This study employed survey methodology to determine non-Aboriginal students’ attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians. A further aim was to determine whether students’ attitudes varied according to their level of contact with Aboriginal people and to their factual knowledge of Aboriginal issues. A subsequent aim was to clarify previous findings concerning attitudes and background factors. The participants were 120 (33 male & 87 female) tertiary students from Victoria University of Technology. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of questions about the respondent as well as contact, knowledge, source of knowledge and attitude measures. The results showed that on the whole students had very favourable (enlightened) attitudes towards Aborigines and a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues. Independent t-tests indicated that enlightened students were significantly more knowledgeable than tolerant (moderately favourable) students and that students with a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues were significantly more favourable than those with low knowledge. Pearson’s correlations revealed significant positive relationships between attitude/knowledge, attitude/age, knowledge/age, knowledge/contact and age/contact. One way MANOVA tests indicated significant variations in attitude according to students’ source of knowledge, nationality, political preference, fathers’ occupation, mothers’ occupation, type of study and residential region. Knowledge, contact and age were conceptualised as a ‘wisdom’ factor which partially explained the variations in attitudes. This study was limited to an investigation of the positive side of the racial attitude continuum. The study may be of interest to anti-racism workers, attitude researchers and educators who are interested in promoting positive racial attitudes among their students.
DECLARATION

“I declare that this report does not incorporate any materials previously written by another person except where due reference is made in the text”.

“I further declare that this study had adhered to the ethical principles as established by the Psychology Ethics Committee of the Victoria University”.

Signature  ………………………

Name  ………………………

Date  ………………………

(From Appendix D, Department of Psychology Honours Manual)
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract (ii)  
Declaration (iii)  
Acknowledgments (iv)  
Table of Contents (v-vi)  
List of Figures (vii)  
List of Tables (vii)  

**Chapter One**  
Introduction: Understanding Attitudes  
1.1 Why study attitudes? 1-2  
1.2 Attitude theory and definition 2-4  
1.3 Racial attitudes 4-5  
1.4 Theoretical Framework  
1.4.1 A typology of knowledge and attitude 5-6  
1.4.2 The learning environment 6  
1.4.3 Experiences and knowledge 8  
1.4.4 Other factors 8-9  
1.4.5 Attitude, attitude/knowledge type 9-10  

**Chapter Two**  
Historical Background to Contemporary Attitudes  
2.1 Attitudes and history 11-13  
2.2 Ignorance, indifference and greed 13-14  
2.3 Legacies of history 14-15  

**Chapter Three**  
Research on Attitudes to Aborigines  
3.1 Community attitudes 16-20  
3.2 Student attitudes 20-22  
3.3 Summary 23-24  
3.4 The present study: Aims and research questions 24-25  
3.5 Hypotheses 25-26
Chapter Four  Methodology
4.1  Participants and selection procedure  27-28
4.2  Questionnaire  28-30
4.3  Data handling and analyses  30-31

Chapter Five  Results
5.1  Attitudes  32-34
5.2  Knowledge  34
5.3  Knowledge and attitudes  36-37
5.4  Contact, knowledge, attitudes and age  37-40
5.5  Source of knowledge  40-42
5.6  Attitudes and background factors  42
5.7  Scheffe post hoc analyses  44-46

Chapter Six  Discussion
6.1  Supported/non-supported hypotheses  47-51
6.2  Limitations of the study  52
6.3  Conclusions and implications  53

References  54-57

Appendices  58-110
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure one  A Typology of Knowledge and Attitudes: Racist, Misinformed, Tolerant and Enlightened  7

Figure two  The Interaction of Contact and Knowledge on Attitudes  38

Figure three  The Relationships between Contact, Knowledge, Attitude and Age  39

LIST OF TABLES

Table One  Percentages of Favourable and Unfavourable Responses on the EAAS  33

Table Two  Knowledge of Aboriginal Issues: Percentage of Students Obtaining Correct/Incorrect Responses  35

Table Three  Comparison of Frequencies of Knowledge and Attitude Type  36

Table Four  Percentage of Students who had Contact with Aboriginal People  37

Table Five  Means and MANOVA Results for Four Source of Knowledge Groups  41

Table Six  MANOVA Results for the Background Factors  43

Table Seven  Mean Contact, Knowledge, Attitude and Age for the Background Factors  45
Chapter One

Introduction: Understanding Attitudes

1.1 Why study attitudes?

Relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians have undergone many positive developments since the early years of white settlement. However, remnants of the past still remain since many indigenous people report that “the attitudes of non-indigenous people are a major obstacle in obtaining just treatment” (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR), 1993, session 5.2). Addressing attitudes with a view to improving relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, is an important aspect of the reconciliation process (CAR, 1993) and constitutes a primary reason for studying non-indigenous attitudes.

Strategies aimed at breaking down barriers and promoting more harmonious relationships could be greatly enhanced with information regarding the need for change (i.e., the extent of positive/negative attitudes in a given area) and the primary areas of concern (Larsen, 1978a). Attitude scales can also be employed to “monitor the relationship between social [or institutional] change and attitudinal change” (Larsen, 1978a, p.94). The recent debates about whether to extinguish native title on pastoral leases, to compensate Aboriginal people for being forcibly removed from their parents during childhood and the emergence of a new political party associated with anti-Aboriginal sentiment, are three such changes why monitoring at the attitudinal level is required. Positive attitudes towards indigenous people and support by the wider community are important ingredients to the success of Aboriginal endeavors. It is therefore essential that a greater understanding of attitudes at
all levels (i.e., theoretical, historical, cultural and individual) be gained.

The main purpose of this chapter is to expound upon some of the theoretical and definitional aspects of the attitude construct. Chapter two deals with the historical underpinnings of Australian attitudes, and chapter three involves a review of previous research relevant to understanding non-indigenous attitudes towards indigenous people. Further chapters focus on the empirical aspects and implications of the present study, which aims to investigate experiential, cognitive and demographic factors associated with non-indigenous attitudes towards indigenous Australians. Information of this kind may increase our understanding of some of the underlying reasons for prejudicial and tolerant attitudes.

1.2 **Attitude Theory and Definition**

Most attitude theories and definitions are derivatives of an earlier tripartite framework developed by Plato. Plato theorized that the mind consisted of the three faculties: “Affection (feeling), Conation (striving), and Cognition (thought)” and used this system to describe the slave, warrior and philosopher classes in society (Allport, 1985, p.11). Although the subsequent development and refinement of the attitude concept must be attributed to the work of numerous psychologists and sociologists during the nineteenth and twentieth century, this early overarching theory remains relevant. For instance, attitude theories today are often distinguished on the basis of whether they are “unidimensional” (where attitudes are defined as feelings of like or dislike), or “tripartite”, which also include the cognitive and behavioural dimensions (Olsen & Zanna, 1991, p.196).

Attitude is “usually defined as a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event” (Azjen, 1984, p114). It is a
“hypothetical construct” which is not directly observable, but must be inferred from “measurable responses that reflect positive or negative evaluations of the attitude object” (p.114). Elaborating on Plato’s classification, Ajzen (1984) proposed that:

Attitudes can be inferred from cognitive responses or beliefs (reflecting the individual’s perception of, and information about, the attitude object); affective responses (evaluations of, and feelings toward, the object); and conative responses (behavioral intentions, tendencies, and actions with respect to the object) (p.114).

Although most researchers agree that attitude involves cognitive and affective processes, some definitional ambiguities concerning the ‘measurement’ of attitude need to be clarified. Some researchers operationalize beliefs and attitudes as separate variables and measure the relationships between them, while others treat “beliefs and associated evaluations” as the “determinants of attitudes” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.50). Many of the Australian studies investigating racial attitudes (e.g., Larsen, 1978; Lippmann, 1973; Walker, 1994; Western, 1969) have employed the latter strategy. These studies presented a series of statements that reflected beliefs, feelings, myths, judgements and stereotypes about Aborigines and the participants’ attitudes were inferred according to whether the evaluations were favorable or unfavourable. This type of approach is clearly more suitable in situations where the attitude item cannot be easily distinguished as either a feeling (affect) or a belief (cognition). For example, the statement “I resent the treatment of Aborigines in Australia” (Larsen, 1978a, p.96), reflects both a feeling (of resentment) and a belief (that Aborigines are treated negatively) component.

Another rarer approach to racial attitude research involved exploring the relationship between knowledge and attitude. Western (1969) presented a series of
knowledge (true/false) statements which reflected the “position and status” (p.251) of Aboriginal people as well as an attitude scale which reflected common beliefs, feelings, judgements and stereotypes about Aboriginal people. By doing this, Western was able to investigate the relationship between the objective and the subjective, that is, between knowledge (of objective facts) and attitude (subjective beliefs and feelings). This approach is of specific interest in the present study and is discussed in further detail in other sections.

