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**Coping with change: Adolescents' experience of the transition
to secondary and boarding school**

Thesis submitted by

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in December 2001

**For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Psychology
James Cook University**

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(Jacqueline Downs)

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My thanks and special regards to you all for making this thesis possible.

ABSTRACT

It appears that very little research has been conducted in Australia on how the transition to secondary school is perceived by young adolescents. Similarly there is a paucity of literature on the effects of relocation and the concept of homesickness, especially within the context of students starting boarding school. This thesis contributes to knowledge of adolescent transitions as normative adjustment or turmoil. These issues were explored by comparing day students with boarders in a longitudinal study of 74 students in their first year (Grade 8) of secondary and boarding school in a rural remote town in North Queensland. The study focussed on the students' perceptions: of themselves and their social contexts of home and school, and examined changes over the school year. Based on previous research exploring homesickness in boarding students (Downs, 1992), from a developmental perspective which included the concept of place identity (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987), this study aimed to identify psycho-social and environmental factors that may influence adjustment, with implications for interventions. The initial sample (N=74) comprised 35 day students and 39 boarders (29 boys and 45 girls) at two private secondary schools. Questionnaires, individual interviews and group work examined students' perceptions of their social contexts. Repeated self-report measures included Reynolds (1987) Adolescent Depression Scale, Dundee Relocation Inventory (see Fisher, 1989), Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a), Self Description Questionnaire-II (Marsh, 1990), and the Impact of Life Events Scale (Adams & Adams, 1991). Findings indicated that most of the students perceived that they had adapted well to the transition to secondary and boarding school, with emphases on peer interactions and school-work. Overall normal levels of depressive symptomatology, positive self-concept and functional ways of coping

with concerns were indicative of adjustment rather than turmoil. Positive identification with home, school and self contributed to adjustment, whilst there were associations among measures of depression, homesickness, self-concept and coping which were also related to negative perceptions of family and/or school contexts and perceived adaptation. Homesickness was identified as a distinct phenomenon, which could be discriminated from, but also include, depressive symptomatology. Whereas at the beginning of the year 90% of boarders were homesick, it remained problematic for 20% of the students. Gender differences were identified: boarding girls remained more homesick and depressed than the boys and there were similarities between male boarders and female day students in negative associations between homesickness and self-concept, and the use of non-productive coping strategies. Homesickness is explained as a normal adaptive developmental process of place identity, which however, if protracted, can impede positive identification with the school setting and adjustment. This has implications for interventions which could include group processes that enable students to share problems and solutions. It is proposed that enhancing place identity may ameliorate the turmoil of factors such as depression and low self-concept. The thesis concludes with suggestions for how parents, students, and staff can address homesickness and facilitate adjustment in the transition to secondary and boarding school.

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

(Jacqueline Downs)

ETHICS STATEMENT

I declare that the research work involving human beings described in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines of “The Australian Code of Practice for the care and use of Animals for Scientific Purposes” and the “Australian Psychological Society Code of Ethics”. This research project received ethical clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee for Research or Teaching involving Human Subjects: Approval Number H357.

.....
(Jacqueline Downs)

6 December 2001
.....

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study: Rationale and theoretical perspectives

Interest in research on adolescence, once the “forgotten era” of developmental psychology (Collins, 1991, p.1), has experienced a “growth spurt” in recent years (Zaslow & Takanishi, 1993, p.185). There have been noticeable developments in the area: the formation of professional societies and committees such as the Society for Research on Adolescence and the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (see Zaslow & Takanishi, 1993); articles and journals devoted to the topic (e.g., *Journal of Adolescence*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *Journal of Early Adolescence*); numerous books and edited volumes that focus on adolescent issues (e.g., Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Feldman & Elliott, 1990; Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996; Heaven, 1994; Tolan & Cohler, 1993), and even an *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (Lerner, Petersen, & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). By the 1980s three major areas of interest in psychological research on adolescence were highlighted: “(a) adjustment or turmoil, (b) puberty and its effects, and (c) adolescent-family relations” (Petersen, 1988, p.585). Petersen also notes that the concept of developmental transition has been central to most research, given that adolescence is a period of life in which there are inherent changes within the individual as well as within the social context.

Although scientific knowledge of adolescent development has burgeoned in the last decade or so, as we enter a new millennium there remain many neglected areas and challenges in adolescent research (Lerner & Galambos, 1998), especially within the Australian context (Collins, 1991; Frydenberg, 1997; Heaven, 1994; Peterson, 1996; Slee, 1993). Given the numerous aspects of adolescence in which

knowledge can be furthered, the present study incorporates three specific areas of research which have been relatively neglected in the psychological literature, particularly in research on young adolescents.

Firstly, there is a need for studies that take into account young adolescents' subjective perceptions of their lives, given that researchers tend to "bypass the step of collecting descriptive and qualitative data that reflect adolescents' organisation of their own experiences" (Zaslow & Takanishi, 1993, p.190). In this thesis it is argued that the young adolescents' views are important in understanding how and what they perceive as stressful or not in a life event such as the transition from primary to secondary school; how they perceive themselves, and how they cope. Consequently subjective experiences are emphasised in the methodology of this study, in order to provide further insight into the issue of 'adjustment or turmoil'; in this case to the transition to secondary school - from the adolescents' perspectives.

Secondly, Zaslow and Takanishi (1993), in reporting aspects of work from the Carnegie Council in the USA, noted the need for longitudinal research with different populations of adolescents that can further the understanding of the effects and processes of change during development. There are inherent difficulties in conducting longitudinal research, some of which are discussed in chapter 4 (Method) of this thesis. However, to gain some insight into Australian youth in the mid 1990s, this study used a longitudinal approach to examine the perceptions of a population of young adolescents, day and boarding students, at two schools in a rural, remote location in Queensland, during their first year of secondary school.

Thirdly, until the 1980s and early 1990s there had been a paucity of literature addressing adolescents' reactions to relocation (e.g., Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Hormuth, 1990) and more specifically, the concept of homesickness (e.g., Brewin,

Furnham, & Howes, 1989; Burt, 1993; Downs, 1992; Fisher 1989). Previous studies suggest that homesickness is a factor that can partially explain experiences of boarding school, although very little research had been conducted in Australia (e.g., Downs, 1992; Fisher, Elder, & Peacock, 1990). My own research, which acted as a pilot study for this thesis, indicated that homesickness, whilst remaining an ill-defined concept, is related to adolescents' psychological well-being, and that an integrative developmental approach to identity formation provides a useful framework for examining the concept of homesickness in boarding students (see Downs, 1994).

This integrative approach, which is used in this thesis, incorporates life-span and ecological perspectives on human development (Baltes, Reese, & Lipsett, 1980; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and emphasises the importance of person-environment interaction and the reciprocal effects of the social context in which the individual lives, especially in the development of identity and the social self. The theoretical concept of place identity is argued to be an integral part of the process of identity formation (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). In this respect, the social environments of home, peers, and school, are considered important factors in adolescent psychosocial development and subjective well-being, and are included in this study in order to explore the transition to the new environment of secondary and boarding school.

The transition from primary to secondary school is a major, normative life event of adolescence in Western society. However, as a significant discontinuous developmental change, the extent to which this transition is regarded as stressful by young adolescents remains contentious (e.g., Berndt & Mekos, 1995). This thesis contributes to that debate, as well as exploring the additional disruption of relocating to boarding school and how that experience may contribute to perceived adjustment

or not. In order to examine the literature related to the themes of this study, a number of areas of adolescence have been reviewed. A brief synopsis follows.

Overview of the literature: Chapters to come

Given that Adolescence is a broad topic, the following three chapters of reviewed literature attempt to encapsulate important aspects of the body of scientific knowledge in the area, whilst focussing on the specific aspects of research pertinent to this study. Chapter One commences with a historical review of adolescence and emerging scientific perspectives, followed by an overview of contemporary issues in research, in which it is acknowledged that there has been a paradigm shift away from stage-oriented to process-oriented approaches to human development.

In adolescence, one central task of development is identity formation (Erikson, 1968). In this study, adolescents' perceptions of themselves and their experiences are emphasised. Hence Chapter One continues by focussing on the theoretical perspectives of identity formation, noting Coleman's (1974) focal model, which suggests that adolescents take an active role in determining their development; who they are and who they become. This leads to a review of the literature on self-concept, whereby development of social self is seen as an important aspect of early adolescence. However the focus is more on the multi-dimensional and hierarchical nature of self-concept (Marsh, 1988, 1990), which in this study allows for examination of the young adolescents' perceptions of themselves on a number of facets that pertain to adaptation to the transition to secondary and boarding school, as well as to other social contexts such as home and peers. Chapter One concludes by exploring these contexts within the theoretical construct of place identity (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987), which integrates developmental, environmental and

psycho-social factors of identity formation and self-concept from life-span and ecological perspectives.

How adolescents perceive themselves is reciprocally influenced by how they experience and cope with situations and personal concerns. Chapter Two begins by examining the concepts of stress and coping, noting how coping develops and its association with not only personality traits such as emotionality, but also social factors and self-concept. The following three sections then review the literature that addresses firstly issues within the family context - parent relations and family stressors - factors that are examined in this study as possibly influencing adolescents' perceptions of themselves and how they experience and cope with change.

Secondly, the social context of friends and peers are reviewed from life-span and developmental perspectives, given that supportive relationships and peer networks become increasingly important and influential in young adolescents' development of social self, as well as for psychological well-being and adjustment (e.g., Berndt, 1996). Peer rejection, neglect, and isolation are discussed as factors that can impact on adolescents' perception of others and themselves. Depression, a mood disorder related to loneliness (e.g., Koenig, Isaacs, & Schwartz, 1994), and a common characteristic problem of adolescence, is reviewed in the third section. An increasing prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents has been found since World War Two (e.g., Cicchetti & Toth, 1998) and is examined in this study to ascertain the prevalence in this sample of Australian adolescents, and its impact on their perceptions of their experiences, self-concept and ability to cope with the transition to secondary and boarding school.

Chapter Three reviews literature specific to the transition to secondary and boarding school. First, studies that have critiqued the school environment in relation to adolescent developmental needs are discussed, followed by research that has explored students' perceptions and adjustment to secondary school. Next is an examination of geographical relocation and the transition of moving to boarding school, whereby the adolescent has the dual task of adapting to a new 'home' as well as school. The boarding experience is reviewed from both adult and students' perspectives, in which it becomes evident that homesickness is an under-researched issue of concern.

The final section of Chapter Three explores the concept of homesickness, from a historical and current perspective, and reviews the limited research in the area especially in boarding school students. Shirley Fisher's definition of homesickness which is expanded into a "multi-causal descriptive theory" (1989, p.113) provides principles which were incorporated in my previous research (Downs, 1992), a survey of homesickness in boarding school students which is described in some detail, as a precursor to the current study from the perspective of the integrative developmental approach, including place identity. Unanswered questions concerning how homesickness impacts on adaptation to new settings prompted the focus of this thesis to explore, from the adolescents' perspectives, and over time, both day and boarding students' experiences of the transition to secondary and boarding school in order to add to the body of knowledge on the question 'adjustment or turmoil?'

