

SEPARATED CHILDREN & FORBIDDEN ROOTS

REMOVALS OF PART-INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AS PART OF AUSTRALIA'S
ASSIMILATION POLICY IN 1950S-1960S

Kaisu Venäläinen

University of Jyväskylä

Department of History and Ethnology

General World History

Master's Degree Thesis

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Research Questions and Material	3
1.2. The Aboriginal & “Half-Caste” Problem	7
1.3. “White Australia” Policy	9
1.4. Theory of Assimilation	11
1.5. Methods	14
2. ABORIGINAL WAY OF LIFE	
2.1. Aboriginals’ Social & Family Structure	17
2.2. Aboriginal Culture & Religion	19
3. FROM SEGREGATION TO ASSIMILATION	
3.1. Aboriginal Laws & Aborigines Protection Board	21
3.2. The Reserves & Aboriginal Missions	24
4. SHAPING THE ASSIMILATION POLICY	
4.1. Native Welfare: Initial Conference of 1937	28
4.2. The Native Welfare Conference of 1951	32
4.3. The Native Welfare Conference of 1961	34
4.4. Aboriginals’ Place in the White Australian Community	42
4.5. Resistance - Fighting for Civic Rights	46
5. THE CHILD REMOVAL POLICY	
5.1. Motives & The Removal Practices	49
5.2. Effects of the Removals	57
5.3. Previous Research	63
6. THE TESTIMONIES - PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE REMOVALS	
6.1. Life Before Being Taken	66
6.2. Memories of Being Taken	68
6.3. The Reasons for the Removal	73

7. MEANS TO ASSIMILATE THE CHILDREN	
7.1. Life at the Missions Homes	75
7.2. The Punishments & Abuse	80
7.3. Foster Care & Adoption	83
8. IMPACTS OF THE REMOVALS	
8.1. Where to Belong?	85
8.2. On a Bad Track	89
8.3. Finding Mum - Reclaiming Identity	91
8.4. Feelings of Being Taken	93
9. CONCLUSIONS	95
REFERENCES	103

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Questions and Material

The focus of this thesis is on the child removals of Aboriginal descent people in Australia and how they were subjected to the assimilation practices in the last decades of child removal policy in 1950s-1960s. From the 18th century onwards Australia has got different policies for its Indigenous population with special legislation and ideological backgrounds from isolation to integration and self-management. The official policy of assimilation took place during 1937-1969 and the Indigenous child removals had a significant role fulfilling that policy. However, assimilation of Indigenous people and Indigenous child removals were separate policies even though they were closely entwined. Although child removal policy had started long before assimilation policy, the removals of the part-Indigenous children accelerated during the official assimilation period. The key concept in here is the *stolen generations* which refer to the children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, who were removed from their families by the federal and states' government agencies in order to be assimilated into the dominant white society. The force removals of Indigenous children became an official governmental policy in 1909 and lasted officially until 1969. However, the practice took place both before and after this period, and in some places children were still being taken until the beginning of the 1970s. Governments, churches and welfare bodies all participated removing the children from their families. Because the period covers many decades, the plural form “generations” is used rather than singular “generation”.

The goal of this thesis is to present a general overview on the removals of mixed descent Aboriginal children and on the policies that made it possible. The focus is in assimilation policy practices and the means how the part-Indigenous children were assimilated in to the white society. This study is part of social history and history of mentality involving Australian Indigenous history as well as political history.

The first part of this thesis discusses the ideology of assimilation and assimilation policies as well as the public atmosphere of Australia in the 1950s- 1960s. The central research questions are about these policies. Firstly, what was the assimilation policy and how did it develop? How did the forced assimilation affect Aboriginal people and moreover what was the child removal policy and what kind of affects it had on the removed children? One of the purposes is to present the assimilation practices from the children point of view and analyse its successfulness. The primary sources include the both legal sources and personal testimonies of removed people. The primary sources are some of the original Aboriginal laws and the three most important documents of the Native

Welfare Conferences of 1937, 1951 and 1961. Unfortunately, despite thorough research, the Native Welfare Conference 1965 document was not available online but because during that conference the official assimilation policy was yet again changed, it has been presented through other sources. The second part deals with the personal testimonies of Indigenous descent people who were removed from their families as children due to the assimilations and child removal policies, and their experiences and memories of the forced removals and assimilation practices. The personal statement materials come from Stolen Generations' Testimonies website. The website was an outcome of the 'Stolen Generations' Testimonies' project, which is an initiative to record on film the personal testimonies of stolen generations' members and share them online. In 2009, more than thirty individuals had shared their stories, their memories and themselves in the first round of interviews for the 'Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation'.

The testimonies in the website are given in good faith and to respect that the names, places and years are not hid or changed in this study as they are usually in many academic researches when the informants are still alive. On the website, the original interviewers are not mentioned, neither are the interview questions. The exact dates of interviews are not presented, but these ones are made in 2009. The interview videos have been cut, moderated and selected by criteria that are not mentioned. These preselected decisions have naturally had some effect on the data and how it is finally represented in the website.

The other part of the study concentrates on twelve testimonies. Seven of the informants are men and five are women. Eight of them were removed during the 1950s and four in the 1960s and almost all had been born within this timeframe. The children were taken in different stages of their childhood: two during their first year, three before the age of five, six between the age of five to ten and one person at the age of twelve. Except two informants who were adopted all others were institutionalized in "Half-Caste" Homes or Missions. Some of them have vivid memories of time before the removals which gives them the opportunity to compare situations before and after the separation from their families. The informants are very heterogeneous group from different states, backgrounds, tribes and different decades. Some of them have strong Aboriginal physical characteristics, others have none or very little. It is interesting to see how their perceptions of themselves have changed and whether they consider themselves more white or Aboriginal. From this small amount of testimonies it is naturally impossible to make any comparison about the removal policies or the outcomes of the removals on a national level. However, it does give us clues and insight on the matter.

This sample does not concentrate on a certain state or area but a certain period of time. It includes people from different parts of Australia: New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria, Northern Territory and Tasmania. The reason why not to concentrate in just one state of is because it would diminish the number of informants to three or five. That is the reason for wider geographical scale. Although the Stolen Generation Testimonies website updates and introduces new testimonies, these ones were the best options available at the time this research started. One other option could have been to examine one state with either a longer time frame from the 1920s onwards or with a smaller sample of personal stories. However, these testimonies give an inside of the experiences of the Indigenous child removals and forced assimilation through Australia and it is interesting to compare them together. It is impossible to provide real and relevant differences between states from such a small and inadequate sample. However, some general similarities of child removal and assimilation policies are noticeable between states and territories. Also those people who were removed from their families in the 1950s -1960s have more likely memories of their life before the separation so the distinction of before and after becomes increases. The memories of personal experiences of “being taken” and forced assimilation practices are presented to give a non-official perspective to the child removal policies.

From an ethical point of view personal stories when revealing trauma and abuse are always tricky, especially when the informant is still alive. I have contacted and informed the Stolen Generation Testimonies website of my study and they were very supporting about the matter. The personal stories are shared online in a public website, so they are in a public use. I am not going to cover up or hide the informants because they are on public display on the website and in my opinion it would be more disrespectful to them to change their identities. The witnesses, or informants, as I refer to them, have been open about themselves, their past and experiences. They have participated freely in the foundation’s project and express their stories publicly online. If there had been something delicate the informants did not want to share in public, it would have been cut out from the interviews or they had not shared it in the first place.

The key terms of this study are *assimilation*, *child removal*, *neglect*, *mixed descent children*, *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous welfare*. Words used in single quotations marks, such as ‘race’ or ‘half-caste’, are those of historical speaker and politically incorrect and derogatory. In this study, they are used to explain the discussion at the time, not to offend anybody. The word “aboriginal” emerged from Latin, meaning ‘from the beginning’, and the word became to mean the original inhabitants of a land in the 17th century. In Great Britain it became a colonial word to mean Indigenous people, as opposite to the colonists. In the early 20th century Aboriginal people were general called Aborigines

but the term was replaced by an Aboriginal in the 1940s-1950s. Nowadays the word Aboriginal is officially sometimes replaced by the word Indigenous. Firstly, the word Indigenous does not have the same historical baggage and secondly it refers to both Aboriginal people of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders, who are original Indigenous people but not Aboriginals but are culturally and genetically linked to Melanesians and people in Papua New Guinea. The term Aboriginal and especially Aboriginal people are, however, still publicly and officially used when referring to the Indigenous peoples of the mainland and in Tasmania. In addition it needs to be said that in reality there are many different Aboriginal peoples or tribes in Australia who are not a unified group.¹ However in this study they are referred to as Aboriginal people in singular.

The mixed descent Aboriginal children were in the first half of the 20th century referred as ‘half-castes’ or ‘mixed race’. In the beginning of the 20th century racial categorization was used to describe a proportion of black ancestry of ‘mixed race’ people in colonial and imperialistic societies. Terms such as ‘quadroons’ and ‘octoroons’ were used to illustrate how much mixed heritage a person had and Aboriginal laws used these categories. However, such terms have no place in a present-day academic world. In this study, terms like part-Aboriginal and people of mixed descent or mixed heritages have been used synonymously.

When talking about separated children and forced removals a few clarifications are in order. Forcible removals mean those removals where the children were taken from their parents and were not returned home while the parents were forceless to prevent the removal. Those cases are typically referred to as ‘stolen’ contrasts the removals which were truly voluntary at least on the part of parents who relinquished their children by their own initiative or where the child was orphaned and there was no alternative indigenous carer.

Australia is a vast country divided into six states and two major territories: New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Northern Territory (NT), The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Tasmania (Tas). Moreover there are eight smaller overseas territories. The state parliaments are permitted to pass laws related to any matter not controlled by the Commonwealth under Section 51 of the Australian Constitution. Seven smaller territories are governed only by Commonwealth law with the help of an Administrator pointed by the Australian Government. Instead Northern Territory, The Australian Capital Territory

¹ http://web.archive.org/web/20061008120749/http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/indg_overview.html, 18.10.2013.

and Norfolk Island have been granted a limited right of self-government and the two previous are usually treated as states due to their large population.²

1.2. The Aboriginal and “Half-Caste” Problem

In the late 19th century, the main question for the settlers was what to do with the Indigenous people of Australia. Should Aboriginal people let just go extinct as inferior ‘race’ or should they be left alone in isolation or should they be converted to Christianity and to be educated? This was referred to as the “Aboriginal Problem”. Many anthropologists considered Aboriginal culture to be an undeveloped “relic” from the Stone Age with no realistic possibilities to survive in the modern times. In the 19th century, ‘race’ became the key justification for discrimination against others in custom and law. Historically, ‘race’ was at first connected with ancestral and familial ties, but the concept has changed across cultures and eras, eventually becoming more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. The idea was that the human species was understood to be divided into distinct groups on the basis on inherited physical and behavioural differences. Human difference was allegedly fixed and explained by skin colour and other physical characteristics. Racial categories were claimed to be immutable, each group having innate racial characteristics shared by all, which explained ability and behaviour. ‘Inferior’ Indigenous races could never be part of colonial society and thus education was seen pointless as theirs ‘inferiority’. In the late 19th century, many concluded that “wild races” could not be saved from extinction and when left alone the Indigenous people would probably die out within a few decades. Because of the nomadic life style the number of Aboriginal population had never been great at the first place considering the size of the continent. This and the destructive conflicts between Aboriginal people and white settlers during the 18th and 19th centuries had diminished Indigenous population even more. The Aboriginal population continued to decrease in the beginning of the 20th century. Remarkably, in the 1920s the number of full and part-Aboriginal population was, however, in a vast growth and it has been ever since.³

However, racism, as any other, can be institutionalized. Ideological functions can create the perceptions and beliefs which are believed necessary to reproduce the political and economic hegemony structures of class, ‘race’ or ethnicity. These conditions are institutionalized through

² <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-government/state-and-territory-government>, 01.09.2013.

³ Broome 2010, 100-102.; Chambers 2000, 158; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488030/race>, 02.05.2013; <http://cnx.org/content/m42857/latest/?collection=col11407/latest>, 02.05.2013.

forms of discourse and power, which establish a holistic framework of values, beliefs, ideas and aspirations. The ideology has a specific role in legitimating racial inequality. Nowadays ethnicity as a term and concept has replaced 'race'.⁴

In the beginning of the 20th century popular thinking in Australian and all around the British Empire and Western countries argued that the Anglo-Saxon 'race' ought to be kept pure. Intermixing would create racial contamination and decline the race and individual. The increasing number of mixed heritage Aboriginal children created among the authorities a severe concern referred to as "The Half-Caste Problem". One of the solutions was the decision to "protect" the Indigenous people from the whites and segregate them into missions and reserves. However a problem still remained: what to do with the fair coloured Indigenous children? If they were left in the reserves, the Indigenous population would continue to increase, which would be a new problem, the one that the authorities had not anticipated nor wished for. The Indigenous policies did not develop purely on the terrain of racism, but under the sign of culture. For the British and Anglo-Australians teaching English to minority groups became a metaphor of a policy of enforced cultural assimilation.⁵

The common opinion of the 20th century was that the "half-castes" usually inherited the vices of both 'races' and virtues of neither. The assimilation policy was designed to 'breed out' the colour and assimilate Aboriginal people. The labels of 'race' reflected most of skin colour (black, white, red, yellow) or geographical regions (e.g. Caucasian, Chinese, African). This typology of race developed during early racial science in the 19th and 20th century has fallen into disuse. Since the Holocaust there has been a big change at the notion of 'race' and it has become rejected as an incorrect and unscientific concept, but in the early 20th century 'race' was very much used. During the 1940s and 1950s 'race' as a word and as a concept went through a huge upheaval becoming an improper and avoidable and now 'race' is considered as a false representation of reality. After the Second World War, 'race' has gradually been removed from legislation. In Australia over the years 1968 to 1978, a Commonwealth definition of Indigenous was gradually developed to reflect descent, identification and community acceptance rather than 'race'.⁶

⁴ Cohen 1992, 79.

⁵Rattansi 1992, 15; <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/history3.htm>, 18.05.2013.

⁶<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/cashome.nsf/4a256353001af3ed4b2562bb00121564/3fd6b6e026e050d0ca2575a10001e763!OpenDocument>, 21.04.2013; Broome 2010, 107; Rattansi 1992, 15;

It was not until 13th February 2008 when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd tabled an official apology to the Indigenous peoples and their descendants. Before that, his predecessor John Howard had many times refused to apologize the past treatment of Indigenous peoples. On his point of view it would have been taking “a black armband view of history”, of which many Australians still think today.⁷

1.3. “White Australia” Policy

How was it possible that Australia stayed a homogenous country from the 18th century to the mid-20th century? It would have been expected that Australia had gained a significant Asian minority from the neighbouring Far East and Asian countries but it never did until the 1970s. The reason was ideological (read: racial). This policy is known as white policy or the White Australia policy. The White Australia policy was an anti-Asian immigration policy, started officially in 1901 and it remained a fundamental government policy in the mid-20th century. It was progressively dismantled between 1949 and 1973.⁸

In 1901, the new federal government passed an Immigration Restriction Act, better known as the “White Australia” policy and placed tight control on certain immigrants, such as the Pacific Islanders and Chinese. Their intention was to promote a homogenous population similar to that in Britain. Under “White Australia” only Europeans and more precisely mainly central and northern Europeans could immigrate to Australia. The 'White Australia' policy was warmly applauded in most sections of the community.⁹

During the Second World War, after the outbreak of hostilities with Japan, the philosophy of the 'White Australia' policy was reinforced. The Prime Minister John Curtin convinced that Australia would remain forever “the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race”. At the end of the 1940s Australian government encouraged immigration from Europe, Australia admitted large numbers of immigrants for humanitarian reasons e.g. from Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia, as well as its traditional source of the British Isles and later from Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands.¹⁰

Australian Commonwealth and States’ governments have both been especially interested in populating rural areas, but most immigrants choose to settle in the cities. Up until the end of the

⁷ www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/world/asia/13aborigine.html?_r=0, 26.10.2012.

⁸ <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/642125/White-Australia-Policy>, 15.04.2013.

⁹ <http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/hotwords/unpack/White.Australia.Policy>, 19.04.2013.

¹⁰ <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>, 15.04.2013.

1960s the Immigration Policy of the Commonwealth's Government was based on 'race'. A common belief was that all European people shared some kind of common cultural heritage, which made them more easily accepted as citizens. This was not the case with Indigenous people or immigrants from Asia or Africa. However, those minority groups, who had visible social or ethnic identity of their own, were more likely to be more resistant to assimilation pressures because of the support and contact of the social group. "At one hand there is the family and other members of the same ethnic group versus school, mixed associations during work and the influence of the mass media."¹¹

Nevertheless the policy could not continue forever. By 1950 the bad post-war economic situation in Europe made it possible that Australia received 150,000 immigrants annually. Between 1945 and 1970, the total immigration number of Australia was over two million. The rapid population growth, such as this, and the immigrants' willingness to accept hard and less glorious industrial work made the industrial growth happened as well as long public development projects. In 1957, non-Europeans with 15 years residence in Australia were allowed to become Australian citizens. The revised Migration Act 1958 introduced a simpler system of entry permits and references to the question of 'race' were avoided. The doors were now open for the educated and "highly qualified" Asians' to immigrate. The year 1966 and "The March announcement" can be seen as the watershed in abolishing the 'White Australia' policy and enabled non-European migration to begin to increase.¹²

From 1973, 'race' was gradually removed as a factor in Australia's immigration policies. In 1973, legislation changes radically stated that all migrants, of whatever origin, be eligible to obtain citizenship after three years of permanent residence, to totally disregard 'race' as a factor in the selection of migrants and to ratify all international agreements relating to immigration and race. Australia was now open to all immigrants and nations. An increase in the number and percentage of migrants from non-European countries did not, however, take place until after the 1975. In spite of the chances, Australia effectively remained 'white' on the immigration front until 1975 when the implications of the new policy was tested by the refugee crisis of the Vietnam War.¹³

Paul Keating, a former Prime Minister (1991-1996), said in an interview that in the 1960s and 1970s Australia became very close to be marginalized the way South Africa was marginalized with

¹¹ Brendt 1964, 27.

¹² <http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/hotwords/unpack/White.Australia.Policy>, 19.04.2013.

¹³ <http://www.abc.net.au/archives/80days/stories/2012/01/19/3415230.htm>, 15.04.2013;

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>, 15.04.2013.

apartheid, but Australia was capable of avoiding it from the last minute. According to a former Labour Party leader Kim Beazley, Australia has been multiracial in a process that started in the 1960s and was submitted in the 1980s. Australia did not become multicultural not until the 1970s when Australia got a large number of Vietnamese refugees and the official policy of assimilation changed to pro multicultural. Soon Australia began to receive immigrants from other China and Asian, African and Latin American countries. According to Mr Beazley they “changed the definition then, of what it means to be an Australian”.¹⁴

1.4. Theory of Assimilation

It is not just a matter of learning a foreign language, but of gaining intimate knowledge of that way of life: and in the process losing one’s own, as a way of life.¹⁵

When talking about assimilation we usually mean cultural assimilation. Assimilation is the process in which individuals or groups of different ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant society while losing their original native language and culture under the dominance of another cultural group. The term is used both to refer to colonized peoples when dominant colonial states expand into new territories, like in Australia, or when immigrants settle into a dominant state society. Assimilation happens when minority groups acquire new customs, language, ideologies and education in the dominant society. The process involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the dominant society. As such, assimilation is the extreme form of acculturation. Although assimilation may be compelled through force or it can be undertaken voluntarily, it is rare for a minority group to completely replace its previous cultural practices. As a result of assimilation, ethnic characteristics of the minority can disappear. This phenomenon is the opposite of multiculturalism, which respects and tries to preserve different cultures and cultural identities within a unified society.¹⁶

Behavioural assimilation or acculturation occurs when a person from another culture absorbs the cultural norms, values, beliefs and behaviour patterns of the dominant society. Within this process,

¹⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/archives/80days/stories/2012/01/19/3415230.htm>, 15.04.2013.

¹⁵ Brendt 1964, 25.

¹⁶ <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/39328/assimilation>, 25.02.2013;

<http://www.questia.com/library/sociology-and-anthropology/cultures-and-ethnic-groups/cultural-assimilation>, 15.02.2013.

a person can choose to retain much of their traditional culture while still acquiring those of the mainstream society or discard one's traditional forms of culture entirely. Structural assimilation or socio-economic assimilation refers to a situation when a newcomer becomes integrated into the formal social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of the dominant society. It can also refer to when they attain socioeconomic mobility and status and are equal to other members of the mainstream society. Assimilation can be either voluntary or forced. Voluntary assimilation, sometimes also referred as a "melting pot" when the ethnic identity is not preserved and the relations and attitudes towards the dominant culture are positive and assimilation is one's own choice. Forced assimilation is simply a process when the assimilation is not voluntary.¹⁷

Socioeconomic or structural assimilation refers to a situation where group or individual enter and become integrated into the formal social, political, economic and cultural institutions of the host country, for example when they begin to participate as full members of the dominant society. Alternatively, it can also refer to a situation when they attain socioeconomic mobility and status equal to other members of mainstream society. This happens usually in the form of income, occupation or residential integration. The process of undergoing assimilation can occur in a linear or "straight-line" manner in which the passage of time and the succession of generations lead to increasing economic, cultural, political, and residential integration; or it can happen in a non-linear or circular, manner in the minority revive or retain old cultural traditions, norms, and behaviors and choose to remain somewhat isolated from mainstream society.¹⁸

Assimilation is closely linked to acculturation and ethnic identity. Both assimilation and acculturation are inevitably accompanied by a weakening of ethnic identity. The difference between assimilation and acculturation is in the volume of a person's self-identification with an ethnic group. Assimilation has happened when a person identifies themselves weakly with their ethnic group but strongly to the majority, so individual's internal change is required. Acculturation is when one identifies oneself closely with both groups. From a socio-historical perspective, acculturation is the mutual adjustment of groups that retain their own identity and interest, whereas assimilation is a process by which the group identity is fused. Ethnic identity is relevant only in situations in which more than one ethnic group are in contact over a period of time. There is no specific agreement on the definition of ethnic identity. Usually, it is defined as the ethnic component of social identity.

¹⁷ Toukomaa 1978, 9.

¹⁸ Le 2013, <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>, 29.02.2013.

Key aspects are self-identification, feeling of belonging and commitment and/or sense of shared values and attitudes with the group.¹⁹

Sociological research has also found that the strength of the child's relationship with his/her parents, along with the level of his/her attachment to the ethnic community also play important roles in determining ethnic identity among second generation immigrants. If child-parent relationship is strong and healthy, the child is more likely to take on the parent's identity, whatever that may be but if the child has conflicts with his/her parents, the more likely the child will identify differently from the parent. Also the strength of a child's ethnic community strongly affects person's identity. Perceptions of racism and discrimination can also have influences on minority group's or individual's ethnic identity. It is the person's reaction to perceptions and experiences of discrimination, prejudice or ethnic competition that will determine how s/he identifies.²⁰

The theoretical framework of this thesis is the effects of forced assimilation: on its success and impacts on the removed persons' Aboriginality, or in other words, their ethnic identity. The Indigenous peoples of Australia became a minority in their own country in the 19th century. Assimilation was an important tool to non-Indigenous Australians who regarded it as a necessity to civilize the Indigenous peoples.

In the 1920s-1930s, it became apparent that the anthropologists and racial theorists had mistaken and the Indigenous peoples were not going to die out as it was believed for many decades. Instead there was an increasing the rate of mixed descent Aboriginal people. In addition, this was seen as a sign that Aboriginal identity could be destroyed though a process of absorption. From the 1930s the policy of assimilation was meant to absorb those mixed descent Aboriginals into the white non-Indigenous population.²¹ It was not until the 1970s the Aboriginal communities were no longer restricted by the government and the Aboriginal peoples were once again free to choose their own residence, spouses, lifestyle etc.

There are at least four different possibilities for a minority, when they are within the territorial and political boundaries of a dominant group: extinction as a group, segregation, accommodation or assimilation. An extreme example would be extinction as a group, in which persecution would eliminate social system as well as the people involved. Segregation is a matter of practice that restricts a group of people to certain restricted areas, separate institutions or facilities. Segregation

¹⁹ Phinney 1990, 500; Le 2013, <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>, 29.02.2013.

²⁰ Le 2013, <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>, 29.02.2013.

²¹ Armitage 1995, 14-15.

can be either voluntary or involuntary. It depends on whether the group has been segregated by others or by themselves, shutting others out. In accommodation the minority would retain some cultural and social individualism while settling in and adapting some new customs of the mainstream society. In other words assimilation is about disappearance of cultural differences between the groups.²²

1.5. Methods

In cases where official documents are limited, or destroyed, have never been properly made, the memory based evidence can give new information and insights into the topic matter. Memory based evidence has provided evidence of alternative values and practices and their existence in a hegemonic construction of the social world. Personal reminiscence is a primary source of oral evidence. Historians use personal reminiscence to study societies dominated by the written word, however, its restrictions are of biological possibilities of the witness, such as age. The oral history can help filling the void in more recent times. The use of experience based evidence makes it possible for the historians to document the lives of those individuals, groups or institutions previously missed out or overlooked in research. This is common especially in social history. They have as well been used to a complete and reinforce the correct incomplete vision of the past, and claim legitimacy on the authority of experience. Moreover many vital characteristics of individual self-image seem to be based on memory: personal identity, culture, ethnicity, nationality, and heritage.²³

Oral history in contemporary society has been extensively used to reconstruct the everyday lives of ordinary people. Personal reminiscence enables small-scale group histories and geographically small-scale work. It can also bring new fresh insight and a broadness of detail which would otherwise not be found. The use of oral data gives historians the means to write rich textured reports with depth. However, memories can be very problematic because they are both personal but at the same time they are many times social. In other words although memories are those of individuals' the majority of memories are often shared by others. This aspect makes it possible to talk about a collective memory. Nevertheless, the question is: do all participants share the same memory of the same event? Do they remember things in the same way? People's memory of matter varies by the

²² Brendt 1964, 25; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488135/racial-segregation>, 15.04.2013.

