

1992

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success in W.A. secondary schools

Jeffrey Jon McQuade
Edith Cowan University

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HOW DO ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ACCOUNT FOR
THEIR LACK OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS
IN W.A. SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

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November 1992

USE OF THESIS

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

HOW DO ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ACCOUNT FOR
THEIR LACK OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS
IN W.A. SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

by

Jeffrey Jon McQuade, B.A.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Education (Honours)

at the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission: December, 1992

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ABSTRACT

The provision of education to Aboriginal students has been the subject of many reports and inquiries over the years, each expressing various degrees of concern about aspects of Aboriginal participation and retention in the school system and the generally low levels of academic performance achieved by Aboriginal children.

Numerous theoretical explanations have been proposed to account for the serious inequities which continue to exist between the academic performance of Aboriginal children and their non-Aboriginal peers. Some of these are reviewed in this thesis so as to provide a conceptual framework in order that readers may judge the results of this study against such theoretical explanations.

Most social scientists seek to examine school failure from the assumption that the cause lies in the background of the child. This assumption is influenced by the ideology of the scientist and aspects of a child's difference are noted with the main thrust of research being to determine the nature and extent of the identified differences. Such a preoccupation prevents social scientists from examining the diverse range of factors that may contribute to the high levels of underachievement among Aboriginal children.

This study was not grounded in a particular theory and sought to evaluate students' perceptions of their schooling experiences against some of the more recent and credible explanations suggested in the literature for minority-group academic failure.

The subjects studied were selected from an existing group of students at school within an Aboriginal enclave and were characterised by having previously underachieved or withdrawn from W.A. government secondary schools. The students were asked to account for their previous lack of academic success. Questionnaires were devised and trialled among a group of similarly-aged Aboriginal students elsewhere. Two instruments were used in the study: the first, a prescriptive questionnaire, used a Likert Scale in which responses were graded against a statement. This questionnaire was supported by the use of an affective questionnaire, administered during a personal interview with respondents.

The students' perceptions are discussed in terms of their compatibility with research findings reported in the literature.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Jeffrey Jon McQuade

20 November, 1992

Acknowledgements.

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude for assistance given to me during the course of this project by the following people:

- * Mr David Prescott: my thesis supervisor, whose constructive advice and helpful suggestions guided the study;
- * Mrs Verna Voss : from the Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies, for acting as a key informant in the study and assisting in the development and trialling of data gathering instruments used;
- * Mr Peter Hann : Deputy Principal of Small-school, for acting as a informant in the study; for assisting in the development of data gathering instruments and for providing helpful insights throughout the study;
- * Mr Henry Court : Lecturer, School of Education, Edith Cowan University - MT Lawley campus, for acting as an informant to the study and providing some useful ideas with regard to the development of the instruments used;
- * Mrs Helen McQuade: for her support and assistance.

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HOW DO ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ACCOUNT FOR THEIR LACK OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN W.A. SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

Chapter One - Introduction

Over the past decade a number of reports and inquiries have examined the provision of education to Aboriginal students. In each instance, concerns have been raised about the degree of participation and low levels of attainment in education by Aboriginal students compared with their non-Aboriginal peers.

Watts (1981, p. 43, 134-5) noted that, whilst Aboriginal students represented only a small percentage of total school enrolments in all states other than the N.T., the respective school systems were:

in effect categorising these children far more frequently than non-Aboriginal children as beyond the capacity of the regular classroom

due to "learning difficulties beyond the resources and skills of his classroom teacher." (p.134)

Ruddock (1985, p.24) concluded, after evaluating current research findings, that:

the recent trends also indicate that the achievements and access to education of Aboriginals still remain well below those of the rest of the Australian community.

Gobbo (1988, p.73, 86) in a multicultural discussion paper, noted that "a particular problem" was the "failure of the education and training systems" to cater for cultural diversity among their clientele:

Those who do not fit the conventional curricula are defined as problems ('people with special needs') and channelled towards special ad hoc provisions. Aboriginal Australians are the prime, but far from the only, example.

The 1988 Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force reported that:

The education opportunities available to many Aboriginal people are not equal to those available to other Australians, despite a number of actions taken by Governments in recent years. (Malin, 1989, p.1)

The Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force used 1986 Census figures to show Aboriginal education participation rates were "well below those of all Australians", with only "17 per cent of Aboriginal youth" continuing to year 12, "compared with the 48.7 per cent for all students." This lack of participation was attributed to "racial discrimination, social and cultural alienation, and economic disadvantage." (cited in Malin, 1989, p.1, 2)

Groome (1988) conducted an interview study of Adelaide Aboriginal parents and reported that they "felt that schools generated prejudice and negative experiences for their children, and 'failed to recognize their identity and cultural values'... ..However the prejudice that their children experienced was the dominant concern for a majority of these parents."

(cited in Malin, 1989, p.4, 5)

In W.A., the Equal Opportunity Commission (1990, p.8, 12) found that a significant number of Aboriginal students left school after years 8 and 9 and recommended:

That the Equal Opportunity Commission in conjunction with the Ministry of Education conduct a detailed investigation of claims made by respective Aboriginal interest groups, that serious inequities exist in regard to the provision of education to Aboriginal children.

However, despite the concerns about the provision of education to Aboriginal children cited above, recent research effort seems to be predominantly focused on explaining or justifying educational inequality using the rhetoric of cultural difference; with such differences determined from generalisations made after study of tribal or "traditional" Aboriginal groups. (with "traditional" referring to those Aboriginals "who still retain much of their pre-European life-style..." - Christie, 1985, p.12)

A number of researchers have questioned the simplicity of the cultural difference explanation however. Eckerman (1988a) highlighted problems associated with research based on such assumptions:

We continue to know relatively little about the richness and complexity of rural/urban Aboriginal cultures, partly because there has been little emphasis in research except on the influence of poverty on rural/urban Aboriginal communities...Transporting simplistic views of traditional values into rural/urban settings is, in my opinion, a doubtful pursuit.

Malin (1989, p.5, 6, 123, 124) supported this contention, stating that most studies "are directed toward tradition oriented Aboriginal communities with urban communities being neglected for the most part", with very few studies offering "development and implementation of specific strategies for classroom practice" as "little substantial ethnographic research has been conducted in Aboriginal education in urban schools."

One of the few exceptions to this apparent pre-occupation with the study of traditional Aboriginal society is the research into sociolinguistic features of urban Aboriginal speech conducted by Eagleson, Kaldor and Malcolm (1979) which was firmly oriented about improving English pedagogical practice. This study will receive further consideration in the review of literature.

The purpose and significance of this study.

The study surveyed a group of Aboriginal students, aged between 15 and 19 years, who had previously met with a lack of academic success in W.A. Government secondary schools. The students are currently undertaking studies within an Aboriginal enclave situated in the Perth metropolitan area.

The study was significant for several reasons:

- * firstly, the research group was unusual in that whilst it comprised students who had experienced education within government schools without success, their return to formal education within an Aboriginal enclave showed that they perceived education to possess some value;
- * secondly, the age and experience of the respondents suggested that they were likely to be able to articulate and explain reasons for their previous lack of success;
- * thirdly, the group contained a mix of students from both urban and traditional processes of socialisation;
- * fourthly, the study sought to analyze and report problems experienced by Aboriginal students within the W.A. education system using their perceptions, rather than those dictated by the theoretical views of a non-Aboriginal observer;

* finally, by investigating what Aboriginal students perceived to be contributing factors to their academic underachievement, the study sought to expand the existing canon of research.

Statement of hypothesis.

Many Aboriginal students underachieve or withdraw from mainstream education because of the cumulative impact of:

- a. schools failing to meet their needs for autonomy and affiliation;
- b. attitudes of intolerance and racism;
- c. a material reality which, contradicting the promise of opportunity through education, leads to disillusionment which is manifest through a decrease in effort and commitment to schoolwork.

Research questions.

1. How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?
2. Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?
3. What significance is attached to inter-personal relationships by Aboriginal students?

4. Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A.
Government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal
students?

Chapter Two - Review of literature

In a discussion about aspects of Aboriginal education, Eckerman (1988a) stated that "we are still very much at the learning /experimental stage ourselves" due to lack of knowledge about strategies which are "appropriate or successful with all children, let alone Aboriginal children." Malin (1989, p. 46) agreed, stating that "researchers and educators have been proposing explanations for the school failure of cultural minority groups for many years." As this study focuses on possible factors contributing to the lack of academic success, self-identified by Aboriginal students, a review of past and present theoretical explanations for minority-group academic failure is pertinent.

Prior to the 1950s, low academic achievement by such groups was attributed to *genetic deficiency*. (Malin, 1989, p.47) Proponents of genetic-biological theories believed that "some groups of human beings were genetically less evolved than others". The theory is essentially a more sophisticated version of 'Social Darwinism', the adaptation of Darwin's theory of evolution. (Malin, 1989, p.47)

Kearins (1976) used a genetic difference hypothesis to investigate visual spatial abilities in Aboriginal and white Australian children and cited findings from earlier researchers (Porteus, 1931, 1966; Fowler, 1940; McElwain and Kearney, 1970) which demonstrated "the relative cognitive inferiority of Aboriginal people, as evidenced by educational and intelligence-test performances." Kearins (1983) became interested in studying traditional and urban Aboriginal pre-school children in order to examine the impact of child-rearing practices on cognition and concluded that the "cognitive-genetic view governing my earlier thinking...cannot be sustained." (Kearins, 1986)

During the 1950s and 1960s, *genetic deficit theory* evolved into a theory of *cultural deprivation* which proposed that the "inadequacies ascribed" were a result of factors involving familial socialisation, economic deprivation and linguistic deprivation. (Malin, 1989, p.48) Malin believed that the deprivation doctrine was accelerated by Lewis' (1965) theory about the 'Culture of Poverty'. (p.48) See Ogbu (1974, p.2-9), Eckerman (1988a) and Cambourne (1990) for a more detailed precis.

Typical deprivation theory research methodology involved the administration of a battery of language, cognitive and psychological tests to children identified as being at risk.

In each case, researchers 'measured' the minority-group child, parent or community against factors considered to be educationally relevant and important in the middle class, white, English-speaking child, parent or community. In each case the minority group child was found to be deficient, deprived or disadvantaged in terms of socialisation, values, environment, communication or even biology. On the basis of these comparisons various forms of compensatory programs, the essence of the deficit model in education, were designed in order to bring the non-middle-class, non-white, non-English speaking child 'up to scratch.' (Eckerman, 1988a).

In the light of these views it is, perhaps, not surprising that much of the research of this period is coloured by the use of terminology such as 'retardation', 'environmental handicaps', 'poor homes', 'defects' and the like. (DeLemos, 1969, 1979; Gault, 1969; Duncan, 1969; McKeigh, 1971; Rosenthal, Baker and Ginsburg, 1983).

As one of the key areas identified as creating educational deprivation or disadvantage among minority groups was language development, this area has received most attention.

Malin (1989, p. 48-50) attributed this focus to the fact that Bernstein's (1969, 1971, 1985) theory concerning the use of 'restricted and elaborated' codes of speech was "misinterpreted" by many researchers (Teasdale & Katz, 1968; DeLemos, 1969; Nurcombe & Moffitt, 1970). Malin asserts that they assumed Bernstein's identification and nomination of a 'restricted' language code, typified by a speaker's use of a non-standard dialect, reflected linguistic impoverishment. This view was rapidly extrapolated to a belief that originating from "homes lacking in standard English and intellectual stimulation" perpetuated the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Bernstein (1972) and others subsequently rejected this view and claimed that:

all dialects of a language, whether they be prestigious forms or not, are equally cognitively complex, and require equally complex and abstract cognitive abilities in order to be mastered. (cited in Malin, 1989, p.48-50)

As Bernstein's (1969) theory about the *public* and *formal* uses of language was a fundamental tenet of models of compensatory education advocated by the researchers nominated by Malin (1989, p. 48-50) above, it is worth reviewing. Bernstein (1971) argued that there are two types of language, formal and public language, "which correlate the two main social classes." (Hodge, 1981) Public language is characterised by such features as short commands, concrete description, specificity and emotionality.

Formal language tends to have a complex syntactic structure, "a tendency for abstraction" (Waters and Crook, 1990), is capable of "hypothetical thinking, and self-reflexive, critical thought." (Hodge, 1981) Waters and Crook (1990, p.272) note:

Public language is a restricted code which tends to cut off inquiry and to limit exploration. Formal language is an elaborated code which encourages further questions and discussion.

Possession of an elaborated linguistic code is a form of what Bordieu (1973) terms *cultural capital*, the "intellectual means of production, which is controlled by the dominant class." (cited in Hodge, 1981) Because the lower socio-economic classes are "linguistically and intellectually deprived", they lack this cultural capital and relative advantage is conferred on children from a middle-class background. (Waters and Crook, 1990, p. 273)

In the U.S. Labov (1966, 1969) studied the use of dialects and found that "speakers were judged consistently on the presence or absence of the prestige" dialect. He argued that the speech environment of lower-status children was "richly verbal, providing all the linguistic material a speaker needs for linguistic development - in non-standard English". (Hodge, 1981) Labov (1970) rejected the claims of Bernstein (1971) that the "syntactic forms of middle-class language signal higher levels of intellectual capacity."

This form of "linguistic prejudice" or ethnocentrism on the behalf of researchers was rejected by Labov and Hodge (1981) notes that:

The language presented to the child may be a non-standard form which is regarded as defective by the researcher, whose tests of language development might be similarly biased to measure competence in standard English, and affected by the child's confidence in test situations controlled by middle-class whites.

These concerns were raised in Australia by McConnochie (1981) and Walton (1983), who argued that the use of overseas-derived standardised tests which used white, western normative groups on Aboriginal children "highlighted the ethnocentrism and conceptual impoverishment of much of the research...from the mid-60s to the mid-70s." (McConnochie, 1981)

As a consequence of Labov's research and the concurrent studies conducted by cross-cultural psychologists and anthropologists such as Gay, Cole, Glick and Sharp (1967) and Cole and Scribner (1974), a belief in *cultural differences* rather than deprivation began to emerge. Their studies showed that "reasoning, or cognition, was both culture and situation specific", demonstrating that the use of testing instruments designed to measure such abilities among white, middle-class populations was ethnocentric. (cited in Malin, 1989, p.51)

In Australia, researchers (Gardiner, 1977; Vaszolyi, 1977; Malcolm, 1979; Fesl, 1981, 1983; Eagleson, Kaldor & Malcolm, 1982; Eades, 1983; Davidson, 1983; McKeown & Freebody, 1988; Cambourne, 1990; Dunn, 1991) have investigated and repudiated theories of linguistic deprivation at length.

Gardiner (1977) provided a comprehensive review of the beliefs underpinning deficit theories with regard to the non-standard form of English used by Aborigines and supported the belief of Vaszolyi (1977) that Aboriginal English was a "legitimate dialect of English" with a detailed phonological and grammatical analysis.

Eagleson, Kaldor and Malcolm (1979, p.113, 137-138) studied linguistic features of the speech of urban Aboriginal children and compared them to those exhibited by their non-Aboriginal contemporaries. A number of interesting results emerged which showed that, linguistically at least, urban Aboriginal children differed little to their white peers. Specifically, the authors found that the vocabulary of Aboriginal students contained "no tell-tale indicators which would immediately disclose the background of the child"; that their speech was characterised by "precisely the same features that characterise non-standard white English...in other words Aborigines are simply replicating the language of their immediate social environment".

The Eagleson et al (1979) study concerned itself with linguistic analysis in order to provide pragmatic pedagogic principles supported by research findings rather than addressing sociological issues. It remains one of the few empirical studies of specific learning issues confronting urban Aboriginals. The study was also able to empirically support observations concerning the classroom behaviour of urban Aboriginal children and was at the forefront of research into aspects of cultural difference, epitomised by the seminal work of Harris (1977). This aspect of their study will be addressed shortly.

From the mid-1970s, sociolinguists (Hymes, 1972; Labov, 1972; Keddie, 1973; Erickson, 1984) and sociologists (Baratz & Baratz, 1970; Bernstein, 1972; Ogbu, 1974) began to question deficit theory as new studies revealed that other factors might account for low levels of educational participation and achievement. Researchers (Watts, 1970; Eckerman, 1973, 1980; Kearney & Patrick, 1978) started to explore aspects of Aboriginal culture with a view that they were not culturally deprived but *culturally different*. (cited in Malin, 1989, p. 50)

The cultural difference theory has lead to a plethora of research, most of questionable generalisability, on so-called 'traditional learning styles'. As these have been extensively documented elsewhere, (Bell, 1970; Christie, 1985, 1988; Duncan, 1969; Eckerman, 1988a, 1988b; Fesl, 1981; Guider, 1991a, 1991b; Harris, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1990; Hart, 1974, 1981; Holm, 1983; Jenkins, 1987; Jordan, 1984), the reader is directed to Malin (1989, p. 51-54) and Christie (1985) for an overview of research findings, and the concept of an Aboriginal "world view". Fesl (1981 & 1983) provides some interesting insights into aspects of research into cultural difference from the perspective of an Aboriginal academic.

Harris (1984) cautioned against unqualified acceptance of a belief in 'Aboriginal learning styles' per se, noting that this would have "severe limitations" for teachers as his research was relevant only to those traditional inhabitants of Arnhem Land. The findings of other researchers, (Guider, 1991a; Eckerman, 1988b; Jordan, 1984; Snow & Noble, 1986) also signal caution against believing that Aboriginals comprise a homogeneous social group, with easily identified characteristics which can be "applied to effective classroom use in attempts to enhance the overall scholastic achievement of Aboriginal children." (Malin, 1989. p.54)

Yet the findings of Eagleson et al (1979, p.165, 180) suggest that even non-traditional Aboriginal children display behaviour in the classroom which is at variance with that of non-Aboriginal children, despite their linguistic similarities. The authors did not analyse the behaviour and it was described in the context of "problems with using 'individual discussion' patterns with Aboriginal children".

With the benefit of hindsight and accumulated research from notable Aboriginal educators such as Harris (1977, 1980, 1984) and Christie (1985), the behavioural characteristics represent significant cultural differences. The study reported incidents where Aboriginal students displayed extreme resistance to classroom practices which would be regarded as incidental by most children. These included a reluctance to respond to questioning when isolated as an individual before the class; inaudible responses when coerced by teachers into making a response; a fear of giving an incorrect response because of peer censure and reserving the right not to respond. Where an individual student elected not to respond, the authors noted that peers would interject.

Research conducted after the Eagleson et al (1979) study suggests that these behaviours are manifestations of what Chadbourne (1984) and Harkins (1990) term "big shame", a little researched concept in Australian cross-cultural education. The significance of this concept will be addressed later in this review.

However, not all researchers accept the cultural differences rhetoric and the concept of an "Aboriginal world view" advocated by researchers such as Harris (1980, 1984, 1990), Christie (1985), Fesi (1981) and Parish (1991). Sharp (1980) argued convincingly that, whilst there was a "superficial progressiveness about this approach", emphasising "cultural differences can become a means of justifying and perpetuating class or ethnic stratification."

McConvell (1991) labelled the concept of 'world view' as 'Neo-Whorfian':

The basic neo-Whorfian tenet is that there is a close association, amounting to direct reflection, between grammatical and lexical forms of language, habitual patterns of thought, and cultural forms, a complex usually summed up by the phrase 'world view'.

McConvell (1991) asserted that researchers such as Bain (1979), Bain and Sayers (1990), Christie (1985) and Harris (1990) use an approach which "is a variety of Whorfism" due to preoccupation with "the relationship between culture, thought and language"; a concept which is akin to deficit theory in that ethnocentric assumptions are held that Aboriginals cannot think abstractly as they are "unable to go beyond 'concrete reality'"; that "the whole semantic fields of Aboriginal languages are structured along essentially non-quantifiable and non-scientific lines" and their infallible belief that English "reflects Western values" and is "more scientific".

McConvell dismissed these claims as "questionable generalisations about the nature of Aboriginal culture", stating that "the neo-Whorfian evidence on Aboriginal language and world-view is very flimsy". McConvell's article is interesting because it addresses the issue of cross-cultural education, with an emphasis on resistance which "may involve some level of non-cooperation with 'Aboriginal domain programs in schools'."

McConvell argued:

The process of defining and fixing Aboriginal and European 'cultural domains' in education can easily allow white stereotypes of Aboriginal people to be institutionalised.

He also contends that many of the phenomena nominated by Harris (1977) as "rules of interpersonal communication" are not manifestations of cultural difference which suggest that the "Aboriginal interlocuters are operating within a restricted or deficient cognitive framework". McConvell draws on the sociolinguistic discipline of pragmatics to support his belief that:

They might be operating with a different cultural pragmatics: a different set of rules for conveying and interpreting messages in conversation. Their pragmatic rules may not be so unfamiliar as they might seem at first, but may in fact only represent slight variations of pragmatics used by white English speakers too.

Boulton-Lewis (1986) also researched suggestions that the "backgrounds of Aboriginal Australian children might induce a cognitive style that is not appropriate for formal schooling", (Harris, 1980; Christie, 1985) and concluded:

" Aboriginal children possess capacity to process information...that is the same as European children of the same age."

