NOT JUST ANOTHER KINDERGARTEN

Characteristics of participation in a pre-school for part-Aboriginal mothers and children in Adelaide.

Claudia G. Knapman

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I hereby declare that this thesis is all my own work and that all known sources are acknowledged.

Claudia C. Knapman

No substantive information about subjects or incidents reported in this study may be quoted without permission of the author.


INTRODUCTION

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Many part-Aboriginal women have never been into a white person's home, have never really seen a dinner table, a house cleared, a baby bathed or garden tended. They know how to maintain the standards expected of them by white neighbours. Most part-Aboriginals are conscious of a century of discrimination against their people, and now their own families, their friends, themselves and their children. To avoid further rebuffs they keep out of the way and live as they know how. The white man will not leave them alone. He sees them as a problem and dares to wonder why they seem so disinterested in the things he thinks important; why they fail at school, cannot hold a job, cannot keep their homes "respectable", are drunk, disorderly and frequent victims of crime and violence.
INTRODUCTION

Australia's Aborigines are disadvantaged in terms of employment, housing, health, education, social recognition and political priority. They have been separated legally, socially and economically from the wider community. They are a people apart. Part-Aborigines in the cities and larger towns are usually oriented towards a European way of life. Their place in tribal society no longer exists. They desire to live as other city-dwelling Australians, maintaining the little that remains of their tribal culture within the framework of an urban way of life. However, they find no place in the white man's community. They are "Outcasts in White Australia". Many part-Aboriginal women have never been into a white person's home, have never really seen a dinner cooked, a house cleaned, a baby bathed or garden tended. They do not know how to maintain the standards expected of them by white neighbours. Most part-Aborigines are conscious of a century of discrimination against their people, and now their own families, their friends, themselves and their children. To avoid further rebuffs they keep out of the way and live as they know how.

The white man will not leave them alone. He sees them as a problem and dares to wonder why they seem so disinterested in the things he thinks important; why they fail at school, cannot hold a job, cannot keep their homes "respectable", are drunk, disorderly and
sullen. With a stirring of conscience he tries to provide things he "knows" they need and curses them for not accepting. The Aboriginal people see that there is no problem for the white man to solve, because he cannot repair two centuries of damage and demoralisation except by starting with himself.

White Australians cannot compensate for the past. They cannot change people according to plan. There is no readymade formula for "advancement", "integration" or "assimilation". White Australians can only provide opportunities for help and self-help from which the Aboriginal people may choose. Many have assumed that if the white society sees a need in Aboriginal society and provides for it, the Aboriginal response will automatically follow. However, there is no reason to believe that needs relative to the white society are also "felt needs" to the Aboriginal.

Thus, attempts to help are experiments. They are trial-and-error ventures which seek to capture the interest of the local Aboriginal people, to gain their confidence and, hopefully, to meet their needs. They may be viewed with deep distrust or with apathy, or branded with paternalism.

One Centre for help and self-help with Adelaide part-Aborigines focuses on the education of the pre-school child. Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal families see little need for education. The children's progress through school is hampered by inadequate preparation for the school situation, frequent absences, frequent changes of school, incongruity of home and
school environments, insufficient motivation and early leaving. Educational disadvantage goes hand in hand with disadvantage in employment, housing and social acceptance. It cannot be considered in isolation. The factors operative in this area must be sought in the complex interplay between the culture of the home and that of the wider society.

This experimental Centre in Adelaide seeks to relate education and the home environment by providing nursery, pre-school and mothers' facilities in a single, informal meeting place. Pre-schools, nurseries and mothers' groups are needs of the white community. It cannot be assumed that these are the facilities desired by the Aboriginal mother. However, this Centre functions as a friendly and personal gathering of mothers and children, rather than as a formal organisation. This approach seems to meet the needs of certain families who choose to be involved.

A successful Centre of this kind may provide guidelines for work with other Aboriginal people. To assess its significance within this broader framework it is important to know how the Centre runs, why particular families respond, and what needs the Centre meets. It is widely believed that the participation of mothers in pre-school programmes fosters parental understanding of the Aboriginal child's educational needs. How such participation may be encouraged, and the need for it made plain to Aboriginal parents, has received scant attention. Clearly, the decision to participate rests with the mother. On her depends the
viability of any mother and child Centre. Therefore, it is necessary to understand with which Aboriginal women this Adelaide Centre has had success. The central purpose of this study is to isolate the sociological characteristics of the mothers involved. The focal question may be framed as follows:

Do the part-Aboriginal mothers who participate with their children in this city pre-school programme have in common
(1) particular life-styles,
(2) sociological characteristics, or
(3) past experiences
which predispose them towards involvement?

Footnotes
Chapter I  NEITHER BLACK NOR WHITE

The Aboriginal has appeared only as a passive figure in most historical studies and few have sought to trace present causes of stress in Aboriginal society to the history that produced them.

C.D. Rowley has provided a detailed and illuminating account of the existing knowledge of contacts between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, of policy and of practice. He argues convincingly that the situation of the Aboriginal appears to be more uniformly depressed than that of any other indigenous minority under British colonisation. His labour was not regarded as an economic asset, he had no clearly demarcated land, he had no organisation for effective warfare and no chief or unitary tribal leadership. In white society, control and tuition have been regarded as the only possible preludes to his eventual citizenship. The special laws to provide for this resulted in setting the "native" apart until he was able to think and behave like a white man.

The part-Aboriginal has been considered particularly eligible for such tuition toward absorption. His lighter skin enabled him to "pass" more easily into white society and, it was believed, the advantage he had over the full-blood as a result of his genetic composition helped him to learn appropriate behaviour patterns more readily. Only very recently has the desire for an Aboriginal identity been acknowledged, and the emphasis shifted from assimilation to integration.
As recently as 1965 it was stated that the policy of assimilation seeks that all persons of Aboriginal descent will choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living as that of other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community—enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities and influenced by the same hopes and loyalties as other Australians. 2

Such assimilation of the Aborigines as an all-embracing policy is regarded as psychologically unsound. It makes the erroneous assumption that their mental health and harmonious adjustment cannot be fostered through allegiance to, and organisation around, some aspects of their own cultural heritage as has been recognised in the policy of integration of European migrants. 3 As Schapper points out, for a policy to qualify as integration it must cater for real equal-life opportunities but, as distinct from assimilation, tolerate and value cultural differences between persons with dissimilar ethnic heritages. 4 Elsewhere, he points out that welfare (the supposed method of assimilation) is static and self-perpetuating and does not go beyond the current welfare services we ourselves have. It is not in itself a sufficient condition for advancement to integration. 5

World War II provided an important stimulus for Aboriginal movement into the cities and towns. More Aborigines began to work in industrial types of employment. Chances seemed better and the opportunity to work for award wages was an incentive to the young and ambitious.
The majority of those who moved were part-Aborigines who had never fitted into traditional society. Rowley notes that this movement must have had a profound effect on Aboriginal sophistication.

Like the other wartime changes, it was a development out of phase with a policy which saw communities living under control on stations as being 'trained' to enter the wider community. The city Aborigine was moving against the prevailing policy and practice with regard to his destiny.

Ronald and Catherine Berndt's *From Black to White* in South Australia, 1951, was the first study to look in detail at Aborigines in South Australia. They devoted a chapter to a description of living conditions in the West End of Adelaide, and to Aboriginal reasons for moving to the city. They had come for medical attention, employment, to spend money in the shopping centre, or on their way to other districts. Many did not stay and many migrated to the country for seasonal work, returning to the city when the shearing or fruit picking was over. The Berndt's noted that the factor of skin colouring was more significant in determining employment than efficiency or personal ability, and that the women seemed better able to cope than the men. The women worked mostly as domestic helps, cleaners and charwomen, in factories and, if lighter skinned, as shop assistants in big stores, in cafes, or as cooks in hotels. Their houses were for the most part squalid and in bad repair, but often no worse than their white neighbours. A further observation was that Adelaide's Aborigines did
not constitute an homogeneous group, that most had little knowledge of Aboriginal life and culture, saw their future in identification with the white community, and lacked any group solidarity and cohesion. They noted that Aboriginal drunkenness, petty crime and psychological problems were symptoms of the unrest amongst these people who, conscious of the disadvantages and disabilities they suffered because of their Aboriginal descent, were unable or unwilling to overcome them.

Fay Gale concentrated in her study on the part-Aborigines of South Australia.\(^8\) She stated that the part-Aboriginal has emerged from two entirely different cultures, but usually belongs to neither. He is attracted by both, but accepted by neither. As an isolated individual he cannot survive, so he clings to the group which is just as insecure and lacking in identity as himself. Gale noted that the majority of mixed-bloods in the Southern parts of the State had no contact with tribalised people, but that some retained aspects of Aboriginal culture (of which they seemed quite unaware) even to the fifth generation. However, family sharing, communal organisation and lack of economic responsibility she attributed to the culture of poverty, also common to whites of low socio-economic status, rather than to tribal background. Gale felt that absorption was the only possible solution for the Adelaide part-Aboriginal community. Although many Adelaide people still retained ties with the part-Aboriginal communities on the Government stations of Point Pearce
and Point McLeay, or on the West Coast, she felt that in most aspects they were virtually assimilated to urban life. She commented on the definite sense of "community" which existed for part-Aborigines in several areas and concluded that in some cases it was as difficult for a part-Aboriginal from one region to be accepted by the Aboriginal community of another region, as it was for him to be accepted by the white community. For Gale, the part-Aboriginal posed a social rather than a racial problem.

Inglis' 1961 study is the most detailed about Adelaide's Aborigines, and is the result of 18 months work in the city. She reinforced Gale's view that the population in Adelaide was not socially homogeneous or geographically concentrated, and that very few were first generation mixed-blood, but were more often third or fourth generation. She emphasised the predominance of people from Point Pearce and Point McLeay in the city, with particular reference to the dominant position of Point Pearce people. Inglis made the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders". The "outsiders" were those who had "passed" into white society and tended to come from the "North", or were Reserve people who had severed connections with the part-Aboriginal community. The "insiders" came from Point Pearce and Point McLeay and strongly resented people trying to detach themselves from their home community. Inglis noted that within this group there was little effective pressure for a change in habits or attitudes, and little conscious effort to emulate middle class whites.
Those who keep clean and well-appointed houses, and they are a majority, do so because they were taught by their parents to do so, and their economic security makes the buying of necessities and luxuries possible. The women, compared with the men, showed great initiative and were most resourceful in locating employment, houses and additional help through the Aborigines Department and other welfare agencies. Inglis concluded that for the "insiders", rather than the conscious adoption of white ideals, the only real pressure to conform came from the Department. Economically, however, they were oriented to city life, they regarded themselves as "assimilated" and, as far as the women were concerned, favoured marriage with whites. Like Gale, Inglis felt their problems had ceased to have much connection with race.

There is no precise estimate of the part-Aboriginal population. The Census estimated that there were 5,505 Aborigines and part-Aborigines in South Australia in 1966. It is highly likely that this is an underestimate of some magnitude. The Census estimates (to 1971) excluded part-Aborigines of less than 50% Aboriginal descent and classified them as "European". Those with little Aboriginal ancestry were classed as "European" even if they identified as Aboriginal. On the other hand, Aborigines who "passed" into the white community, and yet who are 50% Aboriginal, may have stated their race as "European". In the Adelaide context the old Census definitions clearly ignored the fact that the part-Aboriginal is not just one generation...
removed from the full-blood, but is part of a self-
perpetuating community and has been for the past three,
four or five generations. Most Adelaide people,
therefore, have been technically "European" for Census
purposes. This narrow definition based on 50%
Aboriginality not only underestimates the actual
population, but reduces the disparity between European
and Aboriginal Australians in matters of education,
health, employment and standard of living by falsely
including Aborigines with "Europeans".

The newly worded Census definition, currently
accepted by the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs,
allows those who identify as Aborigines to be classed as
Aborigines. Moriarty estimated that there were 3,000
people in Adelaide in 1969 who identified as Aborigines.¹²
In 1972 the Aboriginal Education Foundation stated that
there were 3,500 people of Aboriginal descent living in
metropolitan Adelaide.¹³ However, these estimates are
based on intelligent guesswork. No reliable figures
exist. Nevertheless, these are the people referred to
in the studies of the Berndts, Gale and Inglis. It is
to this community that the mothers in the present study
belong.

Footnotes
2. Hon. C.E. Barnes Further Steps in Assimilation,
Statement in the House of Representatives,
in the Community, Australian Frontier, Canberra, 1966.
Chapter II


7. Melbourne, 1951. See Ch. VII "Adelaide".


Chapter II
THE "CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED": IMPLICATIONS FROM RESEARCH

There is no homogeneous population of Aborigines or part-Aborigines, but two broad groups may be distinguished: the tribally oriented and the European oriented.¹ Grey suggests that the latter, cut off from their tribal origins, retain with yearning their feeling for tribal living.² Moriarty also states that the Adelaide part-Aborigines are distinctly non-white and not fully Aboriginal, but lean more to the Aboriginal than to the white.³ The part-Aboriginal may be oriented to a European way of life, yet searching for his Aboriginal identity. He has a distinct culture of his own.

However, in many respects the European oriented (usually city and town dwellers), may be considered part of the wider population referred to as the "socially" or "culturally disadvantaged". That is, they are as close, or closer to the culture of depressed white groups in the community as to traditional tribal cultures, and share a "culture of poverty" which resembles that of other disadvantaged ethnic and white minorities.⁴ The educational experience of most part-Aboriginal children coincides with that of similarly disadvantaged children. Their school careers are characterised by poor academic achievement, indifference or active hostility to school, undisciplined behaviour, poor attendance, frequent changes of school and a high drop-out rate.⁵ In the following section research with other culturally or socially disadvantaged children is compared with findings in the Aboriginal context. Similarities are stressed.
Extensive research has established that children from lower socio-economic and depressed ethnic minority group backgrounds lack the kinds of experiences that are required for school success. Children from lower class white families perform less well in the school setting than their middle class contemporaries, and children from disadvantaged ethnic groups have even less academic success than children from lower class white families. Similarly, children from other racial groups perform less well on I.Q. tests than do their white counterparts. These findings hold with part-Aborigines. Their educational disadvantages have been extensively documented and, in general, their performance on measures of intelligence and achievement is even lower than that of European children of low socio-economic status.