1.3 **Racial Attitudes**

The tripartite framework can be used in reference to positive and negative attitudes towards a broad range of animate and inanimate objects. However, when the focus of interest is on racial attitudes, we also need to turn our attention to the more specific concept of prejudice. Although less is known about tolerance than about prejudice (Allport, 1981) we can learn about tolerance by understanding prejudice, just as we can learn about health by studying disease. Prejudice generally “refers to negative attitudes toward a racial or ethnic group, or toward … [individual] members of those groups” (Judd, 1991, p.35). It may be conceptualized as an internal process, which, like other attitudes can reflect cognitive, behavioural and affective phenomena. More specifically it can involve an “unfounded or unreasonable judgement, and a feeling … [of] being against something” (Pettman, 1986, p.3).

Prejudice is associated with labeling, stereotyping and judging and is encouraged by ethnocentrism (Pettman, 1986). Ethnocentrism means being so absorbed in the ways of one’s own society that the ways of other societies are judged negatively or misunderstood (Waters & Crook, 1990). It typically involves the
feeling or belief that one’s normative system is superior to others (Waters & Crook, 1990) and is indicative of a we-they attitude (Beswick & Hills, 1969). In contrast, racism usually refers to the claim for “racial superiority” whereas ethnocentrism refers to the claim for “cultural superiority” (Broome, 1982, p.88). However, the term racism is often used as a general umbrella term to refer to “racial prejudice, racial discrimination, racist ideology and institutional racism” (Pettman, 1986, p.4).

The term prejudice can also be used in reference to positive beliefs and feelings. However in the present context, the terms positive, favourable, tolerant or enlightened are reserved for the positive side of the racial attitude continuum while negative, unfavourable, prejudiced, misinformed bigoted or racist are used for the negative side. Some of these terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper while in some cases (where stated) they have more specific meanings. The terms indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 A Typology of Knowledge and Attitude

Western’s (1969) pioneering attempt to establish a link between people’s knowledge of Aboriginal issues and their attitudes toward Aboriginal people has interesting implications. For instance, if it were known that negative attitudes were largely a matter of insufficient knowledge, then promoting attitude change might simply involve increasing knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal issues. It would also be known that there were two types of individuals; those with low knowledge and very unfavourable attitudes (which are referred to here as *misinformed*) and those with high knowledge and very favourable attitudes (which are referred to here as *enlightened*). However, theory, research and logic tell us that the relationship is
more complex than this.

Before discussing the particular aspects of Western’s (1969) research, it needs to be acknowledged that prejudice is a phenomenon with “multiple causation” (Allport, 1958, p.218). Thus, while knowledge may play some part in one’s attitude, other factors both internal (psychological) and external (in one’s learning environment or society) may also contribute to one’s attitude. The second aspect to consider is that not all people with enlightened (very favourable) attitudes are high in knowledge and that not all people with negative attitudes are misinformed (low in knowledge). Figure one illustrates a holistic model that captures some of the complexities surrounding the concept of attitude. Four attitude/knowledge combinations (which can be empirically tested) are proposed in the model: racist (negative attitudes/high knowledge), misinformed (negative attitudes/low knowledge), tolerant (moderately positive attitudes/low or high knowledge) and enlightened (very positive attitudes/low or high knowledge). The following equation simplifies the model: Learning environment + experiences + knowledge + other factors = attitude and attitude/knowledge type. An explanation of each part of the framework follows.

1.4.2 The Learning Environment

Many authors (e.g., Allport, 1981; Olsen & Zanna, 1991; Rajecki, 1990) have implied that attitudes are learned or acquired from one’s environment. The major sources from which we acquire both our knowledge and attitudes are parents and significant others, schools, organizations (i.e., social, political, religious) and the mass media (i.e., newspapers, television and other electronic media).
Learning Environment

Parents
Significant others
Schools
Organizations
Mass media

Experiences
Knowledge
Other Factors

(-) Attitude towards Aborigines (+)

Attitude/Knowledge Type

Racist    Misinformed    Tolerant    Enlightened

Figure 1

A Typology of Knowledge and Attitudes: Racist, Misinformed, Tolerant and Enlightened
1.4.3 Experiences and Knowledge

Experiences and knowledge correspond to the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of the tripartite model and these were the focus of Western’s (1969) research. Western compared residents from a small country town with those from a larger city and explored the relationship between attitudes to Aborigines, knowledge about Aboriginal rights and the impact of contact. The results revealed that higher levels of contact were associated with more favourable attitudes to Aborigines. However urban dwellers, despite having less contact with Aborigines had more favourable attitudes than the country dwellers. This appears to have been partially due to the fact that city dwellers had a greater knowledge of Aboriginal issues.

According to Western, knowledge and contact have “an interesting interactive effect” (p.260). Apparently a favourable image of Aborigines was most likely when knowledge and contact were both high and least likely when knowledge and contact were both low. However when there was a “discrepancy between knowledge and contact”, a favourable image was more likely when knowledge was high and contact was low than when contact was high and knowledge was low (p.260). As Western concluded: “high knowledge in a sense ‘makes up’ for low contact, while high contact fails to ‘make up’ for low knowledge (p.260). Although more research is required in this area, the study suggests that contact and knowledge (in particular) do make a contribution to attitude.

1.4.4 Other Factors

Many other factors, in addition to contact and knowledge, play a part in determining whether an individual holds prejudicial or tolerant attitudes towards indigenous people. For example Allport (1981) asserted that no “solitary” theory of
prejudice could account for the multiplicity of factors involved but that each theory has “something to teach us” (p.218). The six main theoretical approaches to the problem of prejudice can be classified as those that focus on: historical, socio-cultural, situational, psychodynamic or phenomenological factors, or, on the earned reputation of the stimulus object (i.e., Aborigines) itself (Allport, 1981). In addition there are the sociological theories i.e., interactionist, functionalist, conflict and ecological (Kornblum, 1988, pp.307-311).

As will be shown in chapter three, most of the Australian researchers have dealt with this complexity by limiting their empirical focus to contact and background factors (i.e., age, sex, residence, political preference). Several studies have also measured ideological factors and maladaptive personality characteristics and could be described as psychodynamic in their approach (see Larsen, 1978b; Larsen, 1978c; Ray, 1981).

1.4.5 Attitude, Attitude/Knowledge Type

The model proposes that attitude is the unique combination or sum of one’s learning environment, experiences, knowledge and other factors. The model also suggests that four attitude/knowledge types can result, two negative and two positive.

Racist attitudes may exist with either low or high knowledge. The misinformed type is based on the view that some people have racist attitudes because they hold misconceptions about Aboriginal people. A misconception may be defined as an attitude based on inadequate knowledge, or as Pettman (1986) states, an attitude “held without sufficient evidence” (p.4). Pettman claims that some people have “picked up” their prejudices and stereotypes and hold onto them merely
as “information fillers” but are able to modify their attitudes when new information becomes available (1986, p.4). Pettman explained that the true bigots are those that hold onto their prejudices rigidly and who are not likely to change their views with new information. Unlike the misinformed type, this type of prejudice seems to be associated with “personality or emotional needs” (Pettman, 1986, p.4) rather than to a lack of knowledge. Based on this rationale the misinformed attitude type in the present framework may be defined as someone with negative attitudes and a low knowledge of Aboriginal issues while the racist attitude type, refers to someone with negative attitudes and a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues (i.e., is not misinformed).

It is also useful to distinguish between different types of tolerance. Allport (1981) claimed that tolerance could differ in the degree to which a person’s ethnic attitudes were salient or non-salient, whether their tolerance was character conditioned or due to conformity, and whether tolerance was associated with militant or pacifistic behaviour. While not dismissing the importance of these, the distinction made in the present framework is between moderately favourable attitudes which are referred to as tolerant attitudes and highly favourable attitudes which are referred to as enlightened attitudes. It seems logical to assume that individuals with enlightened attitudes would have a greater knowledge of Aboriginal issues than individuals with tolerant attitudes but this needs further investigation.
Chapter Two

Historical Background to Contemporary Attitudes

2.1 Attitudes and History

Contemporary attitudes cannot be fully appreciated without a consideration of historical factors. Although empirical studies on white attitudes towards Aboriginal people were not conducted before the twentieth century, most historians claim that white attitudes of the past were extremely negative. According to Broome:

Most European Australians held racist views towards Aboriginal Australians based on ignorance, a lack of sympathy, on fanciful racial theories, and on the need to rationalise the dispossession of the Aborigines’ land. Indeed, European Australians were obsessed by the notion of race (Broome, 1982, p.93).