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSITIONS IN ADOLESCENCE

1.1 The emergence of contemporary adolescence research

1.1.1 Historical review

The word 'adolescence' is derived from the Latin term 'adolescere' meaning 'to grow up' or 'to grow to maturity' (Slee, 1993). Broadly, it can be defined as the second decade of life, usually heralded, between the ages of 10 and 12 years, by the onset of the process of puberty (e.g., Petersen, 1988; Richards, Abell, & Petersen, 1993; Slee 1993). However the transition from childhood to adulthood also involves adaptation to changes in psychological and social characteristics (Lerner & Galambos, 1998).

Historically, there have been changes in the perception and study of the adolescent years. Ancient Greek philosophers acknowledged stages of human development, marking adolescence by stereotypical behaviours (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Petersen, 1988). Plato commented that adolescents were argumentative, whereas Aristotle wrote "The young are in character prone to desire...passionate, irascible, and apt to be carried away by their impulses" (quoted in Conger & Galambos, 1997, p.5). However, after the fall of the Roman Empire, throughout the Dark and Middle Ages the study of human development was largely ignored, as the scientists of the day strongly believed in the notion of 'preformation' by the 'homunculus' (miniature adult) which supposedly originated in the human sperm. Thus children and adolescents were viewed as growing adults, and as such were expected to be well-behaved and obedient (Heaven, 1994; Petersen, 1988).

Scientific thinking changed during the Renaissance, particularly influenced by John Locke (1632-1704) whose notion of the child's mind as a 'tabula rasa' (blank slate) requiring the acquisition of behaviour through learning from experiences, paved the way for behavioural psychological theory (Crain, 1985). Subsequently, in the Age of Enlightenment, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), viewed the child's mind as not developing from a blank slate, but rather having the capacity to develop at its own pace, in stages, a concept which had particular influence on the later cognitive theories of Piaget (Crain, 1985; Heaven, 1994; Petersen, 1988).

Before the end of the nineteenth century, the notion of adolescence as a separate phase of life was not widely recognised (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Peterson, 1996). The impact of industrialisation which heralded the introduction of formal, public schooling, epitomised in the publication of the English novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in 1850 (Hughes, 1953) has been argued to be the time of discovery of "a specific age group of 'young persons,' neither children nor adults" (Musgrove, 1964, p.33). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the "era of adolescence" had begun (Conger & Galambos, 1997, p.5).

It was the American G. Stanley Hall, who in 1904 published a two-volume work entitled 'Adolescence', who has been credited with being the founder of identifying adolescence as an important stage of human development (see Collins, 1991; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Petersen, 1988; Slee, 1993). Although Hall did not base his views on empirical research, his concept of adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress' dominated scientific research for the next sixty years or so (Petersen, 1988). However, as Heaven (1994) notes, the notion of storm and stress as a feature of adolescence had been stable for many centuries, as depicted in

English literature. Violato and Wiley (1990) recounted classical authors such as Chaucer (1340-1400) who described the frivolity of youth, and Shakespeare (1564-1616), whose many works (e.g., *Romeo and Juliet*) included adolescent characters who were exuberant, passionate, and in turmoil. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) in his tales of *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, for example, also portrayed adolescence in a similar fashion, "...in consonance with Hall's (1904) depictions" (Violato & Wiley, 1990, p.263).

Hall was influenced by Darwin in his thinking on adolescence, believing in the concept of *recapitulation*, postulating that individuals go through stages of life equivalent to the evolutionary stages of humankind. Hall theorised that adolescence recapitulated the evolutionary stage of emerging civilisation. That viewpoint, as well as his opinion that physical development in adolescence was not a continuous process, but rather saltatory and linked to the psychological turbulence, was strongly criticised by other contemporary prominent psychologists such as Thorndike and J.B. Watson who advocated the importance of environmental factors (see Collins, 1991). However, with emerging scientific perspectives on adolescence, which soundly rejected the recapitulation theory, Hall's 'turmoil theory' (Offer, Ostrov, & Howard, 1981) remained influential in theories such as Lewin's (1939, cited in Collins, 1991) analogy between adolescence and societal marginality. Whereas Sigmund Freud's theory of early childhood development dominated psychoanalytic concepts for decades, Anna Freud's (1936, 1958, 1969, cited in Collins, 1991) and others' emphasis on, or inclusion of, the turmoil theory, has until more recently presented 'storm and stress' as an integral part of adolescent development (see Collins, 1991; Petersen 1988). For example, Blos (1979) wrote: "...only through conflict can maturity be gained" (p.14).

Yet other early research presented a more positive side to adolescence. The well-known and controversial work *Coming of Age in Samoa*, written in 1928 by cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, challenged the storm and stress theory by indicating that, given the nurturance of cultural traditions, and attitudes, girls on the Island of Ta'u passed through adolescence with relative ease (Mead, 1961). This provided fuel for ongoing nature versus nurture debates concerning adolescent development, with proponents criticising and defending Mead's argument (see Côté, 1992).

By the middle of the twentieth century emerging theories of adolescence were dominated by two major approaches: "classical, turmoil theory and modern-day, normality theory" (Collins, 1991, p. 2). New developmental theories included for example, Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, including the formal-operational stage of abstract thinking in adolescence (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 1972), and Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial stages of development, with identity formation the main task of adolescence.

Although it was recognised that some adolescents might experience storm and stress (e.g., Adelson, 1968, cited in Collins, 1991), studies began to refute the notion that turmoil was a necessary part of normal adolescent development (e.g., Bandura, 1964; Larson & Lampman-Petratis, 1989; Offer, 1969; Offer et al., 1981; Petersen, 1988). Yet it is only in more recent years that medical, biological, and social scientists have begun to provide empirical evidence that challenges the notion that developmental changes negatively affect all adolescents. In contemporary research it is becoming increasingly evident that physiological changes interact with, and can be strongly influenced, positively and negatively, by contextual factors such as family environment, school, and peers, and psychological factors such as self-

concept and coping skills (Feldman & Elliott, 1990; Frydenberg, 1997; Heaven, 1994; Lerner & Foch, 1987; Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Petersen, 1988; Scarr, 1992; Slee, 1993; Tolan & Cohler, 1993).

1.1.2 Contemporary issues in adolescence research

With the burgeoning interest in human development and adolescence research in recent years it is recognised that adolescence encompasses a period of great change, or developmental transition (Petersen, 1988). Key features of development involve biological, psychological and sociocultural factors, in which no one factor can be assumed to act alone or take precedence (Lerner & Galambos, 1998).

Physiological and biological changes of puberty in early adolescence are well-documented (e.g., Crain, 1985; Richards et al., 1993; Whatley & Schlosser, 1992). Whilst physiological changes per se will not be examined in this thesis, it is noted that studies have investigated to what extent hormonal changes affect mood (especially depression, mood swings, anxiety), and behaviour (e.g., energy levels, aggression, delinquency) during adolescence. (For a review of studies, see for example Buchanan, Eccles, & Becker, 1992; Graber, Petersen, & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Hill, 1993; Richards et al., 1993).

The timing and quality of the physiological changes have been found to influence, and be influenced by other psycho-social and cultural factors (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Girls generally experience a growth spurt and development of secondary sex characteristics about two years earlier than boys (e.g., Tanner, 1991). However as well as genetic determinants, environmental factors such as health, nutrition, geographic and ethnic backgrounds

have also been shown to influence the timing of puberty (Eveleth & Tanner, 1990). Consequently there can be considerable variability in the physiological development in early adolescence which is normal (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Silbereisen & Kracke, 1993).

Studies on the psycho-social effects of early and late maturation have produced mixed results. Whereas early maturation in boys has been found to have positive effects on self-concept, the reverse has been found in girls (e.g. Caspi & Moffitt, 1991; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Petersen, 1988). Adolescence is a time of social comparisons within the individual's immediate environment or reference group (such as peers at school). An individual's maturational timing (early, on-time, or late) relative to peers can be an influential factor in the young adolescent's psycho-social functioning (e.g., Silbereisen & Kracke, 1993; Slee, 1993).

Although there are no conclusive links between puberty and cognitive development (Petersen, 1988; Lerner & Galambos, 1998), the changes in adolescents' intellectual and cognitive abilities has been an important area of research, particularly in the light of Piagetian (e.g. Inhelder & Piaget, 1958), and information-processing theories, based on Tolman's thinking in 1992 (e.g. see Conger & Galambos, 1997; Guerra, 1993; Slee, 1993). Whereas growth in 'intelligence' is believed to slow in adolescence, cognitive abilities, such as information-processing, improve in early adolescence (Kail & Bisanz, 1992) and there is a general increase in abstract reasoning ability. Within a neo-Piagetian framework, Keating (1980, 1990) identifies five abilities in thinking which emerge in adolescence: thinking about possibilities, thinking through hypotheses, thinking ahead, thinking about thoughts, and thinking beyond old limits (see also Slee, 1993).

The social context is important in adolescent development, with continual transitions and changes occurring between individuals and their environment (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). How adolescents think about themselves, others, and social relations include stage theorist concepts such as moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1984), convention and rules (e.g. Turiel, 1983), friendship (e.g. Hartup, 1989; Selman, 1980), identity formation (e.g. Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1966, 1980) and self- understanding (e.g. Damon & Hart, 1988). Considerable research has emerged which addresses the 'developmental tasks' of adolescence (e.g. Havighurst, 1972). A central task, identity formation, and more specifically self-concept, is a focus of the present study.

Although debate continues, current literature reflects a paradigm shift away from stage-oriented to process-oriented approaches to development (e.g. Conger & Galambos, 1997; Petersen, 1988). Until the 1970s, most biological, cognitive and social theories advocated fixed or 'discontinuous' stages of development, in which new qualities emerge. The distinctiveness of stages in development imply that any two stages are qualitatively distinct from each other. However there is growing evidence for both discontinuity and continuity (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Guerra, 1993; Lerner, Lerner et al., 1996). For example, observation of considerable continuity of thinking (e.g. Damon & Hart, 1988; Kail & Bisanz, 1992), and the progressive changes of puberty (Graber et al., 1996; Petersen, 1988) are more indicative of gradual, continual transitions rather than sudden qualitative transformations.

The recognition of continuity and discontinuity of development and the influence of the interaction between the individual and the environment, within social and cultural contexts, has led adolescence research to incorporate life-span

and ecological perspectives of development (e.g. Baltes et al., 1980; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 1993; Sugarman, 1986; Peterson, 1996). Frydenberg (1997) notes three major components of life-span psychology which provide a useful framework for examining the individual and social worlds of adolescents. Firstly, the context of the environment of family and home, peers and school (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Jackson & Rodriguez-Tomé, 1993) influence individual adolescent's development. Secondly, that influence is reciprocal, as the individual also has an effect on a given setting (Coleman, 1993; Scarr, 1992; Steinberg, 1990). Thirdly, interactions are transactional as the stability and changes of social contexts influence continuities and discontinuities of individual development (Sameroff, 1975; Wells & Stryker, 1988).

The period of adolescence differs from childhood in that it demands a capacity for effective coping and adaptation to a number of new challenges and changes, which are precursors to adulthood development (Frydenberg, 1997; Hamburg & Takanishi, 1989; Petersen, 1988). For young adolescents, this includes coping with the transition from primary, elementary school, to secondary, high school. To what extent this transition is perceived by adolescents as smooth and positive, or as a time of storm and stress, is explored in this thesis, using the life-span perspective of adolescence as a "circumstance" (Frydenberg, 1997, p.8).

