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Teachers investigating cultural interactions in schools

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TEACHERS INVESTIGATING CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN SCHOOLS

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by

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SUMMARY

This case study is a description of a research project of teachers investigating the cultural interactions in their schools.

It is a study of the management of a research project, how the teachers undertook the research and it highlights issues relating to investigating cultural interactions.

The project involved, at the beginning a group of six teacher-researchers, in three schools, who investigated the cultural interactions in their schools. Each teacher-researcher was selected for their personal commitment and understanding of multiculturalism or Aboriginal education. Each one set their own research question and made decisions about data collection, analysis and interpretation.

As the project evolved many changes occurred including the fact that three of the researchers did not complete the writing up of their research. As two of these were the only ones investigating interactions for Aboriginal students I met with a group of Aboriginal Education Workers and Aboriginal Resource Teachers to record their stories about cultural
interactions in schools.

Although the study examined one group of teachers it has implications for the management of other research projects especially where teachers are the researchers and where cultural interactions are examined.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This introduction includes background information about how the study was established and an overview of the research project which is the subject of the study.

BACKGROUND

In 1987 when I was Project Officer for the Multiculturalism in Education Unit of the South Australian Education Department's Studies Directorate, I had the unique opportunity of exploring a number of issues critical to education in South Australian schools.

The South Australian Education Department had in recent years been reorganised into seven Directorates; five Area Directorates (Adelaide, Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western), a Resources Directorate (including a Personnel Section) and a Studies Directorate (including subject specific and equity specific Units with the role of developing policy and curriculum for the Education Department in consultation with Areas).

My duties in the Multiculturalism in Education Unit...
led to involvement with a group of educators in the Northern Area who had evidence that racism existed in the Area schools, and that racist attitudes and behaviour seriously affected the educational opportunities of many students. This group, the Northern Area Multiculturalism in Education (NAMIE) committee, established a Racism Working Party to undertake further research in the field of racism and decided to examine cultural interactions in schools, in particular. They applied for support funds from the Area Professional Development Program to release teachers from schools to take part in the project.

I took on the role of coordinator of the project because of my position as a centrally located project officer in multiculturalism. Also, my position had formal links with the Education Department’s centrally based Anti-Racism Policy Coordinating Committee established to develop an Anti Racism Policy. My experience in the related fields of Aboriginal Education and Education of Girls and my exploration of the relevant literature helped focus my concerns and those of the teacher-researchers.

As coordinator I was not able to pursue totally my own interests as I designed the research, being bound by the working party framework and the funds available. However, through negotiation with the
committee and the participants I was able to develop a collaborative research project whereby teachers could investigate cultural interactions in their own school situations.

The research proposal which was accepted by the committee outlined a focus on cultural interactions in three schools to be undertaken by teachers based in those schools. I chose a teacher-as-researcher model of research because I believe teachers have more accurate knowledge and understanding of their situations, because it would provide professional development for them and because I believe that it is an empowering method.

I then negotiated with the committee, the schools and the teacher-researchers to examine the processes involved in undertaking the research. I outlined the ways I would collect information about the management of research projects and about teachers as researchers, their behaviour, their insights and their problems.

I negotiated my roles and responsibilities as coordinator/manager of the project and as researcher. Firstly as manager I would convene meetings and conferences, focus the teacher-researchers' attention on the literature about cultural interactions, guide
their decisions about research methodologies, suggest
options, provide group sessions for them to share
ideas, confirm and check their responses, guide their
report writing, and develop dissemination strategies
through Area and Central structures to schools and
policy making groups. As documenter of the processes
I would tape the meetings and conferences, interview
the teacher-researchers at particular times throughout
the project, and analyse any material written by the
teacher-researchers.

The teacher-researchers' roles and responsibilities
were also clearly outlined. As researchers they were
to negotiate their foci, set their goals, negotiate
ways of operating, gather data, check their
interpretations and write up their findings. As
members of a project they were expected to work with
another teacher-researcher in their school, meet with
the other teacher-researchers from the other schools
and meet with me on a regular basis. As participants
in my documentation of the project management and of
the functions of teacher-researchers they were asked
to reflect throughout the process on the project and
their own processes. So this thesis emerged as a case
study of my management of a complex research project
in which teachers jointly investigated cultural
interactions in schools.

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The purpose of such a study was to explore ways of getting information that would shape policy and practice at various levels within an education system.

OVERVIEW

This overview gives details of the research project which is the subject of this thesis. It describes the timeline, the participating schools and teacher-researchers. It then outlines the teacher-researchers' research questions, plans and findings.

TIMELINE

Term One, 1987

Researchers and schools were selected from the South Australian Northern Area schools. A meeting involving the researchers and facilitators was held where I presented the overall research plan.

Term Two

The researchers met again to set their research questions, work out ways of collecting their data and to negotiate meeting times with me. The research was undertaken with my support through regular school visits.
Term Three

The researchers were released from schools for one day to write up their research findings.

Term Four

I met with people from the Aboriginal Education section of the Northern Area Office and recorded their descriptions of their experiences of racism in schools.

A report was prepared for publication.

1988

The report of the project Cultural Interactions in Schools was presented to the Northern Area Multiculturalism in Education (NAMIE) Committee and the South Australian Education Department Anti-Racism Coordinating Committee.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

School One

Secondary school covering years eight to twelve

Student population of 972

Students of non English speaking background 117

No Aboriginal students.
School Two
Primary and secondary school covering years reception to twelve
Student population of 938
Students of non English speaking backgrounds 169
Aboriginal students 21

School Three
Primary School covering years reception to seven
Student population of 533
35 students of non English speaking backgrounds
33 Aboriginal students

TEACHER-RESEARCHERS

Three pairs of teacher-researchers took part in the project initially. When the two teacher-researchers who were investigating interactions for Aboriginal students found they could not finish the project I collected information from Aboriginal Education personnel from the South Australian Northern Area.

School One
Maria, year ten-twelve Science teacher, of non English speaking background.
Chris, year eight-nine History/English teacher of Indian origin and English speaking background.
School Two

Rob, a year seven class teacher, year eight Maths /Science teacher and of Italian background. Helen, a teacher of Italian and from an Italian background.

School Three

Eunice, an Aboriginal Education Worker. Terry, a teacher in the Child Parent Centre, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher from reception to year seven and of English speaking background.

Aboriginal Education Unit, Northern Area

Aboriginal Education Workers and Aboriginal Resource teachers from the Education Department's Aboriginal Education Unit.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Maria looked at how schools make students feel. She wanted to know:

How students see themselves.
How welcome the school makes them feel.
How a particular group of students fit into the school environment and why they sit in particular areas.
Chris wanted to know:

How students feel about being called names.
Whether the curriculum caters for students and whether it excludes some.
How teachers of non English speaking backgrounds feel they are viewed by the students.

Rob and Helen wanted to know:

What are the interactions between the students of English speaking backgrounds and the students of non English speaking backgrounds?
What are the interactions between the students of Italian and Greek backgrounds in the yard?

Eunice and Terry wanted to find out about Aboriginal learning styles.

The Aboriginal Education Unit personnel were asked to recall their experiences relating to racism in schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

Each researcher used several methods to answer their research question. These included observations, questionnaires and interviews. Other information was collected to supplement the core data through discussion with other teachers and by examining school
files.

Maria used a questionnaire with twenty year ten girls and boys of non English speaking backgrounds.

Chris undertook case studies of three individual year eight students through a series of interviews and gathered information from school files and from other teachers. He then undertook a curriculum development case study by interviewing some year ten students of non English speaking backgrounds, designing a curriculum project for them to do and by recording the students' reactions to the project.

Rob observed a class doing physical education, maths, science and art. He then used a questionnaire with the same year eight class. This led to a series of interviews with twelve of the year eight class including girls and boys of English and non English speaking backgrounds.

Helen observed a year eight Italian class over several sessions. She used a questionnaire about friendship patterns with the whole class. Then she interviewed five girls from that class including both girls of English and non English speaking backgrounds.

Eunice and Terry observed a group of Aboriginal
students withdrawn from class for a special program.

The Aboriginal Education Unit personnel took part in a workshop designed not only to collect information about their experiences of racism in schools but also to clarify their understanding of racism.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research project were published as Cultural Interactions In Schools: A Research Project undertaken by the Northern Area Multiculturalism in Education (NAMIE) Racism Working Party, 1987. This summary of findings includes information about teacher-student interactions, student interactions and school structures which influence interactions.

Teacher-student interactions

The researchers found that many of the other teachers in their schools were unaware of the cultural backgrounds of their students and the impact this has on their schooling. They seemed unaware of their own prejudiced attitudes towards Aboriginal students although some situations had improved by teachers undertaking awareness raising staff development sessions.
The teacher-researchers identified as part of a minority group and were therefore, very aware of negative cultural interactions. They knew from their own experiences that schools could include positive attitudes towards their culture.

Student interactions

Not surprisingly the researchers found that many students' friendship groups were formed on the basis of culture and gender. These interactions between students of particular cultural groups were labelled intra culture for this project. Where students were isolated from other students of the same cultural backgrounds, they often chose other students of non English speaking backgrounds. It appeared that when girls and boys from non English speaking backgrounds had the support of an identified, cohesive group, they expressed positive attitudes towards their language and culture. However, isolated girls and boys from non English speaking backgrounds appear to be at risk both in and outside the classroom.

Interactions between cultural groups were labelled cross-cultural interactions. The researchers found that there was a difference between how students from minority groups believed others perceived them and how they were actually perceived. This also differed
between girls and boys. The researchers differentiated between observed behaviour, each student's perception of particular behaviour and teacher's perception of behaviour.

The researchers found that students were aware of overt harassment, both sexual and racial, but were surprised by the students' acceptance of it. There appeared to be a hierarchy based on harassment in classrooms of boys, girls from English speaking background and girls of non English speaking backgrounds. It is evident that Aboriginal students are harassed by racist comments and behaviour of other students.

School structures

Although the researchers did not focus on school structures which hinder or help develop cultural interactions, some issues emerged such as structures which support the transition of students from one school to another need to include information about the language learning needs of students. There was little evidence of structural support in schools to combat racism or to develop positive cultural interactions. In this project, some ideas were documented. These included Aboriginal Education Workers providing professional development sessions in
awareness raising, Aboriginal people taking part in deciding discipline procedures and teachers documenting cultural interactions in their schools as a professional development program.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

I chose to investigate cultural interactions in schools including those interactions concerning Aboriginal people as well as those concerning people of non English speaking backgrounds. I was also aware of the fact that interaction patterns depend upon other factors such as gender, socio-economic situations, abilities and disabilities. In this thesis I focussed in particular on cultural interactions acknowledging the complexities of gender. I acknowledge that the study of sexual harassment has had an influence on our understanding of cultural interactions and racial harassment in particular.

This chapter therefore examines the literature relating to cultural interactions in schools by first examining the context and in particular the relevant policy development. It then describes the literature relating to students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students. A section on the literature about sexual harassment is included because of the links that can be drawn between sexual and racial harassment.
It is clear that a research project concerned with equity issues is based within a political context even when the research is intended to influence the relevant policies.

An examination of cultural interactions in schools involves an understanding of the needs of students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students and is built on what has already been learnt about the needs of girls in schools and the importance of a safe, supportive learning environment.

In Australia legislation and policies in these fields have passed through similar stages. Rizvi (1985) described the policy stages relating to students of non English speaking backgrounds as that of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and more recently a demand for policy which goes beyond multiculturalism (described as "cultural democracy" by Smolicz, 1984)

The House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education (1985) outlined policy stages related to Aboriginal students as protection, assimilation and the recent demand for self-determination.
Policies relating to the education of girls are relatively recent, are based on Equal Opportunities Legislation and vary from state to state. According to the National Policy Education of Girls (1987) some state Education Departments emphasise gender equity curriculum. This means non sexist curriculum for all students. Other states such as South Australia emphasise issues relating to girls' education. This means a curriculum which is inclusive of women and girls in processes and content.

In South Australia the Equal Opportunities Act (1984) provides legislation to eliminate direct or indirect discrimination in employment, in providing goods and services and in the provision of education. By defining race in a broad sense including nationality, country of origin, colour of skin, ancestry or through association with another person, the act provides a legal structure for students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students to seek the elimination of sexual and racial harassment.

**STUDENTS OF NON ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS**

The substantial literature concerned with the needs of students of non English speaking backgrounds can be
categorised into literature about their language learning needs, their first language maintenance, expectations about schools of students and parents, students' identity and consequent learning needs, teachers' attitudes, student aspirations and educational outcomes. (Hyde, 1986)

These categories are also an indication of the policies of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and cultural democracy where educators have questioned the effect of the implementation of multiculturalism in terms of educational outcomes. Issues of equity and participation have become more important and researchers have started to ask how the system and schools can respond to the special needs of all students. If participation and equity are to be dealt with seriously by schools then the factors which prevent participation such as harassment must be eliminated first. An examination of harassment is one aspect of the interaction patterns in schools. A study of interaction patterns may also illuminate some of the more positive aspects of cultural identity.

For this review of literature I have therefore focussed on those studies which examine ethnic prejudice, racial harassment and cultural interactions.
Parker (1980) in a thesis on ethnic prejudice in the classroom reviewed the literature relating to the existence of and the elimination of ethnic prejudice. He clarified terminology and the concept of ethnic prejudice. He then described characteristics of minority groups; the difficulties faced by members in their attempt to function in the host country and the negative effects which may be caused by the dominant group.

He also categorised the range of educational and social difficulties found by immigrant children including an exploration of what the literature shows about ethnocentricity, stereotyping in children, definitions of ethnic prejudice and scapegoating.

Of particular interest to this project is his summary of studies relating to cross-cultural friendships. He described how migrant children find it difficult to initiate friendships with the majority group. He also documented how students tend to form friendships from within their ethnic group. He concluded that there appeared to be two main factors involved. Firstly, students from minority ethnic groups seemed to be rejected by students from the majority group.
Secondly, because of school structures students are often forced into situations which foster minority group cohesion.

RACIAL HARASSMENT

Jakubowicz (1984) in his review of literature concerning participation and equity cited the Rampton Inquiry (1981) from the United Kingdom which found that one of the causes of underachievement of West Indian children was "unintentional racism by teachers including stereotypical or patronising attitudes particularly to girls".

Klein (1984) described studies which have shown that when racism is addressed openly in schools it can often increase racist behaviour rather than the desired impact of reducing the prejudiced behaviour.

In 1984 the Victorian Education Department initiated a Project to combat prejudice in schools. The project officer researched and developed materials and strategies to combat prejudice and discrimination. She also worked with schools by developing policies, conducting inservice activities, documenting school initiatives and producing a newsletter to support a network of teachers.
From the wealth of material produced by this project it was evident that the staff of many schools recognised that a problem existed. Teachers had evidence of incidents involving different ethnic groups, prejudiced remarks in class discussions, little mixing between particular groups and fear amongst staff of the impact of a recent media debate on immigration. The teachers often recognised that the same conditions prevailed in other schools but it was not dealt with openly. The project officers found that longterm professional development programs were the most effective strategy. (Skelton, 1984)

In South Australia three projects carried out by the Education Department indicated a need for research into racial harassment and cultural interactions. The first project was undertaken by the Northern Area Multiculturalism In Education Committee. They conducted research in 1986 to determine the needs of schools in implementing the principles of multiculturalism by collecting data from interviews with parents, teachers, students and principals; school and departmental statistics about the location of students of non English speaking backgrounds and through the documentation of particular programs in schools which were addressing the issues relating to students of non English speaking backgrounds. They analysed the data to determine the needs of schools
and from that developed a five year action plan. They found that students spoke of racism and teasing but they did not want to talk about being teased. They also found that principals acknowledged that most of their schools' curricula were exclusive and that generally teachers didn't have enough information about different cultures. Parents spoke about harassment as a strong feature of the children's experience particularly in high schools. Teachers observed that there was a greater covert pressure on girls to choose between school and family values. Teachers also felt that non English speaking background girls were not highly valued by schools. (The NAMIE CHART 1986)

The second project which indicated a need for more research was the South Australian Education Department's Anti-Racism Coordinating Committee. This committee was set up in 1987 to develop an anti-racism policy for the Department as a response to the Equal Opportunities Act. The committee used a process of wide consultation to determine what was happening in schools and to illustrate different aspects of racial harassment. At present this committee is completing the writing of the policy, grievance procedures and a professional development program which will be used by all Departmental schools and officers in 1989.
The third project to explore these issues was the Multiculturalism in Education Curriculum Reference Group, a group I convened to develop a curriculum policy. During 1985-1987 we developed a statement on how teachers and schools could develop culturally inclusive practices in the curriculum. As part of the process, this group identified racism and cultural interactions as aspects which required further investigation. In particular, Willsden Junior Primary School, one of the schools studied as part of identifying culturally inclusive school practices identified racism as a major concern of most of the staff. (Hyde, 1987)

CULTURAL INTERACTIONS

The following research studies indicate the specific need to explore cultural interactions.

