HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Discussion Paper No.10

Enduring a lot: the effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

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FOREWORD

It is the responsibility of the Human Rights Commission to promote the observance of the full range of human rights set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rfghts and in the Declarations of the Rights of the Child, on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

Among the human rights articulated in these major international instruments is the right of children to education; in the case of children of racial, ethnic or other minority groups, this includes the right to be educated on terms of equality with others and with due respect for their own languages and cultures. Principle 7 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child states:'

> The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.

The rights of members of minority groups to have the integrity of their cultures respected is stated in they International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27):

> In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

Discrimination which would have the effect of disadvantaging a person on the basis of racial or ethnic background is prohibited under 3.9 of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cwlth):

> It is unlawful for a person to do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public 1ife.

Section 9 goes on to state that the rights and freedoms referred to here include those rights and freedoms set out in Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. That Article imposes on signatories an obligation 'to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, 'colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law', in the enjoyment of rights which include 'the right to education and training'.

In February 1984 the Human Rights Commission made a decision to sponsor a number of separate but related studies on the existence of structural prejudice in schools against students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) and the implications of such prejudice for the human rights of students. Within this general framework individual studies would examine particular aspects of the school system and its operation, such as daily classroom practices, curriculum design and course options, and sporting and recreation activities.

Enduring a Lot is the first report which results from that project. It records an action research strategy devised and supervised by staff of the Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Deakin University, in which NESB students at secondary schools in the Geelong area were given the opportunity to explore and to analyse, with only minimal adult guidance, what it means to be an NESB student in an Australian school. In keeping with this focus on student participation, much of the report consists of the views of the students themselves, their perceptions of what it means to be 'different' in school, what the educational and social implications are and what is to be done to ensure that NESB students will have somewhat less to endure in the future.

A study of student perceptions of prejudice in the school system, consisting as far as possible of the reflections and analyses of the students themselves, struck the Commission as an imaginative venture made all the more relevant by the fact that 1985 was to be the International Year of Youth. The participation of young people in research attempting to come to grips with the problems they faced was a valuable initiative. That the Commission sees value in enabling students to explore the problems they experience within the school

system does not mean, of course, that the Commission necessarily endorses all the opinion and recommendations articulated in this report. But whatever reservations might be felt about individual statements or recommendations, the views of students recorded here are universally expressed with candour and conviction. The views they present will prove illuminating for all those involved in schooling, whether as leachers, parents, or students. The whole report has been edited, and a number of sections of it written by Colin Henry of Deakin University, with the assistance of Brian Edwards. Mr Henry was also responsible for the design and implementation of the action research program. The Commission is greatly indebted to him for his hard work and sensitive response to students, both in the course of research supervision and during the compilation of the report, and for the quality of the final document. Finally, the Commission would like to express its gratitude to the students who took part in the study, giving so freely of their time and going to such pains to provide insightful comment on what is a most complex issue.

Peter Bailey
Deputy Chairman

June 1986

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PART A - THE REPORT

'There's seven deadly sins,' Rudy said.
'Deadly? What do you mean deadly?' Francis said.
'I mean daily,' Rudy said. 'Every day.'
'There's only one sin as far as I'm concerned,' Francis said.
'There's prejudice.'
'Oh yeah. Prejudice. Yes.'

William Kennedy, Ironweed, p.9.

Having a name like Guiseppe was another reason for others to make fun of me. But this 'fun' didn't start until the second half of my time at primary school. Then all I ever heard being said day in, day out, was, 'Papa Guiseppe.

Joe Pino, 'Too much of a barrier'.

PREFACE

ORIENTING THE READER

For three months from about mid September to the middle of December, 1984, significant issues concerning the effects of schools on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds exercised the minds of a substantial group which became associated with this project.

Among those closest to the action, the student researchers and their supporting teachers from Bell Park Technical School, Clonard College, Corio Technical School, Geelong West Technical School, and North Geelong High School probably had the most to think about. But the gentle waves they made as they dipped deeper into their own school experiences and explored more carefully the school lives of other 'ethnic' students, have touched others not directly involved in the project.

The members of the families of the student researchers have been touched; so have other members of their ethnic communities, and so have additional students and teachers within their schools.

The members of staff of the Geelong Migrant Resource Centre who participated from time to time in the study, principally Toni Spanic and Jordan Mavros, but also a number of their co-workers, have also had the issues that relate to being 'ethnic' and being in school, reviewed or refocused for them. They, in turn, provoked new ways of thinking about ethnicity and schooling as they contributed their insights to the project team's deliberations.

Again, those of us from Deakin University who were involved in various ways have found ourselves caught up in the study. And we can say our colleagues have not escaped the contagion of an interest either. For us, the study was a reminder of the unique advantages of our occupation; having the opportunity to take part in research work is invariably informing, thought-provoking, and engaging.

Our hope is that this report will create new resonances by enabling an even wider audience to consider more critically and more reflectively the range of human rights issues that arise when one considers the way 'ethnic' students are treated in our schools. The effects (both those intended, but perhaps more importantly, those unintended) of their treatment at school are considerable and not without their problems and challenges.

We also hope that this report will provide an impetus for action; we are hopeful that it will cause others, who would not otherwise have done so, to 'stick up' more assertively for the rights of 'ethnic' students in our schools. Ultimately, in evaluating the project, we will need to ask; 'Did our work make any difference? Did it improve education provision for 'ethnic' students? Did it lead to greater participation and equity?'

There is another complementary' ambition, too. We hope the report will convey the power of participatory processes in advancing the cause of increased respect for human rights. The study tried to practise an important principle, one this report endeavours to highlight. The principle is this: genuine education reform is possible only if those who are involved in educational work become participants in the process of improving education by studying what they do, and taking part in the struggle to be better at doing what they do. That is the major learning that we hope will emerge from this study. It is not a new idea nor a difficult principle to grasp in the abstract, but it is one more often praised than practised. This report may go some way towards explicating what it means to participate in the social project of improving our own work and working situation.

The report in brief

Part A contains the report and recommendations. Part B consists of the writings of the projects' student researchers.

The first section of the report begins by repeating the 'participation for improvement' theme. In it we quickly sketch the conventional approach to educational research with its distinctive division of labour, before outlining an alternative participatory research style. That discussion provides an explanation of why this study was conducted the way it was. It serves also as a backdrop against which the accompanying discussion of stages in the course of the study are more easily understood.

In the third part of the report the recommendations made by the student research teams in their collective reports are extracted from the full reports which are to be found in Part B. Over fifty recommendations - for school-policy makers, teachers, curriculum developers, students and parents with non-English-speaking backgrounds, and even teacher educators - appear there. Among those recommendations there are few, if indeed any at all, that do not deserve close and serious examination. Readers interested in practical suggestions for action likely_ to improve 'ethnic' students' access to educational opportunities may want to turn to this section of the document before reading any of the others.

The report concludes with a critical friend's perspective on the study. This section is a review of the report and the research project from the perspective of an adult who worked closely with the student-researchers throughout the project. It concentrates on what can be learnt from this brief study about both the relationship between ethnicity and education and the process of youth participation in research activities.

The first section of Part B provides a collection of brief, but surprisingly enlightening statements written by students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. These were penned by a group of students when they were asked to write down what they felt to be the single most significant scholastic effect of their ethnic origins. When that small writing task had been completed, the students had compiled such an illuminating index of the dimensions of the effects of their ethnicity on their everyday educational lives that we felt their views demanded wider circulation than had been originally intended. So this section, called 'Significant effects', was included to provide a 'sounding'; it gives an indication of what can be found further down, or a 'feel' for what follows.

In the second section of Part B the autobiographies of the twenty-eight student researchers are collected together. Each of these personal histories is an authentic and informative account of the personal life circumstances of the student who wrote it Taken together the collection 'makes us thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted' (van Manen, no date, p.ii). The evidence in these personal histories is overwhelming; it shows that if you are still in school it does make a difference to have a non-English-speaking background and, more often than not, that difference works to your disadvantage.

The third section of Part B consists of five school reports, one from each of the school teams. These are the results of a collective effort on the part of each team to organise and present summaries of their group's most significant findings. These reports are thoughtful portrayals of the effects schools have on 'ethnic' students; they raise issues that are problematic for schools with a substantial number of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, and they propose practical action about what should be done in and by schools to provide greater protection for the rights of 'ethnic' students. Their authors' personal knowledge of the circumstances and conditions 'ethnic' students confront in schools makesthese reports compelling reading.

Findings

As a result of this study of the effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, we find ourselves once more face to face with one of the most troubling contradictions in the distribution of educational opportunities. This is the contradiction between offering all students equality of educational Oportunity while effectively denying it to many. Practices which produce unequal access to educational opportunities emerge in sharp relief from the results of this study. The two major general findings of the research teams are these: (i) it does make a difference to have a non-English-speaking background if you are a school student; and (ii) the difference it makes operates, most frequently, to the disadvantage of 'ethnic' students. These matters are taken up in more detail later in this report, but there are a number of striking observations that should be made right away. They raise such disturbing issues about the human rights of students and the role schools play in reproducing disadvantage, that they demand immediate consideration.

First, there is the issue of a student's right to be treated with respect, with consideration and courtesy, and in a self-enhancing manner (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7; Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 10). The evidence students have gathered speaks eloquently and emphatically of the denial of their right to self-respect. Their subjection to insulting remarks, offensive names; and barbed taunts is a daily trial for many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. They are hurt too often because of their cultural background, and they require protection from both thoughtlessness and malice.

Secondly, there is the plight of students who have an inadequate grasp of the English language. The problem is most acute for newly-arrived students from countries like Kampuchea, Vietnam, and Malaysia who may have little or no English. But it is not only a problem for the newly-arrived; it affects many students who have lived most, or even all, of their lives in Australia.

It is obvious that success in Australian schools depends on a student's facility with English. This study makes it very clear that some students in our schools are denied the opportunity to be successful in school because their command of English is inadequate. Failure to attend to students' English language needs is a means of severely limiting their educational achievements (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 7).

Thirdly, there is the question of the right Of students with 'ethnic' backgrounds to maintain and benefit from their cultural roots (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27). The almost total neglect

of community languages, literature, history, and other cultural studies, is commonplace in our schools. The curriculum, by its omissions, expresses a disregard for cultures other than the dominant English tradition; it devalues the cultural heritage students bring with them to school and, in so doing, expresses an assimilationist perspective which mocks the values and aspirations of multiculturalism.

Fourthly, there is the right of students to have an Australian national identity (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 24(3); Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 3). Students who have been born and raised here, or have settled in this country as a matter of choice, are entitled to regard it as their homeland and to call themselves 'Australians' if that is their wish. Yet many do not feel so entitled; they are unsure of their nationality, alienated and disaffected, and they feel torn between being Australian and being Croatian, or Turkish or Italian, or whatever their ethnic origins are. Students frequently feel cut off from the rest of the Australian community, and many speak in terms which indicate there are two classes of Australian," 'ethnics' like themselves, and 'real' Australians. Yet schools often seem oblivious to the role they play in producing identity crises and anti-nationalist sentiments.

On the basis of the analysis made possible by the work of these student researchers, there can be only one conclusion. There is much more that remains to be done in our schools to preserve and protect the rights of students with non-English-speaking origins. If we are serious, for a start, about offering all students the opportunity to be academically successful in our schools, we must take seriously the issues raised and the recommendations made in this report.

But we must consider more than academic success. We must analyse the effect schools have on the total lives of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. So there is a fifth Concern. It is not at all clear that the time students with 'ethnic' backgrounds spend in school makes their lives as rich, as interesting, and as satisfying as it might. Nor is it clear that it enables them to be as well informed, as thoughtful, and as committed to freer communication, just decision-making and making life richer, more interesting and satisfying for others, as it might. What is at stake here is the right of students to learn to participate in the processes by which communities are improved and reformed. To deny them that right is to exclude them from the participatory processes that characterise representative democracies (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 24(3); Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 7).

Any one of these five concerns would be worrying enough by itself; taken together they amount to subtle and not-so-subtle forms of institutionally structured and condoned discrimination. Schools with a significant population of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds will want to investigate these issues further for themselves. Where similar effects are found, they will want to set about redressing the disadvantages of 'ethnic' students as a matter of some urgency. The evidence- contained in this report should be regarded as provocative; it should provoke us to ask whether our usual practices, ideas, and assumptions about equality of educational opportunity are simply wrong, or it should provoke us to collect compelling evidence to refute the proposition that students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are seriously disadvantaged by prevailing practices, ideas, and assumptions which shape the schooling they get. Adopting either of these two options creates the possibility of better informed, more intelligent, and more justifiable educational practice.

A HISTORY OF THE STUDY

Planning the work

In April, 1984, members of the Deakin University School of Education were invited by the Human Rights Commission to submit a proposal to study the effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Stephen Kemmis, Fazal Rizvi and I were interested in doing the work, particularly because it gave us the opportunity to continue studying the possibilities of participatory styles of research, work we had been engaged in for the previous six years.

Conventional research studies

As we sat down to plan a proposal to conduct this study, we were aware that there are well-accepted conventions about the relationship between educational research and educational change, reform, and tmprovement. We were also aware that there are equally well-known conventions about the division of labour research work is supposed to require. These demarcation rules determine which people get to do what as the relationship between research and reform is worked out in the practices of the people who variously sponsor, take on, or are meant to be the beneficiaries of, research designed to improve what is taught and learnt in our schools.

Roughly, what happens during the conventional research process is -this. Particular concerns that need investigating are identified by sponsors. Professional researchers are then engaged to do the work of studying those particular issues, concerns, problems, etc. The researchers next report the results of their work to their sponsors, to other members of the research community, and if possible to teachers, educational workers and others interested in educational reform. Teachers (and here I include others close to the chalk-face such as consultants, administrators, and curriculum developers) subsequently pick up the insights researchers have generated, apply the new knowledge to the work they do, and in that way modify, regenerate, and improve their practice. Students enter this relationship at the end of the production line as it were, ostensibly as the ultimate consumers of researchers' labours. Through the medium of teachers' practices, the new insights researchers have created are deposited in the consciousness of students, and this presumably makes better informed, more intelligent, and more responsible action on their part not only possible, but probable. In that neat 'rational' fashion, thanks to the new wisdom we have about the world, (wisdom, remember, which is the production of researchers' efforts) the community moves closer to becoming more rational and more just.

The logic of the theory and practice of orthodox educational research is so rarely challenged that it often seems part of the natural order of things. 'What is known in the trade as a rationalist theory of action, the theory that ideas came first and implementation follows' (Kemmis, 1984, p.8), is so familiar and so well rehearsed, that it looks to many like the only way available to conduct and use research studies. It is, therefore, an option often taken up because there seem to be no others available.

We might have planned this research project so that it ran on such conventional lines. If it had been so planned, members of the Deakin Institute for Studies in Education would have been committed to conducting surveys, or making case studies of the effects of schooling on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, and reporting their findings to the Human Rights Commission. Later, using whatever channels it had available to it to communicate with the schools, the Commission could have made the findings of the study more widely known to schools, teachers, and others interested in the idea of teaching for improved respect for the human rights of 'ethnic' members of the community. Then we could all have waited expectantly for teachers to modify their teaching strategies in the light of what the 'research says', for students to adopt more enlightened views and to act more reasonably and justly, and eventually for our schools in particular, and our community in general, to express greater respect for the rights of persons with non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Unfortunately, the relationship between educational research and social transformation is rarely as logically simple or as unproblematic as the 'rational model' assumes. Researchers are frequently under attack for the irrelevance of their work to the concerns of practitioners, and educational research has a disappointing record of achievement. The general conclusion that many practitioners have reached is that conventional educational research has failed to fulfil its promise to make a major contribution to reforming our schools and society.

The study could well have followed the orthodox procedure characteristic of educational research, but because of our serious misgivings about the orthodox way of doing the work we chose to conduct it differently. What we wanted was an alternative to ways of doing research which regard researchers as producers of solutions to problems, and others as consumers of their solutions. We wanted more involvement than the standard models of research allow.

An unconventional approach

The unconventional approach we decided to propose was to make this project a participatory study of human rights in, and through, schools. What we intended to do was to involve schools directly in research action intended to improve respect for the human rights of people with non-English-speaking backgrounds.

For the purposes of this study, something like five secondary schools in Geelong would be invited to become affiliated with the Human Rights Commission by co-operating with members of staff of the Deakin Institute for Studies in Education in finding out more about the difference it makes to have an ethnic background if you are a student in a school.

We proposed that each of the schools would provide a team of student researchers and a teacher willing to support the school's student research team. The work they would do would involve the student research teams making short studies, using an active research approach, of the respect shown for the human rights of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds in their schools and communities.

It is important to appreciate the spirit in which we anticipated this work would be carried out The aim of the student-conducted studies was not to apportion praise or blame for the respect shown for, or the violation of the human rights of 'ethnic' students in any school. It was to discover ways in which gradual improvements could be made by schools and their communities in respecting the human rights of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. The attitude underpinning this strategy is that schools would report their research findings to the Commission, not as information told about offenders to a watchdog body, but in the spirit of helping the Commission to find practical ways of improving respect for human rights in Australian communities. The schools in which the student researchers were conducting their research would not be coming under the stern gaze of the Commission for neglecting human rights, but, on the contrary, they would be working with it to develop new strategies for promoting a concern for human rights. Schools would become a principal means for promoting respect for human rights, in this case the human rights of people with 'ethnic' backgrounds. The theory is that as school communities recognise the seriousness of ethnicism, they will become directly involved in combating ethnic prejudice and its manifestations within their own confines, and actively involved in the struggle for greater justice for 'ethnic' groups in the wider community.

We believed that a study of this kind would be significant for the schools and the students involved, as well as the Human Rights Commission. Students could be expected to develop a deeper understanding of their own experience and the experience of students like themselves; schools could be expected to derive an increased comprehension of the issues that arise when students from non-English-speaking backgrounds are educated in schools designed originally for the daughters and sons of English-speaking parents; and school communities could be expected to benefit from a more complete understanding of the educational experiences of 'ethnic' students and their families.

Conducting the study

Involving the schools

Our proposal to conduct the study in the manner discussed was accepted by the Commission in early September, 1984. The study proper began during the third week Of September.

The five schools which agreed to participate were: Bell Park Technical School (a boys' technical school), Clonard College (a Catholic girls' school), Corio Technical School (a co-educational technical school), Geelong West Technical School (a co-educational technical school), and Geelong North High School (a co-educational high school).

Soon after third term began, the principal of each of the five schools listed above was approached; each principal agreed that his school would take part in the project, provided that there was adequate interest among staff and students. That condition was subsequently satisfied; students and staff in each school were interested in taking part in the project, and subsequently each of the invited schools provided both a team of student researchers and a supporting teacher to participate in the project.

The actual membership of the research teams was as follows:

Research team members	Supporting teachers
Bell Park Technical School	
Dennis Brajkovic Stephen Bratanavicius Joe Pino Milenko Podnar Eddie Vlasnovic	Mr Brian Edwards

Clonard College

Alexandra Abba	
Brunella Bernardi	
Maria Brdar	
Vicki Dekleva	Hans Bus
Pauline Hendriks	
Rosetta Salvo	
Ingrid Wilson	

Corio Technical School

Corradina Amato	
Joseph Balazs	
David Dobar	Penny Beeston
Margaret Lokas	
Adam Santospirito	
Damir Zebic	

Geelong West Technical School

Michelle Bartolo	
Paul De Wit	
Georgina Krpez	John Eastgate
Betty Metlika	
John Nguyen	

North Geelong High School

Yudra Ivanovic	
Maria Josipovic	
Attilla Kimmel	Brian Fraser
Filicia Siketa	
Pina Tigani	

The five schools which participated in the study form something of a loose geographical cluster. All the schools are located on the north side of Geelong and each has a significant population of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Historically, the Corio, Norlane, Bell Park, North Geelong, suburbs of Geelong have been those parts of the city in which large numbers of 'migrant' families have established their homes. In part, this reflects the location of .major industrial plants which expanded rapidly after the Second World War (Ford, International Harvester, and Shell were the big employers and still feature prominently in the economy of the city) and the accompanying public housing estates which were built in close proximity to those industries to accommodate employees.

Our decision to invite Bell Park Technical School, Clonard College, Corio Technical School, Geelong West Technical School, and .North Geelong High School, was determined firstly by the ethnic composition of their student population; we wanted to involve schools with substantial populations of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds.

But our preference for schools also depended on the presence of teachers we knew to be interested in the possibilities of innovative styles of teaching and learning. Each of these five schools qualified easily on that criterion as well.

Les Phillips, Principal of Bell Park Technical School, is widely recognised as actively supporting both good education and progressive changes which are consistent with that end. It was through Les that the project was able to boast the participation of Brian Edwards who showed nothing less than remarkable interest in the project before it got off the ground, while it was operating, and during the writing-up-stage.

Clonard College has a long association with the Deakin University School of Education. When John Shannon, Clonard's new Principal, was approached to be involved, he was characteristically enthusiastic about continuing the school's working relationship with the University and optimistic about the possibilities of this particular project. We were fortunate when Hans Bus who joined us as Clonard's support person showed the same degree of commitment and enthusiasm as his 'boss'.

John Eastgate, who also has a long history of working with the School, was the 'natural' person to approach at Geelong West Technical School. Given his already heavy professional responsibilities within the school, we were not expecting John's direct involvement in the project. It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise when his personal participation proved to be possible.

Again, it was through another of our 'old' friends, Peter Stokie, Vice-principal at Corio Technical School, that Penny Beeston's energy, persistence, and good humour were made available to the project.

We had no personal contacts to exploit at North Geelong High, but we were attracted to the school by the reputation its new Principal, John Tol, was earning among 'ethnic' parents for sharing their concerns and being responsive to their wishes. We were doubly fortunate at North Geelong High: fortunate that John Tol wanted the school to participate, and fortunate that his first choice, Brian Fraser, was able to work consistently with us alongside North Geelong's student research team until close to the end of the project.

Recruiting the student research teams

All of the student research teams were made up of volunteers. In each school the recruitment procedure went roughly like this. After the principal had been contacted and had approved the project, the teacher he nominated to support the student research team was asked to call a meeting of 'ethnic' students who might be interested in participating in the research project. We

then explained the project, gave students time to think about participating in it, and after about a week's 'think time', 'signed up' those who felt they could make a firm commitment to the work.

Three of the school teams consisted of five members, the number originally suggested as about the right size. But there were seven in the Clonard team, (although at first it had seemed that Clonard students would decline the offer), and six at Corio Technical School.

Briefly speaking, the proposal that was put to students was for a study of about eight weeks duration. During this time the student research teams in each school were expected to be responsible for researching the effects of the school system on themselves and students like themselves, and for reporting the results of their research work to the Human Rights Commission, their school, and their school community.

Students were told that staff members of the Deakin University School of Education were going to be working with them throughout the life of the project in an advisory capacity. What that meant in practice was that at least one University member of the project team would be meeting with each of .the student teams about once a fortnight to hear work-in-progress reports, offer advice on tasks being conducted, provide resources, equipment, materials, etc., where needed, and generally monitor what was happening and help keep the work progressing.

Students were advised, after they had elected to join the project, that they were to be paid as if they were on work experience. The budget allowed for payment to students of approximately $3,750, or just on $750 per school team (calculated on the basis of $2 per hour for 75 hours, or not quite 10 hours per week for 8 weeks for each of the 5 team members). Agreement was reached with those teams having more than 5 members that the maximum amount available as payment for any one student was $750 6 in the one case, and $750 7 in the other. Students were asked to keep a record of the hours they spent on the project and to submit a time sheet at the end of the study detailing the hours they worked each week. Few, if any,students gave the impression that being paid was a major reason for them joining the study; most, in fact, seemed indifferent to the payment angle, at least at the beginning of the project.

The original negotiations with schools were premised on some time concessions being made for students within the regular school day. It seemed possible, for example, that some of their English, or History, or Social Studies class-time could be made available for the research work. In practice, time for the research project proved difficult to find within the confines of normal time-tables. At times students were released from regular

classes, but there were many occasions when their research tasks required more time than could be allowed within the confines of the regular school day. Consequently, many student researchers could be seen writing, interviewing, meeting, videotaping, and attending to other such research-related activities in out-of-school time, or at times within the school day when they would otherwise have been free. Finding time to keep up with the demands of the research work proved difficult throughout the Study, but it became particularly serious as the end of the school year loomed and the deadlines for the school teams' collective reports approached. These difficulties were not anticipated when the early negotiations were being Conducted.

Completing the two main tasks

The complete project team, students, teachers and University staff, all met together for the first time on the evening of September 27, in the Bell Park Technical School library. The two main tasks students were expected to do were outlined on this occasion. These were:

1 writing personal histories of their own school experience;
2 collectively compiling a team report on the advantages and disadvantages of having a non-English-speaking background, based on their personal histories, video records of discussions and interviews, a brief survey, and discussions with relatives and friends.

The complete project team met again on November 1 to signal the end of the first task (writing the personal histories) and to initiate the second. The second task (compiling the group reports) was due for completion in early December._

Expecting all the personal histories to be completed by November 1 proved, however, to be too optimistic. About half the student researchers were able to meet that deadline, but the others found it impossible to complete the task by then.

The expectation that the research teams would complete their school's report by early December was also unrealistic. As the end-of-year exams, and other end-of-year engagements overtook them, the teams found it extremely difficult to find time to finish their reports. The difficulty was solved, however, once school finished. Without the pressure of other demands, representatives of the research teams were able to meet together to complete what their team had begun before school finished. This was still demanding work, and these team members who completed the group reports deserve considerable credit for shaping up the loosely structured ideas their team-mates had left them with.

Reporting the findings

Audiences

In reporting the findings of this research we were conscious of the need to address a number of audiences. We were also conscious of the need to report on both the substantive findings of the study (what we had learned about the effects of having a non-English-speaking background) and the process of participatory research (what we had learned about the problems and possibilities of involving students in studies designed to improve respect for human rights).

After the Human Rights Commission, the audience we believed to be most interested in the study's findings consisted of the schools and the communities from which the student researchers came. Participation and Equity Program (P.E.P.) targeted schools could also be expected to take more than a passing interest in what this study has to say about improving equity and 'participation in education, and schools applying for the small grants the Commission is presently making available for action research studies intended to improve respect for human rights in schools and communities, might also find this study instructive as they begin to plan their own participatory enquiries. Others involved more generally in youth participation and research-based education (such as the alternative Year 12 programs in Victoria), could also be expected to read the report with interest.

Providing the information a range of readers was likely to want to know about was one set of considerations. Giving the student researchers adequate scope to publish their perspectives and perceptions, was another. The report devotes most of its pages to the perspectives of students; that is as it should be. But it also provides a broader perspective. Principally this additional perspective is provided by those of us from the University who worked to support the student-researchers, but it also includes views drawn from others around the project. Our readers can judge how well our intention (of giving students an adequate voice in reporting the research findings) matches our action as they study the report.

Stages in writing the report

The report was not strictly compiled in the following order because . various writing and editing tasks were conducted at the same time However, this sequential reconstruction doe's give a reasonably accurate picture of the order in which the document was written.

The students' personal histories were written, edited, typed, returned to students and their parents for approval, and retyped. Arranged in alphabetical order according to author's surname, that section was more or less complete by the middle of December.

The collection of significant effects was put together, and a brief explanatory introduction added. This section of the report was finished at about the same time as the personal histories.

3 Rough drafts of the school reports were worked up by editors from the school teams (Stephen Bratanavicius for the Bell Park Technical School Team, Maria Brdar and Ingrid Wilson for the Clonard College Team, David Dobar for the Corio Technical School Team, Michelle Bartolo for Geelong West Technical School Team, and Attilla Kimmel and Filicia Siketa for North Geelong High School Team). The second drafts were finished before Christmas, but it was late in January before the manuscripts were edited and ready for typing. The type-scripts were edited again and retyped, and it was late March before these were returned to the schools and their release negotiated.

The list of recommendations was extracted from the school reports and classified under headings which indicated the people to whom they were addressed.

The 'Preface', 'History of the study', and 'Reviewing the evidence' sections were completed.

Editorial policy

Editing the students' work was a substantial task. What the students had written convinced us that their point of view deserved to be taken seriously. At the same time, the quality of their writing often made it possible for critics to dismiss their opinions and perspectives as insignificant or unimportant simply on the grounds that technical faults with the English language made their message difficult to comprehend and disqualified their work from serious consideration.

In a sense we put words into their mouths, but it is wrong to assume we were telling them what to say. Our intention was to help students speak their minds eloquently, present their points of view logically, and argue their cases convincingly.

At one level the changes that were needed were minor corrections; a student who consistently used 'when' for 'went', and wrote of parents who spoke 'Yugoslavese' rather than 'Yugoslavian', found those words changed when the Wanged copy of the manuscript of her personal history was returned to her.

At another level students were advised to make more substantial changes. Notes written on the draft of one school report included, 'The report needs to be more about your findings and less about what might be, or could be the case'; and 'You need to use more evidence from the videos, personal histories, list of significant effects, etc., to support your views'.

At yet another level, when it came to presenting the combined list of recommendations, students' ideas were extracted, classified and organised for them

So writing this report was a combined effort in which adults played the part of assisting students to say what they wanted to say in a way that would ensure they would be taken seriously. It is a function with which teachers and parents are familiar with.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS' ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

When the recommendations of the five student research teams are extracted from their reports and considered together, we find that they have over fifty specific recommendations to make about improving the education of students like themselves. There are specific recommendations for six groups.

A School policy makers
B Teachers
C Curriculum developers
D Parents
E Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds
F Teacher educators

While the list of recommendations is not uncontroversial, among the range of changes it recommends is a wealth of suggestions for practical, workable improvement. It would be an obdurate person indeed who, after reading these recommendations, would resist close consideration of the action implications of this catalogue of practical suggestions, or who would say, 'They're not telling us anything that we aren't already doing'.

The recommendations begin with suggestions for the formulation of a substantial number of school policies; the policy-makers they are addressed to range from members of student councils to members of school councils.

Recommendations for school policy-makers

Appreciation of people with non-English-speaking backgrounds

I A completely new outlook by schools is needed. They should be welcoming other cultures instead of seeing them as threatening.

2 We feel that the principal should make it known to all members of the school that everyone is to be treated the same, no matter what he or she looks like. Teachers should continue what they're doing to protect students who are harmed by prejudice, and the school council should look into this matter more closely to see what's really going on in the school. Finally, we think the student council should consider writing a bill of rights to emphasise its support for 'ethnic' students and their rights-.

3 Our schools, from the very early years, need to encourage students to be proud of being themselves, and to be proud of their heritage. They should guarantee that students respect themselves and respect other nationalities, colours, and creeds. Especially when students with a non-English-speaking background say its a disadvantage and not an advantage to be different, teachers and parents together have to encourage students to feel better about their origins.

Curriculum policy

4 So that students become more familiar with their own heritage and the heritage of others in the school, schools need to do more to enable students to become aware of current and historical issues involving migrants; students have, for example, to be more aware of Australian politics and migration policy and to be more aware of, and more sensitive to, the human issues that confront newcomers to this country.

Policy on cultural days and other community building activities

5 Something should be done to overcome the problem of students feeling they have to hide that they have an ethnic background. Schools should take the initiative to make ethnic students feel proud about their background. Principals, students, and school councils, all should get together to organise a cultural day, or something along those lines, as a start to bringing Anglo-Australian students and 'ethnics' closer together. Before organising such a day, however, the organisers should remember that being embarrassed about your background may explain why there aren't more of these cultural days at school. If this is so, the staff first has to encourage non-English-speaking background students to come out of their shell and assist themselves. At the same time, teachers should protect students with non-English-speaking backgrounds from those who would tease, embarrass, and insult them.

6 More community programs like camps and gatherings should be organised, so that all students can learn to participate together in harmony.

Integration of Asian students

7 At school people should treat Vietnamese and Cambodians, and any person with an 'ethnic' background, just as they would like to be treated themselves. We think that we would slowly start to demolish the barriers that have been erected between those with non-English-speaking backgrounds and those with English-speaking backgrounds.

8 Sensitivity to the problems faced by Asian students should be generated through the school with the help of students Of European background because they are familiar with problems of settling in and not being accepted within the school. This could be done through devising activities to illustrate the problems faced by Asian students. Assistance could be sought from agencies or schools which have organised similar activities, especially those which have ideas that could be applied in classroom situations. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to have their classes attend Asian festivals, restaurants and celebrations, and design follow-up activities, projects, and discussion which promote understanding of Asian cultures.

Community language policy

9 Students should be encouraged to speak their community language so that more of them feel comfortable about using alternatives to English.

English language policy

10 We believe more assistance should be provided for children with English problems at primary school, especially those who are new arrivals.

11 From their early secondary years, students with English problems should be picked up and directed to special remedial classes, preferably during school hours. Promoting poor English students to the next level while their English is below standard, seems to us to be the means of creating further disadvantage for them. When students reach the Higher School Certificate level, it's hard to know how anybody can expect them to do well if their English is poor.

12 It should be possible to arrange a session or two a week, when 'ethnic' students who are having trouble with their English (or Maths etc.) are brought together as a group and are allowed to ask questions about what they do not fully understand.

Tutoring

13 Special tutoring in the home at low cost to low income families should be encouraged at senior levels of secondary schools.

Discipline policy

14 Schools need to assert more authority and exert more discipline over all their students. It is very difficult to change the opinions of the parents of 'ethnic' students about discipline and the education of their children, so we believe it is really up to the school to do something constructive.

Policies on class size and composition

15 If more than one teacher could be employed per class this would enable students to feel much more comfortable.

16 It would also be an improvement to have a greater cross-section of the ethnic communities in school classes. This would enable many different cultures to be in contact with one another. Hopefully this would lead to a greater understanding amongst students.

Communication policy

17 Principals, teachers, and students need to work together to improve communication between parents and schools because parental involvement in schools, the understanding parents have of the educational process, and their ability to help their children, is very limited at present. When parents and school staff have a better relationship, they can work more closely together to improve the education, well being, and acceptance of 'ethnic' children within our schools. Schools should be a better reflection of parents' expectations; this can be achieved by bringing the school and parents together more frequently.

Schools and parents with ethnic backgrounds should come closer together. They should become familiar with each others' expectations, talk through the difficulties and needs as each group sees them and aim for more mutually acceptable expectations and standards of behaviour. This could take place in meetings with groups of parents with different backgrounds. Schools should try to do away with double standards. It may help if the school's newsletter was written in the language of the students' parents so that the parents could know what's going on at the school. Then they may be more likely to let their sons and daughters go on excursions and trips.

18 Notices and letters should be sent out encouraging parents who don't realise the difficulty their children could face in the early years of primary school if they do not attend kindergarten.

19 Where they are needed, schools should hire translators for days that parents are required at school.

Counselling

20 Counselling, either individually or in group sessions, should be encouraged to help students analyse family relationships. Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds often feel so 'out of it' that the way they cope with conflicting standards is by rejecting their families' standards because that means being accepted.

21 Teaching students experiencing difficulties at home to be able to work on their own and concentrate more on their work, Would help. Helping these students mix in with other students and helping them to forget about family problems at school would also be an improvement. Teaching students who lack communication skills to be able to express themselves more clearly, and encouraging them to become more confident when speaking, would help as well. But no one can really pry into private family problems without creating further hassles. Above all we feel that if a student in this position is having problems at home, everything possible should be done to make that person happy and satisfied while she/he is at school.

Regard for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds and their cultural heritage

22 An awareness of other ethnic groups and their cultures is desperately needed in the school system. This should be introduced with teachers taking a very active part in its introduction.

23 Teachers need to be super-sensitive; they should be aware of cultural differences and treat students as respected individuals. In cases where it is clearly demonstrated that a teacher has shown discrimination or prejudice, measures should be taken to resolve the issue between the student involved and the teacher.

24 Teachers should promote positive human values; they should involve students in cross-cultural studies which stress the heritage, and the beauty of the heritage, of the country being studied. Then students with family connections to those countries can feel proud and privileged to know who they are, and where their roots are. They must be encouraged to be themselves and to be proud of it. They should not feel obliged to conform to another image simply to please others and be absorbed into the Aussie culture.

25 We find it hard to understand why it should have to be an embarrassment to have an ethnic background, and we can't see why students are permitted to laugh at people with ethnic backgrounds. We think people should be encouraged to speak up and be proud of their background; they should not be laughed at and made to feel ashamed of their cultural origins.

Student's names

26 Students should be encouraged to recognise their individuality. They should not have to strive to be common to the extent that even their names have to be Anglicised.

27 Students should be encouraged to maintain their names and not cut them short merely to please others who appear too lazy to make the effort to become familiar with names they have not seen before. Names and their origins and meanings could be studied in class, and this would probably prove interesting even to students with Anglo-Australian origins.

28 Teachers should set an example by getting the records straight at the start of the year. Writing students' names correctly in the roll, and then writing beside each name the way it would be pronounced if English spelling was used, is one simple strategy for ensuring that students' names are not mangled.

Teaching English

29 Teachers should try to spend more time with migrant children who are having language problems. Improving their English should be a high priority.

30 Where that is not possible, students should be taught to speak English by experienced English as a Second Language teachers. This should happen for at least some months before those students go on with their normal studies. This way, they will have a better knowledge of English, and so they will encounter fewer problems with their normal school studies.

Tactful class discussions

31 We feel that steps should be taken to make sure embarrassment does not occur when class discussions about migration, or migrant related issues, are conducted in classrooms. When it does occur, it means that students feel negatively about themselves and therefore may become introverted and quiet.

While we agree that students should be encouraged to speak up on these issues, we also believe that teachers should present the subject in such a way that it does not permit ridicule and offensive laughter. The teacher should control the discussion so that cultural differences are not laughed at.

Discipline

32 We believe that stricter control is needed in our classrooms so that there are more better behaved students. This will promote a positive and healthy learning environment. Those students who upset classes should be punished severely enough to deter others from doing the same thing. Students who insist on disrupting classes need to be removed from those classes.

Improving students appreciation of their parents

33 Teachers can help promote greater understanding by encouraging discussion in the classroom aimed at helping students realise that their parents only want the best for their children. Teachers should point out the consequences of confrontation or rebelling against one's up-bringing, and they should try to help students think of ways of modifying situations without causing conflict.

Recommendations for curriculum developers

Awareness of other cultures

34 As a group, we feel it is very important that an awareness course about ethnic groups be introduced. We feel this task should involve greater contact between 'ethnic' and Anglo-Australian groups, awareness classes, and, more importantly, cultural classes.

35 To prevent the teasing issue becoming a larger problem, all students should be taught more about cultural differences so that they gain the understanding that everybody is different in one sense or another, that we are all human and people who have the right to be treated equally.