He suggested that:

the differences in Aboriginal cognitive strategies that have been identified in other research could be learned differences dependent upon different learning contexts rather than on inherent cognitive differences.

McKeown and Freebody (1988), in essence replicating parts of the study of Eagleson et al (1979), studied aspects of language used by Aboriginal students who spoke non-standard English and concluded that "in aspects of school language...they were indistinguishable from their non-Aboriginal counterparts" and that "the social rather than the academic aspects of school performance" was more likely to be a determinant of school success.

Eckerman (1988a) cautioned against "the process of enshrining" aspects of cultural difference "into 'boxes'" as it "generates a particular set of educational practices" which she likens to a "remnant of the deficit model", a belief shared by Ogbu (1974, p.5-6).

Folds (1984, 1987a,b) utilized *reproduction theory*, from the discipline of sociology, to propose a *resistance hypothesis* in his explanation for Aboriginal underachievement. To some extent, basic tenets of reproduction theory have already been introduced in the earlier discussion of 'cultural capital' and Bernstein's (1969, 1971) notions of 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes of language (pages 11 & 12 of this report).

Within sociology today however, reproduction theories are far more sophisticated and complex. Whilst a full overview is probably useful, the theory is presented in this review only for the purpose of providing a historical context with regard to current sources of explanations for reduced levels of academic attainment by minority-group children. Consequently only fundamentals are included and readers are directed to Waters and Crook (1991, p.91-108 and 272) for a very thorough analysis. For the non-initiate, reproduction theory is a later, more refined offshoot of the deprivation doctrine outlined earlier which is concerned with how familial processes of socialisation, economic reality and institutionalised inequality serve to perpetuate cycles of poverty and deprivation. (Waters & Crook, 1991, p.272-273)

Reproduction is defined by Waters and Crook (1991, p.92) as the "process by which the patterns of social structure are maintained and continued across generations." Discussions of structured or systemic inequality typically entertain notions of conflict between the ruling class and working class and it will come as no surprise to most that reproduction theorists usually investigate such concepts using neo-Marxist or neo-Weberian theories from philosophy.

Etzioni-Halevy (1987) outlines how major elements of neo-Marxist theory and neo-Weberian theory are applied to the sociology of education. Neo-Marxist theories of inequality in education believe:

1. inequalities in education are based on economic class differences;
2. education is used by the 'ruling class' to reproduce the capitalist mode of production and class exploitation;
3. this is achieved through a process of 'hegemony' whereby the ruling class induces the exploited class to accept such reproduction as legitimate.

Neo-Weberian theorists believe:

1. inequalities in education are no longer based primarily on economic differences between classes;
2. such inequalities are based primarily on the independent effect of cultural and attitudinal differences between status groups and on power differences between them.

For a complete discussion of how these theories are applied in the educational context in Australia, see Henry, Knight, Lingard and Taylor's (1988) textbook *Understanding schooling: an introductory sociology of Australian education*, written from a neo-Marxist perspective.

Whilst accepting that cultural factors may contribute to school underachievement, Folds (1984, 1987) suggested that Aboriginal children might be "seen as resisting classroom and school processes". Acceptance of deficit theory, he contends, "suggests remediation", whilst a cultural differences approach suggests curriculum modification, often via the "introduction of 'busy work'" which, reducing the need for verbal interaction, often "mimics one or two aspects of the Aboriginal learning style." (Folds, 1984; 1987a, 1987b; Guider, 1991a)

According to Folds (1987b, p.1, 2, 9, 12-19, 48, 84, 101 & 120), absenteeism, undesirable or disruptive behaviour and refusal or reluctance to complete tasks are seen as manifest acts of resistance to participation in education which is described by Singleton (1974) as "essentially [white] cultural transmission." (cited in Eckerman, 1988a)

Mickelson (1990) also found *reproduction theory* an appropriate explanation for the outcome of her study into the relationship between attitude and achievement among U.S. blacks.

Mickelson (1990), like Malin (1989, p.66-75), utilized a variant of reproduction theory pioneered by U.S. sociologist-anthropologist Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1985, 1987), who found:

that members of a social group that faces a job ceiling know that they do so, and this knowledge channels and shapes their children's academic behaviour.

(a job ceiling is defined by Ogbu (1978) as discriminatory practices that do not permit members of minorities to compete for jobs on equal terms.)

She found that, whilst many black students were "bewitched by the rhetoric of equal opportunity through education; they hear another story at the dinner table." The students perceived that education could not combat the reality of their personal experience with poverty and racism, and, hence, became so demotivated that their levels of attainment waned.

This belief is also confirmed by the findings of other researchers. Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that parents of children from low socio-economic groups were less likely to monitor, reward and encourage their child's academic performance. Saha (1985) studied early school leaving, vocational plans and educational attainment among urban Australian youth and concluded:

a recognition of opportunities and limitations in the occupational structure and difference in the underlying cultural values...influence a young person's ultimate educational and occupational attainments.

Ghail (1989) surveyed black students' schooling experiences in the West Midlands of Great Britain and concluded that, whilst "[T]he major problem in the schooling of black youth is that of racism", students generally "resisted" the dominant white culture due to a perceived lack of opportunity in spite of educational achievement.

Malin (1989, p.46):

Evidence shows that not all ethnic minorities fail in school, only those who have been allocated to low status within the major society such that they are economically and politically subordinated. Ogbu describes these groups as, 'those who have been incorporated into the society where they are found more or less involuntarily and permanently through slavery, conquest, or colonization.' (1985, p.863)

Such groups are known as *subordinate minorities* and differ from other social groups in "the way they perceive...society and in how they respond to the education system." (Ogbu, 1974, p.2) The significance of this claim will be discussed shortly.

As the findings of Mickelson (1990), Baker and Stevenson (1986), Saha (1985), Ghail (1989) and Malin (1989) replicate in many ways the findings of Ogbu (1971, 1974, 1985), and as his contributions within the field of social anthropology and education seem unknown in Australia (Malin, 1989 excepted), a detailed review of his *resistance theory* seems warranted.

Ogbu (1971, 1974) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study of educational problems confronting urban black youth in Stockton, California for his doctoral dissertation. It is fascinating to note that the problems he identified are identical to those described in the literature as confronting Australian Aboriginals today. (Watts, 1981, p.135; Ruddock, 1985, p.24; W.A. Equal Opportunity Commission, 1990; Garlett, 1987, p.10, 12, 13, 26-27, 31, Barlow, 1990; Guider, 1991a, 1991b) Specific problems Ogbu (1974, p. 1-10) identified were:

- * generally poor standards of schoolwork;
- * high rates of attrition in high school with those who managed to graduate achieving at 'C' level or lower;
- * low tertiary participation;
- * entrance into lowly paid and unskilled jobs and extensive periods of unemployment;
- * a high incidence of welfare dependency.

Ogbu (1974, p.3-6) rejected traditional genetic and cultural difference/disadvantage explanations, as did McConvell (1990), on the grounds that these views perceived the minority-group child "as a victim forced to take on the additional responsibility of removing the 'resistance to learning' that the children from poor and minority backgrounds bring with them."

He specifically rejected Taba's (1967) view that:

children from subordinate minority background, however, have different values, attitudes, and learning skills: consequently they do not succeed at school

arguing that this generalisation is unsubstantiable when one considers the academic success of other ethnic groups, such as "Arabs, Chinese, Filipinos and Japanese", who have retained their "different ethnic ways of life...yet their children still do well at school."

The parallels with the beliefs of educators such as Harris (1977, 1980, 1984, 1990) and Christie (1985) are obvious. Ogbu (1985) comments on educational failure among minority-group children:

Anthropological research of the the last two decades suggest that one source of the children's classroom learning difficulties is the conflicts which arise between children's culture, language and the culture and language of the schools. Minority children come to school with styles of learning, communicationg, interacting with adults and among their peers that are different from those expected in the classroom. This discovery has been used to develop classroom teaching approaches more compatible with minority children's own style of teaching and learning.

stating that anthropological research has now moved beyond "identification of the cultural and language conflict of the minorities and beyond prescribing 'cultural solutions' to the problems they generate."

(For an overview of the current state of the socio-cultural literacy debate in Australia the interested reader is directed to Vasolzi (1977), Davidson (1983), Luke, Baty & Stehbens (1989), Cambourne (1990), Harris (1990), Luke (1991) and Dunn (1991). The issue lies outside the scope of this study.)

Ogbu (1985) states that these problems "appear to be temporary" for some groups and "more or less persistent" for others and cites his research which found that "the minorities are characterized by at least two types of cultural/language difference." Primary cultural differences are those that existed "before the group became a minority". Children with primary cultural difference "usually experience learning and social adjustment problems initially", however these are overcome in time as school culture and language expectations are learned. Recent studies into the academic attainment by ethnic minorities in Australia confirm this premise. (Clifton, et al, 1991) Secondary cultural differences arise "after groups have come into contact, especially where one group has become subordinate to the other." Ogbu (1985) explains this causes such subordinate minority groups to develop *castelike* behaviours:

new or 'secondary' cultural ways of behaving, perceiving and feeling and perceptions to cope with their subordination and exploitation, to protect their identity, and to maintain the boundary between them and the dominant group.

because they have been denied "true assimilation" into mainstream society through "formal and informal discriminatory practices".

Consequently, they come to school with "distinctive cultural and language patterns" and are unsuccessful in "crossing cultural and language boundaries."

It is worth noting that Collman (1988, p.3-8, 30), an Australian anthropologist, reported similar phenomena. He claimed that whilst Aboriginals "withdraw from white society and try to be self-sufficient" nevertheless, they have invented "a battery of techniques whereby they gain access to white resources...[whilst] minimizing their debt and involvement". In other words, even so-called 'traditional' groups:

have adapted their own conventions, norms, values and typical understandings in an effort to manage the demands of white agencies.

Ogbu (1974, p.3, 1985) concluded that:

the high proportion of school failures among subordinate minorities cannot be explained by such contemporaneous factors as the home and neighborhood environment, hereditary endowment, the influence of the school, or a combination of all of these

and outlined a number of reasons for the school difficulties of "castelike minorities". These include:

- * the way the wider society (including the schools) treats the minorities and in the way the minorities themselves respond to their treatment;

- * the historical pattern of denying the minority access to good education. the consequences of this treatment for the present situation are several. For one thing, the effects of generations of inferior education is likely to be cumulative...Another consequence is that blacks have come to distrust the schools...and of the white people who run the schools; (a view shared by Folds, 1987)
- * black children may begin to internalize this distrustful attitude toward the schools early in their school career;
- * minority parents discuss the discrepancies they perceive in the education system...among themselves daily and they do so in the presence of their children.
- * thus, children grow up knowing and/or believing that there are discrepancies and this contributes to their distrust of white people and the schools;
- * it seems likely that children who have learned to distrust the schools and people who run the schools would have greater difficulty accepting and following school rules of behaviour for achievement;
- * another treatment of the minorities which contributes to their learning problem is job discrimination. Our study of black experiences in school and the labour markets shows that generations of blacks were denied equal and adequate rewards for their educational accomplishments when compared with whites;
- * we suggest this differential treatment forced the minorities to perceive and interpret their opportunities for self-improvement through schooling differently;
- * ethnographic studies show for instance that black children divert their efforts into non-academic activities as they get older and become more aware of their limited future opportunities for mainstream employment. (Ogbu, 1985)

The above reasons for the school difficulties of minority-group children typically lead to two common ways in which such groups respond to their treatment, according to Ogbu (1974, 1985), and these will now be briefly discussed.

Ogbu (1974, 1985) maintains that 'castelike minorities' respond to their:

forced incorporation, subsequent exclusion from assimilation, and continued exploitation by the dominant group by developing a complex identity system in which the minorities see themselves not just as *different* from the dominant group but in most respects as *opposed* to their "white oppressors". Minority children learn from older members of their community their shared antagonism towards whites and their institutions like the schools, as well as language and culture. Children who have internalized this cultural antagonism may have difficulty performing according to school norms even if they possess the cognitive and language skills of the schools.

Some of these behaviours have been reported in Australian studies and will be discussed shortly. (Jordan, 1984; Eckerman, 1988a, 1988b; Snow & Noble, 1986) Ogbu states that a further, related response is the evolution of an "oppositional...cultural frame of reference of culturally acceptable ways of behaving." These act as "coping mechanisms" and as they:

usually serve as a boundary-maintaining system, they form the basis upon which the minorities come to designate certain ways of behaving as more appropriate for whites, while other ways of behaving (usually the opposite) are regarded as more appropriate for minorities.

It is interesting to reconsider Harris' (1980) 'Milingimbi rules of interpersonal speech' in this light. Ogbu (1985) notes that "in the case of black Americans the distinction is often a matter of differences in style than content...there are "black styles" of talking, walking, dressing, worshipping, thinking and the like because these are not "white people's ways." Other minority-groups may use language differently and individuals who try to behave "like white people or to cross cultural and language boundaries may face opposition from their peers." Ogbu contends that this distinction includes the fact that academic success is defined as "more appropriate for whites" and minority-group students "who do well academically are regarded as 'acting white' and 'strange' and are subject to peer pressure to change."

This may have important, unconsidered ramifications with regard to the significance accorded to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students. Ogbu (1985) cites the findings of Petroni (1970), who explored incidents of reported racial discrimination against "successful minority students". He was initially informed that "blacks were excluded from certain courses...by white discrimination". It was eventually discovered "that blacks stayed away" because of "pressures from fellow black students". This form of collective peer censure may account for high rates of absenteeism among Aboriginal children.

Petroni (1970) found that "fear of being...accused of 'acting white' may prevent black students from working hard to do well in school." This concludes the review of resistance theories and should serve to place some of the results of Malin's (1989) study into context.

Malin's study (1989, p.640-647) showed compelling evidence that, whilst a number of factors affected the school performance of the children in her study, the most significant was teacher expectation; a fact which corroborated the findings of other Australian studies (Tannock & Punch, 1975; Watts, 1982; Eckerman, 1977; Yengi, 1978) which found that teachers "generally had low expectations of Aboriginal students' academic ability." (cited in Malin, 1989, p.55-56)

These findings replicate those of Rist (1970) who found that teacher expectations contributed significantly to student levels of achievement - "a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs." More recent studies (Boulton-Lewis, 1986; Clifton et al, 1986; Wilkinson, 1987; Phillips, 1990) continue to confirm that pedagogical factors have a significant impact on student attitudes to school and learning. Clifton, et al, (1986), like Malin (1989) studied the effect of teacher expectation on minority-group academic attainment and concluded that both ethnicity and gender affect teacher expectations, surmising that these may have "cumulative effects upon ability and performance".

Malin (1989, p.643) also found that cultural difference had an impact; specifically:

- a need for autonomy and affiliation which is a socialisation process of Aboriginal children as reported by other researchers (Berndt & Berndt, 1943; Harris, 1977; Eckerman, 1980; Hamilton, 1981; Christie, 1988);
- sociolinguistic differences as reported by other researchers:
 - i. framing of questions (Eades, 1983);
 - ii. length of pause time (Malcolm, 1979);
 - iii. discomfort at performing in public (Harris, 1977; Eagleson et al, 1979; Coombs, Brandl and Snowdon, 1983).

but concluded however that "cultural incompatibility as the explanation can only be taken so far". (references cited p.50)

Another key finding of Malin's (1989) study was that Aboriginal students' "unfamiliarity with what school learning entailed", and "lack of commitment to a system which has never catered for them", coupled to experiences of "pervasive racism", (p.183, 191-194, 645) created a feeling of inadequacy within the students which led to peer ostracism.

Malin (1989, p. 647) concluded, after analysing the results of her data and due consideration of theoretical perspectives, that "reproduction theory (Giroux, 1981; Connell, 1986; McCarthy, 1988) has vindicated itself in this study." Malin's findings are very similar to those of Ogbu's (1974) ethnographic study of minority groups in the U.S. reviewed earlier.

Watts (1981), in her review of current research literature proposed a series of variables that, in her opinion, determined access to successful participation in education by Aboriginal children. These variables included:

- a valuing of Aboriginality and positive self-identification;
- attitudes, aspirations and motivation;
- cognition, with emphasis on teacher expectations;
- culturally oriented ways of learning; ie the need for autonomy and group affiliation. (Muir, 1983a & b)

The importance of the dominant culture valuing Aboriginality was considered to be a factor by key informants to the study, associated with culturally-based needs for interpersonal relationships and affiliation, expressed by Malin (1989) and others. Empirical research in this area is scarce, however some studies have examined Aboriginal perceptions of their self image and identity.

Jordan (1984) surveyed three groups of Aboriginal people in order to evaluate how they perceived Aboriginality and self image. She selected a tradition-oriented community, a rural community and a city location and classified them according to their degree of integration into mainstream society using the typification "evolving structure" 1, 2 or 3. "Evolving structure I" pertained to "tradition-oriented" Aboriginals who rejected the "white world which has sought in the past to impose its own structures on the Aboriginal people...which were, in fact, oppressive, destroying Aboriginal culture, identity and autonomy." She found, like Collman (1988), that these Aboriginals saw themselves as "contiguous to white society; they needed to interact with the economy of the white world, but they rejected its structures and values."

"Evolving structure II" appertained to those Aboriginals living "parallel" to white society; "acculturated into white society", whose values and culture are "syncretic" in that it has elements of both Aboriginal and white culture and values. "Evolving structure III" entails what Jordan (1984) terms "mediated Aboriginality", those urban Aboriginals who have had over "100 years of white contact". Whilst they had a "comprehensive knowledge of their own relations", they often had no contact with other Aboriginals and "had no real knowledge of the Aboriginal culture of tradition-oriented people." For this group, "Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal language were mediated to them by others".

Jordan (1984) found that "Aboriginal students in the study had institutionalized the negative typifications of mainstream society" and had "distanced themselves" from these typifications. She concluded that, whilst many students expressed self doubt, they had a positive attitude to schooling and to "gaining employment through schooling" and found that "the more visible the Aboriginal group, the more Aborigines will be rejected and stereotyped negatively by the host group."

Eckerman (1988b) believes:

it is pointless (though perhaps intellectually satisfying) to attempt to delineate urban/rural Aboriginal groups on the basis of their adherence or non-adherence to traditionally oriented patterns and norms, unless such an analysis has direct bearing on helping us to understand clearly their life situation today

noting that it is time that researchers began to evaluate how Aborigines have adapted or manipulated their cultural environment. She states that some processes of adaptation are evident, including a declining pattern of reciprocity of family assets which:

challenges a popular positive stereotype...which alleges that, unlike Europeans, Aboriginal people are communally oriented, always share, make decisions by consensus and are dependent on group orientations.

and:

In the Australian studies, Aboriginal people interviewed displayed clear preference for individualism in decision-making.

Eckerman (1988b) also found evidence that "social distance between Aborigines and non-Aborigines persists":

Wherever we went, even in towns where Aboriginal people described race relations as 'good', people were *always* apprehensive about how their non-Aboriginal neighbours would react to their presence.

She noted that the images and perceptions of self received by Aboriginals are confused with "feelings of insecurity and inferiority when relating to the non-Aboriginal majority" with "shyness", "continual worry", "xenophobia and inadequacy" affecting at least a "third" of those interviewed, and concluded:

it would be foolish to underestimate the external pressures exerted on Aboriginal self image by persistent negative stereotyping and social distance, social exclusion practiced, or perceived to be practised, by the majority. Traditions, beliefs, and practices which are 'typically' Aboriginal tend to be played down by Aboriginal people as 'only black-fellas's ways'...

She concluded that "there is little evidence of 'traditional beliefs', and that effort should be concentrated on "contemporary aspects" as urban Aboriginals are no more group oriented than other community groups, with "racism...and fear of isolation" having the key impact on self-perception and consequently, levels of school achievement.

Snow and Noble (1986) investigated perceptions of Aboriginality and found, as did Jordan (1984) that:

Until recently, part-Aborigines have been provided with their identity or self concept by a white Australian reference group which has rejected them.

with the consequence that these Aborigines see themselves:

as second-grade citizens, outcasts, untouchables, the lowest people on earth, in between tribal Aborigines and white people, and lost.

Chadbourne (1984) argued that alleging problems of self-concept, as a consequence of cultural differences, is a vestige of "deficit theory" which allows attention to be distracted from "structured inequality and institutionalized racism". Rather than being problems of negative self-concept, students are likely to display a lack of "self confidence" and "shyness" in "threateningly evaluative relationships with white people".

Harkin (1990) studied the Aboriginal concept of 'big shame' in detail and concluded that it embraced a combination of self-concept, shyness, embarrassment, lack of confidence and a desire to avoid or withdraw from situations which are or may become threatening to the Aboriginal individual. An anecdotal collage of W.A. Aboriginal high school students' perceptions of the concept supports these views. (Helwend et al (1975)

These results suggest that Aboriginal self image is likely to have an effect on school achievement as determined by Watts (1981). (Muir, 1983a&b) The classroom behaviours described by Eagleson et al (1979) and Malin (1989) may be sociolinguistic manifestations of the concept 'big shame' described by Chadbourne (1984) and Harkins (1990). It may also be possible that proponents of reproduction theory have incorrectly interpreted some of these responses as alienation or resistance.