²³ Berkhofer 2008, 1,7; Burke 2001, 42, 135; Scott, 2005, 197.

person's age and generation, social status and gender. It is more difficult to describe and explain memories seemingly shared by all within a society or culture.²⁴

Qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the people it involves. It is effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of particular populations. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. The method provides information about the 'human' side of an issue – the often contradictory behaviours, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying immaterial and abstract factors such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion. One of the many advantages of qualitative methods in research is the use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forces them to choose from fixed responses.²⁵ Textual analysis is part of qualitative methodology and is performed using discourse and narrative analysis. Its primary axioms are hermeneutic and interpretation. When analyzing texts, one must attribute meaning to large-scale units by interpreting the meaning of smaller scale units, and assess how the smaller scale units fit in the larger-scale units.²⁶

Narrative analysis focuses on the way in which people make and use stories to construct and understand the world. Most importantly it does not treat narratives as stories that pass on facts about the world and it is not primarily interested whether the stories are "true" or not. People produce the meanings of themselves that are 'storied' and the social world itself is storied. Narratives link the past to the present objective account of the past meaning that there is not only one absolute truth.²⁷ A historical narrative is always presented as accurate to past persons and events unlike fictional stories.²⁸ In this study a narrative is used as a reference to a life story.

Narrative analysis is an analytical technique that seeks to fit the messages into a pattern of storytelling. The storyteller uses characters and events as symbols to tell their interpretations about what happened, how things behave and how they change over time. Storytelling, to put it simply, is what we do with research and clinical materials, and what informants do with us. Humans tend to have a universal need to tell stories. The narrative approach does not assume objectivity but instead gives room to subjectivity. The systematic dimension of the narrative analysis focuses on looking

²⁴ Berkhofer 2008, 42-43; Prins 2001, 138-139.

²⁵ <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf>, 17.02.2013.

²⁶ Potter 1996, 63.

²⁷ Lawler 2002, 242-243.

²⁸ Berkhofer 2008, 51-52.

for a sequence of events and establishing individual links between events until the overall structures are elucidated. The story metaphor emphasizes that we create order and construct texts in particular context. As research method narrative analysis usually adopts qualitative approach. Narrative analysis and qualitative research are commonly used methods when focused on disruptive life events, the accounts of experiences that fundamentally alter expected biographies, such as the experiences of the forcibly removed children.²⁹

The matter of concepts and political thought are also central. The relationship between concepts is not stable but it changes over time and context. The profiles given to concepts also change with the writer or speaker, depending on their backgrounds and interpretations. Concepts have their own past meanings and as such they do not bring a holistic truth about the past. When talking about concepts Quentin Skinner emphasizes linguistic action where the speech act is primary considering the used language. This requires a very hermeneutic approach where the past has to be considered as a foreign land. He stresses that the meaning of an idea must be in its different use instead of content. Those intentions the writer may have had in writing in the way he/she did Skinner calls illocutionary intentions. In short, Skinner argues that, we need to characterize the writer's intentions if we are to interpret the meaning of the texts or speech. However, it is also possible that the writer is not always aware of their own ultimate intentions.³⁰

When, studying history and historical sources, especially texts, Robert Berkhofer highlights the importance of contextualization, which refers to the fact that extra textual political, economic and social phenomena have an impact on the text. This is similar to Quentin Skinner's idea about historical research. Quentin Skinner argues that words and concepts had different meanings in their own context from how historians have usually understood them. We can know that the phenomenon our object of study is describing is false, but we may still analyze the concepts used as well as the way the phenomenon is being described. This way we find out what the object thinks about the phenomenon she/he is describing. Even concepts that seem irrational to us may have been rational in their own time and historical context. This is true with political and social vocabulary as all the beliefs and concepts we use are socially constructed.³¹

Skinner emphasizes the concepts of time, place and values, which leads to the analysis of ideological contexts. For most studies in history the questions of contexts and interpretation are essential, because in history the aim is to understand the way that a person and a group think in

²⁹ Potter 1996, 139; Kohler Riessman 2000, 1-4.

³⁰ Skinner 2002, 91-99, 104.

³¹ Berkhofer 2008, 31; Skinner 2002, 27-30, 35-37.

different historical periods of time. According to Skinner, to understanding the text both meanings and intention ought to be revealed and understood. He argues that we must first understand one's use of language and vocabulary before we can understand her/his actions because language and social activities have an impact on one another. There is a possibility that the text is interoperated differently from what the writer may have meant.³²

2. ABORIGINAL WAY OF LIFE

2.1. Aboriginals' Social & Cultural Structure

Why then is important to know about Aboriginal peoples' social structure, culture or religion? That is because the official assimilation policy and especially the child removals had a huge impact on the individual level but also to both Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal culture. By taking the mixed descent Aboriginal children and separating them from their families and kin reduced the population of Aboriginal community. It also scared many Aboriginal families and denied access from the removed children to their cultural heritage. Moreover the assimilation policy was an attack especially towards the Indigenous culture, customs and believes. Those things did not have a place in a single white Australian community. Finally, knowledge about the Aboriginal culture and customs helps to understand better the public policies and the individual testimonies, especially the importance of aunts, uncles and cousins in the children's lives.

The most important social order in Aboriginal society is based on age and sex. Age brings increased social status, as sacred knowledge increases through the various stages of initiation that Aboriginal people go through during their life. Younger people are required to acknowledge the high social position of their elders and obey them. If they fail, the elders withhold important sacred information from them, information that is needed for complete adult initiation.³³

The traditional Aboriginal community is based on family. A family includes a man and his wife/wives, their children and sometimes his parents or in-laws. Two or more families make a group, also known as a horde, who together owns and holds specific land area used when hunting or gathering. A horde includes several families. Most groups belong to a clan about 40-50 people with a common territory, totems and a group name. The clan performs rites on holy places located in the group's areas. The rites strengthen the bond between the living and the ancestors. A daughter who is

³² Berkhofer 2008, 31; Skinner 2002, 96-102, 113.

³³ http://www.aboriginalartprints.com.au/culture_details.php?pageID=19, 20.10.2013.

married to another clan still keeps her father's clan name. The groups that speak the same language form a tribe, or a 'nation'. Tribes are united by language and customs, but are not centrally administered. A tribe usually includes about 200-500 individuals. Moreover tribes are divided into two different sections. These sections have names and they can also be divided into subsections. A man must select a wife from an opposite section or subsection. Members of different tribes meet together at the largest ceremonies and gatherings.³⁴

Aboriginals have complex social and marriage laws, based on the grouping of people within their society. They also have a complex kinship system where everyone is related to everyone else. The traditional Aboriginal social life is constructed on three main aspects: physical, religious and social structure. A family, a tribe and a horde form the physical aspect of the social life. Aboriginal peoples make a specific distinction between close and far relatives and kinship networks. However the importance of distant relatives or kinships cannot be underestimated, because they are extremely important when interacting with others. In a matter of fact, kinship determines the whole social life of many Aboriginals'.³⁵

Social structuring and the kinship system can become very complex and difficult to understand, but it is a natural part of Aboriginal life and can vary within tribes. The kinship system allows individuals to be named in relation to one another, and its value is that it structures people's relationships, obligations and behaviour towards each other, in such matters as who will look after the children, if a parent dies; who can marry whom, who is responsible for another person's debts or misdeeds. This system permits that a cousin is called a brother or a sister, uncle can be addressed as father, aunt as mothers etc. Naturally a person knows who their real parents are, but under kinship laws, they may have similar family obligations to their aunts and uncles, the same as they would to their mother and father, and this is reciprocated. Another basic principle is that after matrimony, the relatives from both sides belong to the same family. The kinship breaks all boundaries. Amongst urban Aboriginal people common terms like "brother" or "sister" are used when addressing friends or relatives, are derived from these kinship terms and associations.³⁶

An Aboriginal child is born in a complicated relative and kinship network, dictated by group and tribe. Naturally, everybody knows who they are related to and what privileges and responsibilities it brings. Kinship breaks all boundaries so eventually all Aboriginal peoples were related. According to this thinking, when a child with mixed heritage is born in the tribe, he or she lacks the other part

³⁴ www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml, 27.02.2013.

³⁵ www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml , 27.02.2013.

³⁶ www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml , 27.02.2013.

of their kinship network. White fathers did not usually care about their illegitimate children. Still, it was this empty side of their heritage that snatched these children away from their homes and cut all contact with their families and relatives. In many cases siblings were systematically put into different institutions or departments.³⁷

2.2. Aboriginal Culture & Religion

A traditional Aboriginal is not a builder, a warrior or a tradesman. He does not cultivate land to get harvest. They are instead hunters, gatherers, wanderers and dancers. Traditionally, they get everything they need from the environment: they nurture it instead of cultivate. They gather and hunt food with care and sparingly, so that food does not run out. Men traditionally hunt bigger animals whereas women, with excellent visual perception, hunt smaller animals and gather roots and other edible plants.³⁸

Dreamtime or Dreaming is the core of Aboriginal beliefs and customs. It is not a product of human dreams but a philosophical myth about what happened at the beginning and what great deeds the ancestors did. For Aboriginal people dreamtime is influential and eternal spiritual time and as real as any other perception of time. In fact none of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages contain a word for time. It is the environment that the Aboriginal people lived in and still exist today. It includes values, religion and laws. All life is structured by ancestors. The traditional way of life makes it possible to use lots of time with spiritual aspects of life. The faith in at the ancestral history of the creation is essential to the Aboriginal culture, which is not interested in material good. Instead they concentrate on the spiritual and artistic side of human life. Aboriginal peoples' relentless love for their ancestors and their land is the core of the culture, and it is represented in their art. Art is commonly used as a link to the dreamtime. Art also operates as a sort of a mirror of routes, trails and significant places. By mixing different symbols it also tells a story about people, locations and past events, so in a way they write through their art. In addition art also has a religious meaning when painted on skin. Body painting also reflects the social status and reveals something about the person's motives.³⁹

³⁷ www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml, 27.02.2013.

³⁸ Räsänen 2012, 14-15, 61.

³⁹ <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/what-is-the-dreamtime-or-the-dreaming>, 18.10.2013; Räsänen 2012, 14-15, 61, 124-126.

Traditionally raised Aboriginal children learn very early about their family background. It is very important, because it determines the conduct and communication norms e.g. to whom one can talk to and to whom one must avoid talking to. The mother-in-law is for example someone a man cannot talk directly to. While growing up a traditional Aboriginal child learns vital knowledge about how to survive in the harsh environment conditions, the laws of the tribe and cultural doctrine. Aboriginal peoples' awareness of the nature is enormous and full of details of how to survive in it.⁴⁰

In the traditional Aboriginal societies, the men hunt and rule the community. The women take care of the children, carry burdens and collect food. Marriage considers the whole tribe and the age-gap between spouses can be noticeable. Traditionally men had the possibility to have several wives and polygamy was common practice. The Aboriginal culture is ritual centred. Customs, beliefs, totems and marriage laws divide people into moieties (an Aboriginal kinship group), sections and subsections, totemic groups, and clans. On a religious level, society in much of Australia is divided into two moieties. Within each moiety there are significant animals, plants, or places, which are of a highly religious nature and to which the people are a bond to. Each person, as well as belonging to one or the other moiety, is also connected to one or more of these subjects, called totems. Sometimes moieties are further divided into sections or subsections. These moieties may base on Ancestral Beings, which are regarded as the direct ancestors of the people living. The Ancestral Beings come from the Creation Period. Ancestral Beings taught the first people to make tools and weapons, hunt animals and collect food, they laid down the laws that govern their society, and the correct way to conduct ceremonies.⁴¹

The deceased and ancestors are believed to be present everywhere and guide the living. During dreamtime ancestors give form and order to the world as well as created life. Behaviour was appropriate and inappropriate depending on how it related to the norms of the community or the myths of dreamtime. Morality and motivation, the way Western people understand and see it, are not relevant or important. Birth, life and death are all pieces of the socio-religious continuum and the spirits of the children are considered coming to this world from the dreamtime. Different kinds of rituals attached to life circulation are important for individuals, because they nourish the spirit. In death, the spirit returns to dreamtime to be a part of the continuum of life. Aboriginal people have a unique and deep connection to the land. Aboriginals are originally nomads, but they stay at a specific region and their bound to the land is extremely strong. From this point of view the white

⁴⁰ Räisänen 2012, 124.

⁴¹ www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml, 27.02.2013.

settlers could not have done anything worse than what they did when they drove the Aboriginals away from their lands.⁴²

Unlike many other cultures, among Aboriginal people men are a more important cultural medium than women. Although men and women have separate but complimentary roles at a religious level, men are considered to control the most important sacred knowledge which is hidden from both women and children. Therefore the most important Aboriginal rituals are the initiations rituals for boys who have reached puberty. In these rituals the religious and cultural knowledge and skills are passed on the next generation and this transfer of knowledge continues through the whole adulthood. Aboriginals have generally considered to be very fond of children who are a very important part of the community. It can be said that the radical diminishing of the Aboriginal population at the beginning of the 20th century and the force removals and assimilation of part-white Aboriginal children had a significant effect passing on the tribal customs and traditions.⁴³

3. FROM SEGREGATION TO ASSIMILATION

3.1. Aboriginal Laws & Aborigines Protection Board

From the last decades of the nineteenth century to the 1950s, one of the particular concerns of white Australians was the perceived need to keep Aboriginal people separate from the rest of the population. As a result a system of reserves, missions and other institutions was created to isolate, confine and control Aboriginal people. Although the aims of these institutions and their purposes changed over time, incarceration was seen as the best solution to perceive social problems.⁴⁴

Segregation policy led to the founding of Aboriginal reserves and relocation of Indigenous people. Aborigines Protection Board (APB) became the positioning element, which carried out all Aboriginal affairs, i.e. the removal of part-Indigenous children. A Chief Protector was the highest Aboriginal official and guardian of all Indigenous people and mixed descent children. For example, the Western Australia's 1905 Aboriginal Act stated:

⁴² www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml, 27.02.2013.

⁴³ Chambers 2000, 39-41; http://www.aboriginalartprints.com.au/culture_details.php?pageID=19, 20.10.2013.

⁴⁴ Nethery 2009, 73-74.

The Chief Protector shall be the legal guardian of every aboriginal and half-caste child until such child attends the age of sixteen years.⁴⁵

The Aboriginal Acts included both full and part-Indigenous heritage people to be understood as Aborigines, if the mixed heritage people lived in a reserve or were dependent on rations or any other form of aid from the Board. The definition of Aboriginal was similar within all states and territories with small diversities in the course of time.

Every person who is a) an Aboriginal native of Australia or of any of the islands adjacent or belonging thereto; or b) an half-caste who lives with such an aboriginal native as a wife or husband: or c) a half-caste who otherwise than as wife or husband of such an aboriginal native: or d) a half-caste child whose age does not apparently exceed sixteen years shall be deemed to be aboriginal within the meaning of this Act--.⁴⁶

The New South Wales's Aboriginal Protection Board had been established in 1883 and in the 1909 Aboriginal Protection Act its responsibilities were to "provide for custody, maintenance, and education of the children of aborigines," and "to -- exercise a general supervision and care over all matters affecting the interest and welfare of aborigines; and to protect them against injustice, imposition and fraud."⁴⁷ The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 was the first piece of legislation in New South Wales concentrated specifically with the Aboriginal people, and it was not abolished until 1969. The new legislation gave the Aboriginal Board the right to apprentice "the child of any Aborigine, or the neglected child of any person apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood in his veins⁴⁸", so long as the child was between the ages of 14 and 21 years of age. The Aborigines Protection Act stated that the Board was to act in accordance with the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act of 1905 and the Apprentices Act 1901, but in general the Boards developed their own policies that were quite different to those applied to non-Indigenous children and adults.⁴⁹

In 1915 The Aborigines Protection Act (NSW) was amended to legally allow the old practice of removals of part-Aboriginal children. One ground for the removal was if the child refused apprenticeship placement. From 1915 onwards, the children could have been taken if they were found neglected or if the removal would be in the best interest of the child's moral and physical welfare. In 1936 a new definition to "aborigines" was introduced including only "full-blood"

⁴⁵ Aborigines Act 1905 (WA), 3.

⁴⁶ Aborigines Act 1911 (SA), 2.

⁴⁷ The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW),145.

⁴⁸ The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW),146.

⁴⁹ The Aboriginal Protection Act 1909 (NSW), 114.

people. The board was able to order Aboriginal people to return to their home state if they lived in unsanitary or undesirable conditions. The Boards' executive also included the power to terminate employment, to refuse medical examinations and treatment, or determine where the treatment was to be provided, and finally to inspect the residence of any Aboriginal person.⁵⁰

To the 1920s legislation in different states considering Boards' legal power over Aboriginal people was set in all over Australia. The Boards were specifically responsible for the custody, maintenance and education of children, and provision of apprenticeships and wages. It also held the power to remove Aboriginal from the proximity of reserves and towns, relocating Aboriginal population and individuals as it saw fit. The Board also distributed rations and wages to working Aboriginals and maintained order on reserves.⁵¹

During the 1920s, no new laws concerning the removals of mixed heritage children were legislated and within the following decades the legislation changed very little. The 1920s was, however, the time when "the half-caste policy" was stabled. At the mid-1920s, the Commonwealth started to pay child benefits and pensions to its citizens, which did not include Aboriginals. With the lack of support and benefits, it made it even more complicated and weakened the possibilities of Aboriginal mothers to take care of their children in a manner required by the Boards and states. At the same time, many states wanted, apparently for economic reasons, to diminish the number of reserves. To do so, the number of dwellers in reserves had to be cut up. The logical result was to deny the part-Indigenous children, whose number had increased rapidly in the 1910s and 1920s, to stay in the reserve areas.⁵²

From the 1940s onwards, when the general policy of "protection" was set aside, the Protection Boards were renamed as Welfare Boards. From the 1850s to the 1940s, the Boards' main aim was to "protect" and segregate the Aboriginals, the central goal of the Welfare Boards were the assimilation of Aboriginal population. The Welfare Board of New South Wales was given two major powers: to acquire and dispose of land to those Aboriginals who were exempt from the provision of the Act⁵³. The 1909 Aborigines Protection Act (NSW) was replaced in 1969. Although all Australian States and Territories had separate governments and legislation and different Indigenous populations they had similar laws considering Aboriginals were surprisingly similar in.

⁵⁰ The Aborigines Protection Act Amendment 1915 (NSW), 121-122; The Aboriginal Protection Amendment Act 1936 (NSW).

⁵¹ http://hsc.csu.edu.au/ab_studies/rights/global/social_justice_global/sjwelcome.human.front.htm, 25.08.2013.

⁵² <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-chapter-2>, 05.03.2011.

⁵³ http://hsc.csu.edu.au/ab_studies/rights/global/social_justice_global/sjwelcome.human.front.htm, 25.08.2013.

3.2. The Reserves & Aboriginal Missions

Depending on the state's Aboriginal policy, Aboriginals might had to live on a reserve, but they often camped on stations part of the year. Church missions and government establishments also ran pastoral enterprises and state-run reserves that supplied the labour for the local cattle industry.⁵⁴ The reserves were controlled by a manager or a local police. The managers had complete control over the lives of the inhabitants of the reserves. The Indigenous people had no citizenship rights - anything that Aboriginal people owned or earned came under the manager's control. In some states, some managers had more control than others.⁵⁵

Aboriginal people in a reserve had to ask permission to leave the reserve, to get a job or to get married. They could not own a house or any land, their daily lives were regimented and followed by a certain routine. Punishments were the general result of the smallest of offence and misconduct. Their homes and mail could be searched without their permission. Any traditional Indigenous celebrations were banned as well as their Aboriginal language and customs. On many reserves, Aboriginal names had to be Christianized. Each reserve was different and laid down different levels of restriction on Aboriginal people, but one thing that they had in common was that they took away the ability of Aboriginal people to make choices.⁵⁶

In most cases, the reserves were small with housing consisting of humpies made from iron roofing. In general there were two kinds of reserves. 'Managed reserves', also called stations, were usually staffed by a teacher-manager and they provided some education for the Aboriginal children. Also food rations and housing were provided. 'Unmanaged reserves' provided rations but no housing or education and were under the control of the police. In New South Wales there were over 180 reserves at the end of the 1930s and the trend was increasing. Only a few reserves were abolished in the 1930s and 1940s, mainly because of economic reasons. It was not until the 1954-64 period that there was a wave of the revocations of reserves. This was related to the assimilation policy and involved in the removal of Aboriginal people from traditional reserves to 'new' reserves, which were set aside in nearby towns. At the same time, the large areas of land that formerly have held by reserves were revoked. This occurred in most country towns, e.g. in New South Wales, and approximately 28 reserves were shut.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ McGrath 2001, 143.

⁵⁵ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1125/life-on-the-reserves/nsw/life-on-the-reserves/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 17.05.2013.

⁵⁶ <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/missionsNSW.html>, 11.05.2013.

⁵⁷ <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/missionsNSW.html>, 11.05.2013.

In the bush, Aboriginal people's natural surroundings, their general health was good. Traditionally, the food Aboriginals ate and gathered from different sources varied and holds lots of vitamins and protein. This was not the case in the reserves, where the traditional lifestyle was not possible and although the rations were regular the food was one-sided. In the reserves, people became easily sick. By the 1960s, almost a half of Aboriginal population in Queensland was still controlled by Special Acts. An Australian Historian Richard Broome refers to them as the "hangovers of the colonial world" and he states the residents of Queensland's reserves were subjected to arbitrary conditions and the behaviour of tyranny by the superintended. The superintended could order or deny medical inspections, confiscate possession that might disturb the harmony, forbid leisure activities such as dancing and card games and native practices that might give offence and most importantly he had to maintain good order and discipline at the reserve. Abusive language and alcohol were also forbidden. Reserve inmates could be ordered to work 32 hours continuously without payment. Conditions of the reserves varied. Some managers did not enforce the rules tightly.⁵⁸

The reserves had laws of their own. They even had courts, police and compounds. Their superintended were often police officer, judge and jury in the reserve. Court procedures varied greatly of those outside the reserve. In fact some offences were beyond the jurisdiction of these Aboriginal courts of the reserves. For example, in Queensland reserves', children under sixteen years old were imprisoned for their offence although it was forbidden under the Aboriginal Protection Act. Also adultery and adult consensual sexual relations, not offences in the outside world, were tried and punished on the reserves. The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Act in 1965 did little but cosmetic changes. The Directors and managers still decided for Aboriginal people under Act and they could create reserve regulations beyond the supervision of parliament. The Act was amended in 1971, but the control and racial discrimination still stayed. Broome argues that the self-management was a distant reality in the 1970s.⁵⁹

Missions, at the other hand, were compounds established by the churches as a sanctuary to protect the Indigenous peoples from the mistreatment of the European settlers. The missions were institutions that had, arguably on a long run, also some very harmful influence on the very people they were supposed to protect. In the end, missions became under control of the Aborigines Protection Boards. The difference between a reserve and a mission was that reserves were established by the government, although they ultimately had the same purpose. Religious bodies

⁵⁸ Broome 2010, 223.

⁵⁹ Broome 2010, 223-224.

sometimes set up schools, churches and dormitories on reserves and as well as on missions. Surprisingly, although the impact of missions was enormous, the number of actual missions in Australia was not. For example in New South Wales there were only ten Aboriginal Missions for Aboriginal people. However, life on a mission was not necessary much better than life in a reserve. In some cases it was probably even worse. The missionaries often held paternalistic ideas about Indigenous peoples and thought that they knew the best what was good for Aboriginal people. The Christian missionaries believed doing the best thing for Aboriginal people, when converting them away from "pagan" customs and beliefs, but also by doing so, they participated in the destruction of a culture.⁶⁰

Churches saw missionary activity in the central and northern Australia as the last chance for Civilizing Mission to help save the Indigenous peoples. Missions distributed food ration to Aboriginal people who seasonally had a shortage of food and who eventually included ration in their seasonal food quest. At the early stages, the missions also provided shelter and protection from inter-tribal hatred and the European conquests. This brought them more or less permanently onto the missions. It was in this way the Aboriginal culture began to change when people stopped wandering and became more sedentary.⁶¹

Many children were taken away from the supposed 'bad influence' of their families, especially in the missions. The missionaries concentrated their salvation efforts on the children as they could not persuade their parents to convert to Christianity. Many parents left their children with the mission workers because there the children were guaranteed food and shelter. Some were forced to leave their children by the threat of having their rations cut or other form of durance.⁶²

Those people who stayed in the missions faced efforts to control them. In the Missions, the Aboriginals usually faced the ethnocentric and paternalistic attitudes of missionaries. Many missionary workers saw Aboriginal culture as "heathen, uncivilized and inferior" It was not until the 1970s that the general opinion changed among the missionaries. Although the Aboriginals used and benefited the missions in many ways, few adults actually converted to Christianity. That way the missionaries started to focus on the children. Already before the actual official policies the missionaries' strategy had been to segregate the children from their parents. This happened when the children were placed in separate dormitories as their parents. Aboriginal parents were often

⁶⁰ Broome 2010 150-153.

⁶¹ Broome 2010, 150-151.

⁶² http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1124/paternalism-and-protection-policy/nsw/paternalism-and-protection-policy/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 11.05.2013.

convinced to leave their children in the missions while they went to work or travelled. This might have provided some assistance for the parents because the traditional food gathering had become harder and the country more dangerous because of the land takeovers by white Australians. However, many children in the missions felt themselves abandoned.⁶³

In the 1920s, the missions had become the place of control. On reserves Aboriginal people had the possibility to withdraw into their own domain to maintain a private life and regain some self-esteem under the whites' control. This protected their Aboriginal identity in the crossfire of the official, police and the Board, church and increasing government rule. The maintenance of private and as stated above, hidden traditional life and Aboriginal identity depended upon continuing the traditional ideas. The early 20th century Aboriginal recollections are full of the accounts of how the old people still taught the young traditional stories, the hunting skills and fear of malicious spirits. Despite the low standard or even miserable conditions at the missions and reserves many Aboriginals clung to old beliefs. These ideas and functions were to be kept secret from the whites.⁶⁴

The restrictions of rights and freedoms that existed on the reserves also existed on the missions: sometimes the treatment for not following the rules was even harder on the missions than in the reserves. On some missions, breaking the rules brought severe punishments. Aboriginal people could be kicked, beaten or chained up for any transgressions of the strict rules. There were also economic punishments: the family could be withheld rations. However, the worst punishment was expulsion from the mission which meant no food and separation from their family and community. Some missions were so extreme in their paternalistic attitude that they did not even let Aboriginal people prepare their own food.⁶⁵

On both the reserves and in the missions, education for Aboriginal people was seen as a waste of time and the Indigenous children were viewed merely as potential servants. For Indigenous children, basic education did not go beyond elementary classes and later primary school. Boys were taught how to be farm labourers and girls were taught how to do domestic chores. Once the children were over 14 years old they were not allowed to stay on the reserves or missions, they had to leave and find a job away from their family and community. Even when the children could go to school, the law in New South Wales meant that if a white parent complained about it, they could be sent

⁶³ Broome 2010, 152-153.