This brief overview indicates that literature on current adolescence research is large and beyond the scope of thesis. Thus the literature reviewed in the following sections will focus on concepts pertinent to the current study. Firstly, theories of identity formation and self-concept are examined.

1.2 Identity formation and the concept of self in adolescence

1.2.1 Identity formation

The question “who am I?” is addressed by an individual’s awareness of their unique identity, and concept of self (Erikson, 1968; Heaven, 1994; Peterson, 1996). Van der Werff (1990) suggests that identity can be defined in three senses: firstly in a general sense, in which unique personal details such as ethnicity, gender, name, age, and other identifying characteristics distinguish a person from other individuals or groups of people. Secondly, from psychological perspectives, identity is the personality structure of an individual, and socially, how that person is viewed by others. Thirdly, there is the subjective, or phenomenal sense of identity, in which a person has an “awareness of personal sameness, continuity, and uniqueness” (p.31). Development of the realisation of differing from others in the social environment, whilst “attaining a sense of psychological well-being, a sense of knowing where one is going” is seen as a central developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968, p.165), of ‘identity achievement’ (Marcia, 1966; 1980).

Newman and Newman (1988) suggest that the merging of past experience, with future hopes, whilst acknowledging current characteristics, abilities and limitations, form the basis of identity formation, a task that, once (or if) completed, allows the individual to experience self-worth, to have a positive concept of self (Heaven, 1994). The processes of identity formation and self-concept continue throughout the lifespan and are thought to begin in infancy, with concepts of attachment, basic trust versus mistrust of people, and the child’s developing sense of separateness from others (Bowlby, 1982; Erikson, 1968; Havighurst, 1972; Wells & Stryker, 1988).

In young adolescents, particularly in the first year of high school, from Erikson's view of psycho-social stages of development tasks may include those attributed to middle childhood as well as those of adolescence. Resolving the conflict between industry versus inferiority involves managing the challenge of acquiring new skills and knowledge as well as demands such as homework and examinations. A sense of competence and achievement is desired rather than feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem, if seen to fail or underachieve. At the same time, the onset of puberty means that emerging physical and sexual identities need to be integrated with the individual's social-emotional identity. This is the beginning of the task of resolving the 'social crisis' of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1968). Peers becomes increasingly important in exploring roles and behaviours as part of the quest for personal identity, and as such may clash with expectations from significant adults such as parents and teachers (Heaven, 1994). Indeed, Kegan (1982, and see Kroger, 1989) for example, suggests another stage between 'Industry' and 'Identity' in identity formation to be 'Affiliation versus Abandonment' in which young adolescents focus on being connected to and included in mutual relationships. Thus the perceptions young adolescents have about themselves in relation to their family, school and peers are integral to identity formation.

Although Erikson has dominated psychological thought on adolescence and identity formation, other researchers have elaborated on, or challenged the fixed stages concept, and take into account the cultural and social contexts and challenges that face adolescents today (e.g. Coleman, 1993; Heaven, 1994; Hooker, 1991). Heaven (1994) notes similarities between developmental tasks proposed by Havighurst (1972) and Newman and Newman (1987) to be: "relationships with

peers, emotional independence, preparation for career, sense of morality (or ethical system) and development of a sex-role identity” (p.5). Newman and Newman focussed on tasks seen to be most relevant to adolescents in the modern Western world, and highlight the importance of young adolescents adjusting to their changing body image, being able to accept emotions and mood swings (emotional development), developing abstract reasoning (formal operations) joining peer groups, and developing opposite sex friendships and sexual identity.

Marcia (1966, 1980) expanded on Erikson’s model of ‘crisis’ to include ‘commitment’ as part of identity formation. “Essential to identity achievement is that commitments be made following a period of experimentation or crisis and that these commitments are perceived as an expression of personal choice” (Newman & Newman, 1988, p.552). Marcia proposed four discrete levels of ego identity: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. The last stage, which may mark the end of adolescence, yet may never be complete (Erikson, 1968; Kroger 1989), suggests resolution of crises by commitments that allow the individual to have a strong sense of personal identity.

Identity moratorium is another level more commonly associated with mid and late adolescence in which individuals may experience certain crises and experiment with behaviours but have not yet made choices or commitments. Identity foreclosure is a status that denotes identity formation through identification. Rather than experiencing crises, these adolescents tend not to explore options, but commit themselves to particular attitudes and acceptable behaviours imposed by family or other significant people in their lives (Benson, Harris, & Rogers, 1992; Clancy & Dollinger, 1993; Marcia, 1980). At this level, adolescents tend to be more conforming, seek approval of others, and have respect for authority (see Kroger,

1989). In the school setting, for example, they are likely to be viewed by teachers as well-behaved (Wires, Baracos, & Hollenbeck, 1994). In early adolescence, this level can be seen as developmentally appropriate, particularly if cognitive development has not reached the stage of formal operations (Keating, 1980, 1990).

Similarly it is natural to expect young adolescents to have the status of identity diffusion (Heaven, 1994; Kroger, 1989). At this level individuals are assumed not to have experienced crises, nor needed to make commitments, and have less well-defined concepts of themselves. It is suggested that for individuals in this status there is confusion and insecurity, with higher levels of anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem and greater conformity to peer pressure (see Peterson, 1996). Identity diffusion and foreclosure therefore can be appropriate stages of identity formation in early adolescence, with the expectation of progressing throughout the adolescent years toward identity achievement, as attitudes, values, personality traits, and sexual preferences stabilise (Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1982).

Erikson and Marcia's models highlight concerns of identity confusion if crises are not addressed or resolved by late adolescence (Archer & Waterman, 1990), as prolonged periods of confusion or crisis, or no defined sense of personal identity, can lead to personality difficulties in adulthood (see Conger & Galambos, 1997; Kroger, 1989; Peterson, 1996). However, patterns of identity formation can be more complex than the task-oriented, typological, stage theory approaches suggest. Not only is formation of identity influenced by factors such as quality of family functioning (e.g., Coleman, 1993; Papini, Sebbi, & Clark, 1989) but importantly by the historical, social and political contexts in which the individual and family lives (Archer & Waterman, 1990; Coleman, 1993; Jackson & Bosma, 1992; Peterson, 1996). In today's complex Western society, for example, an ambiguous status is

conferred on teenagers, with many choices to be made, whilst other privileges and rights remain constrained. Whilst it is suggested that contemporary adolescents are experiencing life stages earlier (Heaven, 1994), with high unemployment rates in many countries there is also a growing emphasis on more years of formal education (Coleman, 1993), which may prolong identity achievement (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Hamburg & Takanishi, 1989; Roscoe & Peterson, 1984).

It has been argued that fixed stage and status approaches to identity formation, and indeed most theories of adolescent development, have been socially based on male, middle-class Western society (Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997), that developmental sequences remain unclear, and that rather than acquiring stable identities, in this day and age flexibility is preferable (Heaven, 1994). Whereas, for example, Erikson (1968) assumed that the formation of intimate relationships evolved after the resolution of the individual's identity crisis, more recently it has been found that in females intimacy is more likely to accompany identity formation (Dyk & Adams, 1990). Similarly, gender identity is thought to be acquired early in life, with studies indicating that most people are content with their basic biological status as male or female, and sexual orientation (Boxer, Cohler, Herdt, & Irvin, 1993; Miller & Dyk, 1993).

Since the 1970s sex-role flexibility, or androgyny (being able to change behaviours according to situational demands, regardless of gender), has been suggested to be functional for healthy sex-role development (Bem, 1975; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Hefner, Rebecca, & Oleshanky, 1975). Yet, in a review of literature, Markstrom-Adams (1989) found that research indicates that for adolescent boys, high masculinity and low femininity is related to high self-esteem and peer acceptance. For young adolescent girls, high levels of masculinity, particularly

attributes such as self-confidence and independence, as well as femininity, have been found to be factors for positive self-esteem and peer relationships (Lamke, 1982; Mullis & McKinley, 1989). A longitudinal study on early adolescence included a subset of 200 subjects in which sex-role changes during early adolescence were examined (Galambos, Almeida, & Petersen, 1990). This study investigated the 'gender intensification hypothesis' (Hill & Lynch, cited in Galambos et al., 1990) which suggests that, at puberty, traditional gender-related roles become more distinct as a consequence of social pressures. However, findings indicated no conclusive evidence that pubertal timing was a factor, and although femininity and masculinity increased from Grade Six to Eight in both boys and girls, there was a greater increase in the boys' masculinity.

Slee (1993) notes that, rather than an androgyny model, Australian research (e.g., Antill & Cunningham, 1980) points towards a masculinity model, in other words that masculine traits benefit both sexes. However, Cunningham (1990) reports conflicting results across studies, concluding that "(1) masculinity definitely confers benefits on female adolescents, but this is not clear for male adolescents" and "(2) results vary greatly depending on which aspects of the self and adjustment are tapped" (p.141). For Australian youth, Slee (1993) points out that sex-role development is difficult, given that greater value is placed on masculine traits and behaviour in Australian society. For boys, dominance, strength and competitiveness are endorsed rather than sensitivity and caring attitudes to others, which are regarded as feminine traits, and not so encouraged. Girls on the other hand have a dual problem of being regarded as immature if they take on feminine behaviours, but also risk being regarded as not feminine enough if they are independent, competitive and confident.

A study of normal adolescent development (Coleman, 1974) looked at groups of British adolescents aged 11,13,15 and 17, in which they were asked identical questions concerning self- image, being alone, parent and heterosexual relationships, and friendships. The findings indicated that attitudes to relationships changed with age and, in particular, different issues came into focus as being most prominent at certain ages. Consequently Coleman proposed the focal model of adolescent development. In this he suggests that, although similar to traditional stage theory, there is flexibility, in that resolving one issue is not necessary for confronting the next. Whereas for some adolescents many issues may arise simultaneously and overwhelm the individual (see Feldman & Elliott, 1990; Simmons & Blyth, 1987), most adolescents do not show evidence of emotional upheaval and stress, because they focus on one issue at a time. There are also no assumptions of fixed stages or sequences, so that issues do not necessarily arise at one particular age (Coleman, 1993; Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

The focal model has been criticised as a theory of life events (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974), and for not having regard for social constraints and contexts (Coffield, Borrill, & Marshall, 1986), particularly given that the original study used privileged and academically bright students. Yet over the years it has gained empirical support (Hendry, Glendinning & Shucksmith, 1996; Kroger, 1985; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Coleman maintains that the model provides insight into addressing why and how most youngsters seem able to 'adjust' to the many changes required of adolescence rather than experience 'turmoil'. He suggests that "the young person is an agent in his or her own development, managing the adolescent transition -where possible- by dealing with one issue at a time...and in most circumstances the young person may actually be determining his or her own rate of

development” (1993, p.267). It is important therefore that research on adolescence takes into account the active role that adolescents play in shaping who they are and become (Feldman & Elliott, 1990), as well as “their real life experiences...rather than addressing academic preoccupations” (Coleman, 1993, p.268).