The greatest retardation usually occurs in those abilities that are most crucial to school success, language and reasoning ability. Evidence increasingly points to the influence of background variables on the pattern of perceptual, language and cognitive development of the child and the subsequent diffusion of the effects of such patterns into all areas of the child's academic and psychological performance. In the absence of adequate language, concept formation and operational thinking fail to develop. Since language capacity and conceptual thinking are interlocked, cumulative learning disabilities are compounded with cultural conflict and the lack of a need for achievement. Teasdale and Katz have shown that language is a critical area for Aboriginal children.
Early attempts at educational intervention tended to use middle class standards as the ideal and desired goal for such children. This is reflected by the label "culturally deprived" which was applied to the target population. This implied that disadvantaged children had been subjected to a dull, sterile environment bereft of meaningful stimulation. However, as Jackson and Marsden noted in their study of British working class families, the homes ... seem more remarkable by the wealth rather than by the paucity of background which they offer to children beginning school. 12 Similarly, Rosenfeld, in his study of Harlem School, noted that a sharp distinction should be made between a "culture of poverty" and a "poverty of culture". 13 He was impressed by the fact that teachers unfamiliar with the social lives of the children found it difficult to perceive the mental ability Negro children must bring to bear in meeting the demands of their existence. Many of the traits which teachers saw as negative were positive forms of adaption to the physical and social environment. In the Aboriginal context Nurcombe and Moffitt pointed out that the child's environment is far from dull and unstimulating, and that the child is exposed very early to the realities of human existence. 14

The term "compensatory education", used to refer to intervention programmes has received similar criticism. It implies that to "compensate" for the deficiencies of background and family the child must be changed to "fit" the system. The critics of this approach direct attention away from the deficiencies of the learner to those of the educational process, and condemn efforts to establish middle class schools in the slums. 15
Criticisms of both labels (and their implicit approaches) are directed at the assumed superiority of white middle class culture. In fact, the disadvantaged are not lacking in social and emotional experiences but rather, they are disadvantaged because they fail to act like white middle class children. It is probable that the basic disadvantage is the absence of certain patterns of experience that are of major importance for later educational achievement.

Although a 'complete' culture, in the sense that it meets part-Aboriginal needs within their value system, it deviates sufficiently from the majority culture to be regarded as restricting or limiting.

Goldberg has pointed out that the real issue is not to imbue these children with middle class values or to strengthen the positive aspects of their own unique cultural forms. The issue is, rather to provide these children with the skills and knowledges which will enable them to select their future direction rather than be hemmed in by the increasingly limited sphere of operations left to those who lack these skills.

For the de-tribalised part-Aboriginal child the future can be viewed only in the context of a white Australian society. Such a future demands that the child cope with the educational structure as it is.

The massive intervention programmes launched in the United States in the 60's — Title I, Upward Bound, Head-Start — have not proved demonstrably successful. However, they have been evaluated only within a very narrow academic framework, and a number of vital factors were overlooked. For example, the lack of uniformity within any one programme was discounted; the target population
was treated as an homogeneous group despite the mounting evidence of the heterogeneity of socially disadvantaged groups; and programmes were not evaluated in relation to their expressed aims but only in terms of children's test performances. Gordon stated that intervention programmes have been discredited by the concern with hypothesis testing or verification studies to the neglect of careful and systematic observation.²² It is clear, however, that the longer action is delayed the more likely cultural effects will be irreversible. Thus, most attention is directed to the pre-school child.²³

There is no conclusive evidence about how to improve the educational experience of such children although language skills are given high priority because of their association with perceptual and cognitive development, and their demonstrated weakness with disadvantaged children.

In the Aboriginal context the importance of pre-schooling is now heavily stressed. Dexter has stated that no one working with Aboriginal children has any doubts about the value of pre-schooling.²⁴ McKeich's 1965-66 research in Western Australia showed that 40.36% part-Aboriginal children repeated Grade I, almost entirely because of their limited pre-school experiences.²⁵ Golding noted that in South Australia it was not uncommon for these children to take 3 years to cover the first year of work.²⁶ However, just as there is no conclusive evidence from overseas research, no one is yet able to spell out exactly what are appropriate forms of pre-schooling for Aboriginal children.

The Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs places the main emphasis on the preparation of the child for
subsequent schooling and believes that other pre-school aims should be subsequent to this. Four aims have been listed. A satisfactory pre-school programme for Aboriginal children should aim deliberately and systematically to develop in the child:

1. suitable attitudes - for example, self-esteem and expectations of personal achievement, enjoyment of purposeful cooperation with other children and adults;
2. necessary learning skills - for example, the ability to concentrate, to listen carefully, to respond, to use imagination, to solve problems;
3. cognitive abilities - for example, concepts of space, time, number, weight, colour;
4. the command of language - for example, the ready use of more extensive and accurate language, which in many cases but by no means all cases will be the English language. 27

How such aims can be achieved will vary in each different situation, and research into possible forms and methods of pre-schooling is currently being carried out in many parts of Australia.

One such research programme at Bourke in North West New South Wales aims to compare 2 experimental pre-school situations. 28 The subjects are Aboriginal and European children 4 years of age. Half the children are being exposed to conventional pre-school activities, involving free play in an environment enriched with appropriate equipment. The other half are in a more structured classroom situation which emphasises direct language stimulation. The two programmes have both shown gains in terms of the children's I.Q. test performance and
language skills, with the more structured situation providing superior results.

A different approach is that of the Bernard Van Leer Family Education Centres in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. These programmes depend on the wishes and active involvement of the local Aboriginal people, and cater for parents and very young children, as well as for 4 year olds. In South Australia's Marree and Ernabella Bernard Van Leer pre-schools there are 4 common aims:

1. to develop the intellectual abilities of Aboriginal children and thus prepare them for more effective entry into the formal school setting;
2. to contribute to the physical, social and emotional development of the children;
3. to develop more favourable parental and community attitudes towards education; and
4. to develop in parents a greater awareness of the physical, mental and social needs of the pre-school child.29

The implementing of these aims differs in the 2 centres. At Marree the centre caters for a part-Aboriginal fringe community, which has few remaining ties with traditional Aboriginal culture. The Pitjatjantjara of Ernabella, however, still retain their own ways of life, organisation and cultural patterns. All experimental approaches to Aboriginal pre-school education tend to concentrate on linguistic skills and basic learning concepts. Along with the stress on early education, overseas evidence increasingly points to the influence of background variables, although it is not clear what aspects
of background are most influential in producing what kinds of deficits in skills. These background variables include a complex of family-related variables (for example, socio-economic status, family size, amenities in the home, parents' educational level, parents' attitudes and aspirations); neighbourhood variables; ethnic variables (for example, level of education open to, or aspired to by, particular social groups); peer group variables; and the inter-relationships between them. These variables are associated with the kind of visual, auditory and tactile stimulation available to the child, and with family and neighbourhood patterns of living. As Gordon noted, although it is probably true that for an individual child good schooling can possibly overcome many of the limitations of his background, for the population at large this relationship does not exist. Home conditions and general conditions of life are more important predictors of school achievement than differences between facilities. Hunt stated that these influences are well developed by the time the child begins kindergarten. He argued that it is possible to provide for the disadvantage of infants and young children before the symptoms appear. It has been suggested that one reason for "fade-out" phenomena in programmes of the Head-Start kind can be traced to the lack of congruence between the aims and methods of the programmes and the home. The initial gains of the child are not retained over time because there is no appropriate reinforcement in the child's everyday situation. Bloom argued that when school and home are mutually reinforcing, the optimal conditions are
present for the child's cognitive development. More education takes place outside of the school than within it. Most of this is in the home. Hence, the stress on the importance of the family in the education of the child.

Although it is clear that the family is the single most important influence on intellectual and emotional development, studies trying to identify the important family factors other than social origin, show few significant results. The Plowden Report, 1964, claimed that parental attitudes were much more important than the background of the child or the characteristics of the school. Hunt stated that child-rearing practices of parents in poverty made for incompetence, and denied to the child opportunities to acquire language and number skills, motivational habits and the values and standards which underlie competence. Silverman attributed greatest importance to the objects in the home, the amount of parental interest in learning, and the amount of practice and encouragement the child received in conversation and general learning. It is generally agreed, however, that the parents' attitudes are the crucial factor. Sharrock asked "which attitudes to what?" and pointed out that there is the problem of ascertaining whether it is parental attitudes to education, or teachers, or the school, or to children, or to life in general, or some of all of these, that is significant. There is no satisfactory answer, but most researchers stress that the parents must be sufficiently involved in the nursery school to understand its importance for their children.
Aside from public relations campaigns between home and school little work has been done on how to stimulate parental interest, or involve the mother in pre-school programmes. Most research concentrates on the child, even in programmes where the mother's involvement is considered important. One exception is the research by Karnes, Teska, Hodgins and Badger, 1970, using the mother as the primary agent of early educational intervention. Twenty mothers with children 12 to 24 months participated in this programme. They were required to meet 2 hours each week to learn teaching techniques to be used with the child at home everyday. The ages of the mothers ranged from 22 to 25; their educational levels from 5 to 13 years; and their numbers of children varied from 1 to 12. The course lasted for 15 months and was completed by 15 of the 20 mothers. Fourteen of these were Negro and one white. The programme was highly structured, well-organised and a success for mothers and children. The authors stated that when parents become actively involved in such projects concerned with the education of their own children, the child benefits and the experience enriches their own lives as well. However, no reasons are suggested for the original interest or continued involvement of these mothers. Karnes et al. noted that one important variable was uncontrolled and that they had no explanation for the concern of the mothers who participated over a 2 year period.

The importance of parental involvement is stressed also in the Aboriginal context. Dexter stated that any gains a pre-school can achieve will not be retained unless
they can be related to the child's home environment. 46 It is necessary to establish and to maintain a close association between the pre-school and the home, with the child's pre-school experiences being complementary to, and building on to, those provided by his home, and with his family being given some understanding of, and appreciation of the value to the child of the pre-schooling, and the methods being used and the reasons for them. 47 De Lemos recommended pre-schooling facilities that would remedy the deficiencies of the Aboriginal home environment, and provide the child with opportunities for perceptual and motor learning, and language development. To do that she advocated the extension of pre-school facilities for even younger children, and the setting up of some sort of centre which would allow for adult education courses and leisure activities for the mothers. 48 Kath Walker also suggested that kindergartens can prove of value not only to the children but to their mothers as well. 49 In the Bernard Van Leer programmes a basic premise is the involvement of parents to try to ensure that what is done in school "spills over" into the home and that the parents will feel interest in, and responsibility for, the pre-school programme. 50 Watts also stated that an essential element is the involvement of parents, particularly mothers, if there is to be continuity in the experiences of the young child. 51 None of these advocates of parental involvement assumes that to secure this involvement will be easy. Richardson et al. commented on the very depressed situation of the part-Aborigines at Marree and the apathy which exists running of the kindergarten is one possible incentive.
among the parents. The workers at the Bourke pre-school were very conscious of the importance of sensitivity regarding the "felt needs" of people with different cultural values and, consequently, a number of principles for contact with the Aboriginal people were established. These were to respect individual and community integrity by showing a non-critical interest in the children; to have something concrete to offer (a kindergarten); to minimise the impression of wishing to "change" the Aboriginal community in any way; and to make all contacts as rewarding as possible. They found that one of the major problems, however, concerned the acceptance of the need for pre-school education by the group whose children were to be involved. Brumbie noted that it is not too hard to build a good relationship with children, but their parents offer a different problem. In Adelaide, the Aboriginal Education Foundation assisted approximately 90 - 100 children to attend pre-school in 1972. A spokesman estimated that not more than 20 other Aboriginal children would attend, and that this figure would probably include those at the Centre which is the focus of this study. Attendance at kindergarten is rarely possible without help, therefore; and the small number attending voluntarily indicates that pre-school education is not highly valued. It is clear that the idea of a pre-school must be attractive to the Aboriginal parents if they are to be actively involved.

Few suggestions are made, however, as to how such parental interest may be fostered. The Bernard Van Leer emphasis on parental responsibility for the continued running of the kindergarten is one possible incentive.
The Bourke programme experienced not only the difficulty of arousing initial interest, but also of sustaining mothers' involvement in the face of difficulties. Moffitt and Nurcombe noted that a problem of equality among Aboriginal and European mothers emerged early in the programme. Cleaning and food preparation was their responsibility, but a few European mothers complained that the Aboriginal mothers were not "pulling their weight". The staff noticed that some Aboriginal mothers began to feel some of the criticism and for this reason dropped out of the scheduled groups. A few Aboriginal mothers were asked if they would prefer to work with their own people, to which they replied that they would.

The importance of pre-schooling for all children and, in particular, for disadvantaged children is readily acknowledged. A great deal of time, effort and money is being directed to the provision of pre-school facilities and the development of programmes suitable for Aboriginal children. At the same time those involved in Aboriginal community work maintain that pre-schooling must involve the parents, especially the mother, and that the family influence is crucial for the children's educational achievement. However, no study has examined the motives of parents participating in such programmes, whether they are representative of the community from which they come, or how their interest is maintained. Karnes et al. stressed that they could not account for the concern shown by the mothers in their programme. The experience of the Bourke pre-school indicates that the need for
pre-schooling is not readily understood and once stimulated, interest can dissipate if difficulties arise. Given the importance of both the pre-school years and the mother's participation, it is vital to consider what it is about particular family situations and home cultures that leads to the active involvement of the mother.

It should be emphasised that although comparison is useful, part-Aboriginal families cannot be equated with white disadvantaged groups. Although they may be as near, or nearer, to such groups as to tribal culture, the existence of distinctly part-Aboriginal sub-cultures must be taken into account in any study of part-Aborigines home background and family life. Therefore, it is to the limited research on part-Aboriginal city life that one must turn to build an impression of the kinds of families that might be involved in a city pre-school programme.

Wilson was concerned primarily with assimilation in his report on a part-Aboriginal settlement in Perth in 1958. He noted that social assimilation - in the sense of interaction with all sectors of the larger community - was far from complete even for the urban part-Aboriginal elites of relatively high economic status. The social interaction of the members of the settlement was predominantly with other "nugas" and contacts with whites were limited to the formal situations of tradesmen and storekeeper encounters. Wilson commented that this restricted interaction did not allow for the validation of behaviour patterns appropriate in the wider community. Realistic conceptions did not develop and if embarassing
or traumatic experiences occurred they could lead to the abandonment of an individual's attempts to "get on". However, Wilson pointed out that amongst the young adults much more informal contact with whites took place.

Makin's 1966 study was a broader survey of people of Aboriginal descent in Perth. He found families of all types, from new residents to those always in the Perth area, and that they were distributed along a status scale according to their relative degree of adjustment to urban society. This adjustment was reflected in the particular life styles, type of occupation, educational background and attitudes towards the wider society. Makin drew parallels with the findings of Barwick's Melbourne study on behavioural and structural characteristics of the family. Some of these included the prevalence of de-facto unions, the relative instability of most marriages, the marginal position of the father within the family household, and the strength of the mother role. Reference was also made to the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" made by Inglis in her Adelaide study. Makin felt these categories corresponded to the Perth situation but were not clearly demarcated from one another. It was in the "outsider" group, who were socially mobile, that the husband/father role assumed greater importance within the family, and these fathers were also far more concerned with the education and upbringing of their children. Makin pointed to the importance of colour as a discriminating factor between the socially mobile and the conspicuously Aboriginal. For those who had internalised the values of the wider system it was considered desirable to many "white" or
"light", a person with a steady job who did not drink.