The initial attitude of discoverers and early settlers was to treat the indigenous people of Australia as if they didn’t count. In 1785, the British Government declared that Australia was terra nullius, or empty land, (Attwood, 1996) and settlement proceeded without permission or treaty from Aboriginal elders. When indigenous people resisted the white takeovers of their traditional homelands, a period of violent conflicts between blacks and whites took place. Reynolds has estimated that more than 20,000 Aboriginal people were killed during this frontier period (1987). Many more apparently died of ‘white diseases’ and other causes, so that the Aboriginal population was reduced from about 300,000 in 1788, to about 75,000 by only a century later (Taft, 1975, p.3).

While there have always been exceptions, white attitudes during the eighteenth and nineteenth century could be generally described as ethnocentric and racist.
Broome (1982) stated that the first Europeans were ethnocentric rather than racist because they claimed to be culturally superior rather than racially superior. That is, many people believed that Aborigines could live as white people if given “European education and culture” (p. 88). However “hard-line racism” also began to emerge and many whites believed that even with education, Aborigines “could never equal the European” (p. 88). Racist ideas had no basis in fact but were functional in that they served to justify the killings and “rapacious dispossessions of indigenous people” (Pearson, 1994, p. 3).

Darwin’s theory of evolution served an important but ominous function in Aboriginal dispossession and maltreatment. Although it was not Darwin’s intention, his “theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest” was manipulated so that it supported racist philosophies (Lippmann, 1973, p. 25). The theory was taken to mean that “the less fit or technically primitive peoples of the world were destined to die out or assimilate with the stronger” (Lippmann, 1973, p. 25). Darwinian ideas seemed to fit what many people wanted to believe: that some races were better than others and that weaker races simply died out (Broome, 1982, p. 92).

By the twentieth century, ideas about the supposed racial inferiority of indigenous people had become thoroughly entrenched within the Australian legal and governmental system (Clark, 1994, p. 15). Consequently, many people were “rounded up” to live on missions, were denied the rights to free speech and movement, were not allowed to vote, and were subject to strict control by government officials (Clark, 1994, p. 15). Government policy also led to the forcible removal of Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) children from their families to be placed in institutions or white foster homes and many are yet to be re-united (CAR, 1996). While these ‘protectionist’ practices may have contained a
humanitarian element, Markus (1994) has argued that they were also genocidal in intent. The 1897 act referring to Aboriginal protection apparently grew out of humanitarian pressure on the Queensland government to do something about the rapidly declining Aboriginal population (Reynolds & May, 1995, p.181). It could be argued though, that a genuine humanitarian response would have involved negotiation over land so that Aborigines could continue to pursue their traditional lifestyle and thereby maintain the integrity of their culture. Protection, as Markus (1994) explained was just another euphemism that served to cover up the real intent of genocide, in much the same way as the term ‘dispersal’ was used to cover up the real intent of killing (p.35). Euphemisms were common during the frontier period, and terms such as ‘dispersing’, ‘breaking up’, ‘shaking up’ and ‘giving a fright’ were often used to hide the real atrocities and violence that were committed against Aborigines (McGrath, 1995, p.19).

2.2 Ignorance, Indifference and Greed

Ignorance, indifference and greed characterised the thinking, feeling and behaviour of the settlers. Ignorance was to be expected, since England (like many other countries during the 18th century), was largely mono-cultural and the people were not accustomed to dealing with or understanding other cultures. Because of this ignorance, everything Australian, including the land, animals, plants and people were judged from a British perspective. The British believed that Aborigines had no rights to the land because they had not “mixed their labour with the land so as to have enclosed and cultivated it, [and nor had they] made roads and raised houses and towns” (Frost, 1981; In Markus, 1994, p.20). Moreover, the British saw Aborigines as a people with no system of law, government, religion or sovereignty over the
region (Frost, 1981; In Markus, 1994).

The settlers failed to recognise that land cultivation and enclosure were unnecessary to a hunter/gatherer lifestyle and that indigenous rights to land were inherited and “shaped by complex social processes based on traditional principles of descent, kinship and marriage” (Jonas & Langton, 1994, p.3). They also failed to acknowledge the deep spiritual connection that Aboriginal people had (and have) with the land. Aborigines did not consider the land in material terms but as a responsibility held in sacred (Ancestral) trust; land was not something that was owned but something one belonged to (Mudrooroo, 1995). Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to assume that the events of history occurred only out of ignorance. For, as Markus asked: “why did the British not modify their approach to Aborigines as they gained a greater knowledge of their way of life and of the impact on them of British incursions?” (Markus, 1994, p.21). Clearly the past has to be viewed through a tripartite framework in which ignorance or lack of knowledge was one component, and where indifference (or lack of empathy) to suffering, and greed for land, were the other two components.

2.3 **Legacies of History**

The events of history have created a deep division between black and white Australians, a division that is most evident in terms of the statuses of the two groups. Aboriginal Australians have become a minority group in their own country, not only in terms of their numbers, which totaled only 266,000 in 1991 (Jonas & Langton, 1994, p.11; this figure includes Torres Straight Islanders), but also in terms of their social status. A minority group may defined as a group of people, who on the basis of their “physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in …
society… for unequal and differential treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as the objects of collective discrimination” (Wirth, 1945; In Kornblum, 1988, p.294).

Indigenous Australians are clearly the most disadvantaged group in our community (CAR, 1993, p.13). According to the council, the unemployment rate for indigenous people is four times the national average and the incomes are less than two thirds to that of other Australians. Indigenous Australians are also seriously disadvantaged in terms of housing, education and health and are likely to die 20 years sooner (on average) than other Australians (CAR, 1993). Imprisonment rates and deaths in custody are also significantly higher. The Royal Commission into black deaths in custody found that the underlying factors to Aboriginal deaths in custody and other disadvantages are the “legacy of history” (In CAR, 1993, p.13). They are due to “the dispossession of indigenous peoples from their land and, as a consequence, their lack of access to economic, social and political power” (In CAR, 1993, p.13). The disadvantages faced by indigenous Australians are compounded by racism, the white legacy of history. Racist attitudes are “a source of resistance to improvement in the status of Aborigines” (Larsen, 1978a, p.98).
Chapter Three

Research on Attitudes to Aborigines

3.1 Community Attitudes

Although the previous chapter showed that it was possible to view past attitudes as consisting of ignorance, indifference and greed, the following research suggests that we are only at the exploratory stages of understanding attitudes in the twentieth century. Moreover, only a handful of studies dealing directly with attitudes to Aborigines have been conducted. Of those reviewed in this chapter, most have focussed on assessing the attitudes of a particular sample and on isolating or discovering the factors that are related to attitudes.

In terms of assessing attitudes, Western (1969) found that the favourability (towards Aboriginal people) of his sample ranged from 72% - 94% for items reflecting an Aboriginal rights dimension but only from 49% - 64% for items reflecting a dimension related to negative stereotypes and beliefs. Thus, as Western (1969) explained, both groups (rural and urban) were “more likely to have a favourable attitude to Aboriginal rights than they … [were] to reject the stereotype that Aborigines are inferior, shiftless, dirty and lazy” (sic, p. 254).

Western discovered that younger subjects in the urban sample tended to have the most favourable attitudes to Aborigines and that the favourability in both groups tended to increase with education. Those with tertiary education were the most favourable, those with secondary education less favourable and those with only primary education were the least favourable. He also found differences in attitudes among the occupational groups, with white-collar workers having the most positive attitudes. However a major limitation of Western’s study was that he only used percentages and not inferential statistics to test the differences in attitudes. This
made the results difficult to interpret since no information on whether the results were statistically significant was available.

Another comparative study of Australian towns was undertaken by Lippmann (1973) who surveyed the attitudes of residents from two Victorian towns (which she called Norhtown and Southtown) and two New South Wales towns (Eastville and Westville). Of the 50 participants from each town, 52% of the Westville residents obtained a favourable scale score and this was followed by Eastville - 46% favourable, Northtown – 36% favourable, and lastly, Southtown with 18% favourable. Of the total sample (N = 200), only 40% were considered to have favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal people (Lippmann, 1973).

The relationship between attitudes and the amount of contact with Aborigines was also tested but this was not significant. This could have been because none of the respondents had actually had a “great deal” of contact and only 12% of the sample had had a “fair amount” of contact (p.160). Indeed most of the sample (88%) had had little or no contact with Aborigines at all. Lippmann further explored the relationship between attitudes and sex, age, occupation, education, and length of residence in the town but none were significant. There were however, slight tendencies for males to be more favourable than females and for those who were favourable to be aged between 21-29, “to have had some secondary or tertiary education; or to be employers or white collar employees rather than manual workers” (Lippmann, 1973, p.160).