1.2.2 The development of self-concept

Integral to identity formation in adolescence is the heightened awareness and development of the concept, or perception, of self. Historically one of the oldest psychological constructs, self-concept remains an area of great interest, with, for example, over 11,000 articles related to self-concept and self-esteem cited in the PsycINFO database from 1980 -1995 (Bracken, 1996). Within the literature, there is apparent overlap and interchangeability between these terms (Lawler & Lennings, 1992; Van der Werff, 1990). However, whereas self-concept broadly can be defined, in a phenomenological sense, as an individual’s mental representation, or theory of one’s self, self-esteem can be defined as the evaluative component of self-concept (Harter, 1990; Juhasz, 1985; Van der Werff, 1990).

Harter (1996) provides a thorough overview of the historical roots of contemporary issues that involve self-concept, noting that the early writings of William James in the late 19th century and symbolic interactionists Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) have remained particularly influential. It is recalled that James posited the notion of two distinct aspects of self, the ‘I’ and ‘Me’. The I-self is regarded as the knower, actor, the self as subject which organises and interprets experience, enabling an individual to have awareness of their uniqueness in understanding the world. The Me-self is the object of evaluation, being the sum total of those things known about the self. James divided those things into three

fundamental hierarchical categories of self; the base being the *material* self, body and possessions, that which can be called 'mine'; upon which is built the *social* self, the multiple traits and characteristics of self which are recognised or perceived by others; and thirdly the *spiritual* self, the inner enduring aspects of self which include thoughts, values, moral judgements and the like.

James introduced the notion of how self-worth (esteem) can be regarded as a ratio of the perceived success and importance attached to that success in various domains of life. He also indicated how the multiplicity of self can be discordant as well as harmonious. Concerning adolescence, for example, he noted "Many a youth who is demure enough before his parents and teachers, swears and swaggers like a pirate among his tough young friends" (James, 1890, p.169. cited in Harter, 1996).

Whereas James' theory of self can be seen as a forerunner of later multidimensional and hierarchical theories of self- concept (e.g Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976), the symbolic interactionists Cooley (1902) and G.H.Mead (1934) were influential in propounding how the individual's perception of self is socially constructed via social interaction and identification and internalisation of other people's opinions. Cooley's famous concept of the 'looking-glass self', in which the individual uses significant others as a social mirror to reflectively appraise the self, comprised three components: being able to imagine one's appearance, imagining another's evaluation of that appearance, and an affective component of experiencing some self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. Mead expanded on such themes, emphasising the role of social interaction through language, and the concept of 'generalised' other, in which self appears as a social object. Although other Self theories have emerged over the years (e.g., Epstein, 1973; Hormuth, 1990; Kelly, 1955; Kohut, 1971; Markus, 1977; Rogers, 1951), the scope of which prohibits

detailed discussion in this paper, the classic approaches are indicative of the complex cognitive developmental processes that take place.

Research indicates that physical awareness of self as a distinct entity from others can develop in infants as young as 7-12 months (Amsterdam, 1972; Brooks-Gunn & Lewis, 1984; Oppenheimer, 1991). Similarly, attachment theorists (e.g., Bowlby, 1982) argue that the process of internalising the opinions of others, commences in infancy, in that the positive or negative interactions of the infant's care-givers have an impact on the child's self-concept from the time of object-permanence (Piaget, 1954) and commencement of language acquisition (see Harter, 1996).

In childhood, the process of developing a sense of self changes from concrete concepts such as 'boy' or 'girl' to more abstract, subjective and changing descriptions, as cognitive development progresses. Whereas the pre-schooler develops an awareness of an *inner self* in which thoughts cannot be accessed by other, by adolescence a *psychological self* has emerged (Harter, 1990). Damon and Hart (1988) suggest four phases of development of the Me-self: the physical self, active self, social self and psychological self. Whereas the psychological self matures in later adolescence, the social self is of importance in early adolescence. As the Me-self develops, so also do four aspects of the I-self: continuity (an unchanging physical self), distinctiveness (uniqueness of experiences and as an individual), volition (self's experiences can be manipulated, decisions can be made) and self-recognition (awareness of conscious and unconscious processes). In early adolescence the I-self is still evolving.

1.2.3 Multidimensional and hierarchical aspects of self-concept

Although it has been shown that the concept of self is multi-faceted, it had also been assumed that individuals evaluate themselves to have a general sense of self-feeling or worth, of 'global self-esteem' which is unidimensional and measurable (e.g, Coopersmith, 1967,1981; Rosenberg, 1979). Although this notion has merit, empirical studies, using factor analyses, have found that from childhood individuals also make judgements about themselves across different domains (Marsh, 1986; Marsh & Hattie, 1996; Piers, 1984), indicative of the multidimensional nature of self-concept. Harter (1996) indicates that her research has shown by middle childhood, an individual can self-evaluate competency and adequacy across several domains, as well as make a judgement of overall self-esteem, and that the number of domains increase with development from childhood to adulthood.

An understanding of the importance of both the global and multidimensional structure of self-concept has led to the development of hierarchical models, such as Bracken (1992), Epstein (1973), Marsh (1988, 1990) and Shavelson et al. (1976). In a review article, Shavelson et al. noted major flaws in previous research on self-concept, citing the hypothetical nature of the concept, which requires rigorous testing of construct validity, as well as the lack of appropriate instruments, and the need for a clearer definition of self-concept.

From their research, and based on the early theorists, James and Cooley, Shavelson et al. developed a multi-faceted, hierarchical model, defining self-concept broadly as an individual's perceptions of him/herself. Perceptions are formed from experience and interpretation of the individual's environment, and are particularly influenced by significant others' evaluations, reinforcements, and attributions for the individual's own behaviour. Furthermore, as a hypothetical construct, Shavelson et

al. noted the usefulness of self-concept in both explaining and predicting individual behaviour, and as an outcome and mediating variable in examining other outcomes (Marsh & Hattie, 1996). In this thesis, for example, perceived adaptation to the transition to secondary school is examined.

The Shavelson model identified seven major features of self-concept, which are briefly outlined by Marsh (1988) as follows:

1. It is organised or structured, in that people categorise the vast amount of information they have about themselves and relate these categories to one another.
2. It is multifaceted, and the particular facets reflect a self-referent category system adopted by a particular individual and/or shared by a group.
3. It is hierarchical with perceptions of personal behaviour at the base moving to inferences about self in superordinate areas (e.g., academic - English, mathematics) and then to inferences about oneself in general.
4. The hierarchical general self-concept - the apex of the model - is stable, but as one descends the hierarchy, self-concept becomes increasingly situation-specific and, as a consequence, less stable.
5. Self-concept becomes increasingly multifaceted as the individual moves from infancy to adulthood.
6. It has both a descriptive and an evaluative aspect; individuals may describe themselves ("I am happy") and evaluate themselves ("I do well in mathematics").

(pp. 27-28)

Shavelson et al. provided the foundation for subsequent revisions of the model, as well as construction, refinement and evaluation of self-concept scales which take into account cognitive development. (For further discussion on models and instruments see for example, Byrne & Shavelson, 1996; Keith & Bracken, 1996; Marsh & Hattie, 1996). One instrument pertinent to examining adolescent self-concept, particularly in an educational setting, is Marsh's (1988, 1990) Self Description Questionnaire, (in three forms to account for children through to older adolescents), one of which (SDQ-II) is used in this study. An Australian instrument, Marsh developed the SDQ-II questionnaire for students from Grade 7 to 10, elaborating on the seven domains of Shavelson et al. to include an affective component Emotional Stability, Honesty/Truthfulness, and a General-Self scale, based on Rosenberg's instrument (1965, 1979) to encapsulate the notion of global self-esteem (see Method, chapter 4 for further details). Although criticism has been levelled at Marsh's instruments for their lack of generalisability to other countries, or even other areas of Australia (Keith & Bracken, 1996), the SDQ-III has been used successfully in a modified version in Hebrew for Israeli students (Orr & Dinur, 1995), the SDQ-I, II and III with Canadian school students (Byrne & Shavelson, 1996) as well as in various Australian studies (e.g., Boldero, Frydenberg, & Fallon, 1993; Lawler & Lennings, 1992).

As noted earlier, the literature on self-concept is large, with debate continuing regarding, amongst other things, gender differences, the value an individual assigns to particular domains, and how perceived importance of domains predict global self-esteem (e.g., Harter, 1990; Knox, Funk, Elliott & Bush, 1998; Marsh, 1986), discrepancies between 'real' and 'ideal' self-concept, social sources of self-evaluation, multiple selves versus unified, true versus false selves, and

importantly the affective and behavioural components of self-concept as well as the cognitive (see Harter, 1996 for a review of these aspects). Research findings pertaining to some of these aspects will be discussed in later sections when examining factors relevant to young adolescents.

1.2.4 Place Identity as a substructure of identity formation

It has been noted that identity formation and the process of socialisation in childhood and adolescence have been identified within developmental psychology as occurring through successive stages (Piaget, 1954; Erikson, 1968). Particular emphasis is placed on language acquisition, whereby labels are learnt which allow the young child to distinguish objects and other people from itself. Through social interactions, specified relationships between the child and others are established and a subjective sense of self gradually emerges. It was also noted that, in adolescence research, there has been a shift toward process-oriented approaches to development and incorporation of lifespan and ecological perspectives (e.g. Coleman, 1993).

Yet, although it is recognised that people are not independent of their environment, until recently many developmental theorists tended to neglect the critical element of physical-world socialisation, or 'place identity,' in considering the formation of self-identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Over the last 25 years environmental psychologists have attempted to conceptualise place-related identity from cognitive and phenomenological perspectives as well as sociological and social psychological self theories (Lalli, 1992; Low & Altman, 1992). In the literature one finds analogous terms such as 'topophilia' (Tuan, 1974) 'sense of place' or 'rootedness' (Relph, 1976; Buttner, 1980; Tuan, 1980), 'place attachment' (Altman & Lowe, 1992; Fischer et al., 1977), 'place dependence' (Stokols &

Shumaker, 1981), 'settlement identity' (Feldman, 1990), as well as 'place identity' (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Proshansky and colleagues (1983) argue that socialisation occurs in real-life settings, for every social environment is to be found in a physical context, and therefore the physical environment comprises an integral part of an individual's development. Place identity, therefore, is defined by Proshansky and Fabian (1987) as a "substructure of the person's self-identity that is comprised of cognitions about the physical environment that also serve to define who the person is" (p.22). Place identity is considered to have both stable and flexible characteristics, being a personal construction of cognitions, past, present, and future, representing "memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being" (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.59).

The " 'environmental past' especially the early physical space and place cognitions of childhood" are propounded to have the greatest effect on subsequent place identity (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987, p.24). Diverse experiences of places, spaces, and objects in childhood function to meet biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs. Some cognitions are experienced and learned as 'good,' and others as 'bad'. The social meanings of spaces and places are also learned, defined mainly by significant others, such as primary caregivers, and teachers. Hence an increasing understanding, and subsequent control and competence, of the physical world emerges. In childhood and early adolescence, three main settings dominate socialisation, which shape the development of self: the home, the neighbourhood, and the school.