⁶⁴ Broome 2010, 98-9.

⁶⁵ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1125/life-on-the-reserves/nsw/life-on-the-reserves/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 11.05.2013.

home. In the missions, the schooling was more focused on the Bible and religious teaching than learning how to read and write.⁶⁶

4. SHAPING THE ASSIMILATION POLICY – NATIVE WELFARE CONFERENCES

4.1. Initial Conference of 1937

In the 1930s there was a need to standardize and update the states' Aboriginal policies and legislation. However, the authorities lacked a common forum. Therefore an Initial Conference was held in Canberra in 1937 to all Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities. In the Conference, different states reviewed their Aboriginal situations and, although, the Aboriginal population varied greatly from states to state, shared similar problems and tried to find common solutions mainly to the "Half-Caste" Problem. The Conference became the needed forum for all Aboriginal administrators on federal and state level to discuss Aboriginal affairs, and although, there was a wide diversity of opinion, The Conference was able to formulate a national approach to Aboriginal affairs.

Under the heading *Destiny of the Race* it was suggested that the Conference believed the solution of part-Aboriginal situation not to be in protection and promoted a new policy of assimilation.

-- [T]he destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end. Efforts by all state authorities should be directed towards the education of children of mixed blood at white standards, and their subsequent employment under the same conditions as whites with a view to taking their place in the white society.⁶⁷

So, the Conference's solution to the best way to solve the "Half-Caste" Problem was the assimilation and westernization of mixed decent people. This did not, however, include full descent Aboriginals. There was a disagreement as to the means and discussion should or should not the full decent really be excluded from the merger. A.O. Neville, Commissioner of Native Affairs of Western Territory, and Dt. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector in the Northern Territory were the most

⁶⁶ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1125/life-on-the-reserves/nsw/life-on-the-reserves/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 11.05.2013.

⁶⁷ Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of 1937, 1.

supportive to the notion of biological absorption and thought it to be the best way to deal also the full descent Aboriginals.

J.W.Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland, argued that such schemes of biological absorption would not work and would result only in racial degeneration. As for the full descent Aboriginals, Bleakley argued, “we have no right to destroy their national life” and “[l]ike ourselves they are entitled to retain their racial entity and racial pride.”⁶⁸ These statements were echoed by other representatives. Some, like professor J.B Cleland, Chairman of the Advisory Council of Aborigines of South Australia, were worried about the “ultimate fate of full bloods,” supported the notion of reserves and slow detribalization, because the full descent Aboriginals were “unique and one of the wonders of the world.”⁶⁹ He and others were concerned not to alarm humanitarians and the scientific world by including all Indigenous people in their plan of merger. Rather than deliberate detribalization of full descent Aboriginals, the governments would achieve the same ultimate goal, if concentrating first on mixed descent Aboriginals. Mr Carrodus agreed and stated that ultimately, “if history is repeated, the full bloods will become half-castes.”⁷⁰ Thus when representatives, such as Cleland, argued against biological absorption, they did it at least partly because of racist assumptions.

So, the Conference’s solution to the best way to solve the “Half-Caste” Problem was the assimilation and westernization of mixed descent people. This did not, however, include full descent Aboriginals. However, there was a disagreement to the means and discussion should or should not the full descent really be excluded from the merger. A.O. Neville, Commissioner of Native Affairs of Western Territory, and Dt. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector in the Northern Territory were the most supportive to the notion of biological absorption and thought about it to be the best way to deal also the full descent Aboriginals.

J.W.Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland, argued that such schemes of biological absorption would not work and it would only result in racial degeneration. As for the full descent Aboriginals, Bleakley argued, “we have no right to destroy their national life” and “[l]ike ourselves they are entitled to retain their racial entity and racial pride. Another big concern was the Aboriginal girls. Mr. Neville stated that “[e]very administration has trouble with half-caste girls.”⁷¹ It was considered a principle problem, and Mr. Bailey argued that when Aboriginal or part-

⁶⁸ Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of 1937, 18.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁷¹ Ibid., 12.

Aboriginal girls left the missions or reserves to work, it was “no time before she comes back to the Lake Tyers Station either pregnant or, worse still, with two or three little children.”⁷² The legislation regarding interracial intimate relations and marriage differed between states. Nevertheless, although states had forbidden marriages between the different groups, the officials could not prevent affairs. Surprisingly, the missions were considered somewhat troublesome. Although missions did good work by raising, educating and caring of full and mixed heritage Aboriginal people, missionaries’ moral opinion on marriage and natality differed from that of officials. In some states, marriages between full and part-Aboriginals were not allowed. Mr Neville argued that “no half-caste need be allowed to marry a full-blooded aboriginal if it is possible to avoid it, but the missions do not always take steps to prevent this from occurring; they allow the half-castes under their control to marry anybody.”⁷³

Mr Bailey told that in Victoria, when an unmarried mother came back to the Lake Tyers Station, the policy is to keep her for two years and then the child is taken away and raised as white, knowing nothing or very little about their background. The mother is then sent back into service “so it really does not matter if she has half a dozen children.” In Western Australia, the Board had the power to take any child from its mother at any stage of a child’s life, no matter whether the mother was legally married or not. However, part-Indigenous people should be, as the South Australian representative Mr. McLean argued, “encouraged to leave institutions and mingle more freely with the general public.”⁷⁴

When considering education and welfare, the common opinion seemed to be that it would be too expensive to educate and look after all Indigenous people equally. That is why the consideration should be on those with mixed descent.⁷⁵ To be able to assimilate, part-Indigenous people had to be educated and trained for work. Many favoured the idea that part-Indigenous children would attend general day schools with non-Indigenous children, but the overall experience was that non-Indigenous parents and Citizens Associations were highly oppose practices of this kind and there were many different influential agents pulling in various directions.

Mr. Bailey suggested that maternity allowance and unemployment benefits should be issued also for the Indigenous people but not to the mother but to the authorities which control the Aboriginal people and who provide the necessary hospital and medical attention for the mothers. This

⁷² Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of 1937,12.

⁷³ Ibid.,11.

⁷⁴ Ibid.,15

⁷⁵ Ibid.,12.

suggestion did not gain support from other representatives, mainly because it would have needed law amendments. Therefore a more popular proposition was a financial support from the Commonwealth to the state Aboriginal affairs. Mr. Harkness suggested that Aboriginal mothers were to receive an endowment of £2 a week as well as medical attention and baby clothes, and the resources ought to be targeted to the education of part-Indigenous children and utilization of their potential.⁷⁶

Other matters discussed were financial assistance from the Commonwealth, corporal punishments, police officers and female protectors, Aboriginals' use of liquor and opium, Courts for the Indigenous people and composition of future conferences. Although some previous attempts of Aboriginal assimilation had not succeeded, the Conference came to the conclusion that Aboriginal people's assimilation to the Australian society ought to be encouraged and become a federal policy. The final perspective was that Aboriginals and part-Aboriginals were not a problem for the white society, as long as "mixed-blood" children were to be fully and properly integrated or more precisely, assimilated, to the Australian society. The Conference saw the problem as more economic than racial.⁷⁷

One of the results of the Initial Conference of 1937 were that the state Governments responded to the assimilation policy by replacing the Aboriginal Protection Board with the Aboriginal Welfare Board. Assimilation would now take place under welfare laws and the Aboriginal Welfare Boards were the implements of this new policy. The powers of the new Boards were not as strong as their predecessors. The Children had to be proven 'neglected' or 'uncontrollable' in a Children's Court before being removed. Parents also had greater rights of appeal. The new Board also took responsibility for the placement of children. 'Neglect' was defined to include destitution and poverty. These were, however, constant features of most Indigenous peoples' lives, resulting from a history of colonisation and segregation. So in practice the Board had the right to take whomever Aboriginal children whenever, because the basis for 'neglect' were always present. Certain aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle were also be interpreted by non-Indigenous people as destitute or poor. The idea of neglect carried with it assumptions about this lifestyle. However, the beginning of Second World War (1939-1945) put many things on hold.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of 1937, 25.

⁷⁷ Ibid.,12.

⁷⁸ Ibid.,12.

4.2. The Native Welfare Conference of 1951

The Second World War had put a halt to the assimilation progress in many ways but at the end of the 1940s things carried on the way they had been left before the war: with no significant practical changes, at least, not from the administrative or legislative point of view. Although there had been Conferences in 1947, 1948 and 1950 they were of minor importance. However, the Welfare Conference 1951 was a completely another matter. The Conference was led by the new and eager Commonwealth Minister of Territories, Paul Hasluck.

Because the war had changed how people viewed the world and pre-war practices had to be updated, the Conference had to undertake a political course of conduct whether Australia was to continue its assimilation policy or select another course with its Aboriginal policy. Although, in theory it was still possible to segregate Indigenous people in settlements and missions solely occupied by Indigenous people and in time they might improve a stage similar to that of the rest of the community, Hasluck emphasized that contact between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups had already at the time gone so far that about seventy percent of the Aboriginal people already lived either detribalized life or were “well on the way to losing their tribal life”, so segregation was pointless. Besides, Hasluck argued that, if successful, segregation would build up an increasing group who belonged to a separate caste, and as a “separate racial group” outside the Australian community. He also argued that “blessings of civilization are worth having” and the world was coming around to the idea that inevitable change can be a change for better.⁷⁹

So, the assimilation policy, first formalized in 1937, was reaffirmed in 1951. The assimilation was defined, in practical terms that “in the course of time, it is expected that all persons of aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do”⁸⁰. Education was the long term objective to achieve results and forward the assimilation. Prejudice against Aboriginal children attending the same educational institutions as the whites, should be actively combated.⁸¹

Australia wanted to give the general impression that everyone had the chance of a happy and useful life and that Australia should be build up as a society with no minorities or special classes. This would not be achieved until the Indigenous people were part of it. This was the goal of assimilation, because “all persons who are defined as ‘aborigines’ or ‘natives’ in the respective Federal and State legislation are regarded as constituting a different class of citizens by their very

⁷⁹ Native Welfare Meeting (Proceedings) 1951, 17-18/68; Note: The document does not have consecutive numbering, so the page numbers in this study are presented in a form of 1/68 when 68 is the total number of pages in the document.

⁸⁰ Native Welfare Meeting (Proceedings) 1951, 17/68.

⁸¹ Ibid.,52/68.

nature.”⁸². This was related to the fact that Indigenous people were not citizens and therefore not part of the Australian nation. Behind everything was the notion of uniformity throughout Australia in the enjoyment of citizenship privileges. However, the Conference stated that at the time there were few people of Aboriginal heritage who would be prepared or capable of accepting the “full responsibilities of citizenship”⁸³

The question of citizenship was discussed, because citizenship was seen as the major consequence and ultimate goal of the assimilation policy. Moreover, although possible, in 1951 those Aboriginal people who had got the certificates of citizenship were exceptions from the mass. Aboriginal people were controlled under various Acts and citizenship certificates were hard to get. The Conference pointed out in their conclusions that wards of the states who needed guardianship for a longer time period should automatically cease to be wards when they are fit to assume the full citizenship to which they are entitled. The special legislation of Aboriginal people would be made apply only to those who were considered in need of tutelage and guardianship.⁸⁴

The underlying message was that the Aboriginal cultural beliefs and loyalties did not matter and Aboriginal people were to accept the prevailing Eurocentric views. The Minister of Territories Paul Hasluck presented an idea for the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia as a country with no minorities or special classes. He saw the Aboriginals’ situation was a welfare problem, not a racial one. Hasluck emphasized assimilation as “a policy of opportunity” giving Indigenous people and their descendants a chance to shape their own life, whereas segregation at the other hand would only provide a separate and peculiar world of coloured people.⁸⁵ His solution was an individual approach to assimilation, understanding assimilation as a one-way individual journey to equality⁸⁶ instead an assimilation of the whole group with cultural interaction.

Soon after the Welfare Conference of 1951 Hasluck stated that assimilation is not a means to suppress the Aboriginal culture but rather a way of cultural adjustment that will take place after generation after generation. However, resistance against Hasluck vision of the classless and unified, mono-cultural Australia grew prominently in the 1950s.

In short, the Native Welfare Conference 1951 drew up a series of statements determine the objectives of native policy, and agreed methods by which policy should be applied. Measures

⁸² The Native Welfare Meeting (Proceedings)1951, 16/68.

⁸³ Ibid., 16-17/68.

⁸⁴ The West Australian, Perth, Fri 14th, Sep. 1951, 3.

⁸⁵ The Native Welfare Meeting (Proceedings)1951, 18/68.

⁸⁶ Moran 2005, 188.

regarding Aboriginal health, education and other matters were taken to fulfil the long-term Aboriginal welfare aims of the states. Hence the Conference saw that Aboriginal children should attend normal educational institutions there were some remote areas where special schools were required. The Conference also resolved that a Native Welfare Council to be established and it would meet annually.⁸⁷

4.3. The Native Welfare Conference of 1961

“I feel that every authority in Australia -- is striving to the one end -- to do what is best for the coloured people of the nation. We are aiming at retching the stage at which the question of colour will be completely forgotten.”⁸⁸

Those were the words of Dr. Noble, Queensland representative in the 1961 Native Welfare Conference held in Canberra 26th and 27th of January. Assimilation was then naturalized as an only way to a modern and unified Australia. The Conference wanted the Indigenous people to see it as a demonstration of the non-Indigenous Australians’ willingness to help their Aboriginal people, and at the same time to demonstrate to the whole world that the Australians understood and took their responsibility on Indigenous welfare every seriously.⁸⁹ However, what is the most significant aspect of the 1961 Native Welfare Conference is the new definition of assimilation it proclaimed then.

“[A]ll aborigines and part aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Thus, any special measures taken for aborigines and part aborigines are regarded as temporary measures not based on colour but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their future social, economic and political advancement.”⁹⁰

There are two major issues here. Firstly, the assimilation was to widen to include all Aboriginals, full or lesser descent. Secondly, the aims of this policy are crystallized in the words “the same

⁸⁷ The West Australian, Perth, Fri 14th, Sep. 1951, 3.

⁸⁸ Native Welfare Conference 1961, 7-8.

⁸⁹ Ibid.,3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.,16.

manner of living” as other Australians, meaning that Aboriginal people were to become indistinguishable from the non-Indigenous Australians. Furthermore, although the merger included all people, it would happen to some sooner than others, who still need special protection and supervision.

When in the 1930s-1940s the states had faced similar problems considering Aboriginal affairs, in the 1960s they faced a wider variety of situations. In some states, like in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, the Indigenous population was small in number and had lost most if not all tribal links, whereas in Western Australia and Northern Territory the Indigenous population was large and varied from urban dwellers to traditional tribal nomads. Still, although governments might not have identical tasks, they had the same basic obligations.⁹¹

During the decade, Queensland had changed its policy regarding “coloured children”. Previously, the procedure had been to send mixed descent children to settlements after proved neglected before Court. “Under our new approach to the matter we feel these children should be ordinary citizens of Australia; and the State Children Department now take them over and they go into the white orphanages and enjoy the same privileges as the white children in the institution.”⁹²

However, the removals of mixed descent Aboriginal children were not discussed as such. Instead the focus was on Indigenous education; schooling and apprenticeship of full Aboriginal children. The major problems of educating Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children were firstly the cultural difference and the language barrier and secondly the long distances. In some remote areas in Western Australia and Northern Territory, some of the larger stations had teachers and children near the station were able to receive some education, but on the large pastoral properties only a few Aboriginal families lived close to the homestead. It is understandable that it is difficult to educate children under such circumstances. Thus great deals of the Aboriginals were still illiterate in the early 1960 and a concern for the Boards’.⁹³

To solve this kind of educational problem, e.g. Western Australia had a policy of hostels where the Aboriginal children who lived far away from the school could stay when attending school. The children living in these hostels were not taken from their parent instead, when the school term ended they returned to their home . Mr. Perkins referred this to a similar system then a boarding school. These schools which the children living in hostels attended were not special schools. At first

⁹¹ Native Welfare Conference 1961, 2.

⁹² Ibid.,9.

⁹³ Ibid.,37.

they had had some difficulty with the non-Indigenous parents, but when Aboriginal children's social and living standards were upgraded, these problems were easily resolved.⁹⁴

However the suitable employment of Aboriginal was seen a little challenging to some people. Mr. Perkins, the representative of Western Australia, stated that he could not "think of any kind of employment for which these people would be suitable."⁹⁵

Mr. Hasluck stated his worry of those full and lesser descent Aboriginal children still living with their Aboriginal parents and who had limited knowledge of outside world. Although they might go through primary school it still would not have the intended effect of making those people assimilate, because "they were still aborigines." The primary education is not enough for "[t]he object of education is not merely to give you the skill to read and write; the object is to do something to the whole man."⁹⁶

However, it was not enough to accept the policy of assimilation on a federal and state level, as the South Australian representative pointed out, but the non-Indigenous community needed a great deal of encouragement in general to be ready and receive Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal people into the community without prejudice. One of the recommendations was that the non-Indigenous community should be made aware of the positivity of the assimilation policy and that assimilation cannot happen without the help and acceptance of the white community. Mr. Pearson stated that a large number of its part-Indigenous population have been accepted from the provisions of the Aborigines Act 1934-39 in South Australia, and their descendants had mostly been successfully assimilated. The South Australian government had received about 880 applications of the certificates of exemption during the previous decade. Although progress has been made towards assimilation in South Australia, it was believed that it would be necessary for the "less developed people" to be segregated for some time until they could take their place in the community. In New South Wales certificates of exemption had been granted to 877 applicants who had reached a satisfactory standard of social development. In Victoria allowances had been made to about ten part-Aboriginal children who were receiving post primary education of total number of 2,260 part-Aboriginal in the State. Tasmanian representative regarded that Tasmania had only a small problem with its 150 part-Aboriginal individuals but the government had it under control.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Native Welfare Conference 1961, 38.

⁹⁵ Ibid.129.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 148.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 46, 19-20.

In Northern Territory there had been removal of about 1900 part-Aboriginal persons, including few full bloods. There is a general acceptance of the principle that part-Aboriginal persons as a group would not both subject to the restrictions and protections of the Welfare Ordinance.⁹⁸ In the State of Victoria there were only a few full blood Aboriginals and only 2,260 part-Aboriginal individuals, which meant that some methods of assimilation did not apply. Many of the Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal population of Victoria were already living in the white community. The situation was similar in Queensland.⁹⁹ The total population of Australia at the time was ten million non-Indigenous people and in addition a population of 70,000 Aboriginal people.¹⁰⁰

When talking about the benefits of assimilation Queensland representative Mr. Noble gave a revealing example of the possibilities of what assimilation could achieve and what kind of poor effects any contact with the people in the settlement might have.

I have these people working for me. For some years I have had a very lovable half caste girl who has wonderful attributes and I do not think one would find a nicer girl anywhere. After a couple of years with us she could not be distinguished from a white person, apart from the difference in colour. I had her presented to Princess Alexandra, as a representative of the native people, and she looked lovely. She speaks beautifully. She lives in our house like one of us and has developed like one of our own children. Recently her mother took ill and she went back on the settlement for a while. On her return to us we found that her speech had deteriorated; her eyebrows which she had kept plucked, had grown again. This was due to going on the settlement, where she felt an inferiority complex. I think we will never get very far if we let these people stay on the settlements where they get a complex and lose ambition. This girl now has exemption [citizen certificate] and will never return to the settlement if I have any say in it.¹⁰¹

The part-Indigenous girl described here is the paragon of assimilation: well spoken, smartly dressed, lovely young lady with westernized manners. Not a wild people but fit to be presented to a royalty. This was all achievable when letting mixed heritage people to be settled and part of the white community, and paying some time and effort to educate these people “right” manners. Even citizenship was possible. However, if these people were allowed to visit their kin and have access to their original culture and background it would reduce their achievements and even “deteriorate”

⁹⁸ Native Welfare Conference 1961, 21.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 26-27.

their speech and appearance. From Mr. Noble's speech it can be deduced that even a short period with Indigenous people is enough to have an ill and degenerative effect on mixed descent people. The settlements were reconsidered to be the gravest problem. Mr. Noble also stated that: "Many children are growing up in the settlements and unless we do something to get them off these places we shall develop an inferior and mendicant race."¹⁰²

The problem related to this was the shortage of proper housing everywhere in Australia. Housing was one of the main concerns of the Conference. Also some of the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was concerning. Mr. Perkins argued that Aboriginal people could "become very degraded through association with poor types of whites."¹⁰³ Who these "poor types of whites" are, is not clarified but one can assume they are low-wage or unemployed people from the lower classes, possibly with an alcohol or drug problem.

The Conference agreed on a set of methods of advancing the policy. The government settlement worked to encourage nomadic and semi-nomadic people to adopt a more settled way of life and to make health services, better standards of housing and nutrition, schooling, vocational training and occupation available to them and their children, as the first stage towards assimilation. They should also give provision of health services particularly including the child welfare services as well as provision of education in normal schools and preschools to the extent possible otherwise in special schools and pre-schools for all aboriginal and part aboriginal children. Continual improvements in housing and hygiene standards on government settlements, missions, rural properties, in towns and assistance towards provision of and training in the use of improved housing facilities particularly in town areas. Vocational training, including apprenticeship, and employment, particularly in ways which will assist Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal people to make a contribution to the advancement of their own people - teaching assistants, nursing and medical assistants, patrol officers, welfare officers, etc. It was also regarded that welfare services, such as child, family and social welfare services, provided for non-Indigenous members of the community ought to be available to Indigenous people.¹⁰⁴

The results of the 1961 Conference were presented to the Commonwealth Government in April by Paul Hasluck, Minister of Territories. He gave the Commonwealth Parliament an announcement about the Conference's decisions. Any special measures taken to execute the policy were regarded as temporal measures, which were not based on colour but to meet Aboriginal people's need for

¹⁰² Native Welfare Conference 1961, 28.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 35.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,17-18.

special care and assistance to protect them from the negative effects of this sudden change in their lives and assist them to make the transition so that their social, economic and political future would be fortunate. The goal was to remove restrictive and protective legislation as soon as the person's capacity and advancement made it possible.¹⁰⁵

The term "citizenship" when speaking of Aboriginal people was used loosely. The Conference viewed that "Australian aborigines are Australian citizens by virtue" of the Nationality and Citizenship Act (1948-1960) although not legally entitled to it. The Conference emphasized that the special situation as well as the "rights" and disabilities that the states imposed on their Indigenous population did not diminish the idea that they were regarded as Australian citizens though without the citizenship. Nevertheless, there were certain restrictions on persons under the provision of State Native Welfare Acts but that does not take their Australian citizenship away from them although it might limit their rights enjoyed by other citizens. It can also afford Aboriginals assistance not given to other citizens.¹⁰⁶

Vocational training and employment in ways which would assist them to make a contribution to the advancement of their own people were recommended. The Conference saw it crucial to encourage Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal people to engage themselves and participate in social and sporting as well as general community activity. Furthermore The Conference wanted to extent welfare work among Indigenous people especially to assist those living in or near towns to adjust themselves to the life of white community. In addition more research had to be done on the special problems associated with the native welfare project.¹⁰⁷

The methods may had varied from state to state, since the "conditions of aboriginal race vary very greatly from place to place in Australia"¹⁰⁸ but the methods agreed by the conference of ministers were seen the best way to serve the advancement of the policy. It was recommended that supervision of the Welfare staff as well as the number of welfare workers had to be increased. Attention was also given to the problem of Aboriginal people moving from state to state. Many did not realise that at the same time they crossed the state border, they came under different legislation and their position might have become more restricted. This included both people seeking work and

¹⁰⁵ Assimilation Policy 1961, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 3.

the nomadic and semi-nomadic people. The Ministers had been negotiating about the matter to find measures to overcome the problem.¹⁰⁹

The Conference concluded that Aboriginal children should be educated in schools with special curricula and special teaching methods, but only for as long as the educational authority would consider that the most beneficial educational form for the child than they would under normal curriculum. Nevertheless, there was no mention what these special teaching methods were or what they should have been. The education of Aboriginal children in normal schools was regarded preferable and especially important for children in higher grades. This was not a new practice because a great number of Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children were attending the same school as the whites. The impute of Christian Missions on this valuable work was also noted by the Conference.¹¹⁰

Hasluck suggested at the end of his presentation of the Conference's conclusions that the House of Commonwealth should keep the Aboriginal matter in perspective, after all "the problem" of advancement and adjustment addressed a 'racial' and social minority of 70,000 people in a total population of ten million. Apart from those 70,000 Aboriginals there were estimations of 30,000 people of Aboriginal descendants who lived like whites and did not come under any form of restrictive or protective legislation. "Where special legislation applies to aborigines only, it is solely because of a clear and temporary – need for this in their own interests."¹¹¹

Hasluck declared that contrary to popular belief, the restrictions were of limited effect. Continued changes in legislation and administrative practice had made the assimilation policy possible. In conclusion, Hasluck said, that, although, Governments could and did do great work towards helping the Aboriginal people towards assimilation, the success would, however, ultimately depend on whether the whole Australian community would accept Aboriginals and assist them in the transition.¹¹²

However, it was not long when it became obvious that the methods set to progress assimilation were not sufficient enough. Only four years later in 1965 the definition of assimilation had to be changed again because it had become clear that the level of assimilation, envisioned in 1951 and again in 1961 was not happening. There was no 'single Australian community' and politicians

¹⁰⁹ Assimilation Policy 1961, 3-5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 5-6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹¹² Ibid., 7-8.

started to understand that nor would there likely ever be. That is partly why at the 1965 Native Welfare Conference, assimilation was re-defined.

The policy of Assimilation seeks that all persons of Aboriginal descent will choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living to that of other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community.¹¹³

Now, the requirement was not “same manner” of living but “similar”, leaving space for individual decision and cultural heritage. One can argue that this was the end of assimilation policy and beginning of integration policy.