Purpose of the study.

The study sought to explore the possibility that Aboriginal students' underachievement or withdrawal from education, cited as major concerns by Watts (1981, p.135), Ruddock (1985, p.24), the W.A. Equal Opportunity Commission (1990, p.8 & 12), Garlett (1987, p.10, 12, 13, 26-27, 31) and Barlow (1990), might occur as a consequence of:

- a. the requirement of mainstream education for dependence and conformity being contradictory to the socialisation process of Aboriginal children, in which autonomy and independence are encouraged (hypothesis part a.);
- b. Aboriginal students being unable to meet their needs for affiliation through meaningful interpersonal relationships with teachers and pupils in schools in which they are a minority group (hypothesis part b.);

- c. Aboriginal students realizing that racist attitudes may prevent them from attaining rewarding employment and forming relationships. (hypothesis part c.)

Definitions.

In this report, education within W.A. government secondary schools is referred to as mainstream education in order to distinguish it from education within the enclave in which the

- c. Aboriginal students realizing that racist attitudes may prevent them from attaining rewarding employment and forming relationships. (hypothesis part c.)

Definitions.

In this report, education within W.A. government secondary schools is referred to as mainstream education in order to distinguish it from education within the enclave in which the subjects are presently situated.

A crucial construct for this study is how to define what is meant by the much-cited word 'underachievement' with regard to the academic performance of Aboriginal students. Folds (1987, p.2) suggests that it relates to the failure of Aboriginal students 'at the kinds of assessments used in schools', whilst Mickelson (1990) suggests that 'black students generally earn lower grades, drop out more often, and attain less education than do whites.'

Underachievement in this study is defined as existing when an combination of several of the following characteristics are observed:

- streaming into low ability, remedial or ad hoc classes on the basis that the degree of assistance required is beyond the capacity of the regular classroom teacher (Watts, 1981, p.43, 135; Gobbo, 1988, p.73, 86);

- rates of retention by year level are significantly less per capita of population than those for similar groups of non-Aboriginal students (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force 1988 - cited in Malin, 1989, p.1);
- academic performance is consistently lower than that of groups of non-Aboriginal students, as determined by school assessment methods (Folds, 1987, p.2; Mickelson, 1990);
- students exhibit low career aspirations or lack motivation to succeed (Saha, 1985).

For the purpose of this study little advantage is gained by trying to differentiate between the school experiences of traditional Aboriginals as opposed to those of rural/urban Aboriginals. In any event, the study does not delineate between each category in the sample. It is contended that the determinants of scholastic success identified by Watts (1981) are likely to remain constant and that attempting to ascertain an ad hoc measure of ethnicity is unwarranted - see the comments of Jordan (1984) and Eckerman (1988b) referred to earlier.

Finally, the statement of hypothesis part c. (p.6) uses the somewhat oblique term 'material reality'. The term encompasses socio-economic status and social stratification and may be defined as 'present state of existence'. See the studies of Saha (1985), Ogbu (1985), Ghail (1989) and Mickelson (1990) for background information leading to this construct.

Summary of factors guiding the development of research questions.

Chapter one presented a brief overview of the consistency of concerns expressed about aspects of the provision of public education to Aboriginal children. This study has confined itself to recent history however interested readers will be aware that most of the concerns and issues raised are not new and have, in fact, remained fairly intractable.

The introductory chapter also contained the statement of hypothesis and research questions about which the study was oriented. These were evolved prior to the review of literature and were refined to their present form as issues and concerns emerged. The hypothesis contends that Aboriginal children may not achieve at the same level as other non-minority group children because of the cumulative effect of:

- a. schools (this includes of course such items as pedagogy, curricula, discipline policies, resources and so on) being unable to meet their culturally defined needs for affiliation and autonomy (Christie, 1985; Malin, 1989);
- b. attitudes of intolerance and racism (Ogbu, 1974; Watts, 1981; Snow and Noble, 1986; Eckerman, 1988b; Malin 1989, Mickelson, 1990);
- c. a material reality or present state of existence which, contradicting the promise of opportunity through education, leads to disillusionment which is manifest through a decrease in effort and commitment to schoolwork (Ogbu 1974; Ghail, 1989, Mickelson, 1990).

The purpose of the review of literature is twofold: first, it reviews the three main theories underpinning research into minority-group academic underachievement using local and, where appropriate, international studies; second, it provides a framework upon which to base the research questions which guide the study.

Explanations for minority-group underachievement can be traced through three distinct stages: genetic deficit theory which was basically a refinement of Social Darwinism. This theory was discredited by cognitive psychologists in the 1960s (Malin, 1989; Cambourne, 1990) and gradually transformed into a theory of cultural deprivation which alleged that academic underachievement could be attributed to familial socialisation, economic deprivation and linguistic deprivation. Remedying these problems usually entailed the administering of some form of remedial or compensatory programme which addressed the identified deficits and vestiges of these still prevail. One of the key foci of research was in the area of language deprivation and a number of programmes such as Headstart in the U.S. (Woolfolk, 1986) and the Mount Gravatt Reading Program in Australia (Walker, Wilkinson & Gray, 1980) were initiated in order to compensate for linguistic deprivation. As much of the theory guiding such programmes was based on the research of Bernstein (1969, 1971 - cited in Malin, 1989 and Hodge, 1981), his theories were briefly reviewed and discussed.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, deprivation theories were gradually discredited as researchers such as Labov (1966 - cited in Hodge, 1981), Gay, Cole, Glick and Sharp (1967) and Cole and Scribner (1974 - cited in Malin, 1989, p.51) began to highlight the ethnocentricity of many of the assumptions underpinning deprivation theories.

These researchers, and others, began to propose a belief in cultural differences, rather than cultural deprivation and a research explosion occurred throughout the later 1970s into the 1980s as aspects of cultural difference likely to impede academic progress were identified. Again, linguists were at the forefront of research efforts and some relevant local studies were reviewed. As not all researchers support theories of cultural difference, some of the caveats raised by some of them are introduced. Finally, the review presents findings from contemporary research conducted in Australia, Great Britain and the U.S.A. Some of this research seeks to explain minority group underachievement, using a more refined version of the original 1960s/70s reproduction or deprivation theory, thereby providing a credible alternative to some of the socio-cultural factors identified by cultural difference advocates. A number of sociologists/anthropologists (Ogbu, 1974, 1985; Folds, 1984, 1987; Ghail, 1989 and Mickelson, 1990) have elaborated upon earlier deprivation theories to propose a resistance hypothesis to account for underachievement by minority groups and these are reviewed in some detail. Some cautions advocated by cross-cultural psychologists such as Sharp (1980) and Eckerman (1977, 1988a & b) are presented in the light of this recent research.

The rationale for the selection of the four primary research questions is discussed at length in Chapter Three - Theoretical Framework.

Chapter Three - Theoretical framework

Many researchers have, over the years, attempted to use some theory or another in an effort to explain or justify why Aboriginal students continue to be less successful at school than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. These have been introduced and discussed at length in the review of literature. I was unable to locate any research study where a researcher had canvassed Aboriginal students for their views and reported these.

A second concern was the extent to which the cultural differences rhetoric had been uprooted from the remote and traditional communities where research clearly indicated that it applied, to be transposed into non-traditional and urban communities without question or empirical support.

A further concern was a possibility that researchers, seeking to explain or justify lack of academic success by Aboriginal students from a pre-determined theoretical stance, had overlooked or ignored the significance of the cultural concept 'Big Shame' and how it affected Aboriginal students in western schools. (see Helwend (1975) for Aboriginal student perceptions of 'big shame')

The concerns cited above suggested parameters for the study: it should concentrate on reporting what Aboriginal students think and feel about their experiences in mainstream education; it should evaluate these perceptions and experiences in the light of their compatibility with contemporary theoretical perspectives and research findings, particularly those of Malin (1989) and Mickelson (1990); research questions should be composed, which addressed fundamental issues exposed during the review of literature - issues of cultural difference, cultural concepts such as 'big shame'; racism and discrimination; alienation and hopelessness; curricula suitability and relevance - in order to direct and guide the research study.

These concerns indicated that the study should attempt to find an existing group of Aboriginal students, preferably from a mix of traditional and urban processes of socialisation, all of whom possessed some experience within mainstream secondary education. Such a group was located within an Aboriginal enclave and a sample of 30 students identified from the larger group.

Students in the sample had all met with a lack of academic success in W.A. government secondary schools; they were all aged between 15 and 19 years and therefore likely to be able to articulate and explain reasons for this lack of success and the group contained a mix of students from both traditional and urban processes of socialisation.

Key informants highlighted the possibility of "interviewer effect" - where respondents in a research study answer questions according to how they perceive the person asking the question would prefer them to respond. (Judd, et al 1990, p.215-218; Hosie, 1986.) To counter this possibility, all questions were phrased as neutrally as possible and direct reference to 'big shame' excluded on the advice of the informants. The instruments were circulated to the key informants and subjected to extensive scrutiny and widespread revision before the final version was considered acceptable for trial among tertiary level Aboriginal students of a similar age range to the sample group. As an additional safeguard to ensure that the instruments were as valid and reliable as possible, the trial was conducted and supervised by a senior Aboriginal academic.

Research questions.

The study was oriented about four research questions:

1. How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?
2. Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?
3. What significance is attached to inter-personal relationships by Aboriginal students?

4. Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

Whilst the study was not grounded within any particular theoretical perspective, the findings of researchers such as Ogbu (1974, 1985), Saha (1986), Clifton et al (1986), Malin (1989) and Mickelson (1990) with regard to the effects of teacher expectation, racism, and an alleged awareness or sense of futility concerning future prospects were too compelling to be ignored.

Consequently, primary research questions were devised in order to orient the study about some of the research findings considered likely to impact upon the educational achievement of Aboriginal children. The questions were derived from issues arising from the review of literature.

The first research question asked students to respond to a number of questions derived from the literature relating to reasons as to why Aboriginal students tend to underachieve. These addressed such items as:

- learning style preferences;
- the ability of teachers to match their presentation of content to preferred learning styles;
- teacher expectations and willingness to assist;
- the cultural concept 'big shame' and its impact on scholastic performance;
- family support;

- how students accounted for lack of success;
- absenteeism.

The second primary research question examined issues relating to such items as:

- subjects liked and disliked and reasons why;
- is disruption in class an expression of boredom;
- do students believe that good academic results will assist them to obtain rewarding employment;
- what are their job aspirations and do they think they will have the skills required after school graduation;
- do they believe that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals have equal employment opportunities and if not, what effect does this perception have on their motivation to succeed in school;
- what subject textbooks were hard to understand and why;

Watts (1981) and Malin (1989) cited the culturally based need for affiliation as having some impact upon achievement, with affiliation implying acceptance of ethnicity and an ability to form interpersonal relationships with other students and teachers. This view was shared by key informants to the study therefore primary research question three was devised under which groups of associated questions were clustered to allow students to report their perceptions of how important friendships are and how these might impact upon their academic performance.

Errata:

Due to an error in pagination, this manuscript does not contain a page numbered 53. Any inconvenience created for readers is regretted.

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The questions addressed such issues as:

- influence of peers on attitudes to school;
- do students give up if they dislike a teacher;
- do students believe that they are better students in an enclave situation;
- do students prefer to work in groups or individually;
- what is the effect of being a school minority group;
- are they able to form relationships with other Aboriginal students;
- are they able to form relationships with non-Aboriginal students;
- is being able to form friendships important and why.

The final primary research question sought to corroborate the reports of racism or discrimination reported in the literature and addressed the following issues:

- were there times when students felt that teachers treated them differently to non-Aboriginal students, if so, how;
- do teachers expect Aboriginal students to produce the same quality of work as non-Aboriginal students;
- do Aboriginal students perceive non-Aboriginal students as racist, if so, why;
- are school discipline policies fair to all students, if not why;
- are penalties the same for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students;
- do teachers try to use materials which treat Aboriginality positively.

As stated earlier, the research questions sought to determine if the findings of other researchers were compatible with the students' own perceptions about why they may not have achieved their full potential in government secondary schools.

Further details are given in Chapter Four - Method of Investigation.

Chapter Four - Method of Investigation

Design and sample discussion.

The study used a questionnaire survey combined with interviews to determine how Aboriginal students account for their lack of success in mainstream education.

The sample comprised an existing group of ten Aboriginal students aged between 15 and 19 years. The students selected had all underachieved or withdrawn from mainstream education. At the time the study was conducted, the students were undertaking schooling within an Aboriginal enclave. This enclave will be referred to only as Small School in this report.

Description of instruments used and data collection techniques.

To examine the research questions two questionnaires were designed. The first, a prescriptive survey, comprised a series of statements designed to allow students to select a response from the following Likert Scale:

always
usually
sometimes
not often
never

Judd et al (1991, p.153) provides advice on the construction of rating scales, noting that the most significant problem is that of "halo bias...which refers to the tendency for overall positive or negative evaluations of the object...being rated to influence ratings on specific dimensions."

To counter this effect, each questionnaire contained specific instructions which were read to respondents before data collection began. (Judd, et al, 1991, p.255) The questionnaires comprise Appendices A and B.

The prescriptive (hereafter referred to as the closed-ended) questionnaire contained clusters of questions related to each of the primary research questions, with each question being simply worded to avoid ambiguity, bias and meaningless responses. Each question was short, simple, with the key idea last in order to simplify the respondents' task. (Judd, et al, 1991, p.234-238).

Judd, et al. (1991, p.239-240) suggests that closed-ended questionnaires have three main advantages:

- they are simple to code in order to produce meaningful results prior to analysis;
- they help to clarify intent; and
- they serve as a jog to respondents' memory.

The second survey was conducted in an interview situation using an affective questionnaire containing open-ended questions. These essentially replicated those of the closed-ended survey but differed in that respondents were asked to explain or elaborate upon their responses. The justification for using two types of questionnaire is again drawn from Judd et al (1991): open-ended questions permit respondents to say precisely what they feel about an issue as well as allowing the interviewer to probe the reasons for a particular response in order to fully determine attitudes held. (Judd, et al, 1991, p. 238-240).

Advice as to the content, range, scope and linguistic appropriateness of the questions was sought from the key informants to the study and these informants were also involved in discussing the significance of results. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 119-120)

Questions in the data-gathering instruments were arranged in clusters and introduced to the respondents by topic. This method was adopted during trialling of the questionnaires as key informants felt that the respondents would be less likely to respond as they perceived the interviewer would want them to respond, thereby reducing 'interviewer effect'. Judd et al (1991, p. 244-247) supports this contention, noting that placing questions within a sequence or topic serves to ease the "respondent's task in answering" and can reduce bias, particularly if the questions are grouped contextually.

Judd states that "respondents are frequently confused and angered if questions skip around from topic to topic", advocating that:

clear and meaningful transitions between topics that point out the relevance of the new topic to the study purpose are essential. At a minimum, transitional statements signal that one topic has been completed and that a new one is coming up. (p.245)

A non-scheduled standardised interview was used to administer the second, affective questionnaire two weeks after the closed-ended questionnaire. This approach permitted flexibility in the posing of particular questions thus allowing the interview to be less formal and more "responsive", whilst still allowing results to be enumerated. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 119)

This method was used as it was considered the most efficient means to gather data in the short time available and had several concomitant advantages:

- * ensured that the response rate was as close as possible to 100 per cent;
- * reduced the possibility of 'interviewer effect' or respondent reticence;
- * enabled the interviewer to notice and correct misunderstandings and probe unclear or vague responses;

- * permitted the interviewer an opportunity to establish credibility and rapport in order to motivate the respondents to provide accurate responses;
- * provided two sets of data for comparison to abet the accuracy and completeness of responses. (Judd, et al, 1991, p.228-260; Blackmore, 1990).

Judd et al (1991, p.253) provides a framework of the processes "needed to generate good (ie complete and valid) data in the interview." These include whether or not the respondent can understand what is being asked, has knowledge of the subject or topic and is willing to respond. The comprehensibility of the topic is largely determined by the design of the questionnaire, as is accessibility of recall (see earlier comments). The interviewer alone is responsible for motivation and the avoidance of misleading responses.

Hosie (1986) notes that researchers should "maintain an open mind" in interviews as respondents may reply using language appropriate to their "social roles, norms, values and goals", a point also noted by Judd et al (1991, p.255) who states:

The interviewer's job is fundamentally that of a reporter, not an evangelist, a curiosity seeker, or a debater. Interviewers should take all opinions in stride and never show surprise or disapproval of a respondent's answer. They should assume an interested manner towards the respondent's opinions and never divulge their own.

Hosie (1986) notes that a problem with interview research is the misreporting of responses obtained from the interview. This issue was discussed at length with key informants in concert with how to avoid contamination of results with 'interviewer effect'. As a consequence of these discussions it was decided to administer the second, affective questionnaire in a collaborative small group interview. Informants considered that this would reduce bias, relax any respondent who felt ill at ease at being asked to contribute a single response as well as permitting students to debate the issue among themselves. This format was adopted as it was believed it would yield far more reliable and truthful responses than a one to one interview with a white interviewer was likely to elicit. To overcome recording problems each respondent was given the affective questionnaire to record their individual responses. Anonymity of these responses was stressed. The interviewer initiated group discussion by reading out the prescribed question and soliciting debate. As students discussed their responses, the interviewer and a scribe recorded responses from each person on a separate coded data sheet. At the conclusion of the interview these additional data sheets were collated with the completed questionnaire of the appropriate respondent to allow elaboration and clarification of responses for analysis.

Data analysis procedures.

To counter the possibility of what Judd et al (1990, p. 215-218) termed "interviewer effect", (where the respondent answers questions according to how they believe the interviewer wants them to respond) the study used two questionnaires. All results were discussed with one or more key informants. As an additional safeguard, both instruments were administered to a trial group of tertiary-level Aboriginal students under the auspices of a senior Aboriginal academic. Students in the trial group were screened and selected so that their ages and educational experiences were as close as possible to those of the enclave sample group, educational outcome excepted.

Results of the closed-ended questionnaire are presented in a tabular format detailing the question asked and the number of responses received for each category on the Likert Scale. Further detail is given in Chapter Five - Results.

The results for each question are discussed in terms of their compatibility with existing research and significance with regard to the four research questions posed and the hypothesis.

Presentation of data.

To facilitate analysis and interpretation questions asked in the study have been regrouped according to which research question guided their inclusion in the questionnaires. A matrix is provided showing this information for both the closed-ended and the affective questionnaire in the appendices. Appendix D portrays the realignment of the survey content for the closed-ended questionnaire while Appendix F pertains to the affective questionnaire. The results and appropriate statistical analysis of these for the closed-ended questionnaire comprise Appendix E. Consolidated results for the affective questionnaire comprise Appendix G.

As the closed-ended questionnaire collected data using an ordinal scale, and due to the small size of the sample, the tabular format used in Appendix E to display the results is considered the most appropriate as parametric or inferential statistics cannot adequately describe the data. Gay (1987, Ch. 12, Ch.13) explains that the use of parametric or inferential statistics assumes that a large, randomised sample is used, that two or more groups are scored on variables of interest and that data has been gathered using either interval or ratio data. This study was not designed to comply with any of these requirements.

Chapter Five - Results

Caveat.

The study was designed about an existing group of some 30 to 40 Aboriginal students who shared common experiences with regard to mainstream education. As the study progressed however, a process of attrition was observed within the educational enclave 'Small School' from which the sample was derived. This had two effects upon the study. In the first instance, total enrolments in the school reduced from over 60 students to less than 30 for semester two, 1992. Sampling problems were exacerbated by high rates of absenteeism among the remaining cohort. This sharp reduction in numbers severely restricted the number of students in the sample who conformed to the study design, as outlined in page five.

Prior to administering the closed-ended or response-category questionnaire, student profiles were re-examined to ensure that students remaining in the enclave matched the design criteria. Whilst it was anticipated that the sharp decline in enrolment would also reduce the size of the available sample, I was unprepared for the abrupt alteration in student-experience profiles. Only ten of the re-enrolled students in semester two were able to satisfy the design criteria which specified that students had to have either withdrawn from or underachieved in mainstream secondary education. Remaining students were excluded from the study as they either lacked any experience of formal education or had been educated only to primary level in independent schools.

Data Display.

As stated in the previous chapter (p.63), questions contained in the questionnaires have been regrouped under the heading of the appropriate primary research question which guided their inclusion. The matrices which reveal this information are located in the following appendices:

- Appendix D - shows the realignment of content from the closed-ended survey with research questions;
- Appendix E - displays the actual results for each variable examined in the closed-ended questionnaire for both the trial and sample groups;
- Appendix F - shows the realignment of content from the affective questionnaire;
- Appendix G - displays the consolidated results, expressed as a percentage of the combined sample and trial group.

Notes - closed-ended questionnaire.

Reliability calculations for the closed-ended questionnaire:

The closed-ended questionnaires administered to both the sample group and the trial group were scored and subjected to split-half reliability calculations. The Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was applied to the coefficient to give a reliability coefficient of .88 for the response-category questionnaire. As the coefficient is high, the survey may be considered reliable. (Gay, 1987, p.120) Calculations are shown in Appendix C.