Larsen’s (1981) study (which involved 200 Townsville residents) employed the Larsen’s 12-item attitude scale (Larsen Attitudes to Aborigines Scale) and several other measures to examine the relationship of fascism, religiosity and contact, to attitudes towards Aborigines. With respect to attitudes, Larsen found that 39.5 % to
65% of the participants agreed with the positive statements about Aborigines and that 31.5% to 61% agreed with the negative statements. For example, on the positive items, 65% believed that Aborigines must be given a better share in Australia’s resources in the future, 63.5% agreed we could learn a lot from Aboriginal people, and 58.5% agreed that they liked Aboriginal people. An example of the negative items were that 60.5% of the sample agreed that Aborigines tended to remain childlike and dependent despite the best efforts of civilization, 61% agreed that Aborigines were “spendthrifts” and 50% agreed that Aborigines were “bludgers” (sic, Larsen, 1981, p.114). Thus, while many of the subjects responded positively, an alarming level of stereotyping and prejudice was also apparent.

Larsen discovered that negative attitudes were related to the ideologies of fascism (r = -.28) and religiosity (religious dogmatism) (r = -.17), and additionally to low contact (r = -.36). Higher contact was related to being male (r = -.21) and religiosity was related to being female but the direct relationship between sex and attitudes was only minimal. Older age was related to both religiosity and fascism but here again the direct relationship between age and attitude was only slight.

A similar approach to attitudes and ideology was undertaken by Ray (1981) who surveyed 140 New South Wales residents on the relationship between attitudes to Aborigines and the ideological factors of fascism, rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity and directiveness. In addition, Ray looked at the relationships between attitudes and age, sex, occupation, education and political party preference. Details on whether the group scored positively or negatively were not provided, thereby making interpretation difficult. In terms of the other factors, Ray reported low but significant correlations between racial prejudice and pro-fascist ideology (r = .28), rigidity (r = .26), older age (r = .31), sex (being male) (r = -.21) and political
preference ($r = .24$) in that Liberal and Country party voters were more negative than other voters. These findings supported the theory that racial prejudice was an outcome of conservatism.

More recently, Walker (1994) constructed the 11-item Attitude to Aborigines Scale (AAbS) as well as two other attitude scales that referred to Asians and women. The scales were administered to 257 residents from the Perth district. The negative responses on the AAbS items ranged from 13.1% - 52.4%, that is, 13.1% indicated that they would not vote for their party if an Aborigine was chosen as the candidate; and 52.4% agreed that they wouldn’t like any member of their family to marry an Aborigine. Some of the items on the AAbS were drawn from Larsen’s (1981) earlier scale thus enabling a comparison to be made. It is noteworthy that only 19.4% of Walker’s sample indicated not liking Aboriginal people compared to about 40% in Larsen’s study 16 years earlier. Nevertheless 45.7% of Walker’s sample agreed that Aboriginal people were dirty and unkempt (sic) whereas only 42.5% of the subjects agreed with the statement in Larsen’s study. Moreover, 29.4% of Walker’s sample and 31% of Larsen’s sample didn’t think we could learn a lot from Aboriginal people. These figures indicate that not a great deal had changed despite the passing of so many years, but then again, it is impossible to say whether these two studies represented the attitudes of the general public during these times.

Walker (1994) also analysed the attitude scores for differences due to sex, country of birth, marital status, religion, subjective class identification and political party preference. Results revealed that Democrat supporters were significantly more positive than Grey party supporters and Green party supporters were significantly more positive than Liberal, Grey or National party supporters. With respect to gender, males were significantly more negative than females; and respondents
belonging to the Church of England were less favourable than Catholics, other Christians, and respondents claiming no religion. In addition, Walker found a significant positive correlation between attitudes and years of education, where those with higher educational levels were the most favourable. Age was also related to attitudes (older subjects tended to be less favourable) but this relationship was not statistically significant.

3.2 Students’ Attitudes

During the process of developing the aforementioned (12-item) Larsen’s Attitudes to Aborigines Scale (LAAS), Larsen (1978a) assessed the attitudes of 111 undergraduate students from the James Cook University in North Queensland. Of the total sample, 67.9% of the students disagreed that Aborigines were bludgers, 57.8% disagreed that Aborigines were childlike and dependent and 56% felt that Aborigines displayed a zest for life which is truly to be admired. Examples of some of the more negative responses were that: 37.6% disagreed with the statement “I admire the gentle and peaceful nature of Aboriginal people”, 36.4% agreed that Aborigines were “spendthrifts” and 34.8% indicated that they did not like Aboriginal people (p.96). Larsen supplied percentage data for each item but did not calculate how many students on the whole were positive or negative, that is for all 12 items together. Nevertheless the negative responses for each LAAS item ranged from 10.1% - 37.6%, which demonstrates that the student sample were less negative than any of the community samples.

In the same study, Larsen (1978a) investigated the differences in students’ attitudes according to whether they had had low contact or medium to high contact. The results revealed that the low contact group had significantly less favourable
attitudes (mean attitude score was 158.71) than the medium to high contact group (mean 164.24, F=2.76, p = .006). Because Larsen was mainly concerned with validating the attitude scale, details of background factors such as age, sex, political preference, nationality or type of course were not given. The last factor in particular (course of study) needs further attention because it has been found to be an important predictor of racism among students (Sidanius, Pratto, Martin & Stallworth, 1991).

Sidanius et al., examined the relationship between racial attitudes and career choice among 5655 American tertiary students. They found that students who were preparing for “power sector” professions such as business and law were significantly more racist towards blacks and other minorities than students in “low-power tracks” such as arts and social work (p.706). Thus to return to Larsen’s study, it is impossible to say whether contact alone or other factors contributed to these differences in attitudes.

Larsen’s second study (1978b) of students’ attitudes towards Aborigines involved 122 undergraduate students (46 male and 76 female), also from James Cook University. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between attitudes, contact and the “personality-based” ideologies of “radicalism-conservatism and fascism” (p.101). The results supported the theory that a fascistic and punitive conservative orientation would lead a person to reject minorities like Aborigines. As Larsen predicted the high fascistic-third of the sample were significantly less favourable in their attitudes (p = .008) than the low fascistic-third; and the high conservative-third were significantly less favourable (p = .034) than the radical-third of the sample. Students with higher contact were found to have slightly more positive attitudes but unlike Larsen’s previous (1978a) study the relationship between contact and attitude was not significant. Once again background factors
were not explored.

Larsen’s third study (1978c) investigated factors associated with students’ attitudes towards Aborigines (using the LAAS); and towards Aborigines, Torres Strait and Pacific Islanders (using the Osgood [1957] semantic differential). The study involved 102 undergraduate students (36 males and 66 females) from James Cook University. Larsen theorized that frustration and deprivation derived in earlier life could cause a person to develop certain maladaptive personality traits that led one to reject minorities. He measured the following variables to test the framework: Orthodoxy, machiavellianism, anomia, satisfaction and economic frustration (social welfare and standard of living expectations). The other variables he investigated were contact, age, sex, father’s occupation, political preference, father’s income and place of residence.

The number of significant correlations for the demographic variables and attitudes to Aborigines were minimal but greater numbers of significant correlations where discovered on the combined semantic differential (for Aborigines, Torres Strait and Pacific Islanders, together). The results of the combined measure showed a relationship between “negative attitudes and being male, high fathers’ occupation” and to a lesser extent, right political preference (p.110). Negative attitudes to Aborigines, Torres Straight and Pacific Islanders were also related to high fathers’ income, small town residence, low contact, orthodoxy, machiavellianism, anomia, life dissatisfaction and economic frustration, which was significant for both the combined measure and the LAAS. On the whole, Larsen’s (1978c) research revealed that personality characteristics, contact and certain demographic factors helped to explain the variations in attitudes.
3.3 Summary

The studies revealed that a moderate and therefore unacceptable level of prejudice towards Aboriginal people existed among most of the samples involved. However, subsequent investigation is warranted because all but one of these studies were conducted over 15 years ago. Continuing research is also needed to clarify contradictory findings with respect to attitudes and other factors. For instance, it is not entirely clear why higher levels of contact were found to be related to better attitudes in Western’s (1969) study and two of Larsen’s studies (1978a; 1981) but not in Larsen’s (1978b; 1978c) study. While most researchers acknowledged that it might have had something to do with the quality of the contact (i.e., whether contact was positive or negative), Western’s (1969) study suggested that contact became important when it was associated with knowledge. The contact, knowledge, attitude relationship therefore deserves further attention.

Uncertainty also exists for many of the background factors, partly because researchers have not explored the same factors. For example, only Walker (1994) explored subjects’ country of birth and religion and only Larsen (1978c) explored parental variables such as fathers’ occupation and income. These variables need to be examined again to assess whether they make a contribution to an understanding of prejudice or tolerance.

