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Boys' and Girls' Attitudes to Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Students With Conduct Disorder

Nerine van Wyk
Edith Cowan University

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EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

**Boys' and Girls' Attitudes to Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students with
Conduct Disorder.**

by

Nerine van Wyk

**A Honours Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Award of B.Ed. (Sp. Ed.) (Hons.)
in the**

**Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences
Edith Cowan University**

Supervisor: Dr Russell Waugh

November 2000

Edith Cowan University

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Abstract

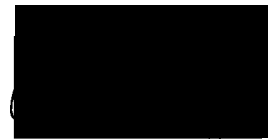
The purpose of this study was to examine children's attitudes towards Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peers with Conduct Disorder. A 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design was used to test the hypotheses. The three independent variables were (a) Ethnicity of the target student (Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal) described in a vignette, (b) disability of the target student (no disability/ conduct disorder) described in a vignette, and (c) the gender of the participants. A sample of 216 Year 6 students was divided into four groups each containing 27 girls and 27 boys and an attitude questionnaire was administered. The attitude survey measured two dependent variables: (a) attitude to working with the target student in class, and (b) attitude to socialising with the target student in school. The two dependent variables measured the extent to which the students would like to interact with the target child in the two contexts.

There were no significant interactions. A significant main effect was found for the variable of ethnicity for the (a) working-in-class variable but not for the variable (b) socialising-in-school context, indicating that the participants displayed a more positive attitude toward the target student who was described as Aboriginal in the socialising-at-school context rather than the target student who was described as Aboriginal in the working-in-class context. A main effect was found for the independent variable of conduct disorder for both contexts, indicating that the participants displayed a more positive attitude toward the target student who did not display the behaviours typical of a child with a conduct disorder than the child who did. There was no significant difference between the responses of the male and female participants.

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;
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.

Nerine van Wyk

November 2000

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I would like to thank the Principals, staff and students of the participating schools for their invaluable cooperation.

Thank you also to my family and friends at Gosnells Family Church who provided the encouragement and support I needed to reach my goal. Thanks specifically go to Merryl Lewis who lent a hand in the editing process. Your support and friendship throughout our four years at university has been invaluable. Thanks to Damian Fasolo who was always there to sort out the technical difficulties on my computer. Special thanks to Stephen for helping me in your special ways.

Nerine van Wyk.

November 2000

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

The Distribution of Young Aboriginal people in Australia

Young people form a significant sector of the Aboriginal community. The 1991 census counted 36 628 Aboriginal young people aged between ten and fifteen, Australia wide. In common with the general population, there were more males than females. The distribution of young Aboriginal people among the States and Territories from the result of the 1991 census can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Young Aboriginal people among the States and Territories.

State/ Territory	Actual	Percentage
Queensland	9994	27
New South Wales	9481	26
Western Australia	5775	16
Northern Territory	5512	15
South Australia	2106	6
Victoria	2094	6
Tasmania	1419	4
Australian Capital Territory	247	<1
Total	36 628	100%

According to Groome and Hamilton (1995), Aboriginal students are now enrolled in approximately 80% of Australian schools. More locally and recently according to the Education Department of Western Australia, in 1999 there were 6367¹ Aboriginal students from the total of approximately 14000 students in Western

¹ Figures obtained via telephone conversation with a representative of the Education Department of Western Australia.

Australian schools. These figures show that Aboriginal students form a minority group in our schools.

Racial problems young Aboriginal people experience

Research has shown that although Aboriginal students are a minority, racism is recognised as a reality by most Aboriginal students (Groome & Hamilton, 1995). They experience it from fellow students and teachers. The kinds of racism they experience include: racial abuse, negative comments about their families and behaviours on the basis of race, prejudicial treatment and being made to feel personally guilty for getting extra money and special benefits. Apart from individual problems Aboriginal students face from peers and teachers, Groome and Hamilton have found that many schools have the negative attitude of trying to get rid of Aboriginal students who cause problems. These schools emphasise conformity and competition, fostering a climate of constant sorting and selecting among students. It seems from these findings that Aboriginal students have to deal with conflicts at school regularly from peers, teachers and sometimes from the school system.

These conflicts are often due to the negative attitudes that people hold toward them. Some Aboriginal students deal with these issues by retaliating with disturbing or violent behaviour. Other Aboriginal students display this behaviour due to the weight of other pressures on their lives such as stress in their homes. Behaviour problems have also been linked to learning difficulties (Groome & Hamilton, 1995). The disturbing behaviour that some Aboriginal students exhibit may be a result of the difficulties they face with their school work. It is clear that the motives behind violent behaviour are varied. While it is true that some Aboriginal students do display violent behaviours, it

has also been found that violent behaviour has been ascribed to Aboriginal students which needs to be better understood (Groome & Hamilton, 1995). This study aims to add to the literature further findings on the attitudes that peers hold toward Aboriginal young people that may lead to a better understanding of how violent behaviour ascribed to Aboriginal students influence peer attitudes.

Conduct Disorder

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (1994) provides a definition and diagnostic criteria for Conduct Disorder. The essential feature of Conduct Disorder is a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which the basic rights of others, or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules, are violated. These behaviours fall into four main groupings: aggressive conduct, deceitfulness or theft, serious violations of rules and non-aggressive conduct. To be diagnosed with Conduct Disorder three or more characteristic behaviours must have been present during the past 12 months, with at least one behaviour present in the last 6 months. The disturbance in behaviour causes significant impairment in social, academic or occupational functioning. Strauss, Lahey and Frick (1988) examined the peer social status of 6- 13 year old children with anxiety disorders compared with children with conduct disorders. Anxiety disorder children and conduct disorder children both were liked by their peers significantly less than normal children. The conduct disorder group received more “like least” and “fights most” nominations than the anxious and non-referred groups which did not differ.

As Aboriginal people are still the most evident target of prejudice and racial violence in Australian society (Humans Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991), the attitudes that peers hold toward Aboriginal students are influenced by

ethnicity. It has been made clear that children hold negative attitudes toward peers with Conduct Disorder (Strauss, Lahey & Frick, 1988). The researcher aims to expand on the literature in this area by combining ethnicity and conduct disorder, in an Australian context, in order to examine the attitudes that children hold toward Aboriginal peers who display behaviours consistent with Conduct Disorder.

Gender

Findings throughout attitude research have indicated that gender differences do exist in attitudes toward people with disabilities (Favazza & Odom 1997; Jones, Sowell, Jones, & Butler, 1981; Voeltz, 1980) and therefore, gender differences are examined in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effects of (a) Aboriginality of the target student, (b) disability of the target student, and (c) the gender of the participants, on Year 6 students' attitudes toward a target student. The target student is described as either Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal and may demonstrate behaviours typical of a child who has been diagnosed with severe Conduct Disorder. A survey was used to establish the participants' preference for (a) working with the target student in class, and (b) socialising with the target student in school. Four vignettes correspond to two of the independent variables: Ethnicity (Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal), and Disability (Conduct disorder, or No Disability).

The study also investigated whether there were significant interactions between the independent variables. For example, the participants may respond differently to a

peer who is labelled as Aboriginal and has a conduct disorder than they would to a peer who is not labelled as Aboriginal and has a conduct disorder. Boys may respond more positively than girls to a peer who displays behaviours such as stealing and lying.

Significance of the Study

The attitudes and perceptions held by peers have been shown to exert an important impact on the social and emotional health, and the long term adaptation of children with disabilities (Gilmore & Farina, 1989; Roberts & Naylor, 1994). This being the case, the researcher believes that a knowledge of the attitudes held by Year 6 students is essential for educators, if they are to ensure a safe, friendly atmosphere in the classroom environment. The present study will provide new knowledge of student attitudes in Western Australia.

It has also been found that an important indicator of the success of inclusion is the extent to which children with disabilities are accepted by those with whom they are in close contact, that is, their classmates (Forlin, & Cole 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). By gaining a knowledge of the attitudes held by students, educators become aware of the need to influence and promote positive attitudes towards students with a disability or of differing ethnicity.

A knowledge of the attitudes held by students may help educators predict the behaviour of their students. If the case need be, educators can stop the progression from prejudice to discrimination that they observe in the classroom (Gleason 1991). A knowledge of the attitudes of Year 6 students by teachers will enable them to predict the behaviour of the students in both a working-in-class context and a socialising-in-school context. With this knowledge, teachers can alter the environment to avoid

negative behaviours toward Aboriginal students and those with a conduct disorder being acted out, which is beneficial for all students involved.

There has been an expressed need for more studies of children's racial attitudes in non-American cultural contexts that would contribute to our understanding of the relative influence of cognitive development and distinctive cultural learning environments on the development of children's attitudes (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996). The results of this study will add to the knowledge about the attitudes that WA students possess toward Aboriginal students and those who display behaviours typical of a student assessed as having a Conduct Disorder.

Limitations

This study was conducted using convenience sampling of urban Year 6 children. Hence strictly, the results can only apply to Year 6 children. The questionnaire was administered to some schools in late 1999 while the rest were conducted in the middle of the present year (2000). The sample may not be representative of the national or even state population as all the participating schools were located in the metropolitan area. Hence strictly, the results cannot be generalised to the state or Australian populations. However the ethnic groups within the sample varied, which is representative of the ethnic diversity of the Australian population.

The present study was limited due to the focus on a severe form of Conduct Disorder. Findings may differ when the attitudes of Year 6 students are examined with the influence of milder forms of the Disorder.

The measurement of the participants' attitudes in the present study was reliant on students indicating their feelings toward a fictitious character. Thus their responses

may not be a true representation of how they would react in a real situation. This notion is supported by research conducted by Juvonen (1991) who concluded that children's ratings of their peers were generally more positive for hypothetical cases than for actual classmates. This raises questions about the validity of using vignette simulations.

Due to time constraints the present study had a gender bias, as it only studied attitude's toward male children with Conduct Disorder and male children described as Aboriginal. Due to vignettes describing the target student as male, the full extent to which the findings may be generalised to females remains unclear.

