s environment, studying Geography and History, learning about modern and ancient cultures and studying the wars of the 20th century.

• I like learning about what has happened to the world and what is happening.
• I like topics on geography.
• I like that we know what is happening around the world.
• I like learning about the world, history and present day.
• Its just fun learning about the community and the world around us.
• I like learning about weather, the planets and I especially like learning stuff about the ancient world.
• Some of the things I like about social studies, is that we can learn about
cultural things and the earth and the things in society. I really like history.
• I like learning about the wars of the 20th century.
• I like it when we learn about medieval times and history of other places.

Written responses indicated that 6.6% of students liked their social studies
classroom teacher. This supported the findings as recorded and discussed
previously in the constructs. Student comments include:
• What I like about social studies is that the teacher is kind and friendly.
• What I like about social studies is that if we have a problem she explains it
carefully.
• What I like about social studies is the fact that our teacher tries to make it
interesting.
• If you don’t understand the topic the teacher explains it again.

Results discussed previously in this chapter (Construct Three) indicate that
students believed that social studies was an interesting and an important subject,
that they expected to make use of. Almost 12% of students commented that they
liked social studies because of its value and importance. Such comments reinforced
the studies findings and examples of these include:
• It is fun and interesting and you learn from what you do in class and helps
you in other areas like homework.
• I like it how we can learn more about the world we live in. We can use
various resources to help us get a better understanding of the past, present
and future.
• I want to be a lawyer, so social studies can help me with this job in the future.
• I like social studies and I will need it for the job I am going to get when I am
older.
The study’s findings suggest students’ perception of their own ability in social studies (Construct Eight) and self concept was highly positive. Approximately 6% of students indicated that they liked social studies because it was easy to do well in the subject and achieve good grades.

- *I like social studies because it is not hard and it is interesting and fun and we talk about things.*
- *Social studies is easy to learn because it relates to current issues.*
- *It is easy you don’t have to do as much work as mathematics to achieve the same mark. It is also more interesting than other subjects.*
- *I like social studies because it is very useful and that it is not really that hard and it is interesting.*
- *I like how I get good marks on all of my projects.*

As a group, 7.6% of students indicated that they liked social studies because it was an interesting and fun subject to learn, while another 8.6% of the respondents suggested that they liked nothing at all about the subject area.

**Dislikes**

Students generally perceived social studies to be a useful and important subject area, however, the case study findings show that social studies is one of the least liked subjects. Student response to the open ended question ‘What do you dislike about social studies?’ may provide insight into why student attitudes towards the learning area are not perceived to be positive.

Written responses reinforced that what students disliked about social studies were matters to do with the teaching-learning practices undertaken, the repetition and the lack of interesting and relevant topics learnt, the classroom learning environment and teacher practice, management and organization during social studies lessons. Writing and reading activities such as ‘copying off the board,’
tests, essays, worksheets, working from textbooks and workbooks (students referred to this as their green, blue and red books - which is a compilation of worksheets for a unit of study) were disliked by 48% of the respondents. Homework and reading were clearly the most disliked and most frequent practices undertaken during social studies lessons. Students comments included:

- I hate doing worksheets, especially worksheets in our green books we have to do for homework.
- I disliked repeatedly reading the same thing over and over again.
- I dislike the amount of writing we have to do.
- I think what I dislike the most about social studies is all the note taking off the overhead projector.
- I dislike tests, essays, quizzes and I dislike reading from the textbook.
- I dislike that we get homework every night.
- I don’t like the tests, they have too much in them and its hard to remember everything.
- I dislike social studies when we have to do common assessments.
- I dislike doing graphs, essays and table work.
- What I don’t like about social studies is taking down notes almost every day.
- I hate copying off the board and doing work out of the book and boring stuff like that.
- I don’t like the short amount of time we get to complete essays, projects and reports.
- I dislike doing dictation and writing answers in full sentences.

Fifteen percent of students also indicated that they disliked social studies because they never engaged in activities that were fun and student centred.

- I don’t like social studies because it is not very interesting, the activities are boring and we don’t get to go on excursions.
- I don’t like that we don’t watch T.V. or go on excursions.
• I don't like social studies because we don't have class discussions.
• I don't like social studies because the activities we do are always the same and boring.