The closed-ended survey was administered individually to subjects after the administrator had read aloud the instructions specified in the questionnaire. These were similar for both questionnaires and may be viewed in the frontispiece to the questionnaires which comprise appendices A and B.

The following notes will aid interpretation of Appendix E:

1. number of subjects in trial group : 5
2. number of subjects in sample group : 10
3. performance of each group on each variable is determined according to the following chart of values assigned to choices:

always	: 5 if +, 1 if - item
usually	: 4 2
sometimes	: 3 3
not often	: 2 4
never	: 1 5
4. range of possible scores on each variable:

- trial group	: highest = 25 (N=5x5)
	: lowest = 5 (N=5x1)
- sample group	: highest = 50 (N=10x5)
	: lowest = 10 (n=10x1)
5. performance by each group on each variable is determined by scoring individual responses and calculating the group's mean. The mean is rounded up if over .6 and rounded down if under .5.

Notes - affective questionnaire.

Like the closed-ended survey, variables included in the affective questionnaire were guided by the four research questions outlined earlier.

(pp.6 & 50)

This instrument was administered in a small-group situation in a semi-structured manner, as discussed in Chapter Four - Methodology (p.59-61), as the key informants believed that the increased flexibility afforded by this approach would offset any possibility of contamination of results due to the previously cited (p.57) 'interviewer effect'. They also agreed that the interview format was likely to be less threatening to individuals and that the use of a forum could promote and stimulate a wider variety of more accurate responses than would be possible in a traditional one-to-one interview. This proved to be the case in this study.

The semi-structured approach was also selected as it permitted more questions to be asked about variables relating to part c. of the statement of hypothesis (p.6) and the concept 'big shame' (p.39-41). Apart from the inclusion of these additional questions, the content of the affective questionnaire closely replicated that of the closed-ended survey. The format differed, however, in that the respondents were asked to explain or elaborate their views on certain issues and provided with an opportunity to comment on any aspect of the questionnaire, study or in regard to the provision of education to Aboriginals in general.

Consolidated results for both questionnaires.

Results for the closed-ended survey are detailed in Appendix B to this report and results for the affective questionnaire are displayed in Appendix G. Both appendices display the results for each variable grouped under the primary research questions (p. 6 & 50).

The results from the closed-ended questionnaire for both the trial and sample groups were combined by calculating the mean score for each variable in order to determine the most common descriptor selected by the students from the Likert Scale. The results of the affective questionnaire provide explanation and elaboration where appropriate and are expressed in terms of the percentage of the students who responded to each variable.

The results for each research question are presented below.

Research question 1.

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

1. Learning style preferences:

The results indicate this group of Aboriginal students usually prefers to learn using a combination of auditory input (mean score 4.2) and individual work (mean score 3.8). Cooperative group learning (mean score 3.5), concrete or tactile activities (mean score 3.5), reading (mean score 3.3) and observation and imitation (mean score 3.1) were preferred sometimes.

It should be noted that whilst both the trial and sample group exhibited like preferences for auditory input, individual work, reading, observation and imitation, in their separate results some variance exists between the groups in regard to their preferences for tactile manipulation of learning materials and working in groups.

Related to the above, students were asked if they thought teachers in government secondary schools were able to cater for students' preferred ways of learning by presenting lesson content in a variety of ways. The combined results (mean score 2.7) indicate this occurs only sometimes. The trial group (separate mean score 2.2) indicated a response of not often. Students believed that they would usually be better students if allowed freedom to choose teaching methods that suited them (mean score 4.2).

2. Teacher expectations:

The results for both groups (mean score 3.9) indicate a belief that teachers are usually willing to assist any Aboriginal students experiencing difficulties in class. Unfortunately this assistance, in their perception, does not seem to be guaranteed if Aboriginal students fall behind in classwork. The combined results (mean score 3.3) indicate a view that teachers are only sometimes willing to assist students to catch up lost work. It is interesting to note however that the trial group was more negative (mean score 2.4), indicating a response of 'not often'.

It is also worth considering the results for this question in concert with the results of the question concerning absenteeism below.

3. Absenteeism:

In response to a question about absenteeism and its effect on academic performance contained in the affective questionnaire, 38 percent of students indicated they were often absent and that this resulted in low academic performance as "nothing got done."

4. 'Big shame':

The closed-ended questionnaire did not make direct reference to the concept to avoid leading the respondents, instead asking them to respond to questions couched in terms of situations where they might feel embarrassed or anxious. The combined results show that Aboriginal students usually feel embarrassed or ashamed if they are unable to do a task (mean score 2.5 - reverse scored item) and that feelings of anxiety generated because of uncertainty about what is expected of them usually affects their school work (mean score 2.4 - reverse scored item). Asked the same question in the affective questionnaire, 76 percent of the students indicated that their school work was affected by feelings of anxiety induced as a consequence of uncertainty about what teachers expect. Some students (24%) stated that they experienced shame and embarrassment and tended to remain shy and quiet as they were "too scared to ask their teacher" for guidance in case they were ridiculed by their peers.

Errata:

Due to an error in pagination, this manuscript does not contain a page numbered 71. Any inconvenience created for readers is regretted.

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Some (24%) expressed a concern that teachers ceased to encourage their efforts. Others (12%) indicated that they felt that some teachers held negative stereotypes, believing Aboriginal students to be "dumb", whilst (24%) simply replied "can you meet them?".

These perceptions are further corroborated by the responses in the affective questionnaire which sought student perceptions of the concept 'big shame' and elaboration as to how these perceptions affected school performance. All students (100%) replied "embarrassment", providing the following elaborations: as a consequence of a teacher singling them out as an individual (12%); having a lack of knowledge displayed to a class by an insensitive teacher (24%); failing at something (12%) and being forced to do a task the student was uncertain about how to perform (52%).

As a further check, the affective questionnaire asked students in what circumstances might they feel embarrassed at school. The outcomes varied: 24 percent said "not knowing what was expected [of them] in class"; "white teachers discussing Aboriginal issues" (12%); public display of failure resulting in class ridicule (12%); being forced to make oral presentations before a class or group (24%); and being "picked on" by other students due to "colour" (12%).

5. Family support:

Parents or family only sometimes helped students with their homework (mean score 3.1), providing little motivation for students to perform academically. When asked how their parents' attitude to education affected their school performance 12 percent said "not at all". The majority (52%) replied that the impact of these attitudes was significant "as support and encouragement [was] needed to get higher education otherwise no effort." Others (24%) said their attitudes reflected those of their parents "who had no education" and that "parents don't push kids to do homework" (12%).

6. Student perceptions about lack of academic success of some

Aboriginal children:

The affective questionnaire asked students to give their views as to why Aboriginal students may not do well at schoolwork in government schools. The question was included only after extensive discussion with informants as to whether or not they believed it could affront the self-concept of the students. To avoid any possibility of the students reacting adversely, the wording was depersonalized to embrace all Aboriginal students, seeking a general view rather than a personal one. Two significant reasons emerged: the school curriculum "doesn't cater for Aboriginal students" (38%) and lack of parental or familial support (38%). Other explanations included: prejudice from other students (24%); the influence of "disinterested peers" (12%); general complexity of language demands (12%); poor teacher/student relationships (12%) and a belief that Aboriginal students were "streamed into low ability classes due to ethnicity" (12%).

Research question 2.

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

1. Career aspirations.

The affective questionnaire asked students to nominate the type of employment they desired after leaving school. Their career choices were categorised as follows:

- those requiring professional awards ; 52%
- those requiring specific work-place
skills - skilled non-professional ; 24%
- those requiring post-compulsory
education training - trades ; 12%
- those requiring no specific skills/
unskilled ; 12%

They were also asked what skills they thought they would need to be able to obtain these jobs:

- management/accounting qualifications; 52%
- reading and writing skills ; 38%
- knowledge of Aboriginal/political
issues ; 12%
- science background ; 12%

Half of the students thought that they would possess these skills when they left school. The students believed that good school results would enable them to get the job they desired (mean score 4.2).

A unanimous 'no' (100%) was recorded in response to a question asking students if they thought that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals have equal employment opportunities and 88 percent indicated that this belief affected their attitude towards education:

- serves as a motivational factor
towards higher achievement ; 50%
- believe that acquiring education is
a waste of effort because of racism ; 50%

2. Subject preferences.

Data was sought from the students about the subjects they liked in the closed-ended questionnaire. The affective questionnaire asked students to give reasons as to why a subject was either liked or disliked. The results are presented in the order they were presented in the closed-ended survey:

- English (mean score 3.9 - usually liked):

62 percent of the students indicated that they liked this subject, citing such reasons as they were "good at it" (12%); "enjoyed it" (38%) or because they liked reading for "personal pleasure" (12%). 24 percent said they disliked the subject because it was "boring" (12%) or because they "couldn't spell" (12%).

- maths (mean score 3.2 - sometimes liked):

24 percent of the students liked maths as they were "good at it" (12%) or "able to understand it" (12%). 62 percent disliked it as they "weren't good at it" (38%); found it "boring" (12%) or "too hard" (12%).

- social studies (mean score 3.2 - sometimes liked):

48 percent said they disliked this subject, citing the following explanations: "due to bias in dealing with Aboriginal issues (24%); "boring" (12%) or due to lack of "relevance or purpose" (12%).

- science (mean score 2.9 - sometimes liked):

As for social studies above, students did not list this subject as liked. The trial group result reflected this, indicating 'not often' (mean score 2.2). 38 percent said they disliked science as it was boring and lacked relevance.

- industrial arts (mean score 2.6 - sometimes liked):

Only 24% indicated that they liked the subject because they were either "interested" (12%) or as it was "hands on" learning (12%). 12% disliked it as they "were no good at it".

- physical education (mean score 4 - usually liked):

Easily the most popular subject with an approval rating of 88 percent. Students usually liked physical education and sports as they believed they were "good at it" (24%); "enjoyed it" (52%) or were "interested" (12%). The trial group said they always liked physical education (mean score 4.6).

- Health (mean score 3.6 - usually liked):

The trial group indicated that they liked the subject only sometimes (mean score 3).

- art (mean score 3.7 - usually liked):

Only 24 percent of students nominated art as a preferred subject in the affective questionnaire as it was "hands on". 12 percent disliked it as they felt they were "no good at it".

- business studies/typing:

52 percent of the students said they liked these subjects as they either related to their "career choice" or because they were "good at it".

Students in both groups indicated a belief that they would usually be better students if they could choose the subjects they wanted to learn (mean score 3.8).

3. Textbooks:

Students completing the affective questionnaire were asked to indicate which subject textbooks were the most difficult for them to read and understand and give reasons for any difficulties experienced. Maths textbooks (76%) were judged to be the hardest to comprehend due to a high degree of abstraction and difficulty. 50 percent of the students criticised English texts, saying that the language was generally too complex.

The results were similar for both science texts (50%) and social studies texts (38%), with students criticising both for having language and content which was too complex and abstract for them to understand.

4. Boredom:

Students were asked if they became disruptive in class as a consequence of boredom. Both groups indicated they sometimes became disruptive when bored (mean score 2.7).

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

1. Teacher/student relationships:

All students surveyed indicated that they were inclined to try harder if they liked their teacher. A related question in the closed-ended survey found that students sometimes tended not to try in subjects where they disliked the teacher (mean score 2.9).

2. Peers:

Students were asked if their behaviour and attitude to schoolwork was influenced by what their friends thought of school. The combined results show that peers have an ability to influence their behaviour and attitude sometimes (mean score 3.5). The separate results for the sample group recorded 'not often' (mean score 3.7). A majority of the students (76%) thought that Aboriginal students worked better in groups as they shared a common background and had similar understandings or were more cooperative than non-Aboriginal students (52%).

Others (24%) said that working in groups was their "culturally preferred way of doing things." It is interesting to note however that the combined group felt that they only sometimes worked better among groups of their friends (mean score 3.5).

All students said that they had no difficulty in establishing relationships with other Aboriginal students in government schools and a majority (76%) said that they had no difficulty in establishing relationships with non-Aboriginal students. All students agreed that being able to form relationships with other students was important to them as "cooperation and support makes school more comfortable" (76%), or gave them an opportunity to "change attitudes towards Aborigines" (24%).

3. Preference for Aboriginal-only classes:

The results indicate that the group believed that they would usually be better students in classes comprising only other Aboriginal students (mean score 3.9).

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

1. Pedagogic practices:

Students were asked if classroom teachers treated Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students the same. The combined results from the closed-ended survey suggest a perception that teachers only sometimes treat Aboriginal students similarly to non-Aboriginal students (mean score 2.9).

The trial group was more condemnatory, indicating a response of 'not often' (separate mean score 2.0). Results from the affective questionnaire confirm these perceptions and a majority of the students (62%) indicated a belief that teachers had treated them differently to non-Aboriginal students. Asked to elaborate, 38 percent felt that they had been treated differently as a consequence of low teacher expectations. Others (24%) described discriminatory talk, attitudes and behaviour exhibited by teachers.

Somewhat paradoxically, the results of both questionnaires suggest that teachers usually expect Aboriginal students to produce the same quality of work as non-Aboriginal students (mean score 4.0) although, again the trial group was more pessimistic, indicating that this was only sometimes the case (separate mean score 3.4). The affective questionnaire yielded a majority view (76%) that teacher expectations were balanced. The negative responses (24%) indicate a belief that some teachers "usually forced [Aboriginal students] into remedial classes (12%) or "expected [them] to be good at sport not academic work" (12%).

Teachers only sometimes used materials which treated Aboriginality positively in the perception of the students (mean score 2.7). The trial group indicated a 'not often' response (separate mean score 1.8).

2. Discipline:

Students were asked if they believed that they received the same penalty for an offence as did a non-Aboriginal student for the same offence. The combined results suggest that this is usually the case (mean score 3.7) although the trial group felt that this occurred only sometimes (separate mean score 3.2).

Half the students felt that school discipline policies were not generally fair to all students, with 38 percent claiming that they "don't cater for black diversity and needs" and 12 percent stating that they "don't consider Aboriginal learning styles". Of the remaining students, 38 percent felt that the policies were fair and 12 percent were unsure.

3. Prejudice from other students:

A majority of the students (62%) believed that non-Aboriginal students were prejudiced against Aboriginal students, suggesting that this prejudice exists "because of ignorance of [our] culture...[and] lifestyles" (50%) or because of Aboriginal ways of living and "inability to do well at school" (12%).

Additional comments:

The affective questionnaire provided students with an opportunity to comment about any aspect of the study or their educational experiences. Not all students elected to comment but the unedited comments of those who did follow:

- * YES, I was angered at not being taught about the wiping out of Aboriginal people in the early days. We all grew up thinking that the white colonists had it hard. Bullshit. Start balancing the content of what is taught then maybe white people will understand why we are in the situation we are in and help Aboriginal people to understand as well.
- * Biggest problem was lack of support or encouragement from both family and teachers.
- * Education has mislead (sic) Aboriginal people. They don't focus on our language, history, culture, tribal groups, environment, conservation - [the] curriculum alienates Aboriginal students because they have misplace (sic) our cultural philosophy within social studies.
- * They should help combat racism from non-Aboriginal students towards Aboriginal students in the school/community. They should incorporate into the academic aspect; teaching of Aboriginal culture is history, especially Australian history - and the Aboriginal side of it.
- * It is essential to have Aboriginal history introduced into government and private schools.
- * I think that schools need an Equal Opportunities Officer to prevent Noongars (sic) being picked on.

Chapter Six - Discussion

Limitations of this study.

A number of limitations concerning the results of this study are evident:

- a. firstly, the students comprising the sample group have all experienced a lack of success (as defined p.42-43) in mainstream education and cannot be regarded, without further empirical data, as being representative of all secondary Aboriginal pupils in W.A. government secondary schools;
- b. despite the controls outlined in Chapter Four, the students may still have matched their responses according to their perceptions of the expectations of the interviewer. Further empirical research will be needed to determine the accuracy of responses obtained in this study before the results may be generalised to include the wider Aboriginal student population contained in the W.A. secondary education system;
- c. the students in the sample group have all elected to return to school in order to obtain academic qualifications and their attitudes and values may not be representative of other groups of Aboriginal students. Further research is needed.

- d. due to circumstances which could not be foreseen or controlled for, the sample group numbers are very small and as a consequence some distortion in the results is possible.

Notwithstanding these obvious limitations which suggest that the results be approached with caution, a number of points have emerged from the study which warrant further investigation in order to determine their wider impact on educational achievement by Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal student enrolment statistics.

This section serves to establish a context with which to begin to discuss some of the issues and concerns which emerge from the data given in Chapter Five. Statistics are presented which illustrate the relative obscurity of Aboriginal students in the overall education system.

In 1991, official figures indicate that there were 10720 Aboriginal students enrolled in W.A. government schools, representing 4.35 percent of the total government school enrolment. Of these, 2843 Aboriginal students were enrolled in government secondary schools, representing 1.15 percent of total government school enrolments. There were 3343 Aboriginal students enrolled in schools in the Perth Metropolitan Area, representing 1.36 percent of the total school enrolments or 1.51 percent of the population of these city schools. (Education Statistics Bulletin 14/91)

The W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission (1990, p.6) estimated that some 4000 Aboriginal students were located in remote communities. If this figure is accepted (it is disputed by the W.A. Education Ministry), it is possible to calculate that about one third of enrolled Aboriginal students are situated in predominantly traditional communities; approximately another one third are resident in the Perth area and the remaining one third are located in W.A. rural districts. These figures convey implications concerning the appropriacy of pedagogic practices.

The figures clearly demonstrate that Aboriginal students are likely to be a minority in most government schools and it may be reasonable to infer that nearly two thirds of the enrolled Aboriginal students live in areas in which Aboriginal people have had a significant amount of contact with white society. Assumptions that the near two thirds of rural/urban Aboriginal students living in such communities, in which the traditional culture has been largely disintegrated by the white protectionist policies of the assimilation era, are best served by pedagogic strategies which imitate 'traditional styles of learning' (Harris 1980) must be regarded with suspicion. Thornbury (1955) stated that a key tenet of assimilationist policies was that "assimilation does not mean suppression of the Aboriginal culture but rather that, for generation after generation, cultural adjustment will take place." (cited in Green, 1986, p.9). Educational implications of this process of acculturation will be discussed presently.

The W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission (1990, p.8) expressed concern at the "disparity between the retention rates and in the rate of improvement of those rates since 1982 for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children". Education Ministry figures for 1989 show that the Year 12 retention rates for Aboriginal students was 9.9 percent of the secondary enrolment. If this percentage is extrapolated to the 1991 secondary enrolment of 2843 Aboriginal students, then approximately 360 Aboriginal students achieve secondary graduation - 0.46 percent of total secondary enrolments. For non-Aboriginal students, the retention rate was identified as 49.8 percent - approximately 37800 students or 48 percent of total secondary enrolments. The same figures, supplied to the commission by the W.A. Education Ministry, show that most Aboriginal students "dropped out" between Years 10 and 11 however a large number also exit the system after Years 8 and 9 and that increasing numbers are leaving "at this very early age." (W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission, p. 8-9) Some reasons why Aboriginal children may underachieve in or elect to leave mainstream education will now be discussed in the light of the results of this study.

Discussion and implications of the results of this study.

Learning style preferences:

A fundamental tenet of those advocating cultural differences as the underlying reason for academic underachievement by Aboriginal children is a belief that the learning style preferences of these children are culturally determined or culturally bound. Christie (1985, p.45) reviews the findings of Harris (1980) to allege that Aboriginal children tend to learn informally:

- * through "observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction";
- * through "personal trial and error rather than through verbal instruction and demonstration";
- * through "real-life activities rather than practice in contrived settings";
- * in "context-specific" learning situations;
- * as they are "person oriented rather than information oriented".

Implications for pedagogic practice derived from these informal styles of learning are reported in detail by Christie (1986) in a paper which compares the requirements of formal, Western-style education to traditional practice. He also relates these learning style differences to a need to "Aboriginalize" post-primary curricula in a later paper. (Christie, 1988)

Similar issues are discussed by the principal researcher in this field, Harris (1984), in his paper *Aboriginal learning styles and formal schooling*. Harris (1984) summarises traditional learning style preferences as:

learning by *observation*
 by *doing*
 by *imitation*
 by *personal trial and error*
 by *real-life performance*
 by *persistence and repetition*

however cautions teachers against simply accepting these as "some misunderstandings and misconceptions have developed", stressing at length that teachers must progressively attune Aboriginal students to the requirements of mainstream education and synthesize or blend informal styles of learning into the classroom in conjunction with more rigid, Western styles of learning. Similarly, Christie (1985, p.53-61) provides an excellent comparison between traditional learning styles and the demands of mainstream education which requires what Christie describes as "purposeful learning behaviour", typified by an ability to abstract "symbolic representations of the outside world." He contends that formal education may be distinguished from informal or traditional education in several ways: formal learning is "abstracted from the 'real life' setting" to become what Cummins (1990) describes as "context-reduced" and "cognitively demanding"; it is "dependant upon language" which is also "decontextualised", being the "almost exclusive means of exchanging information" and it is always "consciously mediated" - learners must accept the teacher's goals and seek to attain them. (Christie, 1985, p.54-55).