Definitions of Terms

A number of terms that will be used need definition. The first three are included for readers without the knowledge of a statistical background. They are as follows:

MANOVA: abbreviation for multivariate analysis of variance, provides analysis of variance for multiple dependent variables.

ANOVA: abbreviation for analysis of variance, a procedure for testing the differences among three or more sets of scores (permits the null hypotheses to be tested).

Interaction: the joint effect of two or more factors on a dependent variable.

Conduct Disorder: the repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated.

Australian: a native or inhabitant of Australia.

Aboriginal: a person of Aboriginal descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal and is accepted as such in the community in which he or she lives.

Attitude: a consciously held belief or opinion. Defined by Reber (1995):

Contemporary usage generally entails several components, namely:

cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion); evaluative (positive or negative); affective (emotional tone or feeling); and conative (disposition for action).

Overview of the Thesis

The second chapter of this thesis is a review of the literature relating to the development of children's attitudes toward different groups of peers. The definitions of attitude and Conduct Disorder are examined and broadened, and the theories behind the development of children's attitudes are discussed. The prevalence and location of negative-peer racial attitudes are then discussed with an evaluation of an Australian study focusing on peer attitudes towards Aboriginal children. Children's perceptions of children with emotional and behavioural disorders in social contexts are discussed, with a specific discussion of a study examining peer perceptions of children with Conduct Disorder. Finally the chapter is concluded with a summary of the literature, linking the literature to the present study.

The third chapter describes the methodology used in the present study. It includes a description of the design, the selection of participants and the instrument used for the study. The procedure for the administration of the survey is discussed, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations. The fourth chapter states the results and conclusions of the study. Tables consisting of MANOVA results are provided, in addition to graphs.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the discussion and implications of the results. The results are considered in terms of the hypotheses and how the findings of the study relate to previous research of similar studies. The limitations of the study are also discussed and an outline of implications for administrators, teachers, parents and students are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

In recent decades, research has identified children's ability to form and display attitudes towards other groups of people. Children's attitudes toward peers with disabilities, especially physical disabilities has been well documented. Like with adults, often these attitudes are negative and rejecting. Research has focused on children's attitudes toward peers in minority groups, in particular those of a different ethnicity. These studies have substantially been conducted in American and British contexts. Research has also focused on children's attitudes toward peers who display negative and disturbing problem behaviours. As yet there seems to be a lack of studies of the influence of a combination of variables such as ethnicity and behaviour problems on children's attitudes towards peers which is the focus of the present study. The most desirable source of this information is the children, themselves.

Due to the lack of literature related to the aims of the present study, the review of the literature is divided into several themes. The first section of the review defines the concept of "attitude" to provide an understanding of the main focus of this study. Research findings on the development of children's attitudes is then briefly discussed followed by a explanation of three current theories, attempting to determine how the development of prejudice progresses in children. The next section of the review focuses on the prevalence and location of negative peer racial attitudes. The findings of an Australian study is presented and critically examined. Next, the definition and the background features of Conduct Disorder are provided to ensure an understanding of the independent variable of the present study. Children's perceptions of children with

emotional and behavioural disorders are the next theme of the review. Peer social status of children with Conduct disorder is then discussed. Within the discussions of each theme, the present study is linked to the literature. A summary of the literature is provided to conclude the chapter.

Attitude: Definition and Development of Children's Attitudes

Attitude

An essential aspect of this study was to examine Year 6 student attitudes. It seems logical then to ensure an understanding of the definition of an "attitude". Triandis (pp 2-3, 1971) defined an attitude as "an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations." Triandis further commented that this definition suggests that attitudes have three components:

- (a) A cognitive component, that is, the idea which is generally some category used by humans in thinking. Categories are inferred from consistencies in responses to discriminably different stimuli;
- (b) an affective component, that is, the emotion which charges the idea. If people 'feel good' or 'feel bad' when they think about the category, we would say they have a positive or negative affect toward the members of this category, and;
- (c) a behavioural component, that is, a predisposition to action.

Researchers have found several elements common to attitudes (Antonak & Livneh, 1988). Attitudes are learned through direct and indirect experiences and interactions with people, objects and events. In addition, attitudes are manifested behaviourally by a predisposition to act in a positive or negative way when the person encounters the attitude referent. Reber (1995) provided a similar definition to Triandis, acknowledging

that attitudes have several components, namely, cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion), evaluative (positive or negative), affective (emotional tone or feeling), and conative (disposition for action).

For the purposes of this study, the affective component of attitudes is the main focus, as the questionnaire administered aimed to determine how the participants would feel in given situations.

The Development of Children's Attitudes

It has been well documented that children, as well as adults, form and display attitudes (Gleason, 1991; Jones & Sisk, 1970). There is now a general awareness that even young children have well developed attitudes towards culturally diverse and exceptional peers (Gleason, 1991; Davis, M, 1988). Children form attitudes about people with disabilities as early as 4 or 5 years of age (Gerber, 1977; Jones, & Sisk 1970), and often those attitudes are negative or rejecting (see Horne, 1985; Jones, 1984 for extensive reviews). The negative attitudes are not just directed at people with disabilities but also towards people of minority groups. There is now a general agreement on the prevalence of racial prejudice among quite young children (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Davis, 1988).

Development of Prejudice in Children

Prejudice, defined in the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary (1985) as “a judgement or opinion formed before the facts are known; especially an unfavourable, irrational opinion” is an attitude or belief. Understanding how children distinguish differences and how that process may develop into prejudice can inform our thinking

about ways to reduce bias. Aboud (1988) presents three research based theories of prejudice which explain how children develop attitudes about minority groups, including children with disabilities and racial minority groups. According to Allports' Social Reflection Theory (cited in Aboud, 1988), children adopt attitudes and stereotypes about groups of people according to the status held by those groups. Frequently children will reflect parental values. This theory coincides with the definition of attitude presented by Triandis (1971), in particular the cognitive component where people develop categories. The child associates negative emotions with categories or groups then generalises the attitude to all persons within the group.

The second theory, Aldorno's Inner State Theory of Prejudice (cited in Aboud, 1988) claims that prejudice grows from the child's inner conflict. The conflict is a result of issues of anger that stem from punishment in child rearing. Children with parents who are punitive may not be comfortable with expressing negative attitudes toward persons of power so the anger is displaced onto minority groups that do not hold positions of power and authority (Aboud, 1988). The theory regards prejudice as a component of a person's personality.

The third theory, the Social-Cognitive Developmental Theory of Prejudice, developed by Piaget, Weil and Katz (cited in Aboud, 1988) explains different levels of prejudice according to the age and developmental level of the child. The theory suggests that young children cannot be held accountable for their attitudes because of their cognitive immaturity (Aboud, 1988). It is believed that, as children mature and their focus is shifted from self to others, their prejudice will be reduced.

Factors that contribute to prejudice

Labelling and adult influences are two factors that contribute to isolating persons in minority groups, resulting in prejudice. Whether one believes that prejudice is a natural developmental characteristic of all children, or a social development that has occurred as individuals reflect parental and societal values, labels are recognised as affecting attitudes of children (Rothlisberg, Hill, & Damato, 1992). In the case of disabilities, labels serve to define a person in terms of what others view as their deficits. They promote a message that the disability is abnormal. Labels are also used for categorising ethnicity. The problem with labelling is that labels become the categories mentioned in the definition of attitudes. One negative experience with an individual of a group and the others within the group are stereotyped accordingly. Labelling could not be avoided in this study in terms of ethnicity (Aboriginal). However the label of Conduct Disorder was not included in the vignettes.

Adults serve as models to children. Young children look to their parents or caregivers for reactions towards differences among people. Teachers as well as parents influence children's attitudes. The literature includes accounts of how teachers influence children's attitudes and acceptance of peers of minority groups (Falvey & Rosenberg, 1995; Derman-Sparks, 1993; Grossman, 1991). The attitudes of students are influenced by the attitudes modelled by their teacher in the classroom. Parish, Baker, Arheart, and Adamchak (1980) found that children imitated the teacher's ridicule of students who were viewed less favourably. This example demonstrates the power teachers hold in facilitating the rejection or acceptance of children from minority groups.

Prevalence and Location of Negative Peer Racial Attitudes

Many studies have focused on reducing prejudice and promoting positive attitudes towards people of minority groups in American and British contexts. Few Australian studies have been conducted (Black-Gutman & Hickson 1996). However, it has been found that European-Australian children are capable of forming and displaying negative racial attitudes towards Aboriginal people. Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) conducted a study where the positive and negative racial attitudes of 122 European-Australian children toward Aboriginal Australian and European and Asian Australians were examined across the 5-6, 7-9, and 10-12 year age groups. The study was an adaptation of a study conducted by Doyle and Aboud (1995) of White Canadian children. Doyle and Aboud, compared levels of prejudice of White kindergarten (5-6 years) and Grade 3 (8-9 years) children to Blacks and Native Indians. They found there was a decline in racial prejudice in the older age group, associated with developmental increase in the ability to reconcile two different views and the ability to see the similarity between people of different races. On the basis of the Canadian findings Black-Gutman and Hickson predicted that the older age group would display lower levels of prejudice.

Black-Gutman and Hickson aimed to (a) measure age-related changes in Euro-Australian children's racial attitudes toward three racial groups (Euro-Australian, Asian Australians, and Aborigines) over three age groups (5-6, 7-9 and 10-12 years); (b) measure age-related changes in the cognitions of racial reconciliation and perception of between-race similarity and within-race similarity; and (c) determine whether children's prejudices were associated with mature social cognitions at each age level. Limitations

of the study could be seen in the account of the study's method and procedure. The researchers used a small sample of 122 participants, 60 girls and 62 boys. The participants were formed into groups of unequal size (35, 49 and 38 children from grades 1, 2, and 6 respectively). The children came from three Sydney, New South Wales, metropolitan schools with populations that comprised 10% of children from an Asian background, but no children from an Aboriginal background. These factors limit the ability of the findings to be generalised to other Australian schools that include a percentage of Aboriginal children in the school population. In favour, however, of the method and procedure of the study, was that the material used in the study was piloted. For example stimulus cards were piloted to ensure that they were free of racial cues (10 adults and 10 children from different racial groups were asked if anything in the picture gave a clue to a particular racial group), stimulus photos had been piloted to ensure comparability of physical attractiveness of children across the racial groups (10 adults and 10 children from different racial groups were asked whether any of the children, from a large pool of photos, were particularly attractive or unattractive, with the ones identified as such being excluded from the study). Also to the researchers' credit, to ensure understanding of the tasks, they asked the children to practise answering non-evaluative items.