Forty eight percent of the respondents suggested that they disliked social studies when they learnt about the same topics in previous year levels. Students found social studies lessons to become boring and irrelevant to them.

• I don't like learning about a theme more than once because I like to accept a new challenge, plus it gets very boring when we hear the same old stuff.
• Sometimes we go on too much about one topic and it gets very boring.
• It gets boring and repetitive sometimes, but that's because of the course and not the teachers.

Students placed emphasis on the classroom learning environment they experienced as an aspect of why they did not like social studies. Of concern was that 8% percent of respondents suggested that during social studies some students were noisy and wasted time, and that their teacher could not control the class. Student descriptions included:

• I don't like the way people talk and distract you.
• I dislike social studies when everyone is calling out and then it gets too noisy to work and think.
• I don't like how mostly everybody wastes time.
• I dislike the noise and disorganisation of my social studies class.
• Most students are very badly behaved and don't listen to the teacher, they just want to talk.
• I hate how everybody mucks around and doesn't listen to the teacher.
• I hate seeing my social studies teacher in stress.
• I don't like how everybody, especially the boys, are really noisy and don't do their work.
I don't like the boys in my class.

I don't like how so many people talk, and nobody does anything about it. I think if it goes on like that we will never be able to learn the things that are really important in our daily lives.

Teacher explanation and instruction practices were frequently mentioned by students as an aspect of social studies lessons they disliked. Two percent of students suggested that their teachers set learning tasks and provided notes to be copied, however, their teachers did not explain the notes copied or provide any assistance as to how they were to complete the task. Student responses included:

- I am opposed to the fact that our teacher sets work and doesn't bother to explain what we are to do
- I don't like that the teacher does not explain anything properly.
- I don't like the teacher who teaches me in social studies. She just makes us take notes from the blackboard and doesn't explain very well. She doesn't tell us or make things interesting about a topic. That is why the class never listens to her and gets bad grades.
- Our teacher talks too much in class and never explains anything really well.

An examination of student responses reinforces the survey results already discussed in this chapter. Clearly, students regard social studies as important but dislike the learning area in terms of the delivery of the subject (especially the frequent use of teacher-centred learning activities in lessons), its content and the classroom learning environment.

Summary

Research data was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS and results pertaining to each section of the student questionnaire SSATSS were reported and
discussed in this chapter. A summary of these results are provided in the following.

**Key issues**

As a whole group, students:

- liked school and were positive towards most subjects learnt;
- were moderately positive towards social studies;
- indicated that social studies was an important subject that would help them with an understanding of the world around them;
- perceived their teachers valued social studies;
- did not think social studies would help them gain future employment;
- perceived their social studies teacher to be fair and liked most students;
- did not look forward to future social studies lessons;
- indicated that many students wasted time during social studies lessons;
- suggested their teacher clearly explained work to be completed however, were unsure whether social studies lessons were well organised;
- agreed social studies was not too hard for them;
- were not convinced that during social studies lessons there was lots of work to do when set work tasks were completed; and
- indicated a strong parental support for social studies.

**Activities in social studies**

The most frequent learning activities undertaken in social studies were predominately teacher centred. The five most frequent were:

- homework;
- textbook work;
- reading;
- copying off the blackboard; and
- map work.
The less frequent learning activities undertaken in social studies were those student centred inquiry based approaches such as:

- problem solving;
- small group activities;
- newspapers;
- whole class discussions;
- role-plays;
- guest speakers; and
- excursions.

Status of social studies and other school subjects

From a list of 14 school subjects, students were asked to respond to the question: ‘How much do you like your school subject?’. Responses ranged from ‘like a lot’ (1) to ‘dislike a lot’ (5). Findings included:

- Of the 14 school subjects social studies ranked eleventh most popular by students ahead of English, media studies and music.
- Most liked subjects overall, were physical education, design and technology and photography.
- Significant differences in student attitudes towards maths, health education, media studies and design and technology were found when responses were compared on the basis of year levels.
- Results indicated the younger the student, the more positive was their attitude towards social studies.
- A comparison of female and male attitudes towards the subject areas found significant differences in students liking for health education, art and design and technology.
- Female students across the lower secondary years of schooling were more positive towards and liked most school subjects.
Students' liking for social studies

Students were asked to state how much they liked social studies. The results indicate:

- Overall, 56% of students indicated 'social studies is okay', 21% stated that they 'liked social studies' and 23% stated that they 'didn’t like social studies'.
- Year 8 students were most favourable towards social studies when compared with other year levels.
- Almost no variation existed in student responses to social studies, when comparing gender differences.