Christie (1985, p.54-55) makes the point that many of these so-called traditional learning styles become dysfunctional when children attempt to apply them in western classrooms. He contends that many teachers "fail to recognize this, and label their Aboriginal students lazy, unmotivated, retarded or deprived, depending on how they respond to the unfamiliar demands of school."

Harris (1984) agrees:

The Aboriginal learning system is not a functional learning system for everything that needs to be learned in school. Whether a formal or informal style fits the task best is dependant on the nature of what is to be learnt, more than on the students' cultural affiliations.

He provides a detailed analysis of shortcomings observed among teachers attempting to implement teaching strategies which they believe encompass informal learning styles and which, unfortunately, become an excuse for lackadaisical pedagogy. Harris suggests that teachers use a model involving content-process crossover in which teachers move through a number of instructional stages which allow students to experience, explore, experiment and express.

Guider (1988b) and Eckerman (1988b) also caution against unqualified acceptance of 'traditional' learning styles, noting that to institutionalize them, as has occurred in NSW, may:

encapsulate a whole new range of over-generalisations which will serve to lock Aboriginal people into yet another cycle of disadvantage.

Reference was made earlier to a quote from the assimilationist era by Thornbury (1955), cited in Green (1986), in which the goal of assimilation was to promote a process of acculturation, presumably with the intention of ultimately integrating Aboriginals into mainstream Australian society. Interested readers are directed to Hasluck (1961), Mounsey (1979), McConnochie (1982), Haebich (1982) and Green (1986) for an overview of policies of assimilation and integration. The point was made in the light of Harris' (1984) comment that teachers must progressively train Aboriginal students to accept the requirements of mainstream education. The results of this study suggest that this process of acculturation is well underway, among the group surveyed at least.

Both Christie (1985) and Harris (1984) stress that learning through verbal interaction is not a feature of informal or 'traditional' learning style preferences. Harris (1980, 1984) and Christie (1985), in particular, also stress the cooperative nature of Aboriginal learning styles. Christie (1988) enlarges upon this principle, advocating that Aboriginals learn through 'unity': "because there is unity in the group, unity in the ideas they are sharing, unity through the time they are spending interacting together", learning is a "group experience". The results of this study do not support these views.

The students indicated that their preferred learning strategies were, in fact, auditory input - ie, verbal interaction - and individual work. This suggests that a process of change, or acculturation, has occurred or is occurring in which Aboriginal students are now becoming more attuned with the requirements of mainstream education (as identified by Harris, 1984 and Christie, 1985) and are "making the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their future social, economic and political advancement" - the assimilationist agenda proposed by Hasluck (1961). Further studies seem warranted in order to assess whether these learning style preferences are generalisable across the Aboriginal student population as a whole and if they are compatible with those favoured by non-Aboriginal students or if, in fact, the results of this study represent an aberration. For this group at least, if their learning style preferences are in accord with mainstream educational requirements then other factors must be identified to account for Aboriginal educational underachievement.

The students were also asked if they thought teachers varied their teaching styles to cater for students' preferred ways of learning. The results, which suggest that teachers rarely adapt their teaching styles to cater for the different learning strategies favoured by students, must be approached with caution as it is unlikely that students are in a position to accurately judge teachers' professional competencies to determine whether this is the case or not.

The realities of classroom life dictate that competent teachers vary their methodology to sustain the motivation and interest of students and this aspect warrants further investigation to see if the perception reported is justified.

The students also indicated a belief that they would be better students if they could choose teaching methods that suited their learning style preferences. This question was framed in the light of findings emanating from ESL research into aspects of student motivation and empowerment. Dickinson (1987) advocates a policy of student self-instruction which caters for individual differences among student cognitive styles and strategies. She defines cognitive style as "an individual's overall approach to learning, irrespective of the task" whilst cognitive strategy refers to the individual's "approach to specific types of task". Self-instruction refers to the gradual assumption of increasing degrees of responsibility for learning. Stern (1983) is cited by Dickinson (1987) as believing that good learners are likely to use an active planning strategy (the ability to set goals); an academic strategy; a social learning strategy and an effective strategy - the development of positive, self-directed motivation. The successful use of these enables a student to self-assess progress and assume responsibility for learning. Self-instruction, according to Dickinson, allows the teacher to function as a resource, promotes empathy and individualism among learners which reduces competition and provides students with an opportunity to negotiate teaching strategies, resource materials and the curriculum.

To effect such change necessitates some form of student empowerment and Ellis and Sinclair (1989, p.2), again from the ESL discipline, promote a form of self-instruction which they call "learner training."

Learner training is based on the assumption that:

individuals learn in different ways and may use a variety of learning strategies at different times depending on a range of variables, such as the nature of the learning task, mood, motivation levels

with the aim of assisting learners to consider "factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best" in order that they can "become more effective learners" and "take on more responsibility for their own learning." The authors claim that learners can be trained to recognise which strategies they employ to perform certain tasks and can learn to focus on skills which promote the use of these strategies. Teachers would need to negotiate the curriculum, encourage discussion, help learners to recognise the different strategies available to them and create a learning environment "where learners feel they can experiment" before forming "their own conclusions". (Ellis and Sinclair, 1990, p.3-10) These are similar sentiments to those expressed by Harris (1984) earlier when his "content-process crossover" model was briefly discussed.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p.160-161) support the teaching "to different learning strategies" but qualify their support by suggesting that "in learning strategy instruction, students probably need assistance and additional practice in those learning strategies that may not be closely allied to their natural learning styles."

The authors cite the findings of Paris (1988) to support this view, identifying four specific instructional techniques which aid and develop motivation and cognitive strategy instruction. These include:

- * modeling, in which the expert (the teacher) demonstrates to the novice (the student) how to use the strategy, often by thinking aloud about the goals and mental processes involved;
- * direct explanation, in which the teacher provides a persuasive rationale of benefits expected from use of strategies, so that students become convinced of their own potential success;
- * scaffolding instruction, in which the teacher provides temporary support to students as they try out the new strategies; and
- * cooperative learning, in which heterogeneous student teams work together to solve a problem or complete a task. (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.161)

Both Ellis and Sinclair (1989, p.10) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p.186) stress that teaching students to use a range of cognitive learning strategies in order to develop self-instruction responsibilities involves "a considerable investment of time" and that any changes would be "gradual and the teacher should not expect instant results".

Cummins (1986) has also investigated the process of empowering minority-group students to "reverse the pattern of minority student failure", arguing that such students are either "empowered or disabled as a direct consequence of their interactions with educators in the schools." Cummins and MacKay (1990) report findings which clearly show that if teachers modify the content they present to students and their style of presentation, it is through a process they term "task reduction". "Task reduction" means that teachers resort to the use of activities termed by both Christie (1985) and Folds (1984, 1987, 1988) as "busywork."

Task-reduced activities or busywork tends to be "cognitively undemanding" and "context-embedded". Context-embedded simply means that teachers ask students to perform tasks that they know "from experience" they can do and which permit "most members of the class to participate with the minimum of embarrassment." The researchers note that this process "does not seek to instruct" and "eventually fossilizes into simple, mechanical tasks which do not challenge the students either cognitively or linguistically." The area of learner training, processes of empowerment, and enabling students to match their preferred learning styles to a modified and negotiated curriculum would seem to warrant a longitudinal study as little or no Australian research seems to exist in this regard.

Teacher expectations:

The effect of teacher expectations and how they adapt their teaching strategies has been introduced in the discussion of Cummins' and MacKay's (1990) research above. The students in the study indicated a perception that teachers are usually willing to assist students experiencing difficulty with content. Teachers appear less willing to help students catch up with arrears of classwork and this may, in part, be attributable to feelings of frustration due to the high rates of absenteeism reported in the literature and by the students in this study. The consequences of low teacher expectations for Aboriginal students will be discussed in future pages within the context of discriminatory practices.

Absenteeism:

38 percent of the students studied indicated that they were frequently absent from school and that this resulted in lowered academic performance. Regrettably, the study failed to ask these students to explain the reasons for their absences and, hence, is unable to relate absenteeism to theories of resistance or alienation suggested by Folds (1984, 1987). A longitudinal research study is needed to assess reasons for the periods of absence reported in the literature in order to determine if these are due to culturally defined kinship obligations, social conditions, alienation or resistance to white education, overt racism from teachers or other students or peer pressure. As this study neglected to seek clarification of the reasons for the absenteeism reported among the students, it is inappropriate to make inferences which cannot be supported.

'Big shame':

The results show that Aboriginal students experience 'shame' or embarrassment in a number of situations, supporting the findings of Harkins (1990) that the concept is an elaborate one not easily defined or confined to one meaning. As Harkins reported, the term embraces feelings of embarrassment and anxiety and the study shows that these feelings have the potential to greatly affect academic performance.

The students reported feeling shame, embarrassment or anxiety in a variety of situations as a consequence of:

- being unable to perform a task expected by a teacher;
- a fear of asking teachers for advice in situations where they were uncertain as to what was expected from them in case of peer ridicule;
- being confronted with racist sentiments;
- being singled out before their peers;
- having their lack of knowledge about something publicly displayed;
- a fear that failure will result in peer ridicule;
- performing oral presentations in public;
- white teachers discussing Aboriginal culture and issues;
- adverse teacher expectations.

The possibility exists that some of these variables are likely to contribute to feelings of alienation which may lead to absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from school. Harkins (1990) provides a detailed analysis of Aboriginal perceptions of the concept, linking and reviewing the research of Harris (1984), Kaldor and Malcolm (1982) and others who have commented on this complex emotional concept, to show that the term is indicative of a major cultural difference.

The study of Eagleson et al (1979, p.165, 180) has been previously discussed in the review of literature, as have findings of Malin (1989). Both studies reported socio-linguistic behaviours exhibited by Aboriginal students in classrooms which may be manifestations of cultural differences, as reported by Harris (1977, 1980) and Christie (1985), or resistance as suggested by Folds (1984, 1987). These researchers have all noted and reported certain behaviours, including:

- * a reluctance to respond to questioning when isolated as an individual before the class;
- * inaudible responses when forced by the teacher to respond in such instances;
- * a fear of giving an incorrect response because of peer censure; and
- * reserving a right not to respond.

The results of this study are in accord with the above behaviours. Malcolm (1979) found that Aboriginal students are likely to show a reluctance to respond in situations in which they are either unsure of what they are expected to do or must answer questions, the reply to which becomes a public statement before their peers. Eagleson et al (1982, p. 144-145) replicated these observations, suggesting that the reticence exhibited in threatening situations (Chadbourne, 1984) was multi-faceted:

One force has to do with fear: Aborigines, especially as they grow older, often become conscious of their minority and despised status in the community...most children have emotional scars of mistreatment: there is a difference then to venture: the classroom can be seen as threatening and even the good teacher can be regarded as a figure of a not-too-benign authority

The authors noted that a "natural fear of failure, of making oneself ridiculous" was partly connected to a tendency to "undervalue oneself", which was sourced in the realistic perception that they were often "less competent than the other students in the class because of absences". A further impacting factor was peer pressure not to excel, "not to surpass one's fellow Aborigines" which resulted in students holding back for the "social comfort" of others. These findings are interesting and tend to support the research of Obgu (1974, 1985), reviewed earlier (p.27-34), into the social practices of "castelike minorities" which exhibit secondary cultural differences as a consequence of social alienation. This leads, ultimately, to resistance to white cultural transmission and, therefore, to white education.

This is the basis for the resistance theory proposed by Folds, (1987, p. 38-73), who argues that a "sharpening of cultural differences" is a manifestation of resistance which ultimately results in teachers becoming defensive - they develop "coping strategies" which with to counter resistance - and these, in turn, inevitably lead to lowered expectations that the students will learn and the adoption of "busywork" which "simulates educational activity" yet guarantees poor educational outcomes. This aspect has been discussed previously within the context of bi-cultural educational research findings reported by Cummins and MacKay (1990).

There is some research evidence which may support theories that social alienation results in resistance to white education. Snow and Noble (1986) studied urban Aboriginal self images and the "new pride in being Aboriginal" to determine Aboriginal perceptions about their image, as projected by the mass media. They noted that "whites are used as reference but in a negative or inverse sense. They therefore seek to be unlike... whites who nevertheless remain as models of what not to be like", the process therefore "suggesting rejection of white values."

Similarly, Eckerman (1988a) found that many Aboriginals found it "difficult to cope with feelings of insecurity and inferiority when relating to the non-Aboriginal majority" and exhibit behaviours such as "shyness, continual worry, xenophobia and inadequacy" and attributes these feelings to the pressure exerted on self-image by "social exclusion" practices. Her thoughts echo the sentiments of Chadbourne (1984), who argued that whilst Aboriginal children may seem to suffer from a lack of self-concept or self-esteem, they in fact hold "positive views of their potential ability", a belief supported by the findings of Jordan (1984). Eckerman (1988b) seems to believe that processes of resistance - she terms it "reactive counter culture" - may signify a process of "pro-active adaptation" or "voluntary separatism" which promotes Aboriginality as a "distinct socio-cultural" entity which is "different yet equal within mainstream society". As Berndt and Berndt (1988, p.1x) note, the "convergence" of Aboriginal culture with that of "mainstream Australian-European culture" is an inevitable fact.

The results of this section of the study must be regarded as inconclusive and the issue of whether or not 'big shame' is simply a manifestation of cultural difference or if, in fact, it signifies a process of resistance must be the subject of further research into the self-concept and self-esteem of Aboriginal children as compared to non-Aboriginal children. The behaviours ascribed are exhibited by most children who underachieve not merely those from minority groups. (Brophy, 1989; Hunter and Barker, 1989; Sagor, 1989; Marshall, 1990) As Harkins (1990) notes, it seems clear that 'big shame' involves "a desire to avoid potential wrongdoing and bad consequences" and seems to be a manifestation of fear more than any thing else. This fear and the resultant feelings of inadequacy seem to signal that "Aboriginal students' unfamiliarity with what school learning" entails places them at a disadvantage when compared to students from higher socio-economic groups. (Malin 1989, 183, 191-194, 645)

Family support:

The results suggest that Aboriginal students receive little encouragement or assistance from their parents or family members with regard to educational achievement, particularly homework. 38 percent of the sample nominated lack of parental support as a contributing factor towards the lack of academic success of some Aboriginal students, supporting the results of Baker and Stevenson (1986) who found that the parents of children from low-socio-economic groups were less likely to monitor, reward and encouragement their child's academic performance.

Mickleson (1990), using a reproduction theory proposed by Ogbu (1974), found that minority group students reflect the "lived experiences" of their families: "People in my family haven't been treated fairly at work no matter how much education they have" and that these beliefs and attitudes lead to a lowered commitment to education as a means of social advancement. U.S. researcher Maeroff (1989) puts the same view differently:

Urban black students, in particular, are surrounded by failure, both in and out of school. Normally they see but a few examples of success, except possibly in sports...and illicit activities. Their sense of the future is stunted and, unlike more advantaged youngsters, it does not include academic achievement

noting that parental support at home is usually lacking and that homework is often done in class time. Similarly, Clifton et al (1991) found, in a study of the academic achievement by minority groups, that the expectations "as mediated by perceived parental expectations" had an effect on academic achievement, leading to a conclusion that "social psychological support" was a major source of "ethnic-group differences in academic attainment." Saha (1985) proposed a similar conclusion in his study of relationships between early school leaving, job aspirations and educational attainment of urban Australian youth.

Sagor (1989), Brophy (1990) and Marshall (1990) all link educational failure to a lack of motivation to achieve as a consequence of diminished self-concept or support, suggesting that the most urgent need for such students is that teachers have high expectations and attainable goals which enable "discouraged" students to experience success.

These researchers contend that discouraged or alienated youth can be remotivated by allowing them some control of the curriculum, their preferred learning styles and recommend that teachers alter their pedagogic practices to include frequent activity changes, mixed-ability grouping, appropriate levels of challenge in content in non-competitive and supportive classrooms. These recommendations are closely related to and in accord with models of self-instruction and student empowerment discussed earlier. A comparative research study between a control classroom and that advocated would be useful in Australian research to determine the effectiveness of such recommendations within Aboriginal education. These researchers all note that the expectations that teachers hold of their students' ability is an important variable.

Student perceptions about lack of academic success of some Aboriginal children:

Again, one of the major reasons cited by the students for lack of academic success is a lack of parental/familial support. This has been discussed. Another significant reason cited was a perception that mainstream curriculum "doesn't cater for Aboriginal students. This will be discussed shortly. Other reasons, such as language complexity, the effect of peers, teacher expectations and prejudice impact on other research questions and will, therefore, be discussed within the context of research questions which follow.

Career aspirations:

All the students reported career aspirations and nearly three quarters stipulated a career choice requiring some form of tertiary training. Half the students believed that they would possess the skills required to obtain these jobs after school or further education. The students perceived that good academic results would enable them to attain their preferred job options yet, paradoxically, indicated that they felt that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals did not have equal job opportunities. Half the students reported that this perception sharpened their motivation towards attaining higher academic qualifications whilst the other half felt that acquiring education was likely to be a waste of time because of racism.

Australian research into the "attitude-achievement paradox"

(Mickelson, 1990) is scarce, however Jordan (1984) touched on this aspect in her study of perceptions of Aboriginality:

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students came very close together in support of those statements which touched on the value of schooling, both in itself and as a means to employment. For the majority of respondents, schooling was valued in itself and was seen as connected with obtaining a job. There was obviously a high degree of positive belief in the value of schooling, and in the interest of teachers. There was a positive attitude to the possibility of getting a job, with a high proportion rejecting accepting ending up on the dole (sic), a surprising response in view of the present [1984] high unemployment rate. Withdrawal, giving up hope, was rejected by the majority of the group.

Jordan (1984) found, however, that a higher proportion of Aboriginal students "saw themselves as likely to give up when things got hard." Saha (1985) notes that "school leaving is strongly related to academic achievement" and that "both high ability and high aspirations" are necessary "for the completion of secondary schooling" and Year 12 graduation.

Mickelson (1990) reviews U.S. research into minority-group underachievement, "specifically the paradox of consistently positive attitudes towards education, coupled with frequently poor academic achievement, in support of Ogbu's (1974) contention that "black students held favourable attitudes toward education irrespective of their performance". The theoretical underpinnings of Ogbu's (1974, 1985) beliefs have been discussed earlier. (pp.29-34) Mickelson's (1990) study replicated, and verified, the findings of Ogbu (1974) and others who proposed that:

black youths, for quite rational reasons, perceive the opportunity structure differently from middle-class whites and consequently tend to put less effort and commitment into their schoolwork.

Mickelson (1990) argues that such youth:

holds two sets of attitudes to schooling. One set is based on beliefs that education and opportunity...which I call *abstract* attitudes towards education, embody the Protestant ethic's promise of schooling as a vehicle for success and upward mobility...Abstract attitudes, therefore, cannot predict achievement behaviour.

At the same time, students hold a set of beliefs about education: concrete attitudes, which reflect the diverse end realities that people experience with reduced returns on education from the opportunity structure.

Mickelson (1990) believes that "concrete attitudes vary in accordance with their perception and understandings of how adults who are significant in their lives" are rewarded relative to the "job returns" of others. These "concrete" attitudes are therefore a reflection of "material realities in which education may or may not lead to social mobility", derived from a person's experience within their family and community. "Abstract" attitudes are instilled or inculcated by the dominant groups in society and are perpetuated, or "grounded in subordinate educational values". This argument is not new in Australia, having been proposed by McConnochie in 1981.

It is necessary to examine students' perceptions of the relevance and value of educational curricula in order to assess whether this modified resistance theory can be accepted as a credible explanation for Aboriginal underachievement. Empirical research seems desirable to accurately gather and document evidence in order to ascertain whether Mickelson's findings are as valid for Australian Aboriginal students as they appear to be for American blacks.

Elsewhere in this discussion reference has been made to Aboriginal people rejecting aspects of white society; it therefore follows, if Mickelson's (1990) perceptions are correct, that Aboriginal students will resist the cultural transmission of white values, particularly within social studies education.

Student views of curricula:

The results of this study indicate that the student's favourite subjects were physical education, health, English and business studies, with Maths, science, social studies, art and industrial arts the least favoured. Students seemed to like a subject based on whether they were good at it or not - with lack of proficiency resulting in a negative assessment of the subject. In the open question offered in the affective questionnaire, a number of students expressed very strong views concerning their perceptions of white education, singling out social studies for criticism due to a perceived bias with regard to Australia's colonization and a lack of study into aspects of Aboriginal culture and history (p.82), a point noted by Folds (1987, p.90), who criticises social studies curricula:

the vision of social reality presented in these lessons is highly ideological...The hidden curriculum of social studies also suggests suggests there is no conflict between blacks and whites, and, implicitly, no underlying causes for conflict. Instead, the main theme in the version of social studies presented in the [Pitjantjatjaral schools' social studies is that of consensus. Likewise, the Australian history taught in the schools rejects conflict...