Data analyses proved to be thorough. The researchers first checked the data to see, if any, the effects caused by tester, order of testing, gender and school on the participants' responses. A series of *t* tests showed no major differences between the two testers, between two different orders in testing, and between male and female students. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the variables by the three schools did not reveal any significant differences. Findings from the study supported Doyle and Aboud's

(1995) results in terms of the tendency of children to be more biased in favour of their own group. The results also indicated that children were more positive toward European and Asian Australians than toward Aborigines. The only significant age comparison was for the Aboriginal group. The middle age group (7-9 years) was significantly less negative toward Aborigines than was the younger group. This was a major difference to the findings in the Canadian study, where increasing negativity with age to the children's own group never equalled or exceeded negativity to other groups.

The children in the Australian study (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996) did not differ significantly in their evaluations of their own group and those of Asian Australians. Nine year old children in both the Australian study and the Canadian study showed more favourable attitudes to other groups as compared to 5-6 year olds. The favourable attitudes of the Australian 7-9 year olds to other groups were shown by fewer negative attributions to Aboriginal people, whereas in the Canadian study the 8-9 year olds showed more favourable attitudes to Native Indians by an increase in positive evaluations but not by a decrease in negativity. Older Australian children as in the Canadian study, perceived more similarity between individuals from other groups than the younger and middle groups. The researchers concluded their findings with recognition of a need for more Australian studies on racial attitudes at specific age groups to further test the social-cognitive theory, as well as examining the effects of environmental-learning factors on children's attitudes.

Another Australian study focusing on attitudes of students toward Aborigines was conducted by Marjoribanks and Jordan (1985). Differences in hetero-stereotypes (the attributes that individuals of a group assign to members of another group), of Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian adolescents, who came from different secondary

schools, were examined. Four schools participated in the study. Two of the schools were located in a rural town with a sizeable Aboriginal population, while the other schools were from an urban setting. The schools also differed in their orientations to Aboriginal students. The two urban schools had no Aboriginal personnel on staff.

One school made the attempt to support Aboriginal identity while the other school preferred that no ethnic group be identified, and the visibility of the Aboriginal students was low. The rural schools differed in that one school made special attempts to identify academic and social problems for the Aboriginal students and also had a counsellor for the Aboriginal students, while the other did not perceive the Aboriginal students to have special problems; thus no counsellor was on staff. This school, rather than drawing attention to the differences, integrated the Aboriginal students into the school community. Due a relatively limited sample of Aboriginal students, the data were not examined separately for males and females, which is a limitation of the study.

The findings demonstrated that Anglo-Australian adolescents have unfavourable hetero-stereotypes of Aboriginal Australians, thus supporting the notion that Euro-Australians associate negative attributes to Aboriginal Australians, as expressed by Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996). Conversely, Aboriginal Australians were found to express quite favourable hetero-stereotypes toward Anglo-Australians. However, Majoribanks and Jordan (1985) concluded that the stereotypes of adolescents from different schools lacked uniformity and clarity. This limitation emphasises the need for caution in generating conclusions about school differences. Both Australian studies then expressed the need for further studies on children's racial attitudes to contribute to the small amount of published literature. In the past, studies have focused on attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians in general. The present study aims to expand on this

literature by specifically examining how the behaviours associated with conduct disorders affect non-Aboriginal children's attitudes toward Aboriginal peers. The following section of the literature review defines Conduct Disorder and includes a brief discussion of associated research.

Conduct Disorder: Definition

Diagnostic Features:

According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994) persons diagnosed with Conduct Disorder, display a persistent and repetitive pattern of behaviour that violates either the major age appropriate, norms or rules of society, or the basic rights of others. The behaviours displayed can be categorised into four groups: (i) non-aggressive conduct which causes damage to property, (ii) aggressive conduct that causes or threatens physical harm to either animals or other people, (iii) deceitfulness or theft, (iv) and serious violation of rules. Behaviour is displayed in a variety of settings such as the school, community or home. Table 2 shows the diagnostic criteria for Conduct Disorder as provided in the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV.

Table 2: Diagnostic Criteria for Conduct Disorder

A: As manifested (repetitive and persistent) by the presence of three or more of the following criteria in the past 12 months, with at least one criterion present in the past 6 months:

Aggression to people and animals

- (1) often bullies, threatens, or intimidates others
- (2) often initiates physical fights
- (3) has used a weapon that can cause serious physical harm to others (e.g., a bat, brick, broken bottle, knife, gun)
- (4) has been physically cruel to people
- (5) has been physically cruel to animals
- (6) has stolen while confronting a victim (e.g., mugging, purse snatching, extortion, armed robbery)

(7) has forced someone into sexual activity

Destruction of Property

(8) has deliberately engaged in fire setting with the intention of causing serious damage

(9) has deliberately destroyed others' property (other than by fire setting)

Deceitfulness or theft

(10) has broken into someone else's house, building, or car

(11) often lies to obtain goods or favours to avoid obligations (i.e., "cons" others)

(12) has stolen items of nontrivial value without confronting a victim (e.g., shoplifting, but without breaking and entering)

Serious violations of rules

(13) often stays out at night despite parental prohibitions, beginning before age 13 years

(14) has run away from home overnight at least twice while living in a parental or parental surrogate home (or once without returning for a lengthy period)

(15) is often truant from school, beginning before age 13

B: The disturbance in behaviour causes a significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning.

C: If the individual is age 18 years or older, criteria are not met for Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Specify type based on age at onset:

Childhood-Onset Type: onset of at least one criterion characteristic of Conduct Disorder prior to age 10 years

Adolescent-Onset Type: absence of any criteria characteristic of Conduct Disorder prior to age 10 years.

Specify severity:

Mild: few if any conduct problems in excess of those required to make the diagnosis and conduct problems cause only minor harm to others

Moderate: number of conduct problems and effect on others intermediate between "mild" and "severe".

Severe: many conduct problems in excess of those required to make the diagnosis or conduct problems cause considerable harm to others.

The disturbance in behaviour causes significant impairment in social, academic or occupational functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The following sections of the review summarise the sections of the Diagnostic Manual of the same

subheadings in order to provide an understanding of the Disorder on which the present study is focused.

Associated Features and Disorders

Children with Conduct Disorder have little concern for the well-being, both physical and emotional, of others. They often read the intentions of others incorrectly and so when they respond with violence or aggression, they believe it to be justified. It is difficult to judge whether children are truly sorry for their actions because they learn that pretending to be sorry can reduce and sometimes even prevent punishment. Self-esteem is low, even if an image of toughness is projected. Temper outbursts, and low frustration tolerance are frequently displayed (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Often Conduct Disorder is associated with the early onset of sexual behaviour, use of illegal drugs, alcohol use and smoking. These factors may increase the persistence of Conduct Disorder. Factors such as parental rejection, child rearing practices with harsh discipline, physical or sexual abuse and association with delinquent peers in groups predispose children to the development of Conduct Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Specific Culture, Age and Gender Features

Conduct Disorder is only diagnosed when the behaviour pattern is symptomatic of an underlying dysfunction, not just a reaction to the immediate social context. The behaviours displayed by children with Conduct Disorder vary due to age and are influenced by physical strength, cognitive abilities and sexual maturation. Conduct Disorder is much more common in males. The behaviour displayed by males is often

more confronting to people, while the behaviour displayed by females tends to be non-confronting to people (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Prevalence

Conduct Disorder is one of the most frequently diagnosed conditions in health facilities for children. Rates vary: for males rates range from 6% to 16%; for females rates range from 2% to 9%. The variation within the groups is accounted for by differing samples of children tested and the method of testing. Studies show that Conduct Disorder has both genetic and environmental components. The risk for Conduct Disorder is increased for children whose sibling(s) have Conduct Disorder or whose parent(s) or caregiver(s) have an Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Course

The onset of Conduct Disorder may occur as early as 5 or 6 years of age but is rare after 16 years of age. For the majority of children, the behaviours remit by adulthood and so they achieve normal social and occupational adjustment. Others, however, continue to display behaviours in adulthood and meet the benchmark for diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder. These are usually the children who had an early onset of Conduct Disorder.

Children's Perceptions of Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

Much of the literature on problem behaviours has focused on teachers' judgements towards students with emotional and behavioural disorders (Safran & Safran, 1988), however, the research on peer judgements is limited. Mullen and Wood

(1986) believe an understanding of peer perception is essential because children's beliefs influence interaction patterns; for example, interactions with perceived "aggressive" students are likely to make the interaction more aggressive. Once one has attained a student perception of particular groups of students, Meadows, Neel, Parker and Timo (1991) argue that a knowledge of youngsters' judgments can help professionals to specifically target social skills required for peer acceptance in integrated settings. A second reason for acquiring the knowledge of peer perceptions by professionals is for the validation of treatment and identification procedures when students agree with clinical decisions (Whalen, Henker, Castro, & Granger, 1987). Early peer recognition and report can help identify children at risk for problems in later life. Research has demonstrated that there is a relationship between aggression in childhood and acts such as delinquency, adult criminal behaviour and school dropout (Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). Thirdly, peer assessment can provide classroom standards indicators that are helpful for programming and developing more valid behaviour management plans (Safran, Safran, & Rich, 1994).