Students' liking for their social studies teacher

Students were asked to state how much they liked their social studies teachers. The results show:

- Overall, approximately 54% of students agreed that they liked their social studies teacher, 25% did not like their teacher and 2% of students were undecided.
- There were no significant differences in attitudes towards the statement based on student gender, however, female students indicated they were more favourable towards the statement 'I like my social studies teacher'.
- Year 8 students were most favourable towards their social studies teacher when compared with other year levels. Year 10 students indicated they did not like their social studies teacher.

Students' likes and dislikes

The open-end section of the questionnaire asked students to state their likes and dislikes about social studies. Results included:

- 45% of students indicated they enjoyed and preferred social studies activities which were more interactive and student centred.
• 15% of students liked social studies when they were engaged in group work and class discussions.

• 37% of students enjoyed learning about certain topics in social studies.

• 6.6% of students indicated that they liked their social studies teacher.

• 12% of students indicated they liked social studies because they thought it was an important subject.

• 6% of students liked social studies because they did well in the subject.

• 7.6% of students indicated they liked social studies because it was fun and interesting.

• 8.6% of students liked nothing about social studies.

• 48% of students indicated they disliked the learning activities undertaken in social studies lessons and the repetition of content taught.

• 8% of students disliked social studies because many students in class were noisy and wasted time.

In the following chapter, a discussion of the results of each research question is provided and limitations and the implications of this case study are provided.
Chapter Five
Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter five provides a discussion of results for each research question and the limitations of the case study. It concludes by describing how the findings from this case study may have implications for classroom practices and future research.

Discussion of results for each research question

Research conducted to identify student attitudes towards social studies in the last three decades, both in Australia and the United States, have found two major concerns in the area of social studies education. The research findings at the primary (elementary) and secondary (high) school levels found that the status of social studies when compared to other school subjects was considerably low and that student attitudes became consistently negative towards social studies as they progressed through the years of schooling.

The purpose of this case study was to identify the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 students towards the social studies learning area and the factors that influence these attitudes at one Catholic secondary school in the Perth metropolitan area. The reason for this study was to investigate whether the decline in support for social studies found in primary school continued in the lower secondary years of schooling at the selected Catholic school.

The respondent group was derived from the lower secondary years at the selected Catholic school. All lower secondary students present on the day of the survey
and who were willing to participate were included in the study. The modified attitude scale instrument SSATSS was used to elicit student attitudes towards social studies. Two questions guided the case study.

1. **What are the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?**

2. **What factors influence the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?**

A discussion of results for each research question is provided in this chapter.

1. **What are the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?**

The results of this case study are supportive of the findings of some of the research studies cited earlier in the literature review. Consistent with the findings of Haladyna and Thomas (1979) student attitudes towards school were moderately positive however, students liking for school became increasingly negative as they progressed through the lower secondary years. Students indicated that they were happy to go to their school, but their 'liking for school' was not as positive. An unanticipated result of the study was that students did not believe they had good rules at the school. Students however gave no explanation for these responses.

The major findings of this study suggested that student attitudes towards social studies were positive. Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Moroz (1996b), the decline in support for social studies found in primary school levels, did in fact continue in the lower secondary years of the case study Catholic school. The magnitude of the deterioration in attitudes towards social studies was of significant concern. Students liking for social studies declined by 13.30% from
Years 8 to 10 compared to an overall decline of 9.60% for the other 13 school subjects.

Of the 14 school subjects, overall social studies was the eleventh most liked subject. Physical education, art, design and technology and photography were clearly the most liked subject areas. The results show that students prefer the more interactive and student-centred subject areas, contrary to predominately writing and reading based subjects. Significant differences in student attitudes towards mathematics, health education, computing and design and technology were evident when responses were compared on the basis of year levels. Of the academic subjects, science was most favoured, followed by mathematics and then social studies. Least favoured was English.