The last Native Welfare Conference 1967 before the total abolishment of the assimilation policy did not bring any changes or new views on Aboriginal welfare policies, which could have been assumed, because the human rights Aboriginal citizenship movements were very vocal at the time. Instead the Conference was content to exchange information on progress and to updated other states on their situation. Child removals were not mentioned but education was in the centre focus yet again. The States had put a lot of effort to improve both Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children’s education and educational opportunities and now children’s educational opportunities were not dependent on their family’s financial position. To ensure equal opportunities a large amount of special schools, manly for those Aboriginal children who did not know any English were established. Many States also had programmes for financial assistance; scholarship and bursaries for support this purpose. It was estimated that about 97 per cent of school aged Indigenous children attended school and approximately only 11 per cent of them continue to have secondary level education. For the first time in the history of Welfare Conferences in 1967 there was a general discussion about Aboriginal land rights and the referendum campaign though mostly superficial. Other important new topics were the advancement of women and discussion on Aboriginal culture and its state as well as consultation with Aboriginal people.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ http://www.skwirk.com.au/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1126/what-was-assimilation-/nsw/what-was-assimilation-/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-, 20.08.2013.

¹¹⁴ The Native Welfare Conference 1967, 95-96, 118-120.

4.4. Aboriginals' Place in the White Australian Community

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations are often schematized as a linear narrative that developed from extermination to segregation and exclusion, from segregation to assimilation and finally self-determination and reconciliation. This kind of 'race' relation thinking is simplistic and can function only as a rough guideline than an actual truth of the reality.¹¹⁵

The 1950s and 1960s saw great shifts in ideas about the national identity, 'race' and assimilation, which were still important metaphors of social class. In Australian discussions about assimilation in the 1960s, to fulfil the dream of whiteness, the Aboriginal people had to be included in or eliminated from the imagined white community. This did not mean necessarily physical exclusion but more like mental elimination. The assimilation of mixed heritage people was an ambivalent project. It was both a threat to the purity of the "white nation" and hope of a seemingly legitimate mode of elimination of the native occupants of the country. Within the whites' logic, the idea was attractive because the "Aboriginal and Half-Caste problem" could be imagined disappearing as colour disappeared. However, it was at the same time repulsive because of an association with white 'race' degeneration. In the biological representation of assimilation at the time, the disappearance of colour signalled the disappearance of one's Aboriginality.¹¹⁶

Class was another principle. Assimilation was envisioned to take place among the white working-class. Aboriginal people were seen as a labour force and taking them in the white society automatically meant that they would become a part of the growing working class. This is also seen in the case of separated children: in institutions and mission homes Aboriginal children, teenagers and adults were trained and worked as domestic servants and farm labour. The general idea was that young Aboriginal women were imagined marrying white working-class men and producing fair skinned children. In the 1950s and 1960s one of the central anxieties about the idea of assimilation was children and young adults of mixed heritage. The inter-racial sexual relations of the past had become the problem of the present. The white men were the originators of the "Half-cast problem" and they were seen to be the present problem, because they kept on having sexual relations with the Aboriginal women and therefore maintaining the problem. Paradoxically white men are also seen as the solution to the problem; by marrying mixed descent women, the problem would eventually fade

¹¹⁵ Elder 2009, 20.

¹¹⁶ Elder 2009, 17, 29, 39.

away. The earlier periods of thinking had been shaped by the discourse of elimination and colonization, which were, however, no longer the official understanding about the matter.¹¹⁷

In official discourse, the topic of miscegenation was often marginal and nearly unspeakable. While at the same time in the literature it features as a central motive of assimilation. The removal of children could also be seen, as it was presented many times in the literature in the 1940s and 50s, as a maternal melodrama, where an Aboriginal woman whose social position was marginal gave up her “mixed race” child so the child could be raised in better social and economic circumstances. In a way, Aboriginal mother’s feelings for her child had to be denied to secure assimilation. The figure of the Aboriginal mother was presented as the agent of assimilation voluntarily leaving her child. The reunion of a mother and her child was not to take place because that was the point of child removal at the time.¹¹⁸

Assimilation was a period in Australian history with many phases with various purposes in terms of ‘race’ policy from the end of the 1930s to the 1970s. It had two effects that were the most prominent. First, the socio-cultural assimilation of Aboriginal groups into the white Anglo-Australian community and secondly, an intention of biological assimilation. In the first half of the 20th century, the focus was on eugenic approach to assimilation, but after the Second World War and the Holocaust the growth in the process of decolonization the emphasis of official discourse of assimilation shifted to socio-cultural.¹¹⁹ Governments launched brochures such as ‘One People’ in 1961, which spread the images of stylishly clothed Aboriginal individuals as smiling and willing subjects, and who were being taught to work, cook and learn by white teachers.¹²⁰

Experiencing generations of poverty and denigration, some Aboriginals at least half believed the slander about themselves. Some started to believe that their poor position and treatment were their own fault. One of the down sides of the policy and the situations it created was the growth of self-denial especially amongst the part-Aboriginals, but it also had its effect on the whole community. Others chose to emulate the culture and lifestyle of white middle-class. Many tried to fade out the features of their Aboriginality, either physically by using whitening creams and powder or by assimilating European behaviour. They hoped to leave poverty behind and overcome the caste

¹¹⁷ Elder 2009, 40, 233, 236.

¹¹⁸ Elder 2009, 113, 235, 239.

¹¹⁹ Elder 2009, 25, 29.

¹²⁰ Broome 2010, 215, 189.

barrier. Having a white or light-skinned spouse might later help their children to slip more easily through the caste barrier.¹²¹

In states that granted citizenship certificates, such as South Australia, New South Wales and West Australia, the denial of one's Aboriginality led to split and divisions within many Aboriginal rural communities in the 1940s-1960s. The certificate was known as an "exemption" certificate, because it exempted someone from being of Aboriginal descent. To be able to vote, move around freely with no restrictions and to buy alcohol or do any sort of decision about one's life, one had to deny one's heritage and family. Citizenship was seen as a lure by the government to assimilate Aboriginal people. The certificate was promoted as a good and desirable thing and something that encouraged Indigenous people to become more "civilized". Nevertheless, the majority of non-Indigenous Australians regarded these "exemption" certificates with contempt and compared them to dog licenses. The fact that in the 1950s there were 14,000 eligible Aboriginal people living in New South Wales but only 1,500 certificates were issued, tells something about the attitudes at the time.¹²²

However despite the adaptation of European lifestyle and manner, few Aboriginals applied for the citizenship, because getting it also required adapting to European social norms and rejecting the Aboriginal ways. The ones who tried to cross into mainstream society during 1940s-1960s rarely achieved their aim. They were between castes not completely belonging to neither. Few white Australians accepted those who wanted to pass, which made it even more difficult.¹²³ In his article "Problems of Assimilation in Australia" from 1964 Ronald M. Brendt stated that: "A few Aborigines have come close to assimilation through intermarriage; however the great majority are still in the 'bush'."¹²⁴

Another way to survive was to accept and hold on to one's Aboriginality, even though in many places the traditional ceremonial life and language had faded, because of the work and teaching of the missions and losses of elders with the old knowledge as well as the young, who were replaced away from their relatives and tribal lands. The sense of being Aboriginal stayed although it was now somewhat different than before. Aboriginal resistance to white dominance had not changed. It was still strong and enduring in many places. In South Australia, the Aboriginal resistance leaned on cultural maintenance, the sense of injustice, acting as oppositional culture, the rebuilding of

¹²¹ Broome 2010, 188.

¹²² http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1126/what-was-assimilation-/nsw/what-was-assimilation-/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-, 05.07.2013.

¹²³ Broome 2010, 187-188.

¹²⁴ Brendt 1964, 26.

positive Aboriginal identity and rise of Aboriginal political movement, which became the central operator, when fighting for the land rights in the 1970s and 1980s.¹²⁵

People in the reserves knew there was no going back to bush life. Now it was up to them what kind of role they wanted to play when deciding Aboriginal peoples' future. The fact is that assimilation policy did not improve Aboriginals' lives as hoped. Instead in many cases it was a plight to them. For the 'full blood' Aboriginal people assimilation policy did not close the reserves, it did not improve their schooling, not in the reserves or in the missions. Even though they got equal pay in 1968, it did them a disservice, because after that they were regarded as unqualified workers, because they had only a little education and training. Apparently apprenticeships "programs" were not good enough, neither for the employees or the Aboriginals, when applying for employment. Even though the assimilation was in action, Australia was a very segregated class divided country.¹²⁶

The logic behind assimilation was contradictory: Aboriginal people were being told they had to be more 'white' but they were never given the actual chance or freedom to change. They were told to take responsibility for assimilating into white society, but Indigenous people had never been given the opportunity to practice or take responsibility for anything. Many of them had spent their entire lives being controlled by a reserve manager or a missionary. When, some Aboriginal people did try to assimilate they were told they were not 'ready' yet to enter the white society. Assimilation never gave Aboriginal people the same rights as other Australians, even though they were supposed to act like them. Nevertheless, by the 1960s it had become clear that the foreign migrants were able to keep the aspects of their cultures alive while still living within Australian society, which made the Federal Government more open towards Indigenous people's integration rather than assimilation. However, everyone was still expected to adapt and adopt the 'white' Australian culture, but they were given more leeway to practice traditional aspects of what was left of their own culture. The Australian Government did not actively try to create a multicultural society until the 1970s, when policy towards the Indigenous population changed once more to self-determination.¹²⁷

In general Aboriginals did not assimilate in the white society during 1940s-1960s and even in the 21st century some still have not. Many Aboriginal people in the settlements knew that there was no going back to the traditional ways, so they coped as well as they could, borrowing from and even

¹²⁵ Broome 2010, 188-189.

¹²⁶ Broome 2010, 188-190.

¹²⁷ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1126/what-was-assimilation-/nsw/what-was-assimilation-/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-, 20.08.2013.

embracing some aspects of white culture. For example they used glass and metal to fashion traditional items, they moved into tin houses and redesigned their traditional humpies. They learned languages to communicate with others and adopted Western names to keep their own names secret. They embraced television, radio, card games and gambling. However, it is good to remember that Australia is a vast country and there are many different Indigenous tribes living in very different circumstances. They do not just differ from each other in tradition and in culture but also according to their lifestyle, how they earn their livelihood and the level and means of interaction with the whites.¹²⁸

4.5. Resistance - Fighting for Civic Rights

The Aboriginal people had demanded the voting right since the 1930s. For many years Aboriginal people's lives were decided by the government, the churches and pastoralist¹²⁹. Modern Aboriginal political activity, with pressure-group activity influencing government policy, began in the early 1930s. The Australian Aborigines' league was established and in 1932 members circled among Aboriginal settlements to a petition for an Aboriginal representative in the Commonwealth Parliament. Other things required were a unified national Department of Aboriginal Affairs and an advisory panel of experts and Aboriginals in each state. Indigenous people tried to bring their voice through and change in their work and living conditions by striking. However, their position was challenging, because unionists and labour organizers, who might have been able to assist their cause and organizing strikes, were not allowed on to reserves or missions. The Second World War put the Aboriginal protest activity on hold, but it continued successfully after the war. The most famous strikes, which achieved some concert changes on Aboriginal workers work conditions, were the Pilbara strike in 1946 and the Gurindji pastoral workers strike in 1966. Other significant events were the establishment of an Aborigines' Progressive Association of New South Wales in 1937 and a 'Day of Mourning', which was first held on 26th of January 1938 in Sydney to protest against "the so-called 'welfare' policies for Aborigines". This is known as the First Wave of Aboriginal civil right activism.¹³⁰

The Second Wave began in the 1950s. Aboriginal freedom fighters were inspired by the freedom rites during the civil rights movement in the United States, especially in 1961. Eventually the

¹²⁸ Broome 2010, 216.

¹²⁹ A pastoralist is a grazier or land-holder raising sheep, cattle, etc, on a large scale.

¹³⁰ Jennett 2001, 121-122.

Australian Federal Government submitted to the logic of Aboriginal claims backed by the international covenants and threats and the fear of international exposure. In 1961, the Senate recommended that the Indigenous people be given the right to vote in federal elections and stated that Indigenous people must be integrated instead of assimilated. Integration suggests a rejection of cultural absorption for a policy of cultural pluralism. The Australian Government had seen what had happened in the United States and did not want to events to escalate the same way in Australia. Aboriginals under federal justice were now given the right to vote, and soon the states followed the suit. However, this was not enough and educated Aboriginal groups demanded full citizen and human rights.¹³¹

Assimilation was a general policy of immigrants in Australia and the dominant concept in academic circles in Australia post-war period until the mid-1950s. From 1947 to the early 1950s scholar activity in Australia focused particular on migrant assimilation. The assimilation policy of Aboriginal people was adopted in all mainland states by 1951. The policy did not succeed, because Aboriginals continued to be excluded from the white society by racial discrimination, low socio-economic status and poor employment opportunity. The “Second Wave” of Aboriginal activity began in the 1950s. In the early 1950s there was little evidence of any questioning of assimilation as a worthwhile concept until the late 1950s, when academics started to question the explanatory meaning of assimilation. At the same time on an international level the UNESCO meeting in Havana in 1956 concluded that ‘integration’ is preferable to ‘assimilation’.¹³²

In the 1950s-1960s there was a considerable political activity around civil rights. The Aboriginal Labour Party (ALP) was an active player in supporting Aboriginal movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s as was the Communist Party. The Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines (FCAA) was established and in 1964 it was changed into Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). Its main job was to co-ordinate the activities of various organisations demanding civil rights. As a result of FCAATSI, churches, unions and active the individuals Aboriginal people won the right to vote in Commonwealth elections in 1962. In 1965 a group of Aboriginal students, led by Charles Perkins, organised a ‘Freedom Rides’ to New South Wales country towns to draw attention to racial discrimination.¹³³

Resistance towards the assimilation and child removal policies rose from many quarters. One of the failures of the assimilation policy was its inability to recognize the importance of cultural groups in

¹³¹ Broome 2010, 220.

¹³² Jennett 2001, 120-123.

¹³³ Jennett 2001, 120-123.

sustaining individuals. Aboriginal people opposed assimilation consistently and fiercely. On a political and cultural frontier there were Aboriginal support groups, which criticized the policy and wanted and required integration instead of assimilation, which would be a two-way engagement. For Indigenous people assimilation meant being swallowed by a majority group and that it could only make them replicates of whites, which was not what they themselves wanted.¹³⁴

In 1965, Australia signed International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Act. It made inevitable to all states' to equalize their legislation and stop discriminating Aboriginal people and other 'races'. Nevertheless yet again legislation and policy were two different things although policies did change, they changed slowly. Although civil rights were achieved at the end of the 1960s, the attitudes lagged behind. As Broome points out the first step was equality before the law, the second was to provide equality of opportunity. The third step was to provide respect for difference. In the 1960s adult white Australians had their attitudes formed in the era when Aboriginal people were thought as doomed race, primitive and unworthy. The adult Aboriginal people at the time had grown up in a time when they had no rights and carried "the psychological scars" of oppression. These challenges were ahead in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it would be naive to assume that the values that favoured assimilation have completely been uprooted even today thus lots of progress has been made.¹³⁵

From the beginning of the 1960s Aboriginal rights defenders demanded two major changes in the constitution. First was to include Aboriginal people under Commonwealth legislation. Section 51 of Australian Commonwealth Federation Constitution stated that the Commonwealth legislation applied to all people of any 'race' other than "aboriginal race" in any state. This meant that the Indigenous people were not part of the Australian Federation or its community, but outsiders, the "relics" of a world and time before the British seizure. However, this was not the case as the policy-makers discovered in the 1950s and the 1960s. The Indigenous population was a growing notable minority that could not be blocked out any longer or shipped away like Government had done to the Pacific Islander workers in the 1920s.¹³⁶

The second demand was to make Aboriginal people countable on the census, because according to the law then: the Aboriginal people were not counted on any governmental census. This was by itself degrading and segregating. Sir Robert Menzies' government agreed to change the last demand, to take Aboriginal people as a part of the census. After Menzies' retired in 1966, the

¹³⁴ Broome 2010, 216.

¹³⁵ Broome 2010, 224-226.

¹³⁶ Broome 2010, 220-222.

government's attitude changed. As a result of an intense pressure his successor, Harold Hot, agreed in February 1967 to make the change in constitution on both demands. The changes happened first on federal then on a state level. Queensland was the last state that implemented Aboriginal rights, which happened in practise in 1982.¹³⁷

5. THE CHILD REMOVAL POLICY

5.1. Removal Practices & Their Motives

By the first decades of the 20th century, the reserves were overcrowded and too expensive for the Boards to maintain. The administrative regarded that the solution was to narrow the definition of 'Aboriginal', so that mixed descent children were no longer defined as Aboriginals. Therefore, because they were officially not Aboriginals, they did not qualify to live in the reserves. This allowed for hundreds of children to be taken away from their families. However, just because they were not 'Indigenous' enough to live on the reserves did not mean that the Boards had given up control over the children's lives. They were sent to training homes so they could be assimilated into non-Indigenous community. In addition, the Chief Protectors of Western Australia and Queensland used their guardianship and removal powers to force all Indigenous people onto large government settlements and missions. To remove children from their parents influence the children were placed in separate dormitories from the age of 4 years. They were then sent to work at about 14 years of age off the missions or settlements.¹³⁸

Although the child removal policy had been practiced a long time before the official assimilation policy, they were strongly entwined. The removal policy was definitely stepped up with the introduction of assimilation policy. This gave extra motive to the removals of part-Indigenous children. By taking the children away from the "bad influence" of their parents and family it was believed to be easier to make them more "European" and to fit them in the dominant white community. The authorities believed that Indigenous parents were unable to look after their children properly and so the children ought to be removed. The importance and value of Indigenous culture were once more completely ignored by the government and those who were supposed to be "protecting" the Indigenous people. Many non-Indigenous people thought they were doing the right thing to the children when separating them from their Indigenous families. Naturally, others had

¹³⁷ Broome 2010, 220-222.

¹³⁸ Bringing Them Home 1997, 25; http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1127/nsw/history/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-asssilation-/why-were-children-removed, 22.08.2013.

more sinister motives. The foundation of the policy can argued to have been essentially a racist one.¹³⁹

There were many reasons to remove Indigenous children. Firstly, the officials and regulations were to protect the children from possible abuse. Other major jurisdiction was that of neglect when the children were deserted by their families and in dire need of help and rescue, in other cases it was the best interest of the child to be taken away meaning that the child would be more provided in somewhere else. Neglect was defined to include destitution and poverty that were constant features of most Indigenous peoples' lives in Australia, resulting from a history of colonization. Also many aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle were interpreted by non-Indigenous Australians as destitute and poor. The Human Right and Equal Opportunity Commission's Inquiry Bringing Them Home Report argues that the idea of neglect carried with it assumptions about this lifestyle. Besides proof of neglect was not always needed. Parents were often persuaded to consent to their child being taken away because it meant the Board did not have to prove neglect in children's court. Sometimes the parents were pressured to send their children to school or their rations would have been cut down.¹⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the socio-economic circumstances of most Indigenous families were such that many children lost one or both biological parents while still young. However, most Indigenous communities had due the kinship networks involving obligations of care and nurture of children. In most cases another relative was to take primary responsibility for the child's maintenance and fostering. Nonetheless, these kinship obligations were misunderstood, underestimated or entirely ignored by most government and non-government administrators. Evidence shows that the welfare officials were not very keen to locate children's relatives and in most cases officers did not expect aunts, grandmothers or uncles to be proper guardians to look after the children. From the official perspective Indigenous children, especially those with mixed heritage, had to be brought up in the approved way or the state would take them. Read argues that as soon as the parents were unable to take care of their children in the manner approved by the officials, there was the opportunity for the children to be removed.¹⁴¹

However, the assimilation programmes were not the only motivation for child removals. A few children were removed because they were lived in genuinely poor conditions or were in danger. Some mixed descent children were being abused by tribe members because they had white fathers

¹³⁹ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1127/nsw/history/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-/why-were-children-removed, 22.08.2013.

¹⁴⁰ Bringing Them Home 1997, 25; Read 1981, 27.

¹⁴¹ Bringing Them Home 1997, 10; Read 1981, 23-24.

or some other reason but majority of the mixed descent children were not abused or maltreated even though they were taken. Also not all children who were taken were “stolen”. Some of the non-Indigenous fathers, who knew their offspring, thought their children would be better off in a place where they could be raised in a stable Anglo-Australian environment, so they gave their consent to send their children to an institution Home and paid for their board and education. Some Indigenous parents believed that they were doing the best thing by sending their children away to be educated. However, many did not realise that by doing so they may never see their children again.¹⁴²

It is also been argued that ultimately the child removals aimed to destroying the Indigenous ‘race’, either through biological or cultural assimilation. If the children were raised to think “white”, they would have better chances within the Australian society. In the 1950s-1960s, many regarded the Western culture and lifestyle superior to that of the Indigenous people. It was not until the 1960s the idea of improving the welfare and lives of the Indigenous people through better living conditions was given any real consideration, partly because many still wanted to “protect” Aboriginals for the harmful influence of the modern world which basically meant isolating them from the Australian society. Instead the authorities believed it was better to remove children make them make them learn how to work.¹⁴³

One significant legal change happened in the beginning of the 1950s in the Northern Territory. The Welfare Ordinance 1953 tried to introduce a welfare model for all people regardless of ‘race’. In the Northern Territory from 1953 to 1964 the direct government control of Aboriginal people was carried out on the basis of declaring practically all full descent Aboriginals wards. In addition, people of mixed descent were no longer under special welfare legislation but to be assimilated. For example, the government officials pressured ‘mixed race’ families in Alice Springs to move into small cottages on the outskirts of town in order to improve their housing and living conditions but also to dissociate them from their ‘full blood’ kin in the Aboriginal camps. However, although the general intentions of the officials were to assimilate the ‘mixed race’ people, the administration still treated them as a distinct group requiring special attention and control. Their homes were subject to surveillance by welfare officers and the welfare efforts were specifically directed to women and children. The welfare officers carried diaries in which they made notes on their “clients” domestic habits. If a mother left her children unattended, drank, neglected the washing or otherwise had failed in her duties, the officer of the Welfare Board gave her a warning. After several warnings, the

¹⁴² Read 1981, 23-34.

¹⁴³ http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1127/nsw/history/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-/why-were-children-removed-, 17.05.2013.

Welfare Board would take the family to court and the children were taken away. If the family lived in remote areas or homes that were absolutely considered unsuitable, the more direct way of intervention would be to simply take the children and placing them in institution.¹⁴⁴

In the Northern Territory in the 1950s, almost none of the approximately 8,000 full descent Indigenous children either attended school or were housed in a welfare institution. The Board explored the possibility of constructing more institutions to house all its removed children but in 1963 it was finally decided not to proceed with another institution because they were too expensive and they were found to encourage segregation.¹⁴⁵

Because authorities regarded it hard to arrange removal of children when they lived in a station or in their tribal community, sometimes the Inspectors of Aboriginal affairs preferred to take the children during their stay in a hospital. This kind of practice broke faith with the parents who had either left the child at the hospital or sent them in for treatment. However, these practices were considered justified by some Inspectors, like Western Australian Commissioner of Native Affairs Inspector Bisley. He defended these practices because during the hospitalization period the children had already been separated from their mothers for some time which also made it easier to the officials to remove them permanently from their families.¹⁴⁶

Although every state and the major territories had Aboriginal Welfare Boards, they were differed from each other. For example the powers of the NSW Board differed from those in some other States in that it never had guardianship of Indigenous children and therefore could not consent to the adoption of one of its wards. However, the Adoption of Children Act 1965 allowed for the consent requirement to be waived if “that person is, in the opinion of the Court, unfit to discharge the obligations of a parent or guardian by reason of his having abandoned, deserted, neglected or ill-treated the child¹⁴⁷”. Instead of trying to contact the mother whose child the foster parents wanted to adopt, the Board applied to children’s court to waive the consent requirement.¹⁴⁸

The institutions of part-Indigenous children, or “Homes” as they were often called, were no exception when talking about prejudice or ill treatment of their protégés. Family life at the Homes usually failed to eventuate. The chronic staff shortages and especially lack of qualified staff since the early days of child removals did not improve in the 1960’s. Inexperienced staff and the frequent

¹⁴⁴ Haebich 2000, 20-21.

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/reading8B.htm>, 20.10.2013.

¹⁴⁶ Bringing Them Home 1997, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Adoption of Children Act 1965, Sect. 32 C (NSW).

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/reading8B.htm>, 05.10.2013.

transfers of children prevented family style environment from developing in most Homes and Missions. Many times the children did poorly in their studies because they were expected to do poorly. Their mental abilities were often viewed to be low and they were treated as such. There seems to have been no comprehension of the effect of the institutional environment upon measured intelligence. After promising starts many children's evaluation and education marks done by the managers of the Homes or schools went from bad to worse. Many had a remark that suggested that their mental capacity was low and therefore it was recommendable that the child would not continue high school or higher education but be sent to employment. It was the same thing with children's personality. Historian Peter Read argued that the children were expected to have problems because of their black skin colour. When problems appeared, they seemed to confirm the deep-rooted notions of racial inferiority. When they were violent or passive, it was viewed as a racial characteristic of Aboriginal people. If the children ran away, it was usually assumed that they had gone walkabout. Nevertheless, whether the managers of the institutions were good or bad, nothing could change the bleakness and sterility of the environment. Many of those children were emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically deprived. In addition, many of the removed children in the institutions were, in fact, mistreated and abused, if not by their supervisors then by the other children.¹⁴⁹

In many cases those children who were put in foster homes were treated well. However, many times there was a constant pressure on the children and young to behave white. There are always certain difficulties when raising a child from another ethnic background. Often children living in foster families were only partially accepted into the new family and often they were already aware of the rejection by the surrounding society. In adoption cases, however, the situation was somewhat different, because the child was usually wanted and became an important part of the family.¹⁵⁰

From the 1950s began the placement boom to the white families. In some areas, like in Northern Territory, there was a great deal of unregistered births among Aboriginal people. So it was necessary to practically "invent" birth certificates especially for those children who were taken in custody and were to be adopted or fostered from a mission or a Half-Caste Home. In many cases the definition between 'fostering' and that of 'adoption' was not clear and the practices varied greatly among and within states. Many mothers were never told about their legal rights or jurisdiction over their children but the children usually believed themselves to be and were treated as state wards.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Cummings 1990, 118; Read 1981, 14-16.

¹⁵⁰ Read 1981, 16.

¹⁵¹ Cummings 1990, 123.