Barwick noted that the total Aboriginal population of Melbourne at any point in time was simply an aggregate of persons, most of whom came from rural districts. She distinguished three groups: these were the apathetic, resigned to their low ascribed status and insensitive to disapproval of their habits; those who "passed" and disassociated themselves completely from their Aboriginal identity; and a third group, increasing in size, of those who re-affirmed the value of their Aboriginal identity, of "respectability" and of allegiance to the group. Barwick tended to concentrate her examination of the household on this third group, and her findings (as noted) were similar to Makin's. She emphasised particularly the well-defined role of the woman as household manager and child-rearer, in contrast to the ill-defined role of the father simply as a good worker bringing home his wage regularly. Barwick noted, however, that marriage with whites was not regarded as a step up the social ladder as it was in other states. The range of white spouses included Maltese, Yugoslav, Irish and Scottish immigrants, and white Australians. With reference to child-rearing she noted that children were indulged, discipline casual and inconsistent and the physical demonstration of affection the most notable feature. Few adults showed interest in skills learned at school, homework or children's reading. Elsewhere Barwick stated that most of these people desired an urban standard of housing and regular employment, but few desired the other characteristics of urbanisation such as the breakdown of the extended family and kinship.
bonds, and the achievement of material success on an individual or nuclear family basis. She felt that members of the part-Aboriginal population of Adelaide seemed more urban and more nearly assimilated as nuclear families than their Melbourne counterparts.

Beasley was concerned with documenting the characteristics of Sydney's Aboriginal population. She noted that they were widely distributed throughout the entire city and fell into 2 major categories, the Sydney born and those who had migrated to Sydney. In her study of housing conditions she pointed to overcrowding as a major feature; the result of high rents, large households and kin obligations. She found that 81 of the 100 homes she visited were cottages or houses, and that 74 of the households were basically single nuclear families.

In her study of the health problems of Sydney Aboriginal children Lickiss investigated family life, city life, neighbours, relatives and friends. She commented that where a grandmother was present her influence was most significant for child-rearing and household decisions. Particular attention was drawn to residential mobility; haphazard, irregular eating problems; and overcrowding, as factors associated with children's ill-health. Lickiss noted that pre-school lecture, children and mothers often went without food till mid-morning. She also pointed to the failure of existing clinics for mothers and babies to attract Aboriginal parents. Reasons for not using such clinics were that it was unnecessary; too much time was taken up getting
the children ready and waiting at the clinic; the advice given was often unhelpful, and the fear experienced in the clinic situation.

Roger's Brisbane study dealt with 2 groups within the Brisbane area; a sub-standard, wholly Aboriginal settlement and a more prosperous group living within the white community. She drew attention to the more middle class attitudes and more mobile pattern of employment of the suburban group. Even so, all employment was below white collar level. However, there were no significant differences between the groups on such factors as satisfaction with present home, home ownership, father's education, educational goals for children, or place of origin. However, Rogers commented on the tenacity of purpose characteristic of the socially mobile group, in contrast to the poor group for whom she saw little likelihood of change.

Reference has been made already to three Adelaide studies. Together with the above material a somewhat sketchy picture of Australia's urban Aborigines emerges. It is clear that there are differences between each city and within each city, partly as a result of local history, particular kin groupings and opportunities for adaption to city life. However, it is also clear that urban Aborigines share certain characteristics of family structure, employment, housing and health. Of particular significance is the role of the Aboriginal woman. Detailed and systematic observation is required to identify the characteristics of any one group, and then to place that group within the broader framework of the urban Aborigine.
The crucial importance of the pre-school years has been established and acted upon. Parental understanding is also acknowledged to be of vital significance. However, little has been done to stimulate parental interest or to secure mothers' participation. An attempt is made in this study to examine a pre-school programme which has attracted and maintained the interest of part-Aboriginal mothers. In particular, the characteristics of these mothers (and their families) are examined in the light of present knowledge about city-dwelling Aborigines.

Footnotes


5. R.K. Kelsall and Helen M. Kelsall Social Disadvantage and Educational Opportunity, Great Britain, 1971. This summarises many studies documenting the evidence for the "socially disadvantaged" in Ch.2. Similar documentation of the Aboriginal situation is found in S.S. Dunn and C.M. Tatz (eds.) Aborigines and Education, Melbourne, 1969.


9. For example, D.W. McElwain "Some aspects of the cognitive ability of Aboriginal children", in Dunn and Tatz, op.cit.


15. For example, Mario D. Fantini and Gerald Weinstein "Taking Advantage of the Disadvantaged", in Dorothy Rogers Issues in Child Psychology, California, 1969.


24. B.G. Dexter, address at opening of Kindergarten Headstart at Townsville on 8 July, 1972, Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra.

25. McKeich, loc. cit., p. 4.


29. Richardson, Hart and Teasdale, op. cit.


32. Kelsall and Kelsall, op. cit. Ch. 3.

33. Gordon, loc. cit.


35. McDill et al., op. cit.


40. ibid., p.75.


42. Silverman, loc.cit.

43. Sharrock, loc.cit., p.188.

44. Bloom, Davis and Hess, op.cit.


46. Dexter, op.cit.

47. ibid., p.3.


49. Kath Walker "Aborigines - assets or liabilities", in Dunn and Tatz, op.cit.

50. Richardson et.al., op.cit.

51. Watts "Aboriginal Pre-School Education", op.cit.

52. Richardson et.al., op.cit.


55. Nancy Brumbie "The Aboriginal child moves into our culture", in Dunn and Tatz, op.cit.

56. Personal communication Aboriginal Education Foundation of South Australia, 23.2.73.

57. Moffitt and Nurcombe, loc.cit.

58. Karnes et al., see p.21.

60. C.F. Makin A Socio-Economic Anthropological Survey of People of Aboriginal Descent in the Metropolitan Region of Perth, W.A., Ph.D., University of Western Australia, 1970.

61. Dianne E. Barwick A little more than kin: Regional Affiliation and Group Identity Among Aboriginal Migrants in Melbourne, Ph.D., A.N.U., 1963.

62. Inglis, loc.cit., see pp. 9 - 10.

63. Barwick, op.cit.


68. See pp. 7 - 11.
Chapter III  THE METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Description of Field Site

In September 1971 a Centre for Aboriginal mothers and children began at an Adelaide city Church. It arose from the social concern of a group of members who, after surveying the needs of Adelaide's Aboriginal population, felt that help could be provided best for pre-schoolers and their mothers. The goal is not just the provision of another kindergarten, but

...is to help the children, together with their mothers, to have a sense of self-worth and dignity by mixing and doing things together. 1

The Centre functions 3 mornings each week (Tuesday to Thursday) from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon in an old 2-storey house next to the Church. There are 3 aspects to the project.

(1) **The Kindergarten** was staffed for the first 9 months by a part-Aboriginal trained kindergarten teacher (1 of the 2 available in S.A.), who resigned for family reasons and was replaced by an English-Australian trained kindergarten teacher. Both teachers received payment. The kindergarten caters for 12 children 3 - 4 years of age.

Many of these children need detailed individual supervision and it is necessary for volunteers to assist the teacher in the running of the kindergarten. The staff are considering the incorporation of mothers into the kindergarten programme as teaching assistants, however, there are a number of difficulties associated with this, (for example, some mothers would not want to be involved in this
way, but may be jealous of other mothers who did.) With the older children particular emphasis is placed on preparation for school. The 3 year olds are introduced more slowly to the formal learning situation. With all children the development of language skills and the ability to concentrate is stressed.

(2) The Nursery caters for 14 children under 3, with an average daily attendance of 11. Its chief purpose is to provide the mothers with a creche for the children during the meeting of the mothers' group. It also provides opportunities for the basic learning of skills required before a child can progress to the more structured kindergarten situation. Considerable importance is given to the demonstrated affection for, and acceptance of, these children by white helpers. The leader is a trained social worker.

(3) The Mothers' Group is intended to provide a friendly meeting place for Aboriginal women. 13 mothers are involved at present, with an average attendance of 8 each day. Volunteers attend each day as hostesses to help the mothers as required, with an emphasis on home management skills. Some mothers learn to knit, sew, crochet and mend. 1 mother was awarded a scholarship by the Adelaide Potters Club with the idea that she might pass this skill on to the group. It is considered essential that the initiative come from the group itself, and so the former Aboriginal teacher has been employed as a supervisor of the mother's activities. The staff
hope that her leadership will encourage the Aboriginal mothers to greater active participation. Prior to this appointment the mothers' group was led by a psychiatrist, who is the overall co-ordinator of the programme. The teacher is very conscious of the need for the mothers to understand the kindergarten programme, and speaks individually to each mother about her children.

All facilities and finance are provided by the Church members, but it is not a Church kindergarten and there is no religious teaching in the programme. The kindergarten room cannot cater easily for more than 12 children, however, the nursery is very spacious with separate play and sleeping areas. The mothers meet in one of 2 rooms available, or outside, depending on the number of mothers present, the activities they wish to pursue and the weather. The greatest disadvantage in facilities is the lack of an outdoor play area (at present under consideration).

The staff emphasise that mothers whose children have access to other pre-school facilities are discouraged from coming, except in special circumstances. All mothers and children are collected and driven by volunteer helpers.

Access to Field Site

The psychiatrist, social worker and kindergarten teacher agreed to provide full co-operation during the period of research. This was the third school term in 1972, from Tuesday 12th September to Wednesday 13th December. Complete access to kindergarten and nursery was guaranteed, and freedom to participate in the mothers' group as desired. The extent of involvement in the
mothers' group was determined by the mothers' response to the presence of a field worker.

Basic Research Design

The fundamental goal of research was to build up detailed case studies of mothers and children, which would allow for the identification of those factors common to participating mothers.

Becker and Geer stated that research oriented to understanding a particular organisation and its local circumstances involves the assumption by the researcher that he does not know enough before beginning his study to identify relevant problems and hypotheses. Filstead pointed out that validity becomes a serious problem in social research when a priori assumptions and artificial schemes of explanation are imposed upon social reality. Therefore, in a study of this kind it is not desirable to structure the research according to some pre-conceived social theory. Too little work has been done in this area to provide an adequate guide for a highly formalised research design. The aim of this study is to discover new facts and develop new hypotheses. The more structured the approach, the less likely the researcher is to uncover facts whose existence he had not previously considered or to develop hypotheses he had not already formulated. The basic underlying assumptions concur with the definition of qualitative methodology provided by Filstead.

Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, field work, etc., which allows the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question—
developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself – rather than from the preconceived, rigidly structured, and highly quantitative techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed. 5

(1) **Data-gathering Techniques**

The above perspective suggests that data-gathering techniques should be flexible. This coincides with the views of those working with part-Aborigines. For example, Gale stated that it was not possible to use such methods as the questionnaire with part-Aborigines, and that...

...the task was "to sit where they sit", and see things as they see them and feel as they feel. 6

Gale was really saying that the questionnaire or the survey are techniques which are not suitable in the part-Aboriginal context, because they are constructions of the Western scientific mind and cannot legitimately be imposed on the thought patterns of a different culture. Makin said much the same thing in another way. He pointed out that for many people of Aboriginal descent any kind of formalised questioning is likely to produce unsatisfactory results, mainly because of the anxiety aroused in situations which are structured in any way. 7

(i) Denzin suggested that the participant observer is not bound in his field work by pre-judgements about the nature of his problem, by rigid data-
gathering devices or by hypotheses. He can avoid the use of meaningless and irrelevant questions (as occurs with the standardised questionnaire), and is better able to make use of impressions and reactions during the research process. Because he is present in situations where they interact, he is better able to link the statements and actions of his respondents. Bruyn noted that participant observation aims at sensitive, accurate interpretation and explanation of man's social and cultural life. He claimed that the purpose is not simply to observe how actions are determined, but involves the study of cultural meanings as a methodological process of gaining accurate knowledge of man in society. Thus, participant observation was selected as the basic data-collecting technique, with the emphasis on the participant as observer.

The triangulation of data through the use of varied data collecting techniques is recommended by most writers, particularly Denzin. He noted that multiple methods must be used in every social investigation since no single method is alone adequate, and each method implies a different data reality for sociological theory. Participant observation was to be supplemented by home visits, informant interviewing and semi-structured interviews. (ii) Formal visits to the homes, which could have aroused a certain amount of anxiety and defensiveness, proved unnecessary. As a participant with access to a car, collecting and transporting of families to and from the Centre allowed for first hand observation.
of the homes. Families were often not ready at collection time, and helping to dress the children provided easy access to the home situation, as did the invitation to have a drink on a hot day. In many cases, verbal information discussed at the Centre could be verified by direct observation.

(iii) The informant interviewing, prior to the actual contact with the families, made it possible to build up a sketchy picture of individual mothers and children. The social worker, psychiatrist and teacher had extensive knowledge of particular family situations, details of life histories or anecdotal incidents. This indirect method of obtaining background information continued until the conclusion of the field work, since the knowledge of the social worker, psychiatrist, teacher and mothers' supervisor also increased as a result of daily contact with the families.

(iv) In the light of such comments as Gale's and Makin's on the structured situation, and the theoretical perspective already outlined briefly, the semi-structured interviews seemed a doubtful method of data-collection. I did not view this method with any degree of confidence, but it was intended that these interviews should be commenced with individual mothers in their homes about mid-term. However, various incidents indicated that lack of confidence with this technique was well-founded, and it was decided to abandon the idea of semi-structured interviews. The following incident may demonstrate why.
Incident I: Cathy and Denise knew each other as children in Central Australia, and still retain links with their families of origin there. They are regarded by the staff as "non-problem" mothers, in the sense that they are enthusiastic about the programme, are "good" mothers and relate well to the other girls. Denise, in particular, is well-regarded because of her expressed desire to learn and to get on, and her responsiveness to staff guidance.

A student from Adelaide University visited Cathy at her home and interviewed her about her background from the time of birth on. The following day at the Centre Cathy told Denise about the interview and some of the questions that she had been asked. She also explained that because the interviewer was a university student she had agreed to tell him about her childhood and life history. Denise appeared to be visibly upset by this and exclaimed "If he'd come to my place I'd have told him to mind his own business!"

Field Notes, Wed. 18th October.

Clearly, Denise would not have responded well to the formal interview situation. However, she was one of the 2 mothers with whom observer rapport was best and about whom the greatest amount of information was collected. Cathy apparently responded well to the formal situation, although it is not possible to gauge the quality of her answers to the formal questionnaire. It was possible that she might not respond as well to the informal situation. However, she is a very outgoing, confident person from whom information was obtained with no difficulty.
The semi-structured interview was replaced by probing within "question areas" as the occasion arose. Most often this was alone with the mother and her children on the way to or from the Centre. A discussion of this kind was much freer and more productive than the attempt to elicit responses by direct questioning. However, as Makin noted, the concept of "question areas" is at a disadvantage in the sense that one can never be sure that all aspects were probed with a high degree of certainty. Nevertheless, by using 4 different (although related) methods information from one source could be checked with that from another in many cases. Thus, the verbal information revealed in the group could be checked against the knowledge of the informants and by direct observation in the home, for example. To some extent this substantiated the validity of that information for which there could be no adequate verification.