Sturman (1984) in his review of literature about education for immigrants, found that research in America indicated the importance of studying classroom interaction processes and in particular ethnic differences. He also indicated that more research is needed in Australia. He cited Dunkin and Doenow (1982) who found that processes of classroom interaction may vary according to the mix of sexes and ethnic groups within the classroom.
Research conducted by Russell (1986) on friendship patterns and use of playground space in a Victorian School indicated that teachers were unaware of the cultural tensions in the playground. This tension was not observable, but when students were asked about their friends and enemies, it became evident.

Tsolidis (1986) in her study, *Educating Voula*, found that girls of non-English speaking backgrounds are more committed to maintaining their culture and language than boys or girls of English speaking backgrounds. They are therefore, more likely to choose friends from within their own cultural groups. An interesting question consequently arises about cultural maintenance and possible cultural tension between groups and the differences between girls and boys.

**ABORIGINAL STUDENTS**

Since the early 70's policy concerning Aboriginal students has changed from one of assimilation to one of self-determination and self-management. This has meant the recognition of Aboriginal cultures and educational approaches that value Aboriginality. It has also meant a recognition that the conflict between formal educational values and Aboriginal people's values needs to be reduced through policies which
promote active Aboriginal participation. (Report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985)

Literature about Aboriginal students and their interactions in schools includes studies about traditional Aboriginal learning styles and the influence these styles have on Aboriginal students in schools in other than traditional settings (Christie, 1985)

However the literature has largely focussed on Aboriginal peoples' recollections about school. This is due to the emerging emphasis for self determination. This kind of literature has the important role of raising educators' awareness of Aboriginal peoples' experiences.

Journals such as the Aboriginal Child at School have included articles written by Aboriginal people about the discrimination they received from students, teachers and educational structures. An example by Morgan "The Good and Bad Times of School" describes year after year of bullying, teachers prejudiced interpretations of student fights, and the negative impact this had on his interest and lack of success in the system. (Morgan, 1982)
The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress prepared guidelines for research in 1985. They recommended (among other things) that:

"Research should be conducted substantially for and by Aboriginal people and not on Aboriginal people."

(National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985)

It would seem that the next step is for Aboriginal people undertaking research into Aboriginal students' learning in schools today. This has already started with research projects being undertaken by the South Australian Education Department's Aboriginal Education Unit.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Research and curriculum development relating to sexual harassment has given us insights which contribute to our understanding of racial harassment and consequently to the field of cultural interactions. It is also important to examine the literature of sexual harassment because of the fact that sexual and racial harassment are so interwoven.

The term sexual harassment has only recently been used and recognised as discriminatory practice. This "naming" of a phenomenon has given women the opportunity to describe and deal publicly with
behaviour which has in the past limited their opportunities. Even the debate about terminology and clarification of the new names has contributed to a growing understanding of equity and ways of ensuring equal outcomes.

Policies and legislation have developed in recent years to ensure that discriminatory practices are eliminated. In South Australia the Equal Opportunities Act (1982) has ensured that educational institutions have to show that they are not using discriminatory practices. This delineation of discriminatory practices has been an important step towards ensuring equitable outcomes.

The South Australian Education Department Sexual Harassment Policy (1984), the accompanying Professional Development Program undertaken by all Departmental personnel and the Guidelines for the Development of Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures (1988) have given educators clear ways of identifying sexual harassment behaviour and ways of dealing with it.

The literature relating to sexual harassment covers a wide range of issues relating to both curriculum development and personnel. The following brief outline shows the scope of the field. This is
followed by a more detailed discussion of the topics which are relevant to this study.

Firstly, a large number of American and Australian studies describe affirmative action programs which prepare women for dealing with sexual harassment in Tertiary institutions such as "Affirmative Action in the South Australian College of Advanced Education" Dyer, (1983); Issues for Women in Technical and Further Education (1984), "Graduate Women, Sexual Harassment and University Policy" Schneider (1987).

There are also many descriptions about sexual harassment in the wider work force which are available for those planning curricula such as the study Intimacy and Dominance Gestures in the Work Place, Der-Karabetian and Angel (1985).

There is some discussion in the literature about the relevant legislation and policy formulation such as "Sex Discrimination Legislation in Australia" Larmour (1985).

Some information is available about child abuse and relevant course materials such as "Sexual Abuse and Schools" McKeith (1983).

A significant amount of the literature relates to
discussion about terminology especially in the workshop material such as sections of Sexual Harassment in Schools: A Statewide Project for Secondary and Vocational Schools, conducted by the Northwest Women’s Law Centre, Seattle (1986).

Some studies show the complex relationships between sexual and racial harassment such as Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, About Migrant Women: Bibliography (1984).

There are materials and kits for teaching about sexual harassment in schools such as the South Australian Education Department’s Education of Girls Unit document, Sexual Harassment Curriculum Project (1987).

There are also descriptions about what sexual harassment looks like in schools such as the South Australian Education Department’s Guidelines for Developing Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures (1988).

For the purposes of gaining insights about cultural interactions in schools the last four topics are the most relevant and are discussed in more detail.
TERMINOLOGY

Much of the literature especially from the United States links definitions of sexual harassment to terminology in legislation. Many workshop kits present a section on legal definitions and explain how institutions and individuals are liable for incidents in schools. An example of this is in the Mondschein and Greene's article "Sexual Harassment in Employment and Educational Practices" (1986).

The South Australian Equal Opportunities Act (1982) provides the legal security that discriminatory practices in places of learning and places of employment are not to be tolerated. The more sexual harassment is explored, however, the more the subtle forms of discrimination are recognised.

The South Australian Education Department's Education of Girls Unit, in a project to explore the curriculum implications of sexual harassment in 1987 found that when teachers started to explore these issues they needed a clear understanding of the terminology. They acknowledged that some people make a distinction between gender harassment, which is random, not overtly sexual and which denigrates women as girls because they are female and sexual harassment which is overtly sexual and intentional. But they started
their curriculum project with the following definition:

"the term sexual harassment is used to describe all behaviour which has its roots in maintaining the power relationships of one sex over the other as this provides the context and framework for understanding and changing behaviour." p64, Education of Girls Unit (1987).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACIAL AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

When the Education of Girls Unit conducted a survey into the needs of girls schools they found that girls experienced racial as well as sexual harassment (Dellit, 1985)

This was again confirmed in the curriculum project undertaken by the same Unit to study the curriculum issues relating to sexual harassment. In this study of teachers initiating curriculum about sexual harassment they not only found that students experienced both forms of harassment, they also found that some boys understood the concept of sexual harassment through their own experiences of racial harassment. (Education of Girls Unit, 1987)

More specific papers such as Holland's "Aboriginal
Women in Education" (1987) examined how Aboriginal women and girls experience not only racism but a form of oppression not experienced by Aboriginal boys and men.

Tsolidis (1985), when researching the educational needs of girls of non English speaking backgrounds in the project **Educating Voula**, found that girls of non English speaking backgrounds were more conscious of sexual harassment than girls of English speaking backgrounds. This could be due to their understanding of racial harassment.

Mahony in the book, *School for the Boys?*, (1985) explores some of the complexities of racism/sexism when she discusses sexual harassment of girls by boys. She acknowledges that there is racial/sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual. However she also acknowledges the need to separate the two as well, "so that Black women can struggle together with Black men against racism while at the same time struggling with Black men about sexism."

**CURRICULUM MATERIALS**

It appears from the literature that an understanding of the nature of sexual harassment is needed by
teachers before they attempt to teach courses about sexual harassment.

The Education of Girls Unit found in their Sexual Harassment Curriculum Project (1987) that the process of raising teachers’ awareness needs to be carefully considered as teachers can be confused if they are still learning about harassment while they are teaching courses relating to it. For example, some teachers in the project were not using gender specific language when teaching about sexual harassment.

They also found that some teachers did not know what terms to use with young students so that students understood the concept while not diminishing the issue.

However supportive teaching strategies such as group dynamics, talking through the issues, role playing and single sex groupings were identified.

DESCRIPTIONS

It also appears from the literature that as people are introduced to the topic of sexual harassment there is a need to explore what it is. In 1982 the topic of sexual harassment was just opening up with articles such as Ramsay’s "Sexual Harassment: The Problem Few
Teachers Notice. In the South Australian Education Department this led to professional development programs where participants were led through discussions about their own experiences and understandings of sexual harassment.

One of the most direct descriptions about sexual harassment in schools is the article "A Can of Worms" in Mahony's book *Schools for the Boys?* (1985). In this account Mahony examines how boys and girls relate to each other in schools. She describes overt and covert behaviour in and out of the classroom which keeps girls in powerless positions in relation to boys and teachers.

The identification of indicators of sexual harassment is still an important prerequisite to undertaking curriculum or policy development relating to sexual harassment. In the *Sexual Harassment Curriculum Project*, Education of Girls Unit (1987), teachers participated in several workshops where they identified indicators and descriptors of behaviour of girls in schools. They also emphasised the fact that mixed groups and male teachers inhibited girls from exploring the issues.
SUMMARY

It is clear from the literature that a research project concerned with equity issues must acknowledge the context and in particular the policies within which the research must rest even where the research is intended to influence the policies.

There also appears to be evidence that the present political framework encourages participation of minority groups in research and decisions about their education. Participation in research about cultural interactions ensures that students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students feel comfortable with the researchers. It means that the interpretations are based on perspectives of people who have, themselves, received racial harassment. It also means that researchers feel empowered by having the evidence of racial harassment to present to others.

Indications from the literature about sexual harassment show that there is a need for descriptions about cultural interactions in schools, terminology needs to be clarified, inservice programs devised and then curriculum materials developed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines how the project was conducted and includes details of the nature of this research, the research plan, the methods for collecting data, the analysis and how credibility was maintained.

THE NATURE OF THIS RESEARCH

As a Departmental Project Officer I had responsibility for establishing the research project, which would not only provide information about cultural interactions to policy makers, but would also provide professional development for teachers, and ultimately be a learning experience for students in schools.

My experience in multiculturalism in education and my readings of the literature relating to cultural interactions led to a concern that the project satisfy certain criteria. It should:

- be devised within a framework of policies relating to students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students and in line with the Equal Opportunities Act
- use a model of participatory practices
- have people of non English speaking backgrounds
and Aboriginal people do the actual research to ensure that students felt comfortable, that the interpretations were accurate and that the researchers learnt about research—describe cultural interactions in schools so that teachers and administrators who develop policy and curriculum would base their work on a clear picture of the reality.

I therefore planned a research project in which four teachers of non English speaking backgrounds, and an Aboriginal Education Worker and her co-teacher planned their own research projects in their schools. As I was also concerned about the effectiveness and the practicality of this kind of project, I planned to document my processes as project manager and the ways the teachers undertook the tasks as researchers.

When some of the teacher-researchers found they could not continue the project I initiated a workshop to collect information about racism from personnel in the Aboriginal Education Unit in Northern Area.

My thesis then is a descriptive account of a project in which a group of teachers were helped to undertake research with two purposes. It was designed to add to the teachers' understandings and affect their
professional practice. At the same time it was designed to provide information about cultural interactions and in particular racism that would affect the shaping of the Education Department's policy.

In a sense it is a case study of the research project where the research responsibility was spread so that teachers as well as the project officer were involved not only in gathering data but in making decisions about what was researched and how it was researched. The teachers were also involved in writing up the research findings rather than the project officer. It is also a descriptive account of a complex teacher development/research project. So in this sense it provides an evaluation of the benefits and problems of such an approach.

Action research methods were used to examine my own practices as research project manager and empowering research methods were used as I guided the teachers undertaking the research. This section explains the term case study. It then outlines the way in which this thesis uses action research and empowering research methods.
CASE STUDY

Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976) describe characteristics of case study in the following ways:

"case study data is strong in reality but difficult to organise...(they) allow generalisations either about an instance or from an instance to a class...(they) recognise the complexity and embeddedness of social truths...(they) may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation...(they) are a step to action..(and they) present research or evaluate data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research report." pp148-149

This thesis is a case study in the following sense. The study is of a single case, a particular research project: Cultural Interactions in Schools. It is unique in that it is a research project about a particular group of teachers investigating cultural interactions in schools, and yet allows generalisations about research project management, teachers as researchers and investigations about cultural interactions. It recognises the complexity and embeddedness of the above three aspects as part of a single project. It forms material sufficiently rich to allow reinterpretation. It is a step to action for
me as a manager, the teachers as participants and as researchers, and for system administrators as policy implementors. It is accessible publicly through the report written by the teacher-researchers.

Walker (1983) warns case study workers of the problem of case studies being "primarily documentary and descriptive in character". He presents the issues in the form of three reasons why not to do case study saying that case study is an intervention, and often an uncontrolled intervention in the lives of others. It provides a biased view, a distorted picture of the way things are and is essentially conservative." p156

I realise that this case study does intervene in the lives of the participants. But I accept that this provided them with a professional development process. The study does present a biased view in that it shows my interpretations and those of the participants. However, I believe that where this is clearly stated and understood, a way of hearing the participants' voices is provided. The conservative nature of the research is present because it is a record of a project at a particular time. By the time it was complete the participants had developed further ideas and concepts.
Jennings (1986) described critical case studies as emancipatory action research projects. She states that critical case study workers use the same tools as qualitative methodologists such as participant observation, documents and recordings, but they differ from the latter on two levels. Firstly they provide the opportunity to examine how participants in a given social setting actively create meanings that generate the human practices out of which the structures emerge. Secondly they allow both the case study worker and the participants of case study to become active and conscious change agents in their contexts.

This study has the added dimensions of being a critical case study as it provides a process whereby we were all consciously change agents and examines how the teacher-researchers actively create meanings and that this is linked to a theory of social change and structure beyond their own perceptions.

ACTION RESEARCH

As I was an active participant in this research project, the research manager I used some action research methods to evaluate and document my practices.
One of the most comprehensive arguments or rationales for teachers as researchers is found in the book *Becoming Critical: Knowing through Action Research* by Carr and Kemmis (1983). They describe educational research in terms of nature and purposes and discuss the development of a new and appropriate focus for researchers.

Walker (1988) has summarised models of action research in *Doing Research: A Handbook for Teachers*. The Kemmis spiral action/reflection process of exploring a field of action, devising and undertaking a plan of action, evaluating the plan and devising new steps fits my action planning as manager of the project.

**EMPOWERING RESEARCH METHODS**

Lather (1985) argues for an emancipatory social research where both researcher and researched become the changer and the changed. She argues for research designs that change people by encouraging self reflection and a deeper understanding of their situations in the world.

She wrote that empowering research methods include:

- interviews which are interactive, dialogic and use self-disclosure on the part of the researcher
- sequential interviews encouraging the building of collaboration and the deeper probing of research issues
- group interviews which encourage deeper probing
- negotiation which characterizes much of the interpretation of meaning
- facing issues of false consciousness.

