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An investigation of the multiple response to oppression and implications for identity among Aboriginal adolescents

Victoria E. Hovane
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**An Investigation of the Multiple Response to Oppression
and Implications for Identity among
Aboriginal Adolescents**

Victoria E. Hovane

**A Thesis Submitted as a Partial Requirement
for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Psychology
at
Edith Cowan University**

30 October, 2000.

Declaration

I declare that this written assignment is my own work and does not include:

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Signed by [redacted].....(Victoria Hovane).

**An Investigation of the Multiple Response to Oppression and
Implications for Identity among Aboriginal Adolescents**

Abstract

In a history characterized by dispossession and oppression since colonization, the responses of Aboriginal people to oppression have typically been presented from an ethnocentric perspective of internalization and assimilation. Another body of literature however, suggests alternative responses to non-dominant status such as resistance and adaptation to oppression. This study sought to investigate the ways in which Aboriginal adolescents respond to the negative messages they receive about being Aboriginal and the implications for their developing sense of identity, within a sociopolitical framework. A group of nine participants (five females and four males), aged 14 - 17 years (\bar{M} = 15.4yrs), were recruited from a state suburban high school and interviewed using a semi-structured interview. Four main themes emerged from the data: Ways of Being Aboriginal; Resisting and Rejecting Stereotypes; Moving Against Stereotypes; and Moving Towards Social Action. A minor theme of Holding On emerged and this referred to participants from the North-west holding on to White imposed stereotypes about urban Aboriginal culture, in order to retain a privileged status as 'real' Aboriginal people. The implications for identity development and how adults work with young Aboriginal people are discussed and suggestions for future research provided.

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An Investigation of the Multiple Responses to Oppression and Implications for Identity among Australian Aboriginal Adolescents

In a history characterized by dispossession and oppression since colonization Australia's Aboriginal people have fought to overcome the barriers imposed on their attainment of self-acceptance and self-esteem (Gibbs, 1996; Haebich, 1992; Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1997; Kidd, 1997; King-Boyes, 1977; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), 1991). Some of these barriers include the devaluing of Aboriginal culture and identity (Berndt & Berndt, 1992), and the denial of access to social resources (Sidanius & Platto, 1999) such as employment, education and self-determination.

As a consequence, the oppression of Aboriginal people is reported as succeeding to a large extent in bringing about a "...breakdown in culture and the line of authority and traditions, resulting in a soul-destroying dependency." (Williams, Swan, Reser & Miller, 1992, p.299) that today sees many Aboriginal people existing in an impoverished and severely disadvantaged environment (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1997; Gibbs, 1996; RCIADIC, 1991). Whilst the negative social consequences of oppression such as poverty and associated issues are well-documented (ABS, 1997; Hunter, 1991; 1993), the psychological consequences for Aboriginal identity and self-acceptance require investigation for three main reasons.

Firstly, the social difficulties experienced by Aboriginal people and the problematic behaviours that are perceived to characterize Aboriginal communities have been attributed to negative responses to oppression. These include

internalization of negative stereotypes leading to a negative sense of self, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness, substance abuse and domestic violence.

Secondly, oppression has been described as denying self-determination that at its most basic level means denial of the freedom to determine and define one's own identity (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994; 1996). The pursuit of self-determination has emerged as a fundamental concern within Aboriginal communities, in an effort to reclaim the right to speak about Aboriginality and to reclaim control over their affairs (Eades, 1981; Langton, 1981; Swan, et al., 1992).

Thirdly, although well documented much of the oppression literature has originated in North America and is associated with African-American enslavement (Freire, 1972). Some of the literature is based on experiences of colonization for example, of the Malagasy (Fanon, 1968), however the relevance of such literature to the Australian Aboriginal context remains largely unresolved. That is not to say however, that there may not be similarities or parallels in experiences, however care must be taken to ensure that the experiences of Aboriginal people are not subsumed under ethnocentric ideas about a universal Black experience of oppression. Aboriginal oppression has originated in and exists within a different context to that experienced by African-Americans and to some extent the Malagasy.

Oppression and Aboriginal Identity in Historical Context

The importance of adopting a historical perspective of Aboriginality arises out of the historical oppression of Aboriginal people on the basis of race. Race is described as the most recognizable, important and enduring collective identity that groups possess (Helms, 1994). The concept of race includes physical appearance

such as skin colour, the position held in the racial-superiority hierarchy, and cultural practices and traditions (Helms, 1994). The historical oppression of Aboriginal people on the basis of race has therefore touched many aspects of Aboriginal identity, the effects of which continue to resonate throughout discourses on contemporary Aboriginality.

A historical perspective is also required in order to illustrate the gradual evolution of attitudes towards Aboriginality that has occurred since colonization. In addition, as societies change and people are exposed to new social and cultural frameworks, findings from one era or set of circumstances may not be applicable in subsequent situations and times (Goosens & Phinney, 1996). So findings from an examination of Aboriginal identity in the 1950's or even the 1960's may no longer be relevant today.

Bearing this in mind, Attwood (1989) notes that prior to colonization there were no "Aborigines", as such and the concept of "Aboriginality" implies a homogeneous people and identity. For Aboriginal people, Aboriginality has become a means of describing themselves in the context of colonization and their subsequent relationship with Europeans (Attwood, 1989). This relationship included the colonial imperative aimed at "civilization" of the natives (Berndt & Berndt, 1992). To the colonizers, "civilization" effectively meant Europeanization and the notion of having to "civilize" the natives is clearly couched in ethnocentric ideas of White superiority over Australia's indigenous people.

Riley (1997) provides a historical summary of Aboriginal disempowerment to empowerment since colonization. In his summary of more recent times, he notes the limited but good intentions of the 1960's, that sought to provide some

rights to Aboriginal people. The 1967 Referendum that voted overwhelmingly to include Aboriginal people in the national census (Riley, 1997) signalled a shift in attitudes towards Aboriginal people. For example, the existence of a separate Aboriginal identity slowly began to insert itself into the social psyche.

However, it wasn't until the Whitlam years of the early 1970's that self-determination through Aboriginal participation in decision-making, was introduced as a viable alternative to paternalism. With this move to promote self-determination came Aboriginal reclamation of the right to speak about Aboriginal matters and to define Aboriginality (Stokes, 1997). Such movements have become understood in terms of cultural renaissance. Cultural renaissance as it is used here, refers to Aboriginal people's reclamation of the right to define and frame their identity in their terms. Up until this period, Aboriginality was devalued (Berndt & Berndt, 1992) and driven under-ground by the assimilationist, protectionist policies and practices of the reserves, missions and society in general. Thus, in the 1970's and 1980's mainstream society was still coming to terms with the concept of a separate and valued Aboriginal identity. Open expression of and pride in Aboriginal identity was often met with White responses of the "radical Black" or "you've got a chip on your shoulder", responses that were intended to silence Aboriginal voices.

Aboriginal people themselves were also trying to come to terms with the consequences of relatively recent assimilationist policies and practices such as the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families (HREOC, 1997). These policies and practices had severe psychological consequences for identity formation in Aboriginal people. These consequences can be summarised by the following quotes from confidential evidence provided to the National Inquiry into

the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families:

“You spend your whole life wondering where you fit. You’re not white enough to be white and your skin isn’t black enough to be black either, and it really comes down to that.” (HREOC, 1997, p203).

“I didn’t know anything about my Aboriginality until I was 46 years of age – 12 years after my father died. I felt very offended and hurt that this knowledge was denied me, for whatever reason. For without this knowledge I was not able to put the pathway of my own life into its correct place.” (HREOC, 1997, p217).

Dealing with these consequences together with deeply ingrained negative stereotypes of Aboriginality was not an easy task and presented its own set of challenges. These included re-establishing familial and kinship ties and reclaiming cultural knowledge.

As Aboriginal people increasingly reclaimed the right to define their identity, it was concluded that anyone who identified as Aboriginal and was accepted by their community as Aboriginal, was Aboriginal (Stokes, 1997). Establishing an Aboriginal identity was not as simple for Aboriginal people of mixed parentage who had been labelled as half-castes for example, thereby implying they were only half Aboriginal. Nor was it easy for those who had chosen to live their lives in ways that were perceived to reflect a White way of life, such as a life including the pursuit of education (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1989), employment, and particular ways of dressing and living. Thus, challenges to Aboriginality have ensued from both within and without the Aboriginal community.

Challenges to identity from White people have been associated with attempts by Aboriginal people to gain access to resources and to utilize policies aimed at promoting equality. For example Aboriginal people have sought equality of access to English common law in relation to their rights to traditional lands. Challenges by Whites have included questions about the Aboriginal “authenticity” of the claimants and therefore the legitimacy of their claims. In other words, the challengers imply that claimants are trying to obtain assistance or access to resources under false pretences since they are not “real” Aboriginal people (Chase, 1981).

Challenges to identity have also come from within the Aboriginal community and usually include comments about “coconuts” and that “you think you’re White”. Recipients of such comments, who have a clear sense of their Aboriginality, often perceive that such comments are motivated by jealousy of their success, as part of what is more commonly known as the “tall poppy syndrome”.