(2) Problems of Role-definition.

Richardson distinguished between primary and secondary skills. The former are those required for the selection, collection and analysis of data. Secondary skills are those required for establishing and maintaining satisfactory relationships between researcher and subjects. The latter, he claimed, are essential pre-requisites for field work.
A major element of the secondary skills, commonly referred to as "achieving rapport", is the role assumed by the researcher. Most writers have emphasised that role definition is of particular importance in participant observation. Richardson noted that the field worker must structure for those he works with (i) the purpose for which he is there, and (ii) a picture of himself. He suggested that the researcher move slowly into the research area and allow considerable opportunity in the early phases for the people to get to know him.

Within this field work situation there are few defined roles, only "teacher" and "helpers". The helpers' tasks range from food preparation, nursery duties, kindergarten assistance, craft instruction and driving, to simply being around. Other than this, there is the individual personality who occupies no defined position, such as the psychiatrist. If access to the mothers' group was the prime determinant of role choice, clearly there was no pre-existing role which served the purpose except that of craft instructor. Further, given the deception characteristic of past Aboriginal-White relations there could be no argument for concealing the researcher's purpose in the group. With these factors in mind, the observer was introduced to the group of mothers by the psychiatrist, as "a student interested in Aboriginal kindergartens and how to make them more effective". At no time was it suggested that I was particularly interested in the
mothers, in case this resulted in guarded responses and stereotypic behaviour in the group. However, they were asked to let the researcher know if they had any suggestions about how to improve the mothers' group, other activities they would like to pursue, or questions about the kindergarten activities. The psychiatrist also asked the mothers if they had any objections to the researcher being there each day, or would mind having an extra person in the group. The role of "student" distinguished the researcher from the staff. However, in a situation of need such as exists at the Centre, it is important to demonstrate "concern" as distinct from intellectual interest. Assisting in the nursery and kindergarten when necessary, with food preparation and transportation of families facilitated observation of mothers and children in varied situations and at the same time demonstrated a willingness to be involved with Aboriginal families. An effort was made to wear simple clothes (such as the girls wore), to act as naturally as possible and to refrain from more than casual interaction with other staff and helpers.

Vidich noted that whether the fieldworker is totally, partially, or not at all disguised, the respondent forms an image of him and uses that image as a basis of response. Clearly, the role of student and helper is not particularly difficult for a researcher to maintain with consistency. It is "understood" by the researcher at the outset.
It soon became evident, however, that the mothers had no clear conception of the student role. During the weeks following my introduction most asked at least once about research, university, or more often "What is it you're doing again?" After brief explanations they seemed satisfied and to understand the importance of finding out more about Aboriginal kindergartens, but many broached the same questions several times.

In the report of the first week's work, I noted:

...my position was defined, but I do not feel they really grasped it i.e. that their relationship to me was any different from that of the other helpers. In fact, because of the informality of the situation, because none of the helpers have special roles (with the exception of the teacher), I seem just another person...I do not feel that they were at all self-conscious because of my presence, or that they acted for my benefit. There seemed to be no special consideration for me being there.

Field Notes, Mon. 18th September

As time went by, I realised from their interaction with the psychiatrist and the volunteer helpers that their role definitions were very limited. They felt confident about the roles of "teacher", "doctor", "policeman", and "welfare officer", but found it difficult to distinguish the psychiatrist from "doctor", or the student from someone immersed in books preparing for examinations. The observations at the end of the first week proved correct. They relate to each member at the Centre as a person, an individual.
This did not mean that the role of student, doctor, or teacher was forgotten. The following incident demonstrates that this was certainly not the case.

Incident II: Vivian is a deserted, de facto wife with 3 pre-school children. She is conspicuous within the group for her general knowledge and ability to articulate her thoughts. She was not present during the first week of term, but it was not necessary for me to explain to her what I was doing as she already knew.

Nothing had been said about my work for some weeks. One morning 5 of the girls and I were playing Scrabble, and discussing the Adelaide Christmas Pageant to be held a few weeks later.

2 of the mothers were talking about the way the whites had pushed the Aboriginal children out of the way last year, and were getting very hostile about the way Aborigines are always pushed around. Denise turned to me and said she did not mind them talking like that.

At which point Vivian commented that I was writing a book about them anyway, which was why I bothered to come.

Field Notes, Wed. 1st November

The crucial point is, however, that excessive concern with role became unnecessary. Although conscious of the student role they did not really understand it. Not imbued with the broad range of institutional postures of the wider society, they relate only to some people in their formal roles and to most as individuals.

This complicated the ethical issue of 'confidence'. In many cases the information I gathered was more personal than the girls would have been willing to give except to a friend. Because little distinction
was made between the student/friend roles by the mothers, it was exceedingly difficult always to observe and record with ease. There is no real solution to this issue for again, the concept of "confidence" in the research situation is a concept of the scientific mind and is fully applicable only to those who have an understanding of role segregation, and who compartmentalise the subjects they talk about. By the end of the term some would have been incensed to find that I was still observing, and at the amount of detail I had compiled about each family. At the same time they wished me good luck with my research.

The greatest difficulty with role was that of being white. The girls are very conscious of their colour and the fact that they are alike. Incident II, above, provides a typical instance of their reference to colour. The racial difference is never far from their minds.

Similarly, it is somewhat incongruous to participate in a mothers' group if you have no children. This was not important with some of the mothers, who had been "late" starting their own families. However, some girls felt that the fact that I had no children at 23 indicated a sharp difference in values from their own. Vivian suggested that I have 4 and in a hurry.

On the other hand, the girls are young mothers and similarity of age was a definite advantage. The deference shown to older women would have been a handicap for the obtaining of critical responses,
at least in the early stages of the field work. As far as the children were concerned there were no problems of role. Used to many adults, and varied helpers in the kindergarten, they took no special notice of my presence after the first few days.

(3) Recording of Data

Although tape recording of mothers' group meetings and home visits would have provided the most comprehensive and detailed record, such procedures are not advisable and rarely useful with groups of this kind. Ward, for example, tried this method in a small black community near New Orleans. She commented that because of noise level in the homes recording was never satisfactory and that adequate conditions could only be attained by creating an artificial, self-conscious atmosphere hampering spontaneity. She concluded that note-taking was the best strategy. However, detailed note-taking in the presence of the Aboriginal mothers would have involved similar problems of restraint, and was not possible in the group situation. Note-taking was restricted to those moments, in the course of the morning's activities, when the mothers were absorbed in other things. Much depended, therefore, on the observer's ability to memorise conversations, situations and incidents. At the end of the morning this material was recorded on tape in as much detail as possible. The ability to concentrate on relevant material proved
less difficult than anticipated, but was an extremely fatiguing exercise.

The material was then transcribed from the tape recording into Field Notes. Richardson stressed the importance of being as inclusive as possible, so that all relevant data can be brought to bear on a particular point. Therefore, any incident that might be relevant should be included, and recorded in full. He explained that this meant ideas expressed, actions taken, people present, date and setting should all be noted. Typically, an incident in the Field Notes would include:

(i) location,
(ii) people present,
(iii) activities engaged in by particular people,
(iv) topics of conversation of particular people,
(v) details of the particular conversation, event, or action being recorded,
(vi) response of those involved, and
(vii) any other relevant information.

The basic principle of the tape recording and collation of the data was that recommended by McCall and Simmons to document in detail more than seems necessary at the time, and to complete the full account as soon as possible after the field work experience and always before the end of the day. The taping and transcribing usually took 3 - 4 hours.

The Field Notes were something of a cross between a field diary and a compilation of data. The observer's impressions, changes in understanding and comments on literature. He agreed that data collection and analysis
were included with all the details of fact and
data, incident, a clear distinction being made between
each kind of material. Interspersed with these
were reports of particular week's work and the
informant material from social worker, teacher
and psychiatrist.

From the Field Notes the material relevant to
each family was compiled into separate groups.
This required extensive re-writing to ensure that
each relevant incident or piece of information was
recorded in full for each family. Whereas the
dominant aspect of the Field Notes was the interaction
at the pre-school Centre, the family notes allowed
for the emergence of more detailed case studies of
individuals.

Analysis of Data

Most writers dealing with qualitative data stress the
fact that the collection and analysis of data proceed
jointly. Glaser and Strauss noted that there is no
sharp division between implicit coding and either data
collection or data analysis. McCall and Simmons
expressed the same view when they stated that data
collection is not a distinct phase in the research process,
but is one analytically distinguishable aspect of a
multiple process. Becker commented on the difficulty
of presenting the data of participant observation because
it is not lent to short summary, and pointed out that the
problem of how to analyse the data and systematically
present conclusions is poorly treated in the methodological
literature. He agreed that data collection and analysis
are intertwined and that important parts of the analysis are made while the researcher is still gathering his data. He applied the term sequential to this form of analysis.23

The framework for, and initial steps of, analysis are integral aspects of the procedure of indexing, cataloguing or coding the data. The strategy followed in this study was determined, in part, by the nature of the data. Just as it was not possible to establish relevant hypotheses prior to the commencement of the field work, so it was not possible to pre-select the variables or their indices which might be relevant for mothers' participation.

On the basis of the literature on other disadvantaged groups and part-Aborigines 4 broad, overlapping areas were pin-pointed as likely to be important for indexing the sociological characteristics of the families.

(1) Family Background Variables (with emphasis on the mother). It appeared that occupational level, educational level (age/grade), place of upbringing (mission, reserve, etc.), length of time in the city, number of stays in the city, and so on, might be of considerable significance for maternal motivation and the goals mothers considered desirable for their children.

(2) Material Environment of the Home. A number of basic items were to be considered such as presence or absence of running hot water, bathroom, drainage, floor coverings, separate living room, washing machine; and number of beds per family size and number of families in dwelling. These items were to be supplemented by...
items derived from the particular sociological context of this study.

(3) **Experiential Environment of the Home.** Attention was to be directed to particular attributes of family life and opportunities for learning appropriate behaviour and perceptual patterns. Items apparently relevant to these aspects are availability of reading matter, range of toys or articles for child play, presence or absence of paintings or interior decor, presence or absence of father figure.24 Again, these items were to be supplemented by appropriate others.

(4) **Perceptual Disposition.** This refers to the attitudes of the mother to various aspects considered important to a "progressive" orientation, and may be envisaged most simply as "outlook on life". Indicators might be such factors as mother's use of child health facilities, attitudes to local whites (for example, shopkeepers, kindergarten teacher, etc.) dependence on Government welfare for economic survival and attitudes to this, marrying "white", attitudes to other Aborigines in the group or those who have "got ahead", and degree of identification with the Adelaide Aboriginal community.

During the first few weeks of the field work these were used as the basis for questions, probing and determining significant from insignificant material. From this point on the type of information that was available in the field work situation had a much greater effect on determining the kinds of items that were appropriate and adding to the number of question areas. Children needed to be considered as a separate category,
allowing for documentation on health, appearance, adjustment and other factors which were regular features of the pre-school situation. Similarly, characteristics of the husbands seemed to require distinct treatment. For instance, the mother's "marrying white" proved to be an important factor; and the presence or absence of the father figure, particularly for the older boys, appeared to relate to adjustment of the child in the kindergarten situation (see footnote 24). It should be noted that the question areas selected and the basic analytical categories were identical, as follows:

(1) Children,
(2) Husbands,
(3) Home,
(4) Experiential Environment,
(5) Mother's Background, and
(6) Mother's Perceptual Disposition.

Within each category a number of items were established. The relevance of these had emerged during the course of the field work. However, data on each item was not available for every mother. For example, the opportunities for observation of the home varied, perhaps because the mother was embarrassed and did not want anyone to see inside (itself part of the data), or because the rapport established was not as good with some mothers as with others. For each category, the individual responses or expressions appropriate to that category were also noted. In effect, this means that the mother herself determined some of the indices of say, her perceptual disposition reflecting the fact that

...the very function of (an index) is to indicate something that cannot be measured directly. 25
The attempt to elicit responses in accord with a given set of items would have resulted in illusory concreteness and precision, and the sacrifice of reality. Similarly, Ward has pointed out that what a person does not say, when and why, is as much a part of the data as is a fairly predictable standard answer. Because the emphasis in this study was on the volunteered, rather than the directed, response the analysis relied heavily on the observer's ability to interpret the significance of these responses. Hence, the category Mother's Perceptual Disposition contained many "examples" from an individual mother's behaviour, which together provided a broader base from which to assess her attitude to various subjects. The range of items in each category is listed in the Appendix.

Each mother was compared with every other mother on the above dimensions. Reference to the categories shows that the six selected areas for analysis overlap. This is particularly so for Mother's Perceptual Disposition. Therefore, items from various categories were combined in order to allow for the inclusion of ambiguous items in several comparisons. For instance, sections (iii) and (iv) under Children provide more information about the mother's disposition than they do about the child (see Appendix). Thus, they were also considered as indices of perceptual disposition along with other indices such as (iv) under Husband and (iv) under Home. This meant that each item had to be recorded on a separate card to facilitate constant re-arrangement and exhaustive comparison. Similarities and differences were noted, and mothers grouped together on the basis of their similarities. It was
anticipated that this would enable the establishment of patterns of a number of characteristics common to particular groups, and the possible relating of these patterns to each other.

Footnotes

1. Quotation from original statement to Church members at the commencement of the programme.
5. Filstead, op.cit.
14. For example, Junker, op.cit., p.34.
22. McCall and Simmons, op.cit., p.61.
24. The absence of opportunities for learning appropriate behaviour patterns, particularly with reference to male models for young boys, has been noted by a number of researchers on Aboriginal family life. See, for example, Barwick A little more than kin, op.cit. Chapter, IV. "Marriage, the Family and Household"; and Inglis, loc.cit.
Becker has indicated that the data of participant observation is not easily presented. Data ... frequently consists of many different kinds of observations which cannot be simply categorised and counted without losing some of their value as evidence... many points need to be taken into account in putting each datum to use. 1

One major reason for this is the use of what have been termed in this study "question areas". Bruyn referred to these as sensitizing concepts, which he describes as those kinds of terms which give a sense of reference, a general orientation, rather than a precise definition to a phenomenon under study. 2 As noted earlier, such concepts are not unscientific because they are not fully operational, but take account of the fact that precise measurement may lead to loss of understanding of the particular concepts. 3 A second reason arises from the distinction made in participant observation studies between volunteered and directed responses. This is of particular importance in attitudinal areas, where the researcher is not primarily interested in the concrete data which may be obtained through probing, but in the spontaneously expressed feelings of the subjects. Such responses require individual assessment and qualification, and are not readily comparable. Much of the data in this study cannot be simply summarised. However, detailed outlining of a set of responses from an individual family, while the most illustrative method of presenting findings, is too lengthy
and complex and enables easy identification of the family concerned. Where the material is standardised and complete for all families, it can be summarised in table form. For example, the basic descriptive details of family size or mothers' attendance at the Centre will be presented in this way. With the non-quantifiable material a more detailed interpretative approach is required. In order to facilitate understanding presentation of findings will follow the order of the question areas listed in Chapter III. Each family will be identified by an alphabetical letter.