Safran (1995) reviewed the available literature on peer perceptions of students with emotional and behavioural disorders. Due to the behavioural features of Conduct Disorder, children diagnosed with the disorder can be considered under this category. He found that many studies conclude that children hold negative views of behavioural problems that are externalised (Kazdin, Giest, & Esveltd-Dawson, 1984; Lancelotta & Vaughn, 1989). Findings from related research demonstrate that children as young as first grade have the ability to differentiate aggression from other behaviours. Children also view peers displaying aggression as having negative dispositions (Younger,

Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1985, 1986). A number of differences were found between younger and older children. Young children were found to be most concerned about becoming the victim. Older students formed judgements about peers with consideration of the socially standard norms of behaviour. Younger children were found to believe that failure to change negative behaviour was due to a lack of effort, whereas the older students believed that those displaying antisocial behaviour were acting wilfully and with intention. In all cases, children believed that antisocial difficulties have a negative impact on peer relationships (Pope, Brierman, & Mumma, 1991). Related research on classroom behaviour found that aggressive youth were reported to be less popular and more rejected by peers, particularly in cases of indirect aggression; in contrast, provoked aggression was more tolerated and socially accepted (Lancelotta & Vaughn, 1989).

Gender findings offered significant differences in male and female attitudes toward peers with emotional and behavioural disorders. Girls were found to be less tolerant than boys of all forms of aggression, and disliked aggressive boys more. Girls also rated a wide range of behaviour problems as more disturbing than boys (Juvonen, 1991). Despite these findings, however, girls were also found to be more open to working with students with various disabilities in developing social skills (Voltez, 1980). Safran (1995) concluded with the recognition that negative peer perceptions of students with behaviour problems, as well as peer rejection, was a recurring theme in the literature and he suggested that more studies should examine how student's race or ethnicity influences how peers judge their behaviours.

Peer Social Status of Children with Conduct Disorder

Specific research on what attitudes children hold toward peers with Conduct Disorder is limited. Generally, children diagnosed with Conduct Disorder have been found to be physically aggressive and to be rejected by their peers (Cantrell & Prinz, 1985; Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984). More specifically, Strauss, Lahey and Frick (1988) examined the social status of 6-13 year old children with Anxiety Disorders. Sixteen children who met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders criteria for anxiety disorders were compared to 26 children with Conduct Disorders and 45 non-referred children. The children were grouped according to assessment carried out by a PhD-level clinical psychologist. The teachers of the students were asked to ask all the children in the class to write down privately the names of three children they liked the most, three they liked the least and the three who fought the most. The results showed that the non-referred group received significantly more 'like most' nominations than the children in the Anxiety-Disorder and Conduct Disorder groups. The Anxiety Disorder and Conduct Disorder group did not differ significantly in the number of 'like most' nominations. The Conduct Disorder group, however, received significantly more 'like least' nomination than the anxious and non-referred children. The anxiety disorder and non-referred groups did not differ significantly in the number of 'like least' nominations they received. Children in the Conduct Disorder group more commonly were viewed as aggressive by classmates.

The limitation of the study was that it only had a relatively small sample of children with anxiety disorders, which in turn limits the generalisability of the results.

While that study specifically focused on children with Anxiety Disorders, the present study will focus on children with Conduct Disorder.

Summary

Although a substantial amount of the literature concerning attitudes is related to teacher attitudes towards children of various groups, clearly there is a lack of research concerning how children's attitudes toward peers are influenced by ethnicity and Conduct Disorder. This is especially true in the Australian context. According to the literature, it can now generally be assumed that children are capable of forming attitudes to members of other groups, especially minority groups at an early age. A number of theories suggest explanations on how children form attitudes and these have served as an inspiration for many studies in American and British contexts. The present study aims to expand the literature by examining the attitudes of Western Australian children. The research in both contexts of ethnicity and Conduct Disorder, although limited, has revealed that students hold negative attitudes to both Aboriginal peers and peers who display externalising behaviour problems. This study combines the two contexts and examines the influence of race and Conduct Disorder on the attitudes that peers hold toward their peers.

Virtually all studies recommend further research in other variables affecting attitude, such as perceptions of globality (behaviour across situations) and contagion (behaviour spreading to others) (Safran, 1995). The social perception and status of children's attitudes though limited has seemed to be the major theme in the research. The present study includes not only an evaluation of children's attitudes towards

behaviour across social situations, but also the evaluation of attitudes towards working in class with the target child in an effort to note any differences that are present.

Shortcomings of previous research in relation to generalisability have been the sample size of the groups. Studies often had small total numbers of participants and unequal group sizes. The present study has a reasonable participant size ($n = 216$) and all groups are of equal size ($n = 54$).

Gender differences within the literature suggest that girls are less tolerant than boys when considering aggression and disruptive classroom behaviour. In the present study, it was predicted that the girls would support this notion, with girls displaying a more negative attitude toward the target student who displays behaviours typical of Conduct Disorder. It was also expected that the girls would show a more negative attitude toward the target child who is described as Aboriginal.

Research has indicated the negative effect that peer rejection and negative attitudes have on peer acceptance. A knowledge of peer perceptions and attitudes is known to be important in predicting student behaviour. It is important that additional knowledge is gained about children's attitudes in given situations typical of school life, so that teachers can use this information to predict student behaviour in the classroom and during lunch and recess breaks. Teachers then have the knowledge to assist them in creating a happy and safe environment for all children at school.

The following chapter presents the hypotheses derived from the literature and a description of the methodology of the present study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This is a multivariate study of how the attitudes of Year 6 students toward peers is influenced, if at all, by the label of Aboriginal, with behaviours typical of Conduct Disorder, and the gender of the participants. This chapter begins with a list of research hypotheses that were designed to be examined from an analysis of the results obtained from the participants' responses. A brief description of the participants follows, with an explanation of the design of this study. The construction of the instrument used for this study is also discussed with the details of the administration procedure. To conclude this chapter, the ethical considerations that were involved throughout the study are outlined.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been developed and will be examined in the present study:

1. There will be a significant three-way (disorder x ethnicity x gender) interaction for attitudes to the target child (a) working- in-class and (b) socialising-in-school;
2. There will be a significant two-way (disorder x ethnicity) interaction for attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school;

3. There will be a significant two-way (ethnicity x gender) interaction for attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school;
4. There will be significant two-way (disorder x gender) interaction for attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school;
5. There will be a significant difference in attitudes (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school to the target child with a Conduct Disorder and the target child without a disorder;
6. There will be a significant difference in attitudes (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school to the target child who is portrayed as Aboriginal or Non Aboriginal;
7. There will be a significant difference in the attitudes (a) working in-class and (b) socialising-in-school to the target child between the male and female participants.

Participants

The schools chosen to be approached were those that the researcher and supervisor believed to be open to the suggestion that they would be participants in this study, based on prior dealings involving teacher training practices. The researcher approached eight schools. After discussing with the principals what participation in the study would entail, three schools declined the opportunity. Five schools in the Perth metropolitan area were selected for the study. Four schools are located south of the river

while the other is located north of the Swan River. All schools were comprised of students from varying ethnic backgrounds.

The Year 6 students within the schools completed one questionnaire each. The children were aged between 10 years and 11 years and 7 months. The total number of participating students was 216, consisting of 27 males and 27 females in each of four groups.

A sample of 216 Year 6 students was randomly selected from five primary schools to participate in this study. The availability of the students and teacher time determined the sample size. The students were divided into four groups of 54 students. The division of students was randomly decided as the four types of vignettes were shuffled prior to distribution. The four groups were divided again, based on the gender of the participants.

Each of the groups was given a vignette, describing a boy including his age, favourite subjects at school, and who he liked to be with during lunch and recess. The four vignettes varied by the noting of his Aboriginality or Non-Aboriginality and the presence or absence of a Conduct Disorder.

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design was used to test the hypotheses. The three independent variables were: (a) Aboriginality of the target student (Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal) as described in the vignette, (b) disability of the target student (No Disability/Conduct Disorder) as described in the vignette, and (c) the gender (male/female) of the participants. The two dependent variables were: (a) attitude to

working with the target student in class, and (b) socialising with him in school. The variables and participants in each cell are evident in Table 3.

Table 3 : Sample Groups

	No Disability	Conduct Disorder	
Aboriginal	Boys	Boys	
	Girls	Girls	
Non-Aboriginal	Boys	Boys	
	Girls	Girls	

Instrument

In order to investigate the participants' attitudes towards a peer who is Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal and has the presence or absence of a Conduct Disorder, a standard vignette was constructed about a boy called "Scott". In this vignette, Scott, the target student, was described as a 11 year old boy. His favourite subjects at school were noted as health, art and science. He was also described as one who spent lunch and recess with both female and male friends. This characteristic was added in order to make him appealing to the female participants and well as the males.

The standard vignette was then varied in two ways. Firstly, in terms of the independent variable of "Aboriginality". Scott was described as a 11 year old Aboriginal boy in vignette numbers 2 and 4. Secondly, the vignette was varied in terms of the independent variable of "disability". Scott's behaviour was described as violent and cruel. He sometimes started fights, was cruel to animals, was caught stealing money and was said to lie a lot. This can be seen in vignettes 3 and 4.

By including the two independent variables (Aboriginality and Disability), the four variations of the vignette were constructed. The age, favourite subjects and his

friends that he played with remained constant throughout the four vignettes, therefore only his ethnic background and behaviour changed. The vignettes were as follows:

Vignette 1: Non Aboriginal No Disability

Scott is 11 years old.

His favourite subjects at school are health, art and science.

During lunch and recess he spends most of his time playing games with his friends who are both girls and boys.

Vignette 2: Aboriginal No Disability

Scott is an 11 year old Aboriginal boy.

His favourite subjects at school are health, art and science.

During lunch and recess he spends most of his time playing games with his friends who are both girls and boys.

Vignette 3 : Non Aboriginal Conduct Disorder

Scott is 11 years old.

His favourite subjects at school are health, art and science.

Sometimes he starts fights with other kids. Once the teacher caught him stealing somebody's lunch money. He lies a lot especially when he thinks it could help him get out of trouble and he is often cruel to birds and other animals at lunch or recess.