Lather argues for a more systematic approach to establishing trustworthiness of data. She suggests:

- triangulation including multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes
- systematic reflexivity which gives some indication of how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of the data, recycling descriptions, emerging analysis and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents
- examining the degree to which the research process re-orientates, focusses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to better transform it.

Empowering research methods were used as the participants and I became the changed and the changers. The methods I used included sequential interviews which were interactive and involved self disclosure on my part, group interviews and continual
negotiations between the participants and myself throughout the process.

Peeke (1984) described some of the difficulties teachers find when they do research. He found that practical difficulties included time, cost and the availability of equipment. His second category of affinity difficulties related to the sensitive task of researching in her/his place of work including collection of data from one’s friends, or from a colleague of higher status, the teacher’s history in the school, their age, political viewpoint, past successes or misjudgements. The third category he labelled role difficulties. These included the dilemma of acting as a researcher when this has consequences for their role as a teacher, reconciliation between competing expectations, they may be attempting to research an area which has little sympathy from colleagues or they may find colleagues sceptical of the value of the research.

These difficulties were taken into account in planning the project and directed the research analysis by suggesting categories which needed further investigation.
RESEARCH PLAN

A research plan evolved which included the research questions, the stages, the sites and the participants.

QUESTIONS

This thesis is based on the following research questions:

How did various management practices work?
How did the teachers undertake their research?
Are there particular issues relating to investigating cultural interactions in schools?

STAGES

There were three distinct stages in the project.

The designing stage involved the establishment of the research project. At this stage I selected schools and negotiated with them as they selected the teacher-researchers. I then helped the teacher-researchers as they planned their research projects.

The second stage involved undertaking the research. This occurred when the teacher-researchers collected
data, interpreted the data and made decisions about their next steps. At the same time I also recorded Aboriginal perspectives on racism and collected data about the research project and its processes, analysed it and made decisions as project manager.

The dissemination stage involved the teacher-researchers writing up their findings and presenting information to others on the staff. I was involved in supporting the writing up process, developing structures for the dissemination of findings through area and central policy groups as I collected data concerning dissemination processes.

SITES

The overall site for this study was the South Australian Education Department’s Northern Area. This was selected as an appropriate Area to undertake the research project for the following reasons:
- it had already identified the task of investigating cultural interactions as a necessary one
- there was an already established committee structure to support the project and to ensure adequate dissemination of the findings
- financial support was offered in the form of
replacing teachers as they were released to attend the four meetings involved in the project.

Meetings were held in the Area Professional Development Centre and in the participating schools. The schools were selected according to the following criteria:

- they needed to have a supportive principal or administration
- junior primary, primary and secondary schools would need to be involved
- the schools would need to have teachers who met the criteria for selection.

PARTICIPANTS

In the early stages of the project I decided that each teacher-researcher had to be of non-English speaking background or Aboriginal and committed to the principles of multiculturalism or Aboriginal Education. I also decided that there would be two participants from each school.

The participants in the workshop about racism in schools were selected because they were all employed by the Education Department in the Northern Area Aboriginal Education Section. The Aboriginal
Education Workers brought an Aboriginal perspective to the research.

DATA COLLECTION

The sources of information included semi-structured interviews, group meetings, focussed interviews, teacher-researchers' data, meetings with principals, a personal journal and a workshop on racism.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

These were the main source of information for this thesis. These interviews were held on a regular basis throughout the project with each teacher-researcher, or pair of teacher-researchers, in their schools. They are a taped record of the meetings between each teacher-researcher and myself as they designed and carried out the research.

This type of interview allowed the teacher-researchers to talk freely about their research tasks informing me of what they were doing, any problems encountered, and what their next steps would be. I used an interactive, manner and self-disclosure. The sequential interviews encouraged a collaborative environment and allowed me to pursue the research.
inquiry at a deep level.

From the tapes I was able to find information about my role as project manager, the teacher-researchers' understanding of research and the actual research in progress.

GROUP MEETINGS

The records of meetings with the teacher-researchers were used to analyse the ways the teacher-researchers were able to explore, as a group, some of the issues relating to undertaking research and the topic of cultural interactions that they puzzled over individually.

Two meetings were held at the beginning of the project as the teacher-researchers found out about the whole project and as they planned their research. Two further meetings were held as they wrote up their findings.

FOCUSSED INTERVIEWS

These were held with each teacher-researcher at the end of the project. At the second to last meeting I gave each teacher-researcher a set of questions to
focus their reflections on the project. I then interviewed each one in their school asking them the same questions.

These questions (see appendix A) emerged from the interpretations I had been making from the data collected at the semi-structured interviews. They provided me with specific information and was a check on some of the interpretations I had already made.

TEACHER-RESEARCHERS' DATA

This provided information about the impact of the research project and was collected in the following four ways.

Firstly, there were the teacher-researchers' contributions to the report Cultural Interactions in Schools. These reports were written using guidelines provided by me (see appendix B) but I encouraged them to make changes.

The second kind of data was the informal notes written to me throughout the project, initiated by the teacher-researchers. I encouraged the teacher-researchers to keep records of everything they did as part of their research. These records were
used as the focus for the semi-structured interviews.

Records of data collection and analysis presented to me at each semi-structured meeting were the third form of document I used.

The teacher-researchers were also asked to write a school context and a personal profile to present to the rest of the group which provided the fourth kind of data.

MEETINGS WITH PRINCIPALS

These meetings provided information about the management of the project, the principals' opinions about the process of teachers undertaking research and the impact this project had on the school community. This data source was particularly important when two of the researchers decided not to continue in the project as it provided me with information about the wider context.

A PERSONAL JOURNAL

I used a personal journal throughout the process to record the decisions I made, the problems encountered, my reflections about the management and the support I
offered to the teacher-researchers.

WORKSHOP ON RACISM

The record of the workshop with Aboriginal Education Workers and Aboriginal Resource Teachers from Northern Area was used to gain information about racism in schools relating to Aboriginal students (see appendix C)

ANALYSIS

The project evolved through the negotiations which occurred between myself, the school administrators and the teacher-researchers. An overall plan was written before schools were selected so that participants and their school administration were clear about the details of expected involvement. Changes were then made to accommodate all participants.

I asked the participants permission to document their processes and asked for their cooperation in reflecting on the management and support as the project continued.

The initial inquiry questions determined the topics for the interviews, the specific questions and
processes. However the research emerged as I got information from the teacher-researchers and reflected on the effectiveness of the processes. Consequently, the interviews were only semi-structured, except at the end of the project, when I asked each teacher-researcher to reflect on the whole process.

A large and complex volume of data was generated throughout the project and so data ordering, reduction, analysis and synthesis was necessary. I continued this process of reframing the thesis throughout the project including the writing up stage.

The information collected from interviews with the teacher-researchers provided the basic, or core data for the thesis. Supportive data, including the documents and records of group meetings, my journal and the meetings with principals were used to check the information revealed from the core data.

The tape-recordings of the interviews with the teacher-researchers were transcribed for reading and coding. Once the tape recordings of the interviews with the teacher-researchers were transcribed, they were grouped into categories corresponding to the three stages of:

- establishing the research project
- carrying out the research and
- disseminating findings.

Within these categories the transcripts were analysed into content categories - ie those chunks of the discussion about particular topics. Each chunk was then broken down into meaningful units. These had one idea, but varied considerably in length. The transcripts were cut up into small cards for easy sorting.

The meaningful units were then categorised into language sequences which sorted out information about who initiated sequences, what was discussed and who terminated the sequence. In this way it was possible to analyse the interactions that occurred to determine the roles undertaken by me and the participants and to determine the dependency of the teacher-researchers.

The language sequences were then coded into categories. The emerging categories varied with the stage of the project and according to the particular teacher-researcher but all included problems experienced by them, their interpretations of their data, my suggestions and support, clarifying questions and negotiation of next steps and time together.
As an example of the above processes the following description shows how I analysed one tape: that of Chris on 28/5/87 after he had spent two weeks collecting data about his three subjects Nandini, Margaret and Daniel. This tape was part of the second stage of the research and consequently was analysed alongside the tapes of the other researchers at this stage.

At first I broke the transcript into content categories. This particular tape covered the topics of discussion of research methodology, problems with research action, retelling of data about each of Chris’ subjects and discussion about racism in general.

These categories were then broken down into meaningful units in the following way.

1. Me: What have you got?
2. Chris: I've decided not to make complete transcripts and I didn't type it. I thought it's going to be hard to make transcripts from that. It'll take too long.
3. I'll just tell you what I've done.
4. I think I'm up to schedule because the weekend after I saw you was a long weekend.
5. I arranged to see the kids. These three
kids were willing.

6. I sensed especially with Nandini that interviewing her alone would be a problem. I sensed she was awkward about it.

7. Me: I didn't think of that.

These meaningful units were labelled according to the speaker and sorted into language sequences to show interaction patterns. The time taken to talk about each sequence was also recorded to indicate how important or difficult the interaction ended up being.

In this tape the first few sequences were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Initiator</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>timetabling</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transcripts</td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timeline</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consent</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documentation</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissemination</td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary of the sequences gave me a clear picture of the interactions and helped me recognise themes that recurred with my other interactions with Chris and with the other teacher-researchers.
Chris' categories that emerged included his difficulties, his interpretations, his retelling of the data and his questions. The categories that emerged that I initiated included my interpretations, my questions and my suggestions.

These categories helped me work out generalisations about my role as facilitator and research manager with one teacher-researcher and the ways that particular teacher-researcher undertook the task of research.

The analysis of each transcript contributed to the analysis of the other transcripts. Once I had identified the emerging categories for one tape I checked these with other tapes taken at the same stage of the research.

At times these were relevant but for some tapes new categories emerged. I then went back to the tapes already analysed to check the appropriateness of the new categories. In this way it was possible to have an emerging set of categories, but it also indicated the different styles of the teacher-researchers, and the different roles I performed with each.

An illustration of the differences can be seen by comparing the tapes of Eunice and Terry as they
planned their research, with a tape of Helen as she planned her research. Eunice and Terry spent most of their time negotiating future meeting times, while Helen straight away talked about her observations. The analysis of one highlighted their different approaches but also gave me new categories to check to see if topics were covered in more subtle ways.

As I analysed the transcripts I was able to make generalisations about the individual teacher-researchers, and some common characteristics. It also became clear that my role varied with individuals while at the same time I performed some of the same roles with all the teacher-researchers.

The supporting data became important as I made generalisations about the project management, teachers as researchers and about investigating cultural interactions.

CREDIBILITY

Throughout the research I attempted to ensure the credibility of the data and my interpretations by intensely involving myself with the teacher-researchers' progress. By continuously revisiting them I got to know them personally as they
undertook their research. I visited them, at first weekly and the fortnightly throughout term two as they collected data. I then visited them fortnightly as they wrote up their findings. We also met as a group four times. The teacher-researchers contacted me at other times to talk over their research. This continued well after their final writing was complete as they sought references for jobs, asked about the publication of the report and its distribution and asked for support as they presented information to others.

In addition to this intense involvement in the research projects I also attempted to ensure credibility by collecting data from a range of sources. Each source provided a different perspective on the inquiry questions. As an example, an interview with one teacher researcher gave information about how another teacher-researcher was progressing. This occurred especially between pairs of researchers in the same school. Similarly written records of the research projects provided a checking device for information from the interviews.

Checking the interpretations occurred with the teacher-researchers throughout the process, informally where I would feed back interpretations from previous
interviews. It also happened at the reflection interview where I asked specific questions about the research process and gave each participant information about my research enabling me to check and recycle my emerging analysis and conclusions with the participants. The teacher-researchers also checked the document *Cultural Interactions in Schools*. This included their writings and a summary that I had prepared which drew out the findings from the project as a whole and what we had learnt about undertaking this particular research project.

A final check on credibility was produced by sharing the data and interpretations with my supervisor and five fellow students who had undertaken the Master of Education (Honours) course together. These students had agreed to act as a critical community for discussing plans, methods, interpretations and conclusions.
CHAPTER 4

ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

This chapter describes the setting up of the research projects in schools. It includes a discussion of how I established the research projects, how the researchers designed their research and gives a summary of findings.

ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH COMMUNITY

This section includes details of how I selected schools and researchers, planned the processes, defined terms and negotiated meeting times.

SELECTING RESEARCHERS AND SCHOOLS

During term one I selected researchers and schools. Three schools were selected covering the age range of junior primary, primary and secondary schools. Two researchers came from each school so that pairs could support each other. Schools were included only if the principal showed that he/she would support the researchers.

Teacher-researchers were expected to be of non English
speaking background or Aboriginal, and committed to the principles of multiculturalism and or Aboriginal Education, so that students of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students would feel comfortable talking about cultural interactions, and because the researchers could bring their own personal experiences to the research.

Selecting the researchers became a lengthy and complex negotiation process. Firstly I identified schools with a record of addressing issues relating to multiculturalism in education and with administrators willing to support a research project. As I had been involved in many Area and school based projects relating to multiculturalism this was not a difficult task. I checked out my decisions with Area personnel with responsibility for multiculturalism and negotiated directly with two schools.

Both schools agreed to take part after I had explained the research proposal to the Principal in School Two and the Deputy Principal in School One. The schools were then asked to identify two teachers who were of non English speaking background, committed to the principles of multiculturalism and interested in undertaking research.

The Deputy Principal in School One selected the
teachers by consulting with the Senior, Languages and Multiculturalism. Maria, a science teacher of non English speaking background was an obvious choice as she had spoken about racism in the school. Chris, a contract History, English teacher of Indian origin was selected because of his interest in the topic and because he had complained to the Deputy that he had received racist comments from students in the school.

In School Two the Principal asked the Multiculturalism in Education Committee to nominate interested teachers. It was difficult to select from the four teachers suggested as each person brought a wealth of experience to the research project. The final decision was made by the principal who thought that Helen and Rob met the criteria. The English as a second language teacher was eliminated because although she had a good working relationship with the Vietnamese students she was not of non English speaking background herself. The fourth nomination met all the criteria but was already heavily involved in a research project in the school.

The choice of researchers actually decided the focus of the project. In this school the research centred upon Italian and Greek background students rather than students who were newly arrived. We realised that this was happening and decided to continue even
through this meant that the focus of the research would be narrowed. This meant that the selection process and in particular the criteria of being of non English speaking background, was critical for the project outcomes.

I used a different approach when selecting a school with Aboriginal students. I contacted the centrally based Aboriginal Education Unit to let them know about the project and asked them who to contact in the Area. The central personnel supported the concept of the project and put me in touch with the Aboriginal Education Workers Coordinator, Northern Area.

The coordinator talked to the Aboriginal Education Workers at a meeting and Eunice, an Aboriginal Education Worker working in several Northern Area schools, said that she would like to take part in the research. When I outlined the project in detail to Eunice, she suggested a junior primary school with a supportive principal where she would be working at least one day per week. Eunice then suggested Terry because she was working with her on a project.

When we found that Eunice was unable to continue I asked the Aboriginal Education officers how to collect relevant information. We decided to hold a workshop where officers of the Aboriginal Education Section
could write and talk about their own experiences of racism and cultural interactions. Selecting the participants for this workshop was also conducted through negotiation with the Aboriginal Education Section of the Education Department, both Central and Northern Area.

All Aboriginal Education Officers in the Northern Area were asked to take part as the workshop was to be held at one of their regular meetings. Most of the Aboriginal Education Workers took part. These officers are all Aboriginal people and have the role of supporting Aboriginal students in schools, providing information to schools about Aboriginal Studies and about their own experiences as Aboriginal people.

Some of the Aboriginal Resource Teachers also took part. These officers are non Aboriginal teachers who provide support and information to schools about Aboriginal Studies and about how to provide a supportive learning environment for Aboriginal students.

PLANNING THE PROCESSES

When I planned the project it seemed that its success would depend partly on the time and support given to
the researchers as they decided a research project that was both relevant and manageable. The project was set up in a way that allowed the researchers to choose to work independently, as part of a pair (co-researcher from the same school) or as part of a team of researchers (multisited co-researchers).