Some mothers gave their consent for their children's adoption because they wanted their children to have a chance for a better life. However sometimes the parents did not consent and sometimes they were not even asked. The situation was not often clear for the children either. Sometimes the kids not know why they were suddenly given away, because in most cases they could not meet or talk with their parents and believed their mothers did not want them anymore. Many adoptions and fostering failed however, mainly according to many adopted and fostered persons, because the kids and youth were not treated as children and family members but more as domestic help. Although the term "adoption" is often used in records, the children were rarely given the status of children born to the "adoptive" parents.¹⁵²

Indigenous adoptions have been marginalized both in the story of the stolen generations and in the history of adoption in Australia. Their adoption stories are difficult to retrieve but they are also more complex and contested than that of the children subjected to cruelty and abuse in institutions and missions. Since legal adoptions are confidential and there is a certain amount of secrecy surrounding it, it means that there is little agreement as to how many mixed descent Indigenous children were ever adopted. However, it is estimated that the numbers remained rather low over time. In the more closely settled states of Victoria and New South Wales the number of adoption stayed under 17 percent of the total number of removed children. Most of the adoptions happened from the 1950s through the 1980s.¹⁵³

The policy of protection at the early 20th century was designed to maintain racial purity by controlling contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This would not have been achieved adopting Aboriginal children. That is why the 'cross-racial' adoptions were generalized and located most clearly within the assimilation period during the 1950s—1960. The most common motivation in the case of adoptions throughout the post-war period was benevolence. While the appeal for adopting a darker skinned child was mainly philanthropic, the childlessness of the couple was not the focus. The adoptive parents were on a mission to "rescue" the children, a notion the media was helping to uphold. There were also religious intents at the background and some parents desired to "recruit" a child to a particular religious denomination.¹⁵⁴

Many of the adoptions of part-Aboriginal children at the time were irregular. Professor Anna Haebich argues that the publicity given to these irregular adoptions promoted the idea that removal and adoption by white families promised more reliable way to success both the children and the

¹⁵² Cummings 1990, 123; Swain 2013, 207.

¹⁵³ Swain 2013, 204.

¹⁵⁴ Swain 2013, 205, 211.

white community, then the official rhetoric of assimilation as a goal to all Aboriginal people. There was also a general understanding that the Aboriginal people and especially young Aboriginal or “half-caste” mothers were not as possessive of their children compared to non-Aboriginal people. At the late 1960s the director of Victorian Department of Aboriginal Affairs argued that taking away from Aboriginal women the responsibility of caring for their offspring had led on his opinion to widespread “trafficking” of Aboriginal children. Pregnant Aboriginal women were approached in the streets by white women seeking to adopt their babies. Some mothers complied because they had been conditioned to believe that white people always knew best.¹⁵⁵

Tens of thousands of non-Indigenous and Indigenous mothers were separated from their infants. They were persuaded, pressured, and at times, lied to in an attempt to gain consent for an adoption to proceed. They were told that if they loved their child they would give him/her up. Young mothers who had themselves been subjected to removal as children were almost powerless in the face of such pressure. After spending some time in care a child could be released for adoption. In most cases a mother’s consent was dispensed with the basis of inability to locate, even though the parents location was known or in cases when the parents had continued to have contact with the child. Courts rarely questioned this claim in cases where the mother had Aboriginal background. Sometimes the children were adopted across state borders. Northern Territory for example extended its adoption place recruitment to southern states as well, because it was unable to find enough adequate placements in its own territory.¹⁵⁶

After 1951 many states had established adoption programs run by or association with a Child Welfare Department. However there continued to be resistance to the program because many community members argued that it allowed “coloured” children to slip into the white community. These kinds of notions were raised in Western Australia as well as in Queensland. However, the professional standards and legal requirements surrounding adoption were such that Aboriginal couples were effectively excluded from adopting a child, a situation similar to a single person or a gay couple applying for adoption today.

The governments were generally pro-adoption. Their motives were, however, mainly economical as well as assimilatory. To the welfare authorities the adoption of Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous children was a cheap and permanent solution. It erased the child’s native identity and removed the probability that the child would be a long-term charge of government resources.

¹⁵⁵ Haebich 2000, 440, 576-577.

¹⁵⁶ Swain 2013, 210-2012.

However the prospective non-Indigenous parents seem to have been somewhat reluctant to commit to the responsibilities a hidden adoption involved.¹⁵⁷ This is probably explains why so many children were fostered instead of officially adopted.

In some cases the child's Aboriginal background was hidden either by the officials or by the adopted parents. Sometimes the child's Aboriginality was too much for the parents, so the agencies told the parents that the child was of some other "less undesirable" ethnic identity, in most cases claiming the father was an African or that the child was from India, but in most cases the parents were told about the child's Aboriginal background and they lied about it themselves.¹⁵⁸

However, compared with the adopted or non-Indigenous Australian children, the children placed in "half-caste" institutions or a foster family often received a lower standard education or in some cases no education at all. For example, in Western Australia the removed children were often placed in dormitories, trained as farm workers and domestic servants, and by the age of 14-15 were sent out to work. Aboriginal children were expected to become labourers or servants, so in general the education they were provided was primary level schooling, few were able to continue to secondary or upper level education. Aboriginal girls in particular were sent to homes established by the Board to be trained in domestic service.¹⁵⁹

Once removed the children were not allowed to return to the reserves or stations, except perhaps an occasional visit if they had parents living there or married a full descent person living in the reserve. However, in practise no home visits were allowed. Visiting became theoretically possible after the children had grown up and left the Homes. Moreover, the parents were not encouraged to visit their children in the institutions and if they did however come, they were discouraged to stay more than a day. Children's as well as parents' letters were censored or withheld.¹⁶⁰

Wards and foster children were legally free of being a ward at the age of 18. Many went home to an emotional reunion. Soon they, nonetheless, found out that if the family lived in a reserve or a station, their family was subjected to a whole new set of regulations and restrictions which made the bonding difficult. Some found out that their family had moved away or even died. In 1981, to help parents and children to find each other, a Link-Up organisation was founded.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Swain 2013, 209-210.

¹⁵⁸ Swain 2013, 2012.

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.nsdca.org.au/stolen-generations/history-of-the-stolen-generations/the-history-of-the-stolen-generations>, 01.11.2013.

¹⁶⁰ Read 1981, 12.

¹⁶¹ Read 1981, 22.

No one knows exactly how many children were taken, as most records have been lost or destroyed. Many parents whose children were taken never saw them again, and siblings who were taken were deliberately separated from each other. Today many Aboriginal people still do not know who their relatives are or have been unable to track them down. The generations of children who were taken from their families became known as the stolen generations. The practice of removing mixed descent children continued up at the end of the 1960s meaning today there are Aboriginal people as young as in their 1950s and who are members of the stolen generations' story.¹⁶²

After 1968, the practice of Commonwealth departments was to place children in the care of the state and attempt to reunite them with their families. When the Aborigines' Welfare Board was abolished in 1969 more than a thousand Indigenous children lived in institutions or in non-Indigenous foster care. Almost none of them were being raised by other Indigenous people.¹⁶³

5.2. Effects of the Removals

In general, it was a fact that a removal from their family altered the children's social conditions and made it easier to survive better in the Australian society. Unfortunately, this meant also stripping of one's Aboriginality and denial of one's background. The removed children had to endure a huge cultural shock and anxiety for been snatched away from their family and familiar surroundings which had an enormous effect on their lives. It is no surprise that, when a child has to live in an unfamiliar environment and with turmoil of unnerving emotions, such as fear, anger, uncertainty and poor treatment from others, the aftermath is rarely clean and pretty. When studying members of stolen generations it is noted that among them there is lots of loneliness and low self-esteem issues. Also a loss of identity has been clearly issued. It has been noted that many also have big mistrusting issues in general and deep distrust towards the government, police and other officials. Sometimes the children were told that their mother and their father were death, when in fact they were not. Being told this kind of information caused many to suffer severe depression and loneliness. Often the children had to cope with their grief and emotions by themselves. Many learned very early on to turn the pain, anger and bitterness inwards or channel it into aggressive and violent behaviour.¹⁶⁴

Members of stolen generations have struggled between two worlds but they were forced to abandon one and still were not welcome to the other. When removed the children lost not only they families,

¹⁶² <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/stolen-generations/21.12.2012>.

¹⁶³ <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/reading8B.htm>, 05.10.2013.

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations#toc2>, 21.04.2013

but their culture and language. So they have lots of identity issues and need for searching for their identity and finding their roots. Sometimes the reuniting took decades and for some the reunions bring more hurt and rejection if they found out they themselves were not able to bond with their own parents. In some unfortunate cases it is the parent who was not capable of bonding or be reunited with their long lost child. It is not just the parents the children lost but sibling and other relatives. Many removed Aboriginal people in rural and urban Australia do not know their Aboriginal family tree further than two generations.¹⁶⁵

The removed children who grew up in institutions or mission schools often lacked the parental affection and guidance. Many staff members were frustrated under stressful circumstances added with over load of more or less traumatized children, culminated no doubt to a response of brutal punishments that often occurred in the Homes. The children's sense of unity or lack of it in the Homes was linked to the dormitory system. When all the children accommodated under the same building this created a sense of bonding when everyone knew everyone else's business and what was going on at the Home. However, if the children were located to separate buildings, it made them more isolated and they did not know or interacted as much with the other children in the other dormitories which made lots of room for rumours and for imagination but not a true comradeship.¹⁶⁶

Many times the kids in the Homes had a collective identity detriment of one's individual identity. Many kids from a Home were considered at school more aggressive as a group than other children. This was because they were used to asserting themselves in the Homes. The participation in community activities was one factor that created the experiences of difference between those institutionalized and those who were not because ones institutionalized did not generally participate. The school was also a place where difference was highlighted but not always because of the school itself or its teachers. For example, some missionaries did not allow the girls to wear shorts which were a compulsory part of a sport uniform in high schools.¹⁶⁷ This might be considered a minor matter perhaps on a grand scale, but a vital one for teenage girls and a great matter in sense of unity and belonging – or lack of it.

A majority of members of the stolen generations had a little practice or experience of 'normal' relationships or parenting and it is not a big surprise that many have indeed difficulties parenting as an adult. It has been recognised in many Australian researches that people who were removed as children have generally more problems with substance and alcohol abuse, depression and other

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/stolen-generations-effects-and-consequences>, 21.04.2013.

¹⁶⁶ Cummings 1990, 118-119.

¹⁶⁷ Cummings 1990, 119.

mental illness and higher suicidal rate than those who were not separated from their families. Hence many relationships of stolen generation members have failed, which has on many cases lead their children into a vicious cycle of foster care. Also some legal problems have arisen. Some individuals' whose exact age cannot be guaranteed, because there are no records of their birth but their birth dates are 'assumed', have had complications applying legal documents such as passports.¹⁶⁸

Those removed were less likely to have undertaken any post-secondary education. They were much less likely to have stable living conditions and more likely to be geographically mobile. It is three times more likely that they inform that they had no one to call on in a crisis and they were less likely to be in a steady, confiding relationship with a partner. They were twice as likely arrested and convicted of an offence. Yet they were three times as likely to report having been imprisoned and twice as likely to use illicit substances. Culturally, they were less likely to have a strong sense of their Aboriginal cultural identity, more likely to have discovered their Aboriginality later in life and less likely to know about their Aboriginal cultural traditions at all.¹⁶⁹

At the other hand, many removed people are traditionally orientated, but suffered the lack of knowledge of their own totems which govern many aspects of their lives, such as marriage. Separation from their families also meant separation from their land. Some do not even know where their traditional land is. While being forcibly removed from their lands and by then breaking the continuous practice of customs they are not entitled to claim native title over their land. According to an Aboriginal leader, Julie Tommy Walker, if the underlying issues are not fixed, such as Aboriginal unemployment and poor housing, such things that assist to child protection, Aboriginal children will continue to be removed from their families. It is important to understand that the bitterness some Aboriginals continue to feel is not simply a result of "whitewash" and years of discrimination, but also unequal opportunity and control.¹⁷⁰

Some non-Indigenous people simply deny that children were stolen but 'rescued' from a family and community environment of insanitary living conditions. On their point of view the part-Aboriginal children were given a chance. However, many of those who were separated in childhood have argued that they did not need rescue. The problem with the apology is that many white Australians think that they do not have to ask forgiveness for their ancestors' deeds or that they had no part in

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/stolen-generations-effects-and-consequences>, 21.04.2013.

¹⁶⁹ Bringing Them Home Report 1997, 12.

¹⁷⁰ Brunton 2000,1; <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations#toc2>, 21.04.2013.

what happened. Many Australians also fear that the apology will lead to a flood of compensation claims which would cause millions of dollars.¹⁷¹

The lack of understanding and knowledge for Aboriginal people also meant that many non-Indigenous people who supported the child removals believed that they were doing the 'right thing'. Some people believed that Aboriginal people lived poor and unrewarding life, and that institutions would provide a more positive environment where mixed descent Aboriginal children could better themselves. The dominant view in the Australian society and State governments also indicated that Aboriginal people were regarded as bad parents and that Aboriginal woman did not look after their children.¹⁷²

Even though the children's and their parents' right on a matter of child removals had seemingly improved since the 1940s there were some vital problems with the new removal practises. Since children had to be proved neglect in special Children's Court and most of these Courts were located far from most Aboriginal communities, and because parents had limited legal assistance, appealing against decisions was nearly always impossible for most parents. Furthermore, the parents were still often prevented from contacting their children in homes and institutions. There also would have been an offence if an Indigenous child or youth declined to go to their apprenticeship employment or the institution. Furthermore, they needed a permission from the authorities to leave their employment or the institution.¹⁷³

So, neglect had to be proved at court before the custody of the children. At the same time, the responsibility of Aboriginal education was transferred to the Department of Education, which took also control of reserve buildings and started to provide more qualified teachers in reserves. However, by the 1960s the Aborigines Welfare Board lacked both the expertise and the will to continue handling child welfare and teenage apprenticeships to the manner it required.¹⁷⁴

After the age of 14-15, the part-Indigenous children had to leave the Homes, and as State wards enter an apprenticeship. After the apprenticeship, they were paid a little, and in many cases most of the wages went into a trust account supervised by the Chief Protector. Access to these accounts was difficult. The official purpose of this was to teach wards responsibility and expenditure, but it was also used for control.¹⁷⁵ But considering the sever alcohol problems Aboriginal communities had

¹⁷¹ <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations#toc2>, 21.04.2013.

¹⁷² <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/stolen-generations/21.12.2012>.

¹⁷³ Broome 2010, 305-314.

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/nsw/biogs/NE00033b.htm>, 27.05.2013.

¹⁷⁵ Read 1981, 14-17.

which would easily led to unconstructive money use. So, against this background and the paternalistic notions non-Indigenous Australians had about Aboriginal people it should not be unexpected that the white Australian wanted to control Aboriginal people's wages. One can of course always disagree with the methods.

Children and young who misbehaved or ran away were captured and sometimes sent to a remote station. The misbehaviour was the central factor. In the institutions, where the children had been raised, there was no conception of the real causes of children's "abnormal" behaviour when aggressive, violent, sulky, depressed or apathetic and so on. The employers often complained how deceptive, lazy, malicious, damaged, violent or insolent their mixed heritage apprentices were. In the 1940s-1960s neglect was the most common reason for removals. In many cases simply being 'Aboriginal' was proof of neglect, and those words were used synonymously. After 1939 Child Welfare Act (NSW) a new category appeared in addition to neglect. Indigenous children could now be removed also if they were found to be 'uncontrollable'. An Aboriginal child who refused to go to school or receive an apprenticeship could be for instance considered 'uncontrollable'.¹⁷⁶

However, it was not long before the Welfare Boards faced the same financial problems as its predecessor. The institutions and homes were very costly to run, especially as the Indigenous population increased constantly. During the 1950s-1960s, fostering and adoption became a more economic solution, and general welfare practices started to encourage them after the use of institutions, when institutions could no longer manage the increasing numbers of Indigenous children. Working with the Child Welfare Department, the Board started placing the part-Indigenous children in non-Indigenous foster homes, where the child's Aboriginal identity was not encouraged. A child's skin colour often determined where the child was placed. The lighter the skin, the more likely the child was to be fostered or adopted to white parents rather than placed at an institution. Adoption was also used in the case of babies and much younger children, especially in the 1960s.¹⁷⁷

Even though by removing the children's' material conditions and level of schooling generally improved, overall it was massive fail out, even though some removals were necessary and even though some children have been thankful for it in retrospect. As Broome states the removal of children was massive and racially driven psychological assault. It was a rupturing of tens of

¹⁷⁶ Read 1981, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Bringing Them Home Report 1997, 28.

thousands' Aboriginal families, aimed at eradicating Aboriginality from the nation in the cause of homogeneity and fear of difference.¹⁷⁸

In the 1950s, in Northern Territory after the introduction of the Welfare Ordinance 1953, assimilation was designed to take place through general child welfare laws. Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were then covered by the same law although Aboriginal children still were wards of the Territory and therefore special cases. Towards the end of the 1960s, children were increasingly placed in foster care instead of institutions and homes, which were quickly closing down. In 1971, 97 percent of the children in foster care in Northern Territory had Indigenous background.¹⁷⁹

Naturally part-Indigenous children were not only ones to be taken in custody or fostered. Non-Indigenous children too were charged with neglect and removed from their parents. Nevertheless the Act under which these children were charged was different from those of Indigenous children, because it offered more alternatives to permanent separation, for it was framed with different purpose. Non-Indigenous single mothers could apply for a pension to take better care of their own children. Non-Indigenous children could be committed into the care of a suitable relative and returned home to their parents after a period of good behaviour. Those non-Indigenous children who were institutionalized could visit home on holidays. However, with the part-Indigenous children the intention was to separate them from their Aboriginal family and 'race' permanently, so they did not have the same opportunities as the non-Indigenous children. In addition full descent Indigenous children were seldom removed from their family, although, their circumstances were many times poorer than those of removed mixed descent children.¹⁸⁰ The removals slowed down only at the end of 1960, when the legislation started to change.

In short, it was a common practice that lighter coloured children were sent to institutions for non-Indigenous children or fostered by white families. The strategies included the perception of Aboriginal adolescents to Europeans. The Board apprehended and removed children on a ground of neglect or moral danger. The main purpose of the Child Removal Policy was to remove children from their Aboriginal environment, which gave the Assimilation Policy a major thrust. The Board reasoned that if the Aboriginal population and children in particular, were to be desocialized as Aborigines and resocialized as whites, they would somehow have to be separated from their families' influence.

¹⁷⁸ Broome 2010, 210-219.

¹⁷⁹ Broome 2010, 82-85.

¹⁸⁰ Read 1981, 9; http://www.stolengenerations.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=, 30.09.2013.

5.3. Previous Research

One of the pioneers of Indigenous child removals is Professor Peter Read who has worked with stolen generations since 1978. In 1981 Read brought the issue to the public knowledge and debate with his article ‘The Stolen Generations – The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969’. Read argues that the reason of part-Indigenous child removals was racial and the authorities tried purposely to keep families apart. Coined by Read, the term stolen generations covers a wide variety of circumstances: from forcible removals by agents of the state, relinquishment of children following the application of the moral and legal pressure and to those powerless young Aboriginal mothers who had or were not given any other choice.

In 1997 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) inquiry realised a report about the forcible removed Indigenous children in Australia. The report is also known as the “Bringing Them Home” report. Since its release it has become a national phenomenon with huge media support. The Bringing Them Home report has got the diversity of applause as well as hard criticism. Undeniably it gives a certain expression that nearly every case the grounds for the removals of the part-Indigenous children were unjustified and racially motivated. It also mentioned the possibility that one of the goals of the past Aboriginal legislations was a cultural genocide of Aboriginal people. These statements have been highly argued about whether or not this was the case. Despite the criticism Bringing Them Home Report has gained some kind of monumental biblical status when considering the removals of Indigenous children in the 20th century.

Due to the long period of time, various practises, different jurisdictional areas, imperfect records, and lack of inclusive archives The Bringing Them Home report stated in 1997 that the number of Indigenous children forcibly removed from their families between 1910s to the early 1970s is something “between one in three and one in ten”. The Report emphasised that these high proportions must be read with caution, especially when only seven percent of non-Indigenous children were taken into custody. One of the issues causing wide dispute about the report is the often falsely quoted saying that “at least 100,000” children were removed from their parents. However, this figure is false and base on wrong calculations using the 1994 Aboriginal population of 303,000 as the basis for the report’s maximum estimate of “one in three”.¹⁸¹

An Australian historian Ron Brunton is one of the HREOC inquiry’s critics and in his opinion the report has contributed to a climate where Australian authorities at present are reluctant to remove Indigenous children from even the most destructive family environments. Brunton argues that the

¹⁸¹ Bringing Them Home Report 1997, 31

genocide arguments are ridiculous and depended on the question of motives and rely on tenuous amount of documents.¹⁸² It has been argued that the report omitted or misrepresented crucial evidence, but above all the report made assertions that have been proven factually wrong. Brunton presented that the percentage separated from both parents was five per cent of males and seven per cent of females. These figures included separation due to hospitalization and sentence in prison, and significant proportion of those whose parents were chronic alcoholics. Moreover in Northern Territory in the late 1940s and 1950s the number of part-Aboriginal children far exceeded the Commonwealth's ability to implement a policy of promiscuous removal.¹⁸³

Historian Robert Manne, who was an advocate of the HREOC's inquiry, admits that there were substantial flaws in the 'Bringing Them Home' report. Nevertheless in his opinion these flaws do not diminish the real substance of the report or the reality of the traumatic experiences it documents. Both Robert Manne and Ron Brunton agree that the real number is closer to one in ten, which is attributed to the Bureau of Statistics.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the one in ten figures of removed children between 1901 and 1969, is on the federal level something between 20,000-25,000 separated part-Aboriginal children. No researcher has denied that there was the forced removal of Aboriginal children with no justification whatsoever. However, it is now generally agreed that 'Bringing Them Home' report have been excessive in its estimates. It is necessary to make a difference between the report and the issue. The most acceptable estimation today is 50,000 forcible removed children, as expressed by for example Peter Read.¹⁸⁵

There have been huge disagreements of the true numbers of the removed Aboriginal children. The differences are explained by the imperfections of the records as well as misinterpretation of different interview material. That is to say there research has been done on slightly different topics, which have been understood or used comparable though they are not. Furthermore, there has been some more or less unqualified research about the issue. Brunton claims that New South Wales's own data shows that in the 1950s, a great number of separated children were in fact placed also with Aboriginal families, who did not support the idea of absorption or assimilation of the children.¹⁸⁶ However, Brunton fails to mention whether he is referring only to the removals of mixed descent children or to all Indigenous children taken into custody. He only speaks of them as separated Aboriginal children. Moreover it is unclear were these Aboriginal families where some children

¹⁸² Brunton 2000, 1-2.

¹⁸³ Brunton 2000, 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/stories/s268644.htm>, 27.05.2013.

¹⁸⁵ Read 1999, 26.

¹⁸⁶ Brunton 2000,2.

were placed Westernized, nomadic or something in between and were they relatives or neighbours or total strangers to the children.

The exact number of removed part-Indigenous children is unknown. In many cases, especially of the late 19th and early 20th century removals, no records exist, if any were kept at all. For example there are some very detailed records from 1916-1928 of 800 wards sent into employment, but only a list of 1,500 names without any details from 1936, and no systematic records of Aboriginal children sent into State or religious Homes not specifically designed for Aboriginal children. Furthermore, the number of children with Indigenous descent whom the Boards did not recognise as Aboriginals is unknown, but the number is likely to be more notable after the 1950s. However in the 1950s-1960s the general record situation is better. In addition there is an unknown number of Indigenous children, mixed and full descent, who were removed unofficially with no existing records. This includes the children of whom the Board asked individuals or local church bodies to take in charge. There is also another category of removed children who went on a holiday with white people but did not return.¹⁸⁷

Keith Windschuttle is one of the most known stolen generation critics. In his controversial book 'The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume Three: The Stolen Generations 1881-2008' he argues that the story of the stolen generations is a myth. Windschuttle also thinks that academic historians have exaggerated the degree of racism in Australian history. Robert Manne on the other hand does not see Windschuttle as proffering any real evidence for his views and argues that Windschuttle's book is based on astonishing ideological blindness, especially to racist ways of thinking¹⁸⁸. Manne argues that there are many good examples of decent Australians who have a poor understanding of the nature of racism and who seems 'incapable of seeing the injustice done 'to the Indigenous people in the past. Because to those people racism merely consists of attitudes, beliefs or act that treated Indigenous peoples as inferior and discriminated them accordingly. Manne argues that this kind of perspective ignores the ways in which ostensibly benevolent welfare practises were akin to racism, an argument previously also made by Peter Read.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Read 1981, 10.

¹⁸⁸ Manne 2010, <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2010/january/1354144036/robert-manne/comment>, 20.10.2013.

¹⁸⁹ Manne 2001, 78-79, 92-93.

6. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE REMOVALS

There's nothing more powerful than the personal story. For people to understand, we have to open ourselves up. It's hard to tell our personal stories but we are doing this to educate people. For us to heal as a country these are the stories we need to share. They're sad stories but they're important stories. For me as a Stolen Generations' Survivor, I know you don't get over things. You sometimes don't fully recover. What you do is you adjust and you build your life around the scars and that's what you have to do in order to survive. And many of us have survived. Whatever this resilience is, whatever this stuff is that keeps us going, it is the strength of the Aboriginal spirit that keeps us alive.¹⁹⁰

6.1. Life Before Being Taken

About half of the informants have vivid memories of their lives before being separated from their families. Many of the memories are good ones and tell a story of a happy family life and a sense of belonging, love and security the family unite and the Aboriginal community provided. Not all of the memories, however, are happy ones. Some of them are about parents' misuse of alcohol, imprisonment, prejudice and fear of being taken. Poverty is a constant theme in the stories, but in most cases it has not affected the happy childhood memories. As one of the informants stated, Aboriginal people were and still are the poorest people in the country.

Kennedy Edwards was born in 1944 in Victoria. He had five siblings and the family lived in a mission. His family and other Aboriginal people used to gather at river banks after fruit season was over. Edwards remembers that they had only one bed in the house and there was shortage of food. The meal included two slice of bread dipped in fat and a cup of black tea. The family did not do well while Edwards' father was an alcoholic and unemployed. Eventually his father left and the family's situation improve a little.