The challenging of Aboriginal people as a result of their perceived success may reflect the internalization of the oppressor’s expectations about the ability of Aboriginal people to succeed in the White world. Successful Aboriginal people challenge the inequities in the social order or status quo that the dominant society has maintained since colonization. By challenging successful Aboriginal people in this way, other Aboriginal people can become oppressors themselves.

In a culture that strongly emphasizes the importance of kinship and interpersonal relationships, the denial of a member’s Aboriginality or cultural identity equates to the denial of that person’s membership to the group and place within the community. This denial of a person’s place within the community,

alongside family and kin, can have traumatic psychological consequences (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1989). The person can experience feelings of alienation, of being an outcast of the community, and feelings of low self-worth.

Thus, over the last thirty years Aboriginal people have become actively engaged in exploring, deconstructing the imposed identity and reconstructing Aboriginality in their terms (Langton, 1981; Oxenham et al., 1999).

Deconstruction is required because over time Aboriginal identity has been shaped by government policies (e.g. assimilation and patriarchal protectionism), agents of colonialism (e.g. the missionaries) and by Aboriginal people themselves in response to oppression and domination (Attwood, 1989; Carter, 1994; Hunter, 1991; Morris, 1994). For example, Attwood (1989) asserts that Aboriginal use of the language of the colonizers, such as “coloured” and “full-bloods”, suggests the adoption of an identity that can only be understood in terms of European perspectives on Aboriginality. Similarly, non-dominant use of the language of the oppressors is viewed by others as a means of maintaining their own domination (Sampson, 1993).

An alternative view challenges notions of internalization of imposed identities that accompany the use of such terms. As Palmer and Collard (1993) note, non-dominance does not equate to passive marginalisation. Rather, Aboriginal people have reframed the meanings of such language to merely describe their relationship with the White colonizers as opposed to adopting those terms as descriptions of their Aboriginality. Similarly, Aboriginal writers conclude that changes in Aboriginal culture and practices can more accurately be understood in terms of Aboriginal adaptation to the imposition of European

culture on the Aboriginal way of life (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1989; Langton, 1981).

Thus, there is a strong theme of adaptation to oppression throughout Aboriginal history since colonization. Adaptation suggests the implementation of alternative responses to oppression, other than ethnocentric theories of internalization and consequent Black self-hatred for example.

The following provides an examination of the ways in which non-dominant groups respond to oppression. Whilst some of this information may be useful in understanding Aboriginal identity development, there have been little if any studies that have examined these issues from Aboriginal perspectives and within Aboriginal communities.

Responses to Oppression

The existing literature details some of the negative ways in which non-dominant groups respond to oppression, such as internalization (Tajfel, 1981), Black self-hatred (Baldwin, Brown & Hopkins, 1991; Nobles, 1973), low self-esteem, depression and self-harm (Swan, et al, 1992). An emerging body of research however, challenges the assumptions inherent in this literature, that non-dominance equates to passive marginalization (Palmer & Collard, 1993).

For example, Baldwin and colleagues (1991) challenge the Black self-hatred paradigm that asserts the existence of a pathogenic self-concept in African-Americans, wherein they internalize or identify with the racist attitudes towards themselves. Baldwin and colleagues (1991) argue that the Black self-hatred paradigm is an oppressive tool that seeks to blame the oppressed for the negative consequences they experience as a result of their oppression.

Similarly, in their study of responses to oppression in expatriate 'coloured' South Africans living in Australia, Sonn and Fisher (unpublished manuscript) noted the existence of a variety of responses to the oppression that existed under the system of Apartheid. The participants talked about responding in a number of ways in various circumstances or contexts. These responses included the accommodation of an imposed racialized social status, becoming used to the racialized labels, resisting oppression, and holding onto racialized ideology in order to maintain a privileged status in comparison to Blacks.

Others, who also take issue with the idea that non-dominant groups respond to oppression in mostly negative ways, have developed theories or models to describe these varied responses to oppression. For example, from a social identity theoretical perspective Tajfel (1981) proposed a theory to describe the range of ways in which people respond along an acceptance-rejection continuum. These include acceptance or internalization, accommodation and assimilation of non-dominant status through to rejection of non-dominant status (Refer Table 1).

Acceptance involves the internalization to some degree, of externally imposed non-dominant group characteristics, and occurs when non-dominant group members perceive there are no prospects of changing their non-dominant status (Tajfel, 1981). However, in interactions with members of an alternative social group that has its own norms, traditions, values and functions, the negative self-image derived from comparisons with dominant groups may not be relevant or have a place in those interactions (Tajfel, 1981).

Assimilation on the other hand, involves the rejection of the non-dominant status in favour of assimilation into the dominant group (Tajfel, 1981). Freire (1972) summarizes assimilation in the following manner: if the struggle is to

restore their humanity and the legitimate “humans” are the oppressors, then to regain their humanity means they have to become like their oppressors. But this does not mean that the assimilating individual is fully accepted by the dominant group. Alternatively they may still be regarded as exhibiting some of the unpleasant characteristics of the non-dominant group, whilst paradoxically, being considered as exceptions to the rule.

Another form of assimilation involves the hiding of one’s true identity in order to “pass” as a member of the dominant group. A method of maintaining the mask is for assimilating individuals to loudly voice their dislike of the ‘inferior’ minority (Tajfel, 1981).

Table 1. The acceptance-rejection continuum.

(i)	Acceptance	Internalizes non-dominant status.
(ii)	Assimilation	Rejection of non-dominant status.
	Full	Reject culture of origin, is accepted by dominant culture.
	Partial	Not fully accepted as seen as continuing to possess negative characteristics of non-dominant group.
	Passing	Accepts dominant culture and tries to hide culture of origin.
(iii)	Accommodation	Retains identity and competes with dominant group for social resources.

Finally, accommodation occurs when non-dominant group members attempt to retain their own identity, whilst simultaneously striving to gain some of the opportunities and material resources valued by the dominant group (Tajfel, 1981). Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) refers to these valued

resources in terms of *positive social value* or the material and symbolic things that people strive to attain, such as political power, wealth and high social status.

Dominant groups typically possess a disproportionately large share of *positive social value* (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, authors' italics). Conversely, non-dominant groups possess a disproportionately large share of *negative social value* that includes low power and social status, poor health care and severe negative sanctions such as imprisonment (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, authors' italics).

An alternative model for describing non-dominant responses to oppression is based on the sociopolitical perspective (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1994; Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Watts and colleagues (1994; 1999) propose a five-stage model of development to explain how individuals and groups respond to oppression over time (Refer Table 2). They draw on Freire's (1972) ideas about the development of a critical consciousness about the social forces that maintain oppression, as a means of overcoming that oppression.

Table 2. Stages of sociopolitical development.

(i)	Acritical Stage	The individual has internalized and accepted their non-dominant status.
(ii)	Adaptive Stage	The individual has internalized feelings of powerlessness to change their non-dominant status.
(iii)	Precritical Stage	The individual begins to question his/her adaptation as member of a non-dominant group.
(iv)	Critical Stage	The individual continues to seek information and understanding of the social forces that maintain the oppressive status quo.
(v)	Liberation Stage	The individual has achieved critical awareness of oppression and becomes involved in social action.

Another theory is advanced by Bulhan (1978) who suggests a theory of reactive identification in his description of the ways in which Western-educated Africans respond to the Euro-American world (Refer Table 3).

Table 3. Stages of Reactive Identification.

i)	Moving Toward Identification	The individual internalizes the western culture and aspires to assimilation.
ii)	Moving Away from Identification	The individual undergoes a period of intense crisis of defensively romanticizing the African past as it repudiates the western world.
iii)	Moving Against Identification	The individual severs their symbiotic existence with the western world and engages in revolutionary commitment.

Bulhan (1978) summarises these responses as fixation with, flight from and fight against the western world.

Whilst these models provide interesting propositions about the ways in which non-dominant groups respond to oppression, their usefulness in the context of Aboriginal experiences of oppression and the impacts on Aboriginal identity remains unresolved. In order to examine the relationship between oppression and identity, the following provides information about some key issues in identity development.

Models of Identity Development

Over time, researchers have increasingly acknowledged the complexity of human development and that the individual does not exist within a social, cultural

or historical vacuum (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Erikson, 1968; Gardiner, Mutter & Kosmitzki, 1998; Goosens & Phinney, 1996; Yoder, 2000). They suggest that these three factors can play an important role in identity development and commitment to an identity (Nurmi, Poole & Kalakoski, 1996). For example, society is reported as playing a causal role in identity formation and if confronted by barriers that limit exploration of or commitment to an identity (Yoder, 2000), the individual adapts his or her identity to accommodate the social context (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). That is, the individual constructs his/her sense of self in relation to the various systems within which he/she resides, from the micro through to the macro-system (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

Similarly, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) posits that people's intrinsic need for a positive self-esteem and positive intergroup distinctiveness are embedded within and influenced by macro-level social belief structures. In other words, although children are socialized into a particular culture from an early age (Groome, 1995), "...identity is achieved through a complex process of judging oneself (1) as an individual, (2) in comparison with others' judgments, and (3) in comparison to social and cultural norms." (Gardiner, Mutter & Kosmitzki, 1998, p. 124). Thus, individuals can potentially possess a number of social identities including a racial and/or cultural identity, and identities based on their age, gender, occupation, socio-economic status, sexuality, and so forth (Tajfel, 1981).