There were no significant differences in attitudes towards social studies based on student gender. Female students however, were more positive towards the subject area than male students. Significant differences were found between the genders for the subject areas of home economics, art and design and technology. For both genders the decline in student attitudes towards social studies across the school years, was greater than the overall decline in the liking for other school subjects. Overall, male students were more negative towards the school subjects when compared with female students attitudes.

Contrary to the findings of Fernandez, Masey and Dornbusch (1976) and Shug, Todd and Berry (1984) students reported that they believed social studies to be a useful and an important learning area to study. Students suggested that they expected to make use of what they learnt in social studies and that social studies would help them in an understanding of the world around them. Although students suggested that they valued the learning area, they did not value it in terms of it helping them gain future employment. Though students perceived social
studies to be important and found the things they learnt to be interesting, students clearly disliked the delivery of the subject, its repetitive content and learning activities undertaken in social studies. The findings show that the most frequent learning activities undertaken were homework, textbook work, reading, copying from the board and map work. These are all predominately teacher-centred activities.

Students indicated that they preferred learning activities which were interactive and inquiry based. Thus, it was not surprising that less than half of the total respondent group stated that they did not look forward to future social studies lessons. The study confirms the findings by Fouts (1990) Hutchen (1993) and Moroz (1996b) who assert that students prefer social studies lessons when they are involved in active cooperative learning and inquiry tasks. The recommendation, as provided by researchers cited earlier, is that if social studies educators adopt learning opportunities that are outcomes based approaches in their lessons, this may promote positive student attitudes towards social studies.

Students’ perceptions of their teachers’ attitude towards social studies and to students overall were positive. The results reinforced that students perceived their teachers were interested in, enjoyed and valued the learning area and social studies lessons. An unexpected result was that students did not feel that their teacher liked to display student social studies work and this could contribute to the declining attitudes of students towards social studies. The data indicates students perceived that their teacher was interested in student opinions, encouraged good work, liked most students and was fair. Yet, a high percentage of students indicated that they were unsure whether their social studies teacher attitudes towards students were positive. Overall more than fifty percent of the respondent group suggested that they liked their social studies teacher, however as the results indicated, as students progressed through the years of schooling, liking for their teacher became
increasingly negative. These findings suggest that teacher-student relationships need building.

As indicated earlier, the lack of student enthusiasm towards the learning area was evident when almost half of the respondent group suggested they did not look forward to social studies lessons. The findings show during social studies lessons many students waste time and as indicated by almost 10% of the respondent group in the open ended section, social studies lessons were too noisy. Even though students expressed that during lessons students worked well together, students essentially disliked (as reinforced by student comments in the open-ended section) social studies because of the classroom environment they experienced. Results of the data analysis also indicate that the social studies lessons were not considered to be well organised however, students felt that the teacher was able to control the class. Thus, the findings permit the conclusion that student experience and perception of social studies are influenced by the classroom learning environment.

The pattern of responses for student perception of their own achievement in social studies was positive. Overall, students expressed that they were able to achieve success, and that social studies work was not difficult to complete. Students also indicated strong parental support for social studies, suggesting parents supported and encouraged them to do well in social studies. Thus, it may be that students with a high perception of their own ability, may come from homes where there is a supportive educational environment. Further research could be conducted to determine if students with a greater interest in social studies come from supportive educational backgrounds.

The results confirmed not only the poor status of social studies at the selected Catholic school, but revealed that the significant changes in attitudes towards social studies was a function of student year level and gender.
2. What factors influence the attitudes of Year 8, 9 and 10 Catholic school students towards the social studies learning area?

The study sought not only to identify student attitudes towards social studies, but to also determine the factors contributing to these attitudes. Analysis of the research data shows that student variables play an important role in the formation of student attitudes towards the subject area. Within this study particular emphasis was placed on the variables of student age and gender, to determine whether or not these factors played a key role in shaping student attitudes. Emphasis was also placed on whether pre-existing tendencies such as students' perception of their own ability; usefulness of the subject matter; teacher attitudes to social studies and students; aspects of the classroom learning environment and parental support for the subject area were factors that influenced student attitudes.

Perhaps the most important factors are student gender and age. As previously indicated, student attitudes became significantly more negative as students progressed through the schooling years. While social studies when compared with other school subjects was considerably low for male and female students, male students were more negative towards social studies over the lower secondary years. Thus, these findings are consistent with findings concluded by Shaughnessy, Haladyna and Redsun (1982), Curry and Hughes (1965), McTeer, Blanton and Lee (1974) and Moroz (1996b), that is, student gender and year level are a determinant of student attitudes towards social studies.