Bill Simon's family lived also in a mission. Simon was born in New South Wales in 1951. His parents did not like the regime of the mission and how their everyday life was restricted and controlled. No one was allowed to leave the mission, not even to the town, without permission from the manager. Their rations, tea, sugar etc., were rationed to them, instead of getting the rations themselves. One night the parents took the children and ran away to a little town near the sea. The children loved it there and they used to go to the

¹⁹⁰ Hocking, http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php/about_stolen_generations.html, 26.10.2012.

beach to collect shells and sell them. After a year, Welfare Board located them, so the family moved again to a place called Platt's estate also known as a "sanctuary place" where all people in need could live free of charge. No matter whether one was black or white, people who had run away from their estates, missions or were unemployed lived there together becoming a community. The accommodation was not much, only little tin shacks. According to Simon things were good before the Welfare Board found them. The police and Welfare officers used to sit on top of a cliff nearby and watch the estate and its tenants with binoculars. However, every time the Welfare officers came within the premises of the estate, the holders informed the dwellers beforehand, so the kids had already ran and hide to the bushes.

Greg Ugle was also born on a mission in Western Australia in 1954. Their family had ten children and he was the middle one. The family travelled a lot camping for a few days in different areas and then moving forward. The family had a base in a place called Bencubben outside an Aboriginal reserve. It was a coalition of six young families who lived in huddies and hunted in the area. They stayed there because the men worked in the farms near the area doing seasonal farm work and when the work stopped they moved to another place and to other towns. The siblings attend school in Bencubben. They took dipped kangaroo to school for lunch and exchange it with other children who wanted to taste kangaroo.

Eileen Moseley was born in Northern Territory in 1949 and removed to an orphanage at the age of seven in 1956. Moseley's parents were originally from the western parts of South Australia and came a long way to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory for rations. Moseley was born "on sand hills in a little humpy traditional way". Her parents lived by the traditional lifestyle and the father who raised her was a traditional healer. The men hunted with boomerangs and spears. Moseley used to get tantrums, because she wanted to go hunting kangaroos and rabbits with them. She describes her father as a patient man who understood children. Understandably little kids could not go hunting, because they scared all the animals with their restlessness. Moseley's mother used to dig rabbits and taught her daughter how to dig iguanas, Moseley's favourite dish after honey ants.

Her Aboriginal father and uncle were arrested once and put in an "iron cell" for killing a goat. Moseley's biological father was a railway worker and, according to Moseley, a kind man, who provided food and clothes to them during hard times. However, Moseley pointed out that the men could not say they were the children fathers because they could have been imprisoned for that. Most of the mixed descent children in the community had tribal fathers, who were their mothers' husbands, and most of them treated the kids as their own. Moseley's father did.

Donna Meehan was born New South Wales in 1954. Six years later, in 1960s, she and her brothers and sisters were removed from their home in a traditional Aboriginal community.

It was a happy camp. I remember been sang to sleep. I, my grandparents and aunties, they would have a sing along every night. So music has just always been a part of my life. I played with my cousins every day. We just had a carefree life. And I was probably influenced by the women in the camp, my grandma, my aunties and my mum. A lot of the men were out working, you didn't have a pension or any benefits for those days, so the men would go away and trapping or building fences, breaking in horses. -- So, they would come home maybe after two weeks when they got paid. So, the little camp, just children and women.¹⁹¹

Althol Mourish and Melbourne Hart were both born in Western Australia. Mourish's family lived in a reserve in a big mob of relatives which was like one big family of aunts, uncles and cousins. He has warm and happy memories of the time and remembers many fun games the kids used to play together. Mourish and his cousins set traps, played around by the rivers making slippery slides. He was about ten when the Welfare officers took him and his brothers and sisters. Hart's mother was 14 years old when giving birth to him, so Hart used to live with his grandparents. Their family was poor and had to go for rations. Hart and his cousins used to go to school and tried to keep away from the Welfare Board and the police. Hart used to hide in the bushes every time the Welfare officers came to visit. He remembers vividly one time when a police officer came and shot their dog. Hart believes that the Welfare wanted him and his cousins because they had fair skin.

In general, many of the childhood memories before the removals construct around everyday life. The presence of relatives is central. Majority of the testimonies reflects the social network around the children. Aunts and uncles were as extensions to parents and cousins were the playmates and friends. Almost all informants when they talk about their family they talk also about their aunts and uncles.

6.2. Memories of Being Taken

One day in 1958 a big black car came and Mourish knew the Welfare officer had come to take him away. His younger siblings were fostered to his father's sister. Mourish and his three older siblings were taken to a Wandering Mission. He remembers crying all the way there. To their surprise, there

¹⁹¹ Meehan 2009.

were many other children in the mission from their tribe. To see familiar faces and been with someone one already knew made it a bit easier for Mourish to adapt the place but he strongly felt the situation was not right.

Daniel Forrester was put in a St. Mary's Hostel Home in 1952 at the age of eight. His mother did not have a steady husband at the time and many of her older children had already been taken. At the time, a single parent was not a positive status when considering child removals and in many times it was regarded one of the grounds for neglect. If there were not both parents in the family to take care of the children and a steady employment it was often used as a reason to remove the children. Forrester argues he was put in the St. Mary's Home mainly because all his other siblings were already there. He feels his mother did not give her children away voluntarily but was forced to do so because he remembers that there was always intimidation in the atmosphere regarding the Welfare Board and its officers. His mother tried to prevent the removals but in the end regarding her life situation could not do much. Forrester thinks that eventually his mother just gave up.

Mum just got sick and tired of running and hiding her half-caste kids.¹⁹²

Lester Maher, born in 1954 New South Wales, was removed from his home at the age of four. He returned to his family at seventeen just to realize that he did not belong there anymore. It is impossible to say whether Maher's and his siblings' removal was justified or not, because Maher does not comment it, so the circumstances at Maher's home are not known. He was removed from his family together with his elder brother and sister. He remembers that an elderly white woman came to their house and told them they were going to have a holiday with her. They took the next train and the children did not see their parents until after many years later. It is not clear from the testimony whether Maher's parents were present at that day or were they informed beforehand that their children were been removed. Maher was separated from his siblings. He was first placed in a Cootamundra Girls Home for two years, probably, because the girls' institutions in general could take better care of the smallest children than boys institutions. Eventually, Maher was placed in Kinchela Boys Home when he was 6-year-old.

Bill Simon remembers his removal clearly. The holders of Platt's estate usually warned the tenants, but that time the Welfare officers got in the estate unnoticed. His father had gone to work other side of the hill and Simon's mother was at home alone with the children when the Welfare came and took all four children. Simon remembers very clearly that when they were being taken his mother turned away from the children and step aside from her children regardless of their cries. That was

¹⁹² Forrester 2009.

the first time he felt rejected by his own family and kin. The youngest brother was still a baby, so he was separated from his other siblings who ended up in Kinchela Boys Home. He was reunited with his brothers in the institution some years later.

Donna Meehan and Debra Hocking had it different. They were both adopted to a white family and grew up in a completely non-Indigenous environment. However, they come from different family background. Meehan came from a very traditional Aboriginal community. Meehan was five years of age and knew about her heritage and family whereas Hocking was taken as a baby with a fair skin and brought up with no idea about her Indigenous background.

Meehan's mother had been notified by a letter that her children were to be removed. Some days later she dressed up all her seven children and took them to the train station where the children were put in a train with a white lady with a red hat. The Welfare officer took care of the children from there. Meehan saw her mother and aunts waving to them from the station. She felt scared the first time in her life. They were not told what was happening, why their mother or aunts were not coming with them or where they were going. It was a day and a night journey that the kids travelled by the train. When they arrived in Sydney the next morning Meehan was told to stay in the train while her brothers were taken off. The Welfare lady told her she would see her brothers soon. Then the train took off again and the next thing Meehan knew she was in Newcastle without her brothers and where everyone else was white. That was not the only thing she noticed.

I was sitting there and I was looking at all these shoes. --People wear shoes. We didn't wear shoes in Coonamble. -- And then she [the Welfare officer] came back and she had a tall dark man with her and a shorter white woman and she bent over and said, Donna this is your new mommy and daddy. Go with them and they'll give you something to eat.¹⁹³

Meehan was only five years old, so what could she have done but to go with her new parents. Unlike Meehan, Hocking was first removed and placed in a foster family. Hocking was too young to remember what happened when she was taken in 1961. She was 18 months when she and her other siblings were removed from home. They were illegally separated from each other, because according to her there was already a law to keep siblings together in custody cases. According to the official report, the removals took place on a ground of neglect. Decades later Hocking has shown her case file to a lawyer and no evidence was found that would support such claims. Hocking was put in a foster care. There were several attempts to place her in different

¹⁹³ Meehan 2009.

homes but with no success. Eventually, Hocking was placed in a family who was deemed suitable. The family was respectful, religious and held a high position in the society and already had four children their own.

The court hearings are not present in the testimonies but some remember being taken to the courthouse. Edwards remembers when he and his siblings were taken to a courthouse. The official court order said that Edwards and his siblings were condemned to the care and protection of the Welfare Department, because they did not have means or visible support, while their father had left them and their mother was indebted to provide her six children, her old mother and her sister. Barbara Kickett has a similar story. She was nine years old when she and her siblings were taken by the court order. The siblings were at school when the Head Master came and called them out from the class rooms. Outside the Welfare and police officers were waited and took them to the courthouse where they found both of their parents crying. Their parents were notified they had lost the custody of their children.

We were told we were neglected children, which was so, so wrong. We were school every day, we were clean, spotlessly clean. -- [W]e were very clean and our parents took care of us the best they could under the circumstances.¹⁹⁴

However, not all the removals happened because of poverty or single parenthood. Alcohol and lack of a suitable caretaker were the reasons Greg Ugle and his siblings were removed from home. Ugle's father worked long hours, but at some point both he and Ugle's mother started to drink heavily and the situation escalated. The parents had fights and his father got violent. Ugle's mother got into hospital and his father was arrested. The children were left home along with their 12-year-old elder sister. One day the kids were coming back home from visiting their father in the jail and there were a couple of white Welfare officers waiting them at their home. Their youngest sister had gotten ill and the Welfare officers informed them that the kids could not stay at home alone and were to leave with them. The Welfare had clearly in this case a good reason to take the children into their custody, because there was no adult carer looking after the children. However, before ending up in the Mission Home the Welfare Board acted according to the official procedures and tried to place the children at a relative. They contacted one of the children's aunts and asked if she would take the children. She would have but apparently the Welfare considered that there would be too

¹⁹⁴ Kickett 2009.

many children in the house, because the aunt had also children of her own. Only the youngest of the siblings was placed with their aunt and others were sent in a institution. Surprisingly, the Welfare Board did not contact any other relatives. According to Ugle, he had two other aunts living nearby who would have taken them. These aunts had houses and regular jobs. “But they only contacted auntie Tilia.”¹⁹⁵ There are variable reasons why the Welfare Board did not contact children’s other relatives. It is possible that the aunts lived alone or they were possibly not married so they were not taken into account when deciding the children’s future. They were possibly regarded unsuitable for some reason. It is also possible that they were not, according to Western standards, as closely related to the children, so the Welfare officers never thought to contact them. It could also have been an error. Nevertheless, although the children had relatives they were still placed in a Kurrawang Mission Home.

According to the testimonies some removals were unannounced or spontaneous. However, many children knew there was a possibility they were going to be taken. The fear and hiding from the Welfare officers were indicators of that. The practices varied as do the memories. Some of the children were taken to a court, some were not or they do not recall it. Sometimes they were taken from home, from school but sometimes the kids were plainly abducted. Rita Wright, born in 1953 in New South Wales, was one of them. Her parents came from a mission. They were married and had four children. Wright was taken one day in 1955 when she was playing outside their house with her other sisters and cousins. Her mother was inside and her father was not home. While the kids were playing outside the Welfare officers came, and apparently not noticing their mother inside and just took the 2-year-old Wright and her 4-year-old sister. The Welfare told her cousins to be quiet about what had happened, so that they themselves were not to be taken. When Wrights mother came out looking for her children, she did not find them. Nobody said anything and she thought her children had been killed. Her mother went from door to door and hitchhiked from town to town looking for her daughters.

Moseley’s family tried their best to avoid Welfare authorities. The authorities used a specific route when searching “half-caste” children in the area. However, it was a general practice among the Aboriginals that, when the time came, the children were hide and sent to the hills for a week and returned home when they saw the patrol leave by road. One time Moseley’s family needed to go to a big town, because her father’s eye needed an operation. It was there in the town when a police officer spotted Moseley.

¹⁹⁵ Ugle 2009.

The officers saw me, a little half-caste kid walking with tribal people, through the window. They snatched me from them on the corner, I still remember it vividly. They just grabbed me and took me. -- Mum and dad of course were really upset--. The officers took me across the street to the Welfare office. They made my parents to sign some paper although they [the parents] were illiterate and did not understand what she [the mother] was signing. --They did not know any English.¹⁹⁶

Melbourne Hart was also taken from school but not to a courthouse. The Welfare came to school and offered lollipops to Hart and his sister. They took Hart's sister and grabbed Hart who remember them saying: we got you now. The Welfare went to notify Hart's grandparents that the kids were taken in custody but did not mention where the children were taken nor were to locate them. Hart was in the car fighting one of the Welfare officers who was keeping him hidden. The Welfare officer slapped Hart's face so that his mouth bled. He remembers that day clearly but more so Hart remembers the fear for not seeing his elderly grandparents who had raised and took good care of him ever again. After Hart was taken, his old grandfather had gone looking for them, but it was after two weeks later he found out that the children were put in some Mission Home to be raised there and not coming home any time soon.

You couldn't do anything; you couldn't speak anybody about it. The police was part of the system.¹⁹⁷

6.3. The Reasons for the Removal

Many never got to know the reason for their removal. The official reasons were cleared after decades of uncertainty in the beginning of the 21st century when Australian government started to release the file and granted access to people who were removed as a child to explore their own case files and official documents related to their removal. Until then many questions were unanswered. Nowadays many have got their official case files. Many who were not taken as infants remember their home situation and have, naturally, spoken with their family and relatives later on about the past events, but to some speaking about the removals had been too painful so many questions are still unanswered. However, the general opinion is quite converging.

¹⁹⁶ Moseley 2009.

¹⁹⁷ Hart 2009.

Well the government thinks that we were taken, because we were neglected. That's what it says in my report.¹⁹⁸

That file there, I got that file eight years ago from the Welfare. That's when they started to release the files. They made up all the lies and the police believed them and then the courts believed them. The reasons they gave us, because, they called my mother a whore. In the file, they called her a prostitute. -- [The Welfare officer] thought we were neglected children. All of them are lies. My mother lived with us, us children. -- They ran her down. They had to have a reason to take us in the first place. They called dad a gambler. They moved around, they were nomadic --. There was all seasonal work. Dad had to go looking for the seasonal work and -- he couldn't leave us, so we went with him and stayed there. That's what we did, that's how we lived.¹⁹⁹

All the eleven informants were officially taken on a ground of neglect. There might have been other alternative reasons but neglect was the primary official ground. For example Simon's custody reports claims that he was a neglected child but he himself thinks otherwise. He has studied all his reports and says it is all lies. He had both mother and a father taking care of him.

We lived the best life of my life until I was away. My life turned bad and around and that's why I joined in the underworld. That would have never happened, if I would have stayed with my family.²⁰⁰

Wright's mother was accused to be an alcoholic and unable to take care of the girls who in the official report were recorded to be malnutrition, dirty and full of louse. This was the official reason Wright and her sister was taken. Wright claims the records lie because many have witnessed that she had been in a good condition when she entered the Marella Mission Home. Her mother has told her that Wright's father was an alcoholic and abusive towards her and the children. Her mother reported him to the police who contacted the Welfare Board. The authorities did not inform the mother of their procedures or their decision of removing the children. Wright's aunts have later on told Wright that her mother did not drink before the children were taken, because she had tuberculosis. It was only after she lost her children Wrights mother began drinking. Ugle never understood, why the official thought that they were neglected. They lived the traditional Aboriginal

¹⁹⁸ Simon, 2009.

¹⁹⁹ Ugle, 2009.

²⁰⁰ Simon, 2009.

nomadic way travelling from places but they had parents looking after them, a place to live and they attended school.

Based on everything she has learned from the officials and her family, Hocking argues that the real reason why she and her siblings were taken was a political one. Her white skinned mother wanted to continue her Aboriginal culture but the Welfare forbade it, threaten to take her children, if she did not live by the norm. Hocking's mother tried to please the authorities and fill up the requirements of the Welfare. Hocking's sister has told her their mum was really scared of the Welfare authorities, because they always found something wrong in the house: a box of matches on a wrong place, not enough food in the cabinet, empty beer bottles etc. The Welfare officers did not just come and see if anything was right but they searched the house thoroughly, opening cabinets and searching hidden alcohol.

They actually looked for things to be wrong, wanted things to be wrong... In none of the files says, but the kid are happy.²⁰¹

7. MEANS TO ASSIMILATE THE CHILDREN

7.1. Life at the Missions

We never had the chance to grow up as children.²⁰²

For many children and young the life in Mission Homes, Christian Orphanages or "Half-Caste" Homes was hard and constricted. Although in most of the places children attended school every day, either within the premises or outside the Home, many times, especially in the missions, the focus of the upbringing and teaching was on religion instead of education. Many of the missionaries and nuns who ran the Homes had more will and belief that competence and knowledge of how to deal with children. Of course at the 1950s and 1960s the teaching and upbringing methods were different from what they are today. Many of the Homes were very authoritarian and it had its impact on the children's not just physical but mental and psychological well-being.

Forrester, Mourish, Simon and Hart had similar experiences from different Homes. First they all had to attend church services every day, sometimes several times a day. They had to wake up very

²⁰¹ Hocking, 2009.

²⁰² Ugle, 2009.

early to do chores before breakfast, after which they attended service and then went to school. This was the usual day rhythm in the Homes. They were not allowed to speak their own language nor interaction with their family too much. Forrester regards that during the nine years he spent in the Home there was not much happiness. The children were to rise with the sunrise, get dressed and made their beds. The older boys had chores to sweep the dormitories, clean the bathroom and the toilet and every morning eight year old Forrester had to go getting the water for the boiler. Before breakfast they attended church service. Before school they had to change their school clothes, keep them tidy and watch not to smutch them, so the children could not play or do anything while wearing them. After school, they changed again and waited for supper and after which they attended church service. As the kids grew up, Forrester tells, they accepted the way things were and waited the time they could leave the place. Wright has similar experience on the Mission Home she was in. The children worked every day in the farm belonging to the mission many times working the whole day picking plums, taking care of the farm animals, milking the cows, making cream etc. Wright compares the work they did to slavery. Although the kids went to school, in Wrights opinion they were not taught anything important but to learn verses from the Bible by heart and sing hymns. The main focus was in domestic work and religious upbringing. As Wright puts it, they did learn to clean but did not get education as such. Hart argues that the children in the Wandering Mission were treated like solders.

Kickett grew up in an Aboriginal Mission in Western Australia, in a one of the most beautiful places she has ever been, she says. However, she could not enjoy it and felt constant anxiety because she rejected the idea of being separated from her parents, and not been able to be at home. She and her sibilings were put in different dormitories and the only time they met each other were at meal times. Maher never felt at home in the Boys Home either and never consider it to be one. It was an institution with “friendly kind of relationships”, as he puts it. There was no love or affection from the adults, who ran the place. He does not have memories of how they celebrated Christmas or Easter or any happy day for that matter. In his opinion, they lived in a prison like environment and were treated as prisoners. It was the kids who took care of everything in the Home. According to Maher the kids did adults' work: everything from cleaning to cultivating the farm.

Without no exceptions, life in the Homes was very different and, in many cases, more suppressive compared with their previous one. During the first year in the mission, Ugle and his sibilings endured a lot of anger and resentment as well as many new rules; a great number of things that they never experienced in their previous life. All the new things they faced were not bad but strange and unnerving such as being cooked for, being told when to eat, when to get up, when to sleep and not

have the opportunity to impact things concerning you. Ugle and his siblings did not adapt very well in the mission. They spent a great deal of time sulking and missing their own home. They might have run away if they would have known where their home was. As far as they knew, home was over a day's drive from there.

The missionaries they raised us, they never knew us. They never understood us. We were, we were children who needed saving. -- I didn't understand why I needed to be saved or go to church with singing at the church at the anniversary days and the congregations, sit there in Sunday School, we listening to their teachings and respected their God and the way they taught Christianity to us. But they never knew us. We were a people, we were children of a land we didn't have any access to. That government policy said that, because -- you're a neglected child, you're gonna live in a mission and... and grow up to be like us, a good person.²⁰³

Sometimes the kids from the institution went to the local private school. The children in Kinchela Boys Home for instance attended school at the town. Maher describes this opportunity to leave the premises at daily bases as very important mental and physical relief as well as freedom from the institution. "For me, schooldays were good. You got away from the place. But when you're going back it's like going back to prison, which it was."²⁰⁴

Assimilation did not just happen by teaching the children Western customs and culture. Many times it required lying and whitewash. Hart was told his mother did not want him and that is why he was in the Home. As for Simon and other kids in their Home were exposed to a heavy propaganda and brainwashing from the personnel. Boys were told Aboriginal people were no good and that their parents did not want them nor cared for them. Hocking was also thought to believe her family was not good by her foster parents and by the Welfare. Hart remembers getting a following answer one time when he asked where his mother was:

She does not love you, that's why she put you here. They don't want you, that's why you're here.²⁰⁵

In the Homes, the kids were targets of heavy propaganda. When the children asked about their parents, they were told they were not wanted or that their parents had left them in the Home,

²⁰³ Ugle 2009.

²⁰⁴ Maher 2009.

²⁰⁵ Hart 2009.

because they were Aboriginal and “no good”. Eventually many started to believe that was true, including nine-year old Simon. When the children did not hear anything about their parents they felt rejected and angry, which made them believe their parents had not wanted them. It was another one thing to alienate the children from their parent but alienating them from their Aboriginality and background another. The children had to act according to Western customs and all connections to the Aboriginal community were to be cut if possible. This meant that the children were not to interact with other Aboriginal people if necessary. The children were made to forget their own native languages and become prejudice of Aboriginal people.

In the Homes, speaking in any other languages except English was forbidden. Forrester got his mouth washed twice for speaking his native language to other Aboriginal people in the town. He was told not to be a savage. However, contradictory to others experience, Moseley had it little different when regarding using one’s own native language. Moseley was able to meet her parents regularly and to talk with them. Nevertheless, Moseley recalls only one time she was permitted to use her own language in the orphanage. She had got measles and somehow her father sensed that everything was no right with her, so he came in the dormitory and threaten the manager with his spear. It was the only time when the manager wanted Moseley to interpret and to talk her own language to calm her father who did not know English. However, not been able to use one’s own languages, has left deep marks on some of the members of stolen generations.

Our family was the bearer of the language, you know, carrier of the culture and the language and to take that away from us was like cutting out our hearts and throwing that away.²⁰⁶

However, not all experiences from the institutions were bad. There are also some good memories and experiences about the Homes. For example, in the Orphanage where Edwards grew up the children get along well and the general atmosphere was not negative according to him. At least he does not recall any fights and he says that the children and young never raised a hand against each other in the orphanage, unlike the matrons who were not afraid to punish the children.

Usually, the homes provided necessities many children did not have before coming there. One of the most memorable things was one's own bed with clean good smelling sheets and three meals a day. Edwards enjoyed his time in the orphanage very much and had four very close friends there. When he became off age it was very hard for him to leave. He understands that to some such places were nightmares but not for him. He says he spent the best four years of his life in the orphanage

²⁰⁶ Kickett 2009.

although Edwards did not receive good reports from the officers. It could have been because he resembled his roommate who stole things so Edwards had constantly been blamed for something he had not done.

Moseley, being kidnapped from the middle of the street, was understandably very scared at first when she was brought at the orphanage. She had not been separated from her parents before. She remembers crying all the time, like most kids did in the orphanage, but Moseley recalls that eventually the kids adapted rather well. Although the children came from different tribes and did not have a common language they became a unite and relied on each other. The orphanage was a completely new world and with a new culture. Moseley still remembers the smell of the sheets, sleeping in a bed and using a toothbrush the first time in her life. Others helped and translated what need to be done when needed. She was taught how to use a knife and a fork, how to eat, go to school, to wear clothes properly. Although the nuns who ran the orphanage were nice, the kids felt more connected with the laundry ladies who were Aboriginal women.

Although the regime might have been strict, the children found their ways to play and be free by bending or breaking the rules. Forrester remembers that the boys used to sneak out to the town's rubbish tip and found materials from which they made toy cars and another toys from empty bottles. They also used to go hunting birds with sling shots. Once someone had stolen a candle and the kids put a sheet in front of it and made shadow movies.

Moseley was one of the lucky ones in the St. Mary's Orphanage. Her parents left their tribal lands and moved to the creek in an Aboriginal settlement nearby the orphanage to be near their daughter. Her father was a traditional healer and healed people in the area, walking around carrying a boomerang and a spear with him, so the people used to stare at him. Surprisingly at one stage the captain who managed the orphanage allowed Moseley's parents to set up their little humpy in the premises and stay for some time. It was a big surprise to see Moseley's traditional tribal parents living in the middle of the white settlement and not been forced to leave. Still, her parents get well along with the captain although they did not have a common language.

Wonder they let them stay. Normally they tried to take Aboriginal out of us, as we were not allowed to speak the language.²⁰⁷

Nevertheless, this is partly why Moseley has still such a strong Aboriginal ties and she knows her language, because her parents were around all the time during her childhood although she was not

²⁰⁷ Moseley 2009.

allowed to live with them. Moseley remembers that the other kids in the orphanage did not see their parents in a very long time and treated her parents as their own.

Although Simon's family knew where the children had been taken to, they were not allowed to visit them. The children thought their parents had abandoned them and felt rejected. Only his grandmother was allowed to visit them a few times. Hart was sent to a Wandering Mission. To his surprise Hart's first cousin had also been taken and located in the same mission. It was fortunate for them because now they at least had each other. Maher and his siblings lost also at first all contact to their parents and relatives when they were institutionalized. However, Maher's relatives located the siblings some years later when Maher was at his teens. After some time the relatives were also allowed to visit the children. His aunt and grandmother even tried to get the children away from the Home but with no luck. Wright's family was also trying to find her and her sister. Her grandmother had even phoned one time at the Mission where Wright and her sister were asking about them, but was not given any answer. Forrester's mother was also allowed to visit. He remembers meeting his mum three times while in the orphanage. He was lucky, because he had his siblings were placed together in the same place and they knew who their mother was and were able to meet her few times.