The material in this chapter is essentially descriptive. No attempt is made to group families together on the basis of shared features as the findings are worked through. This is partly because in the vast majority of cases family similarities on a single item do not hold for other items in any meaningful way. It is also because where relationships do exist, and grouping of families is viable, the correlates linking them emerge only after prolonged examination of the total data complex and are not progressive from one dimension under discussion to the next. However, it can be readily detected that certain families do appear to be linked together on several items and across several dimensions. These threads will be drawn together in Chapter V. At present the emphasis is on simple reporting and understanding of the material.
### Table 1. Distribution of Children by Family

<table>
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<th>I</th>
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<th>K</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of Children in Nursery</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Most mothers accepted their children's colds or sicknesses by keeping the children at home. The mother in family J, for instance, was absent from the Centre once due to a physical ailment, but her children were not hospitalised. The children in family K had respiratory infections each day, but their illness was not severe enough to send them back to the hospital.

(1) (c) Most mothers accepted their children's colds or sicknesses by keeping them at home. The mother in family J, for instance, was absent from the Centre once due to a physical ailment, but her children were not hospitalised. The children in family K had respiratory infections each day, but their illness was not severe enough to send them back to the hospital.

(1) (b) Table 2. Third Term Absenteeism through Sickness by Family.

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<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
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<th>M</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td><strong>No. of Children absent through sickness</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18</td>
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<td><strong>No. of Children hospitalised</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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18 of the 26 children attending the Centre were absent because of sickness at some time during the third school term. The list of illnesses included bronchial pneumonia, chicken pox, measles, colds, diarrhoea, vomiting, ear infections, influenza and gastritis. None of these absences were due to physical injury or accident. Some children had as many as 4 different illnesses, and most of the 26 had colds at some stage during the term even if this did not involve absenteeism. 2 of the children were hospitalised once during the term, for gastritis and pneumonia. The third hospitalised child was hospitalised twice for bronchial pneumonia.

Most mothers accepted their children's colds or sickness as inevitable. Although watchful and attentive, most did not express any concern or uncertainty about their children's health. Only 1 mother, from family J, showed more than usual concern about her children's health by asking questions and commenting on the health of the children on more than 2 or 3 occasions. Most mothers responded quickly to any indication that their children might be sick, either by seeking professional advice or by keeping them home. The mother from family J, for instance, was a recurrent visitor to Outpatients at the Children's Hospital. The mother from family K, whose child was hospitalised twice, visited him each day for more than 3 weeks, although this involved long bus journeys and change-overs. The mother from family D took her children to the local doctor at the first sign of discomfort. However, this seeking of professional advice
was not common to all families. Specific incidents which concern the immediate seeking of professional advice were recorded for 5 of the families. Some children were not considered seriously ill, and thus, professional help was felt to be unnecessary. One incident is recorded of a mother, aware of her child’s ear infection, neglecting to take any positive steps except to keep him home. 2 of the mothers, discussing the seriousness of ear complaints, expressed disapproval of her lack of care.

Not all mothers with children 18 months or younger used the Mothers and Babies Health Association facilities. Those that did tended to have no contacts with other medical or child-care bodies, for instance, the mothers with the two young babies, families A and B. One mother expressly did not attend regularly because she felt that with 2 older children she already knew all about babies, family F. However, 2 mothers from families C and J, with children closer to 2 years of age, still attended; and 1 mother, family H, concerned about her 4 year old son voluntarily sought the Sister’s advice. Of the 5 families with children 18 months or younger, only 1 mother attended each week (family B).

Most children were well-presented, neatly and cleanly dressed. All children wore shoes and socks, or sandals. One mother, from family G, showed particular concern about her children’s footwear and made a point of buying new shoes for each child. Most children, however, wore hand-down shoes. 4 or 5 children were dressed exclusively in hand-down clothes. However, this was the exception and more common for boys than for girls. The mothers tended
to include at least 1 or 2 new, pretty items in the wardrobes of their daughters. Nevertheless (excluding those mothers with only young babies, A and B), only 2 families were dressed almost entirely in new clothes. One of these, I, had only 2 little girls, always smartly dressed. The other, L, had 3 children at the Centre, 1 girl and 2 boys, all beautifully presented. Both the mothers took considerable pride in their children's appearance and both bought the bulk of their children's clothes. Sharing of children's footwear and clothing between families was common. Only 2 mothers, from families D and K, made clothing for their children during the term, although those from G, H and J also expressed interest in doing so. The typical wardrobe was clean, neat, and included both old and new garments. Helpers at the Centre commented on the general well-dressed and clean appearance of the children.

(1) (d) It was not usual for a mother to mention the education of her children. The only references to this arose towards the end of the term when particular families asked about enrolling their school-age children for school the following year. These were formal questions about procedure and not about education as such. Most mothers readily accepted the children's work brought home from the Kindergarten. Only 3 mothers of the 9 with Kindergarten-age children spoke of keeping their children's work or hanging it up at home; families G, I and J. One mother, family G, paid particular attention to the painting and drawing of her younger son, whom she believes is very artistic. All in all, in one case the child was not a problem in the Kindergarten setting, but only at the end of the morning when she ran...
Mothers were willing to discuss their child's work and behaviour with the kindergarten teacher (with the exception of 1 mother who attended the Centre only once during the term, family M).

Only 1 mother read to her children at home. This was the mother from family I.

Few mothers indicated any real understanding of the kindergarten situation. As the term progressed some showed more interest in the work and occasionally visited it during a morning (mothers from families E, G, I, J, K did this). Most claimed that they valued the kindergarten for their children and believed it was important to the child's development. This was demonstrated by the regularity with which the children attended even if the mother did not want to, or could not, come.

The mothers commonly used verbal discipline with their children at the Centre. However, most mothers recommended "belting" the older boys and advised the kindergarten teacher to do the same if they were naughty. One mother, from family H, had particular trouble controlling her 4 year old son and frequently "belting" him at home as a warning to behave the next day. The most usual examples of disciplining of the children by the mothers involved light smacks and raised voices - ranging from firm reprimands to loud yelling - after the act, rather than before.

No mother with more than 1 child considered all of her children a problem. Of the 8 families with 2 or more children at the Centre, 4 mothers referred to 1 of their children as a problem. In only 2 cases was this opinion shared by staff at the Centre, in families F and H. In one case the child was not a problem in the kindergarten setting, but only at the end of the morning when she ran
away on several occasions and had to be carefully watched. The other child was much more severely disturbed, and disrupted the whole Kindergarten programme on most of the days he attended. The mothers in the other 2 families found their children problems in specific ways: in one family, G, because the child was slow to toilet train and in the other, D, because the mother felt the child "whinged" all the time. These children were well-adjusted at the Centre. One mother with only 1 child in her family, E, considered the child a problem and could not control him. This child was not disruptive in the Kindergarten setting, but was not able to adjust and frequently returned to the Nursery where he seemed happier. No other mothers expressed the sentiment that any of their children were problems to them. Most of the Kindergarten children were considered to be behind the usual white standard by the Kindergarten teacher. Only the children from family G were felt to be typical of other Kindergarten children. Often this retardation was a problem of behaviour and not of ability. Of the behavioural problems the most severe were inability to concentrate on any task, unpredictability of mood and fighting by some of the older boys. 3 of the older boys proved difficult to the teacher. One of these, from family K, was considered too developed for the Kindergarten situation, and the teacher felt he needed the experience of school and would probably adjust quite well to the requirements of school. Another was the disturbed child, mentioned above, from family H. The third,
from family L, was most unpredictable. Capable of good work and concentration, he would often rebel, fight and disrupt the others for no immediately apparent reason. The teacher did not consider that the latter 2 boys, from families H and L, would find school a happy or rewarding experience. 2 other children would progress to school the following year. The teacher felt no concern about the ability of the elder boy from family G to adjust. A girl from family F was subject to running away (as mentioned above), and this was considered a handicap for her in the school situation. She was also not physically strong and easily upset. Of the younger children in the Kindergarten the teacher felt it was too early to tell how they would develop before they were ready to start school. Only one child, the one from family E mentioned above, failed to adjust at all to the Kindergarten setting and preferred to spend at least part of the morning in the Nursery.

In the area of abilities the main problems were verbal: the limited use of speech, restricted vocabulary and sentence structure, and reliance on physical gesture. This was not a problem for the children of all families, but children from 6 of the 9 Kindergarten families were felt to show obvious difficulties in this area.

Some children preferred a restricted range of activities, with lengthy concentration on an individual painting or manipulative task. Others tried everything, sometimes failing to concentrate at all. At the start of the new teacher's programme reading proved a virtually (1) With one exception the families were young, with 1-4 children all under 7 years of age.
impossible task, receiving no response at all from the children. This was one area in which a great deal of progress was made by the end of the term. Individual children showed what the teacher considered "a surprising interest" given their general behaviour in the Kindergarten situation. 2 of these were the older boys from families K and L. All children (with the exception of the boys from family H, who left midway through the term), showed a developing interest and concentration in the reading circle, which became a regular feature of the morning programme after the first few difficult weeks. Other favoured activities included singing, painting and manipulative tasks. Progress was also made in child co-operation, the ability to work together improving through the term.

The teacher considered that all children benefited from the presence of the mother at the Centre, and tended to work better on such days. This was particularly noticeable in the case of 2 families, K and L. The younger Kindergarten child from family L refused to come unless the mother came, and the elder child behaved badly more often on the days she was absent. The younger child, in particular, was very possessive of her mother's attention. This was related to the mother's part-time occupation of minding other children. In the other family the mother's absence almost always resulted in a "bad day".

Summary of main points:
(1) With one exception the families were young, with 1 - 4 children all under 7 years of age.
(2) Ill health was prevalent amongst the children, and not considered unusual by their mothers.

(3) The children were typically clean, neat and well-presented. Usually unemployed (with the exception of one family), the husband was only occasionally present during the day.

(4) The mothers showed little or no interest in education. However, they appeared to value the Kindergarten experience for their children, without demonstrating any real understanding of the learning situation.

(5) With the exception of one family, the children were considered to be behind normal Kindergarten standards. The incidence of problems, both behavioural and academic, tended to be higher than usual.

(6) The attendance of the mother at the Centre was considered a definite aid to child behaviour and adjustment.

Husbands

(2) (a) 11 of the 13 mothers were married, or had a de facto relationship. Of this 11, 8 were legally married or considered themselves so.

(2) (b) 9 of the 11 husbands were white, and the fathers of the children of the unattached mothers were also white. Only 2 families had fathers of Aboriginal descent, one of these was the family with 13 children, family M, and the other, family A. The white fathers were Dutch, Italian, Irish and Australian. In all homes English was the spoken language, although children with Italian fathers and relations could also speak some Italian.
With the exception of one, from family G, all husbands were unskilled or semi-skilled in occupations such as factory worker, railway worker and labourer. No husbands were usually unemployed (with the exception of one on a pension). All but 1, in family A, held steady jobs and had a regular source of income.

In 6 families the husband was continually present during the period of the study. 2 families were deserted; and in 3 cases the husband was only occasionally present.

In only 1 family were the relations between the husband and the children described as amicable. Typically, the husband had little to do with child-care and child-play. In only 3 families did the husband play an active and helpful role, supporting the mother. These parents, in families G, I and J, were all legally married and the unions permanent.

(2) (c) In most cases the husband was also the father of the children, although this was not the case for all of the children in at least 1 family. Typically, the husband had little to do with child-care and child-play. In only 3 families did the husband play an active and helpful role, supporting the mother. These parents, in families G, I and J, were all legally married and the unions permanent.

(2) (d) Only 4 mothers regularly discussed their husband's activities or referred to them in general conversation, mothers from families F, G, I and J. 2 mothers expressed dislike of their husbands; one from a deserted family, the other from a family where the husband's presence was only occasional. Another mother referred to her permanently present husband only when asked and always as "him". One mother with a casual de facto relationship tried to emphasise the presence of the husband, making much of his presence when he was there.
The other mothers never, or rarely, referred to their husbands or the fathers of their children.

(5) In the same 4 families, F, G, I and J, the mother frequently drew the children's attention to the father. However, in families G, I and J this was more often in a positive and friendly way, unlike in family F where the father was sometimes referred to as a disciplinarian, or for his faults with the children. No other mothers were observed referring to the husbands in the presence of the children.

In only 1 family were the relations between the mother and the husband's family constantly referred to in a positive and harmonious way, family I. However, in 2 other families at least, formal obligations, visiting and frequent contacts were also maintained, families G and H.

(2) (e) The fathers from families G, I and J were conspicuous by the continual reference to, and awareness of, their presence; and by their importance to the pattern of child-care and child-play in these families.

(3) (v) Most, but not all, of the homes were weathered and tended to be damp and draughty. In 4 families changed address once during the term.

Summary of main points:

(1) Only 2 families had husbands or fathers of Aboriginal descent. Typically the husbands were white.

(2) In 6 of the 13 families the husband was continually present during the period of the study.

(3) In 3 families the husband played an active and supportive role in child-care.
(4) With 1 exception all husbands were in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations.
(5) With 1 exception no husbands were usually unemployed.

Home
(3) (a) Typically, the homes were rented, with rents ranging from $11.00 to $26.00 per week. 3 families lived in single-fronted old stone cottages. Other types included a flat in a modern, but uncared for, block of flats; an old railway cottage; a small, modern red brick home; a solid, freestone, single-front home; a villa; a bungalow; and a flat above a corner shop. Only one was conspicuously different from, and below the standard of, its neighbours. This partly-demolished, open dwelling of 2 rooms on a large block, was being fully rebuilt by the owner.

4 families changed address once during the term. One of these moves was due to the allocation of a welfare home. Typically, residential mobility was low and some families had not moved house for a number of years.

(3) (b) Most, but not all, of the homes were weatherproof. The old cottages tended to be damp and draughty on cold days. Many needed an inside coat of paint, but upkeep outside seemed little different from the neighbouring houses. Only 1 family, G, had made a deliberate effort to paint and improve their rented home. However, the majority were probably no worse than when the family had moved in, as most families tried to at least maintain their homes.
(3) (c) Not all homes had adequate bathrooms or separate laundries. A separate living room was considered desirable, and maintained, by most mothers, although at least 3 families used the kitchen for this purpose. All but 1 house, family E, had window drapes or blinds, but fewer had floor coverings.

Appliances in the home ranged from practically none, to the full-range of sewing machine, T.V., modern cooking range, iron, cake-mixer and refrigerator. Individual families emphasised the importance of different things, for example, J, heaters for the children in winter and I, furniture. One family, D, had a considerable number of appliances, but very little furniture. The mother, in this same family, placed little value on these appliances, bought by her husband, and was always lending them to others (cake-mixer, sewing machine, etc.). Furniture suites, rather than individual pieces, were favoured for the living room by mothers from at least families G, I, J and K. The quality and upkeep of the furniture varied in each home. In some cases, for example, J, considerable effort was expended on painting and even making furniture. In others, for example, D, arms were missing from chairs and the furniture was battered and unpainted.