Primary school curriculum

36 To overcome ethnic and racial prejudice, cultural awareness and sensitivity should be encouraged at the primary school level by, for example:

a inviting individuals from various ethnic communities to work in the school to encourage pupil participation in engaging cultural activities,
introducing community languages to the school,
involving the school in ethnic community activities outside the school.

Curriculum means for achieving improved cultural awareness

37 To combat racism, there is an obvious need to gain a better Understanding of Australian politics and current affairs, especially Australian migration policy and migrant-related issues. Australian students need to be more aware of life in Asia and the positive effects that the Asian community has had in Australia. Schools should work to eliminate false beliefs, such as the one that Asian migrants are taking others' jobs.

38 When students with Anglo-Australian backgrounds know more, and can better appreciate other people's backgrounds, there will be less prejudice.. And when students with a non-English-speaking background know more and can better appreciate their own roots, they will feel less insecure. Developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity can be achieved by means of studying in detail at least some of the different community languages, and the history, the literature, and culture of various ethnic groups represented in the school. This form of education will promote better relationships between people with different ethnic origins.

39 Of course, prejudice, in the form of discrimination, teasing,

stereo-typing and racism cannot be totally overcome. However things can be done to minimise the amount of discrimination shown to ethnic students in school. If ignorance is the main causeof prejudice, something can be done to inform more students about different groups and their culture. Topics to do with different racial and ethnic groups should be introduced into the school curriculum. Subjects like History, Geography and Social Studies should include sections which inform students about aspects of different cultures - where the country is in relation to the rest of the world, the history of its people, the status of the country and its people in the world today, and also the reasons for the migration of that country's people to other parts of the

world. These topics would be especially relevant in schools which have significant numbers of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds because these students would be able to provide first-hand information about their cultures. In these ways, other students can get to know about different cultures and customs and understand the reasons for them. With a knowledge of other cultures an improved 'understanding and acceptance of 'ethnic' students should be possible.

Achieving better integration

40 School subjects and activities should also be better designed tQ promote integration of the various groups. For example, in English, debates should concentrate less on divisive issues such as the value of migration, at least where this invites expressions of hostility, prejudice, and ignorance.

The English language curriculum

41 Before any students enter the normal school curriculum, they should undertake a test (written/verbal) to determine if they understand the English language. If they fail they should be put in a special English class which covers 80% of the school time for 2-3 months, or until they learn the English language well enough to cope in school.

42 We believe there should be more provision made for ESL classes in schools with a number of students who cannot understand English adequately; these students need to spend more time learning English with the help of specialist teachers if they are to have a chance of succeeding at school.

43 Non-English-speaking students arriving in Australian secondary schools should be immediately provided with crash courses in English. Again, these should be taught by teachers who speak English, as well as the students' own language.

44 Ignorance and prejudice do not promote learning; and ignoring the problems students have with English does not either. Serious thought must be given to improving the English language skills of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds because their entire education depends on being competent with English.

45 Language classes should be made available for both parents and children. These should be taught by a teacher who speaks the parents' own language. Ethnic children should also be encouraged to speak about their culture, and to bring pictures, photos, dolls in national costume, music, etc. to school to stimulate discussion.

Introducing community languages

46 A few simple words in different community languages could be taught to students with English-speaking backgrounds so that 'ethnic' children feel their culture is accepted and that it is not completely alien to their fellow classmates. Students should be taught not to be ashamed of their language and culture.

Studying what it means to be an Australian

47 We believe that there is not much others can do to help a person who is going through an identity crisis. It is such a purely personal thing. However we did find that in some cases friends and the school environment have significantly affected students' beliefs about what they are. We think discussions would help, especially discussions on the question (directed to non-English-speaking background students), 'Do you consider yourself to be an Australian or the nationality of your parents?' and, 'When do you consider a person to be Australian?' This second question, especially, would give Anglo-Australian students a chance to put forward their opinions about Australian nationality and being Australian.

Curriculum measures to improve relationships between non-English-speaking background parents and their children

48 The communication gap between 'ethnic' parents and their children can be narrowed by:

a introducing community languages to schools and encouraging them at home via homework;

encouraging cross-language tutoring involving parents and students;

c teaching communication and listening skills to students so they can engage in better communication in the home between themselves and their parents, and, hopefully, create a more positive atmosphere in their homes;

encouraging students to help themselves by preparing community language video cassettes on the problems at school faced by children with non-English-speaking backgrounds. These should be viewed by parents (on a loan basis), by other students within the school, and by students in other schools;

assigning projects designed to encourage parent-student communication. For example, projects involving talking to parents about their expectations, their standards, their own school days, and the differences between schooling then and now. Generally speaking, parents' experiences should be seen as a resource for student research projects;

encouraging feed-back on such projects, would facilitate the exchange of information and would, in turn, increase awareness and understanding between students and their parents. The school curriculum should aim to bring the school's staff, its parents, and its students closer together, and to create better understanding by improved communication.

Recommendations for parents

Small children attending pre-schools

49 Parents with pre-schoolers should be encouraged to permit their pre-school children to attend playgroups which provide opportunities for learning English.

Many ethnic parents are inclined to keep their young children at home right until the time they have to attend primary school. This can present huge problems for their children.

Parents who keep their children at home don't seem to realise how essential it is for their young children to learn English at an early stage so that they will then have less trouble with the English language when they start primary school.

Instead of keeping a child at home, as some parents do, they should be attending a pre-school, even if only for a few hours each week. The children can then become slowly accustomed to the new way of life and so feel more comfortable and confident when they attend primary school.

Strictness

50 When migrant parents are too strict at home and their kids go to school and try to act tough, they can get into trouble. Also, the children of those parents who don't let their children go out are often teased about it.

'Giving in' a little more to the Australian way of life

51 The problem many students encounter of living between two cultures can't be fixed just by an awareness class, because we are dealing with different cultures and nobody wants to give up their culture. The problem is that the student is torn between both cultures and in most cases goes for the Anglo-Australian way of life because she/he spends more time at school and with her/his mates than at home. The only thing the parents can do is to give in a little more to the Australian way of life (since their child is living here), but still expect some respect for their own national culture.

Tutoring and selfhelp

52 To alleviate the problems students have with English, students and parents might be encouraged to make use of special tutoring services which should be made available at minimal costs to low income families. Tutors should be available to go to homes and become familiar with families. At the same time, parents should be encouraged to learn better English and, where there are older brothers and sisters, tutors could help develop tutoring skills which would improve opportunities for self-help with homework within families.

Reasonable expectations

53 Although migrant parents are stricter about their children's education, this strictness actually pays off and is an advantage to students. Many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds seem to achieve very good results when compared to Anglo-Australian children who aren't under such pressure to achieve.

However, we were also able to see that many problems are created within migrant families because of the pressure exerted by parents upon their children to achieve high standards at school. Our conclusion is that there is nothing that can be really done about this other than to arrange more meetings between parents and teachers to discuss the progress of their children, and for teachers to inform parents more frequently about the schools system. If parents can understand the standard their children are expected to be at, they will not have unreasonable expectations. Despite some bad effects, the pressure put on students by their parents means that parents do provide the motivation for the student to excel.

Recommendations for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

Working alone and with others to achieve acceptance

54 Apart from ethnic students having to try to make people who tease them and won't accept them see that we are no different, and being as nice to others as we possibly can so that maybe they will feel guilty and accept us, we think people should work together to try to gain a universal acceptance of individuals. People should work together to try and achieve a universal acceptance of all individuals.

Feeling proud

55 We believe students should not try to hide what they are. They should come out of their shell and feel proud of having a non-English-speaking background. Teachers should tell students the values of being of a non-English-speaking background, and help them feel proud.

Correcting mispronunciation

56 There is only one solution to the problem of names being mispronounced. The solution is that every time someone pronounces your name wrongly, you should correct him or her. Don't just leave it at that because it will happen over and over again. People should also listen more carefully when you say your name. If they do say it wrongly, they should at least say they are sorry and ask how it should be said.

Don't worry about appearances

57 When it comes to your appearance, don't worry about what people say. People who think that all wogs have big noses or dark skin are mistaken. They should shut their eyes to what others look like, find out what these people are like on the inside, and think more about their feelings.

F Recommendations for teacher educators

Improving teacher education

58 Better teacher awareness of the many cultures within the class-room would be appreciated by all ethnic students. This awareness, we believe, could be developed in teacher training where an enormous effort should be made to encourage teachers to take a greater interest in students from all ethnic backgrounds.

59 Better training of teachers could be commenced. We feel this better training could be in child psychology or its related areas. This, in turn, could give a teacher a better understanding of children's behaviour.

Schools which are interested in implementing one or more of these recommendations, but which have some difficulty choosing exactly where to begin, may be guided by a comparison of the students teams' list of recommendations with advice recently published in the United States by the Multicultural Project for Communication in Education (Carswell and Skelton, 1984).

> Is this not the meaning of research: to question something by going back again and again to the things themselves until that which is put to question begins to reveal something of its essential nature? (Max van Manen)

Rising consciousness

When we first began this project in September, 1984, the students we spoke with seemed fairly sure that having a non-English-speaking background made little, if any, difference to their school lives. On being asked- the question, 'Does it make a difference to have a non-English-speaking background?', they would characteristically shake their heads to emphasise their negative answer; mostly, they thought, it didn't. Three or four months later, their view was different. And thanks to their work so was mine.

From my perspective, that of an Anglo-Australian, the treatment of non-English-speaking students in our schools had looked, at least from a long way off, to be fairly unproblematic. I had some experiences and impressions which indicated that life in schools might not be quite the same for students with a different cultural heritage as it was for the children of longer-established families of British extraction, but if I had been asked then to explain the difference, I would have been unsure about the relationship between ethnicity and discrimination in education, and imprecise about its actual manifestations. Now I can say I am considerably more aware of the nature of the relationship between ethnicity and access to educational opportunities.

Learnings

This final section of the report discusses what I learned during the course of this project. There are two kinds of learnings I want to consider. The first has to do with learnings about ethnicity and education; what I found out from my involvement with these student researchers about the major scholastic effects of having a non-English-speaking background. The focus here is on issues that emerge when students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are educated in schools originally intended for the children of parents with British backgrounds. Among the issues that need to be raised, are some that seem to have escaped the notice of the members of research teams. The second matter I want to consider concerns the methodology of this study; the focus here is reflections on the process of youth participation in

research activities. In effect then, this section has two aims: (A) to explain what I learned from my involvement in this project about the experience of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds in our schools, and (B) to share with others the most significant of what I learned about students engaging in research-based learning projects.

Learnings about ethnicity and education

Perhaps the most socially significant result of this study of the effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds was the way it once again revealed the operation of one of the most enduring paradoxes in the provision of educational opportunities. This is the contradiction between offering all students equality of educational opportunity, while effectively denying it to many. Practices which produce unequal access to educational opportunities emerge in sharp relief from the evidence collected during the course of the study; the work raises serious issues about the human rights of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds and it is revealing about the means by which educational disadvantage is reproduced.

Among the issues raised by this study are:

1 The right of students with non-Anglo—Australian backgrounds to practise and enjoy their cultural heritage and to benefit from it.

2 Their right to become proficient with the English language in a school system where an inadequate grasp of the English language places severe limits on educational achievement.

3 The right of students with a different cultural heritage to be treated with respect.

4 The right of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds to acknowledged as having Australian nationality.

5 The right of students to learn to play an active role in social affairs.

The right to practise and enjoy one's cultural heritage

> In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Jtiahts, Article 27)

A major issue is the question of the right of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds to practise and enjoy their cultural roots. The almost total neglect of community languages, literature, history, and other cultural studies, is commonplace in our schools. The curriculum, by its omissions,

expresses a disregard for cultures other than the dominant English tradition; it devalues the cultural heritage students bring with them to school and, in so doing, expresses an assimilationist perspective which mocks the values and aspirations of multiculturalism.

Judged by the curriculum choices of the standard secondary school, there is no Polish, Vietnamese, or Italian history worth studying; no Croatian, Kampuchean, or Hungarian literature, art or music worth talking about; and even at this time in history, few community languages that approach German and French in either utility or aesthetic appeal.

The place in the curriculum of community languages such as Italian, Lebanese, Croatian, and Bahasa Malaysia, vis-a-vis the popular two, German and French, is a classic example of how, in Barry McDonald's words:

> the course of events is shaped by long-forgotten, long dead social engineers whose options have hardened into our habits of mind as well as our icons; we are haunted by legacies we little understand, more innocent than we know.' (p.30)

When asked, as I was during the course of this study, 'Why do these schools continue to teach French when there's no French community to speak of?', one is hard put to provide a convincing answer (other than point to legacies we inherited from British models of education and to note the value these languages once had for English commerce).

I was not asked why competence in the Vietnamese, or Macedonian, or Greek language is regarded as insignificant by our schools, while speaking French or German fluently is acknowledged as a talent and likely to be seen as an 'authentic' (i.e., recognised) subject, in many high schools. Had I been, I would have had no convincing answer to provide to that question either.

The neglect of community languages and other features of community cultures can be attributed to legacies and habits of mind whose origins we have long forgotten. But there are other less innocent legacies that also need exposure. The principal of these are the policies of those post Second World War 'social engineers' who saw the integration of migrant families in terms of assimilating newcomers. Perceived this way, social integration required making migrants into old rather than 'new' Australians, by changing their cultural outlook so that it became as similar as possible to the dominant culture. Change was perceived as a one-way process; migrants were expected to adapt to the Australian life-style, it was expected to remain the same.

Sad and unfortunate legacies of this policy continue to manifest themselves in the outlook of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Here is one student who says, and says with some satisfaction: 'Nobody at West Tech, even knew my parents were Dutch until this research project started.' Here is another who wishes her mother would forget her origins: 'My mother annoys me so much when she goes on about being Polish,' and here is yet another who feels it necessary to conceal his cultural identity: 'Nobody would know I was a "wog" if it wasn't for my name.'

Such expressions of cultural alienation are not universal, nor are they constant or permanent. But they, and the other side of the same coin, the desperate yearning to be accepted as a 'real' Australian, are common enough to demonstrate the continuation of the personally and socially damaging effects of integrationist ideology and policy.

Schools, and those of us who work in schools, are not alone responsible for the continuation of those effects. But we are partly responsible. Although usually unwittingly and more by omission than commission, we have to take some responsibility for what ethnic students go through. That means we have to start thinking about the curriculum, or what is, should be, and could be taught in the schools. We have to think especially about our students, their background, and the way the curriculum values or fails to value the experience of people whose origins are not British.

While there are Turkish-Australian students in our schools who have never even heard of Attaturk, students with Italian backgrounds who can think only of the Pope and Mafia hoodlums if they are asked to identify contemporary Italian nationals with international reputations, and students who call the land their mother and father were born in 'Lebanese' (when they mean 'Lebanon'), we should be wary of claiming to promote the values of multiculturalism.

This study has some evidence to advance about an increasing consciousness among students of the way schools contribute to their alienation from their ethnic roots. John Nguyen's recognition of how a teacher changed his Vietnamese first-name to 'John', because his real name was too difficult to pronounce, is one piece of evidence. Another is Milenko Podnar's view that:

> The one most significant effect of having a non-English-speaking background is that I'm losing contact with my own background because it is being ignored in the school system.

We should promote that increasing sense of cultural confidence in our schools, while admitting that such a course of action will also have curriculum implications which will affect in turn what and how teachers teach, how they

use their time and other resources, the relationship between schools and their communities, and other aspects of school life.

Changing our views of integration as assimilation, and changing those practices of ours which give expression to outmoded ideologies, will not be easy. Having more community languages, history, and high culture taught in our schools, for one thing, will depend on the provision of more teachers who are competent to teach those subjects. But we should be wary of the attitude that nothing can change until everything changes, and we should look immediately for additional ways of building on the cultural foundations students bring with them to school. It should not be impossible in studies of history, literature, and art, to take three examples, to draw on the rich cultural resources of ethnic communities we find represented in localities close to our schools. Historical studies, for instance, which acknowledge the contribution of local people who have participated in the momentous human

-dramas which have changed the course of the 20th century, such as the Second World War, the Hungarian Uprising, the birth of the Indonesian Republic, and the Vietnam War, could not help but be more lively, more appealing and more effective. We could also anticipate improved relationships between schools and their communities, and between students and their parents, where such initiatives were taken.

There is a catch here. Other forms of outmoded ideologies may also need to be critically scrutinised. Building on the cultural foundations students bring with them to school does not mean blindly accepting other forms of false consciousness. The partial perspectives students may be given at home, and the limited versions of the truth others may urge upon them, should be complemented by alternative perspectives. The right to know may clash with cultural indoctrination; when it does, critical understanding must prevail. The danger of reproducing old ethnic rivalries and hostilities in new generations should be resisted; that will not always be popular in all quarters. When the stakes are easing tensions created by primordial loyalties, and the right of students to be informed and to act with insight and intelligence rather than as pawns in others' fueds, temporary popularity may have to be sacrificed to the right to know, to integrity, and to Community healing. It would be a mistake, however, to intimate that teachers who live such educational values cannot expect'to be .supported by influential members of non-English-speaking communities.

The right to become proficient with the English language

> The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.
>
> The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents.
>
> The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote enjoyment of this right. (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 7)

A second issue is the plight of students who have an inadequate grasp of the English language. The problem is most acute for newly-arrived students from countries like Kampuchea, Vietnam, and Malaysia, who may have little or no English. What chance can students possibly have of achieving success at school, while they cannot even understand what their teachers are saying?

Having an inadequate command of English is, however, not only a problem for the newly-arrived. When you are a tiny-tot starting school who has no-one at home to help you with your reading, it's easy to get left behind and harder to catch up; when you need help with your essays, with tests, and with assignments, but there is no native English-speaker in the house to help you, it's harder to do well; and when you are the person who is most fluent in English in your family, although your own reading, writing, and speaking require improvement, it's more difficult to recognise, let alone achieve, the standards required for school success.

It is obvious that success at school in Australia depends on a student's facility with English. This study makes it very clear that some students in our schools are denied the opportunity to be successful in school because their command of English is inadequate. Failure to attend to students' English language needs is a means of severely limiting their educational achievements. It serves further to disadvantage the already disadvantaged.

Two striking examples of the educational problems caused for students by difficulties with English, stick in my mind. The first was provided by Vibol Mak, an articulate Kampuchean-Australian student who attends North Geelong High School, during the interview he gave to members of the student-research team from Geelong West Technical School. I quote from the transcript of the video-taped record of that interview:

> Sure I can speak Cambodian fluently, and English not that fluently. But the problem is this I can't write in Cambodian fluently as good as English. I have difficulty in writing in Cambodian. That's why I'm trying to learn English as much as possible. If I'm not good at one language, I have to be good at another. So I have to be good at English.

The other example is from the same video. Wong Siew, who has a Malaysian background, speaks of pressure she is under to do well at school and the frustration caused by not understanding English well enough: 'My brother expects me to do everything perfect. But I can't; I don't understand what the teacher is saying'.

The educational problems caused by speaking and writing English imperfectly are more extreme, and therefore more obvious, for students recently arrived from Asian countries. But it is a mistake to believe that they are not acute for others with non-English-speaking backgrounds as well

If we wanted evidence to disturb our complacency about the language facility of other students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, there is more than enough in the drafts of the work students wrote during this project. Without expecting perfection, and while appreciating that a number of the students involved in the project write English eloquently and elegantly, it is not at all difficult to conclude that many of them should be a lot better; they use the language less competently than one would expect of Year 10 students, and that is especially true of their writing. How is that to be explained?

Coming from families where English is a second language is part of the explanation, for it means that 'ethnic' students frequently go without the natural language experience English-speakers get as a matter of course. Sometimes, but not always, older brothers and sisters can compensate for parents' inability to help their children. Even where they do, however, being denied parental assistance with essays, assignments, test preparation, and so on, can be a severe handicap. Where being good with the English language has such a bearing on educational achievement, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds enter the competition for educational levels, including in Victoria success at Higher School Certificate examinations, well behind scratch.

My experience in this project suggests at least two facets of the handicap. A number of the students we worked with were the most competent English users in their family. As such, they received a good deal of well-earned praise- at home for their achievement. What is problematic about that is this compared to many students from English-speaking backgrounds, they still have quite a way to go. When the students from ethnic families are

at school, there can be a tension between their own and their parents' views of their achievements, and their teachers'. We have some evidence of students' resentment of teachers' advice about improving the quality of their written English. One response to such conflict over standards is for students to plead discrimination. Another is for teachers to back off and reason, 'Not bad, for an ethnic student'.

Whatever the cause, a strong case can be made for the argument that having. lower expectations for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds works to disadvantage the sons and daughters of parents with a different cultural heritage. Filicia Siketa is alluding to this issue when she writes in her personal history:

> Ours can be seen as a school with many achievements, but it is also seen as a school for 'the disadvantaged'. Our parents ask, 'Are "migrant" children really disadvantaged?' Or is it a question of a few families being disadvantaged (especially 'new arrivals'), a few behaviour-problem cases, and a few children from problem-family backgrounds that make the school a disadvantaged one? Our parents believe that migrant students have much to offer and that they are just as capable as the next student, given the opportunity, encouragement, and a good educational atmosphere.

Teachers' expectations may be too low, but students' expectations can also be unrealistically high. From time to time during this project one of the students was heard to say that he intended taking up law •as a career. The fact is that his English is presently so imperfect that unless something exceptional happens, he has very little hope of even entering the fierce competition for Higher School Certificate scores adequate to win him one of the scarce places available in the law faculties. He is not even in the race unless his English improves dramatically. You could hardly find a plainer example of how one school's English curriculum contributes to maintaining the advantages of already priviliged groups, while another's effectively prevents students from disadvantaged groups 'getting on in the world'.

Improving the English curriculum for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds is a thorny problem that is loaded with resource implications. While the present allocation of resources continues however, we have no option but to admit that the way we choose to use our resources is inequitable, and that it severely disadvantages those students who have non-English-speaking backgrounds. Where additional resources are unavailable we have to decide whether we will continue to use what we have in the way we now do, or to re-allocate resources so that more adequate provision is made for students who need assistance with English. Greater equity may require affirmative action and making some tough decisions.

The right to be treated with respect

> No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7
>
> The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men. Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 10)

The issue of whether or not a student has a right to be treated with respect, consideration, courtesy, and in a self-enhancing manner is obviously raised by this study. The evidence that students with non-English-speaking backgrounds have gathered, speaks eloquently and emphatically of the denial of their right to self-respect. Their subjection to insulting remarks, offensive names, contempt, and barbed taunts, is a daily trial for many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. They are hurt too often because of their cultural background. The chief culprits are from among their peers, it is true, but the victims' distress is not alleviated by teachers who feel little sympathy with them, express no sense of outrage at their treatment, and refuse to stand with them even against those assailants who viciously attack their cultural identity and personal self-esteem. These are practices which must contribute to pushing students out of school by making school :life so uncomfortable and so unpleasant that students would rather drop out than stay in; that hypothesis requires further substantiation, but it is almost certainly true.

Indications of both students' anguish at being ridiculed, insulted, teased, jeered at, humiliated, and harassed because of their cultural origins, and the strength of their feelings about the injustice of their treatment, appeared early on in the life of the project. My field-notes of the meeting at Bell Park Technical School on September 27, for example, record this stunning one-liner from Damir Zebic: 'Wog is a word they stab you with'. While I doubt that he has ever seen, let alone read, Words that wound, (Human Rights Commission, 198.3), his sentiment reveals personal knowledge of the book's central thesis. The field-notes for the same meeting also include references to students wanting to change their names in order to conceal their cultural identity, of their feeling embarrassed when shopping with their non-English-speaking parents, and of individuals confronting unexpected

when their ethnic dancing group performed in a local school.

The personal effects of derogatory comments is a common theme in almost all the personal histories. Specific reference to teasing, insults, jeering, or harassment about their ethnic origins, is made in nineteen of the autobiographies. Three representative examples are repeated below:

> Every day, from Form I to 2, I was called names like 'Maltese Milkshake', 'Spaghetti Oil Tank', 'Fish and Chips', but mostly just 'wog'. It really bugged me being called these names day after day. Some mornings I just lay in bed not wanting to face another day of it, but now I've learnt to ignore it.
>
> Michelle Bartolo, 'I'm no different.'

> In Grade 4 many of the boys in my class were obsessed with war and fighting. A particular boy on finding out that I was Dutch started accusing me of being Hitler's ally, saying that all the deaths were my fault and that my family was bad. At ten this can hurt. I kept insisting that I was Dutch not German, but that would not satisfy this misinformed accuser. I broke down crying, but on going to the teacher to get some relief, I was once again stabbed in the back; she said it was all in my mind. I remembered the stories mum told me about how a member of our family had been kidnapped, and another two killed, by enemy soldiers. So how could it be our fault? I started to doubt how good the Dutch were. Again I wished that I was as Australian as my classmates were.
>
> Pauline Hendriks, 'Farewell Old Holland, g'day New.'

> Some of the students don't like me because I look different to them and sometimes I can't speak properly. They tease me because I can't speak the same as them. It doesn't worry me because I am Vietnamese. My friend said that he had been made to feel unhappy by people calling him names and using very nasty talk. They make funny gabbling noises and call us 'horries'. It upsets me because it's not very nice to call people things like 'horrie' or 'Chinaman'. It hurts my feelings, just like it must hurt someone who has been called a 'wog'.
>
> John Nguyen, 'Experiencing the feelings of hurt.'

It would be labouring the point to go a great deal further. Suffice it to say that the same issue appears prominently in the perceptions of the one most significant effect of having a non-English-speaking background, in the group reports, and in the consolidated list of recommendations.

Part of my education, then, was gaining a clearer understanding of the hostility and humiliation students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are obliged to contend with at school. I know now why Margaret Lokas would say with some resignation after being in Yugoslavia and experiencing the goodwill she found there, that 'their ways are a lot different to ours'.

Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds continue to be harassed remorselessly in our schools. When they are, they sometimes give as good as they get. But attack is not always the best form of defence, and trading insults can escalate the problem. Suffering in silence is another coping strategy, and so is denying the hurt. None of these personal 'solutions' actually _solves the problem, for it is, at its roots, a social problem which requires a social (group) solution. Schools will find it difficult to eradicate teasing, insults, mordant remarks, and derogatory names, but where school councils, teachers' committees, and student bodies decide on, and stick la, policies which establish that attacks on non-English-speakers' dignity is unacceptable, we can expect improvement to occur.

A particularly serious aspect of the problem of harassment of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, is the fact that such action has not already been taken in all our schools and that so much remains to be done to demonstrate, in practical terms, respect for differing cultural heritages on the one hand, and approbation for disrespect, on the other. Where we find people surprised that students with non-English-speaking backgrounds should expect to do other than put up with and accept their harsh treatment, we should ask what justifies such nonchalance and lack of concern.

There is also another side of this issue. We need to acknowledge that claiming the right to be treated with respect involves a corresponding responsibility to recognise the dignity of others and treat them in the same respectful way as one expects for oneself. If I have a Croatian background, I have the right to be treated as the person I am, and not as if I conform to some stereotyped representation of members of Croatian communities in Australia that the misinformed have dreamed up. But I Must recognise the contradiction in my own behaviour when, for example, I. say I don't associate with Yugoslays, or talk to Serbians. Or, if I have an Asian background, I should realise that my prejudices about Aboriginal people are just as offensive to them as is the prejudice I encounter because of my distinctive looks. Again, to decry discrimination and stereotyping directed against members of my own Italian, Greek, or Lebanese community is entirely understandable; but to denounce discrimination and stereotyping while regarding Anglo-Australians as typically trouble-makers, uninterested in school, and morally loose, or to say in effect, 'They're not bad, I suppose, but I wouldn't want my brother or sister to marry one!', is to express the same objectionable attitudes that I denounce in others.

An important understanding that this study alerts us to is the capacity we have to live with contradictions. While we should recognise our own capacity for racist and ethnicist behaviour, and we should not be dismayed when we

discover our own prejudices, we should not be content until we root them out. Change should start with ourselves; the question 'How can I treat others with more respect?', is perhaps the first stage in any analysis of what gets in the way of greater respect for human rights in our society. It is not a question everybody in this project has yet asked, and that often seems to be because people see themselves as more offended against than offending. Change is both a personal and a political process, but it must often begin at the personal level. Whenever we adopt the attitude that others must change before we do, we have the recipe for social inertia.

The often repeated claim that experiencing prejudice produces sympathy for, and understanding of others similarly oppressed is a comforting idea, but it also suggests inaction as a remedy for discrimination. Why should we be too worried if it is true that prejudice actually produces its antithesis? It would be easier to believe the claim that experiencing prejudice inevitably produces sympathy for other victims of prejudice, if we had more evidence of—insensitivity producing its opposite. When, for example, the power relationship between non-English-speaking background groups changes in a school and tiny Anglo-Australians become the victims of prejudice, it would be more convincing evidence to the value Of experiencing prejudice oneself, to hear older students defending the new victims of ethnicism by telling their young brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, 'Don't say that; I know what it's like to be small and victimised'. When such advice is not forthcoming, we should be sceptical of the theory that experiencing prejudice produces solidarity with new victims of unjust discrimination. Similarly, when students see their own exclusive ethnic cliques as discriminatory and recognise the prejudice in their own attitudes (such as the one that Anglo-Australian 'parents don't care about their children'), it will be less difficult to assume that experiencing prejudice produces regard for others. We need more evidence to refute another common view of the consequences of prejudice; this is the less comforting evidence of prejudiced behaviour Producing more of the same..

The right to Australian national identity

> Every child has the right to acquire a nationality. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 24(3)
>
> The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality. Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 3)

The fourth issue that is hard to avoid is the right of students to have an Australian national identity. Students who have been born and raised, or have settled in this country as a matter of choice, are entitled to regard Australia as their homeland and to call themselves 'Australians', if that is their wish. Many do not feel so entitled. They are unsure of their nationality, confused, disaffected, and torn between being Australian or being Croatian, or Turkish, or Italian, or whatever their ethnic origin is They do not seem to understand that it is not necessarily a matter of being one or the other; few seem to realise that one can be a Croatian-Australian, an Italian-Australian, a Malaysian-Australian, or whatever title is needed to recognize Australianess and one's other cultural affiliation. Students are alienated, although in varying degrees, from the rest of the Australian community. Many speak in terms which indicate there are two classes of Australian, 'ethnics' like themselves and 'real' Australians. Yet schools often seem oblivious to the role they play in producing identity crises and anti-nationalist sentiments.

Nobody has captured better than Alexandra Abba the ambiguity many young Australians with non-English-speaking backgrounds feel about, their nationality. In her personal history she explains a common dilemma:

> As I got older, I was forever trying to work out within myself where I belonged. Was I Italian, Australian, or neither? I recall wishing I was a completely different nationality altogether so I would not have to worry about being either one. At times being between two cultures did not bother me, but there were other times when it did. For example, on one occasion there was a tennis championship being held between Italy and Australia and I was confused as to whom I should support. Another occasion I can recall was when I was about nine. I was told at school one day that I was 'Australian', because this was my birthplace. I arrived home that day and made an Australian flag, waving it around and thinking that finally I belonged; I proclaimed I was an Australian. At this point, I was told to stop my celebration because I was part of our family who were all Italian. I denied this, arguing I was different because I was born here. My exact words were, 'I'm not a wog'. After I said that sentence there were fireworks! I felt ashamed of what I had said, and I was back to square one Who was I now? Here I had friends and teachers telling me I was an 'Aussie', while my family was saying I was Italian.

The message that being a 'real' or 'true' Australian means having a British background is frequently conveyed to students by both implicit and explicit means. When Georgina Krpez related in her personal history how she and Michelle Bartolo were told by some of their school-mates that: 'Australia would be a better place without wogs', it was painfully clear to her that they were being classed as second-class citizens and treated as if they belonged to a category of people who have only tentative rights to residence. When she remembers:

> One day in class we were talking about vegemite and when I said that I didn't like it the teacher said, 'You wouldn't with a name like "Krpez" would you?' I knew that he was joking but when everyone started laughing I felt really hurt that the teacher could say something like that in front of the class.
>
> 'Alphabets and vegemite.'

She reads into an adult's misguided attempt at humour the implication that she does not deserve 'true-blue Aussie' status. Her doubts, and those of other ethnic students about her nationality, are fed by incidents like these. They are also increased by tactless classroom arguments about the virtues of migration which expose students with non-English-speaking backgrounds to the crudest of criticism and the most unfair, badly informed, and vindictive expressions of opinion. The anxiety created by these situations forms such a strong thread across the personal histories that we must think of improved ways of organising classroom exchanges of opinion on sensitive topics, as a high priority.

The factors that count as disqualifications for Australian nationality are many and varied. Hair colour, facial features, food preferences, name, favourite football code, language used; all or any of these can be employed to 'prove' one is not authentically Australian. Two examples. You can, like Adam Santospirito, be a third generation Australian and still be treated as an alien because your name is not a 'regular' Australian name. Or you can have a 'regular' Australian name like Ingrid Wilson's, and yet find people who want to deny you your Australian nationality because you have different coloured skin. It is hard to win under such conditions.

For many students, extreme views of Australian nationality persist; they are views of what it means to be Australian which continue to be associated with racism. Students are able to detect the continuation of a white Australia policy which is so excessively exclusive that it refuses to admit even Italians, Greeks, and Spaniards to Australian nationality because their eyes are brown and their hair is dark. Such racist sentiments continue to infect social relations in our schools; those students who have been called c:1,4os', 'greasy wogs', 'horries', chocosI, and 'chingas° and instructed to 'go back to where they Came from', can testify to that.

Adam Santospirito has an insight into the nature of Australian nationality that many more students with non-English-speaking backgrounds need to grasp. His conclusion about his identity:

> I am proud of my ethnic background or anyway what there it of it. I don't think I'm really Italian, or Australian. I'm a mixture of both. Other people can't see that, they seem to think you have to categorise things.
>
> 'More Australian than Italian'.

and the critique he makes of the penchant people have for creating simplistic categories, has particular personal and social importance. If only more ethnic students could believe they can be both Lebanese and Australian, Kampuchean and Australian, Hungarian and Australian, and so on, they could avoid a great deal of personal stress and anxiety about their identity. The Australian community could also be more confident of avoiding the outbreaks of community hostility and violence that oppressed, disaffected, and alienated minority groups have resorted to in less fortunate places, if being an 'Australian' was more generously and realistically interpreted. Schools have an important role to play in making 'ethnic' students feel Australian and feel proud of their background.

The right to learn to play an active role in social affairs

> Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity without unreasonable restrictions:
>
> (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25(a)

> The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgment, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 7)

In Victoria, at least, the right of students to play an active role in school affairs has emerged as an explicit feature of government policy. The most recent Ministerial paper, No. 6, Curriculum development and planning in Victoria (September, 1984) repeats a consistent theme in that government's educational policy when it states:

> It is important to be clear about what schools can and cannot do. Although our present society provides many people with a satisfying way of life, it has still to eliminate social and economic injustice and various forms of discrimination, and to find solutions to many persistent social and technological problems. In such matters, schools alone cannot provide the answers. But they can ensure that all young people receive an education which enables them to participate fully in society, to contribute to overcoming injustice and inequality, and to solve the problems of our society. So the Government's fundamental expectation of schools is that they further the knowledge, understanding and competencies necessary for young people to be able to:
>
> (a) participate effectively in the life of a multicultural society;
> (b) undertake worthwhile work; and
> (c) plan an active role in the processes through which our society is regulated and improved.

This report to the Human Rights Commission is instructive about the problems -and possibilities of providing an education which enables young people to participate actively in social processes, especially those processes intended to 'contribute to overcoming injustice and inequality'. Especially where it turns to recommendations to improve the education of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, the report is particularly relevant to the question of how education might contribute to creating a more just and equitable society. Students can have thoughtful contributions to make to our deliberations about our future, but they need opportunities to make such contributions.

The recommendations made by the research teams involved in this study provide reason for both congratulations and concern.

Congratulations are in order because these student-researchers have been able to compile an impressively large number of practical suggestions that any school, which is serious about improving the education it provides for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, will want to study, and study quite carefully. These students have provided our schools with a challenge that schools will find difficult to refuse without injuring their integrity; if schools are serious about combating injustice and inequality, they will be obliged to take action on behalf of ethnic students. Anybody who wants to know where to begin, will find among this report's recommendations a large range of options about where exactly one could start on making our schools more just and more equalitarian. It is true that more fact-finding will be necessary in the future. (There is much more to be known about the effects schools have on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, even before we begin embarking on comparable additional studies, such as how income, gender, disability, etc. affect access to educational opportunities in our schools and classrooms.) But it would be a rare and fortunate school community which

could say there are no recommendations among those made by these student-researchers that it has yet to implement fully.

So the recommendations made by students in this report should provide reason for satisfaction. But they should also cause us more than a little concern. What we should be concerned about however, is what the recommendations do not include, rather than what they encompass; the limitations of this catalogue of suggestions should grab our attention because these limitations highlight the students' sense of themselves as largely powerless.

Among the recommendations the students made, one has to search very carefully for more than two or three which are not directed to other people. The bulk of the recommendations is about what 'they (others) should do'. There is very little indeed which indicates what these students should do, either individually' or collectively, apart from adopting submissive postures (like 'being as nice as possible'), and seeking altered states of mind (such as is implied in the advice, 'Don't worry if someone calls you a "wog"').

Students express little apparent faith in either the willingness or the capacity of schools to respond, as institutions, to initiatives to overcome the injustices that handicap disadvantaged members of school communities. And Students seem unable or unwilling to work on, or with, the various individuals or committees within the school which have the power to make changes happen. Despite the widespread rhetoric of collaborative decision-making processes, the reality seems to be that students feel less like actors and more like those who are acted upon. They often- seem reticent to make personal or delegated approaches to even their teachers, they appear to be without channels of communication to the administration, and they seem to lack effective representation in the various within-school councils that make policy decisions. Even at the level of student representative councils where one would expect students to have the most confidence, the most power, and the best understanding of defacto and dejure decision-making processes, students seem out-of-touch and out of confidence.

Sad themes run through this report. They include the willingness of Students to treat social problems as if they were personal ones, to see change as dependent on the -action of others, and to regard suffering injustice patiently as the only practical means of dealing with it. Students apparently. lack faith in schools as organisations committed to their welfare; they lack a sense of agency in their personal and collective capacity to make schools respond to reasonable requests to improve their own and others' school lives; and they even lack adequate knowledge of the organizations within schools which make decisions that affect themh

The evidence we have suggests that these attitudes may be particularly rife among certain groups of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Where students are raised in families where parents are 'strict', 'speaking up' can be regarded as rebelliousness or disobedience, being a 'good student' can be equated with compliance and submission, and working together in groups can be frowned on as 'carrying' others. Students raised under such conditions often find it difficult to adopt less constraining attitudes to education than their parents. When these same attitudes go unchallenged, or are reinforced at school, whether consciously or unconsciously, it is difficult to know how the objective of enabling students to learn to play a responsible role in a representative democracy can be achieved. Schooling practices which fetter students by socialising them to accept an equitable status quo are unconscionable to most teachers. When we find that happening, we need to know how our intentions are influenced by community attitudes. It may be particularly easy to fall into the trap of denying students the right to 'an education which enables them to participate fully in society, to contribute to overcoming injustice and inequality, and to solve the problems of society', where parents see education predominantly in privatized terms, and where they equate educational achievement with success in competitive external examinations. What is at stake here is a more generous and socially responsible view of education.