I wanted each researcher to have my support as well as the support of their fellow researchers. I therefore planned that a major part of the first two meetings should be spent discussing their research plans. I then met with each researcher either in pairs or individually in their schools as they decided their research question and worked out how they were going to do it. The times for these meetings in schools was negotiated at the second meeting. Each researcher chose to use some of their non contact time.

The teacher-researchers each set their own questions, collected data and analysed it for their own purposes. However I guided them in several ways. Firstly, I suggested that they examine the messages that students receive that affirm or deny their cultural/linguistic backgrounds. I encouraged them to record details of students including factors such as gender, class, ethnicity and whether they had disabilities. I also suggested that they could choose to focus on teacher-student, student-student or teacher-teacher
interactions and school structures which help or hinder cultural interactions.

I presented them with research that I felt would help them both make decisions about the aspects they would investigate as well as informing them of some appropriate research methods. I suggested they read:

- Russell (1986) *Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*
- Tsolidis (1986) *Educating Voula*
- Mahony (1985) *Schools for the Boys?*

At the workshop about racism held to collect information about Aboriginal peoples’ perceptions of racism I outlined the reasons for my research, the links this research had with policy makers and the processes I had already undertaken. I talked about some examples so that they were aware of the range of behaviour I was investigating and then asked each participant to talk about their experiences and to write down any examples of racism that they had experienced as a teacher, parent, student or as an Aboriginal Education officer. (see appendix C)

**DEFINING TERMS**

From the literature I was aware that people’s
perceptions of student identity and cultural interactions are limited by the use of terms, categories and labels. I therefore, suggested to the researchers at the first meeting that we should be clear about the terms we were to use. This became an issue that we discussed throughout the project.

We knew that we could describe particular students accurately but, when we needed to make generalisations, the terminology became more difficult. Some of the dilemmas included the following:

- the term "non English speaking background" does not include those students who are physically different from the majority of students but who are living in an Anglo culture.
- the term "race" is interpreted in many different ways. eg The South Australian Institute of Teachers draft policy on racism differentiates between racism and the negative behaviour between people of different cultures as cultural chauvinism. However the term race is defined in the Equal Opportunities Act in South Australia in a more inclusive sense.
- racial, sexual and other forms of harassment are interrelated and can be misleading when the focus is only on one aspect.
At the beginning we therefore chose to avoid generalised terms and decided to be as specific as possible in our descriptions of students. We decided to use the term cultural interactions as a way of investigating both the positive and negative aspects of relations between people. We used the following definition of race from the SA Equal Opportunities Act (1984)

"his/her nationality; his/her country of origin; the colour of his/her skin; his/her ancestry or the nationality, country of origin, colour of skin or ancestry of any other person with whom he/she resides or associates."

We also decided to discuss harassment by being aware of particular issues relating to racial, sexual and other forms of harassment while, at the same time, trying to understand harassment as a power relationship in society.

NEGOTIATING MEETING TIMES

A large amount of time at the first individual meetings was spent on negotiating meeting times.

Finding suitable meeting times was a problem for Maria. When I suggested a time she said that she needed to negotiate a swap with another teacher. She
seemed more concerned with fitting in around Chris and my timetable. She eventually agreed to a time when I was already in the school. This time proved to be difficult for her to meet and she dropped out of the project before she completed the writing up task.

Negotiating times with Rob, Helen and Chris was a straightforward task of finding a non-teaching period when I was available.

Because Eunice and Terry were to work together we had to find a time when the three of us could meet. At our first meeting almost twenty minutes was spent trying to find a suitable time. After clarifying the project timeline we each suggested times but in each case either Terry or Eunice had another commitment. Terry was responsible for three different projects in the school; English as a Second Language, computers and the Early Literacy Inservice Course. Eunice as an Aboriginal Education Worker in Northern Area had commitments in three schools. Although we eventually found a time to meet the difficulty proved understandably to be one of the factors leading to Eunice and Terry withdrawing from the project.
TEACHER-RESEARCHERS
DESIGNING RESEARCH

This section describes how the teacher-researchers designed their research and includes information about strategies which supported them, such as writing personal profiles and compiling school contexts. It also describes how they worked together, decided their research questions and plans.

PERSONAL PROFILES

At the first meeting I asked the researchers to be prepared at the next meeting to present a personal profile and describe their present school context. The writing of personal profiles was intended to help the researchers think about why they were doing their research, how they could do it and how their own experiences might influence the way they set up their research projects.

Personal profiles included information about each researcher's cultural background and languages spoken, teaching experiences and fields of interest, personal experiences (as a teacher, student or parent) of harassment (racial or sexual), their understanding of multiculturalism in education and their reasons for wanting to explore racial tension in their schools. I
suggested they share their personal profiles with their co-researcher because exploring common experiences relating to their cultural backgrounds or harassment would help them get to know each other and help them clarify their tasks.

Helen and Rob reported to the whole group that sharing personal profiles had made them realise their family base was similar and they had had similar experiences at school. Each had felt an immediate rapport with other people of non English speaking backgrounds and had also expected total loyalty from them. They had felt different from the majority and had coped with this by forming a gang.

Helen found the sharing of personal profiles very useful in helping her clarify her research question, her understandings of her cultural identity and the concept of a safe environment.

"I didn't understand the term safe environment at first. Then when Maria talked I worked out what I should say...It's only after talking to Rob that I realised everything linked together."

Helen went on to talk about the connection she had only just made between her friendship as a school girl with three girls of Italian background and their common interest in doing tertiary study. This had
grown out of support given by a particular female Italian teacher at her secondary school. She related this experience to the students in the class she taught as she interpreted their behaviour.

Writing personal profiles gave the teacher-researchers the opportunity to articulate their own experiences of harassment in schools. Each teacher-researcher of non English speaking background and the Aboriginal Education Worker had experienced racial harassment as a child. Terry, of English speaking background, on the other hand did not have personal experiences of harassment as a child.

"As an Italo- Australian I spoke only Italian when beginning school; being called a dago; being embarassed about obvious food differences." (Helen)

"Throughout my schooling I was continually harassed (racially) by my peers. I was obviously hurt. Little was done by the teacher...I coped by forming a gang. The school did nothing about the gangs or racism." (Rob)

"In social studies the teacher would say 'We're going to learn about Aborigines today' I'd be sitting in the back of the class, and all the gunya kids sitting in the front would all just turn around and look at me, and I would feel ashamed"
that I was an Aboriginal in that class...the kids used to tease us about traditional things the teacher used to say...I was the only nunga in the class. There were about five or six of us going to the same school but we were all separated...I liked school for the sport but I didn't like the lessons. I didn't like one bit of maths and English; how to rule up pages, I used to get into trouble for doing it wrong." (Eunice)

Each teacher-researcher described incidents of harassment that they had identified recently in schools. Terry was more aware of sexual harassment than racial harassment. The others talked more readily about racial harassment. This could be due to the fact we recognise more readily that behaviour which would affect us personally. Terry of English speaking background described her experiences of harassment in the following way:

"I have observed adult/adult sexual harassment, teacher/school assistant sexual harassment, child/child sexual harassment and adults discussing racism in an offensive way. I know it must exist but I hardly ever observe it personally."

SCHOOL CONTEXTS

I set the task of writing about school context so
that the researchers could check their own and other teachers' perceptions of their school environment and report relevant information about the school to other audiences through the final document about the research.

I explained that school contexts included such things as:

- the school: physical location, area and size
- the school population: the number of students and staff, and specifically the number of Aboriginal people and people of non English speaking backgrounds
- languages spoken by the school community
- special programs offered by the school
- the school environment: the cultural interactions, parental involvement and the safety of the school environment (in terms of racial and sexual harassment)
- how other staff understood cultural issues.

I suggested they share their school context descriptions with the teacher-researchers from the other schools so that they could clarify their understanding of their own situation and check to see commonalities between schools. At the same time it would also provide them with a way of getting to know each other's school situations better. The
teacher-researchers found that when they discussed the school contexts they each had different perceptions of the ethnic composition of the school, for example, Chris and Maria disagreed. Chris felt that half the teachers were of English speaking background and a large number of the students were born in England. Whereas Maria felt that this pattern had decreased over the past few years. Helen reported that she and a group of teachers of non English speaking backgrounds from her school had all overestimated the number of students of non English speaking backgrounds.

WORKING TOGETHER

Maria and Chris worked on separate topics from the beginning. They were investigating different topics and they knew that their timetables wouldn't allow time together.

At the second group meeting Helen and Rob decided to work on the same question. They said they wanted to investigate two major questions:

What are the interactions between students of English speaking backgrounds and non English speaking backgrounds?
What are the interactions within the group of Italian/Greek background students in the yard?
Unfortunately because of busy schedules it was difficult to negotiate a time when the three of us could meet. We therefore planned to meet on Thursdays. First lesson I met with Rob and second lesson with Helen. This meant that they did not work together. I was able to give Helen information about what Rob was doing but could not give the same kind of information about Helen.

When I first met with Helen and Rob individually they clarified their question in different ways. Rob restated the two questions and asked for suggestions about setting up the research. I asked him how he was going to work with Helen. This did not seem to be important to him as he said "We haven't come to an agreement about who's doing what." So we continued to discuss how he was going to observe the interactions in his class.

Helen on the other hand wanted to talk through the questions in more detail asking about other research on the topic. She also wanted to discuss her reasons for researching this particular question. When she showed concern about tying in with Rob I explained that both investigations were worthwhile. Helen and Rob went on to work independently but supported each other by sharing information. I continued to meet
them at the same time once a fortnight.

I encouraged Eunice and Terry to work together so that Eunice's experiences as an Aboriginal person and Terry's experiences as a teacher of Aboriginal students would complement each other. They were the only pair who tried to work as co-researchers. We found that it was not only a complex task to decide and plan a project together, it was very difficult to find time to meet together.

Eunice was unable to take part in the first group meetings where the others shared their personal profiles and school contexts. However she had the same information about preparation for that meeting so had thought through the topic. Terry summarised her interests and presented these to Eunice at the first meeting between Eunice, Terry and myself. She had thought of investigating Aboriginal girls expectations about school and said that someone-else had suggested she look at teacher expectations. When she mentioned learning styles Eunice showed a great deal of interest ignoring the other issues. Eunice seemed to feel that the learning styles of Aboriginal students were different from other students but she had found it difficult to convince other teachers of its importance.

"I felt an unqualified person saying it to
qualified people. It’s a fact but I felt uncomfortable when I was saying it."

Terry was at first unsure about this topic saying, "I felt that (learning styles) might have been a bit dicy. You could get flack from the other teachers. It’s not that they don’t want to do it in case it causes disharmony and it’s a problem if kids are not catered for. But I don’t know if I’m in the right position to bring it up in the open. I don’t want to cause a furore."

After much discussion where I reassured them of the importance of the topic, Terry agreed, but continued to be cautious about statements being made by Eunice. For example when Eunice described a situation where an Aboriginal student’s work picked up after she changed from the local mainstream school to Kaurna Plains, a school for Aboriginal students, Terry said, "On the other hand you hear of kids brought back from Kaurna Plains saying we didn’t learn anything there."

Eunice and Terry continued the conversation showing their different perceptions of the situation.

Eunice: "It’s because they’re all closely related down there. They see each other all weekend."
Terry: "Yeah they see each other too much."
Eunice: "He's getting one to one contact."

Eunice continued to emphasise the importance of informing other teachers,

"For a start I'd like to look at the learning with the teachers and making them more aware. Lots of teachers just don't know how they are different."

I suggested that the way to do that was to observe a class, record the observations and present that to the other staff.

DECIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The teacher-researchers made decisions about their research questions in different ways. Some were clear about their question and sought little support from me to clarify it. Others had a general idea but needed talking time to frame a manageable task.

Maria was clear from the beginning that she wanted to look at how schools make students feel. At the second group meeting she nominated her focus as:

"How students see themselves, how welcome the school makes them feel and how students of a particular group fit into the school environment and the reasons why they sit in particular areas."
When I first met with her individually she needed more time to clarify the focus.

"How do you gauge how schools make kids feel welcome? Kids will say I'm feeling well. I've got my friends. But there are other things that maybe indicate that it is not so. Are they fitting into the stuff schools are offering? How do you gauge that? That's the hard part."

I suggested that she was trying to tackle two things - how kids feel about school and what the school does to make them feel welcome. She decided to try to answer the first question by asking a group of students of non English speaking backgrounds about school. She planned to ask students to volunteer to be part of the project and to meet with her out of school time.

Chris identified three questions at the second group meeting.

"How do students feel about being called names? Does the curriculum cater for students or does it exclude some? How do teachers of non English speaking backgrounds feel they are viewed by the students?"

By the time I met with him individually he had decided to focus on the curriculum question. He had already prepared a questionnaire to be presented to
twenty-thirty, eleven-twelve year students from a range of cultural backgrounds.

The questions focused on what aspects of the curriculum students had enjoyed. Chris was hoping to find that when they were able to learn about their own culture they would enjoy school more. He later realised that some students may not have had the opportunity to do this and would not be able to identify these experiences without a list of suggestions.

He was unsure of the manageability of the research task and asked for help to clarify the question and the tasks. After discussing it with me he changed the focus from curriculum to investigating how students of non English speaking backgrounds perceive their schooling. He also decided to focus on a few students through interviews rather than on a larger number through a questionnaire.

Although Rob had stated that he was interested in the interactions of students both in and out of the classroom, as he clarified his question, he asked only about ways of doing research in the classroom. He decided to observe the interactions between students in a year nine class in several different lessons with a range of teachers including himself.
Helen was less straight forward in her decision making process. She appeared to make decisions about the research question by discussing research methods, ways of selecting students, how she could work with Rob and what was possible given her teaching situation. Some of her dilemmas are evident in this extract of the tape as she decided her topic.

"There are a lot of places I can tap information. A number of the year eight's are happy to talk to me...I've got a year eight class that I observed this week, that wouldn't be a bad place to start...But I don't have that class for the next 6 weeks. There's a student teacher there that I have to observe...I can't observe the kids in a different class because with Italian they are not part of the same home group."

She finally decided to study the interactions that occurred in her year eight Italian class, with a particular focus on two naturally formed groups; one of girls of non English speaking backgrounds and the other of girls of English speaking backgrounds.

DECIDING RESEARCH PLANS

When I first met with Rob, Helen, Maria and Chris individually, they clarified their research plans and
I acted as a facilitator. Each researcher used this meeting time in different ways and I responded to them differently.

Chris had prepared a written research proposal for discussion before we met. He started the discussion by saying that he was not happy with it, inviting me to respond critically. I responded by challenging the questionnaire he proposed to give to a large number of students. I clarified his use of terms such as students of non English speaking backgrounds and made many suggestions about how to keep the project to a manageable size. We negotiated a change from a questionnaire to a series of interviews with only a few selected students.

Maria had a clear idea of what she wanted to do and how she would undertake the research. This appeared to come from her extensive knowledge of the interactions that occurred in the school and from her interest and knowledge of scientific research. As we negotiated and clarified her plan I found that I asked her many questions to clarify what she meant, some questions to initiate new topics and only a few questions to challenge her. I responded positively to her ideas about doing a questionnaire. I made several suggestions about the actual questions, about selecting students and how often and when they could
meet to keep it manageable. She appeared to ask very few questions. She stated clearly how she would conduct the research; the selection of students, the research steps, the questionnaire and time management. She envisaged only two problems which related to how the students would react to the questionnaire and stated quite clearly what she expected the students to say about what they wanted from school.

When I first met with Helen to plan the research she had already done a trial classroom observation. As a consequence she initiated much of the discussion by asking many questions about the overall plan and about how to do observations. She identified a large number of potential problems as she worked out ways of undertaking the research. She made some suggestions about methodology, predicting some outcomes and illustrated her points with numerous anecdotes about particular students. I found myself responding to her by making a huge number of suggestions about research and observations in particular. I talked to her about how to record observations and the importance of keeping the tasks manageable.