The importance of possessing a number of these social identities was demonstrated in a study of identity adaptiveness in response to stereotypes in Asian-American students (Pittinsky, Shih & Ambady, 1999). Pittinsky and colleagues (1999) found that participants who possessed more social identities

were not as adversely affected by negative messages than those who did not possess as many social identities. They suggest that the former group may draw on one or more of their other identities when a particular identity is threatened or adversely affected, in order to maintain a positive sense of self in the face of negative messages. Thus the possession of a number of social identities constitutes a valuable resource for the individual. They conclude that researchers need to expand their perspectives on identity, to one that takes into account the complexity of human development. To do otherwise would be to adopt a simplistic approach that may have limited use in understanding identity development and its social functions (Pittinsky, et al, 1999).

Nurmi, Poole and Kalakosky (1996) in their cross-cultural study of identity exploration and commitment in Australian and Finnish adolescents from urban and rural environments, found that living in an urban setting in Australia provided more opportunities for identity exploration and commitment compared to rural settings. Their results are suggestive of the importance of having an opportunity-rich social and cultural environment that allows the exploration of a variety of social identities in order to promote healthy identity development.

Other studies have also identified ethnicity and the cultural environment as being of central importance in identity development for members of non-dominant groups (Helms, 1994; Phinney & Chavira, 1992). For example, in their exploratory longitudinal study of ethnic identity and its relationship to self-esteem in a small group of Asian Americans, Hispanics and African American adolescents, Phinney and Chavira (1992) found a significant relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem. Possessing a strong ethnic or cultural identity

appeared to be associated with psychological wellbeing in members of non-dominant groups (Phinney & Chavira, 1992).

The results suggest that having a clear understanding of one's ethnic or cultural background, including the problems experienced and overcome by one's group, may contribute to positive feelings about oneself (Phinney & Chavira, 1992). In addition, having positive feelings about oneself may encourage the exploration of ethnic or cultural issues, including the questioning of stereotypes and the search for positive role-models (Phinney & Chavira, 1992). These ideas are consistent with responses to oppression wherein non-dominant people and groups begin to question the forces that maintain oppression (Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

The portrayal of identity as being influenced by social forces is consistent with ideas regarding the influence of societal expectations about behaviour on identity formation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Such expectations are conceptualised as roles that are assigned according to expectations about the positions held by individuals.

Societal expectations are generally determined at the macro-level and are associated with the dominant ideology and institutional structures that exist within a given society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As such, roles are powerful determinants of how people behave, how they are treated and consequently, what they think and how they feel (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, the degree to which expected behaviours occur, depends on whether other roles exist within the setting that invite or inhibit behaviour associated with a particular role (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

For oppressed people, this generally means that their choice of roles is severely restricted to those assigned them by the oppressors wherein they are typically assigned less valued and stereotypical roles. For example, Aboriginal people have historically been assigned roles of servitude to the White masters as labourers and maids (RCIADIC, 1991), or dependents within a patriarchal system and in need of protection. Aboriginal people were allocated specific non-dominant roles within society and were inhibited from exploring alternative roles.

In contemporary times, Aboriginal achievement of alternative roles is becoming more attainable and acceptable, however those who do achieve non-stereotypical roles continue to find themselves viewed as “exceptional” by both Aboriginal and mainstream societies. Social group theory (Tajfel, 1981) provides some insights into the processes that may be involved. Social group theory describes the dynamics of intragroup and intergroup processes and how these processes influence members’ behaviour as they seek to maintain group cohesion and well-being (Tajfel, 1981). Aboriginal individuals, who achieve non-stereotypical roles, do not conform to the roles assigned to the Aboriginal group by the White group and are therefore viewed as exceptional. Challenges to their Aboriginality by White groups may then ensue based on the rationale that since they have not conformed to the roles ascribed to them, they must not identify as Aboriginal.

Similarly, because these exceptional Aboriginal individuals do not conform to typical Aboriginal roles and have assumed what are viewed as White roles, challenges to their Aboriginality may ensue from within the Aboriginal community. Such challenges are based on the rationale that the adoption of White roles must mean that the individuals identify with White people. The ways in

which Aboriginal people respond to such challenges must be explored from a position that provides a historical context to understanding Aboriginality. The importance of doing this can be summarised by the following quote from Michael Dodson, a prominent contemporary Aboriginal leader that "...we re-create Aboriginality in the context of all our experiences, including our pre-colonial practices, our oppression and our political struggles." (Groome, 1995, p.38). In other words, Aboriginal identity is deeply rooted in "...a shared history of suffering and oppression since invasion, one that creates a unity of experience and common bonds." (Stokes, 1997, p.166).

Table 4. Sequence of identity crises.

Phase I	Internalization or Shame	The individual accepts and has internalized the dominant White values
Phase II	Resistance, Active and Passive	Defence mechanisms operate to prevent challenges to the internalized oppressor's views, even in the face of positive messages about Aboriginality.
Phase III	Acceptance of positive messages about Aboriginality	Involves the questioning of internalized oppressive views
Phase IV	Hostility	As a result of actively challenging the oppressor's views, there is an acting out of hostility and anger towards White people.
Phase V	Consolidation	The individual engages in social action activities directed at consolidating their Aboriginal identity.
Phase VI	Self-actualised Aboriginality	Individuals accept their Aboriginality and are able to retain or reject those parts of themselves that reflect dominant White values.

In an effort to ensure that the experiences of Aboriginal people do not become "...submerged among other dark-skinned people who have suffered

through a colonial experience.” (Berndt & Berndt, 1992, p.529), Dudgeon and Oxenham (1989) have developed a model of identity development from an Aboriginal perspective (Refer Table 4).

Whilst this model remains to be tested, it presents a positive move towards Aboriginal reclamation of the right to define Aboriginality. Similarly to other Aboriginal writers Dudgeon and Oxenham (1989) reject the notion that oppression means passive marginalization (Palmer & Collard, 1993). They conceptualize their model as a sequence of six identity crises or phases that echo some of the responses referred to previously (Bulhan, 1978; Tajfel, 1981; Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

Since adolescence is accepted as a defining period for identity development as they make the transition into adulthood (Kail & Cavanaugh, 1996) we continue our in-depth exploration of oppression and Aboriginal identity by examining the current circumstances of this group of young people within society.

Aboriginal Adolescents

Adolescents today are described as growing up in the increasingly hostile world of poverty, crime, violence and strained educational systems, and are faced with a number of other challenges that together make adolescence a difficult transitional period (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998). For young Aboriginal men and women living in urban settings, adolescence can present additional challenges such as having to deal with discrimination and stereotyping. Society typically portrays Aboriginal people as being a troubled people (Hunter, 1993) involved in substance abuse, anti-social and criminal behaviour. If internalized, these negative messages can erode personal pride and lead to alienation in

individuals, resulting in feelings of humiliation and shame that act to further suppress their voices (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994).

Aboriginal adolescents living in urban settings also face challenges to their identity on the basis of their geographical location. For example, mainstream society has typically viewed the continuity of cultural traditions in southern, urban setting with some cynicism (Carter, 1994). The concentration of White settlement and the White population in southern parts of Australia has created the perception that Aboriginal culture has ceased to exist in these areas.

Paradoxically, given Aboriginal claims of diversity, Aboriginal people from other areas may also espouse similar views, to the effect that the urban Aboriginal culture is not as “authentic” as other more remote Aboriginal cultures. However, Palmer & Collard (1993) take issue with ideas about the culturally deprived urban Aboriginal person. They note from their research with Nyungar young people that the Nyungar language, knowledge and culture continues to have considerable influence in the lives of these young people living in urban areas like Perth.

In addition, Langton (1981) argues against the adoption of simplistic explanations of urban Aboriginal culture. She suggests that it must be understood from the emic perspective, or how urban Aboriginal people subjectively experience their circumstances (Langton, 1981). The use of terms such as ‘half caste’, ‘coloured’, ‘part-Aboriginal’ and ‘detrribalized’ to describe Aboriginality are no longer acceptable and researchers need to start listening to Aboriginal voices. (Langton, 1981).

Furthermore, in order to understand how young urban Aboriginal people negotiate their world, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which society has increasingly engaged in the marginalisation or exclusion of its youth. These

can include exclusion on the basis of sexuality, ability, ethnicity, and attractiveness (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998).

In addition, the language used to describe certain groups of young people have often been used as tools of exclusion (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998; RCIADIC, 1991). These include animal metaphors (e.g. wild, predatory, feral), metaphors emphasizing threats to order and civility (e.g. explosive, ticking like time bombs), and medical metaphors wherein youth are presented as psychologically damaged (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998).