Folds (1987, p.92) argues that a curriculum of this nature "dovetails with dependency." For an interesting discussion about issues surrounding values 'education' or inculcation within social studies, readers are directed to an article by Nicklin, Murphy and Abbott (1988) titled *Do we care anymore?*. (The Bulletin, March 22)

It is interesting to note that, of all subjects, only two: science and social studies, were discounted by the students as being of no relevance to them. Sherwood and Jackson (1981, p.235) attributed such perceptions to the fact that curriculum is "oriented totally to the backgrounds, lifestyles and interests of Anglo-Australian children" and advocated the teaching of Aboriginal studies, a point shared by Beazley (1984, p.322, 329-331), Guider (1988b) and the W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission (1990, p.10). Comments made (p.82) by students in this study seem to support this view.

Christie (1988) outlines very sound advice in regard to ways to "Aboriginalize" curriculum, stating that "sometimes the content of the old curriculum was relevant to the immediate needs and interests of the children, sometimes it wasn't. When it wasn't relevant, no-one could change it." He proposes that teachers be more flexible so as to include factors important in Aboriginal learning - "who is involved, where we are, how the people relate to the place, the time...the personal histories of the people involved, etc". He seems to propose an integrated curriculum in which particular skills are taught about a certain learning situation rather than taking "a whole range of situations and looking at them from one particular angle." This approach is similar to that advocated by some of the ESL researchers examined earlier.

Textbooks:

The students generally criticised, to varying degrees, the degree of abstraction of the ideas presented in subject textbooks and the complexity of the language used to express them. This is a difficult issue to address. To simplify the content by reducing the degree of abstraction denigrates learning outcomes and a danger exists that content could become "context-embedded" and "context-reduced" (Cummins and MacKay, 1990), thereby perpetuating the cycle of reduced academic achievement. To do nothing, likewise. Curriculum materials and textbooks represent a considerable financial investment by education authorities and Christie's (1988) suggestion that teachers assume responsibility for modifying curriculum materials to suit the needs of their classes seems the only viable, short-term, alternative.

Interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers:

The students indicated that they tried harder in subjects if they liked the teacher and tended to reduce their efforts in classes where a teacher was disliked. The impact of teacher expectations on educational outcomes is well documented in the literature, (Malin, 1990a & b; Malin, 1989; Mickelson, 1990; Marshall, 1990; Ghail, 1989; Brophy, 1989; Sagor, 1989; Eckerman, 1988b; Clifton et al, 1986; Christie, 1985, 1982; Proctor, 1984; Ogbu, 1974 and Rist, 1970) and the "self-fulfilling prophesy" proposed in 1970 by Good and Brophy (Proctor, 1984) is well known and will not be discussed here.

The issue of concern in this study was whether students perceived they were being treated differently to other students by teachers. It is alarming to note that a majority of the students studied indicated that they considered that teachers had treated them differently, attributing this to low expectations and ethnicity, a perception which corroborates a research study reported by Aisbett (1992) which found that 82 percent of ethnic students reported similar feelings.

Phillips (1990) discusses the performance of Aboriginal children, noting that they are "more likely to work for a sympathetic teacher than for the sake of learning", stressing the importance, as recorded by Harris (1980, 1984) and Christie (1985), of interpersonal relationships to Aboriginals generally. These views are supported by Jenkins (1987), who regards the need for interpersonal relationships as being indicative of cooperative socialisation training; in other words, a cultural difference also described by Christie (1988), using the descriptor "unity".

The results also show that the students felt that teachers expect Aboriginal students to produce work of a quality comparative with that produced by other students. This outcome was unexpected and is somewhat enigmatic when compared with the result above.

It may be possible that perceptions of differential treatment are a by-product of what Malin (1990a) calls the "micro-political processes" operating in a classroom whereby teachers relate to some students and exclude others.

Some students alleged differences as a consequence of discrimination, a situation again widely reported in the literature and, more recently, the press. (See Aisbett, 1992 and Harari (1992) for media reports of racism in schools.)

Proctor (1984) notes that "race, social class and previous achievement" are well-documented sources of differential treatment, a point also noted by Cummins and MacKay (1990), Clifton et al (1986) and a major point of concern expressed by the W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission (1990, p.10). These issues are discussed at length by Henry et al (1988, Ch. 1 & 8) who contends that as teachers are a "microcosm of the wider community", only more diligent supervision by authorities and a greater recognition by teachers that being regarded as a professional requires the assumption of professional responsibilities, including impartiality may alleviate the problem.

Malin's (1989) ethnographic study of an Adelaide classroom showed that attitudes conveyed to other students by a teacher contribute to "social alienation" and feelings of "inadequacy" in children. Clifton et al (1986) also found that teacher's attitudes had a cumulative affect on the interactions between ethnic and non-ethnic students.

What emerges clearly from the research cited above is evidence to suggest that perceptions of low teacher expectation and discriminatory practices contribute to feelings of alienation. A longitudinal ethnographic study of a high school environment in W.A. could assist our understanding of how widespread such practices are in order to propose solutions.

Relationships with peers:

The students reported that their attitudes to school and behaviour were sometimes influenced by attitudes held by their peers and that they sometimes became disruptive in classes if they were bored. Maeroff (1990) notes that teachers are "frequently forced to compete for attention with unruly and disruptive students", arguing that minority-group and "discouraged" students are often locked into a "milieu in which classmates often disparage conscientiousness about school." Maeroff states that the problem is exacerbated by the lack of a "countervailing (sic) force at home", a lack of "enthusiasm among the students" coupled with persistent "negative peer pressure." These findings echo those of Ogbu (1974), discussed earlier, who found that "a fear of being accused of acting white" generated social and psychological pressures which were always counter-productive to the goals of education. Mickelson (1990) reported similar findings, as did Ghaill (1989) and Folds (1987).

Berndt, Laychak and Park (1990) conducted a U.S. study into the ability of friends to influence achievement motivation citing empirical evidence which suggested that "the effects of peer influence can be either negative or positive. Its effects depend on the attitudes and values of the peers with whom one spends most of his or her time." Their experimental study found that the "processes of peer influence" usually result in an individual assimilating the attitudes valued by his or her peers.

Folds (1987, p.25) found that children "who seek praise for their work show an inclination to independence or who act as monitors are viewed as 'promising' or 'creative' [by teachers]...are likely to be brought into line by their peers."

Christie (1985) and others state that Aboriginal students are culturally aligned to non-competitiveness and cooperation, arguing that this presupposes that such students should engage in group-oriented learning tasks as these behaviours represent a cultural difference. This belief has already been discussed within the context of learning style preferences (p.87-91). The results of this study indicate that this group of students was more comfortable with individual work and it was suggested that some Aboriginal students may be engaged in a process of "adaptation" to the demands of formal education (Harris, 1984; Christie, 1988; Eckerman, 1988a) Eckerman (1988b) found that the positive stereotype that:

Aboriginal people are communally oriented, always share, make decisions by consensus, and are dependent on group orientations overly generous, stating that Aboriginal people she had interviewed "displayed [a] clear preference of individualism." Somewhat paradoxically, the students in the group, despite indicating that they learned better individually, expressed a strong preference for groupwork because they believed that their Aboriginal peers shared their common background and understandings or were more cooperative, therefore less competitive, than non-Aboriginal students. It seems that this preference is a legitimate cultural difference which reinforces the need by such students for strong interpersonal relationships.

Jordan (1984) found that, despite racial stereotypes and some discriminatory practices, Aboriginals felt that Australians were generally friendly. The study group also indicated that they had no difficulty establishing friendships among either groups of other Aboriginal children or non-Aboriginal children. A majority felt that friendships were important because the sense of affiliation accorded them support and comfort. Despite this however, the students perceived that they would be better students in classes comprising Aboriginal students. The majority thought that non-Aboriginal students were racist, due to either ignorance about Aboriginal culture, or because of contempt as a consequence of poor Aboriginal living standards and the "inability [of Aboriginal children] to do well at school." One student expressed a hope that schools would engage an Equal Opportunities Officer to prevent acts of overt racism. Payne (1990) reviews research findings from Black (1989), to suggest that "racial prejudice has emerged as a major national goal" and that children divide their peers into groups of "we" and "they" which resulted in alienation if "integration into the peer group" was not successful. "They" groups were subjected to persistent stereotyping as being "inadequate in themselves and in what they had to contribute in the mutual exchange relationship."

Phillips (1990) believes that the strong need for affiliation signifies "field dependant behaviours exhibited by indigenous students" which is manifest in the desire for "group-type, cooperative learning tasks and a sensitivity to the feelings and opinions of peers."

Jenkings (1987) notes that "research on the effect of the co-operative form of schooling on Aborigines is limited through an insufficiency of material written on the subject (sic)", implying that many empirical studies previously conducted have contributed to a perpetuation of "deprivation" by focussing on "inappropriate learning methods." Further empirical study of the above issues may prove fruitful.

School discipline policies:

The W.A. Equal Opportunities Commission (1990, p.11) expressed a "particular concern" at the "over-representation of Aboriginal students in exclusion situations" since 1987 citing evidence which suggested that, in many instances, schools were short-circuiting established punishment procedures by ignoring counselling or 'time-out' routines in favour of making exclusion possible very quickly. It argued that parents often had no inkling that a problem existed until 'exclusion' was reached.

Whilst students in the study perceived that they received the same degree of punishment for an offence as non-Aboriginal students, over half of them claimed that school discipline policies were not always fair. A large number cited a belief the policies did not take into account cultural diversity and learning strategies, implying that teachers may misunderstand and punish certain behaviours. This is particularly significant when the findings in regard to the concept 'big shame' are considered.

Malin (1989) found conclusive evidence to suggest that the need for affiliation and autonomy expressed by the students in her study were regarded by the teacher as breaches of classroom discipline; a perception which resulted in the children being punished to such a degree that some became ostracised by their peers which lead to feelings of alienation and a devalued sense of self. She also noted that punishments meted " out were often more severe than those given to other students."

Guider (1988b) approaches the issue of discipline policies which may be at odds with aspects of cultural difference using the somewhat dated research of Kleinfeld (1972) into effective teaching strategies for minority groups. These were extensively detailed in Australia by Fanshawe (1984) and conclusions must be approached cautiously as the study was heavily oriented about the prevailing 'deprivation theory' popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Fanshawe's hypothetical adaptation of Kleinfeld's findings, proposing likely characteristics of an effective teacher of Aboriginal students, appears not to have been empirically researched although researchers such as Eckerman (1988) have suggested classroom management strategies based loosely on Kleinfeld's typology. Guider (1988b) contends that many discipline problems arise due to misunderstandings or ignorance on behalf of teachers about Aboriginal processes of socialisation which promote independence and autonomy - two personal attributes likely to be frequently at odds with the constraints of a traditional classroom. These views are supported by Malin (1989) and, by inference, by the students' views presented earlier.

Review of key findings.

Important points of review are presented below:

While this group of students appears to have internalised learning strategies favoured within western education, such as working individually from auditory input, nevertheless they sometimes appear to 'fall-back' on less formal learning styles such as group work, observation and imitation. This, partially at least, seems likely to dispel notions that Aboriginal underachievement can be totally attributed to a lack of teaching to culturally-determined learning style preferences.

Many students reported experiencing difficulty with the degree of abstraction of content and language contained in core secondary textbooks. While there is no evidence to support the contention, a possibility exists that some Aboriginal students, when faced with decontextualised (that termed "context-reduced" by Cummins and MacKay, 1990) content or language alien to their previous experience, attempt to negotiate meaning through resorting to secondary learning strategies such as observation and imitation and so on. The results of this study offer some support to this hypothesis as the students expressed a belief that they would be better learners if allowed freedom to select subjects they found relevant and if they could match their preferred learning strategies to a variety of teaching strategies. Some self-instruction and student empowerment ideas from the ESL area were discussed in this context.

It seems possible that different teaching and learning strategies may apply for different subject areas, and the idea of an integrated curriculum, in which different ideas are presented situationally rather than the traditional method of presenting a number of separate situations revolving about a single idea (Christie, 1988), was briefly courted. Again, research data is lacking in Australia about the use and appropriateness of such strategies for discouraged learners. Support for this contention would require a longitudinal study of the transition difficulties experienced by Aboriginal students moving through, say, years 7 to 9.

Teachers were reported as being generally willing to assist those students experiencing difficulties with classwork but were, not surprisingly, seen as less willing to help students catch up arrears of work. This reported behaviour is unsurprising when the effect of persistent or prolonged absenteeism by a student is considered within the context of normal classroom practice. Pedagogic realities dictate that teachers direct their time and resources at those students who are both motivated to learn and willing to persevere. As Sagor (1989) notes, large class sizes, frequent disruption and inadequate or minimally acceptable resourcing ensures that teachers teach to the "middle" ability range, thereby effectively curtailing learning by the top ten percent and the bottom ten percent of students.

Teachers were perceived to expect the same work quality from Aboriginal students although some students felt that some teachers continue to hold low expectations of the achievement level of Aboriginal children. This view seems to be supported by the paradoxical finding that most students felt that teachers treated them differently to other students. This belief may suggest that whilst teachers may transmit a message that their standards for all students are equal, their attitudes and actions, from a social perspective, do not support this message.

The results also show that the concept 'big shame' (Harkins, 1990) encompasses a complex array of variables likely to contribute to reduced academic achievement: perceived discipline or disruption problems, low teacher expectations and feelings of alienation among students. 'Big shame' seems to indicate feelings of fear or anxiety in Aboriginal students and these feelings may arise as a consequence of insensitive or discriminatory teaching practices. It would seem that teachers need to be alerted to the embarrassment experienced by some children when they are selected individually to give a public oral performance or are asked questions before their peers. Some of the sources of anxiety reported can be alleviated by teachers adopting a variety of pedagogic practices, including groupwork, to deflect focus from the individual to the group, thereby allowing insecure students to maintain 'face' among their peers. Embarrassment at having white teachers discuss Aboriginal issues is more complex but it may be possible to mediate instruction using either an Aboriginal Education Worker or a willing conscript from local Aboriginal communities.

The evidence suggests that the concept 'big shame' is a legitimate cultural difference and that Aboriginal rules of interpersonal communication (Harris, 1980; Christie, 1985) are closely associated, particularly in the light of empirical socio-linguistic research findings amassed by eminent linguists such as Eagleson et al (1979) and Malcolm (1979).

It is also possible to infer that some of the behaviours encompassing 'big shame' may represent manifestations of resistance to white education and a reluctance to demonstrate greater classroom competencies than those exhibited by peers. A number of researchers (Ogbu, 1974; Eagleson et al, 1982; Ghaill, 1989; Sagor, 1989 and Mickelson, 1990) have reported findings where black children 'hold back' so as not to impinge upon the "social comfort" of others. It seems unusual that this finding enjoys the support of both detailed ethnographic and empirical research findings elsewhere, yet seems to have been largely ignored in research in Australia.

The findings of Ogbu (1974, 1985), Malin (1989) and Mickelson (1990) all suggest that resistance theory is able to most credibly explain the failure of minority-group children in white classrooms. Such a theory argues, convincingly, that some minority groups undergo a process of adaptation, as a consequence of institutionalised racism and discrimination, to establish a secondary culture in which opposition to the dominant culture is manifest, due to feelings of alienation, in the form of anti-social behaviour. (See Berndt and Berndt, 1988, p.513-532 for an overview in the context of Australian Aboriginal society)

The study reported perceptions of racism held by students and how some of these were manifest in schools in the form of perceptions of different treatment and low expectations from teachers, inappropriate discipline policies, materials which did not treat Aboriginality favourably and unsuitable or irrelevant subjects and overt racism from white students. All those studied held a belief that Aboriginals were denied equal employment opportunities and while half said that this increased their motivation, the other half said that their commitment to education waned because of this. Paradoxically, the students had a positive work orientation and this was discussed within the context of research findings presented by Mickelson (1990), who found that black students, lacking experience with the world of work, internalised two complex sets of attitudes. One set of these was termed "abstract" attitudes, the other "concrete" attitudes. Mickelson (1990) found that black students held positive views of education and towards work as a consequence of values instilled or indoctrinated into them by the education system which promised social mobility through the attainment of education. This abstract belief was tempered by the reality of the students' lived experiences, family support and firsthand experience with and knowledge of discriminatory practices. Empirical Australian research is needed to investigate these issues before resistance theories can be widely supported.

The results of this study indicate that interpersonal relationships with both teachers and students are important for Aboriginal children. Inability to form friendships denies the students the support and encouragement needed to sustain them in a school environment which is often overtly hostile due to prejudice from other students. A number of studies were reviewed in the light of these results and the evidence suggests that peers often affect attitudes to education, and that a lack of parental support means that a steadying influence is unavailable to re-establish achievement motivation. (Sagor, 1989; Maeroff, 1990; Berndt, et al, 1990; Payne, 1990) The importance of interpersonal relationships to Aboriginal students is demonstrated by the study findings which indicate that students perform harder in subjects where they like the teacher and cease effort when a teacher is disliked, a finding supported by Phillips (1990).

Discussion of findings with regard to research questions.

Discussion will now be oriented about the findings of this study as they relate to the research questions and statement of hypothesis. (pp.6 & 50)

Research question 1:

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

Results of this study show that a number of variables have an ability to affect the academic success of Aboriginal students.

These include:

- teacher expectations;
- teacher/student relationships;
- lack of parental support for achievement;
- irrelevant curricula;
- the degree of abstraction and language complexity contained in subject-area textbooks;
- fear and anxiety;
- a perception that educational attainment is wasted because of unequal employment opportunities;
- the attitudes and commitment of peers to education;
- perceptions of racism or prejudice within schools;
- absenteeism.

Research question 2:

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

All students held positive job aspirations and half believed that they would ultimately possess the requisite skills and competencies to perform their desired career choice.

Most thought that good academic results would assist them to obtain the job they desired.

Subjects such as English, health, physical education and business studies were favoured whilst science, maths, social studies, art and industrial art were not. Students seemed to assess their preference for subjects based on how proficient they perceived themselves to be in that subject and more research is needed before questions of relevancy can be accurately addressed. The students expressed concerns at the degree of abstraction and language complexity contained in core curriculum area textbooks. Only science and social studies were perceived as being of no relevance. Social studies was condemned for alleged bias in dealing with Aboriginal history and issues and several students expressed a desire that Aboriginal Studies units be introduced into the curriculum.

Students reported that boredom in subjects disliked often resulted in the pursuit of disruptive activities (they nominated most core subjects).

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

Interpersonal relationships emerged as being very important to the students because of the support and encouragement friends could offer, particularly in schools in which they were a minority group.

The students indicated that their academic effort was usually determined by the strength of their like or dislike of a teacher. Effort was reduced in subjects where a teacher was disliked.

Friendships could be easily established with other Aboriginal students and while these could also be formed with non-Aboriginal students, prejudice was perceived to be a problem by all students studied.

Groupwork was favoured by many students because it enabled Aboriginal students to work cooperatively as they shared common understandings. It is likely that such groups offered a sense of security.

The attitudes of friends was found to sometimes impact on academic achievement motivation and most students felt that working in groups of friends did not make them work better. Most students felt that their academic achievement would be better if they could attend school in an Aboriginal only (enclave) class.

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

The students reported widespread discrimination and prejudice. Many felt that teachers openly discriminated against them by treating them differently to other students.

This discrimination appears to be based on aspects of social difference rather than academic differentiation as many students reported that teachers usually expected them to produce work of a similar standard to that produced by other students. Some felt that some teachers held low expectations, alleging that Aboriginal students were often streamed into low ability or remedial classes. Most students felt that teachers did not select and use resource materials which depicted Aboriginality in a positive sense.

School discipline policies were felt to be discriminatory by some students as they allegedly often failed to consider cultural differences or learning style diversity. It is significant that half the sample either felt that discipline policies were generally equitable or else did not express an opinion.

Non-Aboriginal students generally were regarded as overtly racist by all students studied, with this racism attributed to ignorance, parental attitudes or a general contempt as a consequence of the poor social status of Aboriginals in the community.

Discussion of the statement of hypothesis.

It was hypothesised (p.6) that many Aboriginal students underachieve or withdraw from mainstream education because of the cumulative impact of schools failing to meet their needs for autonomy and affiliation; attitudes of intolerance and racism and a material reality which, contradicting the promise of opportunity offered through education, leads to disillusionment which is manifest through a decrease in effort and commitment to schoolwork. The results do not support all of these sub-hypotheses.

There is some evidence from which it may be possible to infer that schools do not meet needs for autonomy, in that the students expressed a belief that they would be better students if permitted to select subjects they perceived as being relevant to their needs and were able to match teaching styles to their own learning strategies. Some criticism of school discipline policies was expressed, with students alleging that some fail to consider the learning style preferences of students and the cultural diversity of Aboriginal students. The students did not express a clear and coherent belief that schools did not allow them autonomy.

The evidence that schools do not meet needs for affiliation is a little more conclusive. Problems in this area were usually described in terms of perceptions of low teacher expectation, discrimination or overt racism from other students. One student thought that schools should appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer to resolve issues of prejudice.

Notwithstanding the above, the students did not criticise specific school or classroom practices and evidence to explicitly support part a. of the statement of hypothesis is largely inferential. The results must, therefore, be regarded as inconclusive.

Demonstrably, part b. of the hypothesis has been vindicated by the findings discussed in chapter six.