When I met with Rob he knew that he wanted to investigate the interactions in his classroom but he had not worked out how he was going to proceed. He appeared to rely on me to have the answers on how to
conduct the research. He talked about the number of classes and his timetable but did not illustrate the discussion with details of any students in the way that Helen had done. He was more concerned with research methods and their validity. Rob initiated the discussion by asking many questions about research methodology. He made some suggestions, did not identify any problems and had some expectations about the outcomes. I suggested how to proceed with the research and asked many clarifying questions and only a few challenging questions.

In summary I responded to the teacher-researchers differently using strategies including:

- questioning the researchers for clarifications, as a challenge and to initiate a new topic for discussion
- making suggestions about possible methods
- identifying problems that I envisaged
- stating what I expected outcomes would be
- restating what the researchers had said to clarify
- illustrating suggestions by using examples from other research, from my own experiences and from the other researchers in this project.

The teacher-researchers used the time differently using strategies which included:
- asking questions
- making suggestions
- stating problems they envisaged
- identifying their expectations about outcomes
- restating information for clarification or emphasis
- identifying other examples from their experiences
- responding to my suggestions, questions and envisaged problems.

**SUMMARY**

This summary draws together information about how the research projects were established under the themes of research project management, teachers as researchers and the issues relating to investigating cultural interactions.

**RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

The management practices that I used to establish this research project included:
- negotiation with Northern Area, Aboriginal Education, schools and teachers
- the development of a research plan with clear timeline, responsibilities outlined and some directions for getting started
- providing a supportive role to the
teacher-researchers as they planned their research.

Negotiation with the Area, Aboriginal Education unit, the schools and the teachers was a lengthy but essential part of the process of establishing the project. Area negotiations were quite straightforward as I was already involved in the Area Multiculturalism in Education Committee. Without this connection a formal request to undertake the research would have to have been made through the Area administration. The Aboriginal Education Unit was willing to participate even though they were cautious about taking on any new initiatives due to the amount of work they were already undertaking and because they believe it is important to develop their own research projects.

The selection and consequent negotiation with schools and teachers became a critical component of the research outcomes. Those schools which had already established support structures such as committees and actively supportive principals were more effective than the school support I could initiate as an outsider such as linking teacher-researchers in pairs.

We were also overwhelmed by the complex task of negotiating time together. Whether this occurred because of lack of commitment, lack of confidence to
do the task or for genuine unrealistic timetables is difficult to tell. But it would appear that those people selected and interested in doing research and research about cultural interactions in particular are those who are already heavily involved in activities around the school. In setting up a research project this must be kept in mind so the timing of negotiation needs to tie in with school planning, often six months ahead.

The second main management practice I used was to have a clearly articulated plan which gave a timeline, a clear indication of responsibilities of participants and some clear directions about how to get started. I found this an important component of the negotiation process. Schools and teachers are not prepared to take part in projects without this knowledge, especially knowing how long the project will take, how much school time will be required and their responsibilities. At the end of the project the teacher-researchers appreciated that the project did keep within the timeline and showed their frustration whenever they felt they were not keeping to it.

Strategies for giving the teacher-researchers direction at the beginning included getting them to write and share personal profiles, school contexts and providing articles about research and the topic.
Writing and sharing personal profiles proved to be an effective way for the teacher-researchers to get to know each other and helped them clarify their research questions. Articles about research and the topic were found to be useful but it was the time spent together reflecting on the content in relation to their specific concerns about their research that was most valuable.

The third practice of providing support to the teacher-researchers was probably the most important. I had expected to give direction to the teacher-researchers about research and interactions, but I had not expected them to rely so heavily on my knowledge. This dependency varied between individuals but was evident in each one. In managing a project such as this it is important to provide enough time and expertise for the teachers to learn about research, as much as about the background knowledge of the topic. What started as a research project using teachers as researchers because of their intimate knowledge of their students became, even in the early stages, a professional development program about research. My role was primarily at this stage one of research trainer.

The teacher-researchers also found that they needed to talk through what is manageable in time and
processes with me. So my role also involved helping the teacher-researchers by clarifying what they suggested, making suggestions, identifying problems, stating outcomes and restating researchers’ comments.

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

It was clear from the beginning of the project that each teacher-researcher undertook research tasks in unique ways. Indicators of difference in the teacher-researchers included their dependence or independence to undertake the tasks, their focus on individual students or their interest in overall trends and their choice of research methods. These indicators present a picture of individual teacher-researchers who have a range of educational backgrounds and previous experience in particular kinds of research.

I found that I responded to the teacher-researchers in a range of ways. Each teacher-researcher requested different support. Some depended heavily on my suggestions, while others presented their tasks to me in a closed way. Again this seems to relate to the teacher-researcher’s knowledge of and experience in research methods and their consequent confidence to undertake research. It also appeared that differences lie in the fundamental ways they relate to others.
Their ability to work closely with another teacher-researcher seemed to relate to having a common research interest and a common understanding of research methods. Even when Eunice actually chose to work with Terry differences in expectations occurred almost immediately. I would have expected that the common interest in wanting to undertake research about cultural interactions would have been enough to establish good working relationships. Although little conflict was apparent on the whole the teacher-researchers did not work together in pairs.

INVESTIGATING CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN SCHOOLS

The particular issues relating to investigating cultural interactions in schools included:
- the selection criteria of being of non English speaking background or Aboriginal as it determined the scope of the research project
- the teacher-researcher's understanding of the topic and the time spent articulating this understanding
- the difficulties encountered when two people of different cultural backgrounds try to work together on a topic such as this.

The selection of people of non English speaking
background or Aboriginal people determined the scope of the research as the project was also based on the understanding that each teacher-researcher plan their research. In research about cultural interactions it is important that the people who know about the experiences have control over the research. An easier way of collecting information would be to conduct large scale surveys or interviews. This would be inappropriate as this research was based on the knowledge that the teacher-researchers brought to the research about their students, their cultural background and their understanding of cultural interactions from a minority point of view.

The teacher-researchers were clear that the task of articulating their own cultural background, and experiences relating to cultural interactions through personal profiles, was a valuable exercise. This provided them with the chance to become personally involved in the topic. This was a risk as it could have meant that they felt too emotional about the topic. However it appeared to work effectively as it illustrated the fact that their own interpretations based on their experiences were regarded by me as an important part of the research.

The third issue of cross-cultural interactions between the teacher-researchers is illustrated by looking at
how Terry and Eunice tried to work together. It was clear that Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people working together on a topic such as this presented a complex situation which required time and negotiation skills. It was complex because it was difficult for a non Aboriginal person to understand the issues involved as she had no personal experience of racial harassment. Developing an understanding of how this would feel would require an ongoing learning process not possible given the time constraints of this project. It was also difficult because of the unrealistic demands put on Aboriginal Education Workers in our system. Eunice was expected to work in a number of schools on the complex tasks of supporting Aboriginal students involving not only direct counselling but also requiring the longterm professional development of staff about Aboriginal students. Terry the non Aboriginal teacher was also in the difficult position of holding several part-time positions of English as a second language and computer studies in the junior primary school and in the primary school. This caused her to feel her work was overwhelming and fragmented. It is interesting that those working in Aboriginal Education or Multiculturalism are often overworked and their positions are fragmented.
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH IN ACTION

This chapter describes how the teacher-researchers undertook their research by discussing how they collected data, how they made research plans and how they interpreted the data. A summary draws together what we learnt about research in action.

DATA COLLECTION

Each researcher used several methods to collect data to answer their research questions. These included observations, questionnaires, interviews and other sources in the school. In addition I collected information from a group of Aboriginal Education Officers by conducting a workshop on racism. This section describes how these methods were used.

OBSERVATIONS

The researchers observed students for different purposes and at different stages in their research.

Helen used observations at the beginning of her research. Her plan was to find out about the naturally formed groups and cultural interactions in her Italian class. She then planned to check her
information through interviews with some of the students.

Rob decided to observe a group of year eight students (girls and boys of English and non English speaking backgrounds) in physical education, science, art and maths lessons to ascertain differences if any, in behaviour and interaction with teachers.

Terry began her research by observing a group of junior primary, Aboriginal students as they worked together away from the rest of the class. She decided to do this as a way of finding out more about Aboriginal students' learning styles. Eunice and Terry planned to do this in many different situations and planned to record their observations so they could share them with other teachers.

Each researcher used the format I suggested for recording observations (see appendix B), and, as they did not identify any problems with it, I presume they found it useful. Helen however identified a few problems with the physical details of recording interactions.

"It's hard to hear what the girls are saying. Because of the layout of the desks I can't sit next to the group of English speaking girls. Also if
they notice me watching them they will stop what they are doing...Sometimes it's difficult to write down everything of an event. As I write down something I miss something else...Sometimes I needed to see something to confirm what I thought I heard."

Rob found that he had no trouble observing his participants in other teachers’ classes. This could have been a problem but he found that:

"they were supportive from a personal, friendship level and from a professional level. We had presented the task to a reception-year twelve staff meeting so everyone was aware of what we were doing. I also worked with people I felt comfortable with."

Both Helen and Rob had wanted to observe their participants in the yard. This didn’t happen. It seemed that they both used many excuses but finally Rob concluded that:

"We both thought that kids wouldn’t be impressed by teachers chasing particular kids. Questions like Who am I? Why do I do it? Things about my background. I would find that threatening."
Eunice found it difficult to record her observations. Terry and I were surprised that Eunice had not recorded details of the task she had set the students, or noted whether they were on task or not. She apparently recorded only what had been said. This could be due to her inexperience with observations or her understanding of what was important.

None of the researchers used tapes as a way of recording their observations. The reasons given were:

"a tape recorder would only pick up the interactions in one group at a time"

"It's something the students would question"

"It would take too long to transcribe"

QUESTIONNAIRES

The researchers used questionnaires as a way of collecting information quickly. They provided a way of finding broad patterns and helped them identify students who would be interested in contributing further information.

Maria started her research with a questionnaire to find out how students of non English speaking backgrounds
felt about the school. She expected that the questionnaire would give her some general information, and from it she would find a smaller group of students, who would be interested in meeting with her on a regular basis to talk in more detail about school, their backgrounds and how safe their learning environment felt to them.

Rob used a questionnaire to find out the friendship patterns. He felt that this gave all the students that he had observed the opportunity to express their views, and in particular, the quieter students or those who lacked confidence in a whole group situation.

Helen used a questionnaire to identify friendship patterns. She felt it provided her with information quickly and gave her a visual picture of the interactions in the class. She was also able to use the information as the basis for the interviews.

Some of Maria’s students were unable to write the answers to her questionnaire. We decided that there were many possible reasons for this including the facts that they did not know the terminology, they needed time to talk it through, they did not understand why it was being asked or what was expected. They appeared to be unsure of how they
should answer such controversial questions asking "Can we be honest?"

INTERVIEWS

Interviews with students were used to provide the researchers with specific details about students and their understanding of cultural interactions.

Chris used interviews in his individual case studies to "find out their perceptions of their cultural and racial identity, their involvement in their school work and the possible meeting point between the two." He intended to carry out three interviews with each student on their personal and ethnic backgrounds, school work, their involvement in the curriculum and what they would like to study at school. He then used interviews in his curriculum project to find out more about what other students of non English speaking backgrounds perceived as relevant curriculum. He did this because these students were older than the students in the case studies, they were a tightly knit group of students of non English speaking backgrounds and he felt that after reading their answers to Maria’s questionnaire they would add information to his research question.

Rob interviewed selected students to develop a closer
relationship with them. He also used this method to assist in the collation of information "which would either reinforce the accumulated data, or possibly present a new perspective to the particular research question."

Helen used interviews to find more detailed information from questions which emerged from her observations and questionnaire.

We were surprised by the importance of interviews happening in small friendship groups. This happened in Maria's questionnaire when she realised that the students doing her questionnaire needed talking time to work out how to answer the questions. Rob interviewed the students in groups of three to five to discuss their cultural/linguistic backgrounds and interactions in school. He found however that some of the groups gave more comprehensive information than others. When we discussed this we found that some of the groups were naturally formed groups and some were not.

Due to timetabling restraints Helen interviewed girls in friendship pairs and one student by herself. She found that the girl interviewed by herself did not say as much as the others. She concluded that:

"the girls, who were interviewed together, were
able to discuss their thoughts with each other as well as with me. This allowed them to clarify and check thoughts and information with each other."

Chris puzzled over how to find the information he was seeking. He was concerned about what questions to ask.

"There were two ways of finding out whether students would be more involved in work related to their background or not. I could ask an open ended question: What would you like to study? Or I could ask a leading question: What would you like to study, Sri Lanka/Lebanon/Vietnam? I decided to try both as this would be the most exhaustive method. I do not believe that children or adults can always spontaneously identify and express their feelings without an external stimulus or focus. I believe thinking, exploration and discovery are aided by conversation and questioning...I tried to make her connect with how she thought about herself. I didn't phrase it right to get the right answer."

At other times he felt that his questions were only touching the surface and we would spend time working out how to proceed.

"I haven't found the finer points. I don't know how to approach them. I suppose I've got to the hard questions."
He used his experiences to help the students clarify or open up about their experiences. An example of this is recorded in the report when he describes how Nandini felt about being racially harassed by a boy in her class.

"Like Margaret, she began by denying the importance of the harassment, discarding the antagonist as lightweight and insecure, even pitiable. After probing, they both admitted that the harassment did make them angry and that it was constant... My experience of this situation is that it is very irritating and upsetting if there are many against one, it is constant, or if I have no means of retaliating.... Both girls could understand this and Nandini admitted that she felt much better when the racist boy was absent from class."

How to ask the questions to get the answers was a problem for Maria. She said it's not like a science exam where the students have been prepared. She did find, however, that the students,

"go on and tell you, they give examples, they don't have to think about what they're writing as they do in a questionnaire."

The teacher-researchers found some problems as they interviewed students. One teacher-researcher had
angered a parent because he interviewed her daughter out of school time, keeping her late. They all found it difficult to find time when researcher and student could meet. Recording information accurately was difficult as they were faced with the double task of keeping the interview interactive as well as seeking and recording information.

On reflection they found that a useful strategy was to interview in groups, preferably in friendship groups. Interviewing students with a friend who rather than the victim at times was able to talk about racism was also useful. A third strategy was to organise several interviews over a length of time so that the student’s awareness and comfort with the researcher could develop.

WORKSHOP

When I realised that Eunice and Terry were not able to complete their research I sought information from other Aboriginal Education Officers. I set up a workshop where I outlined my definition of racism, talked about the range of behaviour that could be regarded as racist and asked the participants to write or talk about their experiences as teachers, parents, students or Aboriginal people. These anecdotes were compiled and sent back to them as a check for.
accuracy.

The workshop appeared to be a useful way to gain information quickly. The Aboriginal Education Officers seemed pleased to have a forum for discussing their experiences and were keen that they be published and presented to policy makers. They also appeared to enjoy the chance to talk about racism and to discuss our definition which included institutional racial harassment.

Given the time restriction, collecting information from the Aboriginal Education Officers proved to be quite effective. Of course, the information was different from that which we were originally seeking by working in a school. In some ways it is easier to collect information about interactions from those who are able to look back on particular experiences, as adults can sometimes reflect on and understand situations that happened to them as children. It is harder to get children to articulate these experiences. I was also conscious of the fact that this particular group of people had already undertaken a considerable amount of professional development about Aboriginal studies and about themselves as Aboriginal people.
Chris found to his surprise that there was very little information about one of the student's he was studying in the school files. There was no information about his migration or information about his language learning. Chris was particularly concerned that this student was being treated as a behavioural problem rather than being identified for English language support.

Chris decided to give this student an English as a Second Language test. He found that the student couldn't do the cloze procedures. Chris thought that either the student was feeling unmotivated, not confident or he couldn't understand it.