(3) (d) All mothers were conscious of the desirability of keeping the home clean and tidy. Some managed very well with very little, while others tried hard with meager results, and some could not be bothered.
Most mothers were not satisfied with their homes. Some of these seemed resigned or content to go on as they were, however, for example, families D, E and H. Others had applied for welfare or Housing Trust houses and were constantly talking about, and waiting for, news of a move, for example, families I, J, K and M.

(3) (e) Many of the mothers expressed an interest, when prompted, in home management and diet. However, few asked questions about such things and showed more interest in skills such as floral art and domestic crafts like lamp-shade or book-end making. Only 1 mother, from family G, was considered by the staff to be really responsive to home management guidance. Most mothers seemed aware of the need for a varied diet, but few showed that they had very specific ideas about what this meant. Few of the mothers were confident about being able to cook.

(3) (f) Most homes were occupied by single families, with the occasional additional relative. Only 1 family, K, shared the house with a number of other people, friends and relatives. One other family of mother and child, C, shared with the mother's parents and large family. The size of the home and the number of people per room varied considerably. The above family, K, with the mother and 3 children, had only 1 room totally for their own use. In other families, 1 person per room was more common (including the kitchen, bedrooms and
living room, and excluding laundry and bathroom). In some families the children shared sleeping accommodation, or slept with an adult, not through necessity but choice. However, in all families children shared rooms, usually 2 to a room but sometimes more, to magazines and newspapers, and mothers sometimes referred to, or commented on, something they

Summary of main points:
(1) The range in type and standard of accommodation varied considerably.
(2) Residential mobility was typically low.
(3) The range in household facilities and appliances varied considerably. All children had some items
(4) Most mothers were not satisfied with their homes. At least 4 had taken positive steps to acquire better homes.
(5) Upkeep of the home and housekeeping varied considerably.
(6) Most mothers considered themselves competent at home management with the exception of cooking.
(7) Most homes were occupied by single nuclear families.
(8) The homes were not intensely crowded (with one exception). Children were taken on outings to zoo, parks, play grounds, museum or beach. However, most

Experiential Environment
(4) (a) With the exception of 3 families (A, B and D, all flat-dwellers), a garden and/or a yard was a feature of each home. A number of families had pets - dogs, cats and birds - sometimes, as in the case of family E, acquired specially for a child.
(4) (b) Books, magazines and children's books were rare. Only 1 mother was known to have read a book during the 3 months of the field work. This mother, from family I, was also the mother who read to her children. However, most families did have occasional access to magazines and newspapers, and mothers sometimes referred to, or commented on, something they had read.

Not all families had toys for the children, although the mothers appreciated the children's need for them. Some families, however, had quite a range of toys including bikes and scooters for the older children, for example, families I and L. All children had some items for child play, although in some cases, for example family E, these were extremely limited.

(4) (c) Not all children were taken on outings to zoo, parks, playgrounds, museum or beach. However, most children had been at some time to one of the zoo, parks, playgrounds or beach. Some children, as in family I, were regular visitors to parks and playgrounds.

Most families made frequent visits to other people's homes or had visitors to their own. Thus, the children were well-used to many adults and were exposed to adults other than those in the home. In most cases these contacts with 13 children. Typically, therefore, the families
were primarily or solely with other part-Aboriginal families, for example families A, C, E, K and M. Close and frequent contact with a number of white families or individuals was not common. Typically, if white contact was regular it was limited to a small circle of friends or the more formal situation, for example families B, D and L. During the field work only 2 mothers mentioned that their families, J and L, had been, or were going on holidays. In few homes was there privacy for child play.

Summary of main points:
(1) With the exception of 1 family all children over 2 years of age had a garden or yard for play.
(2) The range of experiences in play and items for play varied considerably.
(3) With the exception of 1 family reading material suitable for children was non-existent; and the example of an adult reading was, at best, occasional.
(4) The range of visual and perceptual aids in the homes was limited.
(5) Regular visits to parks, playgrounds, zoo or beaches were not a feature of children's lives.
(6) With the exception of 2 families personal encounters were primarily part-Aboriginal.

Mother's Background (5) (a) The mothers ranged in age from approximately 18 - 30 years, with 1 exception, the mother from family M with 13 children. Typically, therefore, the families
attending the Centre were young families.

Table 3. Place of Origin of Mother's Family

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<th>Place of Origin</th>
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The 3 mothers associated with the West Coast are related; as are the 2 mothers from the Flinders Ranges, who are sisters; and the 2 associated with Point McLeay, who are mother and daughter.

5 of the mothers, from families A, D, E, F and J, grew up in institutions. Only 1 mother, from family M, grew up on a reserve.

All of the families had been living in Adelaide, or close to the metropolitan area for at least 6 years. Two, the mothers from families K and J, had lived in Adelaide all of their lives; and others, for example from family H, most of their lives.

Of those who chose to live in Adelaide one mother, from family I, came specifically to attend High School; and others came for employment or from curiosity. Only 1 mother was involved in seasonal labour, such as fruit picking.
The family of origin of the mother is known to live in the city, also, in only 2 cases, for mothers from families C and K. However, a single parent, the mother, is known to live in the city in 2 other cases, for mothers from families H and J. The mother's family of origin is known to be intact in 4 cases, for mothers from families C, G, I and K. In at least 5 cases the mother does maintain contact with 1 or more of her parents.

(5) (b) One mother, from family I, had completed 4 years of secondary education. Others had a much lower standard of education. Some, for example the mother from family G, were very sensitive about their schooling and when they made mistakes through ignorance, apologised for not being better educated. Some expressed the view that to have completed 3 years of High School (without Certificate), was a considerable achievement. Although it was difficult to probe in this area, most seemed to have had some High School experience. At least 3 mothers spoke happily of their school life and had enjoyed the work, mothers from families H, I and K.

(6) Not all mothers worked prior to beginning their families. Any mention of occupation or past circumstances was unusual. Of those who are known to have been employed at least 2 worked in hospitals as nurses' aides (were "nursing"), 1 worked in a Kindergarten office, 1 worked as an assistant in a children's home, and others were factory workers or shop assistants. Those who were nursing referred with pride to their occupation, as did the mother who worked in a Kindergarten. Only 1 mother was involved in seasonal labour, such as fruit picking.
3 mothers, still attending the Centre, had been coming since the programme first began in September 1971. These were the mothers from families G, I and L. With the exception of 1 mother, from family H, all others had been attending prior to the commencement of the field work. During the term the Centre lost 2 families, A through moving from the city and H, through the illness of the mother.

Summary of main points:
(1) The mothers at the Centre were young mothers, 18 - 30 years of age (with 1 exception).
(2) The families of origin were associated with 6 widely differing places.
(3) No mothers had moved to the metropolitan area within the last 6 years, and some had lived in Adelaide for the best part of their lives.
(4) The mothers were very sensitive to their lack of education.
(5) At least 4 mothers considered their occupations prior to beginning their families with pride.
(6) 3 of the original mothers still attended the Centre.

Mother's Perceptual Disposition
(6) The Mother's Perceptual Disposition was the most individual aspect of the dimensions examined. It is not possible to deal with each mother separately. However, some general comments, illustrated by specific examples, can be made.
The mothers were typically reticent with new white people, with the exception of the mother from family J. This mother is unusual because of her friendship and acquaintance with large numbers of white neighbours, whom she visits frequently and also has to her own home. None of the other mothers have extensive and intimate contact with whites. Some are friendly with 1 or 2 white families or individuals, for example from families F, G and I; and some have frequent contact with their white relations through marriage, for example from families G and I.

The mothers sometimes recounted instances of prejudiced behaviour towards them. For instance, the mother from family J spoke of incidents playing sport, when the all-Aboriginal team for which she played was insulted and abused by the opposing team, on the basis of racial origin. Incidents such as Incident II noted in Chapter III were often referred to in general conversation. Examples of personal insult, as well as group rebuffs, were also noted as below.

**Incident III:** Jeannette is a heavily built, dark girl whose general appearance resembles that of the prevalent Australian stereotype of Aboriginal women. She had temporarily left her husband after a domestic fight, and with Belinda was looking for a flat. Belinda is an unmarried mother of fair complexion and slight Aboriginal features. Both girls are under 20 and with small babies.

6 of the girls were sitting outside in the sun when Jeannette and Belinda arrived. The others asked them about their new flat and how they had found it. Jeannette
explained that Belinda had approached various land agents and then both had gone to see any flats that were available.

"A number of agents would have accepted Belinda", Jeannette said, "but when they saw Bubby and me come around the corner they had no flats left."

**Field Notes, Wednesday 18th October**

In spite of repeated examples of rejection of this kind, the girls readily accepted anybody who demonstrated genuine kindness to them and interest in them. For example, the helpers at the Centre were often referred to with considerable affection and, after the first few weeks, a new mother would completely trust her children to the white staff.

Some mothers frequently referred to the nationality of their European husbands, for example, mothers from families D and F. However, others with different backgrounds frequently referred to this fact. The helpers generally had little contact with the children and were not much loved by them, even when they had lived with the children. Some mothers, who had suggested bringing white friends, always agreed that it was not right that she should use their things.

A similarly ambivalent attitude was revealed about the group itself and the relations with white helpers. Often specifically inviting particular white helpers or myself to share in their activities, on some occasions it was clear the mothers liked to be on their own and enjoyed the security of their own people. This was sensed particularly with mothers from families I, K and L who were,

The strength of this identity varied from the differing views of these 2 girls, to that of the mother from...
at the same time, very friendly with white helpers. The Kindergarten teacher expressed the view that although the mothers accepted her and listened to her, she felt that they would not tolerate any disturbance in the Kindergarten as they would have with the Aboriginal teacher.

Some mothers frequently referred to the nationality of their European husbands, for example, mothers from families G and I, and also showed pride in the culture of the husband's home country. However, others with white husbands never drew attention to this fact.

The mothers, generally, were very conscious of their sense of oneness and strongly rejected any attempts to identify as whites. An example expressing this group identity follows.

**Incident IV:** Evelyn is an attractive girl with fair skin and auburn hair. She has an unstable de facto relationship and 2 children. She frequently comments on sunburn, and getting too dark from sitting in the sun. Denise is married with 3 children. She is very dark and unmistakably Aboriginal.

The mothers were discussing people they knew, in particular some girl known to 2 or 3 of them, who had 4 children. Evelyn expressed disapproval of this person and stated that it was a terrible thing because only the last child was "decent". The others chided her for thinking "like a white woman", and Denise retaliated with "When you go home you'd better look in the mirror again".

**Field Notes, Tuesday 19th September**

The strength of this identity varied from the differing views of these 2 girls, to that of the mother from
family K, who accepted her Aboriginality philosophically.

Incident V: Vivian and some of the other mothers were discussing the Adelaide Christmas Pageant, to be held a few weeks later. 1 or 2 of them hesitated about saying they would go with the group, because they would have to wear labels. Vivian commented "Well, they all know who we are".

Field Notes, Wednesday 11th October.
The most positive identification came from the mother from family I, who was always speaking warmly of her Aboriginal heritage, and the fact that she was "proud to be black".

No mother considered her children to be white. Some have very little Aboriginal blood, and many could be mistaken for European children. However, the mothers are very firm about their children being Aboriginal children.

II. Cathy, Denise and Janice are 3 of the more sophisticated mothers. All are married to white husbands. Cathy, Denise and Janice were taking trips to the country. Janice and Janette believe that people who did not know their own language, for example mothers from families I and K, were learning English from family I. Sometimes they had lost, or never possessed, the ability to communicate in their own language, for example mothers from families I and K. Some were very firm about not being white. Others are very firm about their children being Aboriginal children.

(6) (b) The mothers were typically unsympathetic and superstitious about "bush-blacks". Any mis-spelling of words, or inability to pronounce a word correctly, was referred to as "black-feller language". That fear of magic still exists is demonstrated by the following incident.

Incident VI: A group of mothers were discussing what they had done the previous evening. Jeannette said that they had some people around and spent a really good evening talking about "black-fellers". It was very interesting, rather exciting and she could not sleep afterwards. Denise commented that she rarely did anything like that and did not think it was fun or safe. She suggested to Jeannette that "You'd better not do that again".

Field Notes, Tuesday 19th September
However, pride in Aboriginal language was frequently expressed. Some mothers, from families A, F, I, J and K often spoke to their children in brief Aboriginal phrases or used the occasional Aboriginal word. One mother, from family I, was very proud because her children were learning 3 languages, Australian, Italian and Aboriginal. At times mothers expressed regret that they had lost, or never possessed, the facility which they desired with their own language, for example mothers from families I and K. They often laughed about the possibility of including Aboriginal words in a game of Scrabble.

The majority of mothers retained few contacts with part-Aborigines in the country, apart from very close relatives and friends. They spoke with some surprise of the strength of kinship feeling and generosity towards them of country people. It can result in a sense of unease and is not always welcomed by them.

Incident VII: Cathy, Denise and Janice are 3 of the more sophisticated mothers. All are married to white husbands.

Cathy, Denise and Janice were talking about trips to the country. Janice said she did not really like going to Aboriginal places, because people she did not know always came up and said "You my relation! You my 'lation!" hugged her and gave her money. Cathy said the same thing happened when she went to Alice Springs. She went up with $20-00 and came back with $47-00, not having to spend a penny. Denise said she hated the way they called her their relation and was embarrassed by it.

Field Notes, Tuesday 31st October
The mothers often discussed other part-Aborigines in Adelaide. They did not always agree in their judgement about particular individuals. Some, from families A and F for example, spoke of one successful and well-known Adelaide Aborigine as a "show-off". Later, however, the mother from family A approached him for help with a family problem. Another well-known Adelaide Aborigine was considered "lovely" by the mother from family D, but not well liked by the mother from F because the woman's husband referred to other Aborigines as "blacks". Most expressed dislike of drunken Aborigines and the way they ruined their houses.

All mothers knew large numbers of Aborigines, and all had friends who did not attend the Centre. Only one family frequently boarded other than the immediate family in their home, family M. In some families no other Aborigines lived or stayed in the home during the whole third term, families D, F, G, H for example. No families maintained their kin obligations fully and no families practised an open house policy to Aboriginal guests. One mother, from family D, came under specific criticism from her relatives in Adelaide because she was too lazy to visit them. However, the same mother visited her close Aboriginal friends at least once a week.

The mothers reacted to newspaper publicity about Aborigines on the basis of the individual case. For example, one mother, from family D, expressed strong disapproval of the dismantling of the Adelaide Aboriginal Embassy. She was not incensed because it was dismantled, but because the young men let the women do the hard work.
The mothers expressed interest in Aboriginal men and women who had done well in the fields of sport, entertainment and fashion; but generally seemed unaware of political developments.