1.2.4.1 The home

Few psychological studies have examined the relevance of home as an important physical environment for child development (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Literature has tended to concentrate on child 'attachment' particularly from psychoanalytic object relations theory (e.g., Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983), whilst the notion of attachment to place per se has rarely been addressed for adolescents (Chawla, 1992). Yet for most young children the home is their world, where self-knowledge is acquired by learning the associations of objects and settings such as 'my room,' 'my toys,' 'my clothes,' and so forth. Based on James' (1890) notion of the self, such things are distinct from the self, but belong to 'me.' Proshansky and colleagues (1983) suggested that a young person's bedroom and objects in it are enormously significant in the development of a sense of place and self-identity. This has been supported in studies such as Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981), whereby children and adolescents indicated that they felt most at home in their own bedroom, where they were also most likely to keep personal possessions (see also Korpela, 1992).

The importance of possessions as part of self-identity has been studied from a number of perspectives, the scope of which precludes discussion here (but see Belk, 1992 for an overview). However, it is of interest to note that in a study of eleven hundred American students from grades five to twelve, when asked to write an essay on what they would save in a fire, the two most common categories reported were pets and memorabilia (Schumacher, 1984, cited in Belk, 1992). Pets in particular can be regarded as members of the family (e.g., Hickrod & Schmitt, 1982). Treasured possessions however have been found to change over the life span, and in

adolescence, are age and gender-related, reflecting aspects of identity formation (Kamptner, 1995).

Within the home environment, other spaces and places function to allow development of concepts such as learning to share, and knowing what is private to self or others. Understanding of spatial autonomy is considered important for developing independence (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). The attainment of privacy via some control over the environment is regarded as necessary for healthy psychological growth, especially for maintaining a positive sense of self (Cooper Marcus, 1992; Korpela, 1989; 1992). Korpela, for example, uses Epstein's (1983) pleasure and pain theory of self, and attention restoration theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995) to argue that place-identity is partially a product of environmental self-regulation. In a number of studies, Korpela (1989, 1992) provided self-report data which indicated that adolescents used their favourite places (most often their bedrooms) to relax or clear their minds thus suggesting that the physical environment can be restorative (Korpela & Hartig, 1996). In a study of Estonian young and older adolescents, Somner (1990) found that whereas older adolescents preferred their own room, 58% of the 91 respondents preferred natural settings. Bias toward childhood memories of special outdoor settings, such as backyard trees, sheds, and cubbies, and then landscape beyond the immediate home, has also been noted in environmental autobiographies (e.g., Chawla, 1986, 1990; Cobb, 1977; Cooper Marcus, 1992; Dovey, 1990; Sobel, 1990).

1.2.4.2 The neighbourhood

Socialisation within the home setting allows for learning and integration of behaviour across many situations. As cognitive skills develop, this knowledge

extends to physical environments outside the immediate home. However, Proshansky and Fabian (1987) suggest that the sociophysical setting of the home is the critical foundation for the formation of place identity and may be a determining factor in the perceptions of experiences of other settings.

As the young child develops, the complexity of the outside physical world gradually unfolds. Relatively stable features of the neighbourhood, such as neighbours, other local people and their settings are encountered. As the child learns how to act in such settings, perceptions and concepts are processed as cognitive maps. Features of the physical environment are internalised cognitively and include feelings, attitudes and behaviour toward the setting. Thus place identity can be partially described as a cognitive map of physical settings (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987; see also Spencer & Blades, 1993).

The neighbourhood setting is critical for social development as the child learns to interact publicly with other children and adults outside the family (for example, learning the role of 'friend'), as well as learning to manipulate the physical environment, as in play, or avoiding the traffic. Other relationships between the self and environment learnt in the home, such as privacy and personal space, have to be redefined. The child develops adaptive strategies such as non-verbal behaviour, fantasy and sensory blocking of some stimuli, in order to achieve privacy. Such strategies are particularly important in settings where there is little or no privacy, such as in the institution of school (Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987).

1.2.4.3 The school

With the increasing number of single parent or working primary caregivers, many children attend some form of day care and school from an early age, and for

school-age children a large part of their formative years is spent in this environment. (However, note for example, many children in the Australian outback, have minimal contact with people outside of their home environment, and have primary schooling through distance education, or 'school of the air'). The school is a deliberate medium for socialisation and so is considered an important sociophysical setting in self-identity development (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987; Tyszkowa, 1990).

The school is defined as an institutional setting (e.g., Emler, 1993), which is characterised by "a high degree of organisational control, routinisation of behaviour, and limited opportunities for personal choice" (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987, p.34). Emphasis is placed on controlling behaviour via structured routines. Privacy, freedom of choice, and personal space are restricted. For example, although the child may have his/her own desk, the classroom 'belongs' to the teacher and so is still the adult's space rather than the child's (Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987).

Socially, the child is exposed to new relationship experiences - cohorts and teachers. Teachers may be the first adults outside the family environment to have power and control over the child's behaviour and thereby exert considerable influence over the child's developing sense of identity. Many attitudes and skills are established about the physical setting in which intellectual development occurs (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987).

Importantly, school provides a social and educational setting that allows the child and adolescent to develop complex skills and coping strategies for social interaction as well as social withdrawal. Such strategies, which are discussed later in this thesis, are imperative in highly restrictive environments such as residential institutions. Wolfe and Rivlin (1987), for example, in reviewing their extensive work on children in residential settings, confirm that a striking feature of

institutional life is the “lack of variety and change in both the physical qualities and activities”(p.101).

As in the daily school setting, where the school is also a residential institution, independence is severely curtailed and “privacy is antithetical to the institutional goal of order, control, and enforced sociability” (Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987, p. 106). When students use defensive strategies such as daydreaming, or do not interact socially, they may be labeled as inattentive or withdrawn. Yet, as noted before, a sense of spatial autonomy and privacy is essential for identity formation and psychological well-being (Korpela, 1992; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Similarly, although cited as a goal, the institutional setting is rarely designed to encourage independence of thought or action. Rather, conformity of values and behaviour is sought (Heaven, 1994; Poole, 1990; Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987). Thus for some young adolescents, the new environment of secondary boarding school may be a source of conflict and distress which may contribute to negative perceptions of the transition to the new setting.

It has been argued by Proshansky and Fabian (1987) that place identity is a complex personal cognitive construct which develops from direct experiences with many diverse physical settings. In childhood much of the knowledge and perceptions of the physical world are acquired outside of conscious awareness. Place identity functions to provide an ‘environmental past’ with which new settings can be compared. Consequently settings can be perceived as positive, neutral, or negative. Yet Proshansky and Fabian note that most theory and research examining people’s responses to settings tend to interpret place identity only as the positive emotional attachment to places (e.g., Brown & Perkins, 1992; Harris, Brown, & Werner, 1996; Moore & Graefe, 1994). Such a notion is more akin to Stokols and Shumaker’s

(1982) concept of 'place dependence' which is defined as "the strength of an individual's subjective attachment to specific places" (p.157). Alternatively, humanistic geographers describe a theory of 'place belongingness' in which attachment to the home environment engenders an unconscious sense of 'rootedness' which forms the base for an individual's sense of identity (Relph, 1976).

However, attachment depends on the quality of the setting and/or the length of time spent in one location. Settings that are dysfunctional, such as a disrupted home environment, or where moves have been frequent or forced may lead to a fragmented self-concept and sense of rootlessness (e.g., Coles, 1970, cited in Proshansky et al., 1983; Fullilove, 1996; Hormuth, 1990; Stokols, Shumaker, & Martinez, 1983). Yet there has been little research conducted on how children and adolescents are affected by relocation, with ambiguous findings to date (see for example Fisher & Hood, 1988; Vernberg & Field, 1990).

Proshansky and Fabian (1987) argue that place identity is a much broader concept than place belongingness or attachment, in that it reflects the integration and evaluation of cognitions across many settings. The development of place identity is built on the ability to adapt to many settings and gradually become independent of the earlier primary people and places of childhood. It is when a setting is perceived as highly discrepant from past satisfying experiences that place identity may be threatened in the formative years (Proshansky et al., 1983). From this theoretical perspective, it is suggested that homesickness in an institutional setting such as boarding school, and/or perceived dissatisfaction with the new school environment, could in part be a manifestation of such cognitive discrepancies (Downs, 1994).

The theoretical approach described by Proshansky et al. (1983) has been discussed in some detail in this paper as a perspective which integrates a number of

developmental, environmental and psychosocial factors important for identity formation and self-concept, yet has received little attention in adolescence research. When originally published in 1983, the theory generated commentaries from Krupat (1983) and Sarbin (1983). Krupat supported Proshansky's theory for its conceptual, research and application usefulness, adding that forced relocation, as opposed to choice and personal control in settings, could be seen as an attack on the self, and that it paved the way for reconsidering studies of children in institutional environments. However he also suggested that the concept of place identity raises more questions than answers.

Sarbin, on the other hand, whilst commenting that Proshansky et al. had "addressed a neglected aspect of self theory" (1983, p.341), criticised their lack of an organising principle, and argued that the self emerges from a guiding principle such as 'emplotment' in which individuals construct personal narratives, in order to 'render' experience. Following Sarbin's critique, Korpela (1989) also took up the notion of emplotment, and incorporated self theories to establish place identity as a product of environmental self-regulation, as discussed earlier in this thesis.

However, Hormuth (1990) noted that "Proshansky's theoretical analysis points to the necessity of including the physical environment in the understanding of processes of acquisition and change in one's self-concept...Change in self-concept is mediated through cognitions and processes that relate to the regulation of person-environment relationships which also determine the relationships to other persons and the experiences one has with regard to oneself" (pp.117-118). Lalli (1992) also concludes that the physical environment is relevant to self-identity but the degree to which may vary according to individual differences and a variety of other factors. He

suggests that research from a developmental perspective may provide further clarification of its relevance, which is a focus of this thesis.

In summary, this review of theories of identity formation and self-concept highlight the complex psychosocial processes of development that take place from early childhood onwards. In early adolescence the environmental and social contexts of home (and community surrounds), peers, and school are particularly influential in the individual's psychosocial functioning and subjective sense of well-being.

How adolescents perceive themselves also influence, and are influenced by, how they experience and cope with life events, new situations, and personal concerns. The following chapter firstly examines the concept of stress and coping, and then reviews some of the many individual, social, and environmental factors which may influence young adolescents' perception of themselves and consequently their adaptation to the transition to secondary school.

CHAPTER TWO: COPING AND CONTEXTS IN ADOLESCENCE

2.1 Concepts and dimensions of coping

2.1.1 The concept of coping

“Coping is what one does: it is the cognitive and behavioural strategies that are used to deal with the demands of everyday living” (Frydenberg, 1997, p.xii). Yet, although coping is a way of explaining many human activities, as a concept it remains somewhat elusive, with unanswered questions concerning theories on adolescent coping (Compas, 1998; Frydenberg, 1997).

Since the 1960s there has been a substantial increase in research in the area of stress and coping, with publications cited annually in *Psychology Abstracts* reaching around one hundred a month during the 1990s (Frydenberg, 1997). However until recently most of the literature focussed on adult models of coping. Although there has been a burgeoning research interest in stress in adolescence (e.g., Colten & Gore, 1991; Daniels & Moos, 1990; Hoffman, Levy-Shiff, & Malinski, 1996; Masten, Neemann, & Andenas, 1994), until recently there have been relatively few advances in examining the processes of coping in young people (Compas, 1998; Frydenberg, 1997; Losoya, Eisenberg, & Fabes, 1998), particularly in the relationship between coping and self-concept (e.g., Bosma & Jackson, 1990), and outcomes such as adjustment and social competence (Losoya et al., 1998).