Young people are also increasingly excluded from hanging out in public/private spaces like shopping centres and city squares as a result of being designed out of these areas (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998). For example, the design of space operates to construct young people as outsiders and therefore excludes them. The use of security guards and closed circuit television screens to monitor and remove undesirable young people from shopping centres further reinforces the marginalisation and negative stereotyping of youth as trouble-makers, delinquents and criminals (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998).

Finally, society often and too readily searches for explanations of young people's behaviour that validates and reinforces those negative stereotypes. For example, Aboriginal youth come under intense scrutiny in and around the central city areas and suburban shopping centres wherein they are expected to cause trouble. Societal seizure on instances of anti-social behaviours exhibited by a few, as "typical" behaviour serves to reinforce negative stereotypes of the angry antisocial Aboriginal youth.

Whatever the answers to addressing these issues, it is important to avoid the adoption of simplistic explanations of particular behaviours, such as the

internalization of negative stereotypes and Black self-hate (Baldwin, Brown & Hopkins, 1991; Nobles, 1973). For example, whilst some Aboriginal youth become involved in crime, a large number do not and researchers often fail to ask why they do not (Bessant, Sercombe & Watts, 1998). That is, we become too constrained by stereotypic or preconceived ideas, or statistics interpreted from negative perspectives. In effect, we really do not know how young Aboriginal people respond to the negative messages they receive about their community and what this means for their developing sense of self.

This Study and Research Questions

As illustrated above, whilst there is a plethora of information about the various ways in which oppression may impact on non-dominant groups, little is known about the diversity of ways in which Aboriginal youth respond to oppression and the implications for identity development (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1989). Therefore, this research is interested in exploring the different ways in which Aboriginal youth speak about their experiences within an oppressive mainstream society and its links with identity development. Specifically, 1) how do young people appraise and experience the negative messages they receive about their community, 2) what positive role models within their lives provide sources for identity development, 3) what other avenues and resources do they have to foster a positive sense of self, and finally 4) whether gender differences will be observed.

Method

In order to answer these questions, several approaches to studying human diversity have been considered and examined for their usefulness in understanding how Aboriginal people respond to oppression and the ways in which they maintain their identity. For example, there are the population-specific psychologies and the cross-cultural perspectives. However, the sociopolitical perspective was considered the most appropriate framework from which to pursue this study. This is because it emphasizes a systems approach to human behaviour and social position, and asserts that these are largely determined by the dominant policies and institutions that govern them, rather than as a result of individual attributes (Watts, 1994). This constitutes one of its key strengths, the other being its incorporation of a historical context to human behaviour and this is important for understanding the behaviour of Aboriginal people given the historical legacy of colonization and dispossession.

Within this framework are key concepts such as ideology, power, oppression and empowerment, that are viewed as salient factors in determining human behaviour (Watts, 1994). However, care must be taken, not to present Aboriginal people or non-dominant groups as perennial victims. To do so would be to perpetuate stereotypical images of Aboriginal people as weak and devoid of the social and psychological resources required to withstand adversity or cope with life in the White world. Rather, Aboriginal people have demonstrated a range of ways in which they have actively responded to colonization, such as resisting (Morris, 1994) and adapting (Carter, 1994) in order to survive the oppressive policies and practises of the dominant White society. Keeping this caveat in mind, the sociopolitical perspective provides a useful framework within

which we can develop an understanding of Aboriginal responses to oppression and the implications for identity development.

In addition, a qualitative approach was adopted to explore the subjective experiences of Aboriginal adolescents' social world. Research conducted using a qualitative approach can involve naturalistic inquiry so that an accurate picture of real life is obtained (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further, the qualitative approach can involve conducting in-depth interviews and analysing textual data to elicit underlying meanings, thereby developing insights into particular issues (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 1995). Thus, this research is informed by the following:

“Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.” (Cresswell, 1998, p. 15).

Since this study was interested in exploring the subjective experiences of Aboriginal adolescents, an interpretative phenomenological (Smith, 1995) approach was adopted. The phenomenological emphasis on the individual's experience of their social environment recognises that it is the meanings attached to those experiences that are most influential in promoting development and as such, are important determinants of their behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Nobles, 1973).

The phenomenological approach is also consistent with Aboriginal terms of reference in that it recognises Aboriginal voices, ways of thinking, and the diversity “...of cultural values, beliefs and priorities from within local settings and specific contexts.” (Oxenham, 1999, p. 7). In this way, the phenomenological

approach allows Aboriginal voices and perspectives to be heard outside of the dominant discourse thereby providing opportunities for Aboriginal voices to challenge dominant perspectives (Sampson, 1993).

Further, identity has been conceptualized by some as a life story that individuals begin constructing in adolescence (Howard, 1991). Through the use of personal narratives, participants are able to communicate their stories (Howard, 1991), thereby providing opportunities to gain insights into their psychological world (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Howard, 1991; Rappaport, 1995; Smith, 1995). Thus, personal narratives provide insights into self-concepts and identities.

Participants

The participants were nine Aboriginal adolescents, five females and four males, ranging in age from 14 to 17 years ($M = 15.4$ years). Ten participants were initially interviewed, however the audio quality of one tape precluded transcription. Time constraints prevented the replacement of that participant. All the data for that participant was omitted. Whilst this was not an ideal sample size, the following was noted. When using interviews, between 8 and 20 participants are considered an adequate sample size (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). Others suggest an adequate sample size of no more than 15 cases otherwise the analysis becomes too unwieldy and produces what they describe as thinner data, somewhat like a survey (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In light of this, the sample size was considered adequate.

Just over half of the participants (five), were from the Northwest and resided in hostel accommodation whilst attending school in Perth. The remainder of the participants resided with their families. Since this study was interested in

exploring adolescent responses to oppression and the implications for identity development, the participants recruited were considered rich in the information this study sought to explore (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher is also a member of the Aboriginal community and this was considered appropriate given the shared experiences and meanings held by members of the Aboriginal community. An associated methodological issue is that care is required to ensure that the researcher obtains clarification about meanings and does not rely on assumed meanings that may be flawed. For example, the researcher may believe she knows what the participant means and the participant may assume the research knows what he/she means because the researcher is Aboriginal. Finally, the only demographic data obtained was the names and ages of the participants.

Instruments

The parents of the participants were sent a letter providing information about the purpose of the study, contact names and telephone numbers should they have any queries, confidentiality issues and a parental consent form to complete (Refer to Appendices C-1 and C-2). Participants were also given a letter providing information about the purpose of the study, contact names and telephone numbers in the event of any queries, confidentiality issues, and a consent form to complete (Refer to Appendices D-1 and D-2).

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to guide the interview (Smith, 1995) and contained twelve questions (Refer to Appendix E). Initial questions were designed to establish rapport by performing Aboriginal introductions on the basis of where the participant was from, who their people/family were and talking about the kinds of social networks within which they exist. Subsequent questions were designed primarily to gain an insight into:

- (i) the kinds of groups and settings within which the participants exist that they may draw on as a positive resource for identity development;
- (ii) the kinds of messages (positive and negative) that they receive about being Aboriginal within those settings, together with their responses, and
- (iii) the avenues and resources such as role-models that exist within their lives to provide positive sources for identity development.

It was piloted on three Aboriginal males (M age = 15 years).

Procedure

Initial contact was established with an Outreach Worker at the Aboriginal Community-based Outreach Service and the Aboriginal & Islander Education Officer (AIEO) at the public high school, to explore the viability of obtaining participants through their organisations. As a result of a positive response in both cases, the study proceeded with written contact being established by information letter (Refer Appendix A) with the Head of the outreach service and the school Principal (Refer Appendix B). Unfortunately, access to participants through the outreach service proved difficult within the time constraints of this study, so a decision was made to recruit all participants from the high school. Upon confirmation from the school that the study could proceed, potential participants were contacted with the assistance of the AIEO at the high school. Parents were provided with the information letter and consent form for completion. Once these had been returned, interview times were arranged by telephone, to take place at the high school and to coincide with the most convenient times for each participant. A room was provided at the school for the interviews. Prior to interview, participants were asked to read and sign the information letter and

consent form. The interviews were then conducted with participants being given the opportunity to decline to participate or discontinue the interview at any time.

A semi-structured interview schedule of twelve questions was used to guide the interview (Smith, 1995), with probe questions being utilized to clarify statements and meanings. A semi-structured interview provided the flexibility to pursue particular issues as they arose in the interview (Smith, 1995).

The interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, averaging 60 minutes. Upon completion of each interview, the recorded information was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible to ensure accuracy of transcription and to aid in management of the data. Letters were progressively distributed until the required number of participants was obtained.

A diary of initial thoughts and impressions about each interview was kept by the researcher and updated after each interview. These thoughts and impressions reflected the researcher's own values and perspectives on what was happening with the participants.

Analysis

Analysis of the data was guided by the interpretative phenomenological methods outlined in Smith (1995) and the methods of qualitative analysis outlined in Miles and Huberman (1994). The process of analysis involved examining one transcript in detail and analysing that transcript before moving on to the next one.