Changing our conception of education and the role schools should play in improving our society will not be easy. It will be even more difficult where students and parents want to retain prevailing versions of education which are at odds with students learning to play an active role in social processes.

Learnings about student participation in social research activities

At a time when the Human Rights Commission is launching, nation-wide, a small grants scheme intended to encourage studies of human rights issues in schools and their communities, it seems an unusually appropriate occasion to reflect on this project and what we have learnt from it about engaging schools in education for human rights. What follows has been written particularly for those teachers and their students who have already received, or will be receiving grants from the Commission, but it should also be of interest to other adults (who might all be described in the broadest sense as 'teachers') and students who wish to engage in research action for social improvement.

Before going on to discuss our own experience, however, there are some debts to others that need to be acknowledged.

We were fortunate to have a substantial (and developing) experience of student involvement in research projects to draw on as we planned this study of the effects of schooling on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Garry Coventry, Greg Cornish, and Barbara Cramer's Student perspectives on truancy (Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, 1984) was especially helpful to us as we began to work out what we would do. This account of the authors' work with students who were studying truancy in schools in Melbourne's western suburbs, was both a convincing example of the high quality research students can do, and a source of a great deal of practical advice for new players. We read the conclusion of Student perspectives on truancy with considerable interest, and the discussion of eight issues about student research programs that is found there, played a significant part in shaping our plans and procedure.

Among the good ideas we picked up from Garry Coventry, Greg Cornish and Barbara Cramer's generously shared experiences were these:

- the need to carefully supervise students involved in research projects;
- the need to be sensitive to the variety of structural arrangements in schools and to make plans that are adaptable to different situations;
  the need to be realistic enough to expect some students to grow tired '0 the study and give the work away;
- the desirability of paying students at a rate well above the rate suggested in the work experience legislation (they paid the students they worked with $2.25 per hour);

  the value of providing students with as many opportunities as possible for being involved in making decisions about the project;
- the need to provide students with adult (especially teacher) support so that students do not, for example, have to fight alone against their school's organisational climate;
- the desirability of having students operating in teams within their schools;
- the need to recognise that encouraging students to take responsibility for tasks and to acquire a sense of ownership of them, requires negotiation about purposes and activities, but it does not mean that teachers and researchers should give up their professional responsibilities or no longer feel required to act as leaders and facilitators; and
- the way student research gives students opportunities to be useful, feel competent, be involved in social action, and be recognised for their efforts.

These findings about involving students in research activities are substantially confirmed by the experience we gained from working on the study of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. We highly recommend Student perspectives on truancy and suggest a careful study of its conclusions is well worth the time involved.

Based on our experience in this study (and what we were able to learn from others before it began), the best advice I believe we can offer at this stage to others preparing to start on studies of human rights issues might be summarised in five main points.

As far as possible, adults should:

I work with students on a voluntary basis;

2 involve students as a matter of course in planning and conducting studies of human rights issues;

3 consistently support, assist, and encourage students;

4 focus on those issues which have a direct bearing on improving the quality of students' in-school, and out-of-school lives; (that is, be conscious first of all of school practices that require improvement and start with those human rights issues closest to 'home'); and

5 provide students with direct encounters with other people, places and situations (which means refusing to settle for re-presentations of reality and artificial and contrived experiences).

Normally students should:

I expect to work with adults on a voluntary basis, (and expect those adults to anticipate their willingness to actively work to improve respect for human rights);

2 expect to be involved in, and to take a share of the responsibility for, planning and conducting studies of human rights issues;

3 expect to be supported, assisted and encouraged by adults they are working with;

4 expect the issue being studied to have a direct bearing on improving the quality of their own, and other students' in-school and out-of-school lives; studies should start with research designed to improve what happens in schools, largely to demonstrate our own capacity to improve the respect shown for human rights in these institutions we are making and which make us; and

5 expect to have direct encounters with other people, places and situations, rather than rely exclusively on predominantly the re-presentations of reality normally used in schools (such as books, audio and video-tapes, films, and other simulations of real experience).

Voluntary participation

Involvement in this study was optional for students. That is not to say that no attempt was made to make being involved seem attractive or to persuade students to take part; we did present the project as socially important work, we did mention that it was likely to be a valuable learning experience, and we did not conceal the fact that it was a study supported by prestigious organisations. The twenty-eight students who eventually agreed to take part, were subject to some persuasion to join in (In one school there was an added dimension: when students appeared reluctant to accept the invitation, the school's principal let it be known that he felt the school's philosophy placed some obligation on students to work in the interest of greater social justice when the opportunity presented itself.) But the power of persuasion was not irresistible; many of those students who listened to the invitation to take part (one which was put to them at the same time and in the same way as the acceptors), found it possible to turn down the offer. They exercised the option to give the project a miss.

More students may have been willing to take part in the study if they had been aware of the condition that students were to be paid for the work they did. We withheld that information until after students had accepted the invitation to join the team, so the payment factor was not a consideration in the students' original decision to participate in the study. Having said that, it is not at all clear that being paid was of crucial importance to those students who joined the project; a more obvious impression was that the students who became researchers were genuinely interested in the workand the possibilities it offered.

The point that needs to be made here is that voluntary involvement in research projects does not exclude persuasion, creating a sense of the importance of the work, nor highlighting its attractions. It does imply freedom of choice and self-determination for students in deciding where to put their efforts, and it rules out coercion. However, it would be a mistake to invite students to embark on research action in the cause of improved respect for human rights, unless those issuing the invitation make it known that they themselves have a commitment to human emancipation in general, and the objectives of specific project being mounted; in particular. Our experience in this project is convincing. Students do need adult models; they require people they can work with who will demonstrate the value they attach to participatory action and building a more principled community. That reasoning is supported by the evidence we have about recruitment and what we know about intensity and continuity of student commitment. Where teachers seem uninterested, indifferent, or neutral about protecting and promoting the

rights of human beings, we should expect students to be similarly uninterested, indifferent and neutral. Education for human rights certainly involves adopting an ethical position; but that is not exceptional, for all educational work is based on values and theories about what is right and proper for students to learn. The Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire has alerted us to the fact that 'all education is political' and that we have only three options; education for 'domination, domestication, or liberation' (Lister 1973). Adults (including, but not only teachers) committed to human liberation are the only ones likely to influence students to want to work to achieve greater social equity in their own and other communities.

Being involved was optional; so was staying involved. Although intensity of involvement varied from individual to individual and from time-to-time, the whole team was still intact when the project came to a close in early December. Getting paid for completing the work was certainly a reason for students staying on, although that applies more to some students than to others. An added complication in any consideration of payment as the key motivation was the mistake I believe we made when we decided to pay students by the hour, rather than for tasks completed. Paying on an hourly basis made it difficult to explain why some students who produced rather short pieces of work and were difficult to involve in the group tasks, put in claims for working as many hours as others who had worked much more diligently and productively.

Paying students to do this research work was not essential; many Would have done the work without payment. But it was an added incentive which made it more attractive to see the task through to its completion. Projects that have their origins within schools will not find it necessary to pay students for the work they do, but where outsiders are funded to conduct research in schools involving student researchers, there are good ethical reasons for students (and others) who are involved in the work to expect to share the honoraria that is provided for having it done.

Clearly some individual students were more intensely involved and more continuously committed than others. Being paid does not explain the different responses. Looking at the work done by individuals, one observation that seems tenable is that involvement and commitment had a lot to do with a history of school success. Looking across the whole team, the individuals who proved to be the most consistently industrious and conscientious during the course of the project, were also among those who had acquired a reputation for being the most capable scholastically. Explaining the motivation of other people is never easy to do, but part of the explanation of why some students

took this task so seriously seems closely linked to maintaining reputations for producing work of high quality and seeing tasks through to their completion. That is not surprising, but does it suggest student research projects only work with 'bright' (that is, already successful) students? We think not

When we shift our attention from individuals to school groups, something a little more informative emerges. The school group that proved to be most consistently involved, committed, and productive, did include students who are typically regarded as 'achievers'. But it also included students who have yet to earn a reputation for doing exceptionally well in school. This team of students came from the school where their supporting teacher found it possible to meet with them most regularly, monitor their work most closely, and support them most consistently. This same teacher was also the person who before, during and near the end of the project, found it possible to show more than the usual interest in what was happening. Illness, temporary employment, complex promotion procedures, and extraordinarily heavy work-loads, explain why it was impossible for others to back-up students as much as they would have liked. Still the message is clear enough; students require the consistent support of teachers, and that in turn requires teacher-commitment, as well as the time and other resources that make teacher commitment effective. In plainest terms, this project worked best where teachers did not have too many other things to do.

In summarising our experience of this project it may be useful to suggest four principles for adults working with students involved in research projects:

a work with students on a voluntary basis.

b be committed to the work yourself, and show your commitment.

c make sure you have the time you need to give students the assistance, support, and encouragement they need as they conduct their research studies.

d where students are paid for the Work they do, pay them for products completed rather than by the hour.

Involvement

To claim that there was any significant negotiation with students about the aims, purposes, and the methodology to be used in proceeding with this research, would be misleading. Its aims and purposes were determined in advance by the Human Rights Commission, and its methods of procedure were planned well before students heard of the project, by those of us at Deakin University who proposed to conduct the study in the way the Commission had accepted. It is true, however, that students did suggest some useful changes to our methodology and that we were able to incorporate these changes into our

plans as the study proceeded. (One very sensible change that students suggested was that they travel to other schools to interview additional students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. They suggested this change because they expected they would not be taken seriously if, as we had originally proposed, they interviewed students in their own school.) Having said that, the study should still be characterised as having predetermined aims and procedures: students were asked to find answers to the Commission's questions in the way Deakin University staff proposed they do it. Those conditions were non-negotiable.

If at the level of planning, student involvement was minimal, at the level of execution it was at a maximum, and at the level of reporting, very substantial indeed. The amount of data collected by this team of twenty-eight researchers far exceeds that which even the most industrious researcher working by herself or himself could have gathered in the same time. That is the first advantage of involving so many students and teachers in the task; more hands (and hearts and minds) get more work done.

The other, and perhaps more significant advantage of involving others, is that the research and its findings belong to those who did it in a way it could never have if they had been the objects of the study (those who were researched), rather than the subjects (those who conducted the research). The impatience with which the participants are awaiting this report substantiates that conclusion, and we expect a far more interested audience of readers for it than would normally be the case. Whether or not involvement in conducting the study and reporting its findings produces a greater than usual impetus to see its recommendations implemented, remains to be seen. However, given the meagre effects reports produced by external researchers usually have on improving school practices, the implementation of any recommendations at all may be a far better than usual score.

We should be careful to avoid over-estimating the disadvantages of non-involvement in planning research studies especially where such work is being undertaken for the first time. The terms of reference which determined the shape of this study meant that students had a particular set of tasks to complete and a particular way of tackling those tasks. The advantage of having a fairly specific set of jobs to do was that it removed a great deal of ambiguity about where to begin and how to proceed; having structured tasks to do enabled students to try their hand at being researchers in a relatively straight-forward set of circumstances where they could learn some of the ropes without being tangled 'up by too many complexities. In the future we could expect those who have been involved in this project to have both a greater say in what should be studied and how the study should be conducted. On this

occasion they probably had enough novelty to cope with; there were many new skills to learn, new problems to solve, and new situations to cope with The task was complex enough as it was because of its novelty.

Tasks can be structured so tightly that they leave no scope for students to learn to become more capable and independent. On the other hand, having inadequate structures can produce overwhelming demands that in turn result in a sense of inadequacy and powerlessness. Our experience here leads me to suggest that gradually introducing students to more and more complex tasks and providing them with help when and where it is needed, avoids the pitfalls of either too much structure or too little. I might be mistaken, but I think that teachers engaging students for the first time in studies of human rights issues in schools and their communities, may find it necessary to provide students with a range of options (both about specific human rights issues which might be studied and how those studied might proceed) that suggest what could be done. The intention should be to enable students to develop competence and confidence in their individual and collective capabilities. That means being tactful enough to know when we are too 'helpful', but also knowing when we are placing unreasonable demands on students.

When it comes to involving students then, adults might consider the value of six points:

a Involve students as far as possible in planning research studies.

b Be clear about what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable.

c Remember that student research means research conducted by students'.

d Be willing to incorporate sensible changes to your plans when students suggest them.

0 Where engaging in research studies is a new experience, students will almost certainly need guidance, including a range of options (about what to do and how to proceed) to choose from.

f As students gain more experience, expect them to, and let them, play a larger part in planning and conducting research studies.

Opening up the curriculum to include personally meaningful studies

In some ways students found this study of the effects of schools on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, a shock to the system. For many it was unusual to be studying contemporary social problems, especially those that affected them personally and implied that they should participate in improving the schools they are attending. At the start, some students were tentative about being seen as social and school critics, others were nervous about the demands the study would make on their time and how it would affect their regular school-work, and still others were concerned about their ability

to cope with the unusual tasks they were expected to complete. By the end of the project these anxieties were relieved; school staffs were less testy and 'insecure' than students originally thought, it was possible to find time for the project work without jeopardising high marks, and the tasks proved to be manageable despite the severe time constraints under which students were forced to work. Initial fears were real, but they turned out to be imaginary.

It is important to remember that the work students did for this research project had to be fitted in around their regular school-work or completed during free time and out-of-school time. Their persistence over more than three months and the quality of their work they produced, under the circumstances, speaks eloquently of the appealing nature of studies that address personally meaningful subjects and issues. Going on the experience of this study, those teachers who are now planning studies of human rights issues can look forward to similar levels of-enthusiasm, especially as students move from working on extra curricula activities to those that are an integral part' of their regular school work.

The work may be instructive about a way around two perennial pedagogical problems, how 'to turn students on' to learning, and how to develop socially desirable values, attitudes and sensitivities. What we have learned here suggests that both these problems will remain intractable while present theories of student motivation and attitude development continue to get in the way. Where motivation theory continues to compel teachers to try to think of better and better ways to compel students to learn what others think is best for them, the problem will remain. It will fade, our experience suggests, as we enable students to study personally meaningful concerns.

This study also should lead us to examine critically the assumption that attitudes and knowledge are separate 'domains.' that develop independently of each other. During this study the relationship between increased knowledge or better understanding and changing attitudes, seemed more interactive than we are usually led to believe. A very good example of this is the way attitudes to students from Kampuchea, Vietnam, Malaysia and other Asian countries began to change for the better as more students started to understand what new arrivals experience.

The same example could also be used to illustrate how studying real social issues can make a positive difference where exhortation, simulations and games, values clarification and the like, consistently fail to alter values, sensitivities and feelings.

Four pieces of advice to adults wishing to open up the curriculum to include personally meaningful studies would include:

a expect students to show some reluctance to change from 'regular' school work to studies of issues that are unusually close to home;
b avoid having this work seen as an add-on program, rather than a legitimate part of a regular high status curriculum;
c expect students to want to be involved in personally meaningful studies, but don't be surprised when some remain hard to 'turn on'; and
d expect attitudes to change as understanding increases.

Real encounters

There was a sense of reality about this task which is much too rare in schools. A greater sense of reality was possible because of two features of the experience. Because they were aware of doing research work the Human Rights Commission wanted done, it was always possible for students to see the project tasks as meaningful and purposeful. Again, social research, with its definitive emphasis on producing new knowledge, has a thrust which sends its exponents in the direction of real encounters, and that was certainly true in this case. For both these reasons we were able to escape the artificiality that frequently plagues conventional school-work. Direct encounters with their social environment characterised the work done by students during this project. These included direct encounters with their own history of experience through writing personal histories; direct encounters with other 'ethnic' students in interviews, discussions and meetings; and direct encounters with a range of new activities (including hosting meetings,-making audio and video tapes, arranging transport, and writing formal reports). The Commission's small grants scheme should create many new possibilities for narrowing the gap between learning and doing.

My advice to adults about real encounters can be put in one point:
Avoid fake experiences; don't settle for anything less than the real thing.

Conclusion

Almost twenty years ago (1967) Ivor Kraft, a relatively obscure American educator, advised us that genuine curriculum reform depended on our:

I willingness to give students greater freedom and self-determination in defining the aims of their education;
2 preparedness to open up the curriculum and bring into the classroom all those problems presently regarded as taboo which are right and proper for us to confront as we educate children for more autonomous living; and
3 striving to bring students into direct, real, and non-artificial• encounters with their social environment.

What is involved in putting those principles into practice is now more obvious than it once was, and this report adds to our developing understanding of practices expressive of the three principles Kraft urged us to adopt.

We now know considerably more about how schools might work to protect more adequately and to promote the human rights of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, and how they might contribute, more generally, to overcoming the disadvantages of the least advantaged. When the experience of the Commission's small grants scheme is available to us we will know even more.

But as well as what we know about the possibilities of schools improving 'respect for human rights, the Human Rights Commission's educational initiatives have also provided (and through the small grants scheme will continue to provide) down-to-earth, practical examples of how schools might function as a research resource for many other types of community organisations. The effect of that initiative is stunning; it shows both how 'our schools might be transformed as they are put in touch with the communities they serve, and how our communities might be transformed if we permitted our schools to provide substantive understandings which can provoke critical reflection' (Kemmis, Cole, and Suggett, 1983, p.17).

PART B - THE SOURCE MATERIAL

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF HAVING A NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING BACKGROUND: A SOUNDING

The student researchers who conducted this study began the work of studying the effects schooling has on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, about the end of the third week in September. Approximately eight weeks later, in mid November, most students had already finished writing their own personal histories and were well into the second stage of the task.

The second round of jobs involved two tasks: i) interviewing 'ethnic' students from another school, and ii) setting up (and observing) interviews with other 'ethnic' students within their own school on behalf of one of the other school's student-research teams.

At this stage of the study, each student was invited to write three or four lines which summed up what she or he considered to be the one most significant effect of having a non-English-speaking background.

For the purpose of structuring this task, each of the members of the research teams was each given two single sheets which contained the unfinished sentence:

> Now that I've thought about it a fair bit, I think the one most significant effect of having a non-English-speaking backgrourill7f you are a school student is ...

One of the sheets was for the student researchers to fill out themselves. They were asked to show the second sheet to some other student with a non-English-speaking background, give that person time to fill it out, and then collect it again. Our original intention was to use these sheets as an additional source of data. We were simply going to gather the sheets and return them with the information they contained to each of the teams, so that they would have additional ideas that they could use in compiling their school's research report.

As it turned out, however, the collection of 'significant effects' proved to be too 'valuable to be used for that purpose alone. The data was returned to its collectors, but it appeared so informative and striking as an index of the difference it makes to have an 'ethnic' background if you're still in school, that we decided to include it in a separate section of the report. Our hope is that focusing on these brief statements written by students as they reflected on their lengthy experience in schools, will provide a 'feeling' for their plight. If this section of the report develops the reader's taste for the later sections which elaborate the themes, concerns, and issues exemplified and highlighted here, it will have served its purpose.

The way to proceed is to read the unfinished sentence which is repeated in the line below, before continuing with each of student responses.

Thoughtful opinions

Now that I've thought about it a fair bit, I think the one most significant effect of having a non-English-speaking background if you are a school student is ... understanding that migrants ... have been through too much before coming to this 'lucky country' to be picked on and humiliated when they are living here.

Alexandra Abba, (Italian background)

not being accepted as one of the gang because you have an ethnic background. This is one of the worst things that can happen to you.

Corradina Amato, (Italian background)

... when I am in class people call me slant eyes and things like that, and when I go to teachers to ask for help they say, 'Forget it'.

Anonymous, (Vietnamese background)

... that you learn to accept other cultures and ways of life. Your acceptance of different people with different backgrounds is much easier.

Brunella Bernardi, (Italian background)

... that sometimes I cannot do my work because of English, because I can't understand the teacher. I have similar problems with tests.

Blata Blaszczyk, (Polish background)

... that my parents weren't able to help me with the problems I faced at school because they weren't able to speak English themselves.

Dennis Brajkovic, (Croatian background)

... coping with all the name-calling and coping with all the harassment about the war!

Stephen Bratanavicius, (German background)

... that children with non-English-speaking backgrounds tend to become very insecure because of the prejudice they have experienced; this causes them, at times, to become very withdrawn from the others around them.

Maria Brdar, (Croatian background)

... that I relate better to other ethnics; I have no hassles with other students as they are mostly ethnics.

Ralph Diiorio, (Italian background)

... that you are the butt of the jokes. Someone might say something to do with ethnics, so everyone looks at you. This is the only problem I've had.

David Dobar,(Hungarian-Australian background)

... name-calling.

George Effenberger, (Yugoslavian background)

... that people don't understand what you are about and aren't really willing to find out. That discrimination is due to ignorance.

Pauline Hendriks, (Dutch background)

... not being able to get help from your parents with any homework or school-work.

Yudra Ivanovic, (Croatian background)

... I have more of an open mind on different cultures and I understand their Customs more clearly.

Frank Jerman, (Italian-Slovenian background)

... that you find when people tease you in primary school, you are much more easily embarrassed than what you are in high school. You are ashamed of being ethnic and you try to hide it in primary school.

Maria Josipovic, (Croatian background)

... if students with a non-English-speaking background don't have a basic understanding of the English language they won't be able to understand and be able to do well in senior years or H.S.C.

Attilla Kimmel, (Hungarian background)

... that you know your own cultural background and you can relate to other migrants.

Branko Krstevski, (Macedonian background)

... that if students can't understand the language efficiently, it can affect their concentration on other subjects as well.

Vibol Mak, (Kampuchean or Cambodian background)

... that my parents are unable to speak and read English, therefore they can't help me with my homework if I've got problems.

Joe Pino, (Italian background)

... that I'm losing contact with my own background because it is being ignored in the school system.

Milenko Podnar, (Croatian background)

... that parental involvement, understanding, and ability to help their children is very limited.

Filicia Siketa, (Croatian background)

... the enormous amounts of teasing and name calling.

Richard Siwicki, (Polish background)

. . that people become shy if they get teased about their background.

Mary Skrabo, (Croatian background)

... losing more of my Croatian background, because the school system uses only one language, English. I believe at least one hour a week should be spent on learning a different language.

Tanislaw Svaljek, (Croatian background)

... having to put up with the continuous name calling.

Eddie Vlasnovic, (Croatian background)

PERSONAL HISTORIES

Alexandra Abba 'Due mondi' (Two Worlds)

Situated in south east Europe lies a picturesque town once called Rovigno. Since the end of World War II it has been a part of Yugoslavia. When the border was moved in 1945, the birthplace of my family was renamed 'Rovinj'.

From here in 1965 my parents, Maria and Antonio, came to Australia. With them were two young daughters, Nidia and Lucina. They were seeking a new life in Australia. Four years later, on the 19th of April, 1969, I took my first look at the world from Baxter House, the maternity ward of Geelong Hospital. Soon I was to grow up and discover that being a part of two cultures was not always going to be easy.

Not having attended a pre-school, my first taste of being out on my own came when I was five. Saint Thomas' Primary School was where I began my education. I had a good understanding of the English language as I had two older sisters who spoke English at home among themselves, so I did not find it too difficult to speak or understand what was being said. But I was still very insecure and I cried every morning before school. Some days were even worse than others, and sometimes I was convinced that I never would have a good day at school. Too often I walked in feeling frightened, hesitant, and out of place.

I particularly remember one occasion in Grade Prep. When the bell rang in the morning for all students to attend class, I sat on a bench in the school yard crying because I did not know what it meant, or where to go. Because I became frightened when I was out of my familiar home environment (although I am not certain this was because of my background), I became tense, and at times I was not able to express myself fully in English. Then I would use a few- Italian words in an English phrase as substitutes for the English words, and consequently I was not always understood. I found I was more relaxed with the other children of my own age than I was with the teachers because I felt accepted by the children and made friends easily.

As I got older, I was forever trying to work out within myself where I belonged. Was I Italian, Australian, or neither? I recall wishing I was a completely different nationality altogether so I would not have to worry about being either one. At times being between two cultures did not bother me, but there were other times when it did. For example, on one occasion there was a tennis championship being held between Italy and Australia and I was confused as to whom I should support. Another occasion I can recall was when I was about nine. I was told at school one day that I was 'Australian' because this was my birthplace. I arrived home that day and made an Australian flag, waving it around and thinking that finally I belonged; I proclaimed I was an

Australian. At this point, I was told to stop my celebration because I was part of our family who were all Italian. I denied this, arguing I was different because I was born here. My exact words were, 'I'm not a wog'. After I said that sentence there were fireworks! I felt ashamed of what I had said, and I was back to square one Who was I now? Here I had friends and teachers telling me I was an 'Aussie', while my family was saying I was Italian!

Sometimes I was content to be both Italian and Australian and I felt proud of my Italian blood. I felt especially proud whenever I was told by my teachers and by other students that I was lucky to have a second language. I had some friends in primary school who were quite taken by the fact that I could speak a language they themselves could not comprehend. They happily sat and listened to me count from one to ten in Italian and recite simple poetry, and they eagerly-tried to learn how to speak like me. I was accepted by most of my peers because they were interested in my background. My close friends did not form any prejudices.

I can recall feeling self-conscious, at times, about speaking Italian in front of some people; on occasions I wanted my mother to speak in a low voice so that my language would not be made fun of

I don't recall a lot of name-calling, but whenever I was teased in the higher primary grades (Grades 5 and 6), usually by a particular boy, anger often subdued hurt. While arguing back I normally had the support of my friends which gave me confidence to defend myself. This particular boy expected me to be ashamed of being Italian and he was quite shocked to discover I was not. Once he understood I was not ashamed, he refrained from teasing me again. Unlike one of my classmates who was Portuguese, and who was always discriminated against, I escaped being ridiculed. I put the teasing down to ignorance on the part of those people who indulged in name-calling. They had little or no knowledge of other cultures, different cuisines, or customs. Some education in this respect may have helped them to understand and acknowledge the achievements of other nationalities.

I think that the Anglo-Australian .children have a definite advantage because they form the majority of most classes. Ethnic children are usually out-numbered and easily singled out. In primary school we had no ethnic days or international festivals, nor did our library cater for non-English-speaking children. This too, I think, was disadvantageous.

School-related problems are often magnified when seen through the eyes of ethnic children. Homework can be difficult for an ethnic student who is unable to go to his or her parents for help because of the parents' lack of understanding. As a consequence the student may fall behind.

Being ethnic also has it advantages. I have found ethnic people to be more tolerant of other races and less prejudiced. Also, having a second language enables me to relate to other Europeans and their cultures, both through language and through common ideas and feelings.

For me, primary school report nights were never much of a problem. Criticism and praise were fairly placed, and I usually received good grades and reports on behaviour. No interpreter was available when our results were distributed; so one of my older sisters would go with my mother and translate what was said for her. When they spoke directly to my mother I felt some teachers treated her like a fool by shouting and speaking in an excessively slow tone. No amount of yelling or slowing down of their speech was going to change the fact that she did not understand English.

After completing my primary education I began secondary school at Clonard College. Here I don't recall any direct discrimination which has been good because it has allowed me to develop and understand my identity. At times, though, I still hear some people speaking offensively of Europeans in general and making unkind remarks about them. After having made an offensive comment about Italians in general (a common example is referring to them as 'wogs'), some people, who seem to have forgotten that I have Italian origins, immediately afterwards excuse themselves by saying that the remark was not intended to refer to me, because 'I'm different'. I think that is a very weak excuse.

At Clonard, I have found that most teachers are genuinely interested in different backgrounds and cultures. I have also found that my close circle of friends is very open minded; they have never insulted me because of my Italian background. I was once required to write about 'A Migrant Family', so I wrote about my family, and our customs, etc. I was happy to do so, and would not mind similar projects in the future. Because there are so many other ethnic students in Years 7 to 12, I think people are made more aware of different cultures and they are able to accept them more easily. Apart from a few cases of typecasting, my time at Clonard has been a happy one. I am accepted and allowed to be myself.

Australia is becoming a mixture of all races, creeds and colours, and hope we are learning to accept each other.

The following comment, made by my sister sums up what I mean when I say that Anglo-Australians can no longer call us the 'ethnics'. In answer to a question I asked her about name-calling directed at children with non-English-speaking backgrounds at my six year old niece's school, she took a humourous look at just how multicultural Australia has become.

Question: 'Nobody gets teased at Holy Family because they're ethnic, do they?'

Answer: 'Yes the Australians do!'

As we live in this composite of cultures, I am proud and happy to be an Italian who is living an Australian way of life surrounded by a vast web of nationalities, each diverse but as special and complex as the others.

Corradina Amato Can you tell my nationality from my name?

My dad came out here to Australia from a small town in Italy called Vizzini. He was twenty-three years of age at the time. Mum was born here, but both her parents came from Italy.

I was born in Werribee and we lived there for two and a half years. Then we moved onto a poultry farm at Little River where we still live. I have a brother aged thirty who is married. His wife is Maltese and they have three children. I also have a sister who is aged twenty-nine. She is married to a young man with an Italian background. They have no children.

I was brought up to speak Italian because no-one at home spoke English. When I started kindergarten I had a very hard time because I could not speak English. No-one understood me. I will never forget my first day. Mum took me in and I wouldn't let her go. Because I was frightened of all the strange faces, I kept crying. The 'kinder' teacher took me to the back to get some toys and I stopped crying, but when I came back mum was gone and I started to cry again. From then on mum started talking to me in English and that is why I have now lost most of my Italian. I was interested in taking Italian classes but the problem was I had no way of getting there because I lived too far away from the classes.

When I started primary school I had a difficult time. The older kids called me names and always teased me and picked on me. I hated it. I was bad at Maths, Reading and English. The teacher asked mum to help me read a lot more at home and to teach me my tables. I slowly started to improve after that and found school a lot easier.

I started secondary school at Corio Technical School in 1981. Everyone used to call me 'posh' and tease me. At first I didn't know why they called me 'posh'. I thought it was because I was shy and did not swear. That was partly it, but it turned out to be mainly because I had a good home and family and was always dressed neatly. Because most people around Corio Tech, are lucky to have both parents, they regarded me as privileged. Slowly most people accepted me, but even now I am still known as 'the wog'. I take it as a joke, depending on what I am called and how serious the person is My friends stick up for me when I get teased unless there is an argument between us going on at the time.

I hate it when people or teachers pronounce my name wrongly, especially over the P.A. Most teachers can tell from my name that I have an Italian background.

At first I was hardly allowed to go out at all with my friends and I used to always make a fuss about it because I thought it wasn't fair. Now I am

allowed to go out more frequently. Partly the change has occurred because I am older and I create a fuss if I can't go out. Now it's good. I occasionally go out with my cousin to the Italian Social Club in Werribee and I go out with other friends when I can.

I really like Italian food. Mum makes her own pasta and its really tasty compared to the bought stuff. Once a friend of mine used to always say, 'Yuk, I hate spaghetti'. But after she tasted my mum's she started to like it.

I enjoy going out to those big picnics when all our family and friends come along. Now my cousins don't come on these picnics because they think they're boring. They use homework as an excuse to get out of it, but it's really because they don't want to mix with the older people that they don't come. I don't mind going on these picnics because living in a smell town like Little River is so quiet that there is hardly anything to do. So it's a day out of the house for me, even if I do occasionally also go out with my friends. My cousins have got it a lot easier than I living in Werribee and being able to go out almost whenever they want to. Most of the time when they don't go on outings and I do, I talk with my older cousins. Sometimes my sister goes too, and sometimes my brother as well. My family is pretty close. Mum and I get on pretty well when I'm not arguing with her.

Michelle Bartolo I'm no different

My name is Michelle Bartolo, I was born in Australia but my father is Maltese. If you keep reading I will tell you some of the problems I have faced because of my non-English-speaking background.

In primary school I cannot remember anyone at all teasing me. I didn't find it hard to make friends or to get along with children of my own age. The only problem was with the teachers pronouncing and spelling my name. I'd get called 'Michael' instead of 'Michelle' and they'd spell my last name 'Bartolo' with a double L. It didn't really worry mO though, I guess I was used to it.

When I finally reached Geelong West Technical School things changed. I was known as 'the little wog' of the class. People just ignored me as if I wasn't there. I made two friends though, one from Cambodia, Phoap Tan, and Trang Ngo who came from Vietnam. I found it hard to pronounce their names at first, but I soon got used to it. I felt I could talk to them better, and I got to know them so well that they became two very special friends. I helped them whenever they had problems, and they also taught me a lot of things. I think I would have failed Mathematics if Trang wasn't there to help me. She could explain it much better than the teacher could. I'm glad I had someone to rely

At school we have a Vietnamese room. All the students who cannot speak English well go to this room. There was jealousy between the Vietnamese and Australian students. The Australian students wanted equal rights. They said, 'If they can have a room we should get one too,' but not once did the Vietnamese students stop anyone coming into their room.

I went there during lunchtimes to see Trang and Pheap. They always made me feel welcome. Even some of the teachers begrudged them that room. They wondered why the Asian students rarely came outside to mix with the others, but they never stopped to think why.

If I was constantly getting teased Pd make it my business to stay and hide in that room too. I even got teased because I spent most of my time in the Vietnamese room. They'd say, 'Been in there with your garlic muncher friends, have you?' I tried to explain to my friends that they were no different to us, but they wouldn't have it. They just ignored me.

Every day from Form 1. to 2 I was called names like 'Maltese Milkshake', 'Spaghetti Oil Tank', 'Fish and Chips', but mostly just 'wog'. It really bugged me being called these names day after day. Some mornings 1 just lay in bed not wanting to face another day of it, but now I've learnt to ignore it.

In Form I, I had to attend Special English classes for half a year. I could speak English just as well as any other Australian and I really didn't

need those classes. I told the teachers that, but they insisted I go to them. I understand that they were only trying to help me and I appreciated this, but I wasn't the one who came from a different country, it was my father! After a hard battle I managed to get out of these classes after the half year was up, but it just goes to show you the problems you have when your parents come from a different country.

My parents are strict, they don't let me go on excursions or school camps for my own good. When it comes to school camps they are definitely voted out. Many of the teachers have tried to persuade my parents to let me go but not one has succeeded. The teachers come up to me and ask why I'm not allowed to go on school camps. They always say to me, 'Can't you afford it?'. This really annoys me. I keep telling the teachers it's not the money part of it. My dad and mum don't like me going anywhere without them. When the teachers continue to come up to me it really makes me angry.

I'm not allowed to have a boyfriend or go out by myself. If we do go out it's with the family. I guess I'm fortunate in that way. Our family is really close. I hear children every day having problems with their families breaking up. I see sisters walk past each other at school without even saying a 'hello'. They seem like they're ashamed of each other. I have no feelings like that towards my sisters. In fact I'd be lost without my sisters. My parents do not want to see me get hurt or get into trouble. They really care about me. Not many parents care about their children these days. They let them get away with anything and they give them anything they want.

Some students have television sets in their room and whenever they want something they get it, but the thing they miss out on is love and affection from their parents. The parents of students like this let them do anything, as long as they are out of their hair.

We had a classroom discussion not long ago about whether we should let migrants come over here to Australia. More than half of the class voted against it and reacted with the kind of statement, 'Send the chingas back to their own country', and 'They're taking our jobs'. How do you think I felt? My own father came from a different country and this discussion made me feel very uncomfortable. When you think about it, no-one should be against migrants for the simple reason that we couldn't live without them. Most of our food comes from different countries. The Japanese have invented things to make life easier for us and it wouldn't be a community without different people sharing it.

I'm not at all prejudiced. I never have been and I don't think anyone else should be People from different countries are no different to the people, of Australia, except in colour and language.

Joe Balazs My personal history

My mother was born in Yugoslavia in 1949, and she arrived in Australia in 1966. My father was born in Hungary in 1947, and arrived in Australia in 1956. He left Hungary because of the uprising. He was only nine years old when he, his mother and father, and his two brothers actually saw people being skinned alive during the Hungarian revolution. When he arrived by boat in Australia in 1956 after escaping from the war, the Australian government allowed him to live in Australia.

My mother and father met in 1966 and were married in Australia. I was born in Australia in 1968 and I have a younger brother and a younger sister. When I was young I only knew Hungarian, but by the time I was in primary school I had forgotten how to speak the Hungarian language.

My first friends were Australian and I related to them without any trouble. But when I was in technical school the older students called me a 'wog'. Later I found out that one of them was a wog too. One day a teacher in a sports class called me a wog name when we were playing soccer. I reacted by getting mad because I was surprised to hear that from a teacher.

I only understand some of the language that my mother and father speak because I was never interested in speaking another language. Now I realise that it is good to know another language. There are no subjects in my school that involve speaking another language. I think other languages should be taught in the school.

When I first went to tech, some teachers could not pronounce my name. The other students in my class made fun of my name because, I think, some people in my class would like to see migrants go back to their own countries. I think that we are lucky to have migrants in Australia and I think we should respect them.

Sometimes my class has discussions about migrants. Some of the students make 'funny' comments during these discussions about migrants. Often, I think, they don't take the subject seriously.

There aren't very many migrants at our school. Because of this, students with a migrant background are scared of the other students. Students have treated other students badly when they came to our school to visit.

Using slang words to insult migrants is the wrong thing to do in Australia these days. They should not be used in our schools.

The worst time for me at school was when I was a junior. It was bad then because the students called me names. Now I think they don't call me names anymore, that is because students respect me a bit more now than before.

I think that it is an advantage to be a student with a non-English speaking background in a school.

Brunella Bernardi Sure it has its ups and downs to have an ethnic background

My dad, Bruno Bernardi, migrated to Australia in 1955. Shortly after arriving he married my mother who had migrated in 1956. My parents have a mixture of national backgrounds: they are Austrian and Croatian as well as Italian. Since they were brought up under an Italian government, however, they usually regard themselves as Italian.

I have encountered many situations where people have been nasty, sarcastic or cheeky because of my ethnic background. But the time I found this to happen most frequently was during my primary school days. The first instance of prejudice I encountered, although I did not realise it at the time, was in the Prep. Grade. We had a very old teacher, and thinking back now I remember how I was forever getting into trouble for small things. She always seemed to be nasty to me. This not only happened to me; I had a Croatian friend and she seemed always to be getting into trouble as well. This teacher, as I stated, was pretty old and I think she wasn't used to teaching non-Australian children so she probably didn't know what to make of us. She is the only teacher I remember having something against me because my background was 'different'.