Evaluation of the evidence in support of part c. of the hypothesis is largely inferential. Students identified the lack of parental support and parents' attitude to education as key factors contributing to their lack of motivation to achieve. Similarly, all those studied felt that discriminatory practices precluded them from competing equally for jobs with non-Aboriginals, with half indicating a resultant lack of commitment to education. This part of the hypothesis must be evaluated in the light of plausible explanations derived from the literature and discussed, as appropriate within the discussion of the results of this study. The evidence seems to suggest that this part of the hypothesis is sustainable.

Future research directions.

A number of salient indicators to future potential research issues have emerged throughout this chapter and it is hoped that some of them receive attention in order that the serious inequalities which exist in Aboriginal education can be conclusively studied and documented, either empirically or in ethnographic studies and preferably both, unfettered by the constraints imposed by a necessity to support a particular theoretical ideology.

This study has highlighted a number of areas which warrant further investigation and these are nominated below:

- the learning strategies favoured by non-traditional Aboriginal children compared with those favoured by non-Aboriginal children to see if a process of acculturation or adaptation has occurred or is underway;
- the extent to which teachers vary their methods of presentation to cater for as many preferred learning strategies as possible;
- whether or not models of self-instruction and student empowerment derived from ESL literature are likely to be effective for Aboriginal learners;
- the extent to which teachers reduce the cognitive and linguistic demands of content when teaching underachieving students. The framework proposed by Cummins and MacKay (1990) seems a useful way to study and conceptualise the phenomena of "task reduction";
- clarification of reasons for the high rates of absenteeism reported in the literature and this study;
- investigation of the classroom manifestations of 'big shame' and its impact on learning, achievement, teacher expectations, peer relationships, absentee rates, discipline and punishment. It seems desirable to compare Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal to ascertain if these problems are universal or not;

- investigation of the socio-linguistic actions of the above groups to attempt to gauge the extent to which linguistic acts manifest 'big shame'; ie avoidance strategies, use of paralinguistic cues, classroom speech interactions, teacher talk and so on;
- Aboriginal students' view of self - social identity, aspirations, values and beliefs;
- the extent to which Aboriginal students' attitudes and commitment to educational attainment is affected by the attitudes of their significant others;
- an analysis of the precise nature of difficulties Aboriginal students encounter with subject-area textbooks;
- an exploratory study to assess the appropriateness and credibility of modern resistance theories, as advocated by Ogbu (1974, 1985) and Mickelson (1990), within an Aboriginal education context;
- an exploratory study to see if students and teachers commonly exhibit prejudicial sentiments and the impact of these on the target group.

Resistance theory - credible or incredible?

An aim of this study was to assess the credibility of theories of resistance advocated by Ogbu (1974), Malin (1989) and Mickelson (1990) in the light of results from this study.

Consequently, a number of points and observations have been made throughout the discussion of results where resistance theories seem to suggest a credible means of explanation for attitudes or behaviours reported.

Comparisons between U.S. studies into the academic underachievement of black students and the predicament confronting Australian Aboriginal educators are chilling. Maeroff (1990) asserts that vast numbers of minority children leave school:

utterly unprepared to participate in and contribute to a democratic society. They lack the skills that will allow them to obtain gainful employment, and they are devoid of the preparation that will lead to success in further education.

He states that "reform movements" to improve public education have been "largely irrelevant to the needs of urban minority students". Schools are viewed:

to be large impersonal places in which students lack a sense of belonging and see no connection between what they are asked to do in the classroom and the world that awaits them outside the school.

The atmosphere in schools is "often unsupportive of education and the demands and expectations low".

Attendance is atrocious...and what passes as work in many courses is embarrassingly simple, and the level of discussion and the papers written by students (mostly in class, because few do any homework) are not truly on a high school level. Large-scale low achievement is accepted as the norm. (Maeroff, 1990)

Like Ogbu (1974) and Mickelson (1990), Maeroff (1990) points to a history of failure, sporting achievement excepted, which usually results in "the emergence of a black urban youth culture in which time in prison and unwed parenthood are the rituals of coming of age" because the chances are "that children will seldom interact on a sustained basis with people who are employed or with families that have a steady breadwinner". The school sub-culture discourages achievement and there are "no countervailing (sic) forces at home to reinforce the values that the school wishes to instill". Students lack enthusiasm and the "peer pressure against academic achievement is strong, especially on black males", a finding shared by Folds (1987, Ch. 4 & 6).

Fear of "being accused of 'acting white'" creates "social and psychological pressures against exerting academic effort" with "peer group pressures against academic striving" taking "many forms, including labeling, exclusion from peer activities or ostracism, and physical assault." Students rarely read and consistently argue that teacher "expectations for them are too high" and Maeroff (1990) states that

a teacher who asks too much of students who have not been equipped to meet the demands may not only be unrealistic, but may also be setting students up for frustration and failure.

Ogbu (1974, p.12) believes that because schools are failing black minority-group children, "a retreatist sub-culture or retreatist adaptation" develops since students cannot attain the goals valued by society and, thus, "tend to become alienated from society". "Parents teach their children that they cannot make it in the white man's world" and "peer groups pull the children away from their goals." Ogbu (1974, p.14) conceptualises the problem this way:

the high proportion of school failure among blacks...is the result of this type of adaptation. The dominant perspective on education that appears to exist...may be summarized as follows: Education is a very valuable thing to have; it brings all kinds of economic and social rewards. But the society does not permit blacks...to enjoy these rewards on an equal basis with whites. First, society sets many institutional barriers to prevent blacks...from getting a good education; second, those who get a good education do not receive its full benefits because of discrimination. In short, it is hard for blacks...to 'make it' (that is, to succeed)...In competing with whites for occupational placement, promotion, wages, and the like, blacks...lose just the same whether they have education or not. There is, therefore, no reason for them to work as hard as whites in school: *They will eventually lose anyway.*

stating that the development of these attitudes "has probably been unconscious...although it is verbalized in many contexts." The students studied shared these beliefs and this modified theory seems to be able to account for how such attitudes and beliefs impact upon students' motivation to achieve. Ogbu (1974, p.14) offers the following model to explain the high rate of school failure among "subordinate minorities":

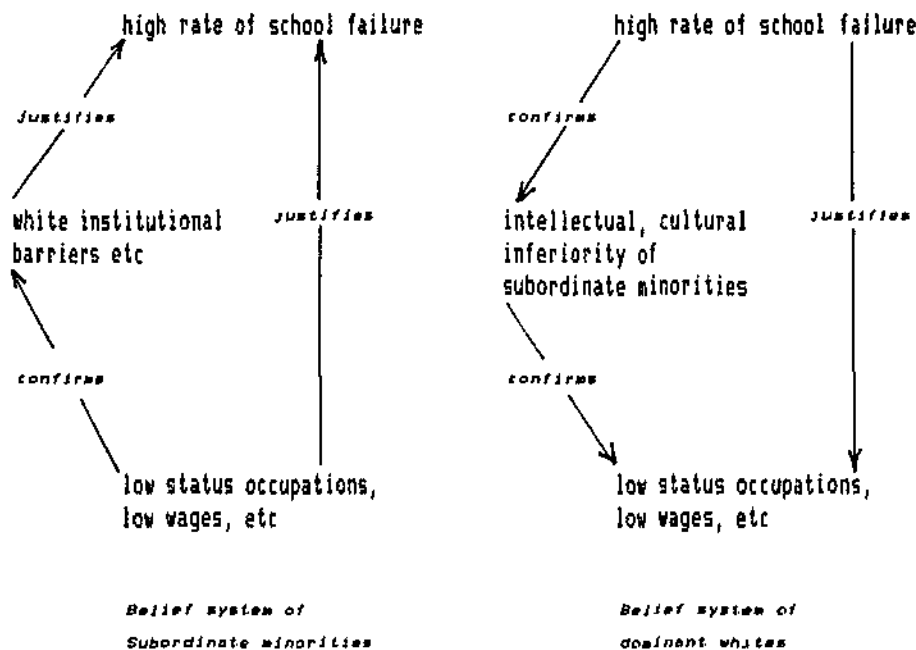


Figure 1.1 Belief systems of subordinate minorities and dominant whites to explain high rate of school failure among subordinate minorities, (Source; Ogbu, J. (1974) *The next generation*, New York; Academic Press Inc, p. 14)

Ogbu (1974, p.252-253) contends that most researchers theorise from the perspective that:

the main cause of school failure lies in the background of the child. That is, they assume that children of poor and ethnic backgrounds fail in public schools because of those background characteristics that distinguish them from middle- and upper-class children. These distinguishing characteristics may be biological, cultural, linguistic, psychological, or social, depending on the dominant interest of the social scientist. Once a particular difference is postulated, the main task of research is to determine the nature and extent of the difference...This preoccupation with the characteristics of the individual child and his background arises inevitably because...social scientists share the...belief that the individual is responsible for his own success or failure in life.

Ogbu (1974, p.253) argues that:

This bias has prevented social scientists from fully exploring the structural and cultural factors in the wider society that may lead to high proportions of failures in some segments of the society. It has also led those concerned with reducing failures to design remedial programmes that treat failures as individual problems, the histories of which begin at birth. For the most part the programs have not succeeded in solving the problems because they are based on false assumptions about the causes of school failures.

concluding "folk and scientific definition of subordinate minorities as mentally or culturally inferior to whites, both in school and in occupational placement" remains predominant and "schools have not changed their treatment of subordinate minorities because their actions are determined by the ideals and policies of the dominant group."

These views are shared by Ghail (1989), who reported that black urban youth in Great Britain are:

consciously creating their own material culture. In doing so they are rejecting the model of white society presented by teachers and are resisting institutional incorporation in white cultural identities

Malin (1989, p.645-647), in her ethnographic study of an Adelaide primary school classroom, found that resistance theory, as hypothesized by Ogbu (1974) and others, was vindicated "at least speculatively".

Sultana (1989), in his study of "transition-to-work" in three New Zealand secondary schools, explored the "possibilities and limitations of resistance theories", positioning these as an adjunct to "radical educational scholarship".

Sultana (1989) noted that resistance theories tend to stress "the contested nature of domination, the prerogatives of agency and voluntarism, the relative autonomy of some sectors or institutions of society, and the idea of hegemonic limits rather than determined necessity." (Burbules, 1986, cited in Sultana, 1989) and are "better placed to account for the students' responses to the schools' practices, relations, curricula and messages" than some other theories. Sultana's data gathering entailed collecting the "intended messages of schools and teachers"; the "actual messages transmitted" and, finally, the "nature of the reception afforded by students to such messages". Teachers were asked to comment on data mismatches. The study was organised around a belief that:

that schools are political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning and subjectivities, and that the meanings generated within such sites cannot be divorced from the socio-economic context in which they are situated (Giroux, 1982, cited in Sultana, 1989)

Sultana (1989) found that "over 90% of transition students shared a disillusionment with mainstream schooling, were eager to enter employment, and came from low socio-economic backgrounds." He noted that attempts to "provide a 'relevant curriculum' were translated into lessons which were often characterised by "minimal preparation and content". This disqualified students from "bodies of abstract knowledge from which they could draw interpretations of their life experiences". His findings are very similar to those of Cummins and MacKay (1990).

The students resisted and refused to be the "passive receptacles of knowledge their teachers willed them to be." Sultana (1989) found that in some schools, low achievers were channelled into "separate, low-status space" and problems of elitism and racism within the schools were highlighted. He also noted, as did Folds (1987), that:

contestations...were noted to have an accommodatory function in that they lock students and teachers in oppositional stances, with members of each camp separately creating meanings to suit personal needs without ever coming together to critically examine their disparate experiences. Since meanings can be developed in isolation within the same social field, the illusion of communication can be sustained in the very midst of dissension.

Folds (1987, p.30-31; 38-55) documents a great deal of classroom interaction which parallels Sultanas' findings. Faced with a "wall of silence", Folds (1987, p.39, 47) noted that teachers resorted to coping strategies which simulated teaching "by carrying on as if cooperation is provided, to proceed as if students are responding appropriately despite the reality that they are not", concluding that "there is little communication of any kind between teachers and students."

It seems clear that resistance theories may be able to describe processes which lead to alienation but, as Sultana (1989) notes, the need is not for more passive accounts which "analyze resistance" but for those that "seek to promote resistance". As Ghail, (1989) concludes:

the implications of this argument are clear: without fundamental change in the larger opportunity structure, the underachievement of minority and working-class students is likely to persist even in the face of the best-designed and most lavishly funded educational reforms.

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Appendix A:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Communications Education
Edith Cowan University
Mt Lawley Campus
PERTH WA

Compiled by: J. McQuade

(revision 3)

June 1992

RESPONSE CATEGORY QUESTIONNAIRE

THESE INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO BE READ TO RESPONDENTS BEFORE THEY COMMENCE

PURPOSE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of an important research study which is trying to establish why some Aboriginal students perform less effectively at school compared to non-Aboriginal students.

In order for your answers to be most helpful to us, it is important that you try to be as accurate as you can. Since we need complete and accurate information from this research, we hope you will think hard to provide the information we need.

As we are concerned only with obtaining group results, please do not write your name anywhere on this paper. This protects your privacy and ensures all results are anonymous.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This is not a test, it is a questionnaire.
2. You cannot be identified from the questionnaire.
3. A number of statements are made in this paper. You are asked to circle the response that you think best applies to the statement. For example:

1. The sky is blue, Always Usually Sometimes Not Often Never
4. It is important that you respond to EVERY statement.
5. Thank you for helping us in this study.

oooOOOooo

Statements:

Response Category

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Not Often	Never
Questions in this section ask you things about learning in government schools.					
1. I liked these subjects and found them useful to me:					
* English;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Maths;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Social Studies;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Science;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Industrial Arts;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Physical Education;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Health;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Art;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* Others (please list)	A	U	S	Noft	N
.....					
.....					
2. I think I learned best by:					
* reading about a topic;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* watching others before attempting a task;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* listening to my teacher explain what I was to do;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* touching the things I was learning about;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* working in a group to do a task;	A	U	S	Noft	N
* working by myself,	A	U	S	Noft	N
3. This question is related to question 2.					
Teachers usually presented lesson content in a variety of ways to cater for students' preferred ways of learning.	A	U	S	Noft	N

Response Category

Always Usually Sometimes Not Often Never

These questions ask you to give your opinion of teachers' attitudes towards Aboriginal students.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|-----|---|
| 1. Teachers treat Aboriginal students the same as non-Aboriginal students in their classrooms, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 2. Teachers usually try to help me if I have a problem with my work, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 3. I receive the same penalties for an offence as an non-Aboriginal student does for the same offence, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 4. Teachers expect the same quality of work from me as they do from non-Aboriginal students, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 5. Teachers assist me to catch up my work if I fall behind, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 6. Teachers use materials which treats Aboriginality positively, | A | U | S | Not | N |

These questions ask you about your attitudes towards teachers and schoolwork,

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|-----|---|
| 1. I feel embarrassed or ashamed if I am unable to do a task, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 2. My behaviour and attitude to schoolwork is influenced by what my friends think of school, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 3. If I don't like a teacher I don't try in that subject, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 4. My school work is affected if I feel anxious because I am uncertain about what is expected of me, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 5. If I am bored with a subject I become disruptive in class, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 6. I believe that good school results will help me to get a job I want, | A | U | S | Not | N |
| 7. My parents or family help me with schoolwork, | A | U | S | Not | N |

Response Category

Always Usually Sometimes Not Often Never

These are general questions,

1, I would be a better student if I could choose subjects I wanted to learn,

A U S Noft N

2, I would be a better student if I could choose teaching methods that suited me,

A U S Noft N

3, I am a better student in a class of only Aboriginal students,

A U S Noft N

4, I work better if I am allowed to work among groups of my friends,

A U S Noft N

End of questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Communications Education (TESOL)
Edith Cowan University
Mt Lawley Campus
PERTH W.A.

Compiled by: J. McQuade

June, 1992

(version 3)

Affective Questionnaire

THESE INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO BE READ TO EACH RESPONDENT BEFORE THE INTERVIEWER BEGINS THE SURVEY.

PURPOSE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire-interview is part of an important research study which is trying to establish why some Aboriginal students perform less effectively in government schools, compared to non-Aboriginal students.

In order for your answers to be most helpful to us, it is important that you try to be as truthful as you can. Since we need complete and honest information from this research, we hope you will think hard to provide the information we need.

As we are concerned only with obtaining group results, please do not give us your name. This protects your privacy and ensures all results are anonymous.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This is not a test, it is a survey.
2. You cannot be identified from the survey so you can say what you really think or feel about the question asked.
3. The interviewer is a researcher from a university and is not connected to the government in any way.
4. It is important that you respond to EVERY question.
5. Take your time answering the questions.
6. There are no right or wrong responses.
7. Thankyou for helping us in this study.

oooOOOooo

QUESTIONS

These are general questions about your education;

1, What sort of job would you like to have when you leave school?

.....

2, What skills do you think you need to do this job?

.....

3, Will you have these skills when you leave school? YES NO SOME

4, Do you think Aborigines and non-Aborigines have equal employment opportunities? YES NO NOT SURE

5, Does this belief affect your attitude to education? YES NO

6, If you answered YES to question 5, how is your attitude to education affected by a belief that Aborigines and non-Aborigines do not have equal employment opportunities?

.....

.....

7, List the subjects you like most at school and explain why you like them;

I like because

I like because

I like because

I like because

I like because

8, List the subjects you don't like at school and explain why you don't like them;

I don't like because

I don't like because

I don't like because

I don't like because

These questions ask you to comment on things which may affect academic achievement in government schools.

- 1, Explain what 'big shame' means to you?

.....

- 2, Give reasons why Aboriginal students may not do well at school work in government schools?

.....

- 3, How do parent's attitudes to education affect your school achievement?

.....

- 4, Do you think anxiety or uncertainty about what teachers expect has any effect on how well Aboriginal students perform at school?

YES NO NOT SURE

- 5, If you answered YES to question 4, explain how anxiety or uncertainty affects your school performance.

.....

- 6, In what circumstances might you feel embarrassed at school?

.....

- 7, Which subject textbooks are most difficult for you to read and understand? Explain why.

..... because

..... because

..... because

..... because

- 8, Were you often absent from school?

YES NO

- 9, If you replied YES to question 8, what effect did absenteeism have on your performance in school subjects?

.....

These questions are concerned with aspects of discrimination in government schools,

1. Were there times when you felt teachers treated you differently to non-Aboriginal students? YES NO NOT SURE

2. If you answered YES to question 1, explain how teachers treated you differently:

.....

3. Did teachers usually expect Aboriginal students to produce the same quality of work as non-Aboriginal students? YES NO NOT SURE

4. If you answered NO to question 2, give examples:

.....

5. Are non-Aboriginal students prejudiced against Aboriginal students? YES NO NOT SURE

6. If you answered YES to question 4, why do you think this:

.....

7. In your opinion, are school discipline policies generally fair to all students? YES NO NOT SURE

8. If you answered NO to question 6, explain why:

.....

Questions in this segment ask about the importance of relationships to you,

1. Did you work harder if you liked your teacher? YES NO

2. How do you feel about being a minority group in a school?

.....

3. Do you think Aboriginal students work better in groups? YES NO

4. If you answered YES to question 3, explain why:

.....

5, Are you able to form friendships with Aboriginal students in government schools?

YES NO

6, Are you able to form friendships with non-Aboriginal students in government schools?

YES NO

7, Is being able to form friendships with other students important to you?

YES NO

8, If you replied YES to question 7, explain why;

.....

This question gives you an opportunity to comment on any aspect of your education in government schools,

1, Are there any comments you wish to make about anything in this paper or about your experience of education in government schools?

.....

End of questionnaire, Thankyou for your valuable contribution to this study,

Appendix C:Split-half reliability calculations - closed-ended survey:

	(X)	(Y)	(X2)	(Y2)	(XY)
Subject	Score	Score	Odd items	Even items	Product
	Odd items	Even items	squared	squared	of scores
S1	47	40	2209	1600	1880
2	56	51	3136	2601	2856
3	49	52	2401	2704	2548
4	59	57	3481	3239	3363
5	56	63	3136	3969	3528
6	56	48	3136	2304	2688
7	55	57	3025	3239	3135
8	61	64	3721	4096	3904
9	57	65	3239	4225	3705
10	66	71	4356	5041	4686
T1	47	49	2209	2401	2303
2	40	47	1600	2209	1880
3	60	56	3600	3136	3360
4	56	51	3136	2601	2856
5	63	62	3969	3844	3906
Total:	828	833	46354	47209	46598
Mean :	55,2	55,5			
	EX	EY	EX2	EY2	EXY

$$r_{oe} = \frac{46598 - \frac{(828)(833)}{15}}{\frac{15}{15}}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{(46354 - \frac{(828)^2}{15}) (47209 - \frac{(833)^2}{15})}{(15)(15)}}$$

$$= \frac{616,4}{\sqrt{(648,4)(949,7)}} = \frac{616,4}{\sqrt{615785,48}} = \frac{616,4}{784,7} = .785$$

Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula:

$$r_{oe} = .785$$

$$r = \frac{2(.785)}{1 + .785} = \frac{1,57}{1,785} = .88$$

Appendix D:Matrix - survey content regrouped under primary research questions.Research question 1:

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

Survey questions:

page 1: 2, I think I learned best by;

- * reading about a topic;
- * watching others before attempting a task;
- * listening to my teacher explain what I was to do;
- * touching the things I was learning about;
- * working in a group to do a task;
- * working by myself.