Due to the limited size and scope of the case study research, teacher and learning environment variables were not investigated to determine if they influence student attitudes. The study did however, attempt to investigate whether students' perception of teacher and learning environment variables influenced attitudes towards social studies. The results showed students' lack of enthusiasm for and
towards the subject, perception of their achievement in social studies and the value of the subject matter, were clearly factors affecting student attitudes.

Though students valued the learning area, the lack of enthusiasm and motivation for the learning area was due to the fact that students disliked the delivery of the subject matter. Thus, it may be that as concluded by Moroz and Baker (1996), Hutchen (1993), Fouts (1989), and Hornstein (1990), teacher instructional style and practices used during social studies lessons are a determinant of student attitude. The reliance of predominately teacher centred learning activities (which focus only on the transfer of information) frequently undertaken during social studies lessons, found students’ perception of the learning area to be ‘uninteresting and boring’.

The study, consistent with the findings of Moroz (1996), found that students preferred social studies when learning activities they were involved in were more of a more interactive and cooperative learning mode. Thus, if the learning area at this case study school is to improve its status, changes to the teaching-learning experiences undertaken in social studies lessons (which could adopt cooperative and inquiry based approaches), may result in positive changes in student attitudes to social studies. Though students disliked their teacher’s reliance on instructional practices during lessons, students’ perception of the teacher’s attitudes towards social studies and students were positive. The study also concluded that students’ perception of the classroom learning environment may be an influence on students’ attitudes towards the learning area.

Aspects of the classroom learning environment were perceived to be important factors that influenced student attitudes. Specifically, students indicated that they did not like social studies because many students wasted time and they perceived lessons were not well organised. As suggested by Haladyna and Shaughnessy (1982), Fouts (1989), Hornstein (1990) and Moroz and Baker (1996) and affirmed
by the findings in this case study, the classroom learning environment created by
the teacher is an important determinant of student attitudes towards social studies.
Several conclusions are permitted by the results of the data analysed:

1. Overall the status of social studies is moderately positive, however, when
compared with other school subjects, students liking for the subject area is
considerably low.

2. Student attitudes towards social studies declined significantly as they
progressed through the lower secondary years of schooling at the selected Catholic
school.

3. Female students expressed a greater liking for and were more positive
towards the social studies learning area when compared to male students.

4. Student variables such as student gender and age, students perception of
their own ability; parental support for social studies; the subject matter value and
importance; teacher attitudes towards social studies and students and the
classroom learning environment were considered as significant influences on
student attitudes towards social studies.

Limitations of the study

A limitation of the case study research was that it was a convenience sample of one
metropolitan Catholic school. The study was also limited to those students present
on the day of the survey. For this study, fifty four students did not complete the
survey due to absence from school. This high rate of absenteeism is attributed to
the last week of school in term one. The total respondent group made up 88.6% of
the total lower secondary population at the selected Catholic school. In addition,
the survey was undertaken on one day in the final week of first term in the school
year. Therefore, the study is limited as students were reporting their perceptions about the social studies learning area based only on having completed nine weeks of schooling in 1999. It may also be that the Year 8 data was tainted by students remembering their primary school experiences of social studies. In addition, Year 8 student impressions of lower secondary social studies may have been dependent on the particular social science discipline chosen to study in term one.

**Implications**

Research into students’ perceptions about education provides a valuable tool which teachers and school administrators can use in making decisions about educational practices in schools. Knowledge of students’ perception about education in particular the social studies learning area, enables educators to obtain objective feedback about the learning environments that students experience.

The data from this case study confirms that students valued the social studies learning area in terms of its importance and usefulness. Students indicated that they expected to make use of what they learnt in social studies and that social studies would help them with an understanding of the world around them. However, students’ liking for the learning area declined significantly over the lower secondary years of schooling. The reasons for the subject’s low status, the magnitude of deterioration in student attitudes towards the learning area and why lower secondary students indicated that they did not look forward to social studies lessons are attributed the fact that students disliked the delivery of the subject matter, the repetition of and the lack of interesting and relevant content taught, learning activities undertaken in social studies lessons, the classroom learning environment and their teachers’ style, practice, management and organisation of
social studies lessons. These findings have implications for teachers, schools and curriculum writers.