The transcript was read several times, with notes being made to enable the generation of categories and codes to facilitate data reduction. Significant sentences were underlined in blue pen and summarised in the right hand margin. The significance of sentences was determined in terms of their relationship to answering the research questions. Upon further reading of the transcripts,

additional notes were made in the margins and categories were developed to describe what was happening.

Emerging themes were then identified and noted in the left-hand margins, using key words to capture what was happening in the text (Smith, 1995). A list of these themes was compiled on a separate sheet of paper, and were then examined for connections and clustering, with some being re-defined or discarded in place of others. Throughout this process, the themes were referred back to the transcript to ensure their connectedness to the primary source material (Smith, 1995). A master list of themes and their definitions was produced together with identifiers of instances from the transcripts (Smith, 1995). This master list was then used to begin analysis of the other eight transcripts.

Each of these transcripts was examined one at a time and subjected to several readings. Once again, significant sentences were underlined in blue pen and summarised in the right hand margin. The master list of themes from the initial transcript was then used to check for theme similarities whilst not being constrained by them (Smith, 1995). Where alternative themes emerged or adjustments to themes were required, these were referred back to earlier transcripts to ensure they reflected the meanings contained therein. Reliability or trustworthiness of the themes was verified with seven of the nine participants, the other two not being available.

Findings and Discussion

The main aim of this study was to develop an understanding about the ways in which Aboriginal adolescents experience living in an oppressive society, and how this may affect their developing sense of identity within a sociopolitical framework. Interview data was used to explore their responses to negative and positive messages they receive about their community, the avenues and resources that they draw on to foster a positive sense of self, and to see whether any gender differences would be observed.

In relation to sources of positive identity development, all participants reported seeking and finding positive role-models within their families. Some indicated that they did not look elsewhere for positive sources of identity, whereas others challenged the stereotypic assignment of sports-people as positive role-models for Aboriginal people. This is discussed in further detail below.

No gender differences were observed in the way in which participants talked about experiencing and responding to the messages that they receive about being Aboriginal, although the female participants talked about receiving support from their groups more than the male participants.

The sociopolitical framework adopts a systemic approach that views human behaviour as being determined by the ideologies of the dominant society by way of the power relationships that exist within oppressive societies. From this perspective, four main themes emerged and they have been called Ways of being Aboriginal, Resistance and Reframing, Moving against Stereotypes and Moving towards Social Action. A minor theme of Holding On emerged, wherein participants from remote towns were aware of and retained a superior attitude

towards urban Aboriginal people, on the basis of stereotypes about urban communities' loss of cultural practices and traditions.

Ways of being Aboriginal

The participants talked about being Aboriginal in a number of ways, including an underlying expression of pride in their Aboriginality. This pride was reflected in the following comments:

“Well, I’m proud of being Aboriginal and it’s a very interesting culture.

It’s one of the oldest in the world and yeah.”

“I’m just glad that I’m an Aboriginal and that I’m not any other kind of thing.”

Some of the various ways in which the participants talked about being Aboriginal were in terms of the colour of their skin, race, biological make-up, cultural practices, social group membership and according to style of dressing. Each of these ways of talking about Aboriginality say more about the various ways in which the dominant White society has challenged Aboriginal identity, than uncertainties Aboriginal people hold about their identity on the basis of particular aspects of themselves. In other words, the participants provide descriptions of Aboriginality that address the various White challenges to their identity.

For example, in their comments about Aboriginality in terms of the colour of an individual’s skin, the participants demonstrate an awareness of the stereotypical requirement of a Black skin in order to be accepted as a “legitimate” Aboriginal person. The following comments capture this awareness:

“Yeah, at school, because I’m not pitch Black sort of thing. I’m not Black as charcoal sort of thing, they think that I’m not like Aboriginal...”

“And they think that because you haven’t got dark skin, you’re not Black either.”

The participants’ rejection of these stereotypes suggests they are aware that Aboriginality is more complex than the colour of an individual’s skin. This awareness is reflected in other comments below.

Other participants talked about Aboriginality in terms of belonging to a particular race and this was reflected in the following comment:

(Aboriginality) “It’s like normal, just a different kind of race.”

Participants’ use of Aboriginality in this way was interpreted as asserting the humanity of Aboriginal people. In other words, Aboriginal people are human beings similarly to members of the dominant White group. Differences arise because they belong to a particular group that has been differentiated on the basis of physical features, social status and cultural affiliation (Helms, 1994).

According to Freire (1972) this can be interpreted as the reclamation of Aboriginal humanity from those who took it away on the assumption that in order to be human, individuals have to be White.

Some of the participants talked about being Aboriginal in terms of biological make-up or quantum-blood (Helms, 1994). The following comments capture this:

“Well yeah. Any person with Aboriginal in them these days, is a real Aboriginal. Maybe not a full Aboriginal, but like they might not have the full blood like mother and father background you know.”

“Well I think they’re pretty stupid really because even if you’re not what some people call full-blooded Aboriginal, you’ve still got like Aboriginal blood in you, which still makes you Aboriginal.”

These comments demonstrate that the participants are aware of the language used by the dominant White society to describe Aboriginality, but they have adopted its usage for their own purposes. For example, they use this language to refer to changes in the relationship between Aboriginal people and Whites, and changes in the concepts of Aboriginality. Whereas there was once a time when Aboriginal people were defined by Whites along biological, quantum-blood lines, nowadays anyone who identifies as Aboriginal and is accepted as such by their community can claim Aboriginality.

The ways in which the participants have used these terms suggest that they do not accept the imposed meanings implicit in the terms of full-blood, half-caste, etc. Rather participants used these terms to refer to how others may describe Aboriginality whilst at the same time participants indicated the importance of the individual's own sense of self as opposed to what others think. In other words, they are aware of how Whites describe Aboriginal people and they have reframed the meanings of those descriptions and their usage to present their own perspectives.

Further, when queried about whether Aboriginality was constituted on the basis of the amount of Aboriginal blood they possessed, the participants were quick to clarify their meanings with comments about knowledge of cultural practices and heritage as being important determinants of Aboriginality. The following comments capture this:-

"No, it's how familiar you are with your culture and heritage, and it's who you think you are. If you – you've got to think yourself that you're Aboriginal and then as long as you know that you're Aboriginal, what other people says doesn't matter really."

“I know our language and that, and our grandparents they speak it to us, never mind we don’t live out bush, but we still know. And like they still have laws and when law’s on in town there, they come and pick up all the girls and take them out bush.”

Talking about Aboriginality in terms of cultural practices and knowledge proved to be one of the strongest ways in which the participants described Aboriginality. This suggests that Aboriginality is more about what the individual does, how they live their lives and what they believe. In other words, Aboriginality is not about a superficial skin colour for example, it is much more intrinsic. It is about the lived experiences of individuals.

In addition, the salience of a cultural identity with this group of participants is consistent with the findings of others (Phinney & Chavira, 1992) as to the importance of the cultural environment in identity development. Phinney and Chavira (1992) also found a significant relationship between cultural identity and self-esteem, so perhaps there are implications for promoting self-esteem in Aboriginal adolescents by way of enhancing cultural identity. This remains to be explored.

Interestingly and somewhat unexpectedly, some participants talked about Aboriginality in terms of membership to social group/activity. For example according to one participant:

“The Homies are the Aboriginals, the Surfies are the White students or that White students that go to the different schools. Yeah, that if I don’t do all this stuff, if I talk to White people, I’m automatically a Surfie, and Surfie’s are White people, so you’re White, not Aboriginal.”

Describing being Aboriginal in these terms was interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it suggests the racialization of social groups wherein there is an imposition of racial identity as a significant determinant of membership to a social group. Racialization as it is used here, refers to the differentiation between groups on the basis of possession of particular characteristics, such as physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour), social status and cultural affiliation (Helms, 1994). Group membership in this case was not associated with participation in an activity like surfing for example, but rather whether the individual belonged to a particular racial group. The racialization of social groups in this way operates to prevent other young Aboriginal people or Homies from participating in what may be perceived as a White activity, surfing.

In addition, the racialization of social groups in this way involves a one way interaction wherein Aboriginal kids can become Surfies if they talk to White people or engage in surfing activities, however, White people cannot become Homies because they are not Black. The Homies automatically assign them to the Surfie group on the basis of their Whiteness irrespective of whether or not they participate in surfing activities.

Further, it is interesting to note the use of the term 'Homie' to describe an Aboriginal group. It is interesting because the term has its origins in the African-American culture. The use of the term Homie suggests that some Aboriginal youth are aware of and at least some have turned to the Black American culture for positive sources of identity. This awareness of Black American culture has occurred through the process of increasing globalization in contemporary times. Globalization has meant that young Aboriginal people nowadays have access to

the global community through various mediums such as television, radio, music, videos and computers.

Identifying with Black American groups may occur because these groups are considered to be 'cool', 'strong' and in some cases, anti-authoritarian in the name of standing up for their rights. Membership to such groups may provide a collective means of challenging the dominant White establishment, whilst engendering a sense of collective power, a sense of belonging to the group and generally providing support to each other.