The next few years at primary school were happy ones for me. We all seemed to be treated as equals and I think this was because there was a balance in the group. Half the class were the 'usual' Australians and the other half Italian -, Polish -, Croatian-Australians, etc. So there was a blend of nationalities within the class. Coming into Grade 5 I suddenly became aware that I was 'different'. We didn't seem to be treated equally any more. For one thing my name, which had never bothered me before, started to bother me greatly! I have an unusual name so at this time if someone wanted to be nasty to me, or just tease me, they would take my name and use it against me. By this I mean I was no longer known just as Brunella but also as 'Banana', 'Banana Fritter' etc., etc. When the time came for the roll to be called out I suddenly noticed that teachers often had trouble pronouncing my name. I would dread roll call time I remember how I used to blush when the teacher couldn't pronounce it and everyone would turn around and stare! Or they would snigger, especially the boys. I used to ask my mother, 'Mum, can't I please, please change my name?'

Grade 6 was perhaps the worst year. The kids who looked foreign, or had foreign names like mine, would really get singled out and be made aware that having an ethnic background made them 'different' - and not in a desirable way. I began to hear the word 'wog' being used many, many times. I began to hate it, obviously because it was used in a sarcastic, condemning way. My

friends knew I hated to be called a 'wog', so some of them stopped using it around me. But some of them would say something such as, 'Oh those wogs . but no offence to you, Brunella', almost as if they were apologising to me for using it. I would defend myself at times like this or give the person who had criticised 'wogs' the cold shoulder. I have a good friend and she says she will always remember the time she used the word 'wog' around me and how, when she did, I gave her such a look that she felt like dying on the spot!

Young children can be very hurtful and spiteful without really realising it. I think this comes about because of their thoughtlessness and ignorance. If you are the sufferer, being teased about being different can be so very degrading that it can ruin your self confidence. One of the worst things that can happen because of this is that the sufferers may start to reject their Greek, Polish, etc. background, and begin to hate their customs and cultures because other people don't think highly of them. This would be a shame because I think you learn and gain so much more if you have a different background. Your understanding and acceptance of other people is easier because you have seen and lived a different way of life; you understand that people are different and you also understand that just because they are different it doesn't mean that they are bad. People who have not experienced this find it harder to accept people from a Greek, or Polish, or Vietnamese or whatever background because they can't imagine anyone being or living differently from themselves. This may be why there is so much prejudice against migrants.

My brother was also telling me that in his primary school days there used to be various ethnic gangs in his school. He encountered quite a bit of prejudice and he remembers being embarrassed whenever he was caught taking salami sandwiches to school. Aussie kids didn't have salami! He was a member of the 'Italian' gang and there always used to be fights between them and the 'Aussie' gang because they would call each other names.

In Grade 6 we had a concert that featured Italian, Croatian and Irish dancing. I helped organise the Italian dance and I felt really proud about it. I also remember feeling proud when I performed another dance at a small Italian festival.

Moving on to secondary school. I found I didn't encounter very much prejudice from other people and it was rather different from primary school. My last years at primary school was the time when I encountered the most prejudice.

I think it is a definite advantage to have an ethnic background. Sure, it has its ups and downs but in the long run you learn so much more about life and people. I am certain that I have learnt a lot from experiencing living in two cultures. I am proud of my background and always will be!

Dennis Brajkovic Staying together

During the 1960's my parents migrated from Croatia to start up a new way of life here in Australia. During this period there was a large number of migrants migrating to Australia from Europe. I was born here in Australia, which should make me Australian, but I am still referred to as a 'wog'. My life during my earlier school career fluctuated somewhat between being happy and not-so-happy, because of the ethnic conflicts present in the school I attended. I was often involved in quarrels with older students due to my inadequacy in understanding the English language.

I arrived at school for the first time and saw many children who I hadn't known or seen before. Same of these children were crying. I kept wondering why they were crying until I realised that it was because they were being separated from their parents, most of them for the first time. Being in a new environment I didn't accept very easily. This was due to previously staying at home most of the time and not really socialising. I didn't attend kindergarten so this made my first days at school a greater fright. I realised, though, that as time progressed I would also progress with learning this new language and in this new environment.

As time went on I improved my knowledge of the new language. Still not able to comprehend it completely, however, I often resorted to my native tongue, Croatian, as the form of communication. I was able to use my native language to communicate to a majority of the students who also spoke Croatian. As a result of this, it was the opposite with most of the Australian students. This was because we weren't able to communicate precisely with others who couldn't speak Croatian.

As I started to grow older I could see two groups developing into isolated packs. There were the migrants who were staying together, and then all the Australians who were also staying together in their own groups. My opinion of this situation was that everybody should be friends and not enemies, but it wasn't possible to make others become friends. There was always some degree of racism present wherever you went.

When my senior year of primary school arrived inter-school sport .became a new battle-ground. There was a great deal of antagonism between the different teams. One reason for this was the hostility present because of the many different cultures represented in the teams. Most of the students from my school came from a migrant background, but the students from other schools were mainly Australians. This often led- to our being subjected to name-calling from the opposing sides: 'stupid wogs!' 'spaghetti munchers!', 'dumb wogs, go back to playing soccer'' .

Others mispronouncing my surname has been a large problem which I have had to face so far throughout my life. It is also probably something which I will face in the future. My surname consists of nine letters. As a result of the way it is composed some people find it very difficult to pronounce. The main people concerned with pronouncing my name would probably be teachers. In primary school the pronunciation of my name wasn't so bad because the same teacher would always be in contact with me and he or she would be used to pronouncing my name correctly. When I began attending secondary school it was quite different because I had a different teacher for every subject. When the teachers would call out the roll they would read through the Anglo-Australians and use their complete name. When they arrived at my name they would only call out my first name. This made me frustrated at times because of the lack of effort that was being made by that individual.

Another problem that migrants face is the slang words that are often used to describe them. In Form 1, .1 was often called names and teased by other students. This was hard for me to accept because I wasn't really expecting it to happen. It Could now be seen that there was a general distinction between the Australians and the 'wogs' in the classroom.

'Greasy wogs', 'daps', 'garlic munchers', 'wogs, go home'; these are only a few of the names by which we are addressed and the taunts directed at us. When this happens the issue is sometimes reversed; the 'wogs' start to retaliate, stinging the 'Aussies' with comments such as 'dirty kangas', and 'dumb Aussies'. This for some people can be very depressing; if it really got out of hand it could also start up fights.

Besides the abuse that was thrown at me I really didn't have any other problems with older students. The senior students just treated me as if I was in their age group. In Years 8 and 9 there was still antagonism present between the 'wogs' and 'Aussies', but at the end of Year 9 I could see that these conflicts were slowly starting to die out. In Year 10 it was the same. The quarrels that the groups were having were dying out; people were starting to mature.

I think that these ethnic conflict's between the 'wogs' and the 'Aussies' have died down because at present there aren't so many migrants arriving. But if there is another intense migration period I feel that these conflicts will start up again. Most of this controversy is due to a communication gap between both parties and to an inadequate knowledge of each other's background.

To conclude this personal history, I feel that when most students reach a certain stage in life they just ignore the criticism that they are put through. They just take it for granted and treat it as a joke.

Stephen Bratanavicius Enduring a lot

Throughout my school career I have endured a lot, as many have, because of their background. In this study I wish to summarise the pain and pleasures of having a migrant background.

I can't talk for the one hundred percent proof migrants because I was born in Australia. But my mother was born in Germany and came over when she was five. My father was born in Lithuania and came over when he was four. Incidentially, Lithuania is no more. Several years ago it was taken over by the U.S.S.R. and now Lithuania is called the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

I think that most of the pain and troubles I experienced were because of my name, Bratanavicius (which is pronounced Brat-an-arv-vi-chus). It wasn't as if I was teased intentionally all the time. For instance, every teacher I have had in primary and secondary school has, at one time or another, asked me to pronounce my name at least twice. Then they ask, 'How do you spell it?' and 'What nationality is it?' This then leads on to further questions, questions largely about my own and my parents' life story. All this always wastes at least ten minutes and, sometimes without knowing it, the teacher embarrasses me and puts me on the spot by asking a personal and very complicated question. I don't mind some teachers asking me these questions, but when all the teachers ask me it turns out to be boring and mostly an irrelevant waste of time.

Every time my name gets called up on the P.A. system or called out on the roll, I don't really mind that it's pronounced wrongly; I've learned to accept that not everyone can wrap his tongue around a name like mine. I've also been called a lot of names because of my surname. One of them last year was 'wog'. Everybody else had his nickname. My friend had the name 'Garlic Muncher', and I must admit I teased him, and others, a lot as well. I would say that it was a case of, 'If I can be teased, so should he', and that's how it grew. I didn't really bother about the nick-names I was called in the school-yard, but I disliked it when they were used in class. For example, they'd say, 'Let the wog talk', 'Sure wog, what-ever you reckon'. These were normal happenings in class. My name was disregarded and substituted with 'wog' constantly in class and out of class. Sometimes I might have deserved it, but not all the time

Another thing I found grotesque was when report day came around last year A substitute teacher was handing out the note⁻ and when he came to my name he said, 'You need a translator don't you?' I said, 'No', and as if questioning my answer he said, 'Are you sure?' Now I don't know what I got

embarrassed about. It was just that he thought of me being a 'wog' just off the boat, as if they were even lower than others.

Yet another thing which annoys me is that others don't seem to understand that after being in Australia all my life I consider myself Australian with a better than average knowledge of Germany, rather than someone with a migrant background.

Now I find in Year 10, when most people have gotten used to my name, that new nicknames are made up from body features or actions.

The next major problem or discomfort I had at school was that people didn't know the difference between a Nazi and a German. Just to get off the track a bit, I also have a Lithuanian background, but I haven't told any of my friends this because, a) my mother and father are divorced and I don't spend a real lot of time with my father, and b) I think they'd say, 'Go blow up the world', seeing that Lithuania is now part of the U.S.S.R., and knowing that Australia is pro-American. Now to get back to the point. I have been called numerous things like, 'Jew killer', 'Adolf Hitler', 'Nazi murderer'. They don't really bother me much.

There are, however, three things which really do upset me. They are:

1 when others make up sarcastic jokes which hurt;

2 when people start calling me names, giving me a hard time, and going on and on; and

3 when I get into an argument with one of my friends and, if I am winning, they come out with some line like: 'What would you know, you stupid Croat!' or, 'Go kill some more Jews!' or, 'Can't even win a war' or, 'It's all Germany's fault the war started!'

One thing which happens after these remarks are made really steams me. It occurs every time I try to defend myself, or try to explain something. They cut me off by saying something like, 'What would you know, you're only a dumb German!' I can't really blame that on them. I don't expect them to go and look up a book on Germany and the war. It's the fault of the community and its attitudes.

Every time there's a war film involving Germany on television at night, I get a few 'jokes' the next day. I know they are jokes and I don't mind them, but maybe there are some younger people getting the same treatment without knowing they are jokes. Then the result can be a fight and someone getting hurt. To remedy this problem I think that before the television companies put on a movie (especially an old propaganda movie) they should state that the war ended forty years ago, that all is forgiven and mostly forgotten, that sometimes the soldiers weren't as bad as the movies make them out to be, and that both sides did some horrific things.

The worst time I had in school was in Grade 6. We all thought we knew everything (although in fact we knew next to nothing). I was constantly being stirred about my name, background, and anything else different or unusual about me. I also stirred other people who were different. I don't exactly know why, but I think it is because we all try to protect everything that is usual. I also think countries go through this stage. For example when the U.S.A. went to war in Vietnam it did so to protect itself against something threatening to it

A good thing that comes from having a hard to pronounce name is that I am never forgotten. Yet another good thing to come out of having a migrant background is that when I do a subject like History, Social Studies, or Geography, I know a little more than the others do. That puts me a step in front of the others which then gets me a better mark.

Now I will explain some things which I have witnessed in our school. More students with migrant backgrounds seem to stay through to Year 11 and most of these are in the highest level of Maths and Science. If this is true for most schools, I think it is because a family coming over from a different country wants a better life for its children. Therefore parents put more pressure on their children to do well at school.

Another thing I find interesting in this school is that in our soccer team most of the players are migrants. This could be because Australians aren't interested in the sport of other countries.

I also found it usual for most people to stay around others of their own nationality. For me it was different. I had as many migrant friends as I had Australian friends. As long as a person speaks English and has some respect for me, I am his friend. I've had clashes with migrant and Australian students. Mostly this is because I didn't agree with them, or didn't like them. Sometimes the students couldn't help it because their parents were putting a lot of pressure on them to stay in touch with the old country and do well in school. This puts the students in two worlds, ripping them apart; it makes it impossible to adjust quickly to a new environment. I haven't had that problem. I have adapted myself to suit the new environment. (Is that social evolution?) But I still like Germany and some day I'd like to visit it and other countries with different cultures.

Students who wanted to know about my background, I found, often only wanted to know about the bad, things and not the good things. For example, they wanted to know about Adolph Hitler and the war, but very few wanted to know about Beethoven or the invention of the jet engine or German craftmanship.

I am also a bit disappointed at this school because there is no class for people to elect to go into for community languages, or migrant awareness, or

classes along those lines. It might work to have migrant awareness classes, butlam a little bit sceptical about what other people who are racist would think.

An example of what could happen in the future as a result of what is happening now is suggested by the constant rivalry between the 'kangas' and the 'wogs'. There's no bashing the 'Aussie' or bashing the 'wog', but there is rivalry between them. Ninety percent of the time this is just expressed in words.

The school is a multi-cultural meeting ground and has its mixture of fair people and racists. I don't think migrant and Australian teachers are any different. I think it depends on the teacher's personality and his or her sense of fair play.

One other puzzling thing I find with migrant students is that they talk back to teachers more than English-speaking students do. When they get told off they start talking in their other language which the teacher doesn't understand. Then the students make this 'joke' a regular occurrence. I don't think it is completely the student's fault. It's also partly the teachers' fault for not knowing, or endeavouring to learn, about the other language.

I am interested in my parents' backgrounds and I'd like to find out about them, but I'd also like to continue to live here in Australia, the 'lucky country'.

Writing this study I have found out that there are a lot of people going through hell because of their background and I hope this study can help. The problem not only exists in people's minds.

Maria Brdar Proud to be both Croatian and Australian

After migrating from Croatia in 1959, my father settled in Geelong. Six years later he met and married my mother who had also migrated from Croatia. They found life in Australia very different but somewhat better than life in Croatia which was under communist rule. Life in Croatia was very tough and, since Australia was accepting migrants, they had both been encouraged to move to another country in the hope of finding a better life with greater freedom.

After getting married in 1965 my parents settled down to become more accustomed to their new, Australian way of living. They both admit that there was a great amount of discrimination during that time in Australia. Migrants weren't welcome anywhere and the thing Australians detested most was hearing migrants speak in their own languages. All migrants were greatly encouraged to learn the English language and adapt quickly to the 'typically Australian' way of living.

I was born in 1968 and spent most of my early years at home with my parents; I hardly associated at all with other Australian children. My parents didn't send me to kindergarten because they thought that I might forget how to speak Croatian. However, they did not realise that it was very important for me to learn English at an early stage so that I would have less trouble with the language when I started school. As it turned out, I started primary school at the age of five and a half being unable to speak a word of English! So far I can easily say that that year in Prep was the worst, year of my school life. I had great difficulties in communicating with the other children and with the teachers in particular. School was a whole new environment for me as there were so many other children around me; I felt so very alone and afraid. I think the communication gap I experienced when I was young contributed in the long run to the fact that I am now quite shy. I remember how I would sit still during my classes trying desperately to comprehend what it was that our teacher was saying to us. The teacher did not seem overly concerned about me at all and most of the time I had to work out on my own just what it was that I had to do next.

Lunchtimes and playtimes were the worst times of the day for me, for then I had to put up with the other children making fun of my lunch. I was usually left alone to try to amuse myself in any way I could. This would also be the time when I would think of going home to my parents and retreating to the loving environment that I was so accustomed to Despite these difficulties it took me only a few months to settle down and pick up the English language. No longer did I dread coming to school each day, for now I had friends with whom I could communicate. Finally I began to understand the tasks assigned to me

each day at school. In a way I can say that this was one of the greatest disadvantages of being unable to speak English; it is one of the disadvantages of coming from a migrant family that has, to some extent, affected me to this day.

The next few years of my schooling were really great. I enjoyed school and made lots of new friends. I had no big problems with my school-work apart from the fact that I would get behind with my reading because there was nobody at home who could really help me each night. In a way, I feel, I was more independent than other children of my age. Because of the fact that I couldn't rely on my parents if I needed any help with my school-work, I learnt to do more things on my own.

There were many occasions when I received notes from school to give to my parents. In most cases I felt like a translator as I had to translate what was on the notes into Croatian so that my parents could understand them. At times I had trouble myself trying to understand these notes or newsletters, but I felt that it was my duty to help my parents as much as I could. At times I envied the Australian children so much as they had no such problems to deal with.

Throughout my school years I experienced very little in the way of prejudice from the other children. As our class was made up of half Australian and half children with migrant backgrounds, I had a mixture of friends. However when I was with my Australian friends I would feel left out to some extent. They went to parties, I wasn't allowed; they went out with their friends, and I wasn't allowed. At times like this I felt so angry. Why couldn't my parents be like my friends' parents? Why couldn't they understand?

Throughout primary school I was also confronted with the question of what my nationality was. In my case, questions about my nationality presented a problem. When I would answer that I was Croatian, most people would ask, 'What's that?' It was at times like this that I wished that I was an Australian for I was fed up with being asked questions and not knowing what to answer in return. I was very disturbed by the fact that I was the only one having to explain what my nationality was. Everybody seemed to accept the fact that there were Italians and Greeks etc., so why couldn't they accept the fact that there were Croatians as well? There were times when I was really ashamed to admit that I was Croatian for I knew that if I did there would be more questions for me to answer. I wished so much that the children and the teachers would accept that I was Croatian; not Italian, not Yugoslavian, but Croatian.

As I moved on to Grade 5 and 6 I was more confident and more sure of my identity as a Croatian. I completed a project and compiled a speech in an

endeavour to try to explain to everyone a bit more about my Croatian background.

I have never experienced much name-calling, either in primary or secondary school. However the times when I was called a 'wog' really hurt me deep inside and I desperately tried to hide my feelings and to retaliate by trying to offend the name-caller in the same way. I was really getting sick and tired of being singled out because of my background. There was one instance in Grade 6 when a boy said something offensive about 'wogs'. I got so fired up that I pushed him hard causing him to get a blood lip. I knew I shouldn't have gone so far as to hurt him, but I was getting fed up With people being prejudiced and offensive.

In my class it seemed to me that it was mainly the boys who were prejudiced. Even now in my brother's school they still have gangs separating the Australians from the 'wogs'. I feel that something should be done to unite these two groups as I am sure that it is not the only school where these forms of prejudice are expressed by ganging up.

During my years at school I have been involved in many activities such as ethnic days, national food days, school projects, etc. At times in primary school I wasn't very eager to participate in such activities. But in my final year at primary school the girls in my class did some national dancing for our annual school concert. I was very keen to participate and, along with the dancing of students having Irish and Italian backgrounds, we performed a selection of Croatian dances. While dancing on the night of the concert I was never more proud of my nationality. I saw the enthusiasm and interest of the audience as they applauded and I thought I would never forget that great moment. Maybe for the first time ever I felt proud to be a Croatian.

Being involved in something like that concert makes me feel that it is a great advantage to belong to a migrant family. I sometimes feel that I'm living in two different cultures. I love being an Australian and I love the Australian lifestyle, but I also think it's an advantage to appreciate what it's like to come from a migrant family and to know what it's like to live in a different culture. It's a good feeling to know that you belong to another group of people as well as the Australian group, and it's good to experience being an Australian as well as having the experience of being a member of a migrant family. I know what it's like to be discriminated against and what it feels like to be a victim of prejudice. Many other Australians don't understand those feelings.

At the moment I feel that I am very lucky to have a second language. However, a second language can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for children with migrant backgrounds. It can be a disadvantage in that young

children often have trouble with their school-work and some difficulty in communicating with others if their English is not good enough. However, I feel that it is more of an advantage to have a second language. You understand what it's like for other people with a second language and, more importantly, your second language can help you if you wish to go onto further education.

Despite there being some disadvantages, I feel that it is indeed an advantage to be a student with a non-English-speaking background. Despite being hurt many times because of my background I am now beginning to learn to.cope with the prejudice I experience. At times my self-confidence has been totally destroyed and I have found it hard to pull myself together and start again. I'm pleased that most of my school friends and teachers who are Australian are beginning to understand what it is like for someone who comes from a migrant background. I think more people should be aware of what being at school means for students coming from a migrant background. I think, by now, that most of my friends are beginning to understand that I am proud to be both Croatian as well as Australian.

Vicki Dekleva Running different races

It was the first of June, 1962, when my father migrated to Australia from Yugoslavia. After meeting other men in the same situation, and after all of them had tried helping each other to try to find a job, (which in my dad's case was unsuccessful) he decided that it was time to find his cousin who lived in Geelong.

After weeks of searching my uncle was found. He was not willing to help my father so a total stranger, who was an acquaintance of my uncle, gave my father a bed in his room and helped him to find his first job at International Harvester. They lived together and helped each other with the language, buying goods, etc., until my father married my mother. She had also migrated to Australia, but she had been living here since she was a small child. My mother came from Poland but she had been born in Germany because my grandparents were taken over the border by the Germans during the war. After coming to Australia my mother and her parents were transported to a refugee camp at Bonegilla. Approximately one week later all the men were bought to Geelong to work either at Ford or at International Harvester.

The women and children were later bought to Ocean Grove to be with their husbands and fathers. Through friends they made here, my grandparents were able to *find more suitable accommodation with an Australian family who understood their problems and taught them the Australian way of life.

I am glad that I do not have to face this type of problem. My parents and I are running different races, and I feel that it does have its advantages as well as its disadvantages. It's a double life; one way of life is that of international foods, customs, and a generally different way of life. Then there is the one we live with our friends who originated from a totally different background from that of our parents and who often make us out to be also different from them. This background, which I share with all other people born in Australia, creates a large gap between me and my parents. My father was raised the old way in times of political unrest, war, and conflict, so I cannot blame him for his strictness. Who is to blame for our differences, do we actually know?

I always knew I was of European descent and because of this I knew I would face some prejudice in my life. At this stage of my life I thought I had escaped prejudice, but when I actually start thinking about it, I find I have not. Even thought I do not look 'ethnic', and was born and raised in this 'lucky country' which I call home, I am still told to go back where I came from.

During primary school I faced no discrimination because the majority of children I attended school with were also from ethnic backgrounds. If others dared to call you a name you would laugh in their faces for they were 'wogs' or 'dagos' themselves.

When I started high school it was completely different. The majority of girls were Australian and this was difficult for me. In my earlier school years my friends and I would talk about gatherings we attended out of school, for example, what we did at the Polish Club. Or I would use the odd Polish or Yugoslav word in my everyday conversation. I admit that this still happens, but now I feel quite embarrassed when it does.

For my sister all this is different. She associates with migrant girls and has many stories to tell. She once told me of one incident when she and her friends were in the classroom at lunch time and five H.S.C. girls were standing around outside. My sister and her friends were speaking together in Polish and when they left the room the five girls who had been outside yelled out to them and said, 'Hey wog, go back to where you came from, I'd hate to be Italian'. My sister and her friends simply laughed.

I found some of my sister's stories humorous but others are sad. I think that migrants, not only from Europe but from many Asian countries also, have been through too much before coming to this so called 'lucky country' to be picked on and humiliated when they are living here.

At school I feel honored when a discussion about migrants comes up because there are only three of us in a class of twenty-six. One day in class a teacher was talking about migrants and stated that all Polish people have tea at 4.30pm. When I told her that I was Polish and that this was not true, she apologised and sat down. I admit that I am one of the lucky ones and I am thankful for that I live the way of life of three different nationalities, Yugoslav, Polish and Australian. I like them all for they are all different. A feeling of satisfaction fills me to know that I can choose what and who wish to become.

It remains for me to say that still the most important parts of my life are gaining the education which my parents could not get, and helping those around me. In the past few weeks I have become more aware and more proud of my ethnic background. Australia is my family's home and where I belong. Even though I am not among other members of our family there is happiness to be found and wonderful times ahead if you want to find them.

Paul Dewit This is how I see it

I was born in Australia on the 24th of November, 1968. When I was five I went to Fyans Park Primary School. No-one really knew I had Dutch parents so I was treated like any other kid. In Grades Prep to 3 I just mucked around with the other kids.-

One day when I was in Grade 4 I was called up to the principal's office to meet two Dutch kids who had just arrived from Holland. The boy was my age and the girl was two years older. Hans looked like a nice kid. I said, 'Hello' (in Dutch of course), but he just bowed his head in embarrassment. For the next few weeks I tried to make friends with him so that I could help him with his English which wasn't very good. But he just ignored me. At recess and during lunchtimes Hans and his sister would just sit down somewhere and watch everyone else play. I'd offer to let them join in a game but they would always say, 'No'. This went on for about a month, then all of a sudden I never saw Hans and his sister again. I really felt sorry for them, I really did, but there was nothing I could think of doing about it until about a week later when I got the idea of asking him around one day to play. I asked the principal where Hans lived, but the principal told me they had gone back to Holland.

That was the only experience I had at school that had anything to do with having Dutch parents. One by one the kids probably found out I had Dutch parents but because I looked the same as everyone else they really didn't even care.

When I left primary school I was worried what people would think like, 'Is he a "wog" or what?' Nobody at West Tech even knew my parents were Dutch until this research project started. Because of this I have never really had any problems at school relating to having Dutch parents.

Recently I was cleaning out the stereo cabinet and I found a tape of my singing when I was about four. The more I listened to it the more I realised that I had a Dutch accent then. I sounded like a little Dutch boy. I was really embarrassed because then I realised the kids must have realised I was a 'wog'. Still they didn't seem to care.

In Form 2 I did cooking as a subject. One week we had to make mince on toast. We had to fry some onions, mix then up with mincemeat, and fry it in a frypan. I fried it up the way mum cooks it, and lost ten marks because my teacher said it was burnt! My mum cooks things a lot faster and more thoroughly than Australians do. I was really 'cheesed off' about this so I had a talk to my teacher. She said different ways of cooking had nothing to do with it.

I have a friend called Robert who goes to Geelong High School. His parents are Yugoslavian and they are very strict, so strict that he was not allowed to go to the shops just fifty metres up the road even when he was ten years old. Now it's different; he can go everywhere, within reason of course.

In Grade 5 I was told to do an assignment on Holland so I got some books and wrote a five page assignment on Dutch food and living. It took me a long time but when I was finished my teacher gave it to the principal. He said that it was one of the best assignments he had ever seen. The principal still has it. He uses it for showing other teachers and students how an assignment is set out and written. I was quite proud to know that the principal of my primary school has kept my assignment.

I talked to a friend of mine today who was in Form I when I was. I asked him if he knew that my parents were Dutch and he said, 'NO'. He's known me for three years and he didn't know. I was surprised to hear him say that.

I also spoke with a teacher who was originally from Germany. He had lots of problems because all the education and qualifications he had earned in Germany had to be repeated in Australia. The Australian government and Education Department didn't recognise his German grades. Another problem he encountered was not being able to buy traditional foods, like black bread. This problem slowly decreased as more and more Germans migrated to Australia and there was a bigger demand for these articles. However, these problems didn't worry him he told me, it actually spurred him on to greater efforts to pass at school and get his qualifications back in Australia. He said it took him twenty years to become completely comfortable living in Australia, and even now he still gets a lot of flack from students and parents.

Another teacher I spoke to was the complete opposite. He didn't have any problems in Australia because he went to an English school in India. When he came to Australia he could speak English and he had an Australian-recognised education. He arrived only twenty years ago and he was able to find some of his national foods in local shops.

Both of them are happy in Australia now and except for the occasional nasty comment they have no worries, but you can see what a difference arriving in Australia at different times makes; ten years too early and you've got problems coming out of your ears.

All in all I think, and a lot of people I've talked to also think, that migrating to Australia is the best thing you or your parents could have done. So what if they call you a 'wog'? So what if they call you a 'boong'? We live in Australia now - the lucky country.

David Dobar Not really a hard time

My father arrived from Hungary in 1956, just after the revolution. My father never really told me about what happened in 1956 during the revolution. Even now I don't know what happened. He met my mother in 1958 during a night out on the town at the Pacific Star Night Club. They went around together for about a year before getting married in 1959. My sister, Betty, was born in 1961; she is now 23. Next came Eva in 1962 then Cathy in 1963. I was born in 1969.

As a child I wasn't really taught the Hungarian language, English came first.

I started school in 1973 when I was four. At school I really haven't had a hard time with teachers and fellow student stirring me about my non-English-speaking background. But the times it has happened it's got me rather uptight. Such as one day one of my friends and I were fooling around when he ripped my coat. I called him something unpleasant and then he started to push me around, calling me everything that came into his mind. I got upset and walked away. Later on he came up to me and apologised. Other than this and a few other incidents, I haven't really copped much. Teachers always spell and pronounce my name correctly, and they always protect me from thoughtless people.

MY friends like me for what I am. I have not had to prove myself because am usually willing to give them anything they asked for.

Older students don't bother me because I don't bother them, but younger students are cheeky. Occasionally they call me a name and run. I'd like to hit them but I'm against fighting. My friends occasionally tease me, but I usually say something back to them and we just laugh.

In my younger days, I was only taught a few words of my father's language. I only used those words at home. In primary school I told these words to my good mates. They thought it was neat, my knowing some words in another language.

In 1979, when I was in grade 5, I went overseas with my parents. It was the first time my father had seen his mother in 22 years. I found it a good experience. It was different over there compared with here. Over there I found that scme people weren't as caring and compassionate. They seemed to be busy, busy, busy. They didn't worry about it if they knocked you flat while they were walking; they would just go around you or walk straight over the top of you There would be the occasional person who would bend over backwards for you, and then there would be the person who wouldn't want to even see you. All my relatives were unreal to me, you couldn't find nicer

people. My conclusion about Hungary is a well known phrase, 'It's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there!'

Anyway, no-one really took any notice of my having a non-English speaking parent until Grade 6. This was the worst time in my school life. Every time some boys (who shall remain nameless) saw me, they would give me a really hard time. They would push me around, and insult me. I used to gooff and cry somewhere where no-one could see me. My good friends tried to protect me from the insults of those smart alecs. Some of the names these people called me are 'Spiro', 'Vas', 'Greaser', 'Wog', 'Slipdip' and 'Mrs. Kink'. These boys were soon sorted out.

By this time my father wanted me to join a national dance group. I didn't want to, but I did it to please him. I didn't want to join because of the thought of my friends finding out and teasing me about it. They thought dancing was only for fairies. I went however, and found it quite enjoyable. I met a lot of friends. I lasted in that group for about three months, until we had to break up.

Then my father wanted me to go to language lessons. They only lasted about three weeks because I couldn't quite get the grip of the basic outline of the language, and that got me frustrated. I think that we should have language classes in all schools.

Since then, until now, I've been to an occasional ethnic dance and social outing with my parents. At present I am a member of Northern Suburbs Soccer Club. The football players at school call me 'wog', but this doesn't worry me.

In conclusion, I would say that my life at school has been more one of enjoyment than of sorrow and I would say that no-one has expressed any real prejudice against me.

Pauline Hendriks Farewell Old Holland, g day New

Standing on the Dutch dock waving goodbye to all she had known, my mother prepared to board a ship to take her to that far off place known as Australia. This was in the 1950's. She had been told Australia was a new and better place to live, a better environment in which to raise children, and a society with more available jobs.

After re-uniting with her fiance, the young couple travelled around Australia contemplating their future together and finding a place to live.

Firstly they settled in a small bush town in New South Wales. After a few years of living there in isolation, they moved to Geelong where they rented a small flat. Soon my mother and father both found jobs that were secure, so they decided to begin a family.

In April, 1963 my sister was born. The small flat became crowded so my parents decided to design and build their own home. Then in 1968 it was my turn to enter the world.

I didn't go to kindergarten and I didn't have many other kids about my own age living nearby, so I was rather sheltered and I hadn't really seen anyone of a different nationality or with different looks. Because I was so naive I naturally assumed that most Australian kids had Dutch backgrounds. All our neighbours were either Dutch or married to a Dutch person. So what else was to think? This part of my life went easily.

Soon the day came when I could start school, and boy was I excited! I skipped all the way to school, dying to see my new friends. If only I could have known what was ahead of me! I paraded through the front gate, into the school-yard and into the classroom. Then like a ten tonne bomb it hit me. Everyone's eyes were glued on the late arrival. What was wrong with me? I couldn't understand what was wrong. I clung onto my mum for dear life. I felt like I was the only human being left on the earth. Everyone else seemed to be just moving by like actors in a constant movie of the school's events. The flow of events seemed to exclude me; I didn't think I fitted in Due to my embarrassment I looked down and noticed that my favourite dress was very different to the other children's dresses. I had on my clothes from Holland and this was very evident. To add to this discomfort my mother's accent also gave the children something to tease me about. I had never noticed that my mum had an accent, but today it showed out like a sore toe. Both of these things ruined my first day of school and I vowed never to return again. At this stage I wished I had never been born to migrant parents. I wanted to be a part of the school group. Basically I wanted to be accepted.

I have always been proud of our family name and I always will be, but I remember how agitated I was by my teacher in Grade 2. Every time he went to spell my name he managed to spell it wrongly. It's such an easy name but he had to mess it up. It was almost as if he did it on purpose. Because I'm a person who tries to stand up for what I believe is right, I had a go at him about it. Here I was, 'a small, outspoken seven year old telling the teacher exactly what I thought. In the long-run I gave up and let him spell it the way he wanted to spell it.

The rest of my junior school life progressed without many other upsets except for one particular instance. In Grade 4 many of the boys in my class were obsessed with war and fighting. A particular boy on finding out that I was Dutch started accusing me of being Hitler's ally, saying that all the deaths were my fault and that my family was bad. At ten this can hurt. I kept insisting that I was Dutch not German, but that would not satisfy this misinformed accuser. I broke down crying but on going to the teacher to get some relief, I was once again stabbed in the back; she said it was all in my mind. I remembered the stories mum told me about how a member of our family had been kidnapped, and another two killed, by enemy soldiers. So how could it be our fault? I started to doubt how good the Dutch were. Again I wished that I was as Australian as my classmates were.

Later that year my father died, and this tragedy added more to my confusion about the way classmates treat you. They wouldn't say anything now. I had peace at last, but what a horrible way to get it.

In December of that year we went to Holland to be with dad and mum's families. Because I basically knew the language, communication was easy. I fell in love with being Dutch and wanted to know more about the Dutch way of life.

When we returned to Australia I prepared and presented a talk for my class. Mainly I wanted to let them share the love I had for Holland and to show them that I was no longer ashamed of my origins. It totally backfired. No matter how hard I tried, I got no reaction. Even the teacher seemed rather bored. I decided that in the future I wouldn't tell anyone about my background who didn't appreciate it.

I knew of others at my school with European cultural backgrounds, but they kept it to themselves and didn't let it show. I know that was because they didn't want to be teased. When they were teased I used to join in in order to be part of the group. I woke up to myself one day and realised I was actually discriminating against others just like myself.

When I left primary school to advance to Clonard I found no discrimination there. I was very pleased to think that everyone thought I was Australian.

However, even students such as the Italian girls didn't get teased at this school.

Although I haven't had very many experiences of discrimination, I still got hurt; and so I can imagine what others went through. That's why I am very willing to help others and to try to assist them to help themselves to live as God wants us to live, in unity and harmony.

Yudra Ivanovic Battling'it out

My name is Yudra Ivanovic, but my real name is Jadranka. My mother changed my name when I started primary school only because she thought it was too long and too hard for me to spell. I was born in Australia, but my mum and dad were both born in Yugoslavia. They came to Australia after they were married which was at a very young age. They were told by others that Australia was a beautiful place to live in. I am sixteen years old and I have one older sister and one younger brother.

I find that most of my friends are 'wogs', in fact most of them are my own nationality. In the group I stick with at school, there are six Croatians, one Italian, and one Russian. We all get along really well. I do have some Australian friends but not any that I'm close to. When I was younger I did have Australian friends who were close to me. They encouraged me to smoke and wag school with them. In class they sometimes tried to cause trouble and they constantly talked throughout the lessons. At my school there is a group of Australians in one form which has a reputation for being rather loud-mouthed and always talking behind people's backs.

I have never really had any problems that have stemmed from my ethnic background. At the beginning of Prep. I had a good understanding of the English language because I picked it up from my sister who is four years older than I am.

In primary school there was no discrimination that I can remember. We were all young and were not concerned about other people except when someone came from another country and did not speak any English. Those newcomers would be classified as 'weird'. Others would keep right away from them and talk about them. When I moved into my new house and went to my new primary school a girl had just arrived back in Australia from Yugoslavia. She came to school with chocolates which she gave out to the class. She was very popular for a while but she had only been away for a holiday and she already knew all the girls at that school. She turned out be my neighbour across the road and as the years went by we grew closer and closer. Now she is like my sister and her family is very close to me. She also has an ethnic background so if we do have any problems we face them together.

It doesn't really make a difference if you have an ethnic background, the only difference is that we can speak another language. But there is one problem that does concern me. That is the fact that our parents cannot help us in any way with our school-work.

It is in high school where most of the trouble starts. For the past four years my friends and I have been battling it out with the Australians. My

group of friends are all from an ethnic background and we all find it hard to get along with the Australians. They often talk about us behind our backs and call us 'dumb wogs'. That really gets me angry and gets my friends angry too. That is how the trouble starts, but it ends quickly and we'll be talking to each other the next moment. I think this sort of conflict will go on for a while until we all realise that it doesn't matter which country you came from

We often talk in our foreign language when we feel like it or have something personal to say. When we do the Australians get really upset because they think we are talking about them. Sometimes I think it's because they're jealous. I always thought it was great, and such an advantage to be able to speak in another language and I still do.

I find that most of my teachers can't say my name properly until I correct them and I find that very annoying. The Australian students have created a lot of the same difficulties for me also; they used to pick on me and call me other names which didn't amuse me at all. There are some teachers who compliment me on my name, and I really get surprised because even I sometimes think it's a weird name although it is common in Yugoslavia.

Teachers also have trouble spelling my name. When I begin to spell my first name the teacher will say, 'Is that your first or last name', and I think 'Gee, he's stupid!' But I can't really be angry with them over my name because it is very different compared to others. My name is the only problem I have at school, it doesn't really worry me but sometimes I wish I had a different name.