During lunch and recess he spends most of his time playing games with his friends who are both girls and boys.

Vignette 4: Aboriginal Conduct Disorder

Scott is an 11 year old Aboriginal boy.

His favourite subjects at school are health, art and science.

Sometimes he starts fights with other kids. Once the teacher caught him stealing somebody's lunch money. He lies a lot especially when he thinks it could help him get out of trouble and he is often cruel to birds and other animals at lunch or recess.

During lunch and recess he spends most of his time playing games with his friends who are both girls and boys.

All vignettes were followed by the same questionnaire. The 20 questions included formed two categories:

- (a) questions pertaining to socialising-in-school with Scott (items 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20), and
- (b) questions pertaining to working-in-class with Scott (items 1, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19).

The items were written in a question form. For example: how the participants would feel if Scott asked to sit next to them in class. The participants responded to these questions by ticking in a box that best described how they felt. The responses were given on a four point Likert scale. The range of responses indicated the participants' feelings in the given situations on a scale between "very unhappy" (0) and "very happy" (3), as shown in Figure 1.

very unhappy	unhappy	happy	very happy
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Figure 1. Likert scale used in the questionnaire.

The initially designed questionnaire differed slightly in the wording of some of the items. This questionnaire was administered to a class of Year 6 students from a school south of the river, to act as a pilot study. Items 4, 8 and 12 were removed and rewritten for the questionnaire in the present study (see Figures 2 and 3).

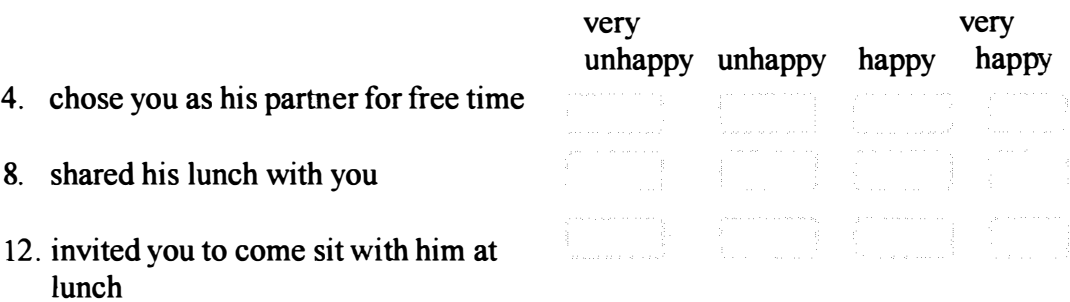


Figure 2. Original items in pilot questionnaire.

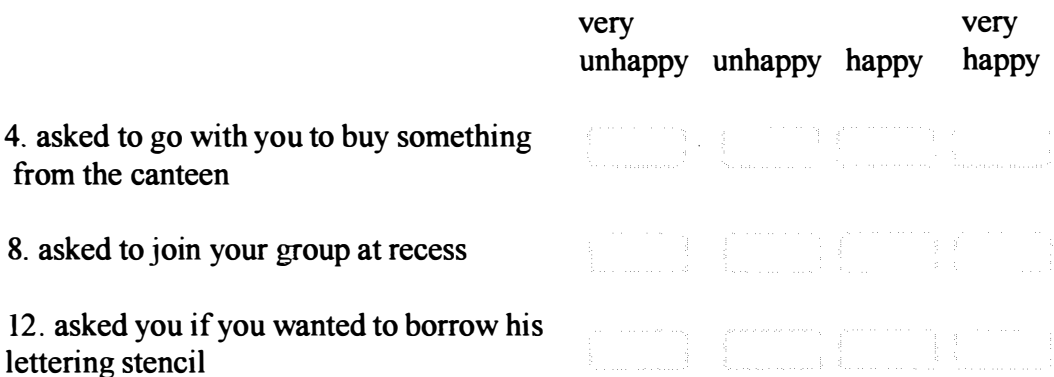


Figure 3. Rewritten items in questionnaire used for the study

Vignette Number two was attached to the questionnaire of the pilot study. Administration of the sample questionnaire gave the researcher the opportunity to ensure all students understood the questions and procedure. The data collected, as well as the school from which this group of students came, was not used for the present study. The school, however, was similar to the research schools in terms of the ethnic mix of the students and the ages of the participating students.

The internal reliability of the questionnaire was high. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was calculated on the pilot study data as 0.88 and 0.82 (see Table 4). The items were separated into the two categories pertaining to the dependent variables. For the items measuring the dependent variable (attitude to working with target student in class) the reliability coefficients were satisfactory for the type of test used. For the items measuring the dependent variable (attitude to socialising with the target student in school), however, the reliability coefficient was not satisfactory. Items 4, 8, and 12 were removed and the remaining items gave a coefficient of 0.82. These items were then replaced with rewritten statements. No other amendments were made to the questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study is shown in Appendix A.

Table 4
Category Reliability Coefficients Obtained in the Pilot Study and Main Study

	Pilot Alpha	Main Study Alpha
Working in Class	.88	.87
Socialising in school (With items 4, 8 and 12 removed)	.82	
Socialising in school (All Items)		.82
Total		.92

Procedure

The study questionnaire was administered on a whole-class basis in ten classrooms within five schools. The testing was held in the participants' usual classrooms during class time. Time spent in the classrooms varied between fifteen and twenty minutes, with the conditions of the experiment standardised through the use of a set procedure and discussion. Before the questionnaires were distributed, the researcher led a brief discussion of the study. The researcher ensured that all students felt comfortable with completing the questionnaire by discussing various issues. She informed the participants that the survey was not a test and no names would be required, to ensure that the items were answered honestly. The participants were informed that they would be asked to answer some questions on how they felt about a boy they would be shortly reading about. The researcher assured the children that there was no right or wrong answer; they only had to put down how they felt and not to worry about what their neighbours were writing. The researcher made it clear that when the survey was to be handed out, everyone would wait until the each child had a copy and the researcher then led the discussion on how the survey had to be completed. The purpose of the study was explained by simplifying the reason for the study. The students were told by the researcher that she had a project to do for her course at university on how Year 6's feel about different people. This simplification of the purpose of the study was done in order to avoid leading the participants to respond in a negative way instantly because of the ethnic background or behaviour of the target child. The researcher gave the opportunity for any questions to be asked about the study. The

researcher found that the majority of questions related to whether she wanted them to put their names and ethnic background on the survey.

Once the participants' questions had been addressed, the researcher asked the nearest boy and girl to hand out the questionnaires. The questionnaires had been split into two piles previously by the researcher. The four vignettes had been shuffled into the two piles so they would be randomly distributed. Thus, any given student may have had vignette 1, 2, 3 or 4. When the whole class had received their copies of the survey, the researcher proceeded with a brief explanation on the cover page (see Appendix A). The researcher joked with the kids. She said she was sure that they would not need help in ticking the appropriate box for male or female. She then went on to ask if anyone in the class could explain what they thought 'ethnic background' meant. Responses varied from "culture" to "where you were born". Once the researcher felt confident that all the children had an understanding of the concept, she explained that she would also like the participants to include their mother and father in the question. So if the children were Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander or if one of their parents fell into these categories, the students would tick the appropriate box. The researcher said she came from South Africa and that many students perhaps weren't born in Australia. However, instead of putting a box to represent all the nations of the world, she only put 'other'. If this was the case, the children were required to tick 'other'. At this stage in some classes, the teachers would help the children and say something like, "There's no one in this class that needs to tick the first box". The reason for the different boxes was in order to spot the surveys that were filled in by children who were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. These would not be used for the purposes of this study, as the aim of the study was to examine the attitudes of Non Aboriginal students. It also enabled all the

children who gained parental permission to participate, avoiding any situation where the Non Aboriginal children would have been asked to leave the classroom. The researcher did not intend for these children to be singled out because of their background.

The practice items on the bottom of the page were described as how the real questions would look on the following pages. The researcher read aloud the statements for each of the practice items:

How would you feel if....

1. I said we were all going to eat icecream NOW.
2. I said we were all had to do a maths test NOW.

It was explained to the participants that it did not matter what they put down, it was just how they felt. She went on to say that they might have thought about what type of icecream she was going to give them. If they liked the idea of having icecream they might have just put 'happy' and not 'very happy' because they were unsure of the flavour. The researcher then stressed the point that they had to tick in a box and not in between. They had to choose which box described best how they would feel.

The researcher then instructed the children to turn the page and read a short story of a boy. The participants were told that the questions would ask how they felt about this boy. The students were required to read through the vignette twice before responding to the questions. No time limit was set for completion of the questionnaires. Upon completion, the students were asked to check that they had filled in all questions, to check the cover page and also check the last three questions on the final page. It was suggested that the participants use a ruler to run down the page in order to make sure they hadn't missed any of the questions. A boy and girl were then chosen to collect the

surveys and they were instructed to hand them to the researcher. She then thanked the students for their participation and directed the students' attention to their teacher.

Appendix B contains the letter of appreciation that was sent to the principals as an act of courtesy, after all the data were collected, though the principals were reminded that the results of the study would be sent to them.

Ethical Considerations

It was considered that participation in the study would not have any adverse effects on the students. All the items in the questionnaire were phrased positively so as not to be threatening or disturbing to the participants.

Maintenance of privacy was ensured by anonymity. The participants noted their gender and ethnic background, but no names were required. The schools involved were also not named.

Participants were never forced into completing a questionnaire. It was made clear that the survey was a voluntary one. This was noted on the notice to the parents (see Appendix C). A permission form as such (with a place to sign for the parents) was not drawn up. After discussing this with the principal, the notice was seen as adequate because it contained the following information:

- the purpose of the research;
- who the researcher is;
- what their child would be required to do;
- how long the child would be involved;

- an offer to withdraw their child from the experiment by a certain date (agreed on by the researcher and the principal, usually the day before the administration of the survey), for any reason;
- an assurance that the results would be kept in the strictest of confidence (no names were required), and
- how the researcher could be reached should the parents have any questions (the researcher's number as well as her supervisor's number was placed on the form).