Alternatively, it may be more accurate to say that it is the symbols of being African-American that attracts Aboriginal youth. For example, basketball is one of the common forms of social activities that are enjoyed within Aboriginal communities. In our contemporary world that amongst other things, is characterized by increasing globalization as noted above, young Aboriginal people are becoming increasingly exposed to the successes of the African-American sports stars in the USA National Basketball Association (NBA). They obtain this information via a number of mediums as noted above. In other words, globalization means that young Aboriginal people now have access to a wider community from which to draw sources for positive identity development.

What this means for young Aboriginal people is that they become aware of the types of products that the basketball stars are seen to be using, such as Nike and Adidas gear, and this increases the attractiveness of these products. Where someone like Michael Jordan has a basketball shoe developed and named after him for example, it perhaps invites young people to imagine that by owning and wearing a pair of those shoes, some of the magic-like skills and success associated with being Michael Jordan will 'rub off on them'.

Another symbol of African-Americanism that appears to have been embraced by some young Aboriginal people is associated with rap music. Young Aboriginal people are exposed to various types of music via the television, radio, compact discs and audio tapes, and so forth. Like other sections of the community, many young Aboriginal people have embraced the rap music and styles of dance such as the break-dancing of the 1980's and 1990's, that originated on the streets of poor Black neighbourhoods in the USA. The lyrics contained in rap music typically involves messages about the Black man's struggle against oppression and provides a vehicle for articulating these feelings in the wider societal domain. For marginalised and oppressed youth, this can be a very powerful symbol with which to identify, in that through such a medium oppressed young people can be heard. Identifying with rap groups then, often entails assuming some of the appearance or symbols of these groups, such as the large dark-coloured beanies, coats, baggy pants and dark glasses. It may also mean the adoption of some of the mannerisms of toughness and being anti-establishment.

The identifying with some of these symbols of African-Americanism may lead to searches for other symbols to identify with. Anecdotal evidence from one young Aboriginal man suggests that groups like the Black Panthers may be viewed as 'cool' and 'strong' because not only do they have access to a cache of weapons and therefore power, they are also viewed as a powerful political vehicle for asserting equality for Blacks. At face value, the implications of young Aboriginal people identifying with symbols of African-Americanism may pose threats to the retention of Aboriginal culture and traditions, through the weakening of cultural ties as young people assume African-Americanisms.

Alternatively, perhaps identification with these symbols provides ways in which young people can be heard or aspire to be heard through rap music for example. They may also be able to draw on and claim for themselves, some of the positive aspects associated with the successes of the basketball stars and musicians, in order to feel good about themselves. Claiming for themselves as it is used here, refers to the identification with and internalization of images of the high profile, wealthy and respected Black person that has achieved access to the White symbols of success. In other words, young Aboriginal people may be able to draw on symbols of African-Americanism as alternative sources for positive identity development.

The result is that a tension may be created between what appears to be a positive impact of globalization, in that young Aboriginal people have access to a wider range of resources and role-models from which to foster a positive sense of identity, and the potential negative consequences of a weakening of cultural ties and traditions. These issues require further investigation.

Finally, some participants talked about Aboriginality in terms of style of dress. For example:

“It’s like when people...or even a couple of times when I see people with Nike or Adidas clothes, when I’m on the train or something, I’ll look and think, who’s that Black fella. Then he turns around and he’s Asian or something.”

This comment is suggestive of the racialization of a particular style of dress, wherein basketball gear such as the Nike or Adidas clothing has been stereotyped as Aboriginal. The racialization of a particular style of dress refers to the differentiation between groups on the basis of ways of dressing and who dresses

in a particular way. If Aboriginal people favour the basketball gear style of dress, then that style of dress becomes Aboriginal and is assigned the negative stereotypes that accompany Aboriginality.

Some of the participants talked about their adaptive responses to the negative ways in which the Police and others looked at them when they were wearing the Nike or Adidas clothing. They describe dressing differently or dressing nicely when they go into settings that might expose them to the Police, in an attempt to avert such negative responses. They also referred to the mistaken arrest of a young man who wore similar basketball clothing to someone who had just committed an offence, as a motivating factor for altering their style of dress.

Whilst some may argue that they should not have to change their style of dress to avert unwarranted attention, for these young people this course of action may be viewed as a survival mechanism. Dressing “nicely” elicited favourable, more positive responses from other people and reduced the amount of undue negative scrutiny under which they found themselves. At the same time, the participants indicated that they enjoy dressing up. This suggested that they were prepared to adapt their style of dress to reduce unwarranted attention because it did not “cost” them more than they were prepared to give. Dressing up is an enjoyable form of self-expression and does not require that they compromise their Aboriginality. Perhaps this is because they recognize that the clothes they wear do not constitute their Aboriginality, but rather, it is something more complex and intrinsic than that.

As a result of adapting their ways of dressing, some participants talked about prejudice from other Aboriginal people, who call them ‘coconuts’ on the basis of the ways in which they dress. Social group theory (Tajfel, 1981) may

interpret this as moves to reinforce group cohesion and conformity in response to some members adopting what may be viewed as particular symbols of Whiteness.

Alternatively, the participants responded by ignoring such comments and rationalizing them in terms of jealousy on the part of other Aboriginal people. Some may argue that this is a simplistic understanding of what is happening, however, perhaps the participants were correct and it was simply a matter of jealousy. The participants indicated in a number of ways described above, that they are aware of the complexity of Aboriginality and by extension, that identity is more than simply how you dress. This awareness suggests that if other Aboriginal people perceive that a change in style of dress equates to a change in identity, then that may reflect a misguided understanding of Aboriginality on their part.

Resisting and Reframing Stereotypes

Participants talked about resisting stereotypes on a number of levels and this was not consistent with the views that the individual adapts his or her identity to accommodate the social context (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). For example, participants talked about resisting stereotypes imposed by White people:

(They think) "That we're all a bunch of drunks, that we're uncivilized and yeah, that just makes me want to do it even more...just like get up and do things you know – and show other people you know."

Comments like this refer to stereotypes as being a motivator for participants to show that they are capable of doing other things. They do not accept that imposed stereotypes are the only option for them in terms of ways of being, and the types of social roles and/or occupations that they may participate in. For example, alcoholism is not the only option available to them. Rather, participants are aware

of the diversity of options and social roles that are available and consider those to be viable choices for themselves, e.g. choices of occupations.

As Nurmi and colleagues (1996) found, living in an urban setting provided increased opportunities for exploration of a variety of social identities. The diversity of career choices that the participants talked about aspiring to reflect their awareness of the opportunities available to them, e.g. becoming a Police Officer, working in the hospitality industry and pursuing further studies at university. The implications of these comments for positive identity development are associated with ensuring a number of opportunities and social role possibilities are available to Aboriginal adolescents.

Other participants talked about resisting stereotypes from within the Aboriginal community and this was reflected in the following comment:

“They haven’t got no law or culture. I reckon, you don’t know nothing. These mob got stuff down here. And she reckon, well that’s the first I’ve heard about it. And she reckon, all my family’s got black magic and I reckon, yeah, my family has too. And she reckon, you’s are Nyungahs, you have to have nothing.”

These comments were associated with stereotypes held by other Aboriginal groups about the loss of urban Aboriginal culture and practices.

Participants from the urban area talked about resisting such stereotypes on the basis that whilst urban Aboriginal culture may not be the same as other Aboriginal cultures, it is real and legitimate for them. An alternative interpretation of such resistance may be that stereotypes about the loss of urban Aboriginal culture are recognized as being framed in White terms about ‘real’ Aboriginal people and what constitutes Aboriginal culture. Real Aboriginal people live in

rural and remote areas, hence urban Aboriginal people are not really Aboriginal. Some participants also highlighted movements within the urban Aboriginal community to retain and strengthen their existing culture.

Another way that participants talked about resisting stereotypes was in the ways in which they reframe the negative messages they received about being Aboriginal, and in particular, to locate the problem within the perpetrator of the stereotypes. For example:

“...And he got his mobile and picked his mobile up and put it in his pocket and said like this to me, you know what my problem is, I’m tired of boongs.

Boongs, I hate boongs...Maybe he was just racist, maybe he was just high.”

Whilst such comments were described as being hurtful, the participants spoke in terms of externalizing the stereotypic content to the perpetrator of the stereotype. In other words, those making such comments are the ones with the problem and not the participants.

From a sociopolitical perspective, participant querying of why people react to Aboriginal people in particular ways is suggestive of Watts and colleagues (1999) Critical Stage of development, wherein individuals continue to seek information and understanding of the social forces that maintain the oppressive status quo. Comments about the role of the media in perpetuating and reinforcing stereotypes illustrate that some participants are thinking about and trying to understand what is happening in their social environment. Some participants demonstrate critical insights into the forces at operation in their social world. This is illustrated in the following comment made by one participant in relation to the ways in which the media presents reports about Aboriginal people:

“They twist the story around... Yeah, make it look like we Aboriginals, we’re all bad.”