For gender and political preference, many of the studies found that males were more prejudiced than females and that Liberal party voters were more prejudiced than other voters. There was also some agreement among the studies with respect to age and attitude in that most of the researchers had found older people to be more negative in their attitudes towards Aborigines. Nevertheless it was not clear whether this relationship with age was directly attributable to age or whether some
intervening variable such as knowledge or education was at play. For instance, Larsen found that the younger student sample (1978a) were much more positive than the older community sample (1981) but was unable to identify whether it was age or education that contributed to the variations in attitudes. He assumed that the students were less “rigid” and “less burdened by stereotypic rationales” because of their younger age, and … [that] education generally produces more tolerant individuals capable of complex and differentiating judgements” (p.121). This uncertainty (between age and education) could have been clarified if Larsen had investigated or manipulated the ages of the students. Nevertheless, it is possible that education rather than younger age contributed to more positive attitudes since many of the studies revealed that people with higher education were generally more favourable towards Aborigines.

The studies reviewed here have presented a profile of the factors involved in prejudice and tolerance towards Aboriginal people. Even so, there are still many gaps to be filled before we gain a complete understanding.

3.4 The Present Study: Aims and Research Questions

The present study employed survey methodology to determine whether non-Aboriginal tertiary students’ attitudes towards Aboriginal people were generally positive (enlightened and tolerant) or negative (racist and misinformed). The second aim, consistent with Western’s (1969) study, was to explore the cognitive and experiential dimensions of attitude. That is, to determine whether attitudes varied according to students’ factual knowledge of Aboriginal issues and according to their level of contact with Aboriginal people. The third aim was to clarify previous research findings concerning students’ attitudes and background factors. The
research questions related to these aims were:

1) Do students have positive attitudes towards Aboriginal people?
2) Do students have low or high knowledge of Aboriginal issues?
3) Have students had contact with Aboriginal people?
4) In what ways are contact, knowledge and attitudes related?
5) Does the source of knowledge (i.e., media, secondary school, tertiary education) make any difference to students attitudes and knowledge?
6) Do attitudes differ according to age, gender, nationality, political and religious affiliation, residential region, and parents’ occupations?

3.5 Hypotheses

In consideration of previous research findings concerning students’ attitudes, it was predicted that the present sample would have favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal people (1). This would also mean that there would be significantly more students with tolerant and enlightened attitudes than either racist or misinformed attitudes. Since respondents were selected from a university environment it was assumed that most students would have a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues (2) and more specifically that students with enlightened attitudes would be significantly more knowledgeable than students with tolerant attitudes (3). Significant positive relationships between knowledge and attitude (4) contact and knowledge (5) and contact and attitude were also hypothesized (6). A further hypothesis related to the learning environment (see section 1.4.2) was that students who learned about indigenous issues at the tertiary level would be significantly more positive than those who had learned from other sources (7).

Nine more hypotheses were developed in relation to the background variables.
Based on previous research it was predicted that age and attitudes would be negatively related (older people would be less favourable) (8). Minimal differences in attitudes were hypothesized for students’ nationality (9), religion (10), and residential region (11) due to insufficient previous research in relation to these variables. In terms of political preference, course of study and gender, it was hypothesized that Liberal voters would be less favourable than other voters (12); business students less favourable than students from other courses (13) and that males would be less favourable than females (14). The final hypotheses were that students with parents (mothers and fathers) involved in professional or white-collar occupations would be significantly more positive than students with parents in blue-collar occupations (15&16).
Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1 Participants and Selection Procedure

This study was commenced following the approval of the study by the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Technology, St. Albans. The ethics approval note is attached as Appendix A. The participants were 120 tertiary students. The primary method of selection was purposive in that it involved approaching individual students at various locations e.g., library, cafeteria and lecture halls. After an introduction and brief discussion of the project, each student was asked if he/she could participate in a survey by filling out a questionnaire and returning it to a designated place within the university. Several more questionnaires were left in the student union and student services reception rooms (n=25), while the remainder were distributed by a university lecturer (n=20). A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed yielding a response rate of 48%. Although the moderately low response rate poses some threat to external validity, it may be noted that surveys were distributed just several weeks before the end of the semester. It therefore seems plausible that exam preparation and the finalizing of term work during this time may have precluded many of the students from responding.

The sample consisted of 33 males with a mean age of 22.44 and an age range of 18-43 (SD 5.45) and 87 females with a mean age of 25.95 and an age range of 17-50 (SD 9.19). Participants were studying a range of courses and represented 17 different religions with the largest group being Catholic (n=44), followed by Orthodox (n=10) and then Muslim (n=9). A high proportion of the participants resided in the Western suburbs of Melbourne (55%) and over 58% were Labour party
supporters. The participants represented 46 different countries and ethnic backgrounds, however the largest proportion (37.5%) were of Anglo Australian ethnicity. Twenty-nine of the respondents were born overseas, 49 were first generation Australians (born in Australia, with at least one parent born overseas) and 41 were second generation Australians (born in Australia, with both parents also born in Australia). For further details regarding the respondents refer to Appendix B.

4.2 Questionnaire

A three part questionnaire consisting of A: personal and demographic questions (background variables); B: contact, source of knowledge and knowledge measures; and C: an attitude scale was used in the present study. A plain language statement describing the research and the voluntary nature of the study, together with instructions, contact numbers and an envelope for survey return, were also included. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix C.

Section A of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the respondent's gender, age, suburb, course of study, political preference, religion, student’s country of birth, student’s ethnicity, parents' country of birth and parents’ occupations and education. Section B contained a question (which consisted of 6 response items) that requested the respondent to indicate his or her main Source of knowledge of Aboriginal issues. This was followed by five short questions that referred to the amount and type of Contact with Aboriginal people. Items a, c and e, of the contact questions were slightly modified versions of Western's (1969) items regarding contact. Also included in section B was the Knowledge of Aboriginal Issues (KAI) measure which was made up of 10 statements (3 true and 7 false) and a three point (true, false, not sure) response scale. This was designed to test
participants’ knowledge of historical events and other issues concerning Aboriginal people. Items three and six, both of which are “myths” (widely held beliefs that are not true), have been reproduced from the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation study kit documents (1993, Session 5.7).

The final section (C) consisted of a 30-item attitude measure with each question assessed via a 7 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. This incorporated two previously established attitude scales: the Larsen Attitudes to Aborigines Scale (LAAS, 1978a) and the Attitudes to Aborigines Scale (AAbS, Walker, 1994). Items 1-11 were reproduced in full from the AAbS (Walker, 1994) but items originally came from older established scales. According to Walker, items 1,2,3 and 11 were originally from Western's (1969) scale; items 4,6,7,8 and 9 were from the LAAS (Larsen, 1978a); and items 5 and 10 were from The Australian Ethnocentrism Scale (Beswick & Hill, 1969). The AAbS demonstrated “good internal consistency” and some reliability and validity data were provided (for a further discussion see Walker, 1994, p.142).

Items 4-9 and 12-18 of the present measure were from the LAAS (Larsen, 1978a) and items 19 and 20 were from Western's (1969) attitude measure. In light of the procedures used for item development (see Larsen, 1978a, p.95) the LAAS appeared to have a sound content validity for the time periods in which it was employed. The LAAS also appeared to have adequate internal and construct validity (Walker, 1994, p.137).

Following an examination of Reconciliation documentation (1993), it became apparent that many recent dimensions of attitudes towards Aborigines were not represented in either the LAAS or the AAbS. Items 21-30 were therefore developed to deal with further current themes (i.e., attitudes to land rights, economic justice,
ecological values). Attitude is a broad construct, hence the addition of these items may be seen as an attempt to improve content validity. For the purposes of this study the 30-item scale is referred to as the **Expanded Attitudes to Aborigines Scale (EAAS)**. The EAAS consisted of 15 positively and 15 negatively worded statements overall. A space at the end of the questionnaire was allocated for any qualitative comments that the respondent wanted to make. However, due to the reasonably large amount of data that emerged in this study, it was decided to limit the present analyses to quantitative data only and to deal with the qualitative aspects in some later study.