At home I always speak to my mum and my older relatives in Croatian. But I speak English to my sister and brother. As the years go by I find it harder and harder to ¯speak Croatian because I'm speaking more English. Now when I talk to my mum it's a mixture of Croatian and English. I really hate that because sometimes I have difficulty speaking and understanding my relatives. I get embarrassed when I can't say what I want to say in Croatian, especially when I know that they like to hear me speak Croatian as much as possible. I remember when I was younger that I was always being told off for speaking English at home, but that doesn't happen any more.

I think that ethnic parents expect more from their children than Australian parents do. My mum expects me to do really well at school every year otherwise she's not satisfied with me. I think most Aussie parents would say, 'You're doing the best you can, that's good enough', and not encourage their children to do better the way our parents do. My mum expects me to do something with my life so that I can live happily. She does not want me to leave school at a young age and go on the dole. Aussie parents don't seem to care whether their daughters and sons do something with their life or not, that's what I seem to think.

During my school years I can't mention one occasion when I have been discriminated against by a teacher; it may not be that they haven't, it's just that I haven't realised it if they have. But sometimes I feel we are treated better than the Australians and thought of as smarter than them.

At school the only languages taught are Italian and German. On Saturday mornings we have language classes which I attend because my language is not taught at my school I don't know much about my country but I am learning and I do want to know more.

I am in the Croatian dancing group, 'Lado', and I really enjoy it. Often when we dance we have to sing as well. It is very hard to learn the words of the songs when you haven't a good understanding of what it means. We perform at many places and do a lot of travelling in a group, which is really fantastic. The first time I performed I felt really proud and each time since then I have felt proud dressed in my national costume.

I am proud to be a Croatian and have never wanted to change my background.

When I started Grade Prep I didn't even know one word of the complicated English language. I have a Croatian cultural background and in my first year of school, at Holy Family Primary School, there were three other Croatian girls in my class. It wasn't entirely coincidental that we became a merry foursome! The other pupils already knew the basics of English so we four were usually put aside from the rest of the class to get special attention and help. Ever since those early days of my childhood we have all remained good friends.

We quickly adapted to the English language and we mixed in well with the other students. Midway through my first year of school my parents decided to go for a holiday back to their homeland, Croatia. Their intention was to stay for only a few months, six at the most. However, they changed their minds and we lived in Croatia for precisely one year and ten months.

When our family returned to Australia the teachers were contemplating putting me back one grade, but seeing that I had an older brother from whom I could receive help, and also because of the persistence of my parents, the teachers decided it was best to place me in my former grade with my former friends.

As I had spent nearly two years in Croatia and had not attended any sort of school there, I was back to base one; once again I did not know any English. Hence both older and younger students found me intriguing. During recess breaks and lunch times I would find my friends and myself surrounded by school-mates. They asked me questions, either forgetting or ignoring the fact that I didn't comprehend. But all this attention died down in a very short period of time. I didn't know whether it was because they had lost interest or because of the fact that I had started to remember the little English I had once known and to learn more that I hadn't known.

Girls have always had the tendency to gossip. Some gossip a lot, others a little. In primary school a lot of childish, immature rumours were constantly spread throughout the school. And the majority of these were started by girls. But, in effect, girls are not rumour-spreaders because of their ethnic background. On the contrary, the rumours that were going around were usually about migrant children.

In primary school I found that I got along much better with migrant children than with Australians. When I was in Grade 4 I played with three other girls, all of whom had a non-English cultural background. In Grade 5 I played with only one girl. She was ethnic. In Grade 6, my final year of primary school, I had a best friend who was Australian. The first half year

of Grade 6 we were a happy twosome, but suddenly we found that we were becoming good friends with two other girls and it wasn't long before we all spent our time together as a foursome. The other two girls were both migrants. In all my years of primary school, with the exception of Grade 6, I had migrant friends. It was purely unintentional, but I preferred it that way.

My worst time was definitely in Grade 2 when I had just arrived back from Croatia. Even though no-one picked on me or teased me, I can still vividly remember how difficult it was for me to catch up to the rest of the class and to try to fit in. As I have mentioned before, no-one had abused me, but the mere fact that they found me interesting only because I didn't know English and had just come back from a foreign country, made me feel like an outcast; I didn't want people to know and like me simply because I was different.

There weren't many fights between 'wogs' and 'Aussies' at our primary school, but those which did occur were in Grade 5 or 6. I think this was the start of the never ending feud because this was the stage when we were finally able to understand the fact that we were supposed to be different. When these fights did take place they could become an all-out war. I can distinctly remember one fight in Grade 6; it was 'wogs' versus 'Aussies'. We teamed up on the appropriate sides and competed against one another in some sort of game (I don't remember what it was called; I assume it was a baseball game or something of that sort). The winning team determined who was the better of the two, the 'wogs' or the 'Aussies'. (Incidentally, the wogs won but I realise now that that's not important.)

Other than that the only fights that took place were verbal, and these were thrashed out between us only on rare occasions. As far as support goes, wogs sided with wogs, Aussies with Aussies.

My surname is Josipovic and for all my life I have been having trouble with it. I don't recall one teacher, especially in primary school, who pronounced it correctly the first time around. There were times when I had to repeat it three or four times so that they would be capable of saying it properly. My worst day of the year every year was the first day of the year. That was the time when the teacher would call out the roll for the first time and my name would always put me on the spot. Because I was so ashamed and embarrassed I willed the first day to hurry up and be over.

Now I am in high school, and all my best friends are migrant. Most of the functions 1 attend are migrant (i.e. I go to Italian discos, Croatian dances, etc.) I am no longer ashamed of having a long and difficult surname. On the contrary I'm proud of it, because I'm proud of being Croatian.

Just as my feelings have changed about being embarrassed because of my surname, so have my feelings also changed about the way I feel when people

make jokes at my, or any of my friends', expense. If anyone teases me about being a 'wog" or uses any other slang words intended to offend migrants, I no longer feel embarrassed and certainly not ashamed. But in primary school I know I would have been. I also find that if a friend of mine is being ridiculed because she is not Australian, I don't feel embarrassed because of her or for her and I don't feel sorry for her. I know I would have experienced those feelings in primary school. What I'm trying to say is that unkind humour doesn't worsen or help my feelings any longer; it doesn't affect them in any way what-so-ever.

I loved getting my reports and seeing what the teachers had to say about me, but I also hated it. I hated it when my parents were required to see a teacher. In primary school I didn't have to go and translate for my parents because I had an older brother. But when I reached high school I was Persuaded by my parents to do the translating. And that was when I began to understand how my brother used to feel and why he was always hesitant. It wasn't that I was embarrassed, because I wasn't, but it was the fact that I can't translate. I speak Australian fluently and I speak Croatian fluently, but when it comes to converting one language to the other I'm in trouble! I no longer have to translate for my parents but I still have to go with one of them when it is report day to show them where the rooms are and tell them which teachers they need to see.

I remember in primary school that the school held an annual ethnic function. Our classrooms were separated by roll-a-door type doors and these would be rolled up. With three rooms put together the combined space was the size of a hall. Along the walls of the room tables were set up, and laid out on them were various ethnic foods. At that time I was in a Croatian dancing group and we peformed at these functions. I am still in this dancing group and now when I perform I feel proud. But at that function in primary school I didn't just feel embarrassed, I felt ashamed. It wasn't because I didn't like my dancing group, for I loved it, but it was so hard to explain to people the purpose of a dance we had just gone through or the meaning of a song we had just sung. When we were up there dancing and singing in a foreign language knowing full well that the Australian audience didn't know what it was all about, I couldn't feel proud. I was always conscious of the fact that the audience enjoyed watching us dance, but I knew they would never understand the sentimental value of the dance, nor the traditions and the beliefs of the Croatian people that it represented. I don't feel embarrassed any more now when I go somewhere with the Croatian dancing group. That's because people are starting to understand the significance of the dances a whole lot better. I'm simply happy to show them how happy I am to be a Croatian.

I am not ashamed to do anything that I do that has to do with my cultural background. If I am called a 'wog' I don't feel embarrassed or ashamed. I know now that they don't call us 'wogs' out of hatred, but I feel it's out of jealousy. Tomorrow if a cousin of mine, who goes to primary school still, came up to me in tears telling me how she had been called a 'wog' and how her parents had been accused of taking away other people's jobs, I would simply tell her not to worry about it. 'They don't hate you, they are jealous of you. They tell you your mum and dad have taken away their jobs because you've got a nicer house than they have, a nicer car, and a nicer amount of money to spend'. But I also know that if I had been born to Australian parents I would be proud of being Australian. Slowly but surely migrants are catching up, and have caught up, with the living standards of Australians. That is not to say they are better, but that they are equal. I'm proud of that.

Attilla K mmel A Hungarian history

My name is Attilla Kimmel and I am sixteen years of age. I was born in Geelong in 1968 at Baxter House. I attended Geelong West Primary School during the years 1973-1980. I am currently in Year 10 at North Geelong High School. My ambition is to be a photographer or an aircraft mechanic.

My mother was born in Cakovec, Yugoslavia, in 1928, while my father was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1915. They both met in Australia after World War II. My mother had been a nurse for the Red Cross .and my dad had been a soldier *during the war.

I have many ethnic friends at my present school. I don't associate with many Australians because there are not very many Australian students to associate with. I feel very comfortable when I'm with my friends as they have been through many experiences similar to mine, and they say, 'We're all in the same boat'. I can trust them up to a certain point better than any Australian.

When anybody says, 'You wogs!' my reaction is to be calm and very stable and not let it become annoying. They should know better than to tease somebody with an ethnic background.

I feel very distressed any time someone calls me a 'wog'. I didn't like these names during the junior forms but I learned that if you pay no attention, it would just pass away.

One of the most difficult situations which I have encountered is if you got a higher mark, say in English or Maths, than the other students. Then they react with words such as 'wog' or 'teacher's pet'. They can't take it if they believe they are better than you are, or if they were used to getting a higher ranking than you

My parents' expectations are that I get a good education and advance to a career which suits me well. My parents want me to have a better life than they had in Europe. (It was mainly a farming background which both my parents had in Europe). Seeing that Australia has a more prosperous economic background, they decided that if they push me in school, hopefully, I will be successful.

They don't expect as much as some parents do; I don't have to get A's or B's all the time but they do expect me to try my hardest and succeed if possible. They don't worry too much about whatever report I receive, but they know how important education is and stress this very firmly because they didn't have a better chance themselves.

My parents generally discuss my homework with me. I did have some problems with my homework in the past because my Hungarian background made it hard to understand the new system I was in. My parents weren't able to help

me often as they had jobs, and my sister was also busy because she had started at university.

I had to overcome these problems and get a clear vision of the situation as it is.

My mum always tells me, 'Get your homework done before anything else'. This is still the case, work before pleasure. She feels very strongly about her role as a parent and emphasises her view that I can cope with the English system. She practically enforces this rule because she is convinced that more homework will improve your schooling. So far this has worked for me.

Primary School

I first began school at Geelong West Primary School at the age of five. When I first started school I had no friends at all. Firstly, I didn't associate very much with any of the Australian students because I didn't fit into their category of friends. They didn't allow anybody else in their group as they thought migrants were cheats and 'wogs'. I had a few very good friends, other migrants of course, who were great mates to me. Usually we did something together, something like playing soccer or indoor games.

I only had one true friendship during all the time I attended primary school. Tony was my best friend. He was like the brother I didn't have. He was something special as a friend at school because he looked after me when I was in tight spots with other students. I really respected him in every way I could. The unfortunate thing was that he had to return to his homeland, Yugoslavia, in Grade 3. I really felt depressed and low, I couldn't believe that this was happening, my mind was a total blank. I feared the worst without Tony, expecting other students to start picking on me and teasing me.

My worst times at school were when our group of students broke a window with a soccer ball and we all had to pay for it. When it came to punishment by the principal it was the 'Aussies' who received no punishment at all. After that incident everybody at school began talking about it and how the teachers would say, 'Oh, look what they did, disgusting little brats!'

My other tough time was in Grade 2 when I was publicly humiliated in front of my friends and everybody else. I had not finished a piece of writing when the teacher asked me to read it out. I told her I hadn't finished, but she refused to listen and I had to read it out anyway. I only got to the middle of my story When everybody began to laugh at me. I couldn't stand it, and so I left the room.

During Grades I to 4 I experienced a lot of name calling from Australians and other migrants too. Well over half of this came from other migrants who had a different background to mine. This happened to many individuals as well

as me and because of it there was a rip in our relationship with each other. This hostility kept increasing due to the fact that we had a high rate of migrants entering the school who were always being teased by other migrant children. As well as migrants teasing me the Australians called me such names as 'Attilla Gorilla', and so on.

I was not a terribly good fighter, nor did I want to fight, but I had to stand up for my rights as a person. That basically was the principle behind all my fights, either gang or solo. The only time I didn't enjoy this was when I got caught and spent half an hour writing, 'I must not fight at school'. Gang fights were usually held out of the school grounds. Some of the toughest guys from both sides (that is migrants and Aussies) would show their strength by giving the others a bruised face or a blood nose. These fights were strictly confined to alley ways, parks, and ovals around our school.

In all my years at primary school I had frustrating moments when teachers couldn't pronounce my name correctly. I really did have problems because other students would laugh as the teacher would foul my name up. Later, after about fifteen tries, they'd get it right.

Secondary School

During my junior years at North Geelong High School, Years 7 to 9, I didn't have many personal friends in my class. This was because everybody changes places for one or another reasons. I didn't have any best. friends until Year 9. Everybody, including myself, had one reason or another for breaking friendships (such as somebody would call somebody a 'pig' or another equally disgusting name). The 'friend' wouldn't take it (not that I would either) so one friend would be lost before another was gained.

It has only been in the last few years that I have had a friendly relationship with other migrant students that have lasted. This is because we both now find we like a hobby or a sport. It has not been just a friendship with boys, but with girls too. In this sense I recognise a great feeling between all of the students* I associate with.

I experienced a lot of name calling and had been on the receiving end of words hurled by both individuals and gangs during the junior years at N.G.H.S. I still found this occurring during the next years, but it gradually disappeared as immature students advanced to maturity in higher forms.

As I come from a Hungarian background, I would like to expect the school to have something in the area of teaching Hungarian. But it has only two . languages, German and Italian, nothing else. Many migrants that I have talked to do not like either of the languages offered. They say, 'Why should we study this lanauge when we don't know our home language or English?'

I was not involved in Saturday morning classes because I have learnt Hungarian better at home. I have had Hungarian spoken to me at all times, whereas it would be taught only on Saturday mornings if I went to language classes. I couldn't really know my language if I was not constantly speaking it.

Georgina Krpez Alphabets and Vegemite

My name in Georgina Krpez. I was born in Yugoslavia. My family migrated to Australia fourteen years ago when I was still a baby. My parents originally decided to come to Australia so that they could earn some extra money and go back to Yugoslavia to live. But later they decided to stay and make a better life for us here.

I started school at Ashby Primary School when I was around four and a half. Nobody teased me there at first because I don't actually look like a 'wog', but when they eventually did I was really hurt because I didn't understand why they were teasing me and calling me names. People only started calling me a 'wog' in Tech, and that was only because of my surname, 'Krpez[1].

Now in Year 10 only one kid calls me a 'wog' when I walk past him. We used to get on O.K. in Form 1 and 2, but in Form 3 and 4 he started calling me a 'wog', which really is a bit pathetic because we were friends earlier. He only started calling me 'wog' when another guy came to the school and called me 'wog' a couple of times. This kid thought it was good to tease me, so he started calling me 'wog' and still does.

My best friend, Lynda Wagstaff, is Australian and when she calls someone a 'wog' she always says she doesn't mean me because she doesn't consider Yugoslavians as 'wogs'. So do my other friends. They say that 'wogs' are 'dark and slimey', like Italians and Greeks. I am glad that they don't tease me about being a 'wog' because it would hurt me if my friends called me a 'wog'. It doesn't worry me that other people at school tease me because I can just ignore them.

One day in class we were talking about vegemite/ and when I said that I didn't like it the teacher said, 'You wouldn't with a name like "Krpez" would you?' I knew that he was joking but when everyone started laughing I felt really hurt that the teacher could say something like that in front of the class.

In class sometimes, when people ask me whet my surname is and I tell them, they make fun of it by saying 'Georgina Alphabet' which I really hate because my surname has only got five letters in it. And they are always asking me to say something in Croatian. I don't really like to because it's embarrassing talking Croatian in front of other people in school.

Sometimes in class discussions when we talk about letting 'ethnics' in or not, nearly everyone in the class says that they should keep migrants out, adding comments like, 'Send the wogs back!' 'They're taking our jobs'. 'If they had to come to Australia they should learn Australian before they come over!' That really makes me wonder what they think of me for being a migrant. Do they hate me? Like me? Or don't mind me?

I hate having to translate for my parents especially when the news comes on. I go out because dad always talks over the news-reader then expects me to tell him what the news-reader said. So I just go to my room. It's worse when we shop and my parents want to know how much something costs or where something is and I have to ask where the item is.

I've got a part-time job in a shop. When people come in who can't speak English I try to help them as much as I can, mainly because I feel sorry for them. But when my parents want to know something I get really annoyed because I think that they should know how to speak Australian since they've been here for fourteen years and they haven't even tried to learn to speak'Australian.

We were sitting in the library doing our personal histories when two students came in and called Michelle 'Greased Lightning' and told her to 'slip out of the library'. Then someone else said, 'Australia would be a better country without wogs'.

Later I was talking to some friends and there was one guy who said, 'I would rather be in a pool of Italians than have one horrie in the pool'. He's a racist but he's still my friend and yet people classify me as a 'wog'. I was really surprised when he said that because I didn't know that he was racist.

A few years ago I would have been hurt if someone said that to me. But now it doesn't worry me because I am proud that I came from another country.

I really get annoyed when people tease the Vietnamese and other ethnics because I think that people shouldn't tease them because we all came from somewhere else to start off with.

Margaret Lokas Their ways are a lot different

My father was born in Yugoslavia in a small town called Rasrlina. He was born in 1941 and came to Australia in 1957 when he was sixteen years of age. When he arrived in Australia he could not speak any English at all. When my oldest sister was born my father could speak proper English.

I did not have very much trouble at school. I can remember being called a few names but that was when I was in about Grade Prep to 3. I can remember when I was in Grade 2 that my father began teaching my sisters and me to speak Yugoslavian. My mother could only speak English so we only spoke Yugoslavian every couple of days or so. We didn't really get to speak it too well because my father died when I was young.

I can remember when I was in about Grade 3 that there were times when I would go to say something in English and it would come out in Yugoslavian. Then no-one would understand me and I wouldn't remember what I had said. My teacher would make me repeat myself and slow down. Then I would say what I wanted to say in English. When my teacher had told me what I had said, I would get all upset, but she would say 'It's alright', and I would feel better.

I can remember that once when my oldest sister was in Grade 2 and I was in Grade Prep, my father wrote us a note. The teachers couldn't understand it and they had to ring .up my mother to find out what he had written.

I never really had any friends at school, I used to play with my cousins. But since I was in Grade 4, everything has changed.

At the end of last year my family and I went to visit my father's mother. This was the first time we had ever seen her. It was really hard; I couldn't understand my relatives properly. When I came back I found that there is a girl in my form (Jodie Rose) who can speak Yugoslavian. So now I speak the language with her every so often. I think it is good to know two different Languages.

I don't care what people say now. When you have been over to Yugoslavia and you have seen what they are like, you know they are just like us. True, they are a little bit different, but they are ever so understanding. When I would go to the shop the ladies knew I could only speak English. So they would let me point out what I wanted and they would help me with my money. My little sister had many friends there. They would take her around and show her everything. They would try to understand each other by pointing at things and using their hands to make the shapes of things. I have noticed when people call you 'wog', or the other unkind names, they often are a little bit of a 'wog' themselves. When I was in Yugoslavia everyone was so kind. They never called me an unpleasant name and they always tried to be so helpful and

understanding; their ways are a lot different to ours. When I first came back, which was when I was beginning Form 4, I used to be called names by all of the younger forms. I just used to put those younger students out of my mind and treat them as people who just don't understand. Now it just doesn't worry me any more.

Betty Metlika Who can spell 'Metlika'?

I have a friend called Maree who was born in Australia. Maree and I have been the best of friends for the last three years. Maree is not at all prejudiced about my being a 'wog'. We go out sometimes and have an unreal time. Maree always helps me when someone teases me or when I am in a fight. We always share things at school. Maree is the best friend I have ever had.

In primary school the teachers had a hard time pronouncing my surname and I had to tell them to try to pronounce it. They tried alright, they would try but they would say it the way they wanted to. They asked me to spell it, I did, 14.E.T.L.I.K.A.[1]. They spelt it like, 'M.E.D.A.L.I.K.A.'. I told them it was spelt wrongly but they said it would be left like that. Everybody laughed!

They started to tease me. I was called 'woghead', 'spaghetti head', or 'spaghetti muncher', even 'grease ball'. I got very upset and went to a corner and cried. In high school I didn't get teased in Form 1, 2, or 3, but in Form 4 I'm getting teased something shocking. I feel very uncomfortable and very mad.

In class we had a class dicussion about whether migrants should come to Australia to live. Nearly the whole class yelled out and said they should stay where they belong because they're the ones trying to take over our jobs and soon they'll be taking over our school. I felt very uncomfortable and upset when I heard all of this I felt like saying to the class, 'I think that the migrants helped Australia a lot. At least the migrants go and look for jobs not like the Australians who sit on their behinas thinking that the jobs will come up to their front door step'. They also sit there and say the wogs are taking over our jobs. I can't see them taking any action about it But I was too upset to say it

People ask, 'Who would want to be a "wog"? I say, 'Me'! I'm proud to be a 'wog'. It's good because there are not many people who can talk two or three different languages.

In the canteen they don't have any of the sorts of food that I like. Or they might have a few things, but they haven't got my kind of food. I think that if they did a lot of students would buy it and eat it The same with teachers. I think a lot of kids would be willing to try any food they see that is different and looks nice. I wished they had some of our Italian-style food.

I have seen a lot of Australian familes fall apart and I feel very sorry for them. My family are all so close. We used to have parties on the weekends so everybody could get together and have fun. But now that my father

is sick, my mother cannot take us any more. I get very upset. We have less fun now than we used to have. It's really upsetting because I miss my father taking us out the way he once did. I really feel sad about mum and dad having a hard time because of dad's illness. I really do.

John Nguyen Experiencing the feelings of hurt

My name is John and I come from Viet Nam. This is my personal history. If you read down further, I will tell you of my problems in a new country.

I have been in Australia for three years. In the earlier part of my life I knew nothing about Australia. When I first came to Australia by aeroplane, I went to Melbourne. I was living in a hostel for about three months. During that time I had to go to school so I went to the one called Blackburn High School in Melbourne. In that school I couldn't speak English, I could only use my hands to draw in order to tell them things and to make them understand me. Sometimes a boy named Nam helped me to translate.

Every day I found myself in difficulty because I couldn't understand what they were saying. Sometimes teachers told me to do something but I didn't do it because I didn't know what was going on. A few months later my teacher found me a translator so that I could understand. From that time I understood quickly and learnt to write. One problem still is reading because I hate to read a book, and I don't talk much like other people do.

I moved to another school called Wattle Park High School. On my first day at this new school I was so shy and ashamed that I didn't know what to do. During lunchtime I went to a quiet place to have lunch. Some kids came and asked my name. I told them but they couldn't pronounce it and they laughed at me because they thought I had a funny name. So the teacher changed my name to John and asked the principal to have a translator help me catch up with my words. At that time I was only in Year 7.

One day the school had their athletics sports. I didn't go to the sports because someone had hidden my bag. When I found my bag, I knew which boy had hidden it and I started to hit him because I was so angry. Then I ran home. When I got home I started thinking about who was wrong. I realised it was my fault. The next day I went to apologise to him. He wasn't angry with me, and he became a good friend of mine. It seems so funny now. He helped me a lot and taught me a lot of Australian slang. A few months later we had to move to another place to live because my aunty, who I live with, had rented another house. I still miss my friend.

When I came to Geelong, a place I had never been to before, I saw that it was a strange place with not as many people as in Melbourne.

I found it difficult to go to another new school because I didn't know anyone there. Sometimes I wonder why I had to go to yet another school. Every time I was happy with a school and had made good friends, it was time for me to move to another school. It's very hard for me to make friends at each new school.

By now I was in Year 8. I got harder work to do, but anyway I had a teacher to help me with reading and writing. But before long, she left to have a baby. She went away for a long time. It was hard for me to work on my own with the problem of learning a language like English. After I finished Year 8 I decided to move to another school because I want to be an architect in the future. I am happy to have moved to this school. It is Geelong West Technical School.

I found a lot of migrant people and a teacher to help non-English-speaking students at West Tech.. I met some Vietnamese, Australian, Greek, Cambodian, Chinese, Italian, and Loatian students. They were friendly and they helped me a lot because L was a new student. Now we have all become good friends.

During lunchtime I often don't go out into the school yard. We have an E.S.L. Centre and we usually have lunch in there. Usually some of the other kids come and play with us. Some of the students don't like me because I look different to them and sometimes I can't speak properly. They tease me because I can't speak the same as them. It doesn't worry me because I am Vietnamese.

My friend said that he had been made to feel unhappy by people calling him names and using very nasty talk. They make funny gabbling noises and call us 'horries'. It upsets me because it's not very nice to call people things like 'horrie' or 'Chinaman'. It hurts my feelings, just like it must hurt someone who has been called a 'wog'.

We are just human beings like you but we come from a different country. You shouldn't try to ruin someone's reputation, but you don't seem to care what you are saying! When you say something hurtful, you can never take the word back.

I hope that one day the same thing will happen to the people who pick on others because of their cultural background. Then they may understand the problems of newcomers and experience the same feelings of hurt.

Joe Pino Too much of a barrier

My parents were one of the many couples who migrated to Australia from Italy during the major influx of migrants occurring between the 1950's and 1960's. During this time my parents came in for much abuse and criticism from established Australians. This abuse became a part of my parents' life but they just pushed the unfair comments aside as being ignorant. The effect of this abuse has stayed with my parents, however, and it has now became a part of my own life.

Ethnic conflict first came to my attention on the first day of primary school. My father accompanied me to school and I was unable to stop talking about how I couldn't wait to arrive in my classroom to meet my teacher and make some real friends. Until that stage I was restricted to playing games at home, mainly with my cousins. When I arrived at school I saw all these strange faces playing and having a good time. My dad walked- me to my classroom, but by that time I was very apprehensive. I walked in and was introduced to all the other children who were already chatting to each other. As I was unable to speak English fluently at that time, I whispered to my dad in Italian, 'I don't know anyone here'. He replied by saying, 'Don't worry, you'll make plenty of friends'. My father kissed me goodbye and this is when I cracked up and started crying. 'I don't want to stay here', I explained to my dad. 'I want to go home with you'. By this time I was the subject of the whole class's attention. My father told me to stay quiet and be calm. _After a good ten minute talk, my father finally got the message through to me that there was no way I could cry my way out of the situation. Not having attended kindergarten had made me very inexperienced about the approach to fitting into school and starting new friendships.

From that day on I started to experienced the abuse and criticism my parents faced when they first migrated to Australia. I started to realise how cruel and callous some people in the community were. Many times I arrived home with tears in my eyes caused by frequent bullying by older students in the school. I was sick to death of hearing the phrase, 'little fat wog'. My parents patiently explained to me that they had had to put up with the same kind of nonsense and they advised me not to retaliate.

Having a name like Guiseppe, was another reason for others to make fun of me. But this 'fun' didn't start until the second half of my period at primary school. Then all I ever heard being said day in, day out, was, 'Papa Guiseppe'. The name °Guiseppe° gradually wore away as the years went by and people started calling me 'Joe'.

I remember in the early years of primary school that there was a group of us, all from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Because we all had similar problems we all used to get together and play. Even today in Year 10, there is still a gap between 'Aussies' and 'wogs'.

One thing that really upsets me is teachers who use slang words such as 'wog'- and 'choco' when speaking to students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. When this occurs it makes the individual feel so small in front of the whole class; misguided humor can really hurt one's feelings.

On most occasions I feel there is more pressure put on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds than on students with an English-speaking background. Parents with non-English-speaking backgrounds expect the best out of their son or daughter at all times. Another area that always used to worry me, and worries a lot of other people in early secondary school without an Australian background as well, is when teachers advise me that they are going to contact my parents about my misbehaviour. In primary school I used to be a little angel, but once I commenced going to secondary school I started mixing with the wrong people. This was quite a surprise to my father and he didn't react very kindly towards the situation. On report day it is sometimes embarassing to hear my dad trying to discuss my marks with my teacher.

On the few occasions that I have had a classroom discussion on migration I almost always get into an argument with another student from an English-speaking background. In these cases I comment as much as I can. Why? Well because I am proud to be considered an Italian and if anyone suggests otherwise with a smart remark like, 'Go home wog', I just answer by saying, 'Where do you think you and this country would be if no-one had ever migrated to Australia?'

Overall, in my eleven years at school, I have been able to handle all the prejudiced remarks made by the so called 'Aussies'. I suppose that this type of conflict in the community will continue even when I have my own children and they commence school. I think that this problem will ever be solved; there is too much of a barrier between ' wogs' and 'Aussies'.

I have never witnessed a racial or ethnic group (or combination of racial and ethnic groups) live and work in complete harmony. This state of unrest among different social groups has not only been a major problem outside schools but also occurs within schools. Being a member of a minority group I have witnessed a large number of problems related to being a 'new Australian'. I wish to share with you the trials, tribulations, and occasional joys of growing up in this environment, and the effects it has had so far on me.

Because Yugoslavia was torn apart after World War II by a level of community rivalry, prejudice, conflict, and violence that had left it a nation of people bitter and confused, my parents were among the many who saw escape to a new part of the world as providing the freedom they had long sought. Australia was the sort of 'promised land' they wished for, and it would soon become the new country they called home. Building up a foundation of security became their goal. However an ever present thorn in their flesh was that in their new country, just as in their old country, they suffered from abuse. This time it came from a new force. The different source of prejudice was the established Australian community. Working with the stubborness of mules they overcame these barriers and planted permanent roots in this 'lucky country'. Soon after I became a part of their lives and they quickly made it obvious that they were determined to shelter me from as many hurtful experiences as they could.

Although still very young and very unaware of the outside world when I started school, I felt that I could nevertheless cope in the new environment. My first day at school began suddenly. Seeming initially innocent in appearance and quiet in manner, I quickly' put this description of myself to shame. Because I was very scared, and because I discovered I was unable to cope with school, I built up a wall to prevent the intruding kindness of my new tutors and classmates. This wall of protective emotion was one which was inpenetrable. Any time a person wished to make contact with me, I cried and ranted; soon I reached the stage where others saw no point in trying to establish a relationship. This lack of communication between me and my peers often led to teasing from fellow students. These 'games' of teasing I found to be a very common occurrence; the students placed themselves in packs and in harmony cried out chants of .abuse: 'Fat-so, fat-sol', 'Piggy, piggy', 'Dumb fat wog'.

Feeling scared and deeply hurt by these taunts, I retaliated in the only way known to me; I resorted to violence I would lose complete control of

myself and would hit and scratch anyone within reach. As you would expect I was punished; but unknown to the teacher responsible for my punishment, I became even more sensitive and paranoid as I struggled to find myself.

The months came and went and eventually my first year at school ended. Still operating very much from behind my emotional wall, I made my first attempts-to communicate with others. My first attempts failed miserably; again this was due to not yet being able to comprehend English fully. Teasing again became a barrier to overcome and I found little refuge within the classroom. I would sit there in my corner and just let the tears flow. The old group of teasers held nothing back, 'Huh, huh, look at the wog cry', 'He can't talk properly he's a wog', 'Go home wog!'.

As time trudged on I saw that obtaining security meant finding my own kind. Eventually my 'own kind' of group developed. This group quickly alienated itself from the rest of the class. Being mainly from one ethnic community we were often on the receiving end of a great deal of abuse from fellow students. On these occasions I took little notice of the abuse; abuse was nothing new to the; it was only the same old barrier to overcome. The hurt, though, only became truly unbearable when the abuse came from a teacher I respected. This teacher made the fundamental mistake of making known his feelings about us. This occurred on one occasion when he was asked his beliefs about the war. His reply was filled with prejudice, something like 'Oh, these grasping new Australians, they come here expecting everything after we have fought them in a war!'.

The years quickly passed, and as they did so my wall of security crumbled until it was all but demolished. I no longer saw this wall of emotions, which had for so long kept me isolated, as an advantage; rather it was a disadvantage. My time at primary school had been one of many bitter confrontations. This had drained all my inner strength, leaving an empty void. This void needed quickly filling and I saw acquiring knowledge as a suitable substitute for friendship. All the suffering I had fallen victim to had left me bitter, but I was determined to prove myself superior to these ignorant people who had not shown me any compassion.

My final years of primary school were very satisfying because no longer did I suffer abuse for being inferior; now I suffered abuse for being intelligent. I didn't really mind this, for now in the eyes of my classmates I was no longer below them, but actually better than them. Such comments as, 'Just because you're smart doesn't mean you're better', 'Not everyone can be smart', 'Showoff wog', only brought pleasure to me.

This turnabout in attitude built up my confidence in my ability to succeed. Even if it meant being criticised and having to prove myself more

capable than the group of critics, I felt that achieving in primary school would only be beneficial in my build-up to secondary school.

Secondary school began anxiously for me, but fortunately my worst expectations were without foundation. No longer was one I of a minority, we were now a majority. My new school felt in harmony with me. Its students were understanding boys, many of whom had themselves suffered much abuse in their development towards manhood. I was no longer a boy with an ethnic background being teased because of it; now I was a young boy being teased for just being young. This teasing wasn't so bad. It may have meant being hit while lining up, fetching the older boys' books, having to act on the older boys' whims, but I just pushed it aside as being growing-pains and I continued life very much as usual.

Feeling very well established and safe in my new environment, I was able to express myself fully in whatever area I chose. There was nothing wrong with what I felt, I believed, so I continued enjoying my freedom of expression. I quickly found out that it caused great conflict among a number of the ethnic groups within our school. Mainly this conflict was caused by me expressing my political opinions about their countries. My fellow students consequently reacted; there was an eruption of hostile beliefs. These, led in turn, to some very bitter and, on occasions, violent disputes. Often there would be name-calling between ethnic groups, 'dago', ichoca, 'back-stabber', but on one outstanding occasion there was actual violence. The violence occurred as a bitter fight between two divided groups, one Croation and the other Macedonian. This dispute had serious repercussions throughout the school. Peace and tranquility ceased to exist within our school; there was complete anarchy as students were determined to prove which group was dominant. I myself came under scrutiny by fellow students in classroom interrogations which may not have put the Russian purges to shame, but still were tense. Here's a sample:

'What are you a wog or an Aussie?'
'An Aussie?'
'That's right, doWt stick up for your country'.
'That's wr....'
'Fair dinkum, you would think you can trust someone, then they stab you in the back'.
'That's not.....'

These battles completely segregated different sections of the student-body; it always seemed as if it was 'us' against 'them', 'them', 'them' and 'them'.

My senior years are more tranquil. Surprisingly, the bitter battles of previous years seem forgotten, distant memories. My struggles to restore my

self respect seemed to have paid off. Even at the price I had to pay of being demoralised, disgraced, abused and demeaned, which almost led to my self destruction, the achievement was worthwhile. Now there are few bitter battles, less racist and ethnic verbal attacks, and a long awaited calm seems to be settling in. Having the peace and tranquility of a calm school life I am better able to examine the outside world. For a long time I have seen the outside world as a distant 'dream', but now I see it as a potential nightmare. Even though there are no battles in the school, I am afraid the streets may become the new battle-grounds in the struggle for ethnic and racial supremacy.

In my years of segregation, abuse, and criticism, I have seen an ugly side of this 'lucky country'. Apart from that, I think my life up to this stage has been one I would not change. Through my school life I have been prepared for the outside world and I have been shown how this world functions. Finally I wish to state that obtaining complete equality must remain a complete fiction.

Adam Santospirito More Australian than Italian

My dad's father arrived in Port Melbourne in 1923 at the age of fourteen. He worked his way over from Sicily on a boat. He then worked in a St. Kilda Road fruit shop and eventually ended up raising enough money to be able to afford a truck to deliver fruit. He then moved to Geelong and opened another shop.

My dad's mother was born here in Geelong. Both her parents came from Sicily as well. She has an Italian accent still, because that's all her parents spoke at home.

My dad's mother and father both married and lived in Geelong. My father was brought up in Geelong, so was my mother, and I was brought up in Geelong as well I may be more Australian than Italian, but I still get the name-calling and all that goes along with it. My worst time at school was probably in primary school when I used to be called 'Adam Alphabet'. It doesn't worry me now, but then, when I was younger it would almost have me in tears. But now I find I do not have any more of that trouble.

I am proud of my ethnic background or, anyway, what there is of it. I don't think I'm really Italian, or Australian. I'm a mixture of both. Other people can't see that, they seem to think you have to categorise things.

When I was in primary school I was expected to know how to play soccer. The fact is I can't play soccer at all. I would be left out of games of Aussie Rules by teachers and students alike. They may have thought that I was not offended, but I was When it came to the crunch I was much better at football than most of the so-called Australians.

When I have friends around and I am eating my tea, they automatically think I am eating 'wog' food. I know they are joking', but it does upset me after a while. To stop them from cracking jokes I decided to give them a taste of my food. After they tasted it Most of the wisecracks stopped.

At the time I did think of changing my name when I reached the certain age, but then I thought to myself, 'Why should I change my ways for other People?'

I know of Vietnamese students at my school who are angry at everyone. When they cause trouble the so-called 'real' Australian students think that the Vietnamese are the trouble-makers. The only reason these Vietnamese students are angry is because the other students annoy them and are mean to them. The Vietnamese students then think that all Australians think about them like that

I would like to go back to my grandfather's village in Sicily just to see how he lived,. If I knew of anyone who had the chance but didn't take it, I would call them stupid. There's nothing wrong with seeing where your folks came from.

Rosetta Salvo Almost the best of both worlds

Both my parents were born in small villages in Italy. My mother was born in the village of Rionero, in Vulture, in the province of Potenza, which is in central Italy. My father was born in the village of Scarcelli which is in the province of Messina, in Sicily.

My father lived with his family on a farm. At a very young age he began to practise his trade as a barber. When he was nineteen he felt the need to 'get away'; he also felt that he could make a better life for himself in the country that held many promises, Australia.

My father arrived in Australia on June 13th, 1956. He travelled by aeroplane from Italy and after arriving in Melbourne he decided to go to Geelong where he had many cousins. He boarded at a house in West Geelong and worked at International Harvester and Ford before he began working at his real trade of hairdressing in 1958.