The next chapter presents the results of the study.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

This chapter reports the results obtained from analysing the data collected at the five schools. The objective was to determine how the independent variables (a) ethnicity of the child in the vignette (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal), (b) conduct of the child in the vignette (Conduct Disorder or no Conduct Disorder) and (c) gender of the participants, influenced the attitudes of the participants toward the target child.

To examine the research hypotheses, an ANOVA was conducted for the two dependent variables: (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. The dependent variables referred to two broad contexts which the participants would find as familiar situations, in which they have interacted with peers at school. The working-in-class context focused on academic activities in the classroom typical of learning experiences in the Science, English, Mathematics and Technology and Enterprise Learning Areas of the Student Outcome Statements. The socialising-in-school context focused on activities with the target child during times such as recess and lunch, playing sport and games and also situations where the target child offered assistance. The probability level for all analyses was set at .05.

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 5 and 6 show the descriptive statistics for the working-in-class context and socialising-in-school context respectively. Scores could range from 0 to 3, where 0 indicated that the participant was 'very unhappy' to interact with the target student and 3 indicated that the participant was 'very happy' to interact with the target student.

Tables 5 and 6 indicate that the mean scores were approximately in the middle of this range.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Scores in the Working-in-Class Context.

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Conduct Disorder</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>
Aboriginal	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.4593	.5444
		boys	1.4296	.6521
		total (lowest)	1.4444	.5952
	No Conduct Disorder	girls	1.7444	.5287
		boys	1.5556	.6974
		total	1.6500	.6203
	Total	girls	1.6019	.5506
		boys	1.4926	.6718
		total	1.5472	.6138
Non Aborig.	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.5741	.6017
		boys	1.4963	.6003
		total	1.5352	.5966
	No Con. Disorder	girls	1.9556	.4051
		boys	1.9296	.5261
		total (highest)	1.9426	.4652
	Total	girls	1.7648	.5433
		boys	1.7130	.6003
		total	1.7389	.5704
Total	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.5167	.5712
		boys	1.4630	.6217
		total	1.4898	.5948
	No Con. Disorder	girls	1.8500	.4785
		boys	1.7426	.6403
		total	1.7963	.5652
	Total	girls	1.6833	.5505
		boys	1.6028	.6437
		total	1.6431	.5989

Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Scores in the Socialising-in-School Context.

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Conduct Disorder</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>
Aboriginal	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.7556	.4925
		boys	1.6630	.5779
		total (lowest)	1.7093	.5339
	No Conduct Disorder	girls	2.0148	.3929
		boys	1.8296	.6238
		total	1.9222	.5247
	Total	girls	1.8852	.4603
		boys	1.7463	.6015
		total	1.8157	.5376
Non Aborig.	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.8000	.4747
		boys	1.7778	.5611
		total	1.7889	.5149
	No Con. Disorder	girls	2.0741	.3558
		boys	1.9963	.5019
		total (highest)	2.0352	.4327
	Total	girls	1.9370	.4380
		boys	1.8870	.5387
		total	1.9120	.4893
Total	Conduct Disorder	girls	1.7778	.4786
		boys	1.7204	.5671
		total	1.7491	.5236
	No Con. Disorder	girls	2.0444	.3725
		boys	1.9130	.5670
		total	1.9787	.4820
	Total	girls	1.9111	.4479
		boys	1.8167	.5727
		total	1.8639	.5151

In order to see the trends more clearly, the means were graphed for each of the two contexts. The graphs include error bars. As evident in [Figure 4](#), for the working-in-class context, the participants responded more positively to the child who was non-Aboriginal and did not have a Conduct Disorder than they did for the child who was labelled as Aboriginal but also did not have a Conduct Disorder. The most negative

attitude was demonstrated towards the child who was labelled as Aboriginal with a Conduct Disorder.

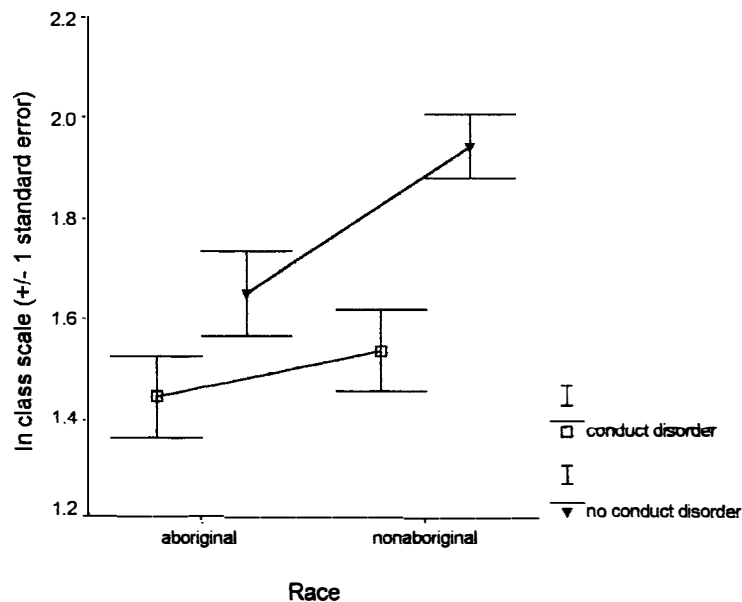


Figure 4. Mean Attitude Scores for the Working-in-Class Context for Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal and Conduct / No Conduct Disorder variables.

As evident in Figure 5, the participants demonstrated a more positive attitude in the socialising-in-school context to the child who was non-Aboriginal and did not display a Conduct Disorder than they did for the child who was labelled Aboriginal and did not have a Conduct Disorder. As with the working-in-class context, the most negative attitude was indicated towards the child labelled as Aboriginal with a Conduct Disorder. In contrast to the working-in-class context the participants’ mean scores were slightly higher over all the variables of Aboriginality and Conduct Disorder.

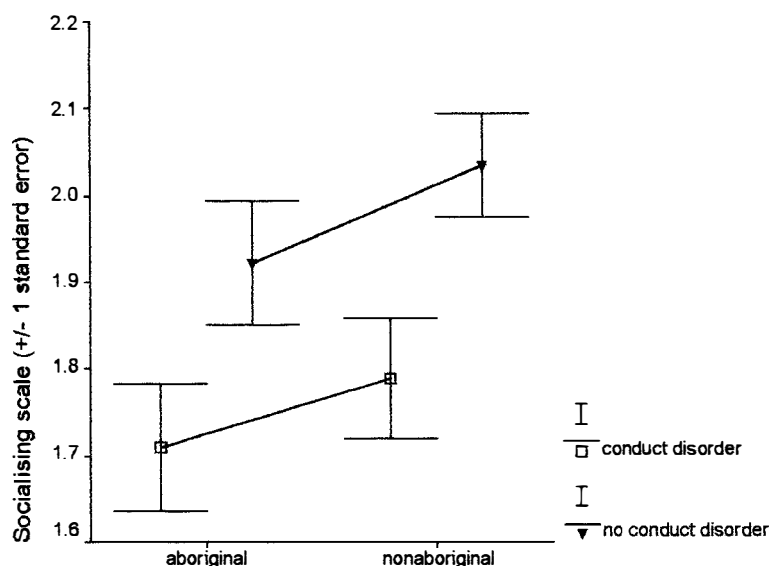


Figure 5. Mean Attitude Scores in the Socialising-in-School Context for Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal and Conduct Disorder / No Conduct Disorder variables.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

In order to determine whether the differences observed in the tables and figures were significant, a 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA was conducted with attitude to the target child in the classroom context and in the social context as the two dependent variables, and ethnicity of the target child, conduct of the target child, and gender of the participant as the three between-subjects independent variables. The MANOVA first of all yielded an overall result for the variables. The results of the MANOVA are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Results of Multivariate Analysis

	F(2,207)	p
Gender	0.95	0.39
Ethnicity	3.46	0.03
Conduct Disorder	7.66	0.01
Gender x Ethnicity	0.24	0.78
Gender x Conduct Disorder	0.15	0.85
Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder	1.75	0.18
Gender x Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder	0.46	0.63

As evident in Table 7, the multivariate analysis yielded a significant main effect for the variable of ethnicity $F(2,207) = 3.46, p < 0.03$. The participants indicated a more positive attitude toward the target child who was not labelled as Aboriginal than the target child who was. There was also a significant main effect for the variable of conduct disorder $F(2,207) = 7.66, p < 0.01$. The participants indicated a more positive attitude toward the target child who did not display any behaviours typical of a child with Conduct Disorder than the child who did. For the variable of gender there were no significant main effects, indicating that there was no significant differences between the responses of the male and female participants.

The multivariate results did not yield a significant interaction for the variables of gender and ethnicity $F(2,207) = 0.24, p < 0.78$. No significant interaction was found

for the variables of gender and conduct disorder $F(2,207) = 0.15$, $p < 0.85$. For the variables, ethnicity and conduct disorder, no significant interaction was found $F(2,207) = 1.75$, $p < 0.18$. The multivariate analysis did not yield a significant interaction for the variables of gender, ethnicity and conduct disorder $F(2,207) = 0.46$, $p < 0.63$.

Univariate Analyses

Working-in-Class Context

Table 8

MANOVA Results for the Dependent Variable of Working-in-Class.

	F (1,208)	p
Ethnicity	5.987	.015
Conduct Disorder	15.308	.000
Gender	1.058	.305
Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder	1.660	.199
Ethnicity x Gender	.134	.714
Conduct Disorder x Gender	.118	.732
Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder x Gender	.454	.501

As evident in Table 8, the univariate analysis for the working-in-class context yielded a significant main effect for the variable of conduct disorder $F(1,208) = 15.308$, $p < .001$. The participants indicated more a positive attitude toward the target child who did not display behaviours typical of a Conduct Disorder than the child that did in this

particular context. There was also a significant main effect for the variable of ethnicity $F(1,208) = 5.987, p < .015$. The participants indicated a more positive attitude toward the target child who was not described as an Aboriginal child than the child who was. There were no significant main effects for the variable of gender $F(1,208) = 1.058, p < .305$ indicating there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' responses.