### 4.3 Data Handling and Analyses

In preparation for data entry, for each of the 120 returned questionnaires: the respondent’s details from section A, and the contact, source of knowledge and knowledge responses from section B were converted to numerical codes. With the attitude measure the ratings from the 15 positively worded statements were assigned a seven if the respondent strongly agreed (slightly agree=6, agree=5, not sure=4, disagree=3, slightly disagree=2) to a one for a strongly disagree. The 15 negatively worded statements were scored in reverse order so that a strongly agree was one and a strongly disagree was seven. Favourability scores ranging from 30-210 were computed by summing the responses for each of the 30 attitude items. Scores ranging from 30-120 represented mostly negative responses on the Likert scale and were classified as unfavourable (racist and misinformed). Scores ranging 121-170 represented uncertain to moderately favourable responses on the Likert scale and were classified as tolerant and scores ranging 171-210 represented strong favourability on the Likert and were classified as enlightened. On the knowledge scale, each correct response was assigned a one so that the minimum score was zero.
(for no correct responses) and the maximum was 10. The contact scale was scored in a similar manner, with each yes response being assigned a one so that the minimum score was zero and the maximum score was 5. Statistical tests included Pearson’s product-moment correlations, independent t-tests, one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and one way Multivariate Analysis of Variance tests (MANOVA). To avoid repetition, specific details regarding the variables tested are presented with the results.
Chapter Five

Results

5.1 Attitudes

Table one shows the percentage of students who responded favourably and unfavourably to each item on the EAAS. The unsure category does not appear in the table but is the difference between the combined values and 100%. As indicated in table one, a high percentage of students responded favourably for most items on the scale. The greatest percentages of favourability (agreement with positive item or disagreement with negative item) were for statements 1, 6, 11, 13 and 24. Most students indicated that they could sit next to an Aboriginal person on a bus or train without feeling uncomfortable, that they liked Aborigines and that they would vote for an Aboriginal candidate. Most also indicated that they wouldn’t mind an Aboriginal person living next door to them and that jokes about Aborigines could be hurtful.

Some uncertainty is apparent for the second statement concerning ‘racial mixing’, for statements eight and sixteen concerning positive stereotypes, and seventeen concerning the outdated term ‘spendthrifts’. The greatest percentages of unfavourable responses were for statements 8, 20, 22, 25 and 30. Some students did not agree with the positive stereotype that Aboriginal people had gentle and peaceful natures and some believed that Aboriginal people were pretty much all alike. Some students’ attributed the blame for poor health and living conditions to Aboriginal people themselves rather than to insufficient funding and services and some felt that Aboriginal people needed to give up much of their culture if they were to succeed in life. Finally, some students were not in support of Aboriginal people receiving
### Table 1

Percentages of Favourable and Unfavourable Responses on the EAAS\(^*\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Favourable</th>
<th>Unfavourable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If an Aborigine sat next to me on a bus or train I would feel uncomfortable</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No matter how much one might support it on idealistic grounds, there have been too many unfortunate consequences of racial mixing for me to be willing to agree with it</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. One reason why the white and black races can never merge is that the white culture is so much more advanced</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Most Aborigines are dirty and unkempt</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I wouldn’t like any member of my family to marry an Aborigine</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I don’t like Aborigines</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. On the whole, Aborigines are a loud and noisy lot</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I admire the peaceful and gentle nature of the Aboriginal people</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. White Australians could learn a lot from Aboriginal people</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I would not like an Aborigine to be my boss</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If I had decided to vote along party lines in an election, I would still vote for my party even if they chose an Aborigine as the candidate</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. On the whole Aborigines tend to be bludgers</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I hope I never have to live next door to an Aboriginal</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I resent the treatment of Aborigines in Australia</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Despite the best efforts of civilization, Aborigines tend to remain childlike and dependent</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Aboriginal people express a zest for life which is truly to be admired</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Aborigines are such spendthrifts</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In the future, Aborigines must be given a better share in Australia’s resources</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Given the same opportunities Aboriginal children will do as well at school as white children</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. There may be a few exceptions but in general Aborigines are pretty much alike</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I am generally in favour of Aborigines getting land rights</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The poor health and living conditions of many Aboriginal people has more to do with insufficient funding and services than with Aborigines themselves</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I like Aboriginal cultures for their consideration and protection of the natural environment</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Although jokes are generally amusing, I can see how jokes about Aborigines might be hurtful</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Aboriginal people need to give up much of their culture if they are to succeed in life</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Aboriginal sacred sights need to be preserved</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Aborigines are just as intelligent as whites</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I feel ashamed at how badly white Australians treated Aboriginals in the past</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Aborigines should try to be more like the rest of us</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Aboriginal people should be compensated for past injustices</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^*\) The EAAS incorporated scales from several other authors, see section 4.2 for details
compensation for past injustices. However, even though some students responded negatively on some items, the overall mean attitude score for the sample was high at 174 (SD 22.79, range 99-209) which on the whole indicated an enlightened (very favourable) group of students.

5.2 Knowledge

Table two shows the percentage of students who responded correctly and incorrectly on the KAI measure. As with the previous table the unsure percentage is the difference between the combined values and 100%. The table indicates that students obtained moderate to high correct response rates for most items on the scale. Most students were aware of major issues, including that atrocities were committed against Aboriginal people, that Aboriginal people face greater disadvantages than other Australians and that children were removed from their parents under government policy. Knowledge tended to decrease with more specific issues such as those involving forced detainment, constitutional rights and the official abolishment of terra nullius. Many students also believed in the widespread myth that all the Aborigines in Tasmania were exterminated (sic) when indeed this was false. Nevertheless the overall mean knowledge score for the sample was reasonably high at 6.33 (SD 2.53, with scores ranging from zero to 10).
Table 2

Knowledge of Aboriginal Issues: Percentage of Students Obtaining Correct/Incorrect Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Correct %</th>
<th>Incorrect %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aborigines were allowed to vote in state and federal elections in 1901 (F)</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Indigenous land rights are recognised in the Australian constitution (F)</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All the Aborigines in Tasmania were exterminated (F)</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Past government policy forced Aboriginal children to be permanently removed from their families (T)</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The doctrine of terra nullius (the idea that Australia was unoccupied land) was officially abolished in the early days of white settlement (F)</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The indigenous relationship to land is no different to that of non-indigenous people (F)</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Aborigines face more disadvantages than other Australians (T)</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Aborigines who lived on government established reserves were not restricted from leaving if they wished to (F)</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. White settlers committed many atrocities against Aboriginal people (T)</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. One can only identify as being Aboriginal if both parents are Aboriginal (F)</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F = False statement, T = True statement)
5.3 **Knowledge and Attitudes**

The frequencies in table three show that there were disproportionately more students with tolerant and enlightened attitudes than either racist or misinformed attitudes. The table also shows that 50% (n=60) of the total sample had both enlightened attitudes and high knowledge. A preliminary Pearson’s correlational analysis revealed a significant and positive moderate relationship (r = .4626, \( p < .0005 \)) between knowledge and attitude. However, because group differences cannot be detected by means of a correlation, two independent t-tests (two tailed) were also conducted. The first of these was to determine the differences in knowledge of the tolerant and enlightened groups and the second was to assess whether the difference in mean attitude of high and low knowledge groups was significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Type</th>
<th>Racist (30-120)</th>
<th>Misinformed (30-120)</th>
<th>Tolerant (121-170)</th>
<th>Enlightened (171-210)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low knowledge (0-5)</td>
<td>n = 42</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High knowledge (6-10)</td>
<td>n = 78</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Number of students | 2 | 3 | 35 | 80 |

| N = 120 |

The results of the first analysis showed that students with enlightened attitudes obtained a mean score of seven (SD 2.31) correct on the knowledge measure while the tolerant students obtained a score of five (SD 2.40) correct. Enlightened students were significantly more knowledgeable than tolerant students (t (1,113) = -4.15, \( p = \))
.0005). The results of the second test revealed that the mean attitude score for the low knowledge group was significantly lower (161.16 compared to 181.57) than the attitude score for the high knowledge group \((t(1,113) = -5.17, p < .0005)\).

Although students with unfavourable attitudes were included in this last analysis, small numbers restricted any further analysis and subsequent conclusions. However students who have a high knowledge of indigenous issues are more likely to have enlightened (as opposed to just tolerant) attitudes towards indigenous people.

5.4 **Contact, Knowledge, Attitudes and Age**

The contact levels presented in table four show that most of the sample indicated having had some form of contact with Aboriginal people. Over 62% had had at least a social conversation with an Aboriginal person and over 27% had visited a town in which Aboriginal people lived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contact</th>
<th>Students %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Social conversation with an Aboriginal person</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Visited an Aboriginal township or settlement</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Visited an Aboriginal home</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Has (or had) an Aboriginal relative</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Has personal Aboriginal friend/s</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous two tables showed that most students scored high on the KAI measure and that most students had some form of contact with indigenous people. Following from this, an ANOVA was conducted to explore the differences in attitudes according to the respondents’ *knowledge and contact* levels. The data were
classified into four groups according to whether the participants scored low or high on the KAI measure and according to whether they had at least some contact or no contact with Aboriginal people. The results are presented in figure two.