When I asked my father what he thought of Australia he replied that he loved it and preferred it to Italy. He said he would always live in Australia and would never like to go back to Italy.

My mother on the other hand was called to Australia in 1960 by her elder sister who resided in Geelong. She also thought that she could make a better life for herself here as her family was quite poor in Italy. My mother first lived in Geelong, then she moved to Melbourne, and then she moved back to Geelong. She worked in factories in both places. My mother said she really hated Australia when she first arrived here because it was nothing like Italy. After twenty-four years here she has learnt to like it and I don't think she would live anywhere else.

My parents had many friends both Italian and Australian, but they did experience prejudice. My Mother told me that once there was an Australian girl where she worked and that this girl would always tease her because she was Italian. One day my mother encountered her in the bathroom and the girl began to call her a 'wog'. My mother replied, 'At least I came here legally, not tied to a ball and chain'. The girl never called her 'wog' again. My mother told me to say this to any Australian who called me 'wog' or idagol. And it works!

My parents were married in 1961 and later had three children, all girls. They have both lived in Geelong for over twenty years and they are well accustomed to the Australian way of life. I was born sixteen years ago at Baxter House hospital. I am my parents' second child and second daughter.

The first seven years of my life were spent in a much-struggled-for weather-board house in West Geelong. I loved it there. We lived on a double

block which meant lots of room to play in. I had many friends who all lived along the street. One of them, a Polish girl, lived across the road. We were great friends until we got into a fight; that was when we started calling each other 'wog'. This was the first time I can recall that I encountered ethnic prejudice.

The major attraction of our street was a playground called simply 'the park'. I remember one incident when we were all at the park. A young girl joined us who was Italian. She had very dark skin. After a while the kids began to call her 'nigger' and 'Abo'. She was unable to stand up for herself. I felt very sorry for her Kids can be very cruel.

My younger sister was born when I was three and a half years old. She was born blonde, and she still is This was strange because we all had dark hair. Being a blonde was an advantage for her because with those features she did not really_ look Italian and therefore she did not experience a great deal of ethnic discrimination.

My first two years of school were spent at St. Patrick's Primary School. I did not have any trouble with English because I spoke it at home a lot. My elder sister,- however, did have a few problems because she had only spoken Italian before going to school.

The Prep Grade teacher was disliked by all of us. There was quite a number of migrant children in the class, and many of them could not speak or understand English very well The teacher was insensitive to all their problems and would hardly ever help them with their work. She would either earbash them or embarrass them in front of everyone- else. She did not understand the problems faced by the children of migrant parents and she would not to understand those children and their problems.

In 1975 we moved house to Bell Park, and because practically every person in the street was Italian, my family had no problems making friends. My elder sister attended Gould College and 1 attended Holy Family· Primary School.

My Grade 2 class was chiefly made up of Croatian children, but it also included Slovenian, Lithuanian, Polish and 4 few Australian children. I was the only Italian child. I didn't encounter any problems due to my nationality until about Grade 6. That's when I found out I was really.different and that to some people I was a 'greasy wog'. I always wondered in those days why the kids who taunted me didn't think of themselves as 'wogs'. I thought the term 'wog' applied to all Europeans. It would not be hard to say that Grade 6 was hell and the worst year of my life. I got into a lot of fights- that year mainly with the boys and with one in particular who thought himself to be the 'leader of the boys'. The fights were mainly over who should take the footy out at lunchtime and other small things. Why we couldn't share the footy I'll

never know, but what made the fights worse was that I would always stand up for myself and never back down. The more I stood up for myself the more I was teased. When I was called a 'wog', or 'pastaface, or 'spaghetti hair', I felt that what they were doing to me was really ethnic prejudice, so I gave the same back to them.

I began Year 7 at Clonard College in 1981. There weren't many migrant children in my class; altogether there were only about seven so it was a big change from an ethnic Grade 6 to an all Australian Year 7. • I made a good friend in Year 7 and she has been my best friend for four years. If I am ever called a 'wog' she always defends me.

In Year 8 I remember one person who would always call Ole a 'wog'. She is a close friend of mine now, but in Year 8 hardly a day went by without her calling me a 'greasy wog'. If I did something wrong she would say, 'Trust a wog'! Whenever she teased me I would reply that at least I was here legally anth¯that her ancestors probably arrived tied to a ball and chain. It finally came to the point where I couldn't take her abuse any longer. At this stage I would return her verbal abuse or try to isolate her for the rest of the day. She gave up teasing and insulting me when everybody began to stick up for me and tell her off.

During Year 9 no-one would say the word 'wog' in front of me because they knew I would be offended. If they did ever happen to say it in front of me they would always say, 'Oh, not meaning you'. This still made me feel pretty bad though, I mean they were talking about 'wogs' and what was I?

In February of that year I began to take karate lessons. My instructor had a Greek background and I think he understood my insecurity, and that of his other ethnic students, very well. The class was made up of various people with different national origins but there was no prejudice between us even though a lot of us were of school age.

Towards the end of Year 9 I began to regularly attend the Geelong Italian Social Club discos. I went out with a group of girls who were all Australian. None of them was prejudiced against me and they never have been. I feel now that I experience no prejudice when I am mixing socially „outside school with guys or girls. I experience more prejudice at school. Because the name of this Italian club was so long, no-one could be bothered saying the whole title. So it was shortened to 'the wogs' or just 'the wog club'. I didn't like the name at first and my friends were careful not to say it in front of me. However I. soon got used to it and always use it 40w. I have also begun to use 'wog' more frequently since then, but I do not use it intentionally to tease or hurt anyone. If I am talking with my sisters about Italians, I say 'wogs'. If an Italian says the word it doesn't worry me, but

if an Australian says it I can't stand it because I know that most of the time they are using the word wrongly. For example, the other day when I went and sat with a group of girls one of them was saying that she hated going to the Victoria Market because of all the 'wogs' who hung out there; they are all idagos' to her This made me very angry.

Year 10 has been my best year at school. I can go out and have a good time with all my friends no matter whether they are Australian or Italian. I get along well with everybody and am never discriminated against.

I feel that being the child of migrant parents gives you almost the best of both worlds. I fit in comfortably with my Australian friends and also with my Italian ones.

I find that most Australians type-cast Italians through ignorance. I remember when an Australian girl asked me once whether I like spaghetti. When I replied no, that I hated it, she was really amazed, apparently because she thought that all Italians loved spaghetti.

The same girls also said to me that she thought all Italian women who went to mass wore black, said the rosary all through mass, and never listened to the service. On another occasion when I had been talking about a Davis cup clash between Italy and Australia, and had said that I was glad that Australia won, I provided another shock.. Shouldn't I be barracking for Italy as I was Italian?

A recent embarrassment to me has been all the Italians who have been involved in drug trafficking. I was talking about it to an Australian girl at school and she told me she thought that heroin, and the trafficking of it, all began in Italy. That really made me embarrassed.

Being an Italian has its advantages and its disadvantages. I find that I have hairier arms and legs than my Aussie friends. I am not allowed out until the earlier hours of the morning as my parents are very protective. My parents used to have doubts about sending me to camps and letting me sleep at friends' houses. There are also many advantages though. I have no difficulties in learning new languages. I like Italian food better than Aussie food, but I dO love meat pies. Having a second language is useful for job opportunities. I also find that most ethnic families are closer than most Australian families. The greatest disadvantage of being an Italian must be the constant gossiping of Italian women aimed in particular at teenagers.

I consider myself an Italian; if I am asked my nationality I always say that I'm Italian. I'm not really sure if I am half Italian and half Australian but I do like to say that I am an Australian-born-Italian. I feel I am very Australian in many of my views and in many of the things I do but despite this fact I'll always be Italian and I will always want to be

Filicia Siketa Multiculturalism in the school

From what I can recall I had a pleasant six years at primary school. There was little conflict between the Australian pupils and the pupils with migrant backgrounds. Everybody seemed to be on an equal level and there was no hatred between the many nationalities at the school. Looking back I believe we gave very little thought to our differences. There was the occasional argument but the teachers always straightened things out. The arguments were not because of our nationality, they were simply everyday disagreements. Teachers always discouraged our telling tales, no matter who was involved. I would say that the teachers played an important role in the school in that they always tried to break barriers and to prevent others being built. All students were encouraged to be friends. I can also remember my parents being so very hard working that they could never be involved with the school canteen or other school activities.

I guess I was lucky because by the time I was ready to go to school I already knew English. My older brothers and sister have helped me with English throughout my school years. Unlike them, I did not have the problems they had when they started school. I can remember my older sister saying how embarrassed she had been when she found herself speaking Croatian to the teacher at school when she was asked questions. Because she didn't know the English equivalent she had to use Croatian words. I remember wanting my older sister to come to the school to collect my report rather than my mother because I felt embarrassed that my mother didn't speak English very well. I guess I wanted to fit in with everyone else at the school.

Mum always used to say to the teachers at school that if I did anything wrong, or anything which the teacher thought would be bad for my upbringing, that they were to 'smack' me and punish me in front of the entire class.

While I was at primary school I became extremely ill suffering from _pneumonia. Mum always blamed the teacher for that because even though I had a temperature the teacher sat me on the floor for story-telling and did not send me home. There was a draft in the room and I was perspiring.

Mum never had much faith in teachers' care, especially when it came to camps. She would always let me go on camps with our dance groups however, because she knew that our supervisors looked after us in the way that our parents expected them to. 'Australian teachers don't care enough', mum would say.

We would make our own lunches at home because we didn't want our friends to laugh at us. Every day mum would check us all to see that we were neat and in correct school wear. I can remember looking forward to weekends when I was able to wear my hair out.

Mum and dad always wanted us to do homework, and they still do. They would get so upset if we did not do our homework. Then they would talk seriously to us about how fortunate we are and how they would have loved to have had the opportunities for learning that they were giving us. Now lazy we are and how hard working they were, how we have everything yet appreciate nothing, and how they had little but appreciated it, were parts of the same story.

I was a member of a Croatian dancing group while I was at primary school. I made many friends there and I still have many of the same people as friends today at high school. We see each other outside as well as at school, and there is so much that we have shared. My parents have always wanted me to have friends who had a Croatian background; friends having a European background were their second preference, then Australian friends. Mum and dad forbade us to have any friendships with Yugoslays.

I enjoyed dancing and I enjoyed performing in front of audiences, especially when I was dressed in my national costume. I felt special, but I could not exactly say why. I loved seeing my parents watching me and my brothers and sisters (who were also involved in the group) performing; they looked so happy and proud. My grandmother loved it even more and she would talk about it for days afterwards.

Now, having been in the dancing group for so long (for ten years in all), I can say that I enjoy it thoroughly. It has become a part of my life and my family's life. Through the group my family has become more involved in the community, both in the Croatian community and the overall community. My best friends are in the group but they don't look only at my background; they have regard for me, Filicia, and my own individual personality. I went with some of these same friends through primary school and now I am going with them through secondary school. We have our differences of opinions and values, but we do not have any resentment about our different backgrounds. With regard to other students at school, especially the Australians (those with Anglo-Saxon backgrounds) we now seem to be facing a more acute situation than ever before. But I feel stronger as a person now; I feel that I know where my roots are and who and what I am. I can stand up for myself and I can argue logically and reasonably against any prejudiced comments made by others. I am not trying to just fit in with everyone else any more because I have now come to realise that, as mum has always said, 'Your true friends are your friends no matter what you are. You don't need to pretend to be someone else. You should be proud that you are what you are'.

I can really appreciate how difficult it must be for those students and pupils who come into a school midway through the year or halfway through their

school career at either the primary or secondary level, especially those with little or no English. To do well must be so difficult; education, socialising, everything puts them at a disadvantage because of their language and background. Some of us at the. school who have a second language and can speak English fluently were assigned to help the 'newly arrived'. We looked on it as a way of helping someone in need, but we were ridiculed by some students. Even the teachers were occasionally unsympathetic to our special, time-consuming efforts.. Our usual work still had to be completed on time and no exceptions were made. We had to do the same as those not trying to help the new arrivals.

Some additional thoughts

1 My best friends were those with my own background because our simil outweigh our differences. Our parents conversed well and so did we. The fact that our parents have a beautiful but tragic background with similar religion, values, standards, etc. leads them to trust each other's children and to want them to associate with each other. Our parents want us to keep up our language, religion and culture and, because all of us have the same expectations as our parents and experience a lack of sensitivity from our peers, we relate to each other well and understand each other. We have a common background and this is the basis of our friendship.

2 Older and younger Australian/Croatian students at the school treated me well because we were already familiar with each other through the dance group (Croatian Cultural Folklore Group). Because a majority of the students in the school have an ethnic background this feeling of being part of a majority gives us an inner strength against bad experiences based on our background.

3 Friendships can be strained within the girls' group at school because of jealousy which sparks off vicious rumours and gossip between

a. Croatian and Croatian,
b. Croatian girls and girls with other European backgrounds,
c. European girls and Anglo-Saxon girls.

Jealousy between European and Anglo-Saxon girls raises interesting issues about morals and upbringing. The Anglo-Saxons are said to attach little importance to virginity, for example, and this is something that the Europeans attach great importance to. Such differences can lead to taunting:

- ••The Aussie girls are slack.
- …The 'wogs' are stuck up teasers.
- . ••Big trendy wogs. (Because the Europeans dress well).

... Girls are 'lesbians' if they hug or walk arm in arm - which is very common in our ethnic communities, but not so at school.

- Boys are 'poofs' if they hold their arms basket-hold and do an ethnic dance-step in good fun.
- Ethnic dancing is not for guys, only 'poofs' dance; it's not 'macho'. Dancing has a stigma attached to it if you are male.

4 I have better relations with students of European (except Yugoslav) background than I do with Australian/Anglo-Saxon students.

5 I would say the worst experiences I have had were during the middle senior level. School becomes very competitive for grades at that level and, in the long term, for employment opportunities. Sometimes we are told, '"Wogs" have shops and contacts so they will get work'. At the senior level we need to be realistic about our future. Hard work, study, good grades are ridiculed by those who do not care to do well and succeed. 'Every man for himself', I say. Even within our own ethnic community there is competition over whose child will do better, get better grades, and have a better career.

6 There were some students who are interested in my background but I feel I cannot trust them because I was taught to protect myself from being hurt and providing ammunition for those who can very easily become your enemies.

7 In my opinion arguments between 'true-blue Aussies' and 'wogs' become more apparent at high school. This is when the students know that what they are saying hurts, and they use it for this purpose. Becoming aware of cultural differences within the school can give rise to prejudice from those who see migrants as 'invading' Australia rather than making contributions to Australian society. Arguments in class over this very issue can become 'mud slinging' matches between the 'wogs' and the 'Aussies' with the climax usually being some insult like, 'Why don't you all go back to where you belong?'

Lately we have noticed Vietnamese children walk alongside the walls in the corridors. They are shy and very timid. Name-calling and mean graffiti on walls does not help these students settle into the school system.

8 I have been offended by teachers and peers not wanting to make the effort to correctly pronounce my name. I am even more offended when my parents say I have changed my name because of my embarrassment, when in fact it was was friends or teachers who shortened my name for me. Some teachers seem to have a friendlier tone when pronouncing a familiar name and a harsher tone for a 'different' name.

9 I found that at times humor can relieve the tension in the room, providing it does not become offensive. At other times I resent it because I feel that the teacher is ridiculing me as 4 person and making fun of my background.

10 Feeling great about my background happens when others encourage me to talk about my out-of-school activities and especially when they make the effort to come and see our group perform.

Making insensitive comments about 'Croatians' and their history when they don't know what our parents have gone through and what they have taught us, has upset me. Once we had to do an assignment in Geography on any country we liked. I selected Croatia for several reasons: because I knew something about Croatia already; because I wanted to know more; and because it enabled me to specialise in one state of Yugoslavia which, I thought, was reasonable. I was told that I went from an 'A' to 'B' because I did not state that Croatia was part of 'Yugoslavia' in my assignment. I really disliked that teacher after that.

11 Why should I do a language that I don't want to do, especially seeing I have already studied my community language which will be more beneficial to me in coming years? I'm glad that finally Croatian has been recognised by the universities. Why shouldn't community languages be spoken in the schools during school recess?

12 Classroom discussions about migrants are always emotional and heated to the point that our classroom has developed a 'permanent' division - migrants on one side of the room and 'skippies' on the other. What is bad is that they make prejudiced comments when they don't know what they are talking about; what is worse is when they don't want to know.

13 There are very few teachers who are genuinely interested in other cultures and lifestyles, and there are those who merely drift along with the mutlicultural themes that are popular today. They don't make the effort to attend functions that we have invited them to.

14 Our social worker, Mr. Patterson, is very supportive and very sensitive and understanding. Mum has said that he does not tell her she is old-fashioned or wrong. He makes the time to speak with parents. This is important for students, both at school and at home.

15 Parents want students to look like students not mannequins modelling the latest fasions. 'Every place and activity has it's own dress', they say. Individuals can still remain as individuals in uniform, but the correct uniform is a sign of discipline. Lack of discipline is what my parents and others believe is a very big problem in our schools today. Parents' views are very important because they are actually bringing us up. They are responsible for us, and they are trying to do their best for us.

The school system here is very different to the system they knew. They often find it hard to understand and accept Australian standards, especially if their students are reported to them as being a problem. Parents blame this

on the encouragement of independence and free verbal expression by the school. They say we don't know how to respect or listen to others, that we are not tolerant, etc, etc.

16 More communication with parents about the school system and the curriculum would be desirable. Our new school principal, Mr. Toll, has been popular with our parents because his views are more in line with their expectations. His stricter rules for the school are favoured by the parents.

17 N.G.H.S. can be seen as a school with many achievements, but it is also seen as a school for 'the disadvantaged'. Our parents ask, 'Are "migrant" children really disadvantaged? Or is it a question of a few families being disadvantaged (especially "new arrivals"), a "few behaviour-problem" cases, and a few children from problem-family backgrounds that make the school a disadvantaged one?' Our parents believe that migrant students have much to offer and that they are just as capable as the next student, given the opportunity, encouragement, and a good educational atmosphere.

Pina Tigani Can an 'Ethnic' be an 'Aussie'?

My name is Pina Tigani. I have lived in Australia all my life. I really don't believe I have any single identity because I'm being brought up with an Italian cultural background in an Australian community. In Italy I would be recognised as an Australian and not an Italian, but in Australia I'm an 'ethnic' and not an Aussie. So what am I? Am I a new breed?

At four years of age I was not attending kindergarten. Instead an Italian lady who had eight of her own children looked after me. At the age of five I started my first year of school. My mother enrolled me as 'Giuseppina Tigani.[1]. One would think that at such a young age your name wouldn't bother you, but that was not the case. I also specifically remember being the only Italian child in the classroom. In Grade Prep, 1 and 2 I found it very difficult to involve myself in group activities with the other children. On many occasions I was left by myself during recess and lunch. That happened day after day.

Getting up in the morning and getting ready to go to school was a nightmare. After a considrable time I found myself giving away my food to other children just so that I could play with some of them. I was buying their friendship. I never really had a best friend at primary school until Grade 3 and I doubt if I really had any true friends at all. In Grade 3 I became friendly with some ethnic girls, but we often fought so it was a pretty unusual 'friendship'.

It was always embarrassing at lunchtimes when it was time to have our lunch because my mother occasionally put salami or some other Italian food in my sandwiches. I'd always try to eat my sandwich without anybody noticing me. Trying to explain to my mum that salami was unacceptable for sandwiches was difficult. Instead I'd tell her make me hundreds and thousands with butter, or jam sandwiches, peanut butter sandwiches, or vegemite and butter sandwiches, all of which I hated terribly.

My mum had the worst imagination when it came to clothes. She would make me wear some of the weirdestclothes you could possibly imagine, but of course she never thought so. My mother used to also make jeans, if you could call them that, and wearing them was very embarrassing. (These days, I'm only too willing to wear the clothes my mother sews and designs for me.) I wore blue with yellow, green with purple, and girls would snigger and laugh about it.

The name-calling was one of my most unpleasant memories of primary school. Many children would call us names such as 'wogs', but we came to accept it and eventually we retaliated and boasted about how proud we were to have ethnic backgrounds.

I absolutely dreaded the beginning of each school year. The teacher always read out the roll in order to become better acquainted with us. She would begin, 'Mary Stevens, Jan Smith, Peter Windfield, Andrew Jones', and then would come my name. I always knew when my name came up because there was always a pause and I'd go red in the fate with embarrassment. The teacher would then attempt to pronounce it and I would correct her while the rest of the class members laughed.

I wasn't personaly confronted with any trouble on report days because my dad understood and spoke English well enough to be able to communicate with the teachers about my progress. However, many of my friends did encounter this trouble. They would have to organise an interpreter to be there or else attend the interview with their parents to do the interpreting themselves.

The things that amazed me most of all throughout my school years was that you were only a 'wog' if you were_Greek, Italian, Yugoslavian or Turkish. If your parents were from any of the Scandinavian countries or from England, Ireland or Scotland, you were not a 'wog'. In other words, if you had dark hair and dark skin rather than fair hair and fair skin, you weren't accepted.

In my late years of primary school I was always embarrassed to talk about anything to do with migrants during class discussions. But now I'm only too proud to do so. Even now in Year 10 there is conflict in the English class because many of the Australian students cannot stand to see one of us achieve higher marks in essays, spelling, vocabulary tests, and speeches. As the old saying goes, 'If they don't like it they can lump it!'

Over the years the name-calling and the general racist _comments have eased considerably for all of us Italians, Greeks and the rest. Unfortunately our Asian migrants are now the centre of these attacks and the targets of abuse that comes from unsympathetic members of this insensitive and racist community we live in.

Eddie Vlasnovic Equality, a dream

During the mid 1960's my parents migrated separately from Croatia to Australia to establish a new lifestyle here in Geelong. They married, and soon after I came into the world. I suppose being born in Australia and having non-English-speaking parents would have made me half 'wog' and half 'Aussie', but surprisingly this was not to be. I was, and still am, referred to as a 'wog' or 'dap' and the list of uncomplimentary names can be added to. During the times I have spent at school I've suffered an enormous amount from ethnic confict and prejudiced remarks. They have usually depressed me. Most importantly I have endured a never-ending antagonism between most people with English and non-English backgrounds ('wogs and Aussies'). I now wish to share some of my experiences of school life with you.

Not only for children with migrant backgrounds but also for children with English-speaking backgrounds, the first day of school is, in most cases, a terrifying one. More so for ethnic children because to lack the art of speaking the English language in an English society (school) is like diving into the deep end of a pool and not knowing how to swim! For me the first day at school and many of the following days, were exactly as mentioned above, TERRIFYING! Having only a few ethnic mates, I found it extremely hard to mix with other teachers and students but, more to my disadvantage, I had to struggle with my school work. Even in the first few months of my schooling career I discovered that the bond between 'wogs' and 'Aussies' was minimal. Continuous name-calling, fighting, and many sorts of enemy games put an end to any thought of forming friendly relationships.

After the first couple of years rapidly went by, however, a greater knowledge and understanding started to appear between the two rival groups. This, of course, was the result of young children like us growing older and realising the significance of friendship. However, this slight change of attitude did not really affect the situation substantially. It was still the 'wogs' against the 'Aussies'.

During my starter years (as I prefer to call them) I experienced many difficulties because of my ethnic origin. Probably one of the most common of my grievances was teachers and other pupils mispronouncing my name. But this was not a solitary worry. Another was trying to adapt to the practice of translating school reports, newsletters, booklists etc., for my parents. This list of problems and tasks is practically endless and probably inevitable.

As my peers and I ascended to the higher levels of our primary school, more and more understanding was achieved. This allowed the rival groups to occasionally mix without incident. It felt good to actually be on the same

team with, or to be assisted in some school work by, one of the 'others'. By now we realised that hate was not the answer to our problems; instead we had to try to live together in greater harmony. We had to try to understand each other and share each other's feelings. This obviously could not be easy, but the effort had to be made. Occasionally the bond was broken, but this was only to be expected considering our past attitudes. Reconciliation was almost immediate and harmonious conditions were usually established without much delay. For me this slow but satisfying build-up of equality of regard was the beginning of lengthy and rewarding relationships with people of English-speaking backgrounds.

During the periods of my early and mid-secondary education, I must say, much to my disappointment, that circumstances similar to those we saw during our earliest years at primary school were encountered again. However, I can confidently say that the attitudes expressed during my early secondary schooling were not quite as conflicting as those coming through in Grades Prep. to 3. Instead, the whole idea behind these attitudes and actions was surely just to tease and joke. I must admit that sometimes when a person with an English background did something incorrectly or stupidly, I would certainly have reacted with, 'Ah, dumb kanga!'. A retaliatory statement would usually follow, something like, 'Shut up greasy wog!' As I stated above, I can certainly say that this type of action was not at all serious. By this time of my life I felt that the long existing barriers had surely been partly lowered. I think the reason for this sudden change of attitude was our greater maturity.

At the present time while studying Year 10, I feel that the rivalry has partly reappeared. For some reason the urge to get at each other has made a rapid come-back. It is evident that in most students there is some amount of hatred towards the 'other' side. Whether it be in the classroom or in the playground, it's there. The great dislike for each other is mentally back. Even during lunchtime in my school it is clear that the 'wogs' and the 'Aussies' have difficulties co-operating in friendly games and meetings. I think that this sudden change in my experience may have been caused by my changing schools after Year 9. I previously attended a Catholic secondary school and have now discovered that the differences there were of a more controlled nature. I'm not sure of the true reason, but I suggest that the stricter conditions could play a major role in stifling ethnic rivalry.

'Greasy wog, garlic muncher', the list could go on. However there never has been, and there probably never will be, any really complete explanation of why this prevalent form of criticism of others takes place in schools. From my personal point of view, I believe this type of criticism in Australian

schools will probably die out in a number of years unless there is another booming migration period such as occurred during the 1950's and 1960's. I don't think that the simply immature and pathetic action which is taking place in our schools can be controlled; children with non-English backgrounds will, most probably, have to continue to try to reach the standards which children with English-speaking backgrounds set.

Ingrid Wilson Looking Singaporean and being Australian

My father and mother, Colin and Coreen Wilson were both born in Singapore, an island off the southern tip of Malaysia. Because it was under British rule in the 1800's, Singapore is now one of the few Asian countries having English as its main language. Singapore's other second languages are Malay, Chinese and Tamil (one of the Indian languages).

Both my mother's and my father's family were quite prosperous and as a result they each managed to attain a high standard of education in English-speaking schools. That allowed them to go on to pursue their chosen careers, my father as a schoolteacher, my mother as a nurse. They knew parts of the Malay language as this was what was spoken to the servants and in the market-places and shops.

I had always been confused about this matter. When surveys were sent around the school about other languages, I never knew what to put. I knew that they both spoke Malay, but to what extent I was not sure. When I described this research topic for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds to my mum, she set me straight as to the situation of second languages. After living away from Singapore for twenty-two•years, mum and dad have found that they have forgotten what little Malay they knew. I, myself, do not speak another language other than the basics of French which I am learning at school. I do not understand a word of Malay as I have not had any contact with the language other than hearing mum and dad sometimes exchanging words and phrases with my relations.

My mum and dad came to Australia in 1963 along with my eldest brother, David, then aged two and a half years. They Settled in Geelong and in the ensuing eight years four other children were born, two girls and two boys.

As all of us were brought up in Australia we have no trace of an Asian accent. Australian slang and its colloquialisms we have learnt just as all Australian kids do; we eat and enjoy the local food, although Asian food is the main style of cooking at home; our way of thinking and expressing ourselves is all Australian; and even our surname 'Wilson' is quite common in Australia. The only thing which differentiates us from other Australian children is our colouring. With our dark skin, eyes and hair we are instantly branded DIFFERENT and in some cases even alien.

It is quite amusing to recall some of the names I have been called; most of these weren't even close to my true nationality. The majority of people who have commented on my nationality have thought I was Aboriginal or Chinese, although these comments were mostly directed at me in a rather a unfriendly and even offensive manner. Words like 'abo', 'nigger' and 'horrie', were used

to insult me. This sort of abuse you get used to and it merely bounces off you, but I can remember on more than one occasion when an adult has expressed an interest in me and my family. What begins as curiosity, however, often turns out to be mockery. However, many people have shown a sincere interest in my nationality. For instance people have thought I was from Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and even a Maori from New Zealand. In these instances the questions were expressed in a manner so as not to offend, which they did not do in the least.

The first real instance of prejudice I came across was during my pre-school days. It may seem to the reader to be a minor or even trivial incident, but to a young child of five it makes an impression which can still be remembered today.

My younger brother, who was two at the time, and I joined the local creche. However we went there for only three days. The reason for this you will soon find out. For some reason, one which I didn't know at the time, my brother was being picked on. At a certain time of the day all the younger children had to have their naps. Inevitably, after a couple of hours sleep, there would be a number of wet beds. However my brother was the only one punished. When playing, he was constantly nagged at and warned against 'disturbing' the other children. Every afternoon would see my brother sitting on the box in the corner of the room which was reserved for 'the naughty people'. The reason I escaped such persecution, you could say, was because I was cunning. I realised that if I gave the child-minders no cause to criticise me I would not be punished, although a few times when I tried to stick up for my brother I found myself given similar treatment. My brother was not of such a passive nature as me and he was not one to take such treatment sitting down. Invariably this only served to get him into more trouble. When my mother became aware of our treatment at the creche she wasted no time in removing us from the place. This display of prejudice settled most deeply in my mind and made me aware of my differences to other children of my age.

My kindergarten days were different from my experiences at the creche. Although there is not much I can remember of my time at kindergarten, I don't think I had many problems mixing with other children because I can just remember being very happy and loving every minute of it.

It was much the same for me at my first school, St. Anthony's Primary, which went from Grade Prep to 4. After the initial teasing and rude remarks, I settled in without too much trouble. In my class the majority of children were Australian with, I think, one German girl, an Australian-born Chinese girl, and myself as the only 'ethnic' children. My mum was glad that I, as

well as my brothers and sister, was thrown into schooling among Australian kids as this forced us to become Australian. As we had no contact with Singapore at all mum didn't want to raise us in a culture that we were not a total part of. Mum and dad, of course, didn't hide the fact that a large part of their lives was spent in another country. They answered all our questions, but saw no point in telling us stories and romanticised versions of life in a country we had no contact with and couldn't visualise. This is why I experienced .a lot of confusion when I was young because although I believed that I was the same as everyone else, I was frequently pointed out as being different.

Back to St. Anthony's. All in all, my days were happy ones. Apart from the general teasing and name-calling there were only a few incidents of prejudice that I experienced. The teachers were very good as they just treated me like any other kid in the grade. I received no special treatment, nor was I treated any worse than other children. I could even go so far as to say that the teachers appeared uninterested in my background. In some cases this can offend a person, but it was the best thing the teachers could have done for me. Showing an interest in me would seem to the other students that I was receiving special treatment which would amount to pointing me out as being different. This would have made it harder for me to be accepted. As it turned out I did mix quite well with the other kids in St. Anthony's; they found that I didn't regard myself as anything different and so they didn't see me that way either. The boys accepted me much easier than the girls as I was a real tomboy. I loved playing cricket, football, handball and especially British Bulldog. At times I preferred to play with the boys rather than the girls who played more 'ladylike' games like hopscotch and netball. As I was a fast runner I was much sought after in the running races and competitions. It was said that it was the Aboriginal blood in me that made me a good runner! However I took this as a compliment althought I do, in fact, have no Aboriginal blood in me at all.

I changed around best friends a number of times, though I don't think this is because of my skin colouring. However, there was one instance when I had a very good friend who lived nearby. She told me that every day when she went home her mother used to ask her what I had been doing that day. Was I rough?, did I swear?. When I went to their house her mother was very polite, although I could sense her disapproval of me. My friend's sister, however, was not as subtle as her mother. She made me aware quite blatantly of her dislike and her believed superiority by name-calling and by making me feel as uncomfortable as possible whenever I was at their house. However, the name-calling didn't upset me very much as I was used to it by then. I think

she was embarrassed that it was known that her sister's best friend was a person of my colouring

The worst time I feel I've had was when I went to Our Lady's Primary, which went from Grade Prep to 6. Because St. Anthony's only went up to Grade 4, we joined the new school in Grade 5. It was very hard meeting and mixing with so many new kids mainly because Grade 5 was segregated into two groups – the Our Lady's kids and those from St. Anthony's. You would think that after being in St. Anthony's and feeling so unselfconscious about my colouring, that I would be able to handle meeting new children, but this was not so. I found that although I accepted that I was Australian, there was a confusion underneath as to what I was. My time at Our Lady's served only to make my confusion more deeply felt.

When I first went to Our Lady's I felt overpowered by such a big school with its older students in groups who stuck together. I suppose this must affect every new child, but in my case I felt it even more acutely as I wondered what they would think of ME! I found that I was very much aware of my differences with so many people staring at me because I was one of the few students at the school with darker skin. So I became very aloof and distant with the kids of Our Lady's and only came out of my shell with my friends from St. Anthony's. Invariably this led to people assuming that I thought myself superior and I was regarded with more antagonism. However my friends from St. Anthony's stood up for me and gradually more people got to know me and the teasing eventually stopped.

Our Lady's had a lot more 'ethnic' students than St. Anthony's, especially Italians and Yugoslays, but I think there was only one other person with dark skin like mine. He was even darker than me!. He was an Aborigine who had been adopted by an Australian family. Even he found it difficult accepting me, as did his friends. I think they found it hard to see that I was an Australian like them, except for my skin colouring. It took a while, but they finally accepted me as being no different from them.

The teachers at Our Lady's did take an interest in my background, but although this can be a good thing, it wasn't good for me at the time; it pointed me out as being different to the other kids in my class which made it harder for me to be accepted. The teachers, I think, were just as confused as I was at times about what nationality I was. They could see that I was not an 'average' Australian by my looks, although I spoke, thought and acted like a 'fair-dinkum Aussie'. Even the name 'Wilson' was common in the school. Also, when talking to me about Singapore, the teachers couldn't understand that I felt no bond and no patriotic feelings for the country of my parents. The teachers also couldn't comprehend my preference for English-style food.

Actually, we were so used to eating Asian food at home that English food was a treat for us! There was one time in primary school, although I can't remember which school it was, when a teacher cooked fried rice for us. The teacher couldn't believe it when I didn't want to eat it. Here were the Australian children loving the Asian food when the 'Asian' kid didn't like it! That enables me to draw a parallel with the Aboriginal boy mentioned before. He would eat nothing but Vegemite, so I don't suppose you could call him anything but Australian!

I experienced no other outright form of .discrimination at Our Lady's except the name-calling which gradually stopped. But almost daily when I walked to and from school I would experience some kind of verbal abuse from kids of neighbouring schools.

With my schooling itself I had no problems. At times I used to get embarrassed, such as when we watched documentaries about dark people - Aborigines for example:- On another occasion I can remember that I wanted desperately to be Mary in the Christmas play, but I couldn't because I was told that, 'Mary wasn't brown'. This really hurt at the time but I suppose there was nothing that I could do about it.

The teachers at Our Lady's didn't really help me with my relationships with the other children. I felt that I continually had to prove that I was an Australian like them. At times I was even ashamed of having a different background and parents who came from another country. I used to wonder all the time about what people thought of me for being a different colour. One time we had visiting students coming down from Melbourne. They were in need of accommodation for one night so almost every person in Grade 6 had a student from Melbourne to stay with them. As we were waiting for the students to arrive, I found myself getting nervous. The thoughts that were running through my head at the time were things like:

> What's she going to think when she sees that a person with my skin colouring is the one she's going home with?
>
> When she finds out it's ME what will her reactions be?
>
> Will she glance at her friends and make a face?
>
> Will they all stand there waiting, to see who they're going home with and see me there and whisper, 'I hope I don't have to go with her'?

As it turned out, I mixed in really well with these students from Melbourne. The girl who stayed with me was very friendly and she enjoyed her short stay in Geelong equally as well as the rest of the group.

I felt that the school, or should I say the school children, were largely to blame for my insecurity and self-doubts. If this situation had happened when I was at St. Anthony's, I don't think I would have felt like I did at Our Lady's. The main cause of my insecurity was the confusion of not knowing what nationality I was. In St. Anthony's I believed myself to be nothing but Australian, but in Our Lady's I was anything ranging from Aboriginal to Chinese. I understood that I was Australian by birth, Singaporean by background, but still why did people call me so many different things?

When I went to Clonard I found that the people there, both teachers and students, were genuinely interested in the school's 'ethnic' students. The teachers were very understanding; they encouraged you to talk about yourself and your background and to relate and discuss your experiences. In Clonard I felt I could really talk about myself when I knew that people were really interested in what I had to say.

There was one teacher in particular in Year 7 who helped me to settle in really well. She was from India and had a daughter around about the same age as me who was also experiencing the difficulties of moving into a new school. In discussions she drew out the people of different nationalities and encouraged them to compare experiences. She also used her own experiences as well, which helped me lose a lot of my self-consciousness.

Many other teachers have expressed a curiosity about my nationality, but by now I have come to terms with the confusion that I had before about what I was, so I didn't mind telling them about myself. There was one teacher whose first name was Ingrid like mine. She was curious, in a friendly way, to know why my parents had chosen that name for me, because it is a Scandinavian or a German name and you usually find fair people with blonde hair, blue eyes and pale skin having the name, 'Ingrid'. She was, in fact, of German origin and was very fair, whereas I was the complete opposite. Even now it amuses me to think that 'Ingrid' would be the last name anybody would guess I had.

Being at Clonard I have found that I have lost a lot of the self-consciousness that I used to have. Even my friends have ceased to think I am different. Occasionally when I was in the younger forms and I had had a fight with other girls, when they ran out of things to say it eventually came down to their saying something about my nationality. It hurt at the time, but it doesn't any more. Now my friends envy me for my 'everlasting suntan'. My good friends tend to forget that I'm Asian and when they say something prejudiced against Asians I say to them, 'But don't you mean me?'. Then they say that it doesn't apply to me. At times I have found that I too am prejudiced against other nationalities, including Asians. The problem with being an Australian-born person with Singaporean-born parents is, that

although I am different to the 'average' Australian, I do not feel any more compatible with other Asians than do other Australians, even though my family has Asian origins and an Asian background. But really, I don't have any strong attachment to my background outside Australia. That part really belongs to my parents.

When thinking back over my school days I know that there is much I cannot remember,' even though they may have been valuable points for my research paper. I didn't have any insoluble problems with my schooling because I wasn't in the situation of either being unable to speak English or of being in two worlds. However I have found that right through my schooling my parents have expected a lot of me, study-wise. Because Singapore is one of many Asian countries where to getsomewhere you must excel in your studies and value your education, my parents have grown up with that train of thought. Especially now that I'm in secondary school I have found that my parents expect a lot of me. I try to explain to them that in Australia education is really not pushed as much as it is in Singapore, but that is the way they have been brought up and I suppose they would like us (my sister and brothers) to accept it.