Chris sought information about his students from other teachers. He found that some teachers were uncomfortable with him asking about students.

"You have to be a real snoop...I don't mind that but when you have to do it to students who aren't deviant teachers wonder why and they're generally not interested."

He found that there was a discrepancy between what he knew about students, the students' views about their learning and what other teachers knew.
"Technical studies, science and physical education teachers all say she’s not doing as well as the impression I got from her...

When I told his English teacher about his interest in films, books and the fact that he sees himself as doing better, the teacher was surprised because he said he couldn’t tell."

**RESEARCH PLANS**

As the teacher-researchers planned their research they had to make decisions about selecting students, dealing with dilemmas, setting timelines and managing the tasks.

**SELECTING STUDENTS**

The researchers used several different criteria for selecting participants. Students were selected in relation to the research questions. The teacher-researchers also took into account their own expectations about what they would find and their knowledge of the students. Factors which limited the selection of students included the physical layout of the classroom, the seating arrangements of the rooms and the time available.

Maria selected about twenty senior students of non
English speaking backgrounds for the questionnaire. The students were known to her as she had taught in the school for many years and had developed a close relationship with many of the students of non English speaking backgrounds.

The year eight students selected by Chris were chosen for very specific reasons relating to their isolation from their cultural group. Chris already knew these students from his class and was curious about how their backgrounds and isolation from their culture influenced their relationships and learning.

"Margaret lived with her mother who is English and divorced from her Lebanese background father. She knew very little about her Lebanese background but suffers racial harassment relating to her Lebanese appearance...

Nandini is an adopted Sri Lankan girl living in an Anglo- Australian family...

Daniel of Polish background had spent the past few years travelling from Poland, West Germany, Adelaide, Victoria and back to Adelaide. He was not identified by the school as a student who needed language support."

An issue relating to the selection of students for whom English is a second language is the use of interpreters. Because of the detailed information
Chris was seeking, he felt he needed to get permission to conduct the studies from the students and their parents. He had difficulty getting permission from one parent because she did not come to a meeting arranged with an interpreter.

Although they provided him with useful information about cultural interactions, he had also wanted to know about whether students of minority cultures would prefer the curriculum to be more inclusive of their own cultural backgrounds. He found that the students' age limited the information he could obtain about their curriculum preferences. He found that this question was,

"too far removed from the consciousness of the three students. Their stance in relation to the curriculum was not critical or creative on cultural issues and at that age mine was not either."

He therefore used five of the year ten girls of non English speaking backgrounds who had answered Maria's questionnaire as part of his curriculum project.

Helen observed, a particular class then selected several students to investigate further according to groups which had formed naturally in the classroom. She chose her students because:

"They are all in my Italian class...they are
familiar with me...they will be able to talk to me freely...the three non English speaking background girls are part of the larger identifiable group in the yard...they form two distinct groups in the class and are therefore easy to observe."

Rob felt that the class size would affect the interactions so he decided not to use the small year eleven class as he felt the choice students had in their interactions was not as great as it was in the year eight class. He was also concerned that interactions would change when the class had different teachers. He therefore decided to observe a year eight class with different teachers and in different subjects.

After observing and surveying this group Rob selected twelve year eight students to interview including girls and boys of English and non English speaking backgrounds. He wrote in the report that they were randomly selected, but in fact he wanted to have a range of girls and boys of English and non English speaking backgrounds. This selection from particular groups caused some problems, as he interviewed some naturally occurring groups, and other isolated individuals, and did not take this into account when he made his interpretations.
Terry and Eunice decided to observe a group of Aboriginal junior primary students who were withdrawn from classes for special Aboriginal Studies sessions. They planned to observe them in this special group and in their mainstream class situation to see how they interacted as a group by themselves, how they behaved with other students and how other students behaved with them. However, they only observed them in the special session because of the difficulty in finding a suitable time and getting the permission of the mainstream teacher.

DEALING WITH DILEMMAS

All the researchers found they faced some dilemmas in their roles as teacher and researcher.

The students seemed unsure of why Maria was collecting the information. This illustrates the fact that science teachers are not often seen to be interested in their students' background and friendship patterns. It also indicates that students in secondary schools have very clear ideas about what to expect from teachers.

Chris found he had to play the roles of researcher, teacher, and counsellor in the interviews. "In the case of Daniel it's really important I'm partly
counsellor even though I haven’t stated that.” Daniel, however felt somewhat confused by this. At first Chris’ counselling techniques helped relax him. But after two interviews Chris felt uncomfortable with the double role. “I told him off between interviews. I’m his teacher not his counsellor.”

He also wondered how to integrate the curriculum project into the students’ school day. “Do I report it to their teachers, show other students?”

Helen found that the role of teacher at times conflicted with the role as researcher. She did her observations when a student teacher was taking a series of lessons. She found, however, that she still needed to help him discipline the students. Instead of observing without interacting with the students she found she had to give nonverbal discipline signals such as raising her eyebrow. She found that this not only stopped her from observing, it also created its own influence on the interactions in the class.

Helen seemed unsure of her knowledge of research methods. She often asked “Can I do that?” or “How do I validate that?” implying that she didn’t know if her observation methods were real research. She continually related her observations about girls’ behaviour to her role as teacher saying “It’s hard to
be a teacher and researcher because you’re expected to act on the observations.”

Rob was also a little unsure of his skills as a researcher and observer. When I asked him if he was going to observe his participants outside the classroom as he had planned he said, "I’m not willing to do that. I don’t have the skills or the time." This became a complicated, unresolved discussion between Rob and myself throughout the research project.

SETTING TIMELINES

Often time would dictate the research method and how it was carried out. One example of this was when Rob wanted to know how many observations he should make. We decided that he would see how many he could manage before we next met. The factors which determined that were the availability of relievers, and his and their timetables, so he could be released to observe the class in other subjects. Another illustration of time determining research method is the fact that time constraint was the main reason given by the researchers for giving questionnaires. They felt that they would be able to collect information quickly.

All the researchers found it difficult to keep to
planned tasks and timelines. Helen, for example greeted me with:

"I didn’t do anything (observations) this week. On Monday I had to teach, Tuesday they had a test, Wednesday I had to talk to the student teacher’s supervisor, and today is Thursday."

Chris often expressed concern about the time involved in undertaking interviews. This seemed to relate also to his negative feelings about being a part time contract teacher and his views of some fulltime permanent teachers who did no extra work.

"If I was being paid full time for this I would write down all the other teachers views of kids."

I helped him through some of these problems by giving him time management suggestions such as spending less time with the interviews this week and more time writing up what he knew. It seemed that Chris was so interested in getting the information that the writing up was an added chore. Therefore I got him to set tasks and times by always asking him what he was going to do next.

Chris' interviews always went overtime causing problems for him and the students.

"It's not enough to get the kids there, then you've got to warm them up and then the interview goes
overtime...

On Monday I went way over the limit of what you can expect a kid to stay in after school. I felt really bad...like I would be accused of molesting a child. I wasn’t being professional because I was so keen getting information out of these kids."

Finding time for interviews which suited Chris and the students, was difficult especially as he found interviews were more productive when each person brought along a friend. I suggested a way of overcoming the problem would be to go to their houses. He agreed with enthusiasm but didn’t go. I presume that this was too difficult for him to find time out of school hours.

Maria found it hard to find time to interview and write up her interviews. She planned to catch up during her holidays and after the end of year examinations. However, she never did find time to write it up.

MANAGING TASKS

I continually asked the teacher-researchers to articulate what they expected to find. I believed that this would help them plan appropriate action but would also help them interpret the data.
Chris started his research with certain expectations which he articulated clearly. He undertook the curriculum project because he wanted to show that:

"...cultural tension has its positive as well as negative potential. It can result in hostile behaviour and attitudes from the dominant group which are internalised and expressed in all sorts of ways by non English speaking background students, but it also feeds into the education of students of non English and English speaking backgrounds if treated as wealth instead of burden."

After interviewing the five year ten girls Chris set them a research topic related to their cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately this was outside their mainstream curriculum and this caused several problems.

"They seem to be turning out a lot of work but they are missing classes...Vickie and Jasna organised their own excursion to the public library but it didn't come off...She can't come to an understanding of Croatian/Serbian hostility because she doesn't know the last several hundred years of Balkan history, nor the concepts to put them together...and I doubt that she would have found a book that she could understand easily enough."
Helen realised that she could only describe her students according to how they related to her and did not feel comfortable describing how they behaved with other teachers.

Rob decided that he would not look for anything specific in the observations, "I’ll just see what happens. I’ve got my own ideas." I suggested that he should write down what he expected as a way of focussing his observations. By discussing his students in more detail he was able to plan who he would observe and how he would do it. It also gave him a clearer idea of why he was using observation as a research method.

INTERPRETATIONS

This section outlines how the teacher-researchers made interpretations and how they checked their interpretations.

MAKING INTERPRETATIONS

Each researcher used different strategies for interpreting the observed behaviour. They used their own cultural experiences and their professional experiences. At times they were hesitant to use their
cultural experiences for fear that they were presenting a biased view. Helen for example said:

"I don't know if it's bias on my part but I noticed and recorded more about the girls of non English backgrounds than the others."

Terry was concerned that she did not have the experience to interpret the data about Aboriginal students.

"I found it hard to do the interpretations. It will be easier when we (Terry and Eunice) can do it together."

Chris' interpretations were based on his own experiences. He often reflected on his own childhood, experiences at school and those of his family when he described his findings.

"She's got upset about it on the inside but she gets really irritated because it's repeated. I know there's this thing about Australian humour. It can be really blunt, totally unsuitable, very negative and very repetitive. Like Chinese water torture and they just go on at you. To me it's like kicking a person when they're down."

As Rob retold his findings from the interviews I felt he understood the boys of non English speaking backgrounds more than the others. I found myself
presenting other information, giving the girls' perspective and suggested that his findings should sit alongside Helen's for a balanced picture. Unlike Helen who showed that she was focusing on the girls of non English speaking backgrounds, Rob seemed not to realise that he was not documenting information about the girls.

Reflections about personal professional development sessions she had attended were used by Terry. She talked in detail about a workshop on Multiculturalism and Feminism, which had highlighted for her the differences between teachers of English and non English speaking backgrounds. As I had helped organise this workshop and was a facilitator at it, we continued to refer to this experience.

CHECKING INTERPRETATIONS

We soon realised that the researchers required a large amount of discussion time as they planned and reflected on their action, findings and interpretations. Each researcher checked their interpretations with me as facilitator using different styles.

Helen asked questions, doubted her own interpretations, referred back to other research she
had read, referred to professional development experiences and asked about the validity of her research.

At first Rob was reluctant to ask for help as he made interpretations. However at times he commented that he had no significant results. I would then ask him to describe what his observations were and talked about what I found to be significant. His descriptions and interpretations focussed on the boys of non English speaking backgrounds. So I found myself asking about the others, bringing information from Helen's research, and suggesting putting them alongside each other.

Terry felt uncomfortable about interpreting her observations without Eunice. As she read out her observations I suggested a number of interpretations and Eunice supported my suggestions. For example, Terry was at first disappointed that the students formed groups on the basis of gender. I suggested that this showed that the girls preferred to sit with girls. Terry however said "I just looked on it as unfortunate, because all the chatter was going on at one table because the girls were quiet. There seemed nothing to observe." On reflection making interpretations about Aboriginal students must have been difficult for Terry, it could have contributed to
her uncertain approach and her eventual decision to not continue with the research.

Chris checked his interpretations with me often. He would retell the data and talk about his interpretations. I would ask clarifying questions, add my interpretations and tell him what the others were doing.

"Who calls her that?" (clarifying)

"Helen is finding that the girls of English speaking background ignore the girls of non English speaking backgrounds. Perhaps this explains this behaviour." (reference to the other researchers' findings)

"Sometimes Australian humour is used as a way of showing acceptance." (interpretations from my experiences)

"Also it's stronger if you are in a minority" (interpretations from my knowledge of research on racism)

He found these sessions particularly useful saying, "I only get to think about these things when I talk to someone."

Some of the researchers checked their observations and interpretations with others. Rob checked his interpretations with other teachers on the staff. He
found that he had support from the school's Multiculturalism in Education and Women and Girls committees.

"If there was something unusual, that I didn't think was normal, I would automatically go to people and that would be one or two times a week...The people on those committees are very sensitive and they'll sit down and have a chat with you. I talk about what I've found out and they say that they've noticed that."

Maria was quite clear about needing support saying "Anybody doing this needs to have another body because when I looked at the survey there's nothing there. Chris looked at it and said this and this." However she asked for little support from others in the school except for Chris. She had not tried to discuss it at a faculty meeting or at a Multicultural Committee meeting because she knew there would be no support.

Chris reflected on his research methods and his interpretations throughout the project. He would often generalise from his findings as a way of making sense of his own world.

"People have lots of bits to their identity
particularly in adolescence, becoming an adult. They have to place themselves in terms of their parents and grandparents. They have to be proud of their families and traditions. I know, I feel that way and perhaps it's stronger for family oriented people."

**SUMMARY**

This summary draws together how the teacher-researchers undertook their research under the themes of research project management, teachers as researchers and the issues relating to investigating cultural interactions.

**RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

It is clear from this stage in the project that one of the important roles of research project manager was to continue to provide the teacher-researchers with information about research techniques and support as they built up their confidence about research.

More that anything else this thesis illustrates the need for allowing adequate time for teacher-researchers to interpret the data. They were keen to get the task finished, as they each had many other activities including their actual teaching
loads. It was the role of the manager to, at times, get the teacher-researchers to stop and reflect on their findings, to challenge their interpretations and to value their contributions.

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

It was evident that teacher-researchers face some constraints and dilemmas in fulfilling their dual function. These must be set against the positive aspects of researching in a situation in which they are also teachers, knowing the participants well before the research and having control over research in their own schools. It appears that students have set expectations of the role of teachers and feel confused when that role is changed.

Although each one agreed that it would be useful to use taperecorders they found a reason for not using them. Their reasons included lack of time to transcribe and the fact that it would intrude in the situation where they were collecting data. I feel that these reasons tie in with the dilemmas teacher-researchers face. Each one is limited in the amount of time they can spend on research and on out of school time in particular. They are also in the position of having to teach as well as research the same students, which makes them particularly sensitive
I was surprised at how dependent the teacher-researchers were on me for information about research methods, techniques and interpretations. This varied with each teacher-researcher but was evident in each case to a certain degree. I believe that this relates to two things. Firstly, teachers, as has been stated above, are busy and have very little time to stop and reflect. They must use information as it is presented. Doing research is no different. Given that this project had a tight timeline, it seems fair that there was little questioning or refusal of information offered. Secondly, I believe that teachers are dependent on outsiders because of the traditional methods that have been used by professional development programs. These have led teachers to expect project officers to be experts.

INVESTIGATING CULTURAL INTERACTIONS

All the teacher-researchers of non English speaking backgrounds and Eunice, the Aboriginal person, used their own cultural experiences as they undertook the research. They set their questions according to their experiences. They used their backgrounds as a way of putting the participants at ease. They used information about their cultural backgrounds as they
interpreted the data. However, at times, they expressed concern that this would mean that they were biased. They overcame their fear of biased research by checking their research findings with members of the multiculturalism in education committee and the equal opportunity committee at their school.

One of the dilemmas they faced was the conflict of roles of teachers asking about cultural backgrounds. It appears that most students do not expect teachers to ask about personal issues such as cultural backgrounds. It is also clear that some of the students interviewed had not talked much about their cultural background at school before. They did not have the terminology and this indicates a need for curriculum which allows students to explore their identity.

The students seemed suspicious about teachers asking about cultural backgrounds. They asked "Can we be honest?" This would indicate that they did not expect to talk about these topics at school but it may also indicate that when it has been talked about they have regretted the consequences.
CHAPTER 6
DISSEMINATION

This chapter describes what we learnt about cultural interactions, the processes used to share the information and a summary.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research project were published as Cultural Interactions In Schools: A Research Project undertaken by the Northern Area Multiculturalism in Education (NAMIE) Racism Working Party, 1987. These findings include information about teacher-student interactions, student interactions, school structures which help or hinder interactions and the next steps identified by the teacher-researchers.