Another way of resisting negative stereotypes about Aboriginality is by de-racializing them. This is captured in the following comments:

“Yeah and most of them are probably drunk or stoned, but White people do too...but they’re probably out in the suburbs drunk.” (and less visible)

“It’s only a small minority that are bad. I mean it’s the same with White people and Asian people. There’s always a small minority that are going to be a bit stupid, so...”

“I’m not only saying it’s just Aboriginal people on the dole, because you see White people sitting in the streets in the city, in the corner park or whatever you know, on the dole. Again, like an Aboriginal person, no job, dirty clothes, they haven’t had a shave, shower, whatever.”

These comments suggest the participants are able to critically evaluate what is happening within the context of the wider community. Their comments suggest they have concluded that the stereotypes applied to Aboriginal people can be applied to anyone, no matter what their racial background, however, it is only Aboriginal people who have had these stereotypical labels attached to them. The attachment of such stereotypical labels to Aboriginal people can be understood in terms of the assignation of particular social roles to non-dominant group members by the dominant White society, in order to maintain the social hierarchy (Sidanius & Platto, 1999) or oppressive status quo.

Moving Against Stereotypes

This theme refers to a rejection of imposed options for developing a

positive sense of identity as the only options available. This was most evident when the participants were talking about other sources of positive identity, e.g. other role-models. Whilst many mentioned sports people as alternative role-models, some indicated that they were looking for something else in role-models. This is captured in the following comment:

“Well, there’s like Cathy Freeman. Like Cathy Freeman is like a good role model for all. Like she’s put in the hard effort and all that sort of stuff... “But I think a better role-model for me would be someone like maybe Eddie Mabo or someone that’s up in politics, that works...I don’t know if he’s been through uni or not, but he’s able to stand up in front of other...he can stand up in front of John Howard or whoever you know, who wants an argument or debate. He can stand there and have a good conversation or debate with them. Not just to run or sing or play basketball. Because he can run if he wanted to. He can run, he can play basketball or whatever, swim.”

This comment reflects a movement by some of the participants against stereotypical ideas about who or what constitutes a positive Aboriginal role-model. Whilst sports people and artists for example, may well be good role-models, some participants talked about exploring alternative sources for positive identity development. This reflects a perspective by some participants that Aboriginal people have more to offer than their sporting prowess and artistic ability. If given a truly equal chance, Aboriginal people have the capacity to compete on equal terms with White people, even those occupying positions of great power within society, e.g. the Prime Minister of the country. In other words there is nothing inferior about being Aboriginal and some participants were not

constrained by stereotypes when searching for positive sources of identity and role-models. Nor were the participants constrained by stereotypes when considering career options. This was reflected in the following comment by one participant in relation to his career aspirations:

“And after that go back to TAFE and do more tourism and then probably go back to [NAME] and may start up a small business.”

In oppressive societies, non-dominant group members are typically denied access to *positive social value* such as economic independence (Sidanius & Platto, 1999). For participants to view starting up their own small business as a viable option suggests a moving against social roles imposed by dominant ideologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Moving towards Social Action.

The participants demonstrated a critical awareness of what was happening in their environment and how certain societal mechanisms operate to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people, such as through the media. Some participants talked about speaking up in an effort to challenge stereotypical comments and this is suggestive of a movement towards becoming involved in social action to address oppression. This is captured by the following comment:

“Sometimes I’ll – well it’s hard to explain to other people because they just won’t listen, so I just don’t give them the time of day basically. Yeah, I try to explain about how the media focuses on bad things that Aboriginal people do, so we’re not like going around and beating people up 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

In addition, some of the participants referred to instances where shop-keepers continually monitored them whilst they were shopping on the stereotypical

assumption that they were going to steal something. The participants responded by engaging in the social act of refusing to spend their money in those shops and speaking aloud about the negative ways in which they were being treated by the shop-keepers. For example:

“We just didn’t buy anything, like one of the girls said this is wrong, saying it a bit loud so that he could hear us. I just said don’t worry about it and just walked away.”

From a sociopolitical perspective, these moves towards social action are consistent with Watts and colleagues’ (1999) Liberation Stage of development wherein individuals who operate at this level have become critically aware of oppression and begin to become involved in social action to address resultant stereotypes and inequities.

These moves towards social action are also consistent with Dudgeon and Oxenham’s (1989) Consolidation Phase, wherein individuals engage in activities directed at consolidating their Aboriginal identity. Challenging negative stereotypes helps to maintain a positive sense of self.

Another way of understanding these moves toward social action with this group of young Aboriginal people, is by examining the historical context of attitudes to Aboriginality. Significant changes in attitude to Aboriginality occurred in the 1960’s and 1970’s to the extent that the notion of a valued Aboriginal identity had become part of the social psyche over the last twenty to thirty years. In addition, the process of Reconciliation that has been taking place in Australia over the past ten years, has highlighted the place of Aboriginal people in Australia’s history and examined ways in which they can participate more

equally in contemporary society. Processes such as this have served to further promote the value of Aboriginal people within the Australian community.

For this generation of young Aboriginal people who admittedly continue to face challenges to their identity, the critical consciousness about the ways in which society oppresses and stereotypes Aboriginal people has become part of their social psyche. They may not have to undergo an identity crisis before attaining a comfortable sense of self, as they are growing up with this knowledge as part of their Aboriginal consciousness. An Aboriginal consciousness also includes an awareness of the adversity faced by their parents and grandparents in the past and this may have influenced the extent of their understanding of how particular social forces operate to maintain oppression.

The existence of such an Aboriginal consciousness may also partially explain the absence of most of the types of responses referred to in the models of responses to oppression that have been referred to in the literature (Bulhan, 1978; Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1989; Tajfel, 1981; Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999). The absence of many of the types of responses outlined in these models may also be because the models are outdated and may have been more applicable ten to twenty years ago when the idea of a separate and valued Aboriginal identity was relative new to White society. In addition, whilst some stages of Watts and colleagues (1999) sociopolitical model of development were detected, it should be noted that the model was developed to apply to a specific population and is premised on ideas about psychological dysfunction. Its use in this study was based on assumptions of the validity of portrayals of Aboriginal youth as being a "troubled" group. The sociopolitical model provided a framework for understanding such "troubled" groups.

Holding on

A minor theme of Holding on emerged from the data, wherein some of the participants from remote areas, referred to stereotypes of the troublesome, cultureless Nyungahs or urban Aboriginal people. These participants appeared to accept those stereotypes, particularly as it involved them being compared favourably with urban Aboriginal people. This is illustrated in the following comment:

“Or if not they’re gonna belt you because they said they got a lot of hidings from other like Nyungahs down here. We’re not like that we’re different and stuff like that. Not like that and they’ll say ‘Oh you know the Nyungah (inaudible) and you show it and stuff like that.’ And I say ‘Yeah that’s right’.”

The holding onto of such stereotypes maintains the relatively privileged status that Aboriginal people from remote areas possess as ‘real’, legitimate Aboriginal people, even if it is at the expense of urban Aboriginal people. Although these particular participants expressed that they did not believe there were ‘real’ Aboriginal people generally, this theme demonstrates how Aboriginal people can use White imposed stereotypes to the advantage of their own group. Social group theory interprets this situation in terms of increasing intra-group attraction and cohesion whilst encouraging inter-group dislike (Tajfel, 1981). Further, these relationships between different groups of Aboriginal people reflect the diversity that exists within Aboriginal communities and that Aboriginal people are not a homogenous group.

General Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the ways in which Aboriginal adolescents respond to negative messages about being Aboriginal and the implications for their developing sense of self. Whilst it is not intended that these results be generalized beyond this sample, some important insights have been gained into the ways in which young Aboriginal people develop a positive sense of self in an oppressive environment.

The participants talked about responding in a variety of ways to negative messages about being Aboriginal. Whilst their comments demonstrated an awareness of the ways in which society marginalizes and excludes young people (Bessant, Sercome & Watts, 1998), their comments illustrated they did not passively accept their marginalisation and the stereotypes assigned to them (Palmer & Collard, 1993). Rather, they actively engaged in trying to understand what was happening within their social environment and demonstrated a critical awareness of the operation of particular oppressive social forces. Consistent with Watts and colleagues (1999) model of sociopolitical development, possessing such a critical awareness of how oppression operates, enabled participants to resist and reject stereotypes, reframe meanings according to their perspectives, challenge stereotypical role-models and move towards participation in social action to address such stereotypes and inequities. This awareness may have been fostered through some of the social changes that have been occurring in Australia, including those brought about by the process of Reconciliation. This process has highlighted the injustices of the past and has sought answers to the ways in which Australia can address these injustices and inequities, in order that all Australians

can participate equally in this country. Such social changes and processes have helped to influence the social psyche of contemporary Australian society.