I feel no shame now for having an Asian background, in fact I am very proud to have a different background. I find that it gives me an identity. At times I have found that it is not easy looking Singaporean and being Australian but when I think of it now, I really would not want to be anything else.

Oamir Zebic My personal history

I was born in Yugoslavia and came to Australia at the age of two. Both my parents were also born in Yugoslavia, and so was my older brother.

When I started primary school I liked it. I began school at Bell Park Primary School, but when I was nine we moved to Lara and I went to Lara Lake Primary School. Lara Lake was a pretty bad school because everyone called everyone else names. If you were a 'wog' it was worse and a lot of people ganged up on you.

I used to get into fights because when I was being picked on I became angry. They didn't really care where you came from, they would stab anyone with cruel names.

When it was report time I found I had bad reports. So my parents moved me to Corio South Primary School. I think my reports were bad because I didn't like the school and the people in it.

Corio South was a good school; I made friends straight away. There still was a bit of name-calling but what occurred at Corio South was a big improvement on what I had experienced at Lara Lake.

When it was time to go to Corio Tech., I was relieved to know that most of my friends were going there too. But at Corio Tech, they split us all up and I was put in a form where I didn't know anyone. However I soon made a couple of new friends. As we were only Year 7 students most of the older students started picking on us 'wogs'.

In Year 8 it got a lot better because I had a chance to do weight lifting. I did it for two years so that people wouldn't pick on me.

Now that I'm in Year 10 sometimes the younger students tease me, but I just ignore them. None of the senior students pick on me anymore. I think that they are more mature and that they know that it isn't right, so they don't pick on people any longer.

The only thing that I've done as a Croatian person is going to dances. At these dances it is really good because everyone is a Croatian, including a lot of kids like me who are still going to school. When they come to the dance everything changes; it's as if all of us are friends.

I also believe that Croatian parents are a lot harder than ninety per cent of Australian parents. NOW I resent that, but I know that it will help me later on in life. I think that most ethnic parents are harder on their children so that they can get a job and be someone.

Sometimes lots of Croatians get together and go somewhere and all have a good time.

My mother went back to Yugoslavia for a holiday. She said it was good to go back there but she also said that it wasn't easy for the people there to make a good living. So in one way it is an advantage to be living in Australia.

SCHOOL REPORTS

Bell Park Technical School Student Research Team report

Are students from non-English-speaking backgrounds advantaged or disadvantaged in any way in school?

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December, 1984.

Introduction

Over the past three months five Year 10 students from Bell Park Technical School have tried to answer the question, 'Are students from a non-English-speaking background advantaged or disadvantaged in any way in school?' In answering this question we compiled our personal experiences in the form of autobiographies, and discussed issues and effects among ourselves and with others. Some of these discussions were recorded on video and audio tape.

The following pages contain most of our findings. The principal findings we want to bring to others' attention are

1 The effect of living in two cultures, one Australian and the other ethnic.
2 The sense of being different.
3 The language barrier.
4 Teasing and name-calling.

The effect of living in two cultures, one Australian and the other ethnic

Because their parents resist the Australian way of life, ethnic students are often torn between two different ways of life, the Australian way and that of their parents. This can affect the relationship between parents and children in a way that means they are always at each other's throats. This conflict, along with other pressures including peer-group pressures, can be very strong. It sometimes causes the student to leave school and their home which is a really great start to life! No education! No parents! No job!

Students often have to live by two standards and the school standard is often different to the home standard. At home the student is expected by his parents to follow their culture and beliefs, but these rules can't be fully followed at school. When people try to follow their parents' culture and beliefs at school they are often mocked because of it. One reason for this is that other students have their own beliefs and cultures and sometimes a majority of these beliefs are similar. Then the person with a different culture is put down because he is in the minority.

When a student was asked about living according to two different standards, she answered, 'I hate it because your parents want you to be like them, and your friends want you to be one of them. There is no way that you can leave one culture and then go and fully accept the other one'. We think that if your friends were really your friends, they will try to understand your culture instead of trying to alter it.

Recommendation

This problem can't be fixed simply by an awareness class because we are dealing with different cultures and nobody wants to give up their culture. The problem is the student is torn between both cultures and in most cases goes for the Australian way of life because he spends more time at school and with his mates than he does at home. The only thing the parents can do is to give in to the Australian way of life (since their child is living here); they can still expect some respect for their own nationality and culture.

2 The sense of being different

It has certainly been evident that in many cases students with a non-English-speaking background, feel at times unwanted in this country. We have learnt that some Australian students continually mock ethnic students about migrating to Australia. This harrassment in turn leads to endless lengthy arguments and can lead to violence.

We wonder why Australian students resort to this behaviour . We think that Australia probably wouldn't be what it is today if it wasn't for the migrants. We are not saying that Australia would have been a failure, but that the migrants have helped greatly to develop Australia into what it is today. So we would suggest that Australian students think twice about making migrants feel unwanted.

In some of our interviews with students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, we asked the question, 'Do you feel unwanted?'. The answer was in almost every case, 'Yes!'. Some students even added that sometimes they were pushed sofar that they thought of going back to their own country.

Coming from a non-English-speaking background, students frequently find it hard to associate with other students. This then causes groups to be formed. Each group consists of people from one ethnic culture. These groups then seek isolation from the school body as a form of security. When their security is threatened by intrusions from the rest of the school body, violence often results.

Not having a complete understanding of other cultures in one's school is a reason for isolation. We have found that the major reason for separation into groups was for safety and security. It was found that many students felt safe with others of their own culture or nationality. They are not frightened to express themselves when they are with others who share their views.

We think that forming these groups can seriously affect people in the future, as well as the present. If students do not mix well with the other groups it can affect them when the time comes to seek employment. For example, when it comes time to be interviewed and find employment, they must

work and mix with Australians. It will be hard for them to cope with the situation if they are not used to it

An extract from one student's personal school history made it quite clear that fear was a major reason for his alienation.

> As time trudged on, I saw that to obtain security I must find my own kind. Eventually my so-called 'own kind' of group developed. This newly-found group quickly alienated itself from the school body. Being mainly of one ethnic community, we often came under much abuse from fellow students ...

Peer pressure, no matter how small, had caused the student to be deeply hurt emotionally.

But this peer pressure to conform to a completely Australian life-style at times has the opposite effect. It often leads to the abused student feeling that his ethnic group is the major cause of all the problems. This then leaves the students feeling that by losing contact with their ethnic group they will conform and not be subject to peer pressure.

Ignorance of ethnic groups often causes abuse. It is this lack of knowledge of how other groups in the community live that often causes people within the school community to be so blatantly intolerant of other people's lives. This lack of knowledge causes respect to be completely thrown aside and leaves many students feeling abused and without defence.

When she was asked about her feelings about her own people, one student quite clearly showed how she was pressured into disliking her own people, 'I don't want to be Italian. I hate how they talk. I hate being Italian because I'm teased a lot because of tt'.

When a Vietnamese student was interviewed he stated, 'I don't want to be different, I just want to be like everybody else'.

Recommendations

I Better teacher awareness of the many cultures now found within schools would be appreciated by all ethnic students. This awareness, we believe, should be developed during teacher training. An enormous effort should be made to encourage teachers to take a greater interest in all students from all ethnic backgrounds.

2 An awareness of other ethnic groups and their cultures is desperately needed in the school system. This should be introduced with teachers taking a very active part in its introduction.

3 It would also be an improvement to have a greater cross-section of the ethnic communities in school classes. This would enable many different

cultures to be in contact with one another. Hopefully this would lead to a greater understanding amongst students.

4 It should be possible to arrange for a session or two a week when ethnic students who are having trouble with their English or Maths are brought together as a group and are allowed to ask questions about what they do not fully understand.

5 If people would treat Vietnamese or Cambodians or any person with an ethnic background, just as they would like to be treated themselves, we think that would slowly start to demolish the barriers that have been erected between ethnic groups.

6 A completely new outlook by schools is needed. They should be welcoming other cultures instead of seeing them as threatening.

7 More community programs like camps and gatherings should be organised so that all students can learn to participate together in harmony.

The language barrier

Feeling frightened about commencing school for the first time is something every young child has to overcome. This fear is made even worse when a student lacks the ability to comprehend the English language due to having a non-English-speaking background. All these fears and inadequacies leave a child vulnerable to abuse from other children. This starts at a young age with name-calling, such at 'wog', 'choco', 'grease ball', and eventually it can even lead to violence.

Having a non-English-speaking background often leads to an inferior grasp of English and the related subjects. This then leads the student to seek his teacher's help in resolving his problems. However, the teacher, occasionally, is slow in responding or just doesn't take notice. This leaves the student requiring help, confused and badly retarded in his school life.

In a country in which the whole system of education is based on the English language, it is unusual for a tutor to communicate in more than one language. It is this inability to use the language Of minorities in teaching that leads minority students to believe they are being ignored. The worst possible reason for being ignored is a simple lack of interest by teachers.

The problem may be seen as just a student backlash against the system. What makes us think that that isn't so, is some of the remarks we heard being made by students:

Teachers ignore students and aren't very helpful.

Teachers on occasion aren't very helpful.

Teachers don't care!

In many cases ethnic students do not fully understand what their teacher has told the class, but they are too scared to ask the teacher to explain things because they are afraid that the rest of the class will laugh or put them down. We think this is evident in very many schools but not much, if anything, has been done about it. Many of the problems over English are related in this quote from an interview we taped:

> When I first commenced primary school I knew half as much English as Italian. So this straight away disadvantaged me in relation to a lot of the other students in my class. I remember many times the teacher used to ask me questions and I didn't have a clue what she was talking about.
>
> It was very hard to keep up with the other children in my class and to do so I had to work twice as hard as the rest of the students.
>
> This is the reason that I insisted to my mother that my younger sister attend kindergarten next year, so she won't have as big a disadvantage as I had.
>
> When I was born my parents had been here for twelve months, and I had no-one to teach me English. My two younger sisters talk to me in English, but my father doesn't agree with that because he thinks that it is up to the teachers to teach them English. But I explained to him that if they don't learn the language now they will have the same problem as I did in primary school.
>
> In the second half of my period at primary school I found it very hard to do some of the homework. When I did have problems with it I couldn't turn to my parents for help, so I always ended up going to my older cousins for help. The next day I used to go to my teacher and tell him I didn't understand the work and he just replied by saying, 'Just work on it and you'll get it right'.

Migrants usually have to face a language change when they migrate to Australia. Trying to understand and learn a new language is a major problem for people who migrate to another country. Some people are teased because they can't speak or understand a new language in the new environment. A Vietnamese boy said, 'I hate this new language because people can't understand me'.

We feel that teasing a person for not knowing how to speak or understand a certain language is wrong, because everybody takes time to learn something and the more practice you have the better you will be at whatever you are practising.

Through their lack of understanding the English language, many_ students don't get enough out of their schooling. In turn this disables the student, it ruins his chances of getting a job and he doesn't get a chance to express himself as 'himself'.

During their interviews, some of the Cambodian and Vietnamese students said that their teacher was helping them with the English language, and they now said that they knew English. In fact, they didn't know enough. We found this out by the way our questions were answered. A teacher at the school we visited said that the questions should have been put more simply because they couldn't really understand what we were talking about.

Recommendations

1 We think that more notices and letters should be sent out encouraging parents, who don't realise the difficulty their children could face in the early years of primary school, to send their children to kindergarten.

2 Before any students enter the normal school curriculum they should undertake a test (written/verbal) to determine if they understand the English language. If they do not, they should be able to attend a special English class until they learn the English language well enough to cope in school.

3 What teachers need to work on is making sure that everyone understands what's being said; they should not just ignore students when they ask for help.

4 We think that more attention should be paid by teachers to this huge disadvantage of having a non-English-speaking background.

Teasing and name-calling

There are several obvious effects of teasing and name-calling, but the one we are going to talk about here is how the person being teased can become very aggressive. We think the reasons for aggression are that students are teased so much that the only way to stop the teasing is to stop it coming out of the mouth of the tormentor by shutting it. We think this attitude starts early and stays with students in their sub-conscious. They think, 'If I act tough no-one will tease me', or, 'If they get a chance they'll tease me'. This attitude can stay with students throughout their school careers.

The teasing and abuse of young students with a non-English-speaking background may derive from their being timid and afraid. However, we see the major cause of this problem being a lack of understanding among young children when their Understanding is most needed. Teachers should be able to develop understanding among young children. In many cases teasing is not stopped for the simple reason that teasing and abuse are often dismissed as games. Teachers do not recognise the seriousness of the situation.

When a number of senior secondary students were asked, 'What is the major reason for abuse you get at an older age?', some of the replies we were given were:

> Primary school was a starting point for teasing people.
>
> When I was young I was teased a lot, this could have caused some problems now.

These quotes strengthen our belief that primary school is a starting point for many conflicts. The large number of students in primary school classes may be a reason for so much abuse going unnoticed.

We found that people usually become emotionally distressed due to the continuous teasing and name-calling that they are put through. People who are teased because of their background and culture feel it badly.

People are teased about their background because sometimes there is a certain dislike for that particular background. Some people are teased because of things that happened in the past. For example, if you are German you might be referred to as Hitler's follower. If you are Italian you might be referred to as one of the Mafia. When this teasing starts to happen, fights sometimes break out. When people are teased too much it is easy to see why that they reach a certain point when they feel they have to resort to violence and forming street-gangs to retaliate.

Pronouncing surnames has been a major problem for many afigrants. A lot of migrant people are subjected to teasing because of their surname. These people are teased because their name is different, because it is a very long name, or because others find it difficult to pronounce. Some people are teased because of the length of their name, 'Here comes alphabet!', they hear.

We think that there is no real solution to the teasing that goes on -about unusual names. Everybody's name is different; it's just that people with ethnic backgrounds have names that are harder to pronounce than Anglo names.

Wherever two or more different races or ethnic groups, come into contact, it is possible that there will be some conflict. This conflict is very evident in our school. On many occasions a situation develops where the established culture will antagonise a new culture, or vice versa, and a fight develops. These fights in many instances are caused by name-calling. 'Wog', choco', 'grease 'sleaze Pot', on the one side; 'dirty kange 'dumb Aussie', on the other.

This lack of respect between people is always likely to cause problems. Even more so in those schools where contact is always being made between people with little understanding of each other._ Misunderstanding builds up tension. It is also very evident that many arguments start from ignorance. Yet there is very little about foreign cultures being taught within schools. This leaves both sides without knowledge of one another and makes them capable of believing the worst lies.

When we questioned them, the response of many students was very disturbing. When we asked, 'How would you retaliate to abuse'? replies we were given included: 'Hit the teaser', and 'I would hit the stupid kanga°!

During one of the interviews a student said that he sometimes just got so much teasing that he felt like going out and killing all the Aussies. Of course he didn't really mean that, but the emotion was there, and he felt strongly about being abused. The same frustration is seen in this quotation from another interview:

> This happened a lot to me in primary school, for example when the teacher asks you a question and your answer is wrong the person sitting next to you would call you a 'dumb wog' and the rest of the class would laugh. When this happens you feel so small you wish you could disappear. It makes you think twice before you answer the next question, and it does nothing for your confidence.
>
> The same thing happens when you play football at school. You get the ball and make a mistake, next thing you hear is, 'Stick to soccer, wog'. It makes you think twice before you go near the ball again'.
>
> On a lot of occasions these situations lead to violence. One of our team recalls a day at primary school when he was playing tennis and there was a group of other students watching. Every time he missed the ball he said he would hear a comment like, 'What happened, wog, did the bat slip out of your hand?' For the first half-dozen times he ignored the comments, but next thing he knew a scuffle broke out and the guy who was saying these comments hit his head on the gravel and cut it as he was pushed over. This is just one other occasion when violence broke out because of teasing.

Recommendations

I We feel it is very important that a course intended to improve awareness of ethnic groups be introduced. If this is not done, we feel that the repercussions would be such that violence would become an all too common occurrence. We feel that schools should encourage contact between ethnic and Anglo groups through these awareness classes.

2 Employing more than one teacher per class would help. If this were done, students would get more attention and feel much more comfortable than they do in a large class with just one teacher.

3 Better training of teachers should be commenced. We feel better training should include child psychology and related areas. This would give teachers a better understanding of child behaviour and how children feel.

Clonard College Student Research Team report

Effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

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December 1984

Introducing the research task

We Are in Year 10 at Clonard College and part of a research team which has been working for the Human Rights Commission. Our aim was to find out more about the effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. We were assisted in our research task by one of our teachers, Mr Hans Bus.

The first part of our task involved each of us writing a personal history which included incidents in our school life relating to our background. For example, instances of prejudice, aspects of our relationships with both teachers and students, the content of certain school subjects, and our feelings about our own backgrounds, were included in our personal histories.

Other ways of gathering information we used during our research include video-taping discussions and interviews with other students, meeting with the other four research teams from different schools, and lengthy discussions within our own research team and with our parents, friends and relatives.

From all this research we have gathered a good deal of information concerning the issues and effects that students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are likely to experience during the course of their own schooling.

Summary of the issues we found

While researching the question, 'What effects do schools have on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds?', we found that there were a number of issues that were of general concern to many students in our own school and in other schools which were participating in the study.

These issues include:

1 Prejudice - Most students encounter prejudice in the form of discrimination, stereotyping, name-calling and teasing, and even racism. We found that these forms of discrimination had definite effects on ethnic students.

2 Culture clash - This means that students are living an Australian way of life while their parents continue to live a life more like they lived in their homeland. This often results in a conflict Of opinions, ideals and values between students and their parents.

3 Double standards - We discovered that many ethnic students are confronted with double-standards. At home their parents use firm discipline while at school they get away with a lot they would never try to get away with at home.

4 Educational pressures - We found that many ethnic parents consider education to be of the utmost importance and so they put pressure on their

children to achieve high academic results. Conflict of opinion can occur when ethnic students see that education is not nearly as important to Anglo students and their parents.

5 Identity crises - Identity crises occur when students believe themselves to belong to one cultural group while their parents and friends make out that they belong to another. This ambiguity can result in confusion and insecurity for students who see themselves living in two worlds. They do not find it easy to know to which group they belong.

6 Language barriers - We found that there was a variety of problems which occur during secondary and primary schooling for any student who cannot speak English well Inadequate English frequently leads to students doing poorly in subjects they might otherwise be good at.

7 Greater understanding of different lifestyles - A positive effect of having an ethnic background is that students are more readily able to understand and accept people and lifestyles that are different. This sort of acceptance is, sadly, often lacking in many Anglo-Australian students.

8 Pride and shame - There are many instances we know of where ethnic students have been made proud of their culture, but there are also times when they have been made to feel ashamed of being different.

Issue I Prejudice

From the information and evidence we gathered while doing this research work, we have found prejudice to be one of the main isues which affect students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. From information we obtained during meetings, interviews and discussions, and also the insight we gained from reading the personal histories that we, and members of other research teams, wrote, it was evident that most ethnic students encounter prejudice. All ethnic students experience prejudice in the form of discrimination, teasing, name-calling, stereo-typing or racism, at some stage of their school life.

1.1 Discrimination

Realising that prejudice was an issue which most ethnic students encounter, we then asked ourselves, 'Why do people feel the need to be prejudiced against another person?' There are many reasons. The main reason, we found, has to do with an ethnic students being seen as different to Anglo-Australians: different because of their physical features' ('with our dark skin, eyes and hair we were instantly branded DIFFERENT and in some cases even alien'); different because of our appearance ('... my clothes were the problem'); different because of having an uncommon name (.. nobody knows

how to pronounce my name'); and different also because of their culture with its various traditions and customs ('I was laughed at because I was dressed in national costume to go to mass'). Each of the students who related these incidents was very hurt, embarrassed and even ashamed of having a non-Anglo ethnic background at the time the incident occurred. As one student remarked, 'When it's being pointed out every day that you're different you feel really ashamed of it...'. This is one of the effects that discrimination has on ethnic students.

There are also times when ethnic students have been subjected to other forms of discrimination. As Pauline observed, 'In Grade 4 many of the boys in my class were obsessed with war and fighting. A particular boy, on finding out that I was Dutch, started accusing me of being Hitler's ally, saying that all the deaths were my fault, and my family was bad'. This type of prejudice has had long-lasting effects on its victim and we now realise that there are many other people, including some in the research teams, who have found themselves in similar situations. This often results in many doubts about the nationality in question. As Pauline, who we mentioned previously, said I started to doubt how good the Dutch were'. We find that this kind of prejudice is due to ignorance; in Pauline's case the people who were taunting her were actually ignorant about the war; they were simply wrong to make such generalisations.

On another occasion, Ingrid remembered she was not allowed to become Mary in the Christmas play one year because, as she was told, Mary wasn't brown'. This incident, however minor, had the effect of making her more self-conscious and more aware of being different to other students of her own age.

1.2 Teasing

Many of the students we talked to, including a number of the members of our own research team also experienced a great amount of teasing, name calling, and being insulted at school. almost daily I would experience some kind of verbal abuse', said one. This has the effect of making young people feel very insecure about themselves, giving them an inferiority complex, and causing them to question their own background. 'One of the worst things that can happen is that the sufferer may start to reject her ... background ...', is the way one of our team members puts it.

We found that most of the teasing and name-calling occurs in primary school, rather than during secondary school. The reasons why this is so may be mainly to do with ignorance, and the inclination on the part of small children to make fun of what they don't know or cannot understand. Kids can

be cruel, we all know that; their cruelty hurts more when you're at the age when you can't stick up for yourself. But even with all this teasing and name-calling we found, that although this kind of prejudice cannot be totally overcome, students are able to lessen the effects it has on them by ignoring it.

1.3 Stereotyping

.Another type of prejudice we came across was stereotyping. Many of the students in our research team have been very offended when they have been stereotyped. Rosetta, who has an Italian background, was once asked, 'Is it true that all Italians make the sign of the cross when going past a graveyard?' As it turned out, Rosetta had never heard of such a thing before and she came from a, very traditional Italian family. Because she doesn't like eating fried rice all the time, Ingrid refused to eat it during a cultural day at school. She recalled that '... the teacher couldn't believe that I didn't want to eat it'. Stereotyping creates some awkward situations. Like most prejudice, stereotyping stems from ignorance of other people and their culture. At times it can be Amusing, but more often it is hurtful and embarrassing.

1.4 Racism

Many ethnic students face prejudice which borders on racism. The nations of the world have their own people, with distinctive features. For example, many of the Asian countries are populated by darker-skinned people with almond-shaped eyes who are generally of a small, slim build. The people of Holland, and many other northern European countries like Denmark and Norway on the other hand, are blonde, fair-skinned and blue-eyed. Italians, with their olive complexion and dark eyes, have their very own distinctive 'Italian' looks. These distinctive human characteristics can become the 'reason' for very hurtful remarks and names. For example, many Italian students are frequently referred to as 'wogs', a name most of the students in the research teams have encountered and thoroughly dislike. These days Asian students are subjected to the name 'horrie' which is used to mock the more 'horizontal' shape of their eyes. The appearance of an individual, we found, has a significant effect upon that person's treatment, both within the school and outside it.

It is unjust the way one individual will be accepted before another because of differences in their physical appearance. We believe that most Australians accept blonde, fair-skinned people, such as the Dutch or Swedish, more readily than darker-skinned people, such as Indonesians and Italians.

Ingrid, who has a Singaporean background, believes she has experienced some very real difficulties being accepted into groups because of her Asian appearance, whereas Pauline, who has a Dutch background, believes that she has been accepted and treated just like any other Australian. Despite this treatment being very unjust, we found that, in most cases, there was nothing the victims could do to stop it and so they had to accept whatever treatment they received.

Recommendations

Of course, prejudice, in the form of discrimination, teasing, stereotyping and racism cannot be totally overcome. However things can be done to minimise the amount of discrimination shown to ethnic students in school. If ignorance is the main cause of prejudice, something can be done to inform more students about different groups and their culture. Topics to do with different racial and ethnic groups should be introduced into the school curriculum. Subjects like History, Geography and Social Studies should include sections which inform students about aspects of different cultures - where the country is in relation to the rest of the world, the history of its people, the status of the country and its people in the world today, and also the reasons for the migration of that country's people to other parts of the world. These topics would be especially relevant in schools which have significant numbers of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds because these students would be able to provide first-hand information about their cultures. In these ways, other students can get to know about different cultures and customs and understand the reasons for them. With a knowledge of other cultures an improved understanding and acceptance of ethnic students should be possible.

Issue 2 Culture clash

During our enquiries we discovered that many students experience what we define as a 'culture clash'. Worded differently, this means that parents are continuing to live their lives as if they were back in their homelands while their children are adapting much more quickly to the Australian way of life and becoming more Australian each day. When a student wrote, 'The background I now share with other people born in Australia creates a large gap between me and my parents,' she was expressing this issue very clearly.

With parents wishing their children to live the way <u>they</u> want them to live and children breaking away from their parents' way of life in favour of the more Australian way of living and behaving, a conflict of both ideas and values often develops between parents and their children. With the parents constantly pushing their own culture and beliefs at their children, it is no

wonder that many children seem sooner or later to reject the culture of their parents, They start off by not accepting it as their own and finish by beginning to rebel.

One of the people we interviewed told us how he felt his parents pushed him so much into being a Croatian. He was expected to associate mainly with Croatians, attend Croatian folklore dancing, and above all, attend Croatian language classes on Saturday mornings. His frustration came out when he told us, 'If I had the chance I'd run away from mum and dad's way of thinking ,.. They're pushing me to be a pure Croatian'.

The members of the research team who interviewed this person found that he obviously wasn't as strongly attached to his culture as were his parents. For example, when mentioning Croatia he referred to it disrespectfully as 'wog land'. We were quite shocked to find this person resenting the culture of his parents so much. His resentment seemed to be the result of his parents forcing their ideals and values on him too strongly. In his opinion, his parents were still living the old-fashioned way and respecting the ideals that really belonged in their own homeland, but not in Australia- But he felt differently: 'No matter how hard they push me, I still feel that I'm Australian. My parents can't expect me to go on living my life as if I lived in Croatia, I was born in Australia, so naturally I will live an Australian lifestyle, They make me feel as if I have to forget that I'm actually living in Australia!'

During our research we came across Many students who are faced with the problem of dealing with parents who are 'old fashioned', and don't understand their children's views and ideas. A member of our research team put that problem like this 'There have been many times when I try to get my ideas across to my parents but they just don't seem to understand'. In some cases disagreements on ,certain issues- can cause arguments between parents and students. These disagreements often weaken the relationships students and their parents have with each other. Another person we spoke to told us how he, too, was actually beginning to resent the culture of his parents and how he was getting sick of his parent's old-fashioned ways of thinking: 'There was a stage when I couldn't even talk to my parents without starting an argument; there were so many issues we disagreed on'.

It seems to have become evident to some students that it is actually nonproductive to discuss anything with their parents any more. These students believe that they are fighting a losing battle because they think that their parents' ideals and values will never really change.

We were also able to see that the inability to communicate and get along with parents, actually presents additional problems for students at school.

Many students in this situation become withdrawn from the others at their school and they often have trouble communicating with teachers and other students around them.

With such problems and worries at home, students have an added burden upon their studies. They often find it hard to concentrate without their minds wandering back to the problems they are faced with at home. An interviewee summed up this issue when she said: 'Sometimes in school I find that my mind really wanders away from my work into the present family situation'.

Recommendation

The only thing that can really be done to help students in this situation is to give them more help at school. Teaching them to be able to work on their own and concentrate more on their work would help. Helping these students mix in with other students and helping them to forget about family problems at school would also be an improvement. Teaching students with a lack of communication skills to be able to express themselves more clearly, and also encouraging them to become more confident when speaking, would help as well. But no one can really pry into private family problems without creating further hassles. Above all we feel that if a student in this position is having problems at home everything possible should be done to make that person happy and satisfied while she/he is at school.

Issue 3 Double standards

Another of our learnings, that should be linked to the issue of culture clash, is that many ethnic students are confronted with double standards. At home their parents use firm discipline, but at school they get away with a lot they would never try to get away with at home.

Our research indicates that many parents who have come from overseas are very strict and protective of their children. At home, especially where education is concerned, we found that parents tend to put a great deal of pressure on their children. 'My parents really push me', is a typical description of what occurs.

However, students have a problem when the people at school who have authority over them, do not use it to achieve the high standards parents are expecting. 'Some of my teachers are so slack you can get away with anything', said one student. Many students who have found themselves in this situation believe that, 'You have more freedom at school than what your parents want you to have'.

We found that Australians regard education very differently; it is not as important to them as it is to many migrants. This is explained in more detail

in our next section on educational pressures. However, it is also relevant to the issue of double standards because it is one of the very important differences in outlook between Australian parents and Australian students and ethnic parents and ethnic students.

Recommendations

We think that the main way to overcome this problem is for schools to assert more authority and exert more discipline over all their students. It would be very difficult to change the opinions of the parents of ethnic students about the education of their children, so we believe it is really up to the school to do something constructive.

Issue 4 Educational pressures

A very important issue that came up quite frequently during our research study was the fact that many students with ethnic backgrounds are faced with the problems of dealing with the educational pressures created by their parents. This means that some parents are attempting to force their children to achieve very high results in school regardless of whether that child has the ability to do so or not. At least that is the way their children see it.

While discussing this issue we first asked ourselves the question, 'Why do migrant parents push their children so hard in school?' We were able to come up with a number of answers to that question quite quickly.

In many cases, the parents of migrant children have not had the opportunity of getting a proper education; some are lacking a formal education altogether. Consequently the majority of these parents feel it is absolutely necessary for their children to make the most of the educational opportunities they have Therefore many put pressure on their children to achieve excellent results at school. One of the members of our research team was conscious of that pressure when she wrote, 'I have found that right through my schooling my parents have expected a lot of me, study-wise'. We found the reason for her parents regarding education so highly was the fact that education was considered as a very important part of life in the place where her parents had been brought up. 'Because Singapore is one of many Asian countries where to get somewhere you must excel in your studies and value your education, my parents have grown up with that train of thought'. Similar reasons were given by another student who told us, 'My parents, for certain reasons, were unfortunate not to receive any education at all, so it's quite easy to understand why they push me so hard to do well at school'.

While interviewing the person who made this statement we were also able to realise that despite great expectations from her parents about doing well at

school, she also had the duty of completing many chores at home: 'At home I am expected to clean, do the washing, make tea, and fit in my homework and study as well. And then despite all that I am expected to achieve outstanding results at school!'

While talking to this person it was not difficult to detect the resentment she felt towards her parents for putting so much pressure on her: 'My parents constantly kept reminding me of the fact that since they didn't have an education, I should make sure that I make the most of mine'.

Remembering back to the start of school when she was unable to speak a word of English, one member of our research team explained to us that it was an enormous task to just pick up the English language, let alone go through school being at the top of the class like her parents expected her to. 'Sometimes being unable to achieve good marks, I felt in a way that I was letting my parents down', she said.

Why are migrant parents more serious about education than Australian parents? Surely Australian parents want the best for the children too?

We found that it was mainly because migrant parents were often unfortunate not to have had a good education themselves, or else to have lived in a country where education was valued greatly, that they seem better able to understand that education is a very important part of life. They realise that if their children wish to succeed in the future, then education is actually the road to a good career. They seem to know more clearly that people with an education actually have many more opportunities open to them and are more likely to be able to achieve their goals.

Recommendation

Discussing this issue between ourselves we all agreed that although migrant parents are stricter about their children's education, this strictness actually pays off and is an advantage to students. Many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds seem to achieve very good results when compared to Anglo-Australian children who aren't under pressure to achieve.

However, we were also able to see that many problems are created within migrant families because of the pressure exerted by parents upon their children to achieve high standards at school. Our conclusion is that there is nothing that can be really done about this other than to arrange more meetings between parents and teachers to discuss the progress of their children, and for teachers to inform parents more frequently about the school's system. If parents can understand the standard their children are expected to be at, they will not have unreasonable expectactions. Despite some bad effects, the pressure put on the students by their parents means that parents do provide the motivation for the student to excel.

Issue 5 Identity crises

From reading our team's personal histories, we discovered that a number of us went through an identity crisis, for a period of time. This means there was a time when we were unsure of who we were and to which culture we belonged. As one person stated (and this also explains what the other girls experienced as well), 'I was really insecure because I was confused as to what I was ...

A question we found very interesting (one which we had many heated discussions about!) was, 'DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE AN AUSTRALIAN OR THE NATIONALITY OF YOUR PARENTS?' This question we found very thought-provoking, but to some of us answering it resulted in even more confusion. All the girls in our research team were born in Australia, although their parents were born overseas. For some this automatically decided the answer to who they were for them; 'I'm an Australian because I was born here'.

However there are those whose home life is traditionally ethnic; they speak a different language, eat different foods, live life the way that their parents did, and are not adapting so readily to the Australian way of life. They strongly believe that they are the nationality of their parents. There was one boy who considered himself to be a 'new Australian' although he was born here. Others argued with him, saying it was only his parents who should be considered 'new Australian' because they were the ones who actually migrated to Australia.

Many students have different reasons and different beliefs about: when someone should be considered an Australian. But, we found that it is not just a matter of <u>your</u> considering yourself an Australian. It also depends on other <u>people</u> treating you as if you are Australian. So the way others regard you also affects your beliefs about your nationality. Ingrid believes herself to be Australian; she was born here, lives the Australian way of life, has an Australian accent and even has a name which is quite common in Australia. However, she also has very distinctive Asian looks and consequently she is often treated as someone who is not Australian. This has had the effect of making her very confused and insecure: 'I used to wonder all the time about what People thought of me for being a different colour'.

An identity crisis can come about as a result of other people's treatment of you; but it can also depend on the way you regard your own culture. The parents of one boy we interviewed forced their culture on him, he felt, although he was Australian born. This resulted in his rejecting his parents' culture in favour of the Australian way of life. Many students who are in the same situation of belonging to two worlds also find that they experience a good deal of insecurity and confusion. In her personal history Alexandra

related an incident that caused an identity crisis for her: 'I was told at school one day that I was "Australian" because this was my birth place. I arrived home ... and made an Australian flag . . and thinking that I finally belonged, I proclaimed I was an Australian I was told to stop my celebration because I was part of our family, who were all Italian. I denied this, arguing I was different because I was born here But I was back to square one. Who was I now? Here I had friends and teachers telling me I was an "Aussie", and my family saying I was Italian!'

Alexandra is just one example of an identity crisis experienced by a student with.a non-English-speaking background. Happily, many ethnic students who have been in this situation find that it is not a permanent feeling. Some find that towards the end of primary school they come to a decision about their identity. As one student discovered, 'As I moved on to Grades 5 and 6, I was more confident and more sure of my identity as a Croatian'.

Other students find that their confusion is still unrelieved by the time they reach secondary school. We were encouraged to find after talking with the other Year 10 students in the research project, that almost all Of them had come to terms with their background and had decided which way of life they felt they belonged to. Some felt more Australian, others more ethnic.

Recommendations

We believe that there is not much others can do to help a person who is going through an identity crisis. It is such a purely personal thing. However we did find that in some cases friends and the school environment have significantly affected students' beliefs about what they are. We think discussions would help, especially discussions on the question (directed to ethnic students), 'Do you consider yourself to be an Australian or the nationality of your parents?' and, 'When do you consider a person to be Australian?' This second question especially would give Anglo-Australian students a chance to put forward their opinions about Australian nationality and being Australian.

Many ethnic parents are also inclined to keep their young children at home right until the time they have to attend primary school. This can present huge problems for their children. The reasons for keeping children at home are varied. For example: 'My parents didn't send me to kindergarten because they thought that I might forget how to speak Croatian', said one student.

Parents who keep their children at home don't seem to realise how essential it is for their young children to learn English at an early stage so that they will then have less trouble with the English language when they start primary school.

Instead of keeping a child at home, as some parents do, they should be attending a pre-school, even if only for a few hours each week. The children can then become slowly accustomed to the new way of life, and so feel more comfortable and confident when they attend primary school.

It isn't only young children starting school who are faced with language problems, but also older students now arriving in Australian from Vietnam, Kampuchea and other Asian countries. These students face many huge problems with their school-work because of their inability to speak English. It is not because they are not intelligent that they find school beyond them; lack of English is their problem. In the words of a Malaysian student: 'Every day I found myself in difficulty because I couldn't understand what they (teachers) were saying'. Liking is also related to language, as one Vietnamese student knows; 'Some of the students don't like me because I can't speak properly' was his sad comment.

Sometimes students can't really communicate very well at all with anybody who does not speak their own language. So they only associate with other students who have the same ethnic background. Understandably most of the time they are together, they speak their own language among themselves.

Issue 6 Language barriers

Language barriers are one of the greatest disadvantages of having a non-English-speaking background.

Many children with non-English-speaking backgrounds face the first year of primary school unable to speak English properly. In some cases, students can speak no English at all. This creates a mixture of fear and confusion in the minds of young ,children. When one student confessed, 'I had great difficulties in communicating with the other children and with the teachers in particular ... I felt so very alone and afraid', she was expressing an experience that many small children know too well Maria's reflection on starting school unable to speak any English at all exemplifies that trial; 'I can easily say that my year in Prep was the worst year of my school life. I remember I would sit still during my classes trying desperately to comprehend what it was that my teacher was saying to us. What really bothered me though was the fact that this teacher didn't seem overly concerned about me at all, she offered me no help at all, and most of the time I had to work out on my own just what it was that I had to do next. I was on my own a lot'.

It is because English is often not spoken in an ethnic student's home environment, that difficulties are created for students . One of our team remembered the trouble she had learning to read: 'I would get behind with my reading as there was nobody at home who could really help me each night'. We

have found that many young children face the same problem of not having anyone at home who can help them with their school work. It is not difficult to see why it takes more time for children to learn the English language if they are unable to speak it at home as well as at school.

A particular incident related by a Vietnamese student in his personal history illustrates the crippling difficulties many non-English speakers face at school:- 'I couldn't speak English so I could only use my hands to draw in order to tell them things and to make them understand me'.

Many of the students we interviewed also experienced the task' of haying to be a translator for their parents at some stage or another. Many found it boring, time consuming, and above allemberrassing.

Despite the many language problems faced in primary School most of the students we interviewed believed that it was an advantage to have a second language. Here's a representative expression of that point of view: 'I- feel that it's a great advantage to have a second language, you undertand what it's like for other people with a second language, and more importantly, your second language can help you if you wish to go on to further education'.

Recommendation

After discussing this issue we feel that there are quite a few things that can be changed to help students in primary and secondary school who are experiencing English language difficulties.