As suggested by researchers cited earlier, if the learning area is to improve its status, then significant changes to the teaching-learning experiences undertaken during social studies lessons and teachers' style and instruction (such as teacher explanation, praise and reinforcement, fairness to students and the display of student work in classrooms) need to occur. The shift from predominately teacher centred learning activities which seem to dominate social studies classrooms, to adopting diverse teaching strategies which are cooperative and inquiry based may result in positive changes in student attitudes towards the learning area and this in turn would impact on student achievement in social studies. Changes in the quality of teacher style and instruction may impact on student attitudes towards the learning area and also foster and build positive teacher-student relationships.

In addition, schools should gain feedback from students about their school system, classroom learning environments and learning areas when making curriculum decisions. Clearly, for the social studies learning area, consideration needs to be given to provide appropriate professional development for teachers who in spite of the student-centred social studies curricula that exists in our schools, continue to use predominately teacher centred instructional practices. The learning area also needs to be reconsidered by educators in terms of the content's relevance and interest to students and the resources and technologies used in social studies lessons.

At the time of this case study recent curriculum developments have seen the introduction of the Curriculum Framework (1998), which adopts an outcomes based approach to teaching, mandatory for all primary and secondary Government and non-Government schools in Western Australia. Developing and achieving a
balanced social studies curriculum under the new framework system is a challenge for all educators. However, if teachers and curriculum co-ordinators are able to meet some of the needs of students (as indicated in this case study) by providing learning opportunities which are outcomes based in their approach, it may lead to an improvement in student attitudes towards the social studies learning area. This may also be the case for the other school subjects.

Though the findings confirm trends evident in prior research studies cited throughout this thesis, further research is recommended to confirm whether these findings can be generalised across the lower secondary years of Catholic schools in Western Australia. Thus, a larger study of randomly selected urban and rural Catholic secondary schools would enable conclusions to be generalised across the Catholic secondary school sector. Due to the limited size and scope of this case study, research into teacher and learning environment variables were not included. Further research studies could investigate teacher and learning environment variables and other exogenous and endogenous variables, to determine their impact on student attitudes towards the learning area. Other studies focusing on how parents and principals perceive the social studies learning area would also be helpful. Such studies would help elaborate and validate the findings of this case study and may provide new knowledge about the social studies learning area.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Secondary Student Attitudes Towards Social Studies (SSATSS) Questionnaire
STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD SOCIAL STUDIES (Years 8 to 10)

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I LIKE WATCHING SOUTH PARK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Please turn to the next page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Social studies lessons are too noisy.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. In social studies lessons the class is well organised.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Social studies is too hard for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. My parents encourage me to do my best in social studies.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I like most of the teachers in this school.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. In social studies I try to do as well as I can.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Doing social studies is not important.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. In social studies my teacher often talks about world news.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. In social studies lessons the teacher is unfair.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Many of the students waste time in social studies lessons.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. In social studies lessons there is lots to do when I finish my work early.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. It is easy for me to do my best in social studies.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. My parents are not interested in the social studies work I do.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. We have good rules in our school.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. The things we learn in social studies are not interesting.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I don't learn much in social studies.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. My teacher likes to display our social studies work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. In social studies lessons the teacher encourages me to do well.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. In social studies I try to get a higher mark than my friends.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. In social studies the teacher clearly explains what we have to do.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. I am a successful student in social studies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. My parents think that social studies is not an important school subject.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. I like my social studies teacher.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>At least once a week</th>
<th>Every two weeks</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Once a term</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50. Computer activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Atlas work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Homework</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Problem solving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Social studies projects</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Copying from the blackboard</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Library</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Newspaper activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Whole class discussions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Roleplays</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Small group activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Excursions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Guest speakers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Films</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Video or T.V. Programmes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Text book work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Tests</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Current Events (News)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Essays (a page of writing)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Pictures and diagrams</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Colouring-in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Tracing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Reading</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. Research</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. Reading aloud to class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Graphs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76. Tables (not maths tables)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77. Map work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Like A lot</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Dislike</th>
<th>Dislike A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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85. Drama: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
86. Media Studies: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
87. Art: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
88. Health: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
89. Design and Technology: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
90. Music: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot
91. Photography: 5 Like, 4 Not Sure, 3 Dislike, 2 Dislike A Lot