Figure 2
The Interaction of Contact and Knowledge on Attitudes

The mean attitude scores for the four groups were: 160.05 (low knowledge/no contact; n=18), 161.17 (low knowledge/some contact; n=23), 177.20 (high knowledge/no contact; n=15) and 182.36 (high knowledge/some contact; n=62). The ANOVA results indicated that there was a highly significant difference between these means (F (3,114) = 9.08, p = < .00005). A Scheffe post hoc analysis revealed that the no contact and some contact groups with high knowledge were significantly more positive than the no contact and some contact groups with low knowledge. Although the no contact and some contact groups ‘within’ each knowledge group appeared to differ on the graph, the differences in contact were only minimal. It may be concluded that while some contact results in a slight improvement in attitudes, those with high knowledge are more likely to be positive than those with low knowledge regardless of the amount of contact.
A Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between contact, knowledge, attitude and age of the respondent. Figure two shows that the analysis yielded low but significant positive coefficients between attitude and age and age and contact. A low positive association between attitude and contact was also found but this was just over the acceptable significance level ($p = .051$).

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3**
The Relationships between Contact, Knowledge, Attitude and Age
(Two tailed; *= <.05; ***<.0005; N ranged from 117-120 for each coefficient. Note: the above figure is not a path analysis.)

Slightly higher significant positive coefficients were found between knowledge and attitude (as mentioned in section 5.3), knowledge and contact, and knowledge and age. Older age and higher levels of contact were therefore both significantly related to greater knowledge whereas only older age was significantly related to more favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal people. The associations were more
pronounced in the age/contact/knowledge variables (see bold lines) than in the age/contact/attitude variables (see dashed lines).

5.5 Source of Knowledge

On the basis of the association between age, contact, knowledge and attitude, the source of knowledge variable was analysed using the one way MANOVA procedure. For this test, knowledge and attitude made up the dependent variables and age was used as a covariate. The MANOVA was used to ascertain whether the means on the synthetic variable (knowledge, attitude and age) varied among the four source of knowledge groups.

The multivariate F ratio and probability (using Pillai’s trace statistics) in table five show a significant overall effect, which suggests that the groups did differ. Moreover, the univariate probability values shows that this difference was apparent on all three variables. In order to determine exactly which of these source groups were different a Scheffe post hoc analysis (using ANOVA) was conducted. The results revealed that students who specified tertiary education as their main source of knowledge of Aboriginal issues were significantly more positive than those who indicated secondary education or media as their main source of knowledge. In terms of the knowledge variable, the tertiary and ‘mixed’ group (this group consisted of students who indicated mixed responses (excluding secondary or tertiary) or demonstrations, documentaries, meetings or personal communication with Aborigines as their main source of knowledge) both had significantly higher knowledge scores than the media or secondary groups. The tertiary and mixed
### Table 5

Means and Manova Results for Four Source of Knowledge Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of knowledge</th>
<th>Knowledge M</th>
<th>Attitude M</th>
<th>Age M</th>
<th>Multivariate F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>171.64</td>
<td>23.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>166.15</td>
<td>20.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>184.66</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>176.86</td>
<td>31.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Univariate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios/Value</th>
<th>F = 28.97</th>
<th>F = 6.64</th>
<th>t = 5.38</th>
<th>F = 9.73</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
groups were also significantly older than the two other groups. It conclusion, the medium from which people derive most of their information about Aboriginal issues does make a difference to their knowledge of Aboriginal issues and to their attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians.

5.6 **Attitudes and Background Factors**

One way MANOVA’s were also carried out to evaluate the differences in contact, attitude, knowledge and age for the background factors. In these tests, contact, attitude and knowledge made up the dependent variables and age was used as a covariate. Significant statistics were found for nationality, political preference, father’s occupation, mother’s occupation, type of study and residential region but not for religion or gender.

The MANOVA statistics are presented in table six and the means associated with these statistics follow in table seven. As indicated in table six, significant multivariate F ratios (using Pillai’s trace statistics) were found for all independent variables which meant that differences among the groups on the synthetic variable did exist. With three exceptions (see numbers marked #) the univariate statistics were also all significant. Moreover the sizes of the F ratio in the univariate columns reveal a definite pattern in the strength of the differences, that is, the differences among the groups for each factor were most apparent in the knowledge scores, and less marked in the attitude and contact scores, respectively.
Table 6

Manova Results for the Background Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Multivariate F Ratio</th>
<th>Univariate F Ratio</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Covariate t-value</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1,113</td>
<td>1.631</td>
<td>.106 #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>1,113</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>33.44</td>
<td>1,113</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political preference</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,103</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>.092 #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>19.09</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's occupation</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,93</td>
<td></td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1,93</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>1,93</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>1,93</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's occupation</td>
<td>14.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,99</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>1,99</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>13.67</td>
<td>1,99</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>41.54</td>
<td>1,99</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of study</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,105</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.053 #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>25.45</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential region</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,112</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>36.29</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Non-significant probability values are marked #)
5.7 Scheffe Post Hoc Analyses

Because of the significant statistics in the MANOVA and in order to determine which of the groups were different in terms of mean contact, knowledge, attitude and age, Scheffe post hoc analyses (using ANOVA) were conducted. It is important to note that Scheffe tests were unavailable for some of the variables due to the differences in the way the MANOVA and ANOVA are calculated. One of the independent variables for which a Scheffe test was not available was nationality.

Even so, judging by the means in table seven it is clear that overseas born students had the most favourable attitudes and second generation Australians had the highest knowledge scores. First generation Australians had the lowest knowledge scores and were also a younger group. For the second independent variable, political preference, the analysis revealed that the Democrat (n =15) Green (6) and Independent (n =2) voters together were older, had significantly more favourable attitudes than the Liberal voters and significantly higher knowledge scores than both Liberal and Labour voters.

A post hoc test was unable to be completed for contact related to father’s occupation, but it appears that participants with fathers in the retired/home (duties)/student group had the highest mean contact scores. The Scheffe results for age and knowledge indicated that participants with fathers in the retired, home, student group were significantly older and more knowledgeable than those with fathers from professional or blue collar occupations. In terms of attitude, participants with fathers in trades, sales and clerical occupations were significantly more favourable than those with fathers in blue-collar occupations.
### Table 7

Mean Contact, Knowledge, Attitude and Age for the Background Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>180.72</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>27.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation Australian</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>171.78</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>21.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation Australian</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>172.60</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>27.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political preference</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/National</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>168.31</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>21.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>173.84</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>24.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat/Green/Independent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>185.85</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father’s occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>171.48</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>22.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades, sales &amp; clerical</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>179.73</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>22.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar workers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>167.30</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>22.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired, home, student</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>174.45</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>32.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother’s occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>182.85</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades, sales &amp; clerical</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>174.50</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>20.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar workers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>170.30</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>20.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired, home, student</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>172.78</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>27.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/Science Psychology</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>178.56</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>24.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/Science Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>183.23</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>27.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>162.77</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>20.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>172.92</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>28.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>174.59</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>180.65</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>23.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern/Southern</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>164.26</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>25.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>173.86</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>26.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although a Scheffe test was not available for contact, attitude and knowledge for the variable mothers' occupation, table seven shows that the most favourable participants were those with mothers in professional occupations. It may be noted that these participants were also the most knowledgeable and had the highest contact scores. In terms of age and mothers' occupation, the post hoc analysis indicated that participants with mothers in the retired, home, student group were significantly older than trades and blue-collar groups.

For the fifth variable, type of study, Arts and Science Psychology students and Arts and Science other (this group included Science and Arts students doing majors other than Psychology and Science and Arts students who did not indicate their major) were significantly more favourable and more knowledgeable than business students. Age was also significantly lower for business students. Scheffe tests were not available for the final independent variable, residential region, but it may be seen in table seven that Northern suburbs residents obtained the highest contact, attitude and knowledge scores while students from the Eastern and Southern suburbs were the least favourable and the least knowledgeable.

Table seven as a whole revealed that the contact, knowledge and age variables together could be conceptualized as a ‘wisdom’ factor. That is, attitudes were the most favourable when all three components of the wisdom factor were high (see Democrat/Green/Independent group) and least favourable when all three components of wisdom were low (see business group). However considering that participants who were the lowest in knowledge were usually the least favourable, it can be concluded that knowledge was the most necessary component of wisdom.
Chapter Six

Discussion

6.1 Supported/Non Supported Hypotheses

The first five hypotheses proposed for this study were all statistically supported. As predicted in the first hypothesis students, as a whole, did have favourable attitudes towards Aboriginal people. There were much greater numbers of students with tolerant and enlightened attitudes than students with either racist or misinformed attitudes. Although the present findings are not directly comparable to previous studies due to the different samples and procedures used, it is probably safe to say that most of the community samples showed a balance between positive and negative attitudes. No such balance occurred in the present study, more than 95% of the sample (n = 115) displayed tolerant or enlightened attitudes towards indigenous people.

