



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Lippman, L. : *The Aim is Understanding - techniques to promote better intergroup relations*. Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Co., 1973. 59pp.

*Two reviews of this recent publication are presented - the first by a practising primary teacher, the second by a teachers' college student.*

P.M. Osborne,  
Petrie Terrace State School,  
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This is a precise, well-written book on a vital and interesting subject.

The first section of the book examines causes of intergroup tensions. Attention is focused on the problems that could be felt in schools where there are minority groups of children, both migrants and Aborigines.

Terms such as prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism and racism frequently used in discussion of racial issues are analysed.

Attitude formation and function are deliberated upon and it is pointed out that an individual capable of accepting himself is capable of accepting others, while one with a weak ego often sees as a threat those in a minority group. Recent research indicates that if behaviour can be changed, attitudes are likely to be altered, to bring them into line with that behaviour.

Whilst basic facts are necessary to form an intelligent opinion, the dissemination of facts about minority groups, in itself, cannot be counted on to change unfavourable attitudes. The second section, then, provides practical suggestions to all who are interested in furthering harmony within our community.

Rather than depicting the minority group, for example, the Aboriginal, in the stereotype, as is so often done in text books, especially at the primary school level, it would help to promote better intergroup relations by showing and discussing features of the particular culture that add up to a rich and meaningful life style centred around things that are of importance in our community - work, care of children, play, religious beliefs and family relationships. This could be achieved through the use of film strips, slides and photographs to stimulate talk among students.

Lippman reminds us that while parents are the primary agents of socialization of a child, and as such, one of the main determinants of any prejudice, teachers also play an important role. Teachers cannot teach students to change their attitudes, but they can establish an environment where students learn to change their attitudes. Within the classroom there are many opportunities for encouraging a child to be kind and helpful towards his classmates and for assisting him to see things from another person's point of view. Within the classroom, too, he is able to talk out his animosities in a friendly, but not too emotional, atmosphere.

Techniques to improve intergroup relations in adult and youth groups are also put forward.

The author emphasizes that the basic aim for any educational program must include the recognition of human dignity, and the rights of others, respect for feelings and learning to accept differences with interest and pleasure.

As a teacher with both Aboriginal and migrant children in the class, I would recommend this up-to-date book as valuable reading to all who are interested in promoting better relations between groups. The book also offers an invaluable appendix which covers extensive resource material suitable for secondary use, as well as a bibliography of books suitable for the teaching of Social Science at secondary and primary levels.

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Ian Christensen,  
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While man's natural xenophobia will never be cured completely, Mrs Lippman's book is a move in the right direction. The book to say the least is timely. It occurs when the Australian Government policy regarding migrants and Aborigines has changed if not dramatically then positively (the foreword is by Mr. A.J. Grassby), when Social Studies curricula throughout Australia have been revised with a new emphasis on attitudes and attitude formation, and with the growing emphasis in this country on the Dewey philosophy regarding social education.

Australia's heterogeneous society is undoubtedly getting stronger and more diverse "as there is an increase in the feeling of separate ethnic identity among the minority groups to combat the impersonality of a large scale mechanized society". This book makes a valuable contribution to the lessening of prejudice by providing a concise summary of recent research in this area and, more importantly for the practising teacher, a practical guide for the implementation of these approaches to the problem of prejudice and attitude change. The book is directed at the educator as the author believes that tolerance may be learnt if the child is provided with the correct environment. A section entitled *Educational Techniques to Improve Intergroup Relations* provides the teacher with relevant examples of group activities through which the student will benefit - the emphasis being on the children learning rather than the teacher teaching. The aspect of *Learning by Doing* is emphasized so as to involve a child's mind and emotions. The primary teacher has the greatest responsibility in this area as Mrs Lippman claims, "if any significant breakthrough in understanding between groups is to occur it must begin in early education."

Two implications for the educator are stressed. Firstly, attitude change does not come about by the presentation of factual information; rather this approach will only reinforce the prejudiced person's own viewpoint - "in so emotive an area facts alone cannot be relied on to increase understanding". Secondly, emphasis should be placed on similarities not differences, things that unite us and common goals. This should

also be seen as a development of a sense of internationalism which is extremely relevant for the ecological crisis, where people everywhere must realize they are all children of "spaceship earth".

Unlike most social psychology viewpoints this book makes an attempt to get away from the broad generalizations of "society and groups" and brings the problem down to a personal level and hence emphasizes the importance of increasing self-awareness as a main criterion for prejudice elimination.

This book should have application not only for improving of understanding between different ethnic groups but also for improving relations between different class and social groups in society and make for a better understanding of all people who are in some way different from the average teacher's own norms and expectations.

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Schools Council Working Paper 27 : *Crossed with Adversity : The Education of Socially Disadvantaged Children in Secondary Schools*. Evans/Methuen Educational. London, 1970. 157pp.

G. Reynolds,  
Education Faculty,  
University of Queensland.

The Working Party was set up by the Schools Council in March, 1967 in order specifically to examine the problems involved in the education of socially handicapped students. Their terms of reference were as follows:

To consider the question of the secondary education of pupils who have been retarded by social or family background, with special reference to the possibility of compensatory education through the curriculum of the schools; to consider what kind of research and development work may be appropriate in this country (England) in the light of what is being done elsewhere; and in doing so, to have regard to the need to outline in terms of general principle the broad social and educational issues involved.