One of the most frequently cited and supported models of stress and coping is that of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Their approach is based on cognitive phenomenological theory, and incorporates Lewin's (1936) person-environment interaction model. Emphasis is placed on the interdependence between the constructs of stress and coping, given the ongoing dynamic, reciprocal relationship between the

person and the environment (Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993). Thus stress is regarded as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Coping is defined as the “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p.141).

Whereas coping was originally defined in terms of psychoanalytic defence mechanisms, a tradition which conceptualises coping styles or traits which are stable across the lifespan (e.g., Vaillant, 1977), Lazarus and colleagues’ approach emphasises coping as a context-bound process that changes over time during a given situation, with cognitive appraisal the key aspect (Lazarus, 1991). In this respect, whether a person perceives a situation to be stressful or not, is partly dependent on the appraisal of that person’s coping resources. The nature of the event, the person’s appraisal of that event, personal and social coping resources available and the actual strategies used, determine effective adaptation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Such an approach provides a useful framework for examining coping in early adolescence, given the many adaptational demands experienced during this period of transition (Frydenberg, 1997; Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993).

However Compas (1998) comments that there is a need for a model of coping that more clearly reflects developmental processes’ reciprocal interaction with coping. Specifically, he notes that four key issues need addressing in current child and adolescent coping research. Firstly, defining the characteristics of coping and examining how such dimensions remain stable and/or change with development; secondly, as well as the social context, exploring to what extent biological, cognitive

and social development factors influence the development and use of coping strategies; thirdly, differentiating effective and ineffective coping, and how effectiveness is related to social context and individual differences; and fourthly, examining to what extent aspects of the coping process are amenable to change.

2.1.2 Dimensions of coping

There is general consensus that the phenomenon of coping is multi-dimensional and has been categorised along a number of domains, mainly derived from factor analyses and other quantitative measures, and based on similarity or the function a particular action serves (Compas, 1998; Frydenberg, 1997; Steed, 1998). Although there is no clear agreement on “the basic dimensions on which coping responses of children and adolescents can be distinguished” (Compas, 1998, p. 232), certain dichotomous groupings have been identified and are commonly used (Steed, 1998).

The most common, posited by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is that two key functions of coping are to deal with the problem (problem-focussed coping) and/or adapt to or manage the problem (emotion-focussed coping), with both forms of coping usually being adopted in response to stress. This has been supported in numerous studies (e.g., Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), and has provided the basis for several coping scales (for a review see for example Burnett & Fanshawe, 1996; Frydenberg, 1997; Steed, 1998).

Another fundamental dichotomy is that between approach and avoidant coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986). These authors suggest that approach strategies “allow for appropriate action and/or the possibility for noticing and taking

advantages of changes in a situation that might make it more controllable. Approach strategies also allow for ventilation of affect” (p. 813). Conversely, avoidant strategies function to reduce stress and/or prevent overwhelming anxiety in the individual. Therefore it is suggested that cognitive and emotional actions are utilised either toward or away from the perceived threat.

Although there are other models of coping such as primary versus secondary (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982), monitoring and blunting (Miller, 1987), and behavioural-, emotional-and orientation-regulation (Skinner, 1995), it is generally acknowledged that the process of coping involves strategies or actions that attempt to “manage the stressor, and/or the self in relation to the stressor” (Losoya et al., 1998, p. 288). Losoya and colleagues point out that coping functions to regulate emotional arousal generated from a perceived stressor, and that the literature on emotion regulation is central to the topic of coping. Citing their six-year longitudinal research on children and other literature, Losoya et al. summarise that firstly regulation of internal (experienced) emotion is similar to emotion-focussed coping (cognitive restructuring, attentional shifts and refocussing). Secondly, behavioural regulation is also associated with the experience of emotion (e.g., inhibition, impulsivity, aggression) and can be linked to emotion-focussed and/or avoidant versus approach coping. Thirdly, regulating the context in which emotion is elicited is akin to the active, approach and problem-focussed approaches to coping.

From extensive research with Australian adolescents, Frydenberg (1997) suggests that in conceptualising coping there are four essential components: “1. Coping is an attempt at solving a problem and may not necessarily result in a resolution. 2. Coping can be behavioural or cognitive in nature. 3. Coping is a

process that changes over time. 4. Appraisal precedes coping endeavours” (p.50).

Thus Frydenberg and Lewis (1993b) define coping as:

“a set of cognitive and affective actions which arise in response to a particular concern. They represent an attempt to restore the equilibrium or remove the turbulence for the individual. This may be done by solving the problem (that is, removing the stimulus) or accommodating to the concern without bringing about a solution. Coping is essentially a dynamic phenomenon.”

(p.255)

There would appear, therefore, to be some consensus and common themes concerning concepts of coping, but as Frydenberg (1997) points out, there is some confusion in descriptive terminology. She notes that *coping actions* can be regarded as the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of the individual, which can be clustered, by related actions, as *coping strategies*. (These terms therefore are often used interchangeably). *Coping resources* refer, not only to external resources available for consideration, but also to facets of the individual’s personality (e.g. temperament, self-concept) which affect the type of strategies used (see also Compas, 1998). *Coping styles* refer to the tendency toward consistency in the use of certain strategies in managing stress.

From their research with adolescents, and subsequent development of the Adolescent Coping Scale, which is used in this thesis, (see Method, chapter 4, and Frydenberg, 1997 for detailed description and comparisons with other coping measurements), Frydenberg and Lewis (1993a) have grouped strategies into three conceptual styles, which can be delineated to represent functional and dysfunctional coping. Whereas functional styles include strategies to deal with a problem, be it

individually and/or with reference to other people, use of non-productive strategies are seen as more dysfunctional. Thus:

Style 1: *Solving the Problem* comprises eight coping strategies (Seeking Social Support, Focus on Solving the Problem, Physical Recreation, Seek Relaxing Diversion, Investing in Close Friends, Seek to Belong, Work Hard and Achieve, Focus on the Positive) and represents a style of coping characterised by working at a problem while remaining optimistic, fit, relaxed and socially connected.

Style 2: *Non-productive Coping* comprises eight strategies (Worry, Seek to Belong, Wishful Thinking, Not Cope, Ignore the Problem, Tension Reduction, Keep to Self, Self-Blame). These primarily reflect a combination of what may be termed non-productive avoidance strategies which are empirically associated with an inability to cope.

Style 3: *Reference to Others* contains four strategies (Seek Social Support, Seek Spiritual Support, Seek Professional Help, Social Action) and can be characterised by turning to others for support whether they be peers, professionals or deities.

(pp.34-35)

It is noted that seeking social support is included in two scales, as it understood that at times such a strategy can be both functional (productive) or non-functional (dependency).

To what extent coping styles and strategies are stable characteristics or variable across situations remains controversial, with research suggesting flexibility rather than consistency of style (e.g., Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Moos & Schaefer, 1993; Stern & Zevon, 1990). However

Frydenberg and Lewis (1994) suggests that the distinction between coping styles and response can be likened to a state-trait approach, which is not incompatible with the transactional viewpoint. Consideration also needs to be given to predispositions being learnt through previous experience (Ebata & Moos, 1994; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1994; Terry, 1994). In a study of post-primary Australian adolescents, Frydenberg and Lewis (1994) reported that whatever the issue of concern, students used a stable hierarchy of preferred coping strategies. However significant differences were detected in the way students coped with specific concerns, which is explored in this thesis. In this respect, it is important to examine how coping evolves and factors that influence perceived coping resources (Compas, 1998; Rutter, 1981).

2.1.3 The development of coping

2.1.3.1 Temperament

From infancy onward, adaptive coping is affected by personality and environmental variables, and may depend on the ‘goodness of fit’ between these factors (Lerner & Lerner, 1983; Sugarman, 1986; Thomas & Chess, 1977). Temperament, a term which generally refers to a person’s basic disposition, is thought to be biologically, and in part, genetically based and can be defined as “individual differences in emotional, attentional, and behavioural self-regulation and emotional reactivity, which colour much of the individual’s behaviour” (Sanson, Prior, Oberklaid & Smart, 1998, p. 9).

The concept of individual differences in temperament has been of research interest since the pioneering New York Longitudinal Study (NYLS) conducted by Thomas, Chess, and colleagues in the 1960s (see Sanson et al., 1998) and in recent years in the large-scale Australian Temperament Project (see Sanson, Prior, &

Oberklaid, 1985; Sanson et al., 1998, for details). Although the concept of temperament is not examined in the present study the findings of other research show that certain patterns remain moderately stable over time, and that “temperament can be described as a ...building block for personality, emerging through interaction with the environment as the child grows. By adolescence, researchers tend to speak of personality rather than temperament” (Sanson et al., 1998, pp. 9-10). A longitudinal study of more than 800 New Zealand children from three to 15 years (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva, 1995) also demonstrated stable patterns of temperament and other personality factors.

The influence of certain characteristics of temperament need be viewed within a developmental and life-span perspective, as particular characteristics may be of greater or lesser importance for adaptive functioning at different ages (Dekovic, 1999; Nitz & Lerner, 1991). The Australian Temperament Project isolated specific temperament factors at different age levels. In early adolescence (11-14 years) these are: Approach (tendency to approach or withdraw from new settings or people), Negative Reactivity, Activity (motor), and Persistence (attention span, ability to remain on task). Sanson and her colleagues (1998) suggest that these dimensions concur with other literature on temperament, which uses more global terms such as ‘self-regulation’, and ‘emotionality’ (e.g., Korpela, 1992). Emotionality is addressed in this study in examining facets of self-concept (Marsh, 1988) as part of identity formation.

Few studies have directly examined the relationship between temperament and coping and how the processes change over time (Compas, 1998; Frydenberg, 1997), yet there is increasing evidence that individual differences in personality influence coping and later adjustment and social functioning (e.g., Caspi et al., 1995;

Dekovic, 1999; Hoffman et al., 1996; Losoya et al., 1998). Buss and Plomin (1984) propose emotionality, sociability and activity to be three dimensions of personality which influence the perception and effects of stress in adolescence. Thus, for example, adolescents who become easily distressed may view certain types of situations as more stressful than those who adapt to change easily. Ebata and Moos (1994) found in a study of 315 adolescents that those who did report high levels of distress tended to use non-productive, emotion-focussed and avoidance coping strategies, as opposed to those who were more active who utilised functional and problem-solving strategies.

There is mounting evidence to suggest that the relatively stable traits of personality can affect ways of coping (e.g., Compas, 1998; White, Hopper, & Frydenberg, 1995, cited in Frydenberg, 1997) which in turn influence adaptation and social functioning. Yet it is difficult to isolate temperament as a single predictor of behaviour or adjustment, as “interactional and transactional processes...explain most of the predictive power of child temperament” (Sanson et al., 1998, p.30). Cognitive and social developmental factors, as well as the social context, explored in this thesis, are equally important in examining how coping evolves and changes over time.