3, This question is related to question 2,

Teachers usually presented lesson content in a variety of ways to cater for student's preferred ways of learning.

page 2;

topic 1: 2, Teachers usually try to help me if I have a problem with my work,

5, Teachers assist me to catch up my work if I fall behind.

topic 2: 1, I feel embarrassed or ashamed if I am unable to do a task,

4, My schoolwork is affected if I feel anxious because I am uncertain about what is expected of me,

7, My parents or family help me with schoolwork,

page 3: 2, I would be a better student if I could choose teaching methods that suited me,

Research question 2:

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

Survey questions:

page 1: 1, I liked these subjects and found them useful to me;

- * English;
- * Maths;
- * Social Studies;
- * Science;
- * Industrial Arts;
- * Physical Education;
- * Health;
- * Art;
- * Others (please list),

page 2:

topic 2: 5, If I am bored with a subject I become disruptive in class,

- 6, I believe that good school results will help me to get a job I want,

page 3: 1, I would be a better student if I could choose the subjects I wanted to learn,

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

Survey questions:

page 2:

topic 2: 2, My behaviour and attitude to schoolwork is influenced by what my friends think of school,

- 3, If I don't like a teacher I don't try in that subject,

page 3: 3, I am a better student in a class of only Aboriginal students.

4, I work better if I am allowed to work among groups of my friends.

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

page 2:

topic 1: 1, Teachers treat Aboriginal students the same as non-Aboriginal students in their classrooms,

3, I receive the same penalties for an offence as a non-Aboriginal student does for the same offence,

4, Teachers expect the same quality of work from me as they do from non-Aboriginal students,

6, Teachers use materials which treat Aboriginality positively.

Appendix B:Results for variables grouped under primary research questions.Research question 1:

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

Survey questions:

page 1: 2, I think I learned best by;

* reading about a topic;

- summary of scores:

actual score	; trial group	: 14
	; sample group	: 35
average score for group;	trial group	: 2,8
	; sample group	: 3,5
	; combined	: 3,3
most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	: SOMETIMES
	; sample group	: SOMETIMES
	; combined	: SOMETIMES

* watching others before attempting a task;

- summary of scores:

actual score	; trial group	: 15
	; sample group	: 32
average score for group;	trial group	: 3
	; sample group	: 3,2
	; combined	: 3,1
most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	: SOMETIMES
	; sample group	: SOMETIMES
	; combined	: SOMETIMES

* listening to my teacher explain what I was to do;

- summary of scores:

actual score	; trial group	; 18
	; sample group	; 45
average score for group;	trial group	; 3,6
	; sample group	; 4,5
	; combined	; 4,2
most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	; USUALLY
	; sample group	; USUALLY
	; combined	; USUALLY

* touching the things I was learning about;

- summary of scores:

actual score	; trial group	; 20
	; sample group	; 33
average score for group;	trial group	; 4
	; sample group	; 3,3
	; combined	; 3,5
most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	; USUALLY
	; sample group	; SOMETIMES
	; combined	; SOMETIMES

* working in a group to do a task;

- summary of scores:

actual score	; trial group	; 17
	; sample group	; 36
average score for group;	trial group	; 3,4
	; sample group	; 3,6
	; combined	; 3,5
most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	; SOMETIMES
	; sample group	; USUALLY
	; combined	; SOMETIMES

* working by myself.

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 21
	: sample group	: 36
average score for group:	trial group	: 4,2
	: sample group	: 3,6
	: combined	: 3,8
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: USUALLY
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

3, This question is related to question 2.

Teachers usually presented lesson content in a variety of ways
to cater for student's preferred ways of learning.

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 11
	: sample group	: 29
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,2
	: sample group	: 2,9
	: combined	: 2,7
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: NOT OFTEN
	: sample group	: SOMETIMES
	: combined	: SOMETIMES

page 2:

topic 1: 2, Teachers usually try to help me if I have a problem with my work.

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 18
	: sample group	: 40
average score for group:	trial group	: 3,6
	: sample group	: 4
	: combined	: 3,9
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: USUALLY
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

5. Teachers assist me to catch up my work if I fall behind.

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 12
	: sample group	: 38
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,4
	: sample group	: 3,8
	: combined	: 3,3
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: NOT OFTEN
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: SOMETIMES

topic 2: 1. I feel embarrassed or ashamed if I am unable to do a task.

- summary of scores: (- scored item)

actual score	: trial group	: 13
	: sample group	: 26
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,6
	: sample group	: 2,5
	: combined	: 2,5
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: SOMETIMES
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

4. My schoolwork is affected if I feel anxious because I am uncertain about what is expected of me.

- summary of scores: (- scored item)

actual score	: trial group	: 11
	: sample group	: 26
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,2
	: sample group	: 2,6
	: combined	: 2,4
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: USUALLY
	: sample group	: SOMETIMES
	: combined	: USUALLY

7. My parents or family help me with schoolwork,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	15
	:	sample group	:	31
average score for group:	trial group	:	3	
	sample group	:	3,1	
	combined	:	3,1	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

page 3; 2. I would be a better student if I could choose teaching methods that suited me.

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	22
	:	sample group	:	41
average score for group:	trial group	:	4,4	
	sample group	:	4,1	
	combined	:	4,2	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

Research question 2:

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

Survey questions:

page 1; 1, I liked these subjects and found them useful to me;

* English;

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	19
	:	sample group	:	39
average score for group:	trial group	:	3,8	
	sample group	:	3,9	
	combined	:	3,9	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

* Maths;

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	16
	:	sample group	:	32
average score for group:	trial group	:	3,2	
	sample group	:	3,2	
	combined	:	3,2	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

* Social Studies;

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	14
	:	sample group	:	34
average score for group:	trial group	:	2,8	
	sample group	:	3,4	
	combined	:	3,2	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

* Science;

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 11
	: sample group	: 32
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,2
	: sample group	: 3,2
	: combined	: 2,9
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: NOT OFTEN
	: sample group	: SOMETIMES
	: combined	: SOMETIMES

* Industrial Arts;

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 13
	: sample group	: 34
average score for group:	trial group	: 2,8
	: sample group	: 3,4
	: combined	: 2,6
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: SOMETIMES
	: sample group	: SOMETIMES
	: combined	: SOMETIMES

* Physical Education;

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 23
	: sample group	: 38
average score for group:	trial group	: 4,6
	: sample group	: 3,8
	: combined	: 4
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: ALWAYS
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

Health;

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 15
	: sample group	: 39
average score for group	: trial group	: 3
	: sample group	: 3,9
	: combined	: 3,6
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: SOMETIMES
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

Art;

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 18
	: sample group	: 37
average score for group	: trial group	: 3,6
	: sample group	: 3,7
	: combined	: 3,7
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: USUALLY
	: sample group	: USUALLY
	: combined	: USUALLY

Others (please list),

- typing:

- summary of scores:

actual score	: trial group	: 10
	: sample group	: -
average score for group	: trial group	: 2
	: sample group	: -
	: combined	: ,7
most common descriptor		
per mean	: trial group	: NOT OFTEN
	: sample group	: NEVER
	: combined	: NEVER

page 2:

topic 2: 5. If I am bored with a subject I become disruptive in class.

- summary of scores: (- scored item)

actual score	:	trial group	:	13
	:	sample group	:	27
average score for group:	trial group	:	2,6	
	sample group	:	2,7	
	combined	:	2,7	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

6. I believe that good school results will help me to get a job I want,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	21
	:	sample group	:	42
average score for group:	trial group	:	4,2	
	sample group	:	4,2	
	combined	:	4,2	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

page 3: 1. I would be a better student if I could choose the subjects I wanted to learn.

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	21
	:	sample group	:	36
average score for group:	trial group	:	4,2	
	sample group	:	3,6	
	combined	:	3,8	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

Survey questions:

page 2:

topic 2: 2. My behaviour and attitude to schoolwork is influenced by what my friends think of school.

- summary of scores: (- scored item)

actual score	; trial group	: 16
	; sample group	: 37

average score for group;	trial group	: 3,2
	; sample group	: 3,7
	; combined	: 3,5

most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	: SOMETIMES
	; sample group	: NOT OFTEN
	; combined	: SOMETIMES

3. If I don't like a teacher I don't try in that subject.

- summary of scores: (- scored item)

actual score	; trial group	: 15
	; sample group	: 29

average score for group;	trial group	: 3
	; sample group	: 2,9
	; combined	: 2,9

most common descriptor		
per mean	; trial group	: SOMETIMES
	; sample group	: SOMETIMES
	; combined	: SOMETIMES

page 3; 3, I am a better student in a class of only Aboriginal students,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	19
	:	sample group	:	38
average score for group:	trial group	:	3,8	
	sample group	:	3,8	
	combined	:	3,8	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

4, I work better if I am allowed to work among groups of my friends,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	19
	:	sample group	:	33
average score for group:	trial group	:	3,8	
	sample group	:	3,3	
	combined	:	3,5	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	USUALLY
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

page 2:

topic 1; 1, Teachers treat Aboriginal students the same as non-Aboriginal students in their classrooms,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	10
	:	sample group	:	34
average score for group:	trial group	:	2	
	sample group	:	3,4	
	combined	:	2,9	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	NOT OFTEN
	:	sample group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	combined	:	SOMETIMES

3, I receive the same penalties for an offence as a non-Aboriginal student does for the same offence,

- summary of scores:

actual score	:	trial group	:	16
	:	sample group	:	40
average score for group:	trial group	:	3,2	
	sample group	:	4	
	combined	:	3,7	
most common descriptor				
per mean	:	trial group	:	SOMETIMES
	:	sample group	:	USUALLY
	:	combined	:	USUALLY

4, Teachers expect the same quality of work from me as they do from non-Aboriginal students.

- SUMMARY OF SCORES:

actual score	: trial group ; 17
	: sample group ; 43
average score for group:	trial group ; 3,4
	: sample group ; 4,3
	: combined ; 4
most common descriptor	
per mean	: trial group ; SOMETIMES
	: sample group ; USUALLY
	: combined ; USUALLY

6, Teachers use materials which treat Aboriginality positively.

- SUMMARY OF SCORES:

actual score	: trial group ; 9
	: sample group ; 31
average score for group:	trial group ; 1,8
	: sample group ; 3,1
	: combined ; 2,7
most common descriptor	
per mean	: trial group ; NOT OFTEN
	: sample group ; SOMETIMES
	: combined ; SOMETIMES

Appendix F:

Matrix - affective questionnaire content regrouped under primary research questions.

Research question 1:

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

Questions:

page 2: 1. Explain what 'big shame' means to you?

2. Give reasons why Aboriginal students may not do well at school work in government schools?

3. How do parent's attitudes to education affect your school achievement?

4. Do you think anxiety or uncertainty about what teachers expect has any effect on how well Aboriginal students perform at school?

YES NO NOT SURE

5. If you answered YES to question 4, explain how anxiety or uncertainty affects your school performance.

6. In what circumstances might you feel embarrassed at school?

8. Were you often absent from school?

YES NO

9. If you replied YES to question 8, what effect did absenteeism have on your performance in school subjects?

Research question 2:

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

Questions:

page 1: 1. What sort of job would you like to have when you leave school?

2. What skills do you think you need to do this job?

3. Will you have these skills when you leave school?

YES NO SOME

4. Do you think Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals have equal employment opportunities?

YES NO NOT SURE

5. Does this belief affect your attitude to education?

YES NO

6. If you answered YES to question 5, how is your attitude to education affected by a belief that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals do not have equal employment opportunities?

7. List the subjects you like most at school and explain why you like them.

8. List the subjects you don't like at school and explain why you don't like them.

page 2: 7. Which subject textbooks are most difficult for you to read and understand? Explain why.

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

Questions:

page 3:

Topic 2: 1. Did you work harder if you liked your teacher?

YES NO

2. How do you feel about being a minority group in a school?

3. Do you think Aboriginal students work better in groups?

YES NO

4. If you answered YES to question 3, explain why.

page 4:

5. Are you able to form friendships with Aboriginal students in government schools?

YES NO

6. Are you able to form friendships with non-Aboriginal students in government schools?

YES NO

7. Is being able to form friendships with other students important to you?

YES NO

8. If you replied YES to question 7, explain why.

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

Questions:

page 3:

topic 1: 1. Were there times when you felt teachers treated you differently to non-Aboriginal students?

YES NO NOT SURE

2. If you answered YES to question 1, explain how teachers treated you differently.

3. Did teachers usually expect Aboriginal students to produce the same quality of work as non-Aboriginal students?

YES NO NOT SURE

4. If you answered NO to question 2, give examples.

5. Are non-Aboriginal students prejudiced against Aboriginal students?

YES NO NOT SURE

6. If you answered YES to question 4, why do you think this?

7. In your opinion, are school discipline policies generally fair to all students?

YES NO NOT SURE

8. If you answered NO to question 6, explain why.

Open question:

page 4: 1. Are there any comments you wish to make about anything in this paper or about your experience of education in government schools?

Appendix G:Results for variables grouped under primary research questions.Affective questionnaire.Research question 1:

How do Aboriginal students account for their lack of academic success?

Questions:

page 2: 1. Explain what 'big shame' means to you?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

100% replied embarrassment;

- * as a consequence of teacher focussing on individual ; 12%
- * at having lack of knowledge displayed to class by
insensitive teachers ; 24%
- * failing at something ; 12%
- * being forced to do something you are unsure of how
to do ; 52%

2. Give reasons why Aboriginal students may not do
well at school work in government schools?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

- * curriculum doesn't cater for Aboriginal students ; 38%
- * lack of parental/family support ; 38%
- * prejudice from other students ; 24%
- * disinterested peers ; 12%
- * language complexity ; 12%
- * poor teacher/student relationships ; 12%
- * streamed into low ability classes due to ethnicity ; 12%

3, How do parent's attitudes to education affect your school achievement?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* not at all	: 12%
* significantly as support and encouragement needed to get higher education otherwise no effort	: 52%
* own attitudes reflect parents who had no education	: 24%
* parents don't push kids to do homework	: 12%

4, Do you think anxiety or uncertainty about what teachers expect has any effect on how well Aboriginal students perform at school?

YES : 76%
 NO : 24%
 NOT SURE: 0%

5, If you answered YES to question 4, explain how anxiety or uncertainty affects your school performance,

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* experience shame/embarrassment or remain shy and quiet as too scared to ask teacher anything in case peers laugh at you	: 24%
* many teachers stereotype Aboriginal students as dumb	: 12%
* can you meet them?	: 24%
* concern that teachers will give up encouragement	: 24%

6, In what circumstances might you feel embarrassed at school?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* not knowing what was expected in class	: 24%
* white teacher discussing Aboriginal issues	: 12%
* when your failures are made public and result in class ridicule	: 12%
* oral presentations in front of class/group	: 24%
* when picked on by other students due to your colour	: 12%

8. Were you often absent from school?

YES ; 38%

NO ; 62%

9. If you replied YES to question 8, what effect did absenteeism have on your performance in school subjects?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* low performance/nothing got done : 38%

Research question 2:

Do Aboriginal students believe that mainstream curricula are relevant to their educational aspirations and needs?

Questions:

page 1: 1. What sort of job would you like to have when you leave school?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* professional : 52%

* skilled non professional : 24%

* trade : 12%

* unskilled : 12%

2. What skills do you think you need to do this job:

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* management/accounting qualifications : 52%

* reading and writing skills : 38%

* knowledge of Aboriginal issues and politics : 12%

* science background : 12%

3. Will you have these skills when you leave school?

YES ; 50%

NO ; 0%

SOME ; 50%

4. Do you think Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals have equal employment opportunities?

Unanimous NO

5. Does this belief affect your attitude to education?

YES : 88%

NO : 12%

6. If you answered YES to question 5, how is your attitude to education affected by a belief that Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals do not have equal employment opportunities?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* serves as motivational factor towards higher achievement	: 50%
* think learning/education a waste of effort because of racism	: 50%

7. List the subjects you like most at school and explain why you like them.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* physical education	: 88%
- good at it	: 24%
- enjoyed it	: 52%
- interested	: 12%
* English	: 62%
- good at it	: 12%
- enjoyed it	: 38%
- personal pleasure	: 12%
* business studies	: 52%
- career choice	: 25%
- good at it	: 25%

* domestic science/home economics ; 38%

- hands on ; 38%

* math ; 24%

- good at it ; 12%

- able to understand it ; 12%

* industrial arts ; 24%

- interested ; 12%

- hands on ; 12%

* art ; 24%

- hands on ; 24%

* Aboriginal studies ; 12%

- sense of pride in heritage ; 12%

8. List the subjects you don't like at school and explain why you don't like them.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* math ; 62%

- not good at ; 38%

- boring ; 12%

- too hard ; 12%

* social studies ; 48%

- due to bias in dealing with
Aboriginal issues ; 24%

- boring ; 12%

- no relevance or purpose ; 12%

* science		; 38%
- boring/no relevance	; 38%	
* English		; 24%
- boring	; 12%	
- inability to spell	; 12%	
* art		; 12%
- no good at	; 12%	
* industrial art		; 12%
- no good at	; 12%	

page 2: 7. Which subject textbooks are most difficult for you to read and understand? Explain why.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* math		; 76%
- too abstract/difficult	; 76%	
* English		; 50%
- language too complex	; 50%	
* science		; 50%
- content too abstract and language too complex	; 50%	
* social studies		; 38%
- content too abstract and language too complex	; 38%	

Research question 3:

What significance is attached to interpersonal relationships by Aboriginal students?

Questions:

page 3:

Topic 2: 1. Did you work harder if you liked your teacher?

unanimous YES

2. How do you feel about being a minority group in a school?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* isolated, at a disadvantage	: 76%
* had to work hard to disprove misconceptions	: 12%
* comfortable if other Aboriginals present	: 12%

3. Do you think Aboriginal students work better in groups?

YES : 76%

NO : 24%

4. If you answered YES to question 3, explain why.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* more cooperative due to security/understanding/ common background experiences	: 52%
* culturally preferred way of doing things	: 24%

page 4:

5. Are you able to form friendships with Aboriginal students in government schools?

unanimous YES

6. Are you able to form friendships with non-Aboriginal students in government schools?

YES : 76%

NO : 24%

7. Is being able to form friendships with other students important to you?

unanimous YES

8. If you replied YES to question 7, explain why.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* cooperation and support makes school more comfortable	: 76%
* change attitudes towards Aborigines	: 24%

Research question 4:

Are attitudes of intolerance and racism manifest in W.A. government secondary schools in the perception of Aboriginal students?

Questions:

page 3;

topic 1; 1. Were there times when you felt teachers treated you differently to non-Aboriginal students?

YES : 62%

NO : 12%

NOT SURE: 24%

2. If you answered YES to question 1, explain how teachers treated you differently.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* low expectations	: 38%
* discriminatory talk, attitudes, behaviour	: 24%

3. Did teachers usually expect Aboriginal students to produce the same quality of work as non-Aboriginal students?

YES : 76%
 NO : 24%
 NOT SURE: 0%

4. If you answered NO to question 2, give examples.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* expected to be good at sport not academic work : 12%
 * usually forced into remedial classes : 12%

5. Are non-Aboriginal students prejudiced against Aboriginal students?

YES : 62%
 NO : 24%
 NOT SURE: 12%

6. If you answered YES to question 4, why do you think this?

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* prejudice because of ignorance of culture or inherited attitudes : 50%
 * lifestyle and inability to do well at school : 12%

7. In your opinion, are school discipline policies generally fair to all students?

YES : 38%
 NO : 50%
 NOT SURE: 12%

8. If you answered NO to question 6, explain why.

- percentage of sample to express each reply:

* don't cater for black diversity and needs : 38%
 * don't consider Aboriginal learning styles : 12%

Open question:

page 4: 1. Are there any comments you wish to make about anything in this paper or about your experience of education in government schools?

- YES! I was angered at not being taught about the wiping out of Aboriginal people in the early days. We all grew up thinking that the white colonists had it hard. Bullshit! Start balancing the content of what is taught then maybe white people will understand why we are in the situation we are in and help Aboriginal people to understand as well.
- Biggest problem was lack of support or encouragement from both family and teachers.
- Education has mislead Aboriginal people. They don't focus on our language, history, culture, tribal groups, environment, conservation - [the] curriculum alienates Aboriginal students because they have misplace [sic] our cultural philosophy within social studies.
- They should help combat racism from non-Aboriginal students towards Aboriginal students in the school/community. They should incorporate into the academic aspect; teaching of Aboriginal culture is history, especially Australian history - and the Aboriginal side of it.
- It is essential to have Aboriginal history introduced into government and private schools.
- I think that schools need an Equal Opportunities Officer to prevent Noongars being picked on.

Errata:

Due to an error in pagination, this manuscript does not contain a page numbered 53. Any inconvenience created for readers is regretted.

oooOOOooo