One thing that many of the informants recall from the Homes was bad food. Wright remembers that the children in the Mission used to be hungry all the time. The food in the Mission was poor and inadequate. It was smashed like a baby's food and they had to eat that every day. In response the kids used to take oranges from the orange trees outside. Holidays were spent in other families. There the children were given good food and they received new toys and clothes but that were taken away from them when they came back to the Mission after the holidays and never saw those clothes or toys again.

7.2. The Punishments & Abuse

The discipline and corporal punishment were very familiar in all the Homes the testimonies tell about. For example Kickett got herself into trouble by been too accurate. One day, when she already done her daily chores, she was hymning a song when a teacher came in the room demanding to know who was singing. No one dared to reply. Finally, the teacher pointed at Kickett and ordered her to stand up. Kickett defended herself saying that she had not sung but had only hymned.

He got so angry that he came and beat the living out me. My legs, blue, black and purple. I stood there and never added a sound when he was beating me. Then when he finished I just grabbed my staff off the desk, walk out the class room and he was screaming me to come back. I turned around and looked him right in the eye and said, no I won't, and kept walking. -- I was told to go to the Superintendent's office. So when I got up there. I got six cuts, three there [on the right arm], three there [on the left arm] with a thing long cane²⁰⁸

Other informants have similar stories, some even more brutal. According to Maher, in the Kinchela Boys Home, the children were punished when they did not do as they were told. Especially men informants tell that if they said anything back to the staff, they were flogged and beaten. Simon says the boys carried lots of hate inside and that erupted as violence and aggressive behaviour, especially amongst the boys.

We were beaten, flogged and molested but we couldn't tell anybody, because nobody was allowed to visit us in the Homes. So, we were just little kids who were flogged, beaten, send up the line, everyone had to hit you, about hundred guys had to hit you. If you'd done anything wrong, one of the worst, main offences was to speak back to the white staff. If you done that you were sent up the line and you'd get a beating. By the time you got to the end of the line there'd be blood everywhere.²⁰⁹

This kind of collective beating where other children are put to beat one of them for punishment does not appear in other testimonies, not directly anyway. It is probable that it was not a common practice in all Homes but more likely in few specific institutions, such as Kinchela Boys Home. There was a lot of frustration at the St. Mary's Orphanage Home where Forrester lived. He says it is hard to explain it but there was hardly any contentment until the children were old enough to defend themselves. However, for the younger children the environment of the Home was unfriendly and hard. For example, children aged five to nine, were forced to take cold showers in cold winter mornings while there was no heating. In the Kinchela Boys Home the boys were given personal numbers and called by that number instead of their names. For eight years Simon was known as a number 33.

Two of the informants have told that they had witnessed rape in the institutions. At least in one of the Homes there was a wide spread sexual exploitation of the children by male staff members. The

²⁰⁸ Kickett 2009.

²⁰⁹ Simon 2009.

children were scared to talk about it to any one because one was usually punished for speaking against the white staff. It was more than fifty years later in a reunion that they discussed their experiences openly for a first time and found out how vast scaled the sexual abuse had been. Although the children often had to endure harsh treatment from the staff the missionaries or personnel were not always the ones making life in the institutions hard. In some cases it was the other children that caused fear and oppression and made the life in the Homes even worst. In the meantime, the adults were often blind to what happened between the children and the young. In short you had to adapt and do as you were told.

The boys raped the girls in these missions, and unfortunately we had to witness this -- and the abuse. The boys. And the missionaries were blind. They had their rules and regulations and they never know our rules and regulations. Like the boys had for us and for us to exist there.²¹⁰

Some of the children at the Homes tried to ran away. Mourish was one of them who tried to run away few times. He tells that after they had been caught the runaways were stripped naked and ordered to stand in the corner. The Mission tried to foster him in couple times but with no luck. In Kinchela Boys Home one form of punishment was to lock the child in a store room with a little toilet and keep him there for a few days with dread and water. Simon tells that the children were very scared and therefore many of the older boys tried to escape. So did also Maher's elder brother and succeeded. In 1967, Maher himself tried to run away from the Boys Home but was caught and spent the night in the police cell. He had tried to run away following a train track but was caught by a police. He was 13 years old.

I spent night in the sell. Came to see lock up. The next day they [people from the Boys Home] came to get me and that's when I got a bit of flog. The back shit I got from the manager. Lol of the boys got splashed by that manager. He was a cruel man. Him got the biggest flog of me life. Striped me naked. Flogged me. I was in bed for a week. Bruises all over my body --. from hill to toe. From six foot cane.²¹¹

When Maher was released from his room where he had been locked up after the flogging, he ran away again. This time he got to his aunt's, who had been able to visit him regularly in the Boys Home. He showed the bruises and cuts to his aunt who took the case to court. They won the case

²¹⁰ Ugle 2009.

²¹¹ Maher 2009.

and the manager who had flogged him lost his job. Maher never had to go back to Kinchela Boys Home again.

The boys in the mission... there was a about thirty or forty boys. And to this day 94 percent are dead. That's what the mission did to these boys and the girls.²¹²

7.3. Foster Care & Adoption

For Donna Meehan the removal meant that she went from a very extended family to a nuclear family of three members overnight. Her adoption family had no other children or family members. Although her foster parents were very kind and supporting, Meehan missed her old life and family desperately. She used to imagine her toys were her brothers and cousins and named them after them. She also missed the singing. Her life had changed culturally and socially. She was not used to men and she was at first scared at her father. "So it took me a couple of months to adjust to him. I used to run and hid when he came back from work."²¹³

Meehan grew up in different white Australian suburbs. She was the only Aboriginal child in middle schools and had to get used to the name calling and teasing she got because of her Aboriginality. Meehan thought it would be easier if her brothers were there and stick up for her. She did not see or have contacts with other Aboriginal people until high school where two other Aboriginal girls were studying, but for some reason they did not become friends. At that time, they did not have any Aboriginal studies in schools like they do in Australia today. Nevertheless, her foster parents who were new Australians tried to support their daughter and encourage her to be proud of her Aboriginality. Although Meehan's foster parents were very supporting and loving she still felt very lonely and empty inside. She felt the absence of an extended family really oppressive. Meehan was ten years old when she started to get angry with her biological parents, not understanding why they not came to get her away.

I had a lot of anger in me. By the time I was thirteen I was in denial. I wouldn't say I was an Aboriginal because I knew the evil comments that children would make. I didn't see another Aboriginal person in Newcastle until the Jimmy Little brought out his record Royal

²¹² Ugle 2009.

²¹³ Meehan 2009.

Telephone. I was looking at him and he looked like my uncles and that was the first time I saw another Aboriginal person since I left Coonamble.²¹⁴

Debra Hocking grew up in a foster home knowing nothing about her Aboriginal background. She knew the family she lived with was not her real family and wanted desperately to get a contact with her own parents. Hocking had to call her foster parents aunt and uncle, not mum and dad. At school she was teased and called the “gutter child”. Her childhood with the family was not a happy one. She was sexually abused by the foster “father” from her early childhood onwards.

You know they go on church on Sunday and rape you on Monday, and the Welfare came to asked you, are you happy, of course you had to say you’re happy.²¹⁵

The Welfare did checkups on the family and talk with Hocking but the visits were always arranged beforehand. If Hocking did not say she was happy with the family, she would get flogged, which happened often according to her. “It was a ghastly foster home and I desperately wanted my mum.²¹⁶” She spent 15 years in the foster home, as she says, desperately unhappy and abused. It was a deliberate separation, which meant that she was not allowed to have any contact with her original family although her mother tried continuously to get her children back. Hocking pictures the separation as stripping ones identity. As an adult and looking back her own file Hocking says there are indications of abuse and suggestions of inter family relations, but the officers still left her there and did nothing.

When Hocking turned 15 the Welfare officer told her to sign her own adoptions certificate. At the age of 15, she was not a ward of the state no more, so on Welfare’s opinion because she was still under aged she had to be adopted to her foster family. First Hocking refused to tie herself to the family, but the Welfare pointed out, she did not have many other options. When she asked about her other family, the Welfare told her, they did not want her back. So, she signed her own adoption papers and has regretted it ever since.

Also many of those who lived in “Half-Caste” Homes were tried to be placed in a foster care at some point. The Mission Homes tried to foster the children but it was many times as likely that the kids were returned to the Mission. Mourish was also tried to foster in couple families before his teens, but he did not like either of them, so he was returned to the Mission. When Moseley turned

²¹⁴ Meehan 2009.

²¹⁵ Hocking 2009.

²¹⁶ Hocking 2009.

14 she was also fostered in white foster families. First foster family could not handle her, so Moseley was fostered in another family from whom she got a good home. The family treated her as one of their own. The orphanage where Moseley had grown up had taken care of children but they had never received any affection or learned to talk and express their emotions. From her foster parents she learned “a whole new range of emotions and how to survive in another culture²¹⁷”, and lots of art and music.

8. IMPACTS OF THE REMOVAL

8.1. Where to Belong?

After the institution period and forced separation, the kids usually wanted to go back home and find their parents and family. In many cases that was not so simple. For many, the trouble was that they did not know where the home was and where to go or even where to begin the search. Besides, not all people who had been taken had the chance to reunite with their families. For some it was too late. Some at the other hand did find their way home just to realize it was too late to get back to the life they had once had.

Depending on the year and the state legislation the young were usually released from the Homes after their ceased being wards at 15 or 17. When Hart was old enough to leave the Mission he was given options: because his grades were sufficient he could seek in a senior high school or get an apprenticeship and find work in two other towns. He chose work in the same town where his cousin was. Hart stayed at a local “Half-Cast” Hostel but it was not long when he had to leave because he had serious disagreements with the manager who eventually threatened him with a knife. He and his cousin ran away from the Hostel but because they were still under aged the police caught them. At the police station, the Welfare officer asked them whether the boys wanted to go back to the Hostel or go home to their families. Hart decided to go home.

When Forrester turned 15 the situation at the Home had escalated to the point where he could not endure it anymore. He was allowed to leave after he had threatened to kill someone if he was forced to stay any longer. Forrester went to see his mother, but because of the treatment he had endured at the Home he could not stand other people near him and did not let anyone to touch him,

²¹⁷ Moseley 2009.

not even to put a hand on his shoulder in a friendly gesture. He lost his temper quickly and fought back quickly. It has taken him 50 years to grow out such manners. That was one of the reasons he did not stay long in his mother's home. His step-father knew something was wrong and asked him about it but Forrester could not open up about his experiences. Forrester's step-father was a cattle station manager and he told Forrester to stay and work six months in the station so he could learn cattle work. He did and after that he went droving²¹⁸ around the Northern Territory. It was a hard work but he loved it and was good at it. When droving he felt he was part of Australian history and it gave him more self-esteem and made him feel good about himself. Forrester spent 25 years doing cattle work in different parts of Australia. He also got married and had children and grandchildren.

In 17, two years after her adoption, Hocking ran away from her abusive foster family and lived on the streets. There had been some attempts to replace Hocking back in her original family but eventually the attempts had abated because the foster home had vividly opposite it. The family did not look for her when Hocking ran away. At the age of 20, Hocking got through high school although she still lived on the streets. After that, she applied and got a job from a bank. She felt very proud of herself because she had done it all by herself with no help. Later on she has gained some academic qualifications studying Aboriginal health care and being a union active as well as working for Link Up organization, helping separated people to find their relatives.

Hart remembers well the first time he went back home because everybody was drunk. Although people were genuinely happy to see him, he wondered where he had got himself into. It was a major culture shock: he was raised as Christian in very sanitary and strict environment and did not know Aboriginal customs. He tried to grow custom to the way his family lived their life but it was not easy. Nevertheless, after returning home Hart got to know many of his younger step-sisters and -brothers who lived with his mother nearby. Also Hart's sister, who had being taken at the same time as Hart and brought up in the same Mission, came home eventually. Hart had promised to his sister that he would always be there for her and would never leave her in the institution alone. For a long time he felt guilty for leaving his sister in the Mission although he had promised to be there for her. He still feels remorse about it and thinks his sister has not completely forgiven him for leaving her in the Mission.

²¹⁸ Droving means to drive the cattle from the property to the market place for sale.

Because of the lifestyle in the Boys Dent -- [and the] white men's way of living, that's all we knew. So, when we went back to our families, to the Aboriginal way of life, it was a big culture shock to us. -- We didn't know how to react to that. You know, the drinking and... the house was dirty and all sorts of stuff --. And we didn't know how to interact around people. So that's one of the big things that struck me severally when I left The Boy's Home. I didn't know how to react among them and mix in. And even today -- we are still different.²¹⁹

Ugle had similar experiences. He was released from the mission at the age of 17. He immediately started to locate for his parents. When he came back home they family went back to "caravan things", the tribal way of life.

It is very hard to go back to those places because, you know, I'm not welcome in both. Cos Ganguli is a one guy's country, that's them. Their lands and their stories. My story is down this way, and he say, prove who you are. Who's your family, what's your family history? So we've got a ...I still got to prove my own *unga* people who I am.²²⁰

Although his family was very happy to have him back, he did not feel completely at home, so he stayed for a year and moved on. "There was always, this is not my home. - - When they sent us away they... ahh... sent us back to nothing. Back here was nothing."²²¹ Ugle did not cut his ties to his family or their customs entirely. However, it was not until he was a grandfather Ugle finally began to understand his Aboriginality. He has tried to teach his language to his child and grandchild but he is not very fluent. He knows a few local Aboriginal languages and speaks another tribe's language more fluently than his own, which saddens him

Donna Meehan got married when she was 18 years old. Her husband loved Aboriginal people. It never occurred to her to marry another Aboriginal person, because she simply did not know any. Nevertheless it was not long before Meehan's life became more contradictory. The anger which had started to grow when she was ten years old grew bigger and the emptiness inside her got deeper.

My husband could see the anger in me. I never showed it visibly but he knew that there were something missing. It brought me to a point I wanted suicide. In the morning when I wanted

²¹⁹ Maher 2009.

²²⁰ Ugle 2009.

²²¹ Ugle 2009.

to go through that I just felt so lonely and empty. And even though I had a husband and a baby I just... there were always something missing. And it felt like I had lived my whole life sitting on a fence looking at the white society and I knew I didn't belong. And I just sort of lived on my own bubble, my own world -- ... my life was just...I guess it's just a fog.²²²

She was 27 when by a strange coincidence she finally located her birth mother. One day she attended a women's meeting and started a conversation with another Aboriginal woman. It turned out that the woman knew her birth mother and gave her the contact information. Although Meehan's family had tried to find her, they did not know what had happened to her. The Welfare had told Meehan's mother that she had been sent to New-Zealand and so she stopped looking, convinced that she would never have her daughter back.

“When I asked her, why she gave me away, she just weld up with in tears and said, I don't know why they took you away. But she said that... that day at the train station, she lost seven children, life or not. And many times she wanted to suicide, but grandfather said, no you have to be here when the children come home. He said you known our *mari* spirit and we'll call the children back home and that you have to be here. So a happy little camp just became a real sad little camp and the singing stopped and ahh... they started drinking, as you do when your hear is breaking.”²²³

The removals had also drive Meehan, her mother and also her grandfather to a situation they had all consider suicide. It is only a small indication what kinds of effects the removals of children away from their families had on many people's lives. Drinking was a common factor and a problem also in other families, sometimes before but especially after the removals. Many parents started to drink after their children had been taken from them. It was also hard to continue to live normally when suddenly your children had been snatched away. Kickett describes how the siblings' removal affected her parents:

As it for my father -- he always had problems, all his life, after his children were taken away. -- He used to take off, leave mum and go walkabout, you know. Because, if he stayed home for too long...he'd keep remembering all the stuff. He didn't want that and because he used to drink a bit. Mum, she loved our dad until the day she died, you know. -- He was ... a very, very strong man but when he saw his kids taken away, he just became very vulnerable and

²²² Meehan 2009.

²²³ Meehan2009.

used to drink a bit, because of the pain. Dinking would stop the pain. So even I, as a kid, I understood -- that's what he had to do to stop his pain. But-- mum never ever drink, you know. Never drink in her life. And her pain would have been awesome because she was there 24/7 with us, you know.²²⁴

Afterwards Kickett never talked about being removed from her parents. She says she could not imagine the pain her parents had to go through and she would not bring it up again. Her own pain was bad enough. It took decades from Kickett to ever speak about her past. She did not even tell about it to her husband and children until lately.

I never told my kids about it. It was just too painful and I didn't want my kids to feel my pain. I, as long as I live, I'll never ever forget. Every time... I cry when I talk about it. Cos the pain will never go away. I took council myself -- but I still can't take the pain away. It's just that unbelievable pain that will never go away.²²⁵

8.2. On a Bad Track

Edwards had run way from the "Half-Caste" Hostel and had been caught by the police. He ended up in a Young Offenders Home. He had done some minor juvenile crimes: smashed cars, been involved in break-ins and theft. The life in the Young Offenders Home was not easy. However, it was there Edwards learned how to steal a car, organize and execute a robbery and do "this and that". One day Edwards and some of the boys tried to escape the institution but they were caught. Edwards was locked up for 24 hours in a room with no light. All this happened when he was barely 16. "They had complete control over me because I was a ward of the state."²²⁶

After The Young Offenders Home, 17 year old Edwards was able to reunite with his mother and grandmother. After that, he admits making lots of bad decisions but at least they were his own. He used drugs 25 years, started drinking at 19 and finish drinking at 30. If he had got the choice, he says, he would never have left the Orphanage.

²²⁴ Kickett 2009.

²²⁵ Kickett 2009.

²²⁶ Edwards 2009.

Simon was also 17 when he left the Boys Home. Although some of the white's propaganda about Aboriginal people had change the way how he thought about his family, Simon decided to look for them even though he had lost all contact with them. He did it because there was no one else to turn to. He found many of his relatives: uncles, cousins and his mother. The distance between them was, however, too great to create a warm mother-son relationship after so many years of being apart. Although there was much of past hurt they stayed in friendly terms, however, Simon could not consider her as a mother. It was only years later he began to understand how an enormous impact his removal had also had on her life.

After the reunion with his family, Simon went to have a drink with his uncles for first time in his life. They drank spirits mixed with methanol because it was cheap. Simon started to drink and when drunk he got in to fights. He liked to fight because while drunk he could not feel anything and that is why he drank more. At 18 Simon was imprisoned for five years.

It was hard and rough out there as well but [in the prison] it was just like the Boys Home, so it really did not worry me, because I really felt that I was home again. In the jail, it was the same thing as in the Boys Home. We were given numbers and have a guess what number they gave me --. You never guess. The same [as in the Boys Home]... 33.²²⁷

In the prison, Simon talked with many of the inmates who had been removed from their families and experienced the similar things he had. Hearing the stories of others changed his life. However, after he was released from the prison Simon got involved with a gang, to whom he felt he could relate to, fit in and be accepted. The common factor of the gang was the feeling of rejection. So, Simon became accustomed to the underworld. They sold drugs, terrorized the neighborhood and had fights. Eventually, Simon was caught and got 25 years prison sentence. At this point he blamed his own people and family for everything because they did not want him and had not come for him when he was a child.

Simon explains that, no matter how much one would like to manage the outside world when one is released from prison, the outside community is not prepared to receive and back up a person who has been imprisoned for a long time and become institutionalized. Outside one has to be active, look for a job, keep the job, manage the daily life, restrict one self, but in the prison everything is done ready for you and one just have to follow the orders given from above. That is also what happened to the children in the Homes and Mission. Simon has experienced both. This is also why many prisoners end up back in the prison not long after their release, because “[t]hey don’t know anything

²²⁷ Simon 2009.

about the world once they got out.²²⁸ In fact many of the prisoners do not want to get out, because they do not know where to go or what to do after they are released. That is not taught in the prison.

Being removed and the restlessness that followed have also impacted Simon's relationships. He has had five wives and three of them needed hospitalization because of his violent behavior and anger management issues. Things started to change in his life after he found faith. Simon started to heal inside and was finally able to forgive everyone. He believes that it would not have been possible without God's presence in his life. Now Simon works as a reverend.

By removing six generations of Aboriginal people with mixed heritage through the system also have its effects on the children today. Hart thinks that that is why many Aboriginal children are getting themselves in trouble too because the life the parents and grandparents had has also affected their children's lives. Especially the alcohol and drug problems have, in Harts opinion, roots in the past events. People think that no one will listen to them and they will stay that way for the rest of their lives.²²⁹

8.3. Finding Mum – Reclaiming Identity

Wright found her mother by accident. Her mother was extremely happy to see her and introduced her to all her friends and relatives many of which had not known she ever got any children. Wright developed a warm relationship with her mother and since then she had felt herself wanted and really cared for, but it is still hard for her to call her mother 'mum'. Wright's mother started to drink after her daughters disappeared. She was able to stop drinking after she joined the Salvation Army. Things happened differently when Maher met his mother and father for the first time after being taken away. Any of them did not know how to react or respond to one another. The bond just was not there.

You never had that mother-son relationship at all. So, it was quite nub really. And there was no response. You know, from her, because suppose she didn't know how to react really either. Same is with my father. I didn't have that relationship too. And when my brother and I started to build relationship whit my mum, she died. So... here we go again.²³⁰

²²⁸ Simon 2009.

²²⁹ Hart 2009.

²³⁰ Maher 2009.

In her twenties Hocking got a terrible urge to find her mother. She did not have any information about her family, not even a name, so it took two years from her to locate her mother. Eventually, she got an idea. She went to the same authority who had taken her in the first place. She asked to see her own files. The officer said they could not help her because the documents were regarded as privilege government information and could not be given to anybody, not even the litigant themselves. After this, Hocking decided to arrange a sitting protest in the office. For two weeks she sat in the Welfare office until finally a man came to her and told her to follow him. She was taken in a file room where she saw her own file on the table. She was given 30 minutes to read her files and make notes. She found out the names of her family members and the contact information. Her mother lived five minutes away from where she was.

She had been told in the foster home that her family was no good and that her mother did not want her. However, she decided to meet her mother. Her mother had known Hocking would finally come back some day as did the rest of the siblings. The first meeting was very emotional but neither wanted to rush things so they decided to take things slow. A week later Hocking's mother died. Hocking was very sad about her mother's death but she is happy that they had a chance to meet before she died. She also felt very privileged that she could be there at the hospital when she died.

It was only after her mother's death Hocking heard about her Aboriginal background. Then she spent 20 years to learn about her heritage and culture, which was not easy, but she did it because to her it was reclaiming her identity, not something new but something that had always been there just needed to be reclaimed. Nowadays Hocking identifies herself as an Aboriginal. She knows where she fits and belongs to but to some people it has been hard to accept her because she is fair skinned Aboriginal while the concept of dark skin is very strict. Hocking knows many very dark skinned Aboriginals who do not care about their Aboriginality or heritage. Hocking has four children who all identify themselves as Aboriginal. The process was not easy for them either. "You have to be very strong if you are going to stand up and say who you are."²³¹

Hocking argues strongly that the purpose of removing children was mainly a matter of colour; to get the fair ones into the mainstream society because they had better changes to blend in. However, as she puts it, it might take four generations to "take out the colour", but there is 40,000 years of inherited culture and customs, which will not be as easy to erase. "Never mind your skin colour, your culture is deeper than that."²³² She claims that although the politicians thought about skin

²³¹ Hocking 2009.

²³² Hocking, 2009.

colour they made a huge miscalculation for not thinking about Aboriginal spirituality. According to her Aboriginal spirituality might bend but not break. Many of those people with Aboriginal heritage who were separated from their families are still talking and embracing Aboriginal spirituality today.

Moseley went back to her Aboriginal parents as a young adult after she had lived some years in a foster family. She relearned her language but never relearned the dance, songs or the stories. Her parents died 20 years later. She is fluent with her native language and it has been helpful in her work in the hospital. “My language has got me a long way in communicating with my own people. I was actually one of the lucky ones to be able to re-learn my language.”²³³ There were not that many removed children with Aboriginal heritage that could have kept their language. As adults they might have got the opportunity if they knew their tribe and were ready relearning. However, Moseley points out that many were too traumatized or had mental blocks to remember some basics of their native language.

Many brother and sisters can't remember the day they went in, but I do, vividly. Some don't remember events or names of the people looking after them. They had blocked that out.²³⁴

8.4. Feelings of Being Taken

The government believed it was the best thing but it wasn't.²³⁵

The uppermost feelings towards the force removals are the fundamental sense of loss and that they were wrong and in the end did more harm than good. Among the informants there is lots of anger for been taken away from their families and confusion because they still do not fully understand why they were taken.

I was so hurt and broken. I had much aggression.²³⁶

The contradiction between the reality and the official reports is sometimes big. Maher wonders how anyone can claim that it was for their own good when they were being separated from their families and in majority of cases the most traumatic way, then brought up in institutions and taught to disregard their own people and taught to be like whites when they were not. The anger also

²³³ Moseley 2009.

²³⁴ Moseley 2009.

²³⁵ Simon 2009.

²³⁶ Simon, 2009.

comes from the knowledge that there is no one to blame anymore and no way to get back what was once lost. Those people who decided and signed their removals are dead.

And they are buried in my land. That's why I got the last laugh because they are laying in my dirt that I walk on, that my grandfathers and grandmothers walked on. That's our land.²³⁷

When we were taken as kids, we were scared for life by being ripped away from our parents and loved ones. There is no way we can heal. – I feel so bad and I couldn't trust anybody, I didn't know anybody. I lost everything. I lost my family, I lost my culture, my Aboriginal language.²³⁸

However, despite everything there are also some positive or at least less negative aspects about the removals. When asked Forrester for example appreciates for instance the education he got from the Home, which he would not have got other ways. It has made it easier for him to mix in the "white man's world" and to go better places' and know his manners. Regardless, the education and English the kids had to speak, Forrester still knows both his parents' languages. He used to talk them aloud to himself not to forget. Edwards, on the other hand, did not suffer in the Orphanage as some other children did, but enjoyed it, so he does not feel as bad about the separation as others. He also appreciates the little education he got while at the orphanage. He never thought about his mother or brother until later. His experiences differ greatly from his brothers. He says he never went through any trauma like his brother and mother did. He has only started to think about their experiences later in his fifties. Nevertheless, in his opinion things would have been better for his family when he was little, if his mother would have been able to access more support and welfare benefits. Their lives would have been different. The kids might have been able to stay and life might have turned out better. His brother has blocked away the days in the orphanage and do not remember how the events really went. In his fifties Edward's brother still believed that their parents had dropped the kids at the orphanage and just left them there.