The univariate analysis did not yield a significant interaction for the variables of ethnicity and Conduct Disorder $F(1,208) = 1.660, p < .199$. No significant interaction was found for the variables of ethnicity and gender $F(1,208) = .134, p < .714$. Significant interactions were not found for the variables, Conduct Disorder and gender $F(1,208) = .118, p < .732$. For the variables of ethnicity, Conduct Disorder and gender no significant interaction was found $F(1,208) = .454, p < .501$.

Socialising-in-School Context.

Table 9

MANOVA Results for the Socialising-in-School Context.

	F (1,208)	p
Ethnicity	1.965	.162
Conduct Disorder	11.173	.001
Gender	1.890	.171
Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder	.059	.809
Ethnicity x Gender	.419	.518
Conduct Disorder x Gender	.291	.590
Ethnicity x Conduct Disorder x Gender	.018	.893

As evident in Table 9, the univariate analysis for the socialising in school context yielded a significant main effect for the variable of conduct disorder, $F(1,208) = 11.73, p < .001$. The participants displayed a more positive attitude to the child who did not display behaviours typical of Conduct Disorder than the child who did. There was no significant main effect for the variable of ethnicity in this context. The participants indicated that though there was a difference in attitude toward the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal target child the interaction was not enough to be significant. The social context shows no significant interactions between the results for the variables, ethnicity $F(1,208) = 1.965, p < .162$ and gender $F(1,208) = 11.173, p < .001$.

No significant interactions were found for the variables of ethnicity and Conduct Disorder $F(1,208) = .059, p < .809$. For the variables of ethnicity and gender no significant interactions were found $F(1,208) = .419, p < .518$. No significant interaction was found for the variables of Conduct Disorder and gender $F(1,208) = .291, p < .590$. There was also no significant interaction for the variables of ethnicity, Conduct Disorder and Gender $F(1,208) = .018, p < .893$.

Conclusions

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant three way interaction (disorder x ethnicity x gender) for the attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. The three way interaction was not significant for both of these dependent variables and so the first hypothesis is not supported.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be a significant two way interaction (disorder x ethnicity) for the attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-

class and (b) socialising-in-school. The interaction was not significant for both working-in-class and socialising-in-school. Thus the second hypothesis is not supported.

The third hypothesis stated that there would be a significant two way interaction (ethnicity x gender) for the attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. This hypothesis can be disregarded because the results did not yield a significant interaction.

The fourth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant two way interaction (disorder x gender) for the attitudes to the target child (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. The fourth hypothesis is not supported because the results did not yield a significant interaction.

The fifth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes to (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school with the target child with a Conduct Disorder and the target child without the Disorder. The results supported the hypothesis in both (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school context. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The sixth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes to (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school with the target child who is portrayed as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. The results supported the hypothesis with regards to (a) working-in-class but not for (b) socialising-in-school. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The seventh hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes to (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school with the target child between the male and female participants. The results did not indicate that there was a significant difference between the attitudes of male and female participants toward the

target child. The unexpected result for the variable of gender will be discussed in the next chapter.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the results and their implications.

Chapter V

Discussion and Implications

Introduction

This chapter discusses the meaning of the results that supported the hypotheses of the study. The results are linked to the findings of previous research. The second section deals with the implications of the findings for administrators, teachers, students and parents. Finally, a third section discusses possible directions for further research.

Discussion of the Meaning of the Results

The influence of the presence of Conduct Disorder on students' attitudes toward peers

The fifth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes to (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school with the target child having a Conduct Disorder and the target child without the Disorder. The results of the data analysis mentioned in the previous chapter, supports the hypothesis in both (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school context. This indicates that, overall, the participants displayed a more positive attitude toward the target child who did not display behaviours typical of a child with Conduct Disorder. This more positive attitude toward the target student was evident in the social context. This is in keeping with the conclusions of researchers, Kazdin, Giest, and Esveltd-Dawson (1984) and Lancelotta and Vaughn (1989) that children hold negative views of externalising behavioural problems. The characteristics of the target child with a Conduct Disorder, as described in the vignette, reflect behaviours that have been identified as being external problems that students find most problematic (Vidoni, Fleming, & Mintz, 1983).

Adding to the findings of the literature, the more positive attitudes of the participants toward the target child who did not display behaviours typical of the child with Conduct Disorder, carried over to the (a) working-in-class context. Due to the nature of the items in the questionnaire, this finding indicates that the participants preferred working in class and did not mind acting as a partner for class work, with the student who did not display behaviours typical of Conduct Disorder.

A difference in the results that does deserve some recognition came to light during the univariate analyses of the two contexts: (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. In contrast to the working-in-class context the participants' mean scores were slightly higher for the socialising-in-school context. This indicates that although the child with Conduct Disorder was viewed with a more negative attitude than the child who was not, when considering the child with the Conduct Disorder in the socialising-in-school context, the participants held a more positive attitude toward the child, than in the working-in-class context. It is possible that in the working-in-class context, because the emphasis is on academic pursuits, the participants desired a partner in class that did not display disruptive behaviour that would interfere with their achievements in projects of differing subject areas. The activities in the questionnaire included working in subject areas such as maths, science, reading, and art. As children with a Conduct Disorder are often aggressive, the findings of research by Zubrick, Silburn, Gurrin, Teoh, Shepard, Carlton and Lawrence (1997) may provide a possible explanation of the participants' negative attitude to working in class with the target child. The researchers found that aggressive children are more likely than non-aggressive children to display attention problems. This creates difficulties for students working with aggressive children in group situations in the classroom whereas, during

lunch and recess, the child displaying behaviours typical of Conduct Disorder, although aggressive, did not pose as much of a threat as in the classroom.

Influence of presence of Aboriginality on students' attitudes toward peers.

The sixth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school to the target child who is portrayed as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. An analysis of the significant results, found that the participants, whilst considering the working-in-class context, showed a more positive attitude toward the child that was not described as Aboriginal than towards the child who was. This is in keeping with the research conducted by Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) who found that children were more positive toward Euro-Australians than Aborigines. In relation to age, Black-Gutman and Hickson found that the 10-12 year olds displayed a more negative attitude toward Aborigines than the 7-9 year olds. A comparison can not be made in this regards with the present study, as the author only examined the attitudes Year 6 students (10-11 year olds). However, the results are similar when examining the older age group alone.

In contrast to the working-in class context, the socialising-in-school results offer different findings. There was no significant difference in the univariate analysis for this context. It appears then that the label of the target child as being Aboriginal did not have a significant effect on the attitudes of the participants. It is possible that the participants may hold stereotypical views about Aboriginal peers in the two contexts. The items in the questionnaire differed according to the two contexts: (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school. The items relating to working-in-class focused on academic pursuits in class projects, whereas the items relating to socialising-in-school

focused on sport and time spent during lunch and recess. Within Australian society in general, there is more of an emphasis on the sporting talents of prominent Aboriginal personalities in the media, such as the 400 metre Olympic sprint champion Cathy Freeman and West Coast Eagles football players, than on academic achievements. This may contribute to the views children hold toward Aboriginals. It is possible that the participants may have been influenced by factors such as these. If this is the case, perhaps the Aboriginal target child was perceived to be not as intelligent or hard working as the non-Aboriginal child, thus explaining the participants' reluctance to work with the Aboriginal child in class. The positive image of Aboriginal people in the sporting world may have increased the desirability of socialising with the Aboriginal child in school. These are just possible explanations of the reasons as to why a difference was found in the responses of the participants. Further research would be required to determine the influences of the media on children's attitudes.

Similar to findings related to the influence of Conduct Disorder on the attitudes that the participants held toward the target child, the mean scores of the participants' responses in regards to the influence of race, were higher overall in the socialising-in-school context than in the working-in-class context. This indicates that although the Aboriginal child was more negatively looked upon when compared to the non-Aboriginal child, the participants had a more positive attitude to the Aboriginal child in the socialising-in-school context, than in the working-in-class context.

Further issues raised in the present study.

An unexpected result of the present study that deserves attention is the lack of difference in the responses given by the male and female participants. The last

hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in attitudes (a) working-in-class and (b) socialising-in-school to the target child between the male and female participants. The hypothesis was not supported by the results of the study.

The findings of this study are in direct contrast to those from previous research. Past research has shown that girls and boys have varying attitudes towards aggressive peers (Huston, 1983). In the present study, there was no significant difference between the responses of the male and female participants. This indicates that the gender bias that the researcher predicted as having a negative effect on the responses of the female participants (the target child in the vignettes was described as male), may not have had the expected impact. Overall research in perceptions of classroom behaviours indicates that girls are less accepting of disturbing behaviour than boys (Safran, 1995). Tulloch (1995) describes how reactions to aggression are based on stereotypical gender norms. As the target child was a boy who demonstrated severe Conduct Disorder behaviours that are predominantly more common in males (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), the gender of the participants may have been irrelevant due to the description of the target child's behaviour. The difference could also be attributed to the inclusion of the sentence that 'during lunch and recess he spends most of his time playing games with his friends who are both girls and boys' in the vignettes. Whether or not the female participants took this sentence into consideration as the researcher intended, to counter the affect of gender bias when indicating how they felt about the male child is unknown. Further research into this possibility is required.

Implications of the Present study

Implications for Administrators

The findings of the present study have implications for educational administrators of schools, universities and education departments. It can be concluded from the results of the study, that non-Aboriginal students hold relatively negative attitudes towards their Aboriginal peers, in the working-in-class context. Positive racial relationships in school can be the focus of early intervention plans for whole school policies. This can only be brought into effect when individuals who are in positions of power within the institutions - the teachers, principals, curriculum writers and others - are committed to eradicating racism, and prejudice (Brennan, 1998).