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

The teachers who undertook the research identified as part of a minority group and were therefore, very aware of negative cultural interactions.

"My experiences and observations have led me to believe that, although overt racism may not be as prevalent as it was, racism is still a reality in schools." (Helen)
These same teachers were aware from their own experiences that schools could include positive attitudes towards their culture.

"I felt good about myself when the whole class had to learn about Sukarno and Gandhi, who had stood up for their people’s against white domination; knowledge about my original country was being valued so I felt valued." (Chris)

The teacher-researchers found that many other teachers in their schools were unaware of the cultural backgrounds of their students and the impact this has on their schooling. At our first meetings I asked them to write a school context and share this information with the other researchers to help them clarify their own situation. I suggested that they could check how other staff members would describe their school. Terry gave a questionnaire to some staff members, including the Principal of the Junior Primary section, Principal of the Primary section and Community Liaison Officer. The following results indicate the wide range of estimations made by the staff. It is interesting to note that three answered for junior primary only, one answered for primary only and four answered for both primary and junior primary. This seems to indicate the confusing reality of two schools on the same campus, sharing a staff room and some staff working in both schools, but with separate
principals and different philosophies.

### Whole school responses

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### Primary response only

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<tr>
<td>the community</td>
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Junior primary response only

Students
(310) 250 250 230
Students of NESB
(20) 20 20 20
Aboriginal students
(7) 15 10 45
Teachers of NESB
(1) 0 10 1
Languages used by the community
(12) 0 5 3 0

[ In this table brackets indicate the actual numbers and NESB stands for non English speaking backgrounds]

Chris found that one of his subjects was disciplined without taking into account his background or his English language ability.

"He was disciplined and remonstrated about; he was not counselled or tested and there were no records of his performance at previous schools. It was only when Daniel's parents were called in for an interview about his reticence/dishonesty that the school discovered his cultural background."

An Aboriginal Resource Teacher found that some teachers are unaware of their own prejudiced attitudes
towards Aboriginal students.

"I'm certain it's not the mother (who is Aboriginal). I spoke to her on the phone and she's very well spoken, very articulate."

Some Aboriginal Education Workers found that some situations have improved by teachers undertaking staff development sessions in awareness raising.

STUDENT INTERACTIONS

Not surprisingly the researchers found that many students' friendship groups were formed on the basis of culture and gender. These we labelled intra cultural groups. It appeared that when students from non English speaking backgrounds have the support of an identified, cohesive group, they express positive attitudes towards their language and culture. Isolated students from non English speaking backgrounds are at risk both in and outside the classroom. Where students were isolated from other students of the same cultural backgrounds, they often chose other students of non English speaking backgrounds.

Groups of boys from non English speaking backgrounds appear to be confident, especially when they are part of a culturally identifiable group. These groups
appear to be strong and cohesive with members seeing themselves as better than others. They appear to be competitive amongst themselves and demand teacher time. Isolated boys from non English speaking backgrounds, however, did not want to be identified as part of a cultural group.

"(Daniel) is not keen to be seen as Polish. He is aware of the difference between himself and others, and thinks that it would not be positively viewed in English speaking background company." Chris pg54

Groups of girls from non English speaking backgrounds appeared to support each other in class by "discussing the task, carrying it out, brainstorming ideas and attaining feedback from others". These girls had close friendships with other girls from non English speaking backgrounds as part of a larger group of girls and boys from non English speaking backgrounds.

We labelled interactions between cultural groups as cross-cultural interactions. The researchers found that there is a difference between how students from minority groups believe others perceive them and how they are actually perceived. This also differed between girls and boys. Early in the project I pointed out that I found it useful to think about cultural interactions as messages; how they are sent and how they are perceived. The researchers,
therefore differentiated between observed behaviour, each student's perception of particular behaviour and teacher's perception of behaviour.

There appeared to be a hierarchy of behaviour in classrooms of boys, girls from English speaking background and girls of non English speaking backgrounds. The researchers found that students were aware of overt harassment (sexual and racial) but Helen was surprised by the students' attitudes towards it.

"Racism came out but it didn't happen in the classroom like it does in the yard."

Helen was also surprised by the way one group of girls from English speaking background behaved with the girls of non English speaking backgrounds in the class. The English speaking background girls ignored the contributions by the girls of non English speaking backgrounds and demanded more teacher time.

From the experiences of Aboriginal Education Workers and Aboriginal Resource Teachers, it is evident that Aboriginal students experience racist comments and behaviour from other students.
SCHOOL STRUCTURES

Although the researchers did not focus on school structures which hinder or help develop cultural interactions, some issues emerged. For example, structures which support the transition of students from one school to another need to include information about the language learning needs of students.

"One of Daniel’s difficulties is that the school began by treating him as a behaviour problem (his fault) rather than as a language/culture problem (not his fault)” (Chris)

There is little evidence of structural support in schools to combat racism or to develop positive cultural interactions. In this project, some ideas were documented. These included Aboriginal Education Workers providing professional development sessions in awareness raising, Aboriginal people taking part in deciding discipline procedures and teachers documenting cultural interactions in their schools as a professional development program. One Aboriginal Education Worker felt that Aboriginal people’s involvement in behavioural management plans would improve some situations by ensuring that teachers are aware of Aboriginal cultural methods of discipline.
NEXT STEPS

The researchers identified questions that they would like to explore further as a result of their research. These included:

What are the curriculum implications from our findings about cultural interactions?
How can our findings be checked out by others?
How do girls from non English speaking backgrounds see themselves and how do they perceive schools meeting their needs?
How do teachers perceive girls from non English speaking backgrounds?

PROCESSES

Dissemination of the findings of this project occurred throughout the process and was an integral part of the support for the teacher-researchers. This section outlines the processes involved in disseminating the research findings as they clarified their expectations, wrote up their findings and shared their findings with others. A summary examines what we learnt about dissemination of research findings.
CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

Each researcher knew that a written report of their research was required when they agreed to take part. Consequently discussion about the writing up of the project took place at each meeting and often occurred when I met with individuals.

At first the researchers' greatest concern was how much information should be given to other staff and who should tell them.

Helen and Rob planned to tell the whole staff and felt they needed to present the information because they felt that "...racism is threatening but needs to be faced up to" and "...even an understanding Deputy Principal can misinterpret our intentions as our project was misquoted in the staff bulletin as being about racism rather than cultural interactions". They had the support of the active Multiculturalism in Education Committee and the Women and Girls Committee, and kept the whole staff informed along the way.

Maria was concerned that,

"the predicted numbers for the school are decreasing. The effect is that there will be displaced teachers... If information is collected about racism in the school it will quickly be known
by other staff, then parents, then the community. The image of the school could suffer. Other teachers will blame racism or the research for the loss of numbers."

She did not feel threatened personally as she felt secure as a female Physics teacher. Chris on the other hand was a little hesitant as a contract teacher but decided that he might not be there next term anyway.

The junior primary and primary staff at Eunice's school showed different attitudes towards Eunice and her role as Aboriginal Education Worker. She said that she felt more comfortable in the junior primary school because they acted on what she said straight away. There were only two teachers on the primary school staff that she felt she could work with. She identified a difference between the two principals, finding the female junior primary principal more supportive and approachable than the male primary principal. She also described a successful professional development session she had held with the junior primary teachers about Aboriginal students. The same session with the primary teachers was not as successful as she felt they were not as receptive to the ideas.
There appeared to be some factors identified by the teacher-researchers which they found supportive. Firstly, they were supported by some other teachers who had shown an interest in the topic before the research started. Secondly principals who actively encouraged the researchers by acknowledging their cultural experiences as much as their skills as educators were necessary. A network such as a committee already established, and active, gave encouragement, support and challenge. They also showed that it was necessary to feel secure in their position to feel secure in the research.

For some of the researchers deciding to do the research was closely linked to what they thought other teachers knew about racism.

"I have a gut feeling about interactions. I need the evidence to show others." (Maria)

"I’d like to look at how Aboriginal students' learn with teachers and make them more aware. Lots of teachers don’t know how they are different." (Eunice)

The researchers had plans throughout the project to share with other staff. Even though Rob was in a supportive environment he still anticipated some problems.
"It's difficult to find a time to get the interested teachers together because of other professional development commitments made by the staff."

"I need to present it to the staff development committee myself so that it can be built into the program. As I'm a member of that committee it shouldn't be a problem."

"I know that not many of the staff are interested in parental involvement. Not that they don't see it's important it's just they can't be bothered."

WRITING UP THE FINDINGS

Writing up the research findings was difficult for all the researchers. They identified useful strategies such as structuring time to think through their findings before writing, having a clear idea of audience, having a clear format, sharing ideas with others, setting a deadline, having someone to check where to include information that didn't fit the format and organising writing time away from the school.

I encouraged the researchers to write as their research progressed rather than leaving it to the end.
I continually suggested that they write down, observations they had made, their interpretations and their next steps as they discussed their research.

Chris used the written form more than the others. At each meeting with me he would present me with a piece of writing for a response. He would also write notes to me explaining his work, his drafts and how he was feeling about his progress.

The teacher-researchers showed different levels of confidence about writing:

"I'm happy with the writing so far. It's written as I feel. There's a lot of my personal stuff." (Maria)

"I'm quite happy with that, there's probably one or two areas which I'll change after not looking at it for a week or two. I've gone through it a couple of times. Enough of that." (Rob)

"This is the first draft of the worst piece of research that's ever been done." (Chris)

"Is it easy to read?" (Helen)

Helen was the only researcher to take up my suggestion to get other teachers to respond to the writing. She
used a reference group of women educators including an English as a Second Language teacher at her school, the Deputy Principal of nearby school who was also a member of a support network of women educators of non English speaking backgrounds, the Equal Opportunities teacher at her school and the Principal at her school.

The researchers used the format I suggested as a guide for writing up their research. (see Appendix B) They appeared to find it useful to have a structure and to be clear about what was expected. There were only a few questions about how to use the format such as Helen's concern about fitting in certain information.

"The languages they speak doesn't fit anywhere, nor does the fact that they talked about sexual harassment as it wasn't part of the question"

By far the greatest problem experienced by the researchers as they wrote up the findings was the amount of time available and their own time management.

"I've been finishing school work at ten each night. The last two weeks before the holidays things should slow down."

"I need more than twenty-four hours in a day."
"You think five or ten minutes a page writing time but you forget you have to put in thinking time. You’ve got to get the ideas, get the information in order and make suggestions."

They also felt frustrated that their time away from school was not long enough.

"Once I get started I don’t want to stop. The last time we met it took up to three hours just taking it in again."

Throughout the process I made suggestions about time management and reassured them about how far they had proceeded saying such things as "Do as much as you can. Say to yourself, this is my question, this is as much as I’ve found out."

SHARING FINDINGS

The findings of the projects were shared between the teacher-researchers, between other staff, with policy writers, other schools and through a teacher network.

The teacher-researchers met to find out my expectations about the project, discuss their plans and to write up their findings. I also encouraged them to work in pairs and to comment on any written material produced by each other. On the whole they
showed each other support by being enthusiastic about each other’s work but offered very few criticisms. Chris was the only one to make his points in writing:

"I have read Helen’s report and I reckon it’s so well researched and written! My only suggestion is that maybe she criticised the school for ignorance. I don’t reckon that’s so racist, but maybe it is. I think she should have pointed out the racism of the English speaking background girls who were being looked after by the non English speaking background girls while not acknowledging them equally."

Chris had information he felt other teachers should know. He found it difficult to share this because there were no formal structure for communicating information between teachers. This was seen as the role of the counsellor not that of a contract teacher. Helen and Rob, however shared information with the school’s Multiculturalism in Education committee, the Women and Girls Committee and other interested staff.

The differences between the two situations seem to relate to the kind of information to be shared, the communication structures in the schools and the status of the researchers involved. Chris had very specific information about particular students as he undertook case studies on the students. Rob and Helen had more
general information about groups of students. Chris had not kept the staff or the Multicultural Education Committee informed about his research. Rob and Helen on the other hand had told the whole staff about the research at the beginning and had kept the specific committees informed, using some other teachers as critical friends. Chris was quite self conscious about his status as part time contract teacher and felt that the other teachers would not take any notice of him because of it. This is only a small factor as Maria also felt unable to share information with other staff at the same school even though she was a permanent member of the staff.

When the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT) produced a draft policy on Racism we found that their definition of racism was different from the one used in the Equal Opportunities Act. I responded to the draft by meeting with the group of educators who were developing the policy. In order to argue the importance of the broad definition of racism I needed to quote some of the findings from the researchers. As the researchers were still undertaking their research, and had not produced finished products, I asked their permission to use the information as they had described it to me. The writers of the SAIT policy have continued to use their definition and the policy remains in draft form.
The Report Cultural Interactions in Schools was distributed to advisers throughout the state and to the schools who took part in the research and was available from the Northern Area Office.

Helen was invited to present her findings at several conferences organised by the Girls and Multicultural Education Network.

SUMMARY

This summary draws out the issues relating to disseminating research findings including those that relate to research project management, teachers as researchers and those which are relevant to research about cultural interactions.

RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The findings of this research project are not a comprehensive overview of cultural interactions in schools. It was not our intention to produce such a study. What it does show is a process for teachers to investigate cultural interactions in their classrooms. It also shows that effective management of such projects is critical so that teachers feel supported, schools know about the project and so that the
findings are disseminated widely.

We found that it was important that each teacher-researcher was clear about what they were expected to do from the beginning. This was particularly important when it came time to write up the research. Each teacher-researcher needed considerable support as they wrote up their findings. They needed reassurance that their research was valid, that their writing was clear and that the task was kept manageable. Each one relied heavily on the format I had prepared as a guide to write up their findings.

The sense of a research community and school support structures were important at this stage in particular. Just knowing that their findings were only part of a wider research project was important in easing their load. Support from each other was also important as they talked through their research and read each other's work. Those who had support had already established structures for dissemination. Those without these structures felt isolated and powerless to inform others on their staff.

School support took the form of individual and group interest in the project, the principals support and an understanding by the administration that researchers
need time to conduct research. Where this occurred teacher-researchers found an already established structure to share their information. Strategies used by them to share information were formal professional development sessions, informal talking to colleagues and through the final report.

The links between this project and the Area and Central policy structures were already established at the beginning of the project and other schools were kept informed throughout the project and through the report at the end.

As a member of the Girls and Multicultural Education Network I was able to bring to other members notice information about the project. It was through this network that one of the teacher-researchers was asked to talk about her research. This experience not only disseminated information about the findings it also showed her that her work was valued by others.

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

The teacher-researchers were concerned that their findings were not very significant. They seemed disappointed with finding evidence for things they already knew. I reassured them that their findings were useful if they sparked a jolt of recognition in
other teachers who might then check out the findings in their classrooms.

The teacher-researchers displayed a range of confidence in their ability to write. This related to their previous experiences as students and the confidence they felt in this piece of research. Again those who had a supportive school environment found this task easier. Only one teacher-researcher used a reference group to check her writing up of the research. She found this a useful and supportive process. Each teacher-researcher depended upon my framework as they wrote up their findings. This dependency varied and seemed to relate to their confidence in themselves as researchers.

Time was again a limiting factor when they wrote up their findings. The two days set aside for this task were taken up discussing the projects and reconnecting with each other. Some of the researchers found this frustrating but all agreed that they felt the process was necessary. Being absent from class was a frustrating experience for all the teachers. It meant that one of them did not complete the writing up as she decided that her year twelve students could not be given a relief teacher so close to the exams. Even the others were reluctant to be replaced by relievers because they had to program for them anyway and the
INVESTIGATING CULTURAL INTERACTIONS

Each teacher-researcher felt that this research project was an important way of letting others know about cultural interactions. They appeared to use the situation to gather evidence to validate what they knew or had hunches about. The significance of the findings was the fact that interactions were observed in classrooms because of the teacher-researchers' own interpretations based on their cultural backgrounds.