Within the group the mothers' activities varied

(6) (c) There were few examples of the mothers' attitudes to "Australia", but some of these were very interesting. For example, the mother from family D, was most incensed about certain aspects of the Aboriginal Delegation to China, because it "let Australia down". The same mother refused to vote at the Commonwealth Elections, however, because she was "not going to vote for any white feller".

7 of the mothers received the bulk of their income from Government welfare. None of the mothers expressed the view that this was their right as citizens. Some accepted it philosophically and as a matter of necessity, for example, mothers from families B, C and D. However, one at least, was very sensitive about the source of her income, from family L.

The mother from family L was the only one to express strongly her intention to vote at the Commonwealth Elections. She stated this on several occasions.

(6) (d) Some mothers had no hobbies or activities outside of the group apart from their families and visiting friends. One mother spent nearly all her time watching T.V., from family D. Few mothers went to films or concerts, although they sometimes discussed their intention to do so, for example from A, B, D and L. One mother liked making
toys for her children out of cigarette boxes and other containers, from family L. Several played winter sport for an all-black team; and one is an extremely good artist.

Within the group the mothers activities varied considerably. Some mothers were involved in no specific activities, for example, those from families A, B, C and F. Other mothers were enthusiastic Scrabble players and some took considerable pride in their skill, mothers from H, I and K. This form of entertainment was too demanding for mothers from families A, C and F. One other mother, from family E played regularly but was very unsure of herself, regularly relying on the others or the dictionary with even very simple 4-letter words. Mothers from families D, G, H, I, J, K and L were quite confident and willingly played at any time. This was the most popular activity for most mothers. Some mothers took up sewing very keenly, for example, the mother from family D. The greatest range of activities was entered into by the mother from family G, who played Scrabble, sewed, crocheted, took up pottery, upholstered furniture and attempted to lead and organise the group. However, she did not have the allegiance of all of the members. Many of the various activities, such as sewing and crocheting, carried over into the home setting. Mothers from C and M were mother and daughter. Most of the

(6) (e) At the beginning of the term, one mother commented several times on the fact that she liked the Centre and had missed it during the holidays. This mother, from family D, was the mother who spent most of they knew people in common.
her time watching T.V., but who was very active sewing, encouraging others and playing Scrabble in the group. Other mothers, from families B, G, H and J expressed appreciation of the Centre.

Those mothers who were most involved in the activities of the group attended very regularly, from families D, G, H, I, J and K. Others who attended regularly were not always involved to the same extent, for example mothers from families A, B and E. Attendance, however, is a major indication of enthusiasm.

Table 4: Mothers' Attendance by Family

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<th>B</th>
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<th>I</th>
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<th>K</th>
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All of the mothers, from families A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K and L had known at least 1 other member of the group before, or when, they started. Mothers from C and M were mother and daughter. Most of the members, it has been noted, were contacted by referral. In some cases this meant that the Centre served to renew old friendships. In most cases the mothers had known each other, were related by marriage, or discovered that they knew people in common.
The mothers did not form one homogeneous, interacting group, although all spoke and were pleasant to each other. Mothers from families G, H, I, J, K and L formed a broad group. Within this, mothers from families I and J, and I and L were particularly friendly. The mother from family L, through her association with others in an institution, also fitted in with the group of mothers from families A, D, E and F. The mother from family G tried very hard to be friendly with all members of the group, and the mother from D managed to fit in with the larger group if her closer friends were not there. However, mothers from A, E and F did not relate easily to those from G, H, I, J and K. Mothers from B and C tended at first to spend more time together because they knew each other before. The mother from B later shared a flat with the mother from A, and soon became friendly with the other members of that group.

Not all mothers saw other members of the group outside of the Centre. Mothers C, G, K and M rarely, if ever, had contact with the others in this way. Mothers A, B, D, E, F and L frequently saw each other and all lived within walking distance of each other at one point in time during the term. Mothers I and J, and I and L also saw each other outside of the Centre.

(6) (f) Only 1 mother, from family G, actually expressed a desire to get on, to improve herself and be worthy of her husband. Many others, however, showed initiative, resourcefulness and self-reliance. The mother from family H, for example, became a representative for a
Another mother, from family J, arranged several parties for a well-known home-visiting cosmetics agency. Some mothers, for example from families D, F and L, earned extra money by looking after the children of white families during the day. 2 of the mothers who had applied for public housing, from I and J, showed considerable initiative in getting attention for their cases. However, mothers from families A, B, C and E seemed to lack the motivation, or knowledge of how to participate in these sorts of activities.

Like the children, most of the mothers were well-presented, clean and tidy in appearance. 2 mothers, from families I and L, had extensive and fashionable wardrobes. Other mothers, for example from families A, E and F, were less sophisticated in appearance and the upkeep of their clothing. Most mothers dressed up for special occasions and showed concern about their appearance. Pierced ears were considered highly desirable and fashionable by at least mothers from families F, I, J and K.

Summary of main points:

(1) The mothers were very conscious of their group identity and shared a sense of belonging together.

(2) Although friendly and open in manner they tended to distrust, or be reticent towards, white people they met for the first time.

(3) They felt uneasy about Aborigines in tribal contexts, and those who did not share their pattern of living.
(4) The mothers showed little or no interest in political developments or publicity.

(5) Their attitudes to race, colour and culture appeared to be ambivalent.

(6) Visiting and family life were the main activities of the mothers.

(7) Interest in household skills and hobbies at the Centre developed slowly. The learning of a new skill aroused considerable enthusiasm.

(8) Only those who attended regularly were involved in a number of activities. However, not all regular attenders were actively involved.

(9) All of the mothers knew at least one member of the group prior to attending. Several networks existed within the group as a whole.

(10) A number of mothers were involved in activities of an independent and self-advancing kind.

Footnotes

2. Bruyn, op. cit., p. 32.
4. Field Notes, Wednesday 8th November.
5. See p. 48.
Chapter V  SHARED CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

Familiarity with the part-Aboriginal mothers at this Centre leaves one impressed by the diversity of the families represented, and by the individuality of each of the mothers. A glance at the findings outlined in Chapter IV indicates that the families and mothers are characterised more by their differences than their similarities.

However, it was also noted that the mothers fell into 2 broad sub-groups, within the larger group. Certain features were associated with each of these groups, and they will be considered below.

Characteristics of Sub-groups

Both sub-groups shared particular characteristics. For instance, _de facto_ relationships, relative poverty, friendliness, reticence, active participation and inactivity could be found in each. Evenso, the two groups differed in some ways.

Mothers from families G, H, I, J, K and L formed one group, and mothers from families A, D, E and F another. The mothers from B and C did not fit fully into either group but were closer to those mothers from families A, D, E and F. The mother from family M remained alone, and was atypical because of her lack of involvement, age, number and age of her children and other factors.

(1) **Families G, H, I, J, K and L.**

Mothers from these families were the main mothers
around whom the mother's group centred (with 1 exception, the mother from family D). The 3 mothers who were original members of the Centre belonged to this group. They interacted most with each other, but did not have extensive contact with each other outside of the Centre. They were better dressed, and their children were better dressed, than those in the other sub-group. All lived in houses and not flats, and appeared to be less satisfied with their homes than the other mothers. They were also characterised by their apparently greater degree of sophistication, the fact that they had "better" jobs before they married, and because they seemed to value their group identity at the Centre more strongly.

(a) Within this sub-group 3 families were conspicuous at the Centre, families G, I and J. The mothers from these families attended very regularly and nearly always accompanied their children, who were bright and well-adjusted in the Kindergarten setting. They had well-kept homes, although I was of poor standard. These mothers seemed to have greater awareness of the educational needs of their children. All were legally married to white husbands who were present in the home. They often referred to their husbands in a positive way, and each husband played an active, supportive role in child care and child play.

The mother from family M cannot be considered a participating mother. She was atypical in a number of other respects, to which attention will be drawn.
(2) **Families A, D, E and F.**

The mothers from these 4 families all grew up in the same Adelaide institution, and 2 of them are sisters. They are slightly younger than the other mothers.

They interacted most with each other and seemed very dependent on each other outside of the Centre. 2 of them lived in flats. I paid the highest rent of any family at the Centre for a large, but dilapidated, house. Their homes were less tidy and less clean than the homes of the mothers in the other sub-group. They seemed to have less idea about how to maintain their belongings or keep their homes in order. 3 of them had little idea about hygiene or how to care for their children, although they showered them with affection. These 3 lacked confidence, and were less responsive at the Centre than the mothers in the other sub-group. Only 1 mother from this sub-group readily adjusted to either group of mothers.

There are also particular characteristics which were associated with the group of mothers and their families as a whole. These are the stronger, uniting and prominent characteristics which are of significance to the success of the Centre, and in determining the form which the programme at the Centre has taken. They will be considered below.

**Shared Sociological Characteristics of the Families of Participating Mothers.**

The mother from family M cannot be considered a participating mother. She was atypical in a number of other respects, to which attention will be drawn.
Background of Mothers

(a) The places of origin of the mothers are diverse in terms of geography and kind. With 1
exception, however, the mothers had in common
the fact that they had no direct ties with
mission or Government reserve life. The
exception, the mother from family M, came from
Point McLeay reserve, but has not lived there
within the last 20 years.

(b) All of the mothers connected with the Centre
have lived in, or near to, the city for at
least 6 years. Some have lived in Adelaide
for 20 years or more. No mother was a recent
arrival from a rural area.

(c) With 1 exception, the mother from family M, the
mothers were young from 18 - 30 years of age.
Half were 25 or younger.

Husbands

(4) The husbands or fathers of the children were,
with 2 exceptions, white. About half of these
were white Australians, the rest were Europeans.
One of the exceptions was the husband from family M.
The mother, as noted above, was atypical in place of
origin and age, factors which would bear relevance
to her choice of a marriage partner. The other
exception was the husband from family A, who
originally came from Point McLeay. He was not
well-liked by the mother's sister (the mother from
family F), and it seemed that this was largely
because he was not white nor a hard worker, like her
own husband.
(5) Employment

(3) Nuclear families

The families in this study typically lived as independent nuclear units. 2 families did not. One of these, C, lived with the parents of the mother (that is, family M). The other family, K, had been unable to establish itself in a separate dwelling as an independent unit. This was not for lack of effort or desire by the mother, and the family was at the time of the study on the waiting list for a Housing Trust home. This mother, who was a deserted de facto wife, and her 3 children shared a house with a number of other people. No family had more than 1 permanent addition, and in the 2 cases where such a person was present he or she was a parent of either the mother or father. No mother tolerated the permanent boarder or guest, although visits of short duration by relatives were welcomed.

(4) Young families

The families who attended the Centre, with 1 exception (M), were young. Since the Centre caters for pre-schoolers, young children are to be expected. However, only 1 family (M) had children 7 years of age or older. From the 12 young families only 2 children were of school-age. These families were also relatively small in size with 4 the maximum number of children. 4 families had only 1 child. In some families no more children were desired; in others 4 and 5 children were favoured. This did not seem to be a function of present family size.
(5) Employment

(a) 7 fathers were considered bread-winners in their families. These fathers were employed in steady jobs for the whole of the third term, with 2 exceptions. One of these, the husband from family J, was unable to work and had a steady income from welfare sources. The other, from family A, had been employed in a variety of positions, was unemployed for part of the term, and then found a steady job which necessitated the family moving from the city. Where the husband was not present, or did not provide for the family, it was made clear that the mothers expected a man to work. In 3 cases, at least, the mothers knew that the fathers of their children were working.

(b) Not all mothers worked prior to beginning their families, and for those that did some occupations are not known. However, at least 6 of the mothers held jobs which are usually considered "good" in the Aboriginal context. Such occupations include "nursing", working in a Kindergarten, as an assistant in an institution, or as a shop assistant.

(6) Relative economic stability

7 of the families in this study were self-supporting. The rest depended on Government resources for their livelihood. All families, therefore, had a regular source of income. All but one family managed to cope on this income. The mothers managed to make ends meet, sometimes with the help of extra part-time jobs.
No family was concerned about whether there would, or would not, be a next meal at any stage during the study. Although budgeting was poorly managed in at least 3 cases, no families depended for their survival on relatives or voluntary charity agencies. Mutual support and intelligent use of charity agencies supplemented a family's income, but no family was at any stage destitute.

(7) Residential Stability
5 families moved house during the period of the study. 2 of these moves resulted from the allocation of welfare housing. Only 1 family moved twice during the term. All other families lived in only 1 dwelling. At no time did moving house disrupt the attendance at the Centre, or result in the staff losing touch with a family. (There was 1 exception, but the real cause was the husband's move to the country and not the actual moving house. The mother visited the Centre on her visits to Adelaide.) It is clear that residential mobility was not a feature of the way of life of the families at the Centre.

(8) Social and Material Disadvantage
Although there was a range in the types of homes and material standard of living, these families as a group did not share the standard of living of most members of the community. Many of the homes which appeared similar to those of their neighbours externally, exhibited inside a poverty and lack of
knowledge about home management that is not typical of the population at large. It is probably similar to the disadvantage of poor whites of low status.

(9) Group Identity.

The mothers shared a sense of identity and oneness, which was attributed distinctly to their Aboriginal heritage. They believed they were materially less well-off than their white counterparts (an often-expressed opinion), and they also felt social exclusion was a factor of race. Thus, they considered that their material and social disadvantage was supported by their racial disadvantage. This appeared to be the main basis for their sense of unity.

(10) Educational Disadvantage of their children.

Measurement of child performance was inappropriate in this particular Kindergarten setting. However, the present Kindergarten director and the former Aboriginal Kindergarten director (both experienced and capable teachers), were conscious of the handicaps these children would suffer from in the normal school setting. In the context of academic abilities the children, as a group, were considered disadvantaged in particular in the areas of verbal skills and linguistic ability, and concentration. Behavioural and academic problems reinforced each other.
(11) **Ill-health of their children.**

The children in this study were frequently ill, and absent because of illness, during a 3 month period. 18 of the 26 children attending the Centre were prevented from attending at least once because of ill-health. In at least 7 families children were away for over a week. 3 children were hospitalised.

(12) **Motivation of the Mothers.**

This is the single most important characteristic of the families at the Centre. All mothers were prepared to get their children ready and have them available for Kindergarten between specific hours 3 days a week. With 1 exception, all mothers were prepared to attend themselves, usually at least once a week (2 exceptions). Furthermore, the families were consistent throughout a whole term, with 2 exceptions which could not be avoided (because of ill-health of the mother in family H, and moving from the city for employment with family A).

This motivation took 2 forms: the motivation of the mother to value the education of her children, even if she was not clear what that involved; and the motivation of the mother herself, to recognise and attempt to meet her own needs. All mothers seemed to be motivated in the former sense. At least 8 mothers expressed awareness of the latter kind of motivation.
Summary: The shared characteristics of the group of families as a whole may be listed as follows. (Exceptions will not be emphasised.)