2.1.3.2 Cognitive and social factors

Earlier sections of this literature review outlined the complex psychosocial processes of development that take place from infancy onward. However, in examining coping across the lifespan, it has been noted that most studies have examined age differences within the adult population (Compas, 1998; Frydenberg, 1997; Losoya et al., 1998). Although studies examining emotion regulation in

childhood have indicated predictable changes in coping with development of cognitive skills and language acquisition (e.g., Braungart-Rieker & Stifter, 1996; Kopp, 1989; Losoya et al., 1998), research on the processes and development of coping in older children and adolescents has produced mixed results. Losoya et al. (1998), in their comprehensive review of literature, suggest that a few patterns have emerged: “ that with age children use more strategies that are inner-focused and mentalistic, such as emotion-focused coping. Strategies that require more sophisticated cognitive processing ...emerge with age in childhood...(and) with age, children seem to become more independent and begin to move away from relying on others for support” (p. 295).

These findings have been supported by Australian research on adolescent coping using the ACS (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a), in which distinct differences have been found in strategies used by younger and older teenagers. Frydenberg (1997) cites a study by Farrell (1993) in which comparisons were made between Year 7 students (12-13 years old) and Year 11 (16-17 years), noting that whereas older adolescents worried more, young adolescents used more “social support, expressed more feelings of not coping, took more social action, ignored their problems, sought more professional help and in general used more reference to others...” (p.72). In another study of over 600 students aged between 12-17 years (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993b), the young post-primary adolescents reported more work-related and less tension-reducing strategies than older students. Frydenberg suggests that whereas the transition from primary to secondary school is viewed enthusiastically by the young students who are keen to work hard in order to be viewed favourably, for older adolescents, the “novelty has worn off ” (1997, p.72). Encountering multiple pressures and challenges may account for less use of

productive strategies and more use of tension-reducing strategies and self-blame in older adolescents (Frydenberg, 1997). However it could be argued that the period of young adolescence is equally or more stressful, given the transition to secondary school, and onset of puberty (e.g., Petersen & Crockett, 1985; Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993).

As children and adolescents' coping abilities become more complex, so does their social context, with more potential stressful situations to be encountered. In this respect, other important aspects of psycho-social functioning such as self-concept, as well as self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982), attribution styles (Robinson, Garber, & Hilman, 1995; Rutter, 1981) locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and hardiness (Kobasa, 1979) have been explored as potential protective factors in studies on resilience and vulnerability to stress in adolescents (e.g., Luthar, 1991).

There are many factors related to the development of coping which could be considered, the scope of which prohibits detailed discussion in this thesis. Compas (1998) however notes that further research is required in areas such as the role of observational learning versus instruction, and the relevance of the influence of parents, peers, teachers and other adults in the development of coping.

2.1.4 Coping and self-concept

It will be recalled from earlier sections that, in discussing the formation of identity and self-concept, the environmental contexts of home and school, and the influence of primary people such as parents, peers, and teachers were proposed as integral to the individual's psychosocial functioning and subjective well-being, with the social self being of importance in early adolescence. Yet until recently, in adolescent research, the domains of identity and self-concept have tended to have

been investigated quite separately from coping and development (Jackson & Bosma, 1990).

In their comprehensive book (Bosma & Jackson, 1990), a number of authors from different perspectives presented issues with varying emphasis on self-concept or coping. Overall results of cited longitudinal studies, and cognitive perspectives of both adolescent development and coping, demonstrated the interaction of the two domains. Adolescents need to respond to new tasks, challenges and concerns, and so, in turn, participate in their own development and sense of self (see also Coleman, 1993). Therefore, as Skinner and Edge (1998) argue, “researchers studying coping and development are examining processes on (probably qualitatively) different points on the same continuum” (p. 360).

For example, Seiffge-Krenke (1990), in discussing developmental processes in self-concept and coping behaviour, provides evidence, from results of longitudinal studies of German adolescents, for the association between domains of self-concept and coping styles. She identified three main styles to be active copers, internal copers, and problem avoiders. Using an adapted form of Offer’s Self-Image Questionnaire (Offer et al., 1981), Seiffge-Krenke found that, as in Offer’s research in the USA (Offer, 1969; Offer et al., 1981), young people in Germany generally had high self-esteem, were satisfied with their relationship with their parents and peers, and were active and/or internal copers. Problem avoiders were more depressed in their self-concept. As in the USA there was also a marked difference in gender, with girls having less positive perceptions of themselves than boys, particularly in early adolescence (see also Marsh, 1989).

Research with 208 Australian students (Boldero et al., 1993), using Marsh’s (1990) Self Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ-II) and the Adolescent Coping Scale

(Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a) found self-concept to be predictive of 16 of the 18 coping strategies, with non-productive strategies related to lower self-concept in physical appearance, emotional stability, relations with parents and same-sex peers. Conversely, functional strategies were positively related to higher self-concept in areas such as physical abilities and academic domains.

Gender differences have also been noted in adolescent coping research (see for example Frydenberg, 1997 for an overview), with some consistent patterns which indicate that girls use more social support and other emotion-focussed strategies than boys (e.g., Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993b; Patterson & McCubbin, 1987; Seiffge-Krenke, 1990, 1993). Boys have been found (in the Australian context) to use more physical recreation, take more risks, are more aggressive and private (Fallon & Bowles, 1999; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991). It has been proposed that styles of coping may reflect inherent gender differences in communication and premises about themselves (see Frydenberg, 1997), and that any particular style of coping may not necessarily be better than another (Feldman, Fisher, Ransom, & Dimiceli, 1995; Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). What is important, is the effectiveness or not of the coping strategies used in any given situation.

2.1.5 Coping efficacy

It has been argued in this paper so far that non-productive, emotion-focussed strategies are regarded as more 'dysfunctional' than actions that are problem-solving (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a), with empirical evidence regarding adjustment outcomes such as negative affect (e.g., depression, anxiety) and behavioural problems generally supporting this view (e.g., Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Hoffman, Levy-Shiff, Sohlberg, & Zarizki, 1992). However,

there is also some contradictory evidence suggesting, for example, that avoidant coping is positively associated with less problems at school, and social competence in girls who are high in depressive symptomatology (e.g., Kliever & Sandler, 1993). It is thought that management and/or expression of feelings can be useful particularly when a situation is not in the individual's control to change (e.g., Weisz, McCabe, & Dennig, 1994).

Compas (1998) comments that attempting to identify individual strategies as effective or not will, "for the most part, prove fruitless..." (p.234). Effective coping therefore depends on the goodness of fit between what an individual brings to any given situation (such as individual dispositions, family circumstances, and support systems), the context of the situation and the nature of the response (Frydenberg, 1997; Sugarman, 1986). Judgement of efficacy is best determined by the individual's answer to "Did it work for me?" (Frydenberg, 1997, p. 54). Differences in coping and self-concept may depend on general and specific individual concerns and perceptions of life experiences.

The next section reviews some of the literature that addresses the influences of the social context of the family in how adolescents' perceive and react to concerns and life events, and the correlations with coping, self-concept and emotional stability (depressive symptomatology).

2.2 The family context in adolescence

2.2.1 Parent-adolescent relationships

In discussing identity formation and self-concept, it was noted that the environment of home is the foundation upon which the child and adolescent builds a sense of self. Whilst place identity concentrates on the importance of the physical

environment, it is recognised that, for most children, socialisation and learning about the world occurs within the family context, and that the quality of attachment and bonding with primary caregivers from infancy onwards impacts on later psychological well-being (e.g., Bowlby, 1982; Feiring & Taska, 1996). The family environment remains an important influence and potential source of support in adolescence, and can impact on individual sense of well-being, competence and ability to cope with everyday concerns and stressful events (De Ross, Marrinan, Schattner, & Gullone, 1999; Feiring & Taska, 1996; Frydenberg, 1997; Heaven, 1994; Novick, Cauce, & Grove, 1996).

Whereas there was relatively little published research on the nature of parent-adolescent relationships before the 1980s, many integrative reviews emerged in the 1990s, the general conclusions of which have been summarised by Holmbeck (1996). He notes that most research has tended to detail the sort of changes that can occur in families, that most has concentrated on intact, white middle-class families, and that less than 10% of these families report chronic parent-adolescent relationship difficulties. Holmbeck examines, from a process perspective, the notion that in early adolescence parent-adolescent relationships undergo a period of transformation and redefinition, and suggests that conflict is a natural component of the process of change.

The complementary processes of continuity and discontinuity of development discussed earlier (see section 1.1.2) can be applied to the transformation of parent-adolescent relationships along behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions (Collins & Russell, 1991; Heaven, 1994). Issues of attachment and autonomy, cohesion, conflict, parenting control and communication styles are factors which have been variously described as influencing the adolescent's perception of the

family environment in relation to self (see for example Conger & Galambos, 1997; De Ross et al., 1999; Heaven, 1994; Laursen, Wilder, Noack, & Williams, 2000; Santrock, 1997).

Parenting style and control can affect outcomes for adolescents. Although not directly addressed in this study, it is important to note that parenting behaviour can be divided into two main dimensions: emotional support and parental control, with control emphasised more than support by adolescents (Amato, 1990; Noller & Patton, 1990). Styles of parenting can be differentiated as Authoritative, Authoritarian, Indulgent and Neglectful permissiveness (Lamborne, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornsbusch, 1991). Authoritative parenting, which is regarded as a democratic approach, combines parental rule-setting and boundaries, high expectations and monitoring, with warmth, affection, support and respect for the adolescent's exploration of self-identity and competencies. Adolescents in this environment tend to view parents as important support systems and attachment figures, whilst developing autonomy (Santrock, 1997), and are found to be competent and confident, well-adjusted and better able to deal with stress, using productive coping strategies (Frydenberg, 1997; Hetherington, 1999; Lamborne et al., 1991). This is in contrast to those brought up in a neglectful environment where there is low parental control and disengagement from responsible parenting. Adolescents in this environment have been found to be lower on psychosocial development and higher on internalised distress. The authoritarian style in which there is high parent control, with minimal discussion, as well as the more indulgent style of parenting produce mixed outcomes, but generally adolescents present with few behavioural difficulties (see Lamborne et al., 1991 for further details). However

an important factor of parenting is the nature of communication within the family (Heaven, 1994).

Communication is integral to all types of interaction, and effective communication is regarded as the key to good family functioning. This is particularly important for adolescents during their process of individuation, in developing their sense of identity and independence (Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998; Noller & Callan, 1991; Younis & Smollar, 1990). In two recent Dutch studies of 13-15 year old students, Jackson et al., (1998) explored firstly adolescents' perceptions of communication with their parents and areas of home life such as decision-making, conflict and its resolution, and family satisfaction; and secondly, the association between parent-adolescent communication and the adolescents' well-being (defined as physical and psychosocial health, experience of positive and negative affect, and general satisfaction with life), self-esteem, and coping.

Results of the first study indicated that most of the 413 respondents were satisfied with the communication with their parents, but had more open communication with their mother. Boys however were more positive than girls about their father (cf. Noller & Callan, 1991), and younger adolescents (13 year olds) more positive about both parents than at mid-adolescence. Open communication was also positively related to family satisfaction, and with a 'compromise' style of parental authority in conflict resolution rather than 'aggression' (see Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Smetana, 1995). The second study, with 660 subjects, whilst confirming most findings from the first study, found that open communication was significantly related to adolescents' well-being, self-esteem and functional aspects of coping.