PART-C OPEN ENDED SECTION

92. What DO YOU LIKE about social studies?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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

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'S ALL FOLKS! MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.
APPENDIX B

Ethics Clearance and Letters
14th January 1999

Dear Ekaterina

I am pleased to advise that your research proposal “Lower secondary student attitudes towards society and environment learning area in a Catholic school” has been approved by the School Postgraduate Studies Committee on the condition that you consider the points offered by the reviewers and the comments by Dr Wally Moroz. The Committee also granted ethics clearance.

This approval means that the Committee believes that you have developed the proposal to a stage where worthwhile research can be conducted on your topic. It does not mean that an examiner will be unable to find fault with your work.

Before submitting your thesis for examination, you must obtain confirmation from your supervisor that the format in which you intend to present your thesis is consistent with University requirements.

If you have not already received a copy of the booklet “Preparing a thesis or research project for Honours, Master and Doctoral awards [1998]” please contact Molly Schwegler on phone:

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Penny Proctor
Executive Officer
Higher Degrees Committee

cc: Dr Wally Moroz
   Personal file
5 March 1999

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am an Edith Cowan University Student completing my Bachelor of Education (Honours). The principal has agreed to allow me to conduct my research study at your school. The study will focus on student’s attitudes toward Society and Environment/Social Studies in Years 8, 9 & 10.

All Year 8, 9 & 10 students present on the day of the survey, will be asked to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire will only take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The study will provide your school with a data base of information about the learning area.

Anonymity of the school and the participants is guaranteed. Results of the study will be made available to the school and general findings will be published in a thesis.

I seek your cooperation in allowing your child to participate in this study.

Any questions concerning the project titled: Lower Secondary Student Attitudes Toward the Society and Environment Learning Area in a Catholic School can be directed to Katie Thiveos (Principal Investigator) on the above number or Dr. Wally Moroz at Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley (University Supervisor).

Sincerely

KATIE THIVEOS

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

I (the parent/guardian) have read the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to allow my child to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time.

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

___________________________                                   __ / ___ / ___ Date
Participant

___________________________                                   __ / ___ / ___ Date
Parent/guardian
5 March 1999

Dear Principal

I am an Edith Cowan University Student completing my Bachelor of Education (Honours) and I seek your assistance in undertaking a research study at your school. This research study will focus on students' attitudes toward Society and Environment/Social Studies in Years 8, 9 & 10.

My study will attempt to determine the status of the Society and Environment learning area and will also attempt to identify the factors that influence students' attitudes toward the learning area. All Year 8, 9 & 10 students present on the day of the survey, will be asked to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire will only take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The study will provide your school with a data base of information about the learning area.

Anonymity of the school and the participants is guaranteed. Results of the study will be made available to the school and general findings will be published in a thesis and possibly in a journal.

I seek your cooperation in allowing your school and students to participate in this study.

Any questions concerning the project titled: Lower Secondary Students' Attitudes Towards the Society and Environment Learning Area in a Catholic School can be directed to Katie Thiveos (Principal Investigator) on the above number (home telephone) or Dr. Wally Moroz at Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley (University Supervisor).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

KATIE THIVEOS
APPENDIX C

Descriptive Statistics

Note: Item numbers in SSATSS appear with the prefix A, B and C in the tables of this Appendix.

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## Descriptive Statistics: A4 - B91 & C94

### Descriptive Statistics

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APPENDIX D

Mean Report

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APPENDIX E

Frequency Tables

Note: Item numbers in SSATSS appear with the prefix A, B and C in the tables of this Appendix.

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APPENDIX F

Independent Samples Test

Note: Item numbers in *SSAT* appear with the prefix A, B and C in the tables of this Appendix.

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### Independent Samples Test - Gender

#### Independent Samples Test

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Independent Samples Test

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APPENDIX G

Oneway ANOVA

Note: Item numbers in SS47SS appear with the prefix A, B and C in the tables of this Appendix.

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APPENDIX II

Descriptive Statistics - Constructs
## Descriptives - Constructs

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