Over time we heal but I get there. But when you tell your story...it's traumatizing and it is heart breaking to hear stories of other members of stolen generation. Although we can say we have get on in this world but your heart still hurts.²³⁹

²³⁷ Ugle 2009.

²³⁸ Simon 2009.

²³⁹ Moseley 2009.

They tried to make us white folks. That was actually what they did. They told us that we weren't black, that we were white and that we were not to mix up with any Aboriginals, any Aboriginal kids at school, you were to keep to yourself. Taking that away, everything that's us! I'm Aboriginal. I was born Aboriginal, staying Aboriginal, die as Aboriginal, you know. But that's the thing they tried to do. To take everything away from you and replace with white man life style.²⁴⁰

There can be a huge distinction between what is written, said, thought or done. There can be a big difference between the law and what it says and what people really think about it. Hocking argues that in the early 1960s in Tasmania was a general practice to distinct Aboriginal people, no matter how fair skinned the person was, they still had some Aboriginality in them, so they were regarded a threat. That is why they were targeted for special attention and practices. "You won't find any document that will tell you that, but I tell you now, that's what happened."²⁴¹

They were just busting up Aboriginal families and the Tasmanian government has now recognized that and apologized for. This is not just something I'm out there with... The evidence has been gathered, and there has been an apology and compensation paid. So if anybody is out there that might sort of suggest that, well, perhaps that wasn't so, perhaps the mum was neglecting them a bit, think again, because the government certainly has.²⁴²

Moseley has accepted that what has happened has happened. But it does not mean that she would forget or would not brush into tears when sharing her story. "One just has to get on with one's life. But some things are still too traumatizing."²⁴³

9. CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have tried to shed light on the two different policies which had an enormous effect on Indigenous people of Australia in the 1950s-1960s. Assimilation and child removal policies were promoted to be for the benefit and wellbeing of the Indigenous peoples. The policy of assimilation aimed to merge the Indigenous population into the white dominant society, concentrating first on

²⁴⁰ Maher 2009.

²⁴¹ Hocking 2009.

²⁴² Hocking 2009.

²⁴³ Moseley 2009.

the mixed descent people and finally, in the 1960s, to all Indigenous people. Despite all efforts the assimilation policy did not work. Although there were many reasons why not the failure of the policy can be crystallize into two main factors. Firstly, Indigenous people did not give up their culture as officials had planned and hoped for. Secondly, one cannot integrate someone who is not accepted or wanted by the outside community to be part of that specific community, especially if the very people one is integrating do not want to be integrated or at least not the way one want them to be.

There were various motives for assimilation but the most underlining reasons were mainly financial ones. The reserves and estates were money consuming and did not produce anything. So, it was financially grounded to try to diminish the number of reserves and the support given to Indigenous people, who were not benefiting the dominate community by paying taxes or providing hardly any income to the states. The main aim was to make the Indigenous people to take a part and employ themselves in the white Australian society and by so be able to provide themselves. However, this would not have been possible if Indigenous people were to maintain their traditional customs and culture. Therefore the Indigenous child removal policy became so important, because it provided to the labour market a supply of a young low-paid workforce who conducted according the Western customs and living by the life style. Because of the prejudice and the White Australia policy no other cultures were wanted nor were they able to root in Australia until the mental change from the 1960s onwards and especially after the abolishment of the White Australia policy in the 1970s.

The official aim of Indigenous child removals was to protect the mixed descent children from neglect and the harmful influence and “unhealthy” environment of reserves and settlements. The removals can also be viewed from a racial point of view when the removals become a matter of skin colour. “Breeding out the colour” was a very popular thinking in the early decades of the twentieth century and also in some degree in the 1950s and the 1960s, although documents of The Native Welfare Conferences do not directly support this claim. Nevertheless, Peter Read and Debra Hocking certainly believe that this was the case with the stolen generations. In the “half-caste” institutions, the children were taught to think and act like whites and beware and mistrusting towards Indigenous people. The whites tried to turn the part-Aboriginal children against their own people and families with some actual success because some of the removed children became weary of Aboriginal people. Many times the institutions reinforced the children’s feelings of being abandoned and rejected from their own people and family. Some informants, manly men, expressed that they went back home not because they missed their family or specifically wanted to go return home but because they did not have anywhere else to go.

In a practical sense, the idea of biological absorption was more or less successful. Some of the informants have married a non-Indigenous person and have children and grandchildren who live by the Western customs. The majority did not mention or specify the background or colour of their spouses. However, the documents of the Native Welfare Conferences indicate that during and before the assimilation period majority of the mixed descent people were finding spouses among themselves and not from the non-Indigenous Australian society. The idea of absorb the Indigenous people biological in the Australian society was linked to the notion of 'race' and racial hegemony. It is hard to believe that such a notion like 'race', which had been a central part of the Western world view for hundreds of years, would suddenly disappear from people's thoughts. However, the terminological and political changes made after the Second World War indicate that mental change did happen and that Indigenous people were not regarded at the same way they were used to. The changes in terminology as well as the increase of Aboriginal activism and support for the Indigenous cause around the whole Australian community in the 1950s and especially in the 1960s with the legislative changes in the end of 1960s and early 1970s are proof of that.

From cultural perspective, assimilation did at least partially achieve some of its goals. The ones removed from their families were simultaneously separated from their community as well as their linguistic and cultural environment. Many lost their languages, customs and lots of ancient knowledge was never passed forward to the next generation. Nevertheless, many of the people removed as children returned home and tried to learn their culture back. However, going back home was in many cases a great culture shock. Sometimes it was too great to pass and many have settled themselves in the non-Indigenous society or found their place somewhere between the two cultures. Culturally, the child removals had dual effects. Firstly, from the Indigenous peoples' point of view they reduced the members of Indigenous communities and secondly, made it more complicated to transfer cultural codes and traditions to the next generations creating discontinuity as well as preventing children's rights to enjoy and be part of their cultural heritage. On the other hand removals gave, or compel, children the opportunity to grow up and become familiar to the other part of their cultural heritage, the non-Indigenous one.

Both policies had some serious flaws and despite their good intentions the policies created more individual distress than prosperity. Although both policies accomplished to improve Indigenous and part-Indigenous people's physical wellbeing, it often caused mental scars. Nevertheless, the policies or the officials cannot be blamed for all bad things that happened due to the assimilation or removal practices such as rape, abuse or mishandling of the children in the foster homes and institutions. Only the people committing those things are to be blamed although the authorities and

staff members were responsible not interfering and protecting the children from harm. In addition, the authorities and the state governments can be blamed for not providing the sufficient and safe surroundings for the removed children and adequate qualified personnel in the institutions as well as more professional welfare officers. Nevertheless, probably the majority of requirements of the time were accomplished and carried out, because it was not until the Welfare Conferences in the 1950s and 1960s when qualification and standards of housing, health and education were brought into the public debate. The laws relating children and their protection, education or physical and mental health were different and they were interpreted and applied differently from state to state.

The officials were extremely interested in the physical wellbeing of the part-Aboriginal children. These children belonged to the poorest section of the population and many lived in non-ideal circumstances. However, even today unemployment, alcoholism, poor single-parent families especially under the influence of a culture that endorsed polygamy and teenage marriages, with the huge contrast to the dominant non-Indigenous Western culture are justifiable reasons to be concerned about a child's welfare, but they are not direct reasons for a removal. A concrete concern of the authorities was that the Aboriginal girls, especially those with white heritage, were to be married young and exploited. The fact is that the status of women in the Aboriginal society was lower than in the Western society, mainly referring to the women's right to interact and speak with other members of the community or with outsiders; the right to choose a spouse or attend work by your own choosing. I am not saying that Aboriginal women would not have been capable or it would not have been possible for them to affect their own life, but Aboriginal culture is, nonetheless, quite conservative as well as collective and family centric and for a woman to leave that and pursue individual goals would have been very hard. Besides, many Aboriginal women did not have an education, so usually their life remained in the traditional circles guided by a tribe and the community. However, due to the assimilation policy in the 1950s-1960s, many Aboriginal people were losing their tribal ways and increasingly adapting Western customs.

In addition Australian Aboriginal laws and removal documents emphasize the protection of the moral well-being of the child. From the non-Indigenous' perspective, the ancient tribal customs, the unemployed and more or less alcoholic surroundings did not give the right support or provision for the children to persuade their education nor become "good" and proper members of the white Australian society.

The personal testimonies on the other hand reveal how the children experienced assimilation and what they think about the policies to day as adults. All of the informants have undergone anger and

depression for being denied their original family and culture and forced to be raised in white society that they do not feel their own. The dominant reason for anger and despair seems to be the information denied by the officials. After their removals all the informants have got strong fundamental feelings of misplacement and suffered from partial identities. One common factor is also that when the kids were removed their families tried to get the children back or at least to have some kind of contact with them while in institutions. Almost all those who were removed have later tried to find their families and get back home. The officials were not keen to locate children's families or other relatives in order to place the children to them. They also did not generally provide any contact information for the ones who wanted to locate their lost relatives and family.

For individuals, their removal as children and the abuse some of them had to experience at the hands of the authorities, staff or foster care have one way or the other permanently scarred their lives. The mental pain is stronger and longer lasting than the physical pain. It is also worth remembering that the children were not the only ones to suffer. The removals did affect the whole families and other generations as well. The pain of being taken away, forcibly or not, is just as real to a child as it is for a parent. One interesting point is that, although the removed individuals were brought up to be white, they associate themselves clearly to be Aboriginal. Many have always identified themselves as an Aboriginal; others have had very long periods when they have denied their Aboriginality wanting to be like other non-Indigenous people around them; some have found out about their Aboriginality many decades later. All informants have also experienced duality. Some of the informants have felt themselves misplaced and did not know where to belong. Some felt themselves rejected and were angry to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, belonging to neither. It did not matter whether they were reunited with their families the feelings of hurt, depression and misplacement were still there and it has taken a long time for them to get where they are now: publicly speaking about their life and sharing their stories. Many of the informants get strength from their spirituality and old beliefs. They have began healing when accepting the facts and finding out more about their culture and background. For some, the healing and strength comes from finding God and forgiveness. Some find strength from their families and some do not mention any special source where to find strength. However, minority of the informants do not regard the removals a bad thing to themselves and can appreciate the good things they got.

However, based on the data, the assimilation nor the child removal policies were by themselves truly successful on a long-term scale. It was probably the legislative changes in the end of 1969 and

during the 1970s-1980s that made the Australian community more open and made it possible for the Indigenous people to adapt and become part of the dominant society.

At the other hand, the assimilation policy can be seen successful, because the many mixed descent children were removed from their original cultural surroundings and separated from their family and kin. A majority lost their own language. They were alienated from their culture and its customs. They became strangers in their own culture. They all speak English better than their own languages, they live in the dominant white society, dress up and act as non-Indigenous Australians. In addition, although many have been reunited with their family the real closeness was not there anymore. Some went back and tried to live the Aboriginal way, but had eventually built their lives elsewhere. The most important aim of the assimilation and child removal policies were that at the end they cut the children's ties to their families and cultures for a long period of time. At the other hand the assimilation was not successful, because all the informants identify themselves, at least now, first and foremost Aboriginal, not as whites as they were taught and bought up to be. They are proud of their Indigenous heritage. During their youth, the effects of assimilation were probably stronger, but at the older age the informants have sought and got in touch with their ethnic identity again. Although they were removed and separated from their families they were reunited later on. They know about their history, roots and people and have taken some aspects of their heritage in their daily life and tried to pass some aspects them on to the next generation.

As a heterogenous group members of the stolen generations were removed from different places, different states and under different circumstances over a period of hundred years. The practices varied as did laws and circumstances. Sometimes the siblings were all taken at the same time. Sometimes they were taken one by one. Each case was most likely considered separately, because sometimes the Welfare monitored the family's situation for a longer period of time and sometimes the separations were more extemporized. Some lived the traditional way wandering and following the tribal life style but some lived stable life with more Western life style. Some had stable families with both parents, who were not alcoholics, went to school regularly, had clean clothes and food, relatives and many family members who created a support network around the family, but who were not considered when placing the child. Besides this sample of informants does not tell who many removed children were in reality placed at the care of their relatives, and who are not considered part of the stolen generations' story.

Anyway the main purpose is not to examine whether the removals were justified or not, but to reveal what the children felt and by removing part-Aboriginal children did the assimilation policy

achieve its goals. Those who have more positive experiences, or more precisely have expressed more positive experiences of their lives in the institutions are a small minority. Either this correlates with the truth but there can be other possibilities why such narratives have not come forward. Either these kinds of stories are not heard, or the informants are not revealing their true opinions. It is also possible that the interviewers have questioned the wrong questions or have not been interested about them. It is also possible that those people who have more positive experiences do not associate themselves to stolen generations, or they do not feel they have as traumatising experiences to share. Nevertheless, it is also possible that the more positive experiences are selected out, because their stories are not “good” or tragic enough to be shared. There must also be those who do not know about their Indigenous heritage and therefore cannot express their experiences or feelings about the matter.

It appears that the stolen generations have become an acceptable form of identity for those mixed descent people who have not been brought up in the Aboriginal society or are not completely accepted in the culture they want to identify themselves with. These people are in the middle of two cultures but unlike many other members of minority culture who assimilate or acculturate themselves to the mainstream culture or find their cultural identity from either one, the members of stolen generation were denied access to the other part of their cultural heritage, the Aboriginal one, and then made clear by the white culture that they were not good enough to be part of the white Australian society. These people were not given a real change in either community. There are also people who have mixed heritage but who were not removed from their families and for them the situation is probably different. But for the members of stolen generations, there was no real change. These people were the "in-betweens", not properly belonging to either Indigenous or non-Indigenous group, but not for their own choice but because of the decisions made by the state and federal authorities. The most tragic individual and social aspect of the assimilation policy was that it separated many from their parents and families, either by placing them in foster care or different institutions, or denying them the possibilities to see and visit their families.

In short the fair skinned Aboriginals were regarded to have better changes to adapt and mix in the mainstream community unlike darker skinned full descent Aboriginals. So, finally I want to conclude that the assimilation policy of Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal people was ultimately set up for economic reasons, whereas the removals of mixed descent children were first and foremost a colour and racial issue. It is probable that without the dramatic and negative experiences and practices the assimilation policy could have been more successful. If the removed children would have been able to keep in touch with their families from the institutions and got knowledge about

Aboriginality and Aborigines culture instead of being cut out from them, they would have got the chance to choose and be less traumatized.

Although some narratives do not reveal the conditions of the home or the family, in many cases there is indication of poor and unstable family circumstances. That would have given reason for at least short time custody: the excessive use of alcohol, extreme poverty, a parent's illness or imprisonment, lack of shoes or proper clothes while others lived with a single-parent or alternative carer with no means of support. However, many mixed descent children were really happy and oblivious to the lack or the absence of some material commodity and goods. There are always difficulties when two distinct groups of people are tried to be united. The major distinction between Aboriginal and Western culture can be culminated in the following question: are shoes and clothes necessities for children' wellbeing in a climate like Australia and among people who have lived 40,000 years without clothes or shoes of any kind? What is the degree a person has to adapt to live in a modern world and to live alongside the Western culture and its standards? Perhaps there would have been more harmonious solutions made, if the Indigenous peoples would have been heard and taken along making the decisions considering their future.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Aborigines Act 1905 (WA), <http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/removeprotect/52790.pdf>, 01.10.2013.

Aborigines Act 1911 (SA), <http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/removeprotect/54205.pdf>, 01.10.2013.

The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW), <http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/removeprotect/52303.pdf>, 20.09.2013

The Aborigines Protection Act Amendment 1915 (NSW),
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/apaa1915n2321.pdf, 01.10.2013

The Aboriginal Protection Amendment Act 1936 (NSW),
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/apaa1915n2321.pdf, 01.10.2013.

Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Canberra, 21st to 23rd April, 1937, <http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/referendum/20663.pdf>, 30.08.2013.

Native Welfare Meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers, Canberra, 3rd and 4th September, 1951, (Proceedings),
<http://www.planitaerth.com/PDFs/indigenous/national/1951NativeWelfareConferenceProceedings.pdf>, 30.08.2013.

Native Welfare Conference, Canberra, 26th-27th January, 1961, (Verbatim Record of Proceedings),
<http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/referendum/20782.pdf>, 30.08.2013.

The Policy of Assimilation – Decisions of Commonwealth State Minister at the Native Welfare Conference, Canberra, January 26th and 27th 1961,
<http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/referendum/18801.pdf>, 15.09.2013.

Aboriginal Welfare Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers 1967, Volume 1:
<http://archive.aiatsis.gov.au/referendum/21005.pdf>, 10.09.2013.

Adoption of Children Act 1965 (NSW),
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/repealed_act/aoca1965191/s32.html, 28.10.2013.

Testimonies

Edwards, Kennedy, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Forrester, Daniel , <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Hart, Melbourne, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Hocking, Debra, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Kickett, Barbara, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Maher, Lester , <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Meehen, Donna, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Moseley, Eileen, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Mourish, Althoul, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Simon, Bill, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Ugle, Greg, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Wright, Rita, <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com>, 25.20.2013.

Bibliography

Aboriginal Culture website, www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml, 27.02.2013.

Armitage, Andrew (1995). *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. University of British Columbia, Canada: UBC Press.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Website, “End of The White Australia Policy”. 100 Years – The Australian Story: Episode 2 – ‘The Rise and fall of White Australia’: <http://www.abc.net.au/archives/80days/stories/2012/01/19/3415230.htm>, 15.04.2013.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Website, Transcript 29/3/2001, Academics debate contents of Stolen Generations report, including Robert Manne and Ron Brunton, <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/stories/s268644.htm>, 27.05.2013.

- Australian Bureau of Statistic,
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/cashome.nsf/4a256353001af3ed4b2562bb00121564/3fd6b6e026e050d0ca2575a10001e763!OpenDocument>, 21.04.2013.
- Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
http://web.archive.org/web/20061008120749/http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/indg_overview.html,
1810.2013.
- Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection,
<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>, 15.04.2013.
- Australian Government. State and Territory Government, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-government/state-and-territory-government>, 01.09.2013.
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies,
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/missionsNSW.html>, 11.05.2013.
- Berkhofner, Robert F. (2008) *Fashioning History: Current Practices and Principles*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Brendt, Ronald M. (1964) "Problems of Assimilation in Australia". *International Migration Digest*, Volume.1, No. 1, Spring, 25-28. The Centre for Migration Studies of New York, Inc.
- Bringing Them Home Report 1997,
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf, 05.10.2013.
- Broome, Richard (2010), *Aboriginal Australians. A History since 1788*, 4th edition, Allen & Unwin.
- Brunton, Ron (2000) "Justice O'Loughlin and Bringing Them Home: A Challenge to the Faith". *Quadrant Magazine*, Volume 44, Issue 12, 37-43.
- Burke, Peter (2001) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Polity Press: Cambridge, 2d edition.
- Chambers, John H. (2000), *Matkaopas historiaan – Australia*, Kuopio: Oy Unipress Ab.

Cohen, Phillip (1992) 'It's Racisms What Dunit': Hidden Narratives in Theories of Racism. Donald, James & Rattansi, Ali (ed.) 'Race', Culture & Difference. London: Sage Publication Ltd, 62-103.

Creative Spirits website, www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations, 21.10.2012.

Creative Spirits website, <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/what-is-the-dreamtime-or-the-dreaming>, 18.10.2013.

Creative Spirits website, <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/stolen-generations-effects-and-consequences>, 21.04.2013.

Cummings, Barbara (1990) Take This Child...: Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Children's Home. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies.

Elder, Catriona (2009). Dreams and Nightmares of a White Australian: Representing Aboriginal Assimilation in the Mid-twentieth Century. Studies in Asia-Pacific "Mixed Race", Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

Encyclopedia Britannica website, Academic edition, <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/39328/assimilation>, 25.02.2013.

Encyclopedia Britannica website, Academic edition, <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488030/race>, 02.05.2013.

Encyclopedia Britannica website, Academic edition, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488135/racial-segregation>, 15.04.2013.

Encyclopedia Britannica website, Academic edition, <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/642125/White-Australia-Policy>, 15.04.2013.

Find & Connect – History & Information about Australian orphanages, children's Homes & other institution website: <http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/nsw/biogs/NE00033b.htm>, 27.05.2013.

Haebich, Anna (2000) Broken Circles. Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000. Fremantle Arts Centre Press: Fremantle, W.A.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission website,
<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-chapter-2>, 05.03.2011.

Introduction to Sociology, Racial, Ethnic and Minority Groups. OpenStax College.
<http://cnx.org/content/m42857/latest/?collection=col11407/latest>, 02.05.2013.

Jennett, Christine (2001) Aboriginal Politics. Jupp, James (ed.) The Australian People. An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and Their Origin, Centre for immigration and Multicultural Studies Australian National University, Cambridge University Press, 2d edition , 121-127.

Kohler Riessman, Catherine (2000), Analysis of personal Narratives. Boston University, Sage Publications, Inc. USA, <http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~brooks/storybiz/riessman.pdf>, 17.02.2013.

Lawler, Steph (2002), "Narrative in social research". Qualitative Research in Action, ed. May, Tim, 2002. Sage Publication, Ltd. London, 242-243.

Le, C.N.(2013). "Assimilation & Ethnic Identity" Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America.
<http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>, 29.02.2013.

Manne, Robert (2001) In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right. The Australian Quarterly Essay, Issue 1,
http://books.google.ca/books?id=MWngZ6wvslwC&printsec=frontcover&hl=fi&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false, 20.10.2013.

Manne, Robert (2010), Comment – Keith Windschuttle. The Monthly- Australian Politics, Society & Culture, <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2010/january/1354144036/robert-manne/comment>, 20.10.2013.

McGrath, M. (2001) Pastoral Industry. Jupp, James (ed.) The Australian People. An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and Their Origin, Centre for immigration and Multicultural Studies Australian National University, Cambridge University Press, 2d edition ,141-145.

Moran, Anthony (2005) "White Australia, Settler Nationalism and Aboriginal Assimilation", Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 51, Number 2, 168-193.

Multicultural Australia website, White Australia Policy,
<http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/hotwords/unpack/White.Australia.Policy>, 19.04.2013.

Nethery, Amy(2009) 'A modern-day concentration camp': Using history to make sense of Australian immigration detention centres. Neuman, Klaus & Tavan, Gwenda (ed.)Does History Matter? Making and Debating Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Policy in Australia and New Zealand. Canberra: The Australian National University E Press, 65-80.
http://www.academia.edu/974602/4.A_modern-day_concentration_camp_using_history_to_make_sense_of_Australian_immigration_detention_centres , 17.05.2013.

National Sorry Day Committee inc. (NSDC), <http://www.nsd.org.au/stolen-generations/history-of-the-stolen-generations/the-history-of-the-stolen-generations>, 01.11.2013.

New South Wales Higher School Certificate Online, Aboriginal Studies: Social Justice and Human Right Issues – The Global Perspective,
http://hsc.csu.edu.au/ab_studies/rights/global/social_justice_global/sjwelcome.human.front.htm#, 25.08.2013.

Phinney, Jean S. (1990), Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review Research – Psychological Bulletin, Volume 108, Number 3. 499-514.

Potter, James W. (1996). An Analysis of Thinking and Research about Qualitative Methods. Lawrence Erlbaum Association Publishers: Manhattan, New Jersey.

Prins, Gwyn (2001) Oral History. Burke, Peter (ed.) New Perspectives on Historical Writing. Polity Press: Cambridge, 2d edition.120-156.

Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide - Module 1 Qualitative Research Methods Overview, <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf>, 17.02.2013.

Questia Online Research Library, <http://www.questia.com/library/sociology-and-anthropology/cultures-and-ethnic-groups/cultural-assimilation>, 15.02.2013.

Rattansi, Ali (1992) *Changing the Subject? Racism, Culture and Education*. Donald, James & Rattansi, Ali ed. 'Race', *Culture Difference*. London: Sage Publication Ltd, 11-48.

Read, Peter (1981) *The Stolen Generations – The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Read, Peter (1999) *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Reconciliation website, <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/stolen-generations>, 21.12.2012.

Räisänen, Heljä Viola (2012), *Aboriginaalit. Australian alkuperäiskansa*. Books of Demand, Helsinki.

Scott, Joan (2005) *Evidence of Experience*, 199-216. Spiegel, Gabrielle M. (ed.) *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the linguistic Turn*. New York: Routledge.

Skinner, Quentin (2002) *Visions of Politics, Volume1: Regarding Method*. Cambridge: Ambridge University Press.

Skwirk – Interactive Schooling website, http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1125/life-on-the-reserves/nsw/life-on-the-reserves/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 17.05.2013.

Skwirk – Interactive Schooling website, http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1127/nsw/history/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-/why-were-children-removed-, 17.05.2013.

Skwirk – Interactive Schooling website, http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1124/paternalism-and-protection-policy/nsw/paternalism-and-protection-policy/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience, 11.05.2013.

Skwirk – Interactive Schooling website, http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-328_c-1126/what-was-assimilation-/nsw/what-was-assimilation-/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/stealing-a-generation-assimilation-, 20.08.2013.

Stolen Generation Info website,

http://www.stolengenerations.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=3, 30.09.2013.

Swain, Shurlee “Homes Are Sought for These Children”. Locating Adoption within the Australian Stolen Generations Narratives. *American Indian Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 2013, Vol. 37, Nos. 1-2, 203-217.

The Australian Art Print Network. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Prints,

http://www.aboriginalartprints.com.au/culture_details.php?pageID=19, 20.10.2013.

The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/world/asia/13aborigine.html?_r=0, 26.10.2012.

The West Australian, Perth, Friday 14th, September 1951,

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/3791255?zoomLevel=1>

Toukomaa, Pertti (1978), *Assimilation and Integration as Alternative Models of Adaptation for Linguistic Minorities*. University of Helsinki.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their Communities website,

<http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/history3.htm>, 18.05.2013.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their Communities website,

<http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/reading8B.htm>, 05.10.2013.