Language classes should be made available for both parents and children. These should be taught by a teacher who speaks the parents' own language. Ethnic children should also be encouraged to speak about their culture, and to bring pictures, photos, dolls in national costume, music, etc. to school to stimulate discussion. A few simple words in different community languages could be taught to students with English-speaking backgrounds so that ethnic children feel their culture is accepted and that it is not completely alien to their fellow classmates. 'Students should be taught not to be ashamed of their language and culture.

Teachers should try to spend more time with migrant children who are having language problems. Improving their English should be a high priority, so that these students will not have to encounter great difficulties in furthering their education.

Non-English-speaking students arriving in Australian secondary schools should be immediately provided with crash courses in English. Again these should be taught by teachers who speak English, as well as the students' own language.

Where that is not possible, students should be taught to speak English by experienced teachers of English as a Second Language. This should happen for at least some months before those students go on with their normal studies. This way, they will have a better knowledge of English and so they will encounter fewer problems with their normal school studies.

Issue 7 Greater understanding of different lifestyles

One of the positive effects that their ethnic background has on non-English-speaking students, is to create open-mindedness and an ability to accept, more easily than others, people and their cultures who are different to one's own. We found ethnic students believing '... ethnic people to be more tolerant of other races and less prejudicedl(towards them).

In our own case we believe it is a result of being ethnic ourselves, and knowing what it is like being different from Anglo-Australians, that we are able to appreciate other people. One student put it in these words; 'I know what it's like to be discriminated against and what it feels like to be a victim of prejudice. Many Australians don't understand this'. From the prejudice we all have experienced we have found that '... an important thing you learn is to respect different people with different ideas and different ways of life' and that you also understand that just because they are different it doesn't mean that they are "bad"'. We found, on the other hand, that many Anglo-Australians are constantly 'having a go' at ethnics because they are 'different' to themselves. As a result, Anglo-Australian students try to make others ashamed, embarrassed and inadequate, simply because they are different. This is discrimination.

Despite being the victims of prejudice, most of the students involved in this project believe that it is an advantage to be a student with a non-English-speaking background. Why? Because your background broadens your outlook on life and your appreciation of people in general. Your understanding and acceptance of 'other people is easier when you have seen and lived a different way of life.

A common opinion expressed by most students with non-English-speaking backgrounds[4] when asked about being ethnic in Australia, was, 'You get the best of both worlds'.

Issue 8 Pride and shame

There are times when we, as students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, have felt proud of our culture. But there are also times when we

have been ashamed. Below we have made a collection of quotations from personal histories, interviews, videos, and discussions which relate instances of pride and shame experienced by ethnic students.

...when we had a culture day at school, when kids from different backgrounds had to bring their national dishes, I was really proud

- I felt I had an identity...

... I used to get embarrassed, such as when we'd watch documentaries about dark people - Aborigines for example.

While dancing on the night of the concert I was never more proud of my nationality. I saw the enthusiasm and interest of the audience .. I would never forget that moment.

There were times when I was really ashamed to admit that I was Croatian.

Now my friends envy me and my 'everlasting suntan'.

... I would talk about gatherings we attended out of school, for example, what we did at the Polish Club. Or I would use the odd Polish or Yugoslav word in my everyday conversation. And I admit this still happens and I feel quite embarrassed when it does.

- I was teased ... in the higher primary grades ... by a particular boy ... who ... expected me to be ashamed of being Italian and he was quite shocked to discover I was not.

I felt especially proud whenever I was told by my teachers and by other students that I was lucky to have a second language.

At times I was ashamed of having a different background and parents who came from another country.

... teachers ... had trouble pronouncing my name. I would dread roll call time.

... embarrassed whenever he was 'caught' taking salami sandwiches to school.

I helped organise the Italian dance . . I felt proud . .

They made fun of my lunch.

A recent embarrassment to me has been all the Italians who have been involved in the drug trafficking ... An Australian girl . thought that heroin and the trafficking of it, all began in Italy.

- I have hairier arms and legs than my Aussie friends.

- I felt honoured when a discussion about migrants came up ...

- I ... noticed that my favourite dress was very different to the other children's dresses.

I had never noticed that my mum had an accent, but today it showed out like a sore toe.

... I fell in love with being Dutch.

Concluding quotes made by the Clonard Research Team

In the past few weeks, I have become more aware and more proud of my ethnic background. Australia is my family's home and where I belong. Even though I am not among other members of our family there is happiness to be found and wonderful times ahead if you want to find them.

Vicki Dekleva

I consider myself an Italian ... I feel I am very Australian in many of my veins and in many of the things I do, but despite this fact I'll always be Italian and I will always want to be.

Rosetta Salvo

I think it is a definite advantage to have an ethnic background. Sure, it has its ups and downs but in the long run you learn so much more about life and people. I am certain that I have learnt a lot from experiencing living in two cultures, and I am prouct of my background and always will be.

Brunella Bernardi

I love being an Australian and I love the Australian lifestyle, but I also think it's an advantage to know what it's like to come from a migrant family and to know what its like to live in a different culture ... I am proud to be both Croatian as well as Australian.

Maria Brdar

Although I haven't had any discriminatory experiences, I still get hurt; and so I can imagine what others went through. That's why I am very willing to help others and to try to assist them to help themselves to live as God wants us to live, in unity and harmony.

Pauline Hendriks

I feel no shame now for having an Asian background;in fact I am very proud to have a different background. I find that it gives me an identity. At times I have found that it is not easy looking Singaporean and being Australian but when I think of it now, I really would not want to be anything else.

Ingrid Wilson

As we live in this compound of cultures, I am proud and happy to be an Italian, living the Australian way of life surrounded by a vast web of nationalities, each diverse, but as special and compound as the others.

Alexandra Abba

Carlo Technical School Student Research Team report

Effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

David Dobar
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December, 1984.

Introduction

The information we needed for this report was obtained by talking amongst ourselves and sharing our own experience, by talking to the members of other schools' research teams, and by interviewing students in our own school and one of the other schools involved in the research project.

These are the main effects which this report is meant to highlight.

Students with a non-English-speaking background:

- are often teased about the way they look;
- are often teased about their names, and have their names mispronounced;
- frequently feel they need to 'put up a front' to hide their background, and frequently feel embarrassed because of their origins;
- have to put up with people who want to put 'ethnics' down because of their background;
- experience English language problems because of their lack of familiarity with English;
- often have stricter parents;
- are occasionally embarrassed by teachers;
- are sometimes expected to be good at some sports, but not at others;
- are sometimes confused about whether they are ethnic or Australian.

Teasing

One of the main things we noticed was the amount of teasing ethnic students have to put up with. What you look like, your clothes and appearance, the colour of your skin, can all lead to teasing. You can be singled out for all sorts of reasons: As Damir put it, 'If you have a big nose, you're a wog. If you have dark skin, you're a wog. If you dress unusually, you're a wog. People wrongly judge people on their appearance and jump to the wrong conclusions.'

Here's another interesting statement that was made during one of the video-taped interviews. It also shows the importance of the way people look: 'I can just look at you and tell you're not Australian by looking at your face. You haven't got an Australian face.'

While not all our team would say that being teased about what you look like, about your name, your nationality, and so on, is a really outstanding problem at Corio Tech., we all agree that it does occur. Some of us, however, regard the way ethnics are put down as the cause of a great deal of hurt and the worst thing about our school. When someone is caught putting ethnics down, the offender is usually obliged to report to a teacher. The principal goes around saying, 'Respect all your fellow students', and most of the time

the students listen. The ones who don't listen usually get into trouble and at times, their parents are informed.

We feel that the principal should make it known to all members of the school that everyone is to be treated the same, no matter what he or she looks like. Teachers should continue what they're doing to protect students who are harmed by prejudice, and the school council should look into this matter more closely to see what's really going on in the school. Finally, we think the student council should consider writing a bill of rights to emphasise its support for ethnic students and their rights.

Difficulties with names

Another thing that causes teasing is uncommon names. And, in addition, too often people pronounce unusual names wrongly.

Names are mispronounced by teachers over the P.A. system at school, at roll call, or when they are talking to you personally. Later on other students laugh at you because of this. Adam has a point-of-view about the problems students have with their non-English names. He asks: 'Why is it that people think it's okay to pronounce your name wrongly when if we did that to them they would get all upset and would blast our heads off?'

We believe that it's a person's right to have his or her name spelt correctly and said correctly, and we know it can become very annoying if it is constantly done wrongly.

There is only one solution to this problem. The solution is that every time someone pronounces your name wrongly, you should correct him or her. Don't just leave it at that because it will happen over and over again. People should also listen more carefully when you say your name. If they do say it wrongly, they should at least say they are sorry and ask how it should be said.

When it comes to your appearance, don't worry about what people say. People who think that all wogs have big noses or dark skin are wrong. They should shut their eyes to what others look like, find out what these people are like on the inside, and think more about their feelings.

Hiding ethnic backgrounds

One of the things that occurs, and it is not unusual, is that people try to hide their background. Some students seem worried that if they are found out by their friends to have a migrant background, they won't be accepted any longer.

We believe students should not try to hide what they are. They should come out of their shell and feel proud to be ethnic. Teachers should tell students the values of being ethnic, and help them feel proud.

There is one problem with this advice though. The problem occurs when students with a non-English-speaking background say it's a disadvantage, and not an advantage, to be different. When that happens, teachers and parents together have to encourage students to feel better about their origins, and get through to them the advantages of having a non-English-speaking background. But there is still another stopping block to be overcome before this can happen; the attitudes of other students who don't really care enough about their ethnic peers. The evidence we have collected indicates that if you have a non-English-speaking background, you are likely to be treated differently to everybody else at school. You are not as much a part of the gang as everybody else, more of an outsider. Students often don't make ethnics feel really at home at school. The point is that some Australians regard ethnics as outsiders because of the way they live. They do have different traditions to Aussies, but it's our view that they deserve just as much respect as any other person All Australians who were born in Australia should strive to see how the other half lives, and then give them the respect and protection they deserve.

Corradina's feeling that not being accepted as one of the gang (or being regarded as a genuine part of the school community) because you have an ethnic background 'is one of the worst things that can happen to you', is not exclusively hers. Others feel the same way. Sometimes they try to hide their background, sometimes they consider changing their name, and sometimes they wished they looked more like 'conventional' Australians.

Something should be done to overcome the problem of students feeling they have to hide that they have an ethnic background. At our school, no-one really has taken any initiatives to make ethnics feel proud about their background, and not much has been done to make them come out of their shell. The principal, the students, and the school council, all should get together to organise an ethnic day, or something along those lines¯, as a start to bringing Anglo students and ethnics closer together. Before organising such a day, however, the organisers should remember that being embarrassed about your background may explain why there aren't any ethnic days at this school. If this is so, the staff first has to encourage ethnic students to come out of their shell and assist themselves. At the same time, teachers should protect students with non-English-speaking backgrounds from those who would tease, embarrass, and insult them.

Language barriers

One other thing that does create very real problems for ethnic students is the language barrier. Language is an important part of every person's

everyday life, and if you don't know the English language, you are unlikely to succeed in this society. This problem faces many new Australians and their children'.

New Australians from, say, Vietnam, can come into a school without knowing a word of English. If teachers feel that they can't do anything about helping non-English speakers, the danger is that those students will drift to the back of the classroom. Then, because they can't speak English well, they are likely to end up without an adequate education.

This is an important issue right now as more new Australians from places like Vietnam, Cambodia, Lebanon and Turkey, are coming to this country each year. The problem will continue as long as we have nothing to offer these people to help them to improve their English so that they can communicate better. We wonder why it is that few schools bother to take enough time to help these people.

We believe our schools should be able to offer these people something worthwhile to help them *prove their English. All schools should offer the right sort of English classes to enable students, who do not speak English when they arrive at school, to learn the language.

We also found that even ethnic students who speak English fairly well can experience problems, especially if they have to use their ethnic language (for example, to translate for their parents when the parents have to come up to the school for an interview or to pick up a report). At times students get confused when translating, and they often feel embarrassed in this situation if they are seen by friends. Students should recognise that there is nothing to be embarrassed about in speaking another language, and there is nothing wrong with getting to use their community language at school.

Where they are needed, schools should hire translators for the days that parents are required at school. Students should also be encouraged to speak their other language so that more of them feel comfortable about using alternatives to English.

We also learned that speaking English at school and another language at _home, can create additional problems. It can create a barrier between students and their families, it means you get less help with homework, and it can also cause some embarrassing situations when friends are brought home.

Stricter parents

Some people we spoke to regarded having stricter parents as a drawback. For most ethnic students having strict parents is a way of life. It means they are not allowed to go on school camps, not allowed to go out with friends, always being told what to do, and having to do well in school - or

else! Always having your parents on your back is often regarded as a burden other Australians do not have to carry.

Students talked about resenting their parents and wanting to refuse to do what they are told. Some said they hated having their parents on their backs and wished their parents were different, and more like everyone else's.. One of the students we interviewed, one who feels she has stricter parents, says she often asks herself, ',Why do my parents have to always be stricter than everyone else's?', and 'How come my friends can go out, but I can't?'

Students who feel their parents are strict regard themselves as being faced with different standards at school than at home. The school's standards are set according to the average Australian family's standards, not those of ethnic families. One result of this is that students who are forced to go to ethnic outings or to language classes are usually teased and pointed out by their friends. That makes them feel different, when they are trying to be one of the crowd.

In our opinion people should not be teased when what their parents think is best for them is not the same as the rest of the community.

Embarrassment

Yet another thing that makes life in school different for ethnic students is the problems teachers cause by embarrassing students in front of their friends. This is not always intentional, such as when students are sitting in class and a teacher asks them to tell the class what it is like to have an ethnic background.- But when everyone laughs at you in those situations, it makes you feel small.

We find it hard to understand why it should have to be an embarrassment to have an ethnic background, and we can't see why students are permitted to laugh at people with ethnic backgrounds. We think people should be encouraged to speak up and be proud of their background; they should not be laughed at and made to feel ashamed of their cultural origins.

Sport and stereotyping

In Australian schools sport is a major part of the curriculum. It also invites stereotyping, as many of our interviewees told us. Because of their background and culture, students are often supposed to be good at sports that come from that country and not so good at other sports. Students can be left out of games their friends are playing, such as Australian Rules football, because people assume they are good at soccer, but not at Aussie Rules. Adam was a victim of this sort of discrimination. In his personal history he wrote:

> When I was in primary school I was expected to be good at soccer, when the fact is, I can't even play soccer. I would be left out of games of Aussie Rules by teachers and students alike. They may have thought that I was not offended but I was. When it came to the crunch I was much better at football than most of these so called 'Australians'.

Confused identity

'What am I?' is a question that worries many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. For many, the most important and crucial point about having a non-English-speaking background is that you don't know what your identity is. Not knowing if you should be classified as an Australian, an Italian, a Croatian, or whatever, is confusing because you are classified as an Australian by your friends, but as a 'wog' by others. It is hard to know who you are. People are not clear that being born here makes them an Australian. Because they have an ethnic background they are called 'wogs', and it's hard for students to decide if a '"wog" can also be an Aussie'.

Students can become confused by their friends' and parents' different attitudes. Their friends want them to be more Australian than ethnic; but their parents want them to be more ethnic and to resist becoming Australianised. Pressure from both sides creates real tensions for the student who is in the middle, and many students feel angry about their treatment. When we asked one student about identity issue she replied: 'It doesn't matter what country you come from, you should be treated the same as any other person, Australian or otherwise.'

While we agree with those sentiments, we know that many .others act as if they do not.

Geelong West Technical School Research Team report

Effects of the school system on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of their experiences at school on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. We concentrated mainly on the question: Does it make a difference to have a non-English-speaking background? The student research team at Geelong West Technical School worked on this project for three months. We gathered information from videos we made, discussions we had with students in our own school and other schools, and personal histories of our own experiences. We have compiled a summary of all the information we have collected and it is contained in this report.

3 Communication is a problem

There are many problems faced by students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Oneof these problems is especially severe for students who have only recently arrived in Australia. It is the problem of not being able to communicate with friends and teachers because of lack of understanding of the English language. This problem raises the issue of why there are not more E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) classes in schools for students who are in desperate need of them.

When we spoke to a Vietnamese student and asked him if it makes a difference to have a non-English-speaking background, this is what he replied:

> I cannot understand what my teacher is saying because I cannot understand English very good.

Another student told us of similar problems he was having when he wrote:

> Everyday I found myself in difficulty because I couldn't understand what they were saying. When the teacher told me to do something I just looked at him blank faced; I didn't know what he was going on about.

Students who don't understand English adequately are seriously disadvantaged. However knowing English and another language is a different proposition. As one of our team recognises:

> Having two languages has helped me meet a wider number of people. have discovered we have many things in common.

So coming from a different background really can be an advantage when you know two languages, one of which is English. But it is difficult when students

first came to Australia and cannot understand anything because they are unfamiliar with English.

The student research team at West Tech. has thought a lot about this effect, and we think schools should do more to provide E.S.L. Classes for students who have just come to Australia because they really need it if they want to go on to further schooling.

This English language problem is one which a member of our team has experienced personally because he is Vietnamese. He has been able to help us appreciate how hard it is for him to understand English. When we think about, quotations we have recorded during our conversations with him, such as:

> I have more problems with formal tests/exams because of my non-English speaking background.'
>
> Students like me should be given more time when they have to do an exam which has a lot of reading in it.
>
> I need extra help to explain the meaning of these (exam) questions.

We realise not only what he is up against, but also why it is that other Vietnamese, Kampuchean and Malaysian students find school very difficult if their English is not particularly good.

We agree with another of the students we interviewed who said:

> It's not fair. It's too hard to understand when no one is there to help you.

We know that students from non-English-speaking backgrounds are unlikely to proceed right through secondary schooling if they don't speak English well and they can't get the help they need.

We believe there should be more provision made for E.S.L. classes in schools with a large number of students who cannot understand English adequately; these students need to spend more time learning English with the help of specialist teachers if they are to have a chance of succeeding at school.

Not being accepted

Another effect of having a non-English-speaking background is not being accepted by other students in the school. This is very upsetting for students who have just come out to Australia.

> 'Why can't we be accepted for what we are?' one of the students we spoke to asked. 'I don't think I'm any different', he added, 'but people think you're different because you speak a different language and the colour of your skin is different. But I treat everybody the same and I think they should do the same.'

The feeling of not being accepted and not belonging isn't only a problem for new arrivals because another thing we found out was how embarrassing class discussions about immigration policy can be for students with a non-English-speaking background, even when they were born in this country! The subject being discussed is often whether or not we should let migrants come into Australia. Each of us is aware of times when the vote has been clearly against letting migrants come anywhere near Australia. This is what one of us thinks about these sorts of votes:

> How do you think I feel when my own father came from a different country?

If you consider some of the offensive statements made by students in the classroom during these discussions such as: 'Send the chingas back, they're taking our jobs'. 'They're going to invade our schools', 'Send the wogs back, they're job stealers', it seems that many Australians are very racist. Some would rather see Australia without many •of the immigrants it now has. People with these views seem scared that the immigrants will take over all of the jobs.

Teasing is yet another part of not being accepted. Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are repeatedly teased and made fun of. John recalled his feelings about being insulted and teased when he wrote in his personal history:

> They make funny gobbling noises and call us 'horries'. It upsets me because it's not very nice to call people things like 'horrie' or 'Chinaman'. It hurts my feelings just like it must hurt someone who has been called a 'wog'. I hope that one day the same thing will happen to the people who pick on others because of their cultural background. Then they may understand the problems of new comers and experience the feelings of hurt. Students are not the only culprits. Sometimes even teachers make jokes which go too far and are offensive.

Apart from ethnic students having to try to make peoPle who tease them and won't accept them see that we are no different, and being as nice to others as we possibly can so that maybe they will feel guilty and accept us, we think people should work together to try to gain a universal acceptance of individuals. People should work together to try to achieve a universal acceptance of all individuals.

Less freedom

Many students feel that migrant parents are stricter than Australian parents. Our team tends to agree. One effect of having strict parents is that many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are prevented from going on outings arranged by the school. Another is that some ethnic parents will not allow their son/daughter to go out with a girl/boy until a certain age. Here is one of our team's thoughts on strict parents.

> My parents are strict, they don't let me go on school camps for my own good. When it comes to school camps they are definitely voted out Many of the teachers have tried to persuade my parents to let me go, but not one has succeeded. The teachers come up to me and ask me if I can't afford if. This really annoys me. I keep telling the teachers that it is not the money part of it. It is just my parents will not allow me to go on school camps and excursions. I'm not allowed to have a boyfriend either. Probably many students with non-English-speaking backgrounds are the same as me.

When migrant parents are too strict at home, When their kids go to school and try to act tough, they get into trouble. Also the children of those parents who don't let their children go out, are often teased about it. It may help if the school's newsletters were written in the language of the students' parents so that the parents could know what's going on at the school. Then they may be more likely to let their sons and daughters go on excursions and trips.

North Geelong Nigh School Student Research Team report

Effects of schooling on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds

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December 1984

This is a report on what we have done during the previous three months while we were studying the effects of schooling on children with a non-English-speaking background.

This report contains sixteen of the effects we regard as most significant, as well as a number of recommendations which we think provide good advice for schools.

The effects we will discuss have to do with teasing, feeling insecure, sticking together, having a hard time at primary school, getting less help with homework, experiencing a communication gap with parents, having inadequate English, behaving one way at home and another way at school, feeling embarrassed during class discussions about migration, experiencing teacher prejudice, realising what Asian students are up . against, feeling ashamed of one's background, having your name mispronounced, being regarded as better behaved, and living with conflicting Standards.

Effect 1 Teasing

Teasing is a big problem for students with a non-English-speaking background because it makes them feel that other students see them as being 'different'. Teasing hurts and embarrasses the students concerned and results in the creation of a number of other problems affecting their personality, learning, socialising, attitudes and behaviour.

To prevent this issue becoming a larger problem, all students should be taught more about cultural differences so that they gain the understanding that everybody is different in one sense or another, that we are all human, and that people have the right to be treated equally.

Effect 2 Feeling insecure

Many migrant students feel insecure at school and this insecurity is caused by the prejudice they encounter there. We believe that prejudice is the result of ignorance. If it is, it can be cured by developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity among students within our schools.

When students with Anglo-backgrounds know more about, and can better appreciate, other people's backgrounds, there will be less prejudice. And when students with a non-English-speaking background know more about, and can better appreciate, their own roots, they will feel less insecure. Developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity can be achieved by means of

studying in detail at least some of the different community languages, as well as the history, the literature, and the culture of various ethnic groups represented in the school. This form of education will promote better relationships between people with different ethnic origins.

Effect 3 Sticking together

Everybody needs friends and a sense of belonging. Sticking together gives students a sense of belonging, but at the same time it also can foster ignorance. While Australian students stick together, students with a non-English-speaking background stick together, and students remain exclusively within their respective groups to share the sense of being the same, mutual hostility and ignorance are likely. Students who say things such as, 'I like associating with migrants more than Australian children', give 'outsiders' reasons for feeling excluded or left out, and invite similar treatment themselves.

School subjects and activities should also be better designed to promote integration of the various groups. For example, in English classes, debates should concentrate less on divisive issues such as the value of migration, at least where this invites expressions of hostility, prejudice, and ignorance.

Effect 4 Having a hard time at primary school

More than one of the students we spoke to told us that they had more problems at primary school than at high school. Quite a few of the problems that students with non-English-speaking backgrounds have, seem to stem from primary school years. Negative experiences at primary level, we found, often created identity crises for a number of students. Children who are embarrassed and made to feel ashamed of being what they are, have to put on a different identity while at school, because they want so much to be accepted. To overcome these difficulties, cultural awareness and sensitivity should be encouraged at the primary school level by, for example:

1 inviting individuals from various ethnic communities to work in the school to encourage pupil participation in engaging cultural activities,
2 introducing community languages to the school,
3 involving the school in ethnic community activities outside the school.

The ultimate aim of all this is to develop a sense of self-awareness self-confidence, as well as a sense of cross cultural awareness among all pupils at primary level. This sort of curriculum would give young children more self-respect and more respect for others, and this, hopefully, will reduce, and may even eliminate, ethnic prejudice at the secondary level.

Effect 5 Getting less help with homework

We became aware that ethnic students often had many problems with homework. This was largely because their parents couldn't help them because they had little understanding of English. Non-English-speaking parents often feel they are unable to help their children with their homework (both at primary and secondary level), not only because of their lack of English, but also due to their work schedules, their lack of understanding of present-day school curricula, and their own lack of education. Girls, in some families, traditionally have duties to perform around the home and this makes it even more difficult for them to complete their homework.

To alleviate these problems students and parents might be encouraged to make use of special tutoring services which should be made available at minimal costs to low income families. Tutors should be available to go to homes and become familiar with families. At the same time, parents should be encouraged to learn better English and where there are older brothers and sisters, tutors could help develop tutoring skills which would improve opportunities for self-help with homework within families.

Effect 6 Experiencing a communication gap with parents

Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds often have the advantage of knowing another language. However, they also often have the disadvantage of knowing neither English nor their own language well enough. Because English is the language taught to students at school, and because many parents do not know English very well at all, communication barriers are often widened by what happens at school. 'My language is different at home than at school because at school I learn to speak English, and at home I must speak Croatian as that is the only way I can communicate with my parents, as they cannot speak English', is the way one student put that problem. Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds frequently have problems with both their languages. They tend to stick with English for several reasons; it's easier, it's the language of other Australians, and they feel more comfortable with it Parents', on the other hand feel neglected when their children don't want to speak to them in the language they know -best. They feel that their children are drifting away from them when they and their sons and daughters are more comfortable in different languages. This communication gap can be narrowed by:

1 introducing community languages to schools and encouraging them at home via homework. When Stephen Bratanovicius wrote, 'I would like to learn German but I can't because Bell Park Technical School does not have any language classes', he was pointing out both his wish to learn his parents' language, and the practical difficulty he had in doing so;

2 encouraging cross-language tutoring involving parents and students;

3 teaching communication and listening skills to students so they can engage in better communication in the home between themselves and their parents and hopefully create a more positive atmosphere in their homes;

4 encouraging students to help themselves by preparing community language video cassettes on the problems at school faced by children with non-English-speaking backgrounds. These should be viewed by parents (on a loan basis), by other students within the school, and by students in other schools;

5 assigning projects designed to encourage parent-student communication. For example, projects involving talking to parents about their expectations, their standards, their own school days, and the differences between schooling then and now. Generally speaking, parents' experiences should be seen as a resource for student research projects;

6 encouraging feed-back on such projects, which would facilitate the exchange of information and would, in turn, increase awareness and understanding between students and their parents. The school curriculum should aim to bring the school's staff, its parents and its students closer together, and to create better understanding by improved communication.

Effect 7 Having inadequate English makes HSC success unlikely

It is not difficult to agree with the student who said, 'I really think that students who don't know English very well, no matter who they are, are not likely to succeed in senior school and HSC'. Students with a non-English-speaking background are disadvantaged throughout their schooling whenever they have a poor command of English. Their disadvantage becomes progressively worse if they are promoted from one level to the next, despite their poor achievement in English.

Although students may be capable of achieving good results in HSC their potential will never be realised so long as teachers go on ignoring their problems with English.

From their early secondary years students with English problems should be picked up and directed to special remedial classes, preferably during school hours. Promoting poor English students to the next level while their English is below standard, seems to us to be the means of creating further disadvantages for them. When students reach the HSC level, it's hard to know how anybody can expect them to do well if their English is poor.

Special tutoring in the home at low cost to low income families (as outlined previously) should be encouraged at senior levels of secondary schools.

Effect 8 Being poor at English means it's hard to do well in primary school

Going from home to school is an important transition for all children. This transition can be even more difficult when a child is from a non-English-speaking family. This difficulty is less pronounced in those cases where a child has an older brother or sister at a higher level who is able to help him or her at school. Members of our team have personal knowledge of the advantages there are, both in primary and high school, in having an older brother or sister to help with school work. Where the language used at home is different to the language used at school, and where there are no older brothers or sisters capable of helping, students find themselves with a severe handicap. In this sort of situation its so hard to keep up.

If children don't get off to a good start, they are always behind; this is always likely to happen to those children whose mums and dads can't help them with their reading at home or check their written homework, because they themselves have little or no English.

We believe more assistance should be provided for children at primary school with English problems, especially those who are new arrivals. We also think 'parents with pre-schoolers should be encouraged to attend playgroups which provide opportunities for learning English.

Effect 9 Behaving one way at home, and another way at school

Our research team has found that students with a non-English-speaking background often behave differently at school to the way they do at home. This is due to different expectations and standards of behaviour in homes and schools. Parents with non-English-speaking backgrounds were raised in another

- country at a different time, and these differences in their personal history result in certain expectations about their children's behaviour. Their children, however, usually become familiar with different views of their rights and freedom at school. They have, therefore, developed two sets of standards of behaviour. When schools don't comply with parents' expectations, parents usually resent the behaviour, conduct, and standards of discipline accepted by the school. They feel they are battling with their children at home because the school is not strict enough.

In these circumstances students are caught between two standards; the requirements of behaving one way at home and another way at school. In our opinion, schools and parents with ethnic backgrounds should come closer together. They should become familiar with each others' expectations, talk through the difficulties and needs as each group sees them and aim for more mutually acceptable expectations and standards of behaviour. This could take place in meetings with groups of parents of different backgrounds. Schools should try to do away with double standards.

Effect 10 Feeling embarrassed during class discussions about migration

> When we had class discussions on migrants at Geelong West Primary School, all the other migrants would sort of close in and not be heard of. I always got embarrassed and felt ashamed because the teachers would crack a joke about migrants; that really got many students ashamed of themselves.

This is the way one student recalled her feelings about classroom discussions on migration. We feel that steps should be taken to make sure embarrassment does not occur when class discussions about migration, or migrant related issues, are conducted in classrooms. When it does occur it means that students feel negatively about themselves, and therefore may become introverted and quiet.

While we agree that students should be encouraged to speak up on these issues, we also believe that teachers should present the subject in such a way that it does not permit ridicule and offensive laughter. The teacher should control the discussion so that cultural differences are not laughed at. Everyone is different and everyone has the right to be what they are. Discussions should be a means of communication. Communicating requires exchanges of points-of-view, not ridiculing students who have different opinions and perspectives. Those students who overstep the guidelines about respecting the feelings of others and avoiding ridicule, should be made to feel out of place. Guidelines for discussion should emphasise real communication and genuine questions; blocking techniques, ridicule, insensitivity and rudeness should not be tolerated in classrooms.

Effect 11 Experiencing of teacher prejudice

There is some evidence among our findings that suggests prejudice by teachers. Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds appear to believe that their treatment, on occasions, by some class teachers, amounts to expressions of prejudice. Students we spoke to believe that prejudice is shown by teachers who:

a ignore them in class by not talking to them as frequently as they talk to other students;
b make jokes about them which are intended to be humourous, but instead hurt;
are always asking them to answer difficult questions; and
d humiliate students who ask questions and make them look stupid.

Whatever the reason for such a negative relationship between students and their teachers, when it happens, students feel neglected and upset. This

inevitably results in below standard achievements, which, in turn, affects their overall education.

Teachers need to be super sensitive; they should be aware of cultural differences and treat students as respected individuals. In cases where it is clearly demonstrated that a teacher has shown discrimination or prejudice, measures should be taken to resolve the issue between the 'student involved and the teacher.

Effect 12 Realising what Asian students are up against.

With the increase in Asian immigration that is now occurring, a more recent issue within our school has to do with the treatment of Asian students. Whereas European students are sometimes seen as an old 'threat', Asian students are seen as a new 'threat'. Some Australians in our schools seem to feel threatened by minority groups. This feeling comes through in the attitude that Asians (who are often shamefully referred to as 'chongs', Ichingasl, and 'harries') are taking over.

To combat this racism, there is an obvious need to gain a better understanding of Australian politics and current affairs, especially Australian migration policy and migrant-related issues. Australian students need to be more aware of life in Asia and the positive effects that the Asian community has had in Australia. Schools should work to eliminate the false beliefs such as the one that Asian migrants are taking others' jobs.

Sensitivity to the problems faced by Asian students should be generated through the school with the help of students of European background, because they are familiar with problems of settling in and not being accepted within the school. This could be done through devising activities to illustrate the problems faced by Asian students. Assistance could be sought from agencies or schools which have organised similar activities, especially those which have ideas that could be applied in classroom situations. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to have their classes attend Asian festivals, restaurants and celebrations, and design follow-up activities, projects, and discussion which promote understanding of Asian cultures.

If that happened, less Asian students would have to say, 'In my country, Cambodia, there were not many different students, but in Australia there is a lot of prejudice against people who.have dark hair and skin and are different in culture', and 'When I'm in Australia, I see a lot of students especially being mistreated Only because they are different in one way'.

Effect 13 Feeling ashamed of one's background

For many students the background they come from can be recognised by distinguishing physical features which are unique to a group of people. At our school the most obvious groups are the Asians (Vietnamese, Malaysians, and Cambodians) Russians, Greeks and Italians. If someone has dark hair, dark skin or other distinguishing features,• she or he is made to feel alien. Through teasing, insults, and name-calling, they are made to feel ashamed of themselves and to resent their parents. Each and everyone of us has physical features which are different and which make us unique and individual. It is not a bigger nose or the differently shaped eyes that is the issue; the issue is being ethnic, and the problem is racism and prejudice. The sickness that has be cured is the ignorance that exists. Schools need more subjects which include topics relevant to migrant issues.

Teachers should promote positive human values; they should involve students in cross-cultural studies which stress the heritage, and the beauty of the heritage, of the country being studied. Then students with family connections to those countHes can feel proud and privileged to know who they are, and where their roots are. They must be encouraged to be themselves and to be proud of it. They should not feel obliged to conform to another image simply to please others and be absorbed into the Aussie culture.

Effect 14 Having your name mispronounced

Names, like physical features,are distinguishing, but our research shows that unfamiliar names can also create unpleasant incidents for students with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Having to put with 'wog' and 'chong' and other labels given to people with non-English-speaking backgrounds is bad enough. But when your name, and surname in particular, is different to the common 'Tommy Smith' and 'Terry Jones', you also have to put up with mispronounciation, and repetitive mispronounciation at that, mis-spelling, and nick-names, and be good at laughing-off mistakes. This is irritating.

Teachers should set an example by getting the records straight at the start of the year. Writing students' names correctly in the roll, and then writing beside each name the way it would be pronounced if English spelling was used, is one simple strategy for ensuring that students' names are not mangled.

Students should be encouraged to maintain their names and not cut them short merely to please others who appear too lazy to make the effort to become familiar with names they have not seen before. Names and their origins and meanings could be studied in class, and this would probably prove interesting even to students with Anglo origins.

Students should be encourage to recognise their individuality. They should not have to strive to be common to the extent that even their names have to be Anglicised.

Effect 15 Being regarded as better behaved

The parents of students with a non-English-speaking background very often have different expectations of their daughters' and sons' behaviour and school performance than do the parents of children with Anglo backgrounds. Because ethnic parents have left behind their homeland to come to Australia to take advantage of the better opportunities Australia provides for their children, they expect their children to go to school to learn diligently, behave properly and obey their teachers' instructions. Where these children live up to their parents' expectations they are looked upon as being 'goodies' by other students who are not expected to behave in the same way, or to be as conscientious about their school work.

Conflict often arises when students who are seen by their classmates to be better behaved, also achieve better results. Then a different form of name-calling arises, and students are called 'teachers pets', 'crawlers', etc. The implication is that their good behaviour is the reason for their good results; their hard work, application and diligent study is simply denied.

We believe that stricter control is needed in our classrooms so that there are more better behaved students. This will promote a positive and healthy learning environment. Those students who upset classes should be punished severely enough- to deter others from doing the same thing. Students who insist on disrupting classes need to be removed from those classes.

Effect 16 Living with conflicting standards

Parents who are born in another country differ greatly from their children who are born and raised here, in Australia. Parents born in another country also find many differences when they bring their children who were born overseas to Australia. Either way, change from one country to another brings about many changes and problems. Culture shock for the parents is a very painful experience. They have to learn to adjust to a new way of life, yet the old ways are still very much with them, and valued by them. They are living in Australia and yet they do not feel themselves to be Aussies. Many feel what their children feel at school; they are regarded as outsiders who do not really belong in this country.

Some ethnic parents are hostile towards other Australians and reject the idea of their children having Australian friends. We believe that the

children of ethnic parents are usually less prejudiced than their parents, but when their parents prefer them to make their friends among those with the same ethnic background, it's not easy to resist their parents' prejudices.

We know that our parents' upbringing, their past experiences in their home country, their past experiences on arriving in Australia, and their later years here, all provide reasons for their thinking the way they do. Change is likely to come about only gradually. The children of these adults can help themselves and their parents by not pushing issues, and by trying gently to promote understanding of others in their homes.

Teachers can help promote greater understanding by encouraging discussion in the classroom aimed at helping students realise that their parents only want the best for their children. Teachers should point out the consequences of confrontation or rebelling against one's up-bringing, and they should try to help students think of ways of modifying situations without causing conflict.

Counselling, either individually or in group sessions, should be encouraged to help students analyse family relationships. Students with non-English-speaking backgrounds often feel so 'out of it' that the way they cope with conflicting standards is by rejecting their families' standards because that means being accepted.

Conclusion

Our research into the effects of schools on students with non-English-speaking backgrounds convinces us that from the early years of pre-school right through to the senior years of secondary school, students with non-English-speaking background have too many negative experiences. We have, in the course of speaking with students with various ethnic backgrounds, realised that there are many issues which occur in their everyday school lives. These issues should be resolved. While they remain unresolved, schools are discouraging the integration of the many cultures within our community. They are in fact promoting prejudice and segregation.

Ignorance and prejudice do not promote education; and ignoring the problems students have with English does not either. Serious thought must be given to improving the English language skills of students with non-English-speaking backgrounds because their entire education depends on being competent with English.

Principals, teachers, and students need to work together to improve communication between parents and schools because parental involvement in schools, the understanding parents have of the educational process and their

ability to help their children, is very limited at present. When parents and school staff have a better relationship, they can work more closely together to improve the education, well being, and acceptance of ethnic children within our schools. Schools should be a better reflection of parents' expectations; this can be achieved by bringing the school and parents together more frequently.

Our schools, from the very early years, need to encourage students to be proud of being themselves, and to be proud of their heritage. They should guarantee that students respect themselves and respect other nationalities, colours and creeds. So that students become more familiar with their own heritage and the heritage of others in the school, schools need to do more to enable students to become aware of current and historical issues involving migrants; students have to be more aware of Australian politics and migration policy and to be more aware of, and more sensitive to, the human issues that confront newcomers to this country.

Prejudice and discrimination are not healthy in a multi-cultural society. This social illness needs to be cured, and a good place to start is in schools..

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