Some negative responses did arise for individual items. For instance, 19.2% of the respondents were negative on the issue of compensation, which suggests that support for Aboriginal justice is not at an optimal level; and 27.5% were negative on the statement about Aboriginal people being pretty much alike, which suggests ignorance. However negative proportions were still lower than Larsen’s (1978a) student sample or previous community samples.

To account for these findings it could be said that tertiary students are in a unique learning environment. Students learn to be critical of rumor, the media and secondary sources of information and are encouraged (via the curriculum, student magazines, books, posters, cultural events, or by means of contact with a multicultural mix of students) to be culturally sensitive. That more than 15 years had passed since most of the studies were conducted may also explain why the present
sample was much more positive.

Nonetheless, before making any conclusions it is necessary to reconsider the moderate survey return rate. Although it was previously stated that exam preparation might have deterred some students from responding, Taft (1970) has suggested that less co-operative people may also be more “misanthropic” than average (p.7). That is, people with racist attitudes might not be bothered with completing a survey, especially if they do not care to see an improvement in the status and conditions of Aboriginal people. The results must therefore be interpreted carefully since negative attitudes as well as time restraints might have contributed. Further research using methodology that ensures a greater response rate and comparisons with students’ from other universities are required before any firm conclusions about students’ attitudes are drawn.

The second, third and fourth hypotheses which all related to knowledge were also supported. As anticipated participants had a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues and those with enlightened attitudes were significantly more knowledgeable than participants with tolerant attitudes. The results were also consistent with Western’s (1969) study, in that knowledge and attitudes were positively related.

It makes sense that participants had a high knowledge of Aboriginal issues since as previously mentioned tertiary students have much greater opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture. The results tempt one to assume that attitude change strategies could be at least partially successful by increasing peoples’ knowledge of Aboriginal issues. Increases in knowledge may contribute to breaking down negative beliefs and stereotypes thereby removing the reasons for negative feelings and emotions. However it is still unknown whether knowledge actually improves one’s attitude or whether an enlightened attitude causes one to seek out information.
The knowledge factor made a greater contribution to attitudes than did the contact factor. Knowledge was moderately and significantly related to attitude whereas contact, although positively related, just exceeded the acceptable significance level (the fifth hypothesis was therefore supported while the sixth was not). Further analysis (ANOVA) showed that attitudes were most favorable when there was high knowledge together with some contact but even participants who had not had any contact at all were still more favourable (if they had high knowledge) than those who had some contact and low knowledge. Thus, although the hypothesis pertaining to contact and attitude was unsupported, the latter finding lends statistical support to Western’s (1969) conclusion regarding the interactive effect of contact and knowledge.

The source of knowledge variable also produced interesting results. The hypothesis pertaining to this variable predicted that participants who learned about indigenous issues at the tertiary level would be significantly more positive than those who had learned from other sources. This was partially supported because although the tertiary group obtained more positive attitude scores than any other group, they were only significantly more positive than the media or secondary group but not significantly different from the ‘mixed’ group. It may be recalled that these students derived most of their knowledge via mixed sources, documentaries or active involvement such as demonstrations, meetings or personal communication with Aborigines. In contrast, the participants who had derived most of their knowledge via secondary education had the least favourable attitudes. The slightly more favourable score of the media group compared to the secondary group suggests that those who ‘choose to take a further interest’ in Aboriginal affairs (via the media) may be more positive than those who just participate in ‘compulsory’ secondary
education. The results also suggest that the secondary curriculum might not be addressing Aboriginal issues adequately, however, it needs to be remembered that this group was still within the tolerant attitude range. The tertiary and mixed group appeared to be much ‘wiser’ than the other two groups; that is, as well as being significantly more positive, they were also older and more knowledgeable. The media group were the least knowledgeable of the sample, perhaps because the media report a different type of information to the type presented in this survey.

A significant but opposite (thus unsupported) relationship to that predicted in the eighth hypothesis was discovered for age and attitudes. Although the relationship was not strong, it was found that as age increased, so did favourability. To some extent this could have been because age was also associated with greater contact levels and more knowledge of Aboriginal issues but additional factors such as maturity and other life experiences that are conducive to tolerance may have also contributed. Still, there are limitations in how far these findings can be generalized. For instance a similar result might be possible in other universities when comparing younger and mature age students, but not, as Larsen’s (1981) study implies, in the wider community when comparing older non-students to younger students.

For hypotheses nine to eleven, it was predicted that there would be minimal differences in attitudes according to students’ nationality, religion and residential region. Religion was insignificant as predicted but significant differences were found for nationality and residential region. With the exception of gender, the hypotheses for the remainder of the background variables (political preference, course of study, parents’ occupations) were all statistically supported. It may be recalled that all these background variables were analysed via the MANOVA procedure; and that contact, knowledge and age were referred to as a ‘wisdom’ factor
in which knowledge was the central component. That is, attitudes were the most favourable when wisdom was high and least favourable when wisdom was low but in many cases favourable attitudes occurred with higher knowledge and not necessarily with older age or greater levels of contact. The larger F-ratios for the knowledge variable (and a stronger correlation) also indicated that knowledge of Aboriginal issues was more important to positive attitudes.

 Nonetheless, other factors in addition to the ones investigated here may have contributed to the attitudes observed in this study. For instance, overseas born students may have been more positive because they were able to empathize with Aboriginal people due to being minority group members themselves. The Democrat/Green/Independent group could have been more positive because their political party represents more democratic ideals, or in the case of Greens, because they often share Aboriginal concerns about the environment. Moreover, Liberal voters may have been less positive due to a “conservative ideology” (Ray, 1981, p.350). The more positive attitudes of participants with parents in the professional, or trades, sales and clerical group could be related to ‘class’, education or freedom from “economic frustration” (Larsen, 1978c, p.107). The less favourable attitudes of the Eastern/Southern suburbs residents compared to residents from Northern and other regions could have had something to do with ‘class’ or with the type of cultural groups residing in the area. While the less favourable attitudes of the business group strongly suggests lower wisdom (contact, knowledge and age) it might also have had something to do with them pursuing “power sector” (Sidanius et al., 1991, p.706) professions. Hence the overall conclusion to be made is that wisdom might be just one factor of a complex phenomenon with “multiple causation”, as Allport (1958, p.218) proposed.
6.2 Limitations of the Study

The original intention of this study was to investigate racist, misinformed, tolerant and enlightened attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians, in order to gain an understanding of some of the related factors (i.e., knowledge, contact and background factors). In contrast, it turned out to be a study of tolerant and enlightened attitudes. For this reason, there are obviously limitations in the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other populations.

There are limitations in generalizing the present findings to other tertiary students (due to potential reasons for the moderate response rate) and to other non-student community groups (due to educational and cognitive differences). Moreover, there is a further limitation in applying the results of this study to the lower end of the racial attitude continuum. That is, how can a study of tolerant and enlightened attitudes contribute to an understanding of negative attitudes, when it is after all the negative attitudes we want to understand and change? Although the answer is not an easy one, it has been proposed in the theoretical model that some people with negative attitudes may be misinformed (low in knowledge) and may therefore benefit from increases in knowledge while others will be negative despite having knowledge of Aboriginal issues. Variations in attitudes among negative types may also be associated with maladaptive personality factors such as those described by Larsen (1978b&c) and with background factors such as those discovered in the present study. Nonetheless this only provides a guide and needs to be tested in future research with a more complete sample, and ideally with a negative sample (if that were possible). Two further limitations of this study were that qualitative data and individual knowledge and attitude items could not be explored.
6.3 Conclusions and Implications

This study introduced prejudice as a complex phenomenon in which knowledge, contact and other factors were expected to play a part. Although the study was limited to an investigation of tolerant and enlightened attitudes, the findings generally supported the theoretical framework. As assumed, attitudes varied according to knowledge and certain background factors and while contact on its own didn’t seem to add much to our understanding of attitudes, the final analysis (MANOVA) showed that it could be conceptualised as part of a wisdom factor that consisted of contact, knowledge and age. Wisdom partially explained the variations in attitudes among the participants but it was acknowledged that other factors not explored in this study might also contribute to attitude. The model (figure one) has implications for theory because it offers a working framework that includes both sides of the racial attitude continuum. Moreover, the results make a contribution to our knowledge of positive racial attitudes. The study may be of most interest to anti-racism workers, attitude researchers and to secondary and tertiary educators who wish to promote positive racial attitudes among their students.
References