Some of the teacher-researchers were concerned about how other staff would interpret their findings and how they would receive information about cultural interactions. This appeared to relate to whether or not the teacher-researcher had a support structure in the school. This means that those schools where there was a support structure either gave each teacher-researcher confidence to stand by their research or they had already undertaken professional development about these issues and as a consequence there was an acceptance of the ideas. This was particularly so at the school where there was an active Multiculturalism in Education Committee that was kept informed of the research in progress. At another school the equivalent committee was not kept
informed as there appeared to be no structure for dissemination of ideas.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study has shown how a group of teachers investigated cultural interactions in their schools. From it conclusions can be drawn about research project management, teachers as researchers and the issues relating to investigating cultural interactions.

RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT

I based the management strategies for this project on those I had developed as a project officer in the Education Department of South Australia over several years. In this section I draw conclusions about the management roles involved in project responsibility, school and participant selection, research plan, teacher-researchers' support and dissemination of findings.

PROJECT RESPONSIBILITY

In the early stages of establishing the research projects I made many decisions as the research manager. One of the most critical decisions to be made was who would be responsible for each aspect of the project.
I knew that the project could have a focus on whole school change. This would mean that decisions about the research question, methods and the analysis would have been made by a representative group of staff, parents and students in the school for their own purposes. It could also have been a piece of research, initiated and controlled by me, a centrally based outsider. In this case decisions would have been made by me for my purposes as a system's wide policy maker. However, I chose to initiate school based research where a group of teachers undertook their own research. In this case the teacher-researchers were responsible for their own projects, they decided their questions and methods and they brought their own experiences to the task of interpreting the data. Once the projects were in place it was my role to support the teacher-researchers rather than actually carrying out the research or attempting to facilitate whole school change.

Each of the above models for research would have provided information to the schools, to the system and to the individual teachers who participated. However, each would have provided different information because the questions, methods and analysis would have been different for each model.
Although the choice of model was critical in determining the kind of information the study identified, the actual decision was a relatively easy one. I chose the model of teacher-as-researcher for the following reasons. Firstly, I believe that teachers are the practitioners who know their own situation; the students, the curriculum and the other staff. Secondly, as a curriculum project officer my role was to support schools and educators as they explored issues relating to providing a supportive, safe learning environment for students. Thirdly, I believe that my role as a project officer in the equity field was not to speak on behalf of people of minority groups but to provide ways for people from minority groups to voice their own concerns.

This study has confirmed my belief that the teacher-as-researcher model is a powerful method of research. It provides teachers with the research skills and opportunity to reflect on and change their own practices. It also allows teachers to control the information about schools which is used to change the whole system.

However, I still believe that there is a place for the other two models of whole school change and centrally based research. Decisions about the appropriate
method need to be made for each research question taking into account other factors such as the purpose of the study, the resources, the initiator and the other participants.

SCHOOL AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Even after the lengthy process of deciding criteria for school selection and negotiation with the schools only one school appeared to provide adequate support structures for the teacher-researchers. That school had a well established committee structure, a supportive principal and other teachers who were interested and involved in supporting the teacher-researchers. Those schools without positive support structures made teacher-researchers feel isolated and powerless to inform others on their staff. This reinforces the need for research project managers to either select schools with a supportive environment or to set up these structures. The latter task is a difficult one for an outsider as it would appear that supportive environments are created by a collection of factors. Even those schools with committees which should be supportive are only as successful as the active participants make them. The challenge for project managers is how to identify a supportive environment when some of the factors are as subtle as the participants' relationships within the
school. One factor which is easier to identify is the importance of a dynamic and committed principal who consciously establishes the formal support structures while at the same time acknowledges the personal strengths of each staff member.

It seems that it is important for managers to select teachers who are able to work well together. Criteria for working well together includes the availability of support in the school, a common research interest, a common understanding of research methods and a commitment to working collaboratively. There appears to be some risk in any project if we take the notion of collaboration seriously and these criteria are not met.

The selection process actually determined the actual scope of the research. This was because I had set the requirement that the teachers were to be of non English speaking backgrounds or Aboriginal and because they were encouraged to set their research question based on their own experiences. The research project therefore covered particular aspects and not others. For example interactions concerning students newly arrived in Australia and students from Asian countries in particular were not examined because they were not relevant issues to those teachers selected as researchers.
When planning research it is necessary to take into account working relationships. It is clear that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together on a topic such as this presents a situation which is complex and requires time and negotiation skills. It is complex because it is difficult for non-Aboriginal people to understand the issues involved. This would require an ongoing learning process, not possible, given the constraints of this project. It is also difficult because of the unrealistic demands put on Aboriginal Education Workers in our system, who are expected to work in a number of schools, on the complex tasks of supporting Aboriginal students, which involves not only direct counselling, but also requires the long-term professional development of staff about Aboriginal students. Other specialist teachers are often also in the difficult position of holding several part-time positions, sometimes in junior and primary sections of a school. This causes them to feel their work is overwhelming and fragmented.

TEACHER-RESEARCHERS’ SUPPORT

Throughout the project I provided ongoing support as the teacher-researchers made decisions about their research. I was aware that I would have to provide
information about research techniques but I hadn't appreciated how much information would be needed. It is one thing to use teachers as research assistants where their task is to carry out a preplanned methodology. It is quite another thing to expect teachers, inexperienced in research, to be aware of the complex array of options that researchers have to grapple with. I provided information about research techniques, talked through what was manageable in time and processes, gave information about the topic, built up the teacher-researchers' confidence about research, got them to stop and reflect on their findings, challenged their interpretations and valued their contributions, by reassuring them that their research was valid and that their writing was clear.

Research project management also involves setting up strategies for support for the researchers. The study confirmed the importance of teacher-researchers being part of a research community. This sense of community provided by meeting together as a group gave them the knowledge that their findings were a part of a wider research project which eased their sense of responsibility. Support from each other was also important as they talked through their research and read each others' work.

The teacher-researchers appreciated the clear goals,
timelines and background information I presented to them at the beginning of the project. On reflection they all said that the project was manageable, that the length of time was not too demanding and the amount of release from school was not too much. I believe that because the plan was clear at the beginning and because we kept to the schedule they did not feel overworked.

DISSEMINATION

The impact of research depends upon the dissemination processes. I believe this is the case at the systems level and in this study this involved formal links with central and area policy makers, other schools and networks.

The teacher-researchers also took part in disseminating information. They had an immediate impact as they informed others in their schools about their findings. I found myself as research manager not only noticing these effects but also contributing to them as I encouraged and extended the teachers to share their information. The professional development of the teacher-researchers and others in their schools needs to be an acknowledged part of this and other research projects.
This study confirmed Peeke's (1984) findings that teachers encounter certain difficulties when undertaking research. He described these difficulties in the categories of practical, affinity and role difficulties. In this section this study's research findings are summarised using Peek's categories. Also included is information about the positive aspects of research as training for teachers.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Like those in Peeke's study the teacher-researchers found that time was their greatest problem. We expected that time would need to be well managed but we were surprised by how difficult it was to even negotiate time together. It would appear that this was because those people selected and interested in doing research, and research about cultural interactions in particular, are those who are already heavily involved in activities around the school.

The teacher-researchers felt constrained by time at all times, but in particular, when they were writing up their research findings. They seemed to appreciate doing this in a group. However, they felt frustrated that some of that time was spent discussing the
projects and reconnecting with each other even though they realised that it was a necessary part of the writing process.

AFFINITY ISSUES

We found that some of the teacher-researchers had difficulty collecting data from other teachers or from colleagues of higher status, due to the teacher’s status as a short-term contract teacher or because they were regarded as inexperienced. As many teachers who are on short term contracts or are who have recently graduated are enthusiastic, committed and have particular knowledge and skills this issue of their credibility cannot be ignored. Research project managers and school administrators have a role in supporting these teachers as well as addressing this issue with other staff.

I was quite surprised at how reluctant the teacher-researchers were to be released from their classes. Even where funds were available for release the teachers were careful not to do it often, not to do it two days in a row and they said they would prefer to do much of the research in their own time. One way of supporting teachers as researchers would be to program release time into the timetable rather than giving them isolated release time from the classroom.
ROLE ISSUES

The role difficulties described by Peeke were particularly applicable in this project as the teacher-researchers identified the dilemmas of being teachers and researchers, as well as those associated with attempting to research topics that are not valued by others. It is interesting to note again that those teachers at supportive schools did not experience difficulties with others not taking their research seriously. It appears that students have set expectations of the role of teachers and feel confused when that role is changed.

The constraints and dilemmas in fulfilling their dual function must be set against the positive aspects of researching in a situation in which they are also participants; where they know the students well before the research and where they have control over the research in their own schools.

The teacher-researchers were reluctant to use tape recorders. This appears to relate to lack of time to transcribe and the fact that they felt it would intrude in the classroom situation. I believe that these reasons tie in with the dilemmas teacher-researchers face. They are limited in the
amount of time they can spend on research and on out of school time in particular. They are also in the position of having to teach as well as research the same students, which makes them particularly sensitive to any intrusive methods.

RESEARCH AS TRAINING

The importance of research as a professional development cannot be underestimated. I was conscious of this when I planned the project but I was surprised by the impact that it had on the teachers involved.

The teacher-researchers gained confidence in their abilities to undertake research from the project. Helen presented her findings at several conferences such as the Girls and Multicultural Education (GAME) group. She undertook a major research project in the school in the following year where racial and sexual harassment was investigated in all year levels. She confidently presented the findings of that research to the whole staff. Chris applied for a position as Research Assistant to an Equal Opportunities Officer in a Tertiary Institution. Rob became involved as a teacher representative on the planning group of a joint South Australian College of Advanced Education-Education Department Professional Development Program. Rob also planned to undertake
further graduate studies.

Other teachers in each school also learnt about cultural interactions and about research from the teacher-researchers.

The teacher-researchers undertook their research tasks in a range of unique ways. They showed differences in their dependence or independence to undertake the tasks, their focus on individual students or their interest in overall trends and their choice of research methods. It would appear that individual teacher-researchers have a range of educational backgrounds and previous experience in particular kinds of research.

This range of dependency, I believe, relates to two things. Firstly, teachers are busy and those who are involved in extra curricular activities in particular have very little time to stop and reflect. They must use information as it is presented. Given that this project had a tight timeline it seems fair that they used information offered with little questioning or refusal. Secondly I believe that teachers are dependent on outsiders because of the traditional methods that have been used by professional development programs which has led teachers to expect project officers to be experts.
The teacher-researchers displayed a range of confidence in their ability to write. This relates to their previous experiences as students and the confidence they feel in particular pieces of research. Again those with a supportive school environment found this task easier and teacher reference groups to check research findings a useful and supportive process.

INVESTIGATING CULTURAL INTERACTIONS

This section describes the findings of the research projects in schools. The strengths and limitations of investigating cultural interactions in these schools is then discussed.

FINDINGS

As the teacher-researchers investigated the cultural interactions of the students in their classes, teacher-student interactions and school structures that help or hinder positive cultural interactions also emerged.

They found that student friendship groups are often based on gender and culture where possible. Where students were isolated from their own cultural group
they chose other students of non English speaking backgrounds as friends. When boys and girls of non English speaking backgrounds have the support of a group they express positive attitudes towards their language and culture. However when they are isolated, they are more likely to deny their cultural background.

The researchers found that students have a hierarchy of power maintained by harassment. Boys appear to be in the most powerful positions. Then girls of English speaking background appear to treat girls of non English speaking backgrounds in ways similar to the ways boys treat girls. Aboriginal girls and boys receive both racial and sexual harassment.

Some other teachers in the schools were found to be unaware of the cultural backgrounds of their students and the impact this has on learning. However, the teacher-researchers were aware of the impact of negative interactions from their own experiences as students of minority groups.

There appear to be few structures in schools to combat racism. The first step in addressing this issue is to help teachers identify the behaviour and label it as inappropriate so that it can be dealt with. This project has shown one way of identifying racial
harassment is by focussing on the cultural interactions in schools. It has also shown that teachers of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal Education Workers have some suggestions to make to other educators if they are prepared to listen.

STRENGTHS

The teacher-researchers' own cultural backgrounds provided important information as they investigated cultural interactions. This information helped them set their questions according to their experiences, put their subjects at ease and helped them interpret the data.

Research projects such as this provide people of non English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal people with avenues for letting others know about cultural interactions as they gather evidence to validate what they have always known. They also help them articulate their experiences.

The teacher-researchers found that the task of writing personal profiles, designed to help them discuss their own cultural backgrounds and experiences relating to cultural interactions, was a valuable exercise. It provided them with the chance to focus their attention
on the topic in a personal way. It also reinforced the notion that their own interpretations based on their experiences were valued as an important part of the research. Their fear of biased research was overcome when they checked their research findings with others.

LIMITATIONS

It appears that students do not expect teachers to ask them about their cultural backgrounds and are suspicious of teachers who ask about such personal issues. Perhaps this is because students have not had the opportunity to talk about their cultural backgrounds at school and therefore they do not have the terminology to use. On the other hand it may also indicate that when it has been talked about in the past they have regretted the consequences. One strategy for overcoming this reservation would be to encourage students to explore their identity as part of the curriculum.

Teacher-researchers were concerned about how other staff would interpret their findings and how they would receive information about cultural interactions. This appeared to relate to the formal and informal support structures available to them. This means that those schools where there is a support structure
either give teacher-researchers confidence to stand by their research or the other staff are prepared for the information by other professional development and as a consequence accept the ideas.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focussed on only some aspects of cultural interactions in schools. It was quite clear that issues relating to cultural background and gender were drawn out because of the discussions based on the research readings I presented to the teacher-researchers at the beginning of the project. Other factors which were not addressed were those relating to students' socio-economic situations and those relating to students with disabilities.

This study presents a model for other research projects designed to investigate classroom interactions focussing on other equity issues in other schools. It shows how one group of teachers investigated the cultural interactions in their classes. It is applicable to many other teachers and schools who are interested in investigating interactions with a focus on other factors.

It is now important to explore the implications this research has for learning. Studies are necessary
which explore how interaction patterns present barriers to learning through harassment or through the maintenance of stereotype views which lower teacher expectations for students and for specific groups of students such as girls, students of non English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal students and those with disabilities.
APPENDIX A

REFLECTIONS

1. What did you plan to do, but didn’t?

2. What support was useful? What other support would have been useful?

3. What would you like to find out about now and what would you need to do to find out?

4. What advice would you give to others attempting similar research?

5. What needs to happen to your research?
## Appendix B

**Observation Sheet**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observable Behaviour</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
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RACIAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

Racial harassment occurs in all schools, everyday, it can be:
- open eg name calling between students or racist slogans painted on walls
- non verbal eg students not listening to each other or teachers not taking an interest in the work done by an Aboriginal Education Worker.
- structural eg Aboriginal people not being involved in developing behavioural management plans, Aboriginal students being isolated from other Aboriginal students or an inappropriate location of the Aboriginal students' room.

Describe a racist event that you (as an Aboriginal Education Worker, student or parent) have:
- seen
- been a part of, or
- had to deal with.

What happened?
Who took part?
Who dealt with it?
How was it dealt with?
SUGGESTED HEADINGS

1. TITLE
2. RESEARCH QUESTION

What did I set out to find?

3. BACKGROUND

My starting points personal experiences and other research

4. CONTEXT

School
Class
Groups of students selected and why they were selected

5. METHODOLOGY

What did I do and why?
What did I learn? Surprises, confirmations

7. NEXT STEPS
What would I like to find out now?

What action am I going to take because of the findings? (individual, school)
7. NEXT STEPS

What would I like to find out now?

What action am I going to take because of the findings? (individual, school)

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