The implications of these results for identity development are that a healthy cultural identity seemed to provide the participants with a strong base upon which to explore other social identities. Participant reports of families providing the primary source for positive identity development, suggest that developing and maintaining healthy familial relationships may be one way of addressing poor self-concepts in Aboriginal adolescents. Valuing Aboriginal cultures and teaching Aboriginal adolescents about Aboriginal history may provide them with the critical consciousness about how oppression operates and therefore, how they can respond to overcome such oppression. Thus, promoting ways of achieving and maintaining a positive sense of self may facilitate the development of a healthy identity in Aboriginal adolescents to the extent that they do not need to turn to African-American symbols for positive sources of identity. As discussed, one of the implications of adolescents identifying with these powerful African-American symbols may be the weakening of Aboriginal cultural ties in those individuals. Such a weakening of cultural ties would not bode well for the maintenance of the culture. Having said this though, the tension between Aboriginal adolescents utilizing whatever means they have at their disposal to foster a positive sense of self and the potential for such identification with these 'foreign' symbols to weaken the cultural ties, remains unresolved and requires further research. In addition, as comments from one participant suggest, some Aboriginal adolescents are searching for alternative sources for positive identity, other than sports people. Rather, it appears that some young Aboriginal people are seeking sources for identity that symbolize Aboriginal people as having a

more powerful voice within society. In other words, they are not content to accept imposed sources for identity, but rather are engaged in exploring and aspiring to their own sources for identity.

A methodological issue in this study was the relatively small number of participants, however, in light of the numbers usually used in qualitative studies (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) the present number of nine participants was considered adequate. In addition, future studies should recruit its participants from a wider range of settings than used here. This study attempted to do that by unsuccessfully trying to recruit participants from the Aboriginal Community-based Outreach Service as well as the school. A sample obtained from a broader range of settings may include participants with a wider range of social experiences than illustrated in this study. For example, some participants may not have access to the types of support mechanism that the participants in this study referred to, and as a consequence may respond in different ways to negative messages about being Aboriginal.

The findings of this study also suggests implications for how we work with young Aboriginal people, wherein there is a need to challenge and debunk some of the myths associated with the passive marginalization of Aboriginal youth. As illustrated here, Aboriginal adolescents have a very clear understanding about how oppressive social forces operate and that they respond in a variety of ways to such oppression. Therefore, challenges for people working with young Aboriginal people would need to address stereotypical myths about young Aboriginal people. For example, that young Aboriginal people have low self-esteem, experience helplessness and have little or no aspirations for the future.

Perhaps future research could address whether these responses occur as responses to oppression with some groups.

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Appendix A

Information Letter to Outreach Organisation

Mrs V Hovane
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear

My name is Victoria Hovane and I am an Aboriginal woman from Broome. As part of the fourth year Psychology (Honours) student programme, I am conducting a study to look at identity development in Aboriginal teenagers and how positive and negative social representations influence that development.

Adolescence is an important time for identity development. There is evidence that the environments within which people develop can impact on identity in different ways. I am interested in understanding Aboriginal adolescents' perspectives about the challenges to their developing sense of self and identity.

In order to do this, I am seeking your permission to approach some of the young people you have contact with through your adolescent outreach service, to interview them. The interview will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes. Before I interview them, I will need to obtain their consent and the permission of their parents.

Benefits to the community

This study will provide an important contribution towards our knowledge about the ways in which Aboriginal teenagers respond to oppression and what this may mean for their self esteem and developing sense of identity. The results will provide us with an insight into why they engage in particular behaviours that may have positive or negative outcomes. Such insights may then be used in the development of strategies aimed at diverting young people away from negative experiences and towards more positive outcomes.

Ethical Issues

The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, has approved the study. In addition, the study is guided by Aboriginal terms of reference developed by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University.

Before doing any interviews, I will need to obtain the consent of the participants and their parents. All information collected from the participants will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. At no time during the reporting stage of the study will the participants be identified in any way. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and the participants may withdraw themselves and any information they have already provided at any stage of the study without penalty.

Where issues are raised during interview that may indicate potential negative consequences for participants (eg., self-harm), then these participants will be referred to the Outreach Team for follow-up.

Finally, the results of the study will form the basis of my thesis. A copy of this report will be available to participants upon request.

If you have any further queries please feel free to call me on [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Hovane.

Enc.

Appendix B

Information Letter to High School

Mrs V Hovane
[REDACTED]

Dear Sir

I refer to my previous telephone conversation with Mr [REDACTED] and confirm the following information.

My name is Victoria Hovane and I am an Aboriginal woman from Broome. As part of the fourth year Psychology (Honours) student programme, I am conducting a study to look at identity development in Aboriginal teenagers and how positive and negative social representations influence that development.

Adolescence is an important time for identity development. There is evidence that the environments within which people develop can impact on identity in different ways. I am interested in understanding Aboriginal adolescents' perspectives about the challenges to their developing sense of self and identity.

In order to explore these issues with a group of adolescents, I am seeking your permission to approach some of the young people at the school, to interview them. The interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Before I interview them, I will need to obtain their consent and the permission of their parents.

Benefits to the community

This study will provide an important contribution towards our knowledge about the ways in which Aboriginal teenagers respond to oppression and what this may mean for their self esteem and developing sense of identity. The results will provide us with an insight into why they engage in particular behaviours that may have positive or negative outcomes. Such insights may then be used in the development of strategies aimed at diverting young people away from negative experiences and towards more positive outcomes.

Ethical Issues

The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, has approved the study. In addition, the study is guided by Aboriginal terms of reference developed by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University.

Before doing any interviews, I will need to obtain the consent of the participants and their parents. All information collected from the participants will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. At no time during the reporting stage of the study will the participants be identified in any way. Participation in the study is

entirely voluntary and the participants may withdraw themselves and any information they have already provided at any stage of the study without penalty. Where issues are raised during interview that may indicate potential negative consequences for participants (eg., self-harm), then these participants will be referred to Mr Brown for follow-up.

Finally, the results of the study will form the basis of my thesis. A copy of this report will be available to participants upon request.

If you have any further queries please feel free to call me on [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Hovane.

Enc.

Appendix C-1

Parental Information Letter and Consent Form

Dear Parent

My name is Victoria Hovane and I am an Aboriginal woman from Broome. As part of the fourth year Psychology (Honours) student programme, I am conducting a study to look at identity development in Aboriginal teenagers and how positive and negative social representations influence that development. The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, has approved the study. In addition, the study is guided by the guidelines for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

If your child participates, he/she will be interviewed by me. The interview will be tape-recorded to make sure I collect the information provided by your child accurately. The interview involves 12 questions and it will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to do this.

If you decide to let your child participate, please fill in and sign the attached consent form, making sure to give a contact telephone number if you have one, so that I can ring to arrange a specific time with your child. Any information that you and your child provide will be treated as strictly confidential. At no time will your child's name be reported along with his/her responses. At the end of the study, a report of the results will be available upon request. This report may also be published but in no way will your child or any participant be identifiable.

Please remember that your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and either he/she or you are free to withdraw your consent for your child to participate in this study, together with any information already provided, at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions please feel free to call myself, Victoria Hovane on [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Hovane.

Appendix C-2

CONSENT FORM

I..... have read the information attached and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I give my consent for my child.....to participate in this study, realising that I may withdraw my consent for my child to participate at any time.

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

.....Date.....
Parent/Guardian

.....Date.....
Victoria Hovane.

Appendix D-1

Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

Dear Participant

My name is Victoria Hovane and I am an Aboriginal woman from Broome. As part of my studies at University, I am interested in finding out about the everyday experiences of young Aboriginal people and the views that they have about being Aboriginal. The Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, has approved the study. In addition, the study is guided by the guidelines for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I would like to interview you. If you agree, I will tape-record our conversation to make sure I record what you say accurately. There are about 12 questions and we will talk for about 30 to 45 minutes.

If you are prepared to talk with me, all you need to do is to fill in and sign the attached form to show that you understand what will happen. Only two people will have access to the information you give. Your name is not required and you are free to withdraw from the study, together with any information you have already given at any time without penalty. At the end of the study, a report of the results will be available upon request. This report may also be published but in no way will you or any participant be identifiable.

If you have any questions please feel free to call myself, Victoria Hovane on [REDACTED] or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Hovane.

Appendix D-2

CONSENT FORM

I..... have read the information attached and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, realising that I may withdraw from the study at any time, removing any information I have already provided, without penalty. I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

.....Date.....
Participant

.....Date.....
Victoria Hovane.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW QUESTION SCHEDULE

1. Can you tell me a bit about what it's like for you, growing up as a young Aboriginal person?
2. Tell me about your experiences at school – what is it like for you as a young Aboriginal person?
3. If you had to tell someone something about being Aboriginal, what would you say?
4. Are there things that Aboriginal people do, that are different to what white people do?
5. When you hang out with your friends, are there times when you feel like you have to do things otherwise you might be told “you think you're white”?
6. Some people talk about “real” Aboriginal people. What do you think about comments like that?
7. What are some of the positive things you hear about Aboriginal people?
8. What are some of the negative things you hear about Aboriginal people?
9. Can you tell me about some of the people in your life, that you really look up to?
10. What about other role-models (eg, some kids would like to be like Michael Jordan)?
11. Tell me about your group. What are some of the best things about being in the group? What are some of the worst things about being in the group?
12. What do you think you'll be doing in five years time?