(1) The mothers had no direct ties with Government reserves.
(2) The mothers came from widely differing places and have had different life experiences. They are not all alike in background.
(3) The mothers had lived in, or near to, the city for at least 6 years.
(4) The mothers were young, from 18 - 30 years of age.
(5) The husbands, or fathers of the children, typically were white.
(6) The families lived as independent nuclear units.
(7) The families were young, with children under 7 years, and many were not complete.
(8) The husbands, or fathers of the children, typically were employed.
(9) At least 6 mothers held jobs which are considered "good" in the Aboriginal context.
(10) The husbands held unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.
(11) All families had a regular source of income.
(12) No families were subject to periods of destitution.
(13) Residential mobility was not a feature of the way of life of these families.
(14) The families were socially and materially disadvantaged.
(15) The mothers shared a distinctly Aboriginal sense of identity.
(16) The children were educationally disadvantaged.
(17) The children frequently experienced poor health.
(18) The mothers were motivated to attend the Centre.

In many respects the families in this study shared the characteristics and way of life of other urban-dwelling Aborigines. De facto relationships, deserted families, unskilled occupations, dependence on welfare, child ill-health, educational retardation, disadvantage relative to the white community, absence of adequate father-figures, and limited experiential environments for appropriate child learning were found amongst this group of families.

As well as these shared characteristics, however, these families exhibited certain features which are atypical of Adelaide's Aborigines as a group. By using the information from the earlier studies,¹ the direct experience of people involved in Aboriginal work, and the material available from other bodies concerned with Aboriginal affairs,² it is possible to distinguish those characteristics which are unusual in the broader context.³

The single most important distinguishing feature of these mothers was their motivation. They valued the Kindergarten experience sufficiently to get their children ready to attend regularly, and they valued the opportunities of the mothers' group sufficiently to attend themselves. With small children attendance 3 days a week is not an easy task and within the Aboriginal context such effort should not be minimised. Few Aboriginal mothers would value either of the above facilities, and few would be prepared to adjust to the regular routine that is necessary. It was noted earlier that attendance at
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Kindergarten is rarely possible without help, and fluctuation in numbers attending indicates that pre-school education is no readily grasped experience. It appears that the mothers at this Centre had a greater awareness of the need for education than their counterparts, and had the incentive to take hold of opportunities for their own, and their children's, advancement.

The mothers also seemed to make greater use of community facilities than is general throughout the rest of the Aboriginal population. Although they were spasmodic and irregular in their attendance at, or participation in such associations some familiarity with public hospitals, Mothers and Babies Health Association clinics, Family Planning Clinics and public health immunisation centres extended to most families. Lickiss noted the reasons why Aboriginal women in Sydney did not use such facilities. Some of these still applied in the Adelaide context, but had been overcome by will-power or necessity by these mothers. Clearly, they are atypical in terms of the wider perspective of the urban Aboriginal, at least, in this sense.

The families are also atypical of Adelaide's Aborigines in a number of the general features of their way of life. For instance, their residential stability, with reference to both moves within the city and moves to and from the city, is unusual in the broader context. They also seemed economically more stable than the majority in the Aboriginal community. Regular employment of the husband is far from typical of most Aboriginal
families. Further, these families did not live in intensely overcrowded homes. The children shared rooms and occasionally beds, but the latter was not usually the case. In particular, they lived for the most part as nuclear families and there was little evidence of the maintenance of kin obligations.

The mothers are also atypical in their place of origin. They are linked by family of origin to 6 widely differing places, but none of the 12 participating mothers came from either Point McLeay or Point Pearce reserve. However, it is well-established that the Adelaide Aboriginal population is composed predominantly of people from these reserves. The importance of this fact is the focus of the following discussion.

Rowley has directed attention to the "dependent personalities" of many people of Aboriginal descent. He referred to Aboriginal politics as the...politics of the asylum, hospital, camp, or other authoritarian institution... of inmates against the management. Rowley used institutional conditioning as part explanation for the habit of living for the moment, of not saving or thinking of the future, and noted that there must be cynical discounting of all appeals to logic or self-interest among any people who have suffered from this over long periods. In the South Australian context he referred specifically to the managed reserves of Point Pearce and Point McLeay. He wrote that these...have possibly had a more lasting influence on Aboriginal attitudes in the closely settled areas of South Australia than have institutions...
anywhere else. As both have had a century of continuity, as mission stations until 1914 and from then as government stations, one would expect a high degree of institutionalised attitudes to authority among the large proportion of persons of Aboriginal descent who retain the tradition that one or other of these places is 'home'.

It is significant that none of the involved mothers came from either Point Pearce or Point McLeay, and that the single most distinguishing feature of the group was that its members did not exhibit "dependent personalities". They were motivated to participate. It is probable that this motivation is associated with the other distinguishing characteristics such as breakdown of kin obligations, economic stability and residential stability noted above.

Earlier, the distinction Inglis made between "insiders" and "outsiders" was noted. It is clear that the mothers in this group share more characteristics with the "outsiders" than the "insiders". However, the distinction does not hold in all aspects that Inglis considered important, and is not of the hard-and-fast kind suggested in 1961. For instance, the mothers in the group at the Centre (like her "outsiders") do not come from Point Pearce or Point McLeay, tend to make a conscious effort to emulate whites and prefer to "marry white"; but (unlike her "outsiders") they have not "passed" into the white community, or totally severed connections with the part-Aboriginal community. Perhaps this reflects a change in the climate of opinion - both white and Aboriginal - which allows the more European oriented to move ahead without rejecting their Aboriginal identity. Although the Adelaide Aboriginal population
does not form one community the "insider" - "outsider" distinction no longer seems relevant or adequate.

The Adelaide Aboriginal population may be regarded as a continuum ranging from the most depressed groups in the community to those who are closer materially, socially and attitudinally to the white majority.

The mothers who attend this Centre are at the upper end of the continuum. They have responded to the approach of the Centre because it meets their needs. These include:

(1) the educational needs of the children, as envisaged by the mothers, and

(2) the seeking and learning needs of the mothers.

These needs are met within an atmosphere appropriate to the culture of the mothers. The Centre:

(1) has no rules, no forms to fill in, no imposed activities for the mothers;

(2) does not have an institutional building designed specifically for use as a Kindergarten centre;

(3) provides a supportive atmosphere for the Aboriginal woman within the security of her own group;

(4) is flexible enough to adjust to the needs of the mothers as they express them;

(5) does not remove the children from the mothers, but caters to the family unit;

(6) allows the mother free access to her children, to check on them, watch them and help them;

(7) develops the confidence of the Aboriginal mother about the educational process;

(8) enables her to become confident enough to send her children to local Kindergartens. 

10 This type of Centre meets the needs only of a small
In spite of the differences from the usual Kindergarten, this approach is essentially a modification of the established Kindergarten pattern. It is natural, therefore, that it caters for those who are closest to the way of life of the dominant society. These are the people who are generally considered to be "assimilated", and who are believed to participate in the established system. However, existing facilities do not meet the needs of even these relatively sophisticated families.

The simple extension of such facilities to provide for the increasing numbers of eligible children will not in itself secure the participation of this upper group on the continuum. Certainly, it will not motivate the great majority who reveal the "dependent personalities" of the institutional community.

This finding is of considerable significance within the general framework of Aboriginal advancement.

(1) Aboriginal families who are relatively sophisticated, and who see some sort of value in Kindergarten education for the children and a meeting group for the mothers, do not voluntarily involve themselves in the facilities provided by the system.

They do not have the confidence nor perhaps the desire to approach a formal white Kindergarten.

(2) The importance of the mother's presence for child adjustment is acknowledged. The demonstrated involvement, and regular attendance of the mothers, indicates that the Centre meets the unexpressed and often ignored needs of Aboriginal women.

Educational programmes should be both mother and child centred.

(3) This type of Centre meets the needs only of a small
proportion of the total city population of people of Aboriginal descent. It caters for an unrepresentative, select group; those on the upper end of the Aboriginal continuum. Simple modification of the existing system does not meet the needs, attract or hold families who are less sophisticated, less secure and who have no motivation.

Footnotes
1. See Chapter I.
2. For example, the Aboriginal Resources Branch of the Department of Community Welfare; and the Aboriginal Education Foundation of South Australia.
3. It should be remembered that this study is based on those families attending the Centre during a particular 3 month period.
5. See p.29.
6. In the past Inglis, Gale and others noted this. That it is still so is clear (from a personal communication from Aboriginal Resources Branch, Department for Community Welfare, 20.2.73). There is a greater influx from other areas, but the bulk of these are very recent arrivals to the city.
8. ibid., p.19.
10. 3 families now send a child to a local Kindergarten in the afternoons.
APPENDIX

(iv) Has the mother ever mentioned the child's

The range of items in each category is listed below. It should be emphasised that information for each item was not available for any one mother. However, for most mothers responses were available for at least three quarters of the items noted. To facilitate understanding the items are listed in question form.

(1) Children (details about each child and mother's attitudes to, and knowledge of, child-rearing).

Does the mother ever comment on appropriate

(i) How many children are in the family? How many attend the Centre? What are their ages?

(ii) Is the child often absent? What are the reasons for absences? Has the child been hospitalised during the term? What general comments can be made about the child's health?

(iii) Does the mother ask questions about the child's health or general welfare? Does the mother use Mothers and Babies Health Association facilities at the Centre (if the child 18 months or younger)? Are the child's clothes clean? in good repair? made by the mother? new? hand-down? for children? What general comments can be made about the child's appearance?

If 3
(iv) Has the mother ever mentioned the child's education?

Does the mother show pride in the child's achievements at the Centre?

Does the mother read to her children?

Does the mother commonly use verbal or physical modes of discipline with the child?

Does the mother ever comment on appropriate modes of disciplining?

(i) Is the mother married?

Does the mother have a meaningful relationship?

Does the mother reveal an understanding, or lack of understanding, about the kindergarten work?

Does the mother send the child to kindergarten if she herself cannot come?

Does the mother consider the child a problem?

Does the mother show general pride in the child?

(ii) Is the male figure the father of the children?

Does the male figure play an active part in childrearing?

(v) Does the child adjust well to the kindergarten situation?

Does the mother's attitude to the male figure affect the child in the kindergarten situation?

What sort of activities does the child enjoy most?

Is the child a problem in the kindergarten situation?

Does the child co-operate with other children?

(3) Home

What is the child's standard of work relative to the other children of his/her age?

(i) Is the home owned or rented?
Is the child likely to adjust well to the school situation (if beginning school next term)?

1. Are there any comments about the child?
   (i) Is the teacher's general comments about the child?
   (ii) Are there any other comments about the child?

2. Husbands
   (i) Is the other parent married?
   (ii) What is the mother's attitude to the male figure?
   (iii) What is the mother's role in the family?
   (iv) Does the male figure speak English?
   (v) What is the occupation of the male figure?
   (vi) Is the male figure a member of the household at present?
   (vii) Is the male figure the father of the children?
   (viii) Does the male figure play an active part in child care and child play?

3. Home
   (i) Is the home owned or rented?
   (ii) Are there any other comments about the home?
   (iii) Are there any other comments about the standards in the home?
If rented, what is the rent per week?

What general comments can be made about the style of home, its location and general appearance?

(ii) Is the home brick?
Is it weatherproof?
Is it painted inside?
What is the general condition of upkeep outside?
Is the home damp?
Is it in good repair?
Does the family make a deliberate effort to maintain the home?

(iii) Is there a bathroom?
Is there a separate living room?
Is there an indoor toilet?
Is there a laundry?
Are there facilities for heating in winter?
Are there floor coverings? What kind?

(iv) Does the mother try to keep the home clean and tidy?
Is the home clean?
Is it tidy?
What is the overall appearance of the home?
Does the mother spend much of her time housekeeping?

(5) Mother

Is the mother satisfied with her home?
Has the mother applied for a welfare home?
Does the mother spend much of her time housekeeping?

(6) Mother (i) How many families share the home?
How many people live in the home?
How many people are there per room?
Do the children share sleeping accommodation?

(vi) How many families share the home?
How many people live in the home?
How many people are there per room?
Do the children share sleeping accommodation?

(vii) Are there any other general comments?

(4) Experiential Environment of the Children
(i) Is there a garden?
Is there a yard?
Does the family have pets?

(ii) Are there magazines in the home?
Are there books in the home?
Are there children's books in the home?

(iii) Does the family ever visit the zoo? parks?
play-grounds? the museum? or beach?
Do the children visit outside the home?

Are there toys for the children?
Are there a range of items for child play?
Is there scope for child-adult play?
Are there wall decorations and ornaments in the home?

(6) Mother (i) What is the mother's occupation?

Does the family ever visit the zoo? parks?
play-grounds? the museum? or beach?
Do the children visit outside the home?

Are there any other general comments?
Do Aboriginal friends come to the home?
Do white friends come to the home?
Does the family ever go on holidays?
Is there privacy for child-play?

(ii) Are there any clear examples of the mother's attitudes to Aborigines?

(5) Mother's Background

(i) What is the age of the mother (approximate)?
Where is the mother's place of origin?
Where has the mother lived prior to Adelaide?
How long has the mother been in the city?
Why did the mother come to the city?
Is the mother's family of origin in the city?
Is the mother's family of origin intact?
Does the mother maintain contacts with her family of origin?

(ii) What is the mother's standard of education?
Does the mother ever express satisfaction/dissatisfaction with her education?
What did the mother do prior to beginning her family?
Does the mother ever express satisfaction/dissatisfaction with her prior occupation?
How long has the mother been coming to the Centre?

(iii) Is there any other information about the mother?

(6) Mother's Perceptual Disposition.

(i) Are there any clear examples of the mother's attitudes to whites?
   e.g. has she recalled any particular incidents?
   has she made any general comments?

(v) Are there any comments about the Centre?
Does the mother have white friends?
Does the mother frequently refer to her husband's nationality (if European)?

(ii) Are there any clear examples of the mother's attitudes to Aborigines?

- e.g. has she recalled particular incidents?
- has she made any general comments?
- how does she react to newspaper publicity about Aborigines?
- has she made comments about particular individuals or groups of Aborigines?

(iii) Are there clear examples of the mother's attitudes to "Australia"?

- e.g. how did she react to the Commonwealth elections?
- does she ever comment on international politics with reference to Australia?
- does she ever comment on national incidents, criticisms or opinions?
- what is her attitude to Government assistance, pensions, welfare, etc.?

(iv) What activities, hobbies and entertainments does the mother participate in outside of the group?

What activities, hobbies, etc., does the mother participate in within the group?

(v) Are there any examples of her attitude to the Centre?
e.g. comments about the children, incidents with members of staff, general opinions expressed about the Centre.

Who did the mother know in the group prior to her participation?
Who invited her to join the group?
Who are her friends within the group?
Does she meet members of the group outside of the Centre?
What is her record of attendance?

(vi) Are there any examples of the mother's desire to get on, self-reliance or initiative?
Has she expressed any feelings on these matters?

(vii) What general comments can be made about her appearance and attitudes?

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