According to Brennan, as cited in Partington (1998) the current policies are a step in the right direction. However, what is happening in some schools, is that the actual implementation of these policies is left up to individual schools and teachers. When there isn't a recognition of the need to change, then policies are carried out in a 'tokenistic' manner. To recognise cultural differences in food, religion and music is not enough. There is a great need for schools to address the deep issues of prejudice and racism.

There is no easy solution to the problem of racism in schools and the wider community. Just as participants in this study show that the feelings and attitudes children exhibit are less positive to peers described as Aboriginal, than towards the peers who aren't, the feelings and attitudes of some members of the community could also be improved. For most of its history, European Australia has seen itself as a monocultural nation of settlers of British descent, maintaining the 'White Australia'

policy until the 1960s. Australian Aborigines, now 2% of the population, were not granted citizenship and inclusion in the national census until 1967 (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996). Change in policies and attitudes has proven to be a long process. However, an awareness of negative racial attitudes is essential in moving forward to a more equitable education system.

Universities have a responsibility to student teachers to increase their knowledge and awareness of the current racial attitudes that children hold. These future educators will then be better equipped with the skills needed to implement steps to ensure more positive peer relationships among their students than there has been in the past.

Implications for Teachers

Although involved in the implications for administrators, there are more specific implications for teachers in Western Australian schools. As stated in the literature review, students often reflect their teachers' attitudes and beliefs. As professionals in the education system, teachers have the responsibility to model positive attitudes and relationships to all students in their classes.

According to Fishbein (1992) prejudice appears to be part of belonging to a group and this has implications for teachers as the forming of in-and-out groups are common in classrooms. The results of the study indicate that the participants held relatively negative attitudes towards working-in-class with the Aboriginal student. It is possible that this finding can be generalised to groups of Aboriginal students. Teachers need to be aware of the different in-group and out-group behaviours and attitudes. When there are negative racial attitudes to working with Aboriginal peers in the class, it

is suggested that teachers create classroom situations that involve working together to achieve a common goal rather than promoting division and competition (Brennan, 1998). As speculated earlier in the discussion, children's attitudes toward Aboriginal peers may be influenced by stereotyped views that Aborigines are not as intelligent, so working-in-class with these peers is undesirable. If this is the case, teachers have the responsibility of highlighting the strengths of all children in various aspects of the curriculum, in order to promote working together.

As yet, the focus has been on the implications of the influence of Aboriginality on children's attitudes. There were significant differences in the attitudes that the participants held toward the target child who was described as displaying behaviours typical to Conduct Disorder. The results indicated that the participants held a more positive attitude towards the child who was not described as having Conduct Disorder, than the child who was. This has implications for the teacher. Children need to be made aware of the consequences of displaying inappropriate behaviour both in-class and while socialising-at-school. The teaching of social skills to children may be needed for children to develop skills in displaying anger and aggression to the children who exhibit it as well as developing coping strategies for the children who are victims of the inappropriate behaviour a child with Conduct Disorder may exhibit. Early intervention may be necessary to prevent aggressive tendencies in young children developing into serious behavioural problems in adolescence and adulthood.

Implications for parents

The results of the present study have implications for the parents and caregivers of the participants. As adults, there must be an awareness as to how children look to

adults for the appropriate in which manner to act, based on the beliefs and attitudes they hold. The extent to which this influence, that parents hold over the formation of their children's attitudes at the Year 6 age level, was not a focus of this study. As stated in the review of the literature, adults serve as models to children. Their responses to differences whether it be race or behaviour, will be demonstrated in their actions. Young children especially look to their parents for these reactions (Marks, 1997). It is clear then that parents as well as teachers are authority figures who hold some power to facilitate acceptance or support rejection of Aboriginal children.

With regards to the parents of children with Conduct Disorder, the knowledge of the negative attitudes that are held toward their children is also valuable. Just as adults' attitudes are often reflected in their children, so too is their behaviour. Adults have the responsibility to act as appropriate role models in terms of behaviour. Many Conduct Disorder children show the characteristics of aggressive behaviour before coming to school. Thus parents have a vital role in educating their children with appropriate behaviour for school so that early intervention can take place to avoid, as much as possible, the likelihood of these children having negative peer relationships at school.

Implications for the students

In this sample of non-Aboriginal children, the least positive attitude (score=1.44) was displayed toward the target child who was described as Aboriginal, as well displaying characteristics typical of Conduct Disorder. The reasons for children holding this attitude was not examined in this study. However, as discussed earlier, children's attitudes may be influenced by the stereotyped views of Aboriginal persons in society and the media. There are indications that higher levels of prejudice toward Aborigines

compared to other Australian people are prevalent throughout Australian society. Some negative images of Aboriginal people are passed around through the culture's jokes and literature, and idiomatic expressions (Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996). These negative images are easily accessible to children.

According to the Social-Cognitive Theory, as described in the review of the literature, the participants of this study are at an age where they are maturing and starting to develop their own attitudes, as they move from focusing on the similarities and differences of people to the internal qualities of specific individuals. If this is the case, then children at Year 6 level may be able to take more responsibility for their attitudes and beliefs and how they affect their peers.

Children who are rejected because they are Aboriginal, can not change the fact they were born as members of that particular race. Children who are diagnosed with Conduct Disorder, however, can make a positive change in their behaviour. If the children with Conduct Disorder are made aware of how their actions affect their peer relationships then this may be a start in changing their attitudes. Perhaps this may be an essential first step in creating more positive peer relationships at school, just as awareness of racial prejudice may be the first step for a positive change in attitudes.

Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned in the discussion of the limitations of this study, the study was conducted using convenience sampling of metropolitan schools. The schools were also a mix of Catholic and State schools. Further research in this area could assess whether the attitudes of students differ according to the category of school which they attend. The schools used for the sample had varying numbers of Aboriginal students, ranging

from a significant percentage in schools south of the Swan River to none at all in the school north of the Swan River. It would make interesting further research if the Aboriginal population of the schools were taken into account when examining the attitudes that peers hold toward Aboriginal students.

The effect of the gender bias in this study is unknown. As the vignettes described the target child as male, this may have had an influence on the responses of the female participants. It would be worthwhile to repeat the study using a female target child in the vignettes. It would be interesting to determine whether females are viewed in a more negative manner than males.

Further studies could also address the impact of varying severity levels of Conduct Disorder on the attitudes of students. The present study described the target child with a severe form of Conduct Disorder. It would be interesting to note any differences in attitudes towards children who display milder forms of the Disorder.

A repeat of the study in a similar manner to that performed by Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) to compare the attitudes of children across age groups would add valuable information to this field of knowledge. This would contribute clearly to the aim of more Australian studies that could contribute to our understanding of the relative influence of cognitive development on children's attitudes.

The findings of this study are in light of the participants' responses to hypothetical cases. Further study, to determine the participants' actual reactions to Aboriginal peers and those with Conduct Disorder, would require direct observation. Finally, this study was concerned only with determining if the attitudes of children toward their peers differed according to whether the child was described as Aboriginal or had a Conduct Disorder. It has been speculated by the researcher as to what factors

influenced the attitudes of the students. Further research is needed to make statements based on evidence. The optimal source of this information is the children themselves. The study could be repeated and the surveys could be administered on an individual basis (orally) and further questions could be asked with regards to the reasons why the children feel the way they do.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study Questionnaire

Attitude Survey

You DO NOT need to put your name on this sheet, just tick the box.

I am a : BOY

☐

or

GIRL

☐

My ethnic background is :

ABORIGINAL or
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

OR

OTHER

☐☐

Practice Items:

How would you feel if...

very

unhappy

unhappy

happy

very

happy

1. I said we were all going to eat icecream
NOW!

☐☐☐☐

2. I said we all had to do a maths test NOW!

☐☐☐☐

Attitude Survey

Please tick the response that best describes how you would feel if the student you have just read about...

	very unhappy	unhappy	happy	very happy
1. asked to sit next to you in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. asked you to play a game at recess	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. asked you to be his partner for a science project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. asked to go with you to buy something from the canteen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. asked to sit with you at lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. asked you to be his partner for a class speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. asked you to be his partner for a library project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. asked to join your group at recess	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. asked to draw you in art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. asked you to play basketball at lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. asked you to be his partner for a maths problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. asked you if you wanted to borrow his lettering stencil	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. asked you to be his reading partner in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. asked if you wanted to borrow his textas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. asked if you needed help in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. asked if you wanted to watch a video at the library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. asked you to be his spelling partner

18. asked if you needed help when you
got
hurt at lunch

19. asked you to be his partner for
computer work

20. asked you if you wanted to play with
his Game Boy at recess

Appendix B: Letter of Appreciation to the Principals

Nerine van Wyk
1 Carey Place
GOSNELLS
6110
Telephone:- 9490 4690

Date

The Principal
Schools Address

Dear Sir or Madam,

Just a short note to express my deep appreciation for your cooperation during the planning and implementation of the attitude survey, conducted with your Year 6 class(es).

When I have analysed the data, I will send you a report of the results of the study.

Thank you again,

Yours Sincerely,

Nerine van Wyk

Appendix C: Notice to the parents of the participants

Notice to the parents of all Year 6 students concerning a voluntary study

My name is Nerine van Wyk. I am a fourth year student studying for a Bachelor of Education degree. I am interested in finding out how students feel about working with their peers in class, as well as how they feel about socialising with these students in school. Your child's school has been invited to be a part of this study in the afternoon of Wednesday 1st of March. I believe this study to be a worthwhile project as the results may help teachers in their planning of their classrooms.

The survey will be given to a whole class at a time and will take no longer than 20 minutes of class time. Your child will be told not to write his or her name on the survey, so all answers will be anonymous.

If you would prefer your child **NOT** to be involved, please **inform the class teacher before Wednesday 1st of March**, and your child will be removed from the class while the survey is being administered. If we do not hear from you by this date, we will assume that you are happy for your child to be a part of this study.

If you have any questions please phone me on 9490 4690 or my supervisor Dr Blackmore at Edith Cowan University on 9273 8518.

Nerine van Wyk