Problems with communication were associated with avoidance and depressive reactions in adolescents.

Overall, Jackson and colleagues (1998) propose that parental authority is more readily accepted in early rather than in mid-adolescence, and that good communication, including parental explanations for reasons for their approach on matters, can be expected to positively influence adolescents' satisfaction with family life; that constructive resolution of disagreement is experienced, and that adolescents have positive perceptions of their self-worth and cope functionally with problems. The Dutch findings supported Australian research, whereby adolescents have been found to generally report good relations with their parents (e.g., Noller & Callan, 1990; Rigby & Rump, 1981), that communication and styles of negotiation, rather than the degree of conflict, is associated with adolescent self-esteem (e.g., Amato, 1987; Brown & Mann, 1988; Ellerman, 1993), and that positive family climate is associated with functional coping styles (see Frydenberg, 1994), and can serve as a protective, resilience factor (e.g., Garton, Zubrick, & Silburn, 1998; Hurd & Wooding, 1997).

2.2.2 Family stressors in adolescence

Other aspects within the family context however can affect the experiences, concerns and psychological well-being of adolescents. Ongoing daily family stressors need to be considered as well as potentially stressful life events (Compas & Wagner, 1991; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Johnson & Bradlyn, 1988; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). There is a burgeoning literature which examines associations between family factors and adolescent psycho-social functioning, particularly depression, self-concept, and coping. Examples include family structure, such as

size, composition, divorce and separation (e.g., Frost & Pakiz, 1990; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1996; Hetherington, 1999; Lawler & Lennings, 1992; Lennings, 1995), socio-economic status and difficulties (e.g., DuBois, Felner, Mears, & Krier, 1994; Orr & Dinur, 1995; Ortiz & Farrell, 1993; Whitbeck et al., 1991), parental stress (e.g., Compas & Wagner, 1991), parental health, and psychological well-being, particularly depression (e.g., De Ross et al., 1999; Downey & Coyne, 1990; Heaven, 1994). Whilst the scope of this wide field of research prohibits detailed examination of factors, some are pertinent to the research conducted in this study.

In ascertaining the impact of various life stressors, an important aspect, emphasised in this thesis, is the adolescent's subjective perception of their circumstances. Various methods have been utilised to examine the impact of life events in childhood and adolescence, most commonly using self-report scales (e.g., Adams & Adams, 1991; Cohen, Burt, & Bjork, 1987; Daniels & Moos, 1990), or other written and oral descriptions (e.g., Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1984; Frydenberg, 1997).

Daniels and Moos (1990) note eight types of stressors most commonly reported by adolescents to be: 1. Parent stressors: conflict between parents and adolescents, conflict between parents, and parental health; 2. Home/financial stressors: living conditions and economic status of the family; 3. Sibling stressors: such as conflict, and health problems in siblings; 4. Physical health problems in the adolescent; 5. Extended family stressors: interpersonal stress between relatives and the adolescent; 6. School stressors: for example, dealing with teachers, and other students; 7. Friend stressors: such as peer pressure, and difficulties with friends; and 8. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationship stressors. Daniels and Moos found that the more stressors experienced, the more likely adolescents were to be depressed, have lower

self-esteem and display behavioural difficulties. Ongoing stressors were found to be more important overall in explaining adolescent psychological well-being, than specific life events.

Adams and Adams (1991) constructed a Life Events Survey which included 13 aspects of family and personal events (see Appendix B2) in order to ascertain to what extent potentially stressful life events negatively affected American adolescents, and the association with depression and potential use of problem-solving alternatives. In mid-adolescence (N=135, mean age 15.4 years), it was found that 'death of a family member or friend,' 'failure of a test or course,' 'alcoholism/drug abuse in family,' 'fighting/arguments within family,' and 'breaking up with boy/girlfriend' had the most negative affects, with over 90% of respondents acknowledging that fighting and arguments took place in their families. The Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (Reynolds, 1987) was used to determine depressive symptomatology, with subjects divided into Low, Medium and High groups of depression, according to score distributions. Results indicated that 'unemployment of a family member,' 'starting a new school,' and 'breaking up with boy/girlfriend' affected the High depression group more negatively than those Low in depression.

In their study, Adams and Adams (1991) also devised three scenarios of problem situations: Parental Breakup, Loss of Friends, and Drop in Grades, with eleven problem-solving alternatives to choose from: four positive, five negative, and two, ambiguous. Whereas most respondents considered positive strategies, such as talking to friends or adults, or confronting the issue, those who displayed a high degree of depressive symptomatology were more likely to isolate themselves and use other negative alternatives. However there was no significant difference in the Low

and High depression groups in considering alternatives for Parental Breakup. Adams and Adams hypothesised that this may be due to the fact that even non-depressed adolescents have difficulty in preparing themselves for parental separation, and so would cope less well.

Marital discord, parental separation and divorce is estimated to affect 50 percent of American adolescents by the time they are 18 years old (Hetherington, 1999). Similarly, although lower than the USA, divorce rates in the United Kingdom and Australia have risen markedly over recent decades (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Heaven, 1994). There is a growing literature that suggests that separation of parents is stressful for most adolescents, and is associated with depression and low self-esteem, especially in girls (Frost & Pakiz, 1990; Hetherington, 1999; Roberts, 1999). There is also evidence to suggest that marital discord is related to parental depression, which in turn is associated with adolescent depression (e.g., De Ross et al., 1999), and that as many as one third of adolescents and parents do not adjust to divorce in the long-term (e.g., Westman, 1983).

However, meta-analysis of previous literature on the well-being of children following parental divorce (Amaoto & Keith, 1991) suggests that there are inconsistencies in findings that need to take into account characteristics of the family, such as socio-economic status. Similarly, ongoing parental conflict, custodial and access arrangements may be more relevant to the adolescent's perception of stress and ability to cope rather than the separation or divorce per se (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1996; Hauser & Bowlds, 1990). In their review, Coleman and Hendry conclude that given so many factors, divorce should be regarded as a process rather than an event. Frydenberg (1994, 1997), in reviewing her own and colleagues'

studies of adolescents' ways of coping with family concerns, notes that in one study examining young adolescents' coping with parental separation there was a tendency to use less *Seek Social Support*, *Seek to Belong*, and *Seek Professional Help* as strategies than for general concerns, suggesting that young people prefer not to involve others in that particular matter. On the other hand, those in intact families found it harder to deal with family-related concerns than in general, reporting more use of *Not Cope*, *Worry*, and less reliance on *Seeking Relaxing Diversions*. One might surmise that a lack of perceived control in such matters might account for the preferred ways of coping with them (e.g., Weisz, McCabe, & Dennig, 1994). In examining gender differences, Frydenberg noted that boys were more inclined not to acknowledge a concern and *Ignore the Problem* as a strategy, whereas girls report using more *Social Support*, *Work Hard and Achieve*, as well as *Tension Reduction* strategies (for further details, see Frydenberg, 1997).

Parents serve as role models, whereby the child and adolescent learns by observation and imitation, as well as instruction (Compas, 1998; Heaven 1994; Whitbeck, 1987). Family ethnicity has been found to be associated with specific styles of coping with differences noted for example between German and Israeli students (Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1990) and in Australian research, between Anglo-Australians, European-Australians and Asian-Australians (see Frydenberg, 1997). Parents who use adaptive problem-solving strategies in resolving disputes and concerns are more likely to provide constructive models of coping for their children, and conversely non-productive coping in parents can influence the use of dysfunctional coping in their children (e.g., Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Shulman, 1993). However, other research comparing coping strategies between mothers and daughters did not generally support the influence of the parent's coping

style, apart from spiritual belief, but rather suggested that maturation level of the adolescent and outside influences, such as cohorts, might be more relevant (Lade, Frydenberg, & Poole, 1998).

Individual differences need to be considered in how young adolescents cope with concerns at home. For example it has been suggested that ‘easy’ temperament, and ‘resilient’ children tend to cope better with potential stressors (e.g., Emery, 1988). Social support networks, particularly other family members such as grandparents (e.g., Tyszkowa, 1993), friends and other significant adults such as teachers, can also ameliorate an adolescent’s concern and worry about a given situation (Heaven, 1994).

It can be seen from this overview of the family context that there are many interwoven factors to be considered. It should be re-iterated that from this study’s view-point, subjective experiences are considered important determinants of perceived adaptation to situations and transitions. The next section examines the relevance of friends and peers in adolescence.

2.3 The social context of friends and peers in adolescence

2.3.1 The development and nature of friendship

From late childhood into adolescence there is a change in the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships outside of the immediate family. As family relationships become redefined, friends and peer networks become increasingly important and influential in the young adolescent’s development of social self as part of identity formation (see section 1.2.1), for social competency, source of support, psychological well-being and adjustment (Berndt, 1996; Burhmester, 1996; Conger

& Galambos, 1997; Furman & Burhmester, 1992; Heaven, 1994; Kegan, 1982; Larson & Richards, 1991; Newman & Newman, 1987; Santrock, 1997).

A basic premise of attachment theory is that, from infancy, internal representation of self and others emerges through interactive experiences with primary caregivers (e.g., Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton, 1985). It is also argued that very young children develop representations of friendship and peer relations in a similar way (Howes, 1996), and that they react differently to one another than to adults (Parke & Asher, 1983). Behavioural indicators of 'friendships' can be identified among infants and toddlers, the word 'friend' is found in most four year olds' vocabularies, and 'best' or 'close friends' are integral to the social experience of middle childhood and adolescence (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996).

Whereas the concept of friendship is linked to 'liking' or attachment to someone, and is a voluntary relationship (Gottman, 1983), peer groups contain individuals of the same cohort; acquaintances who may not necessarily be considered as close friends (Heaven, 1994). Peer relationships, both close friends, and as a group, play a significant role in adolescents' daily experiences. An increasing amount of time is spent interacting with peers (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Larson & Richards, 1991), and the nature of friendship changes (Berndt, 1996).

Considerable research has examined the concept and significance of friendship in childhood and adolescence, as reviewed by Gottman (1983), Serafica and Blyth (1985) and more recently by Bukowski et al. (1996). Bukowski and colleagues note that there is increasing evidence to suggest that relationship variables such as friendship need to be included in models of development, and that friendships are complex and multidimensional; " that there is more to friendship than

having friends; that all friendships are not alike; that friendships involve social interactions that are sometimes affirming but sometimes contentious; that different benefits and liabilities may derive from having friends than from who one's friends are; and that friendships can be described in numerous ways other than the time that children spend together or the intimacy of their social exchanges" (p. 2).

Dimensions of friendship have been variously described from developmental perspectives, and depend on methodology, such as self-report evaluations and observations of responsiveness. Kerns (1996), for example, divides childhood into three distinct phases: early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. In early childhood (ages 3-7) maintaining harmony and engagement in play are seen as distinct features of friendship. Similarly, Hartup (1989) identifies a 'reward-cost' developmental stage of friendship around the time of second to third grade of school, with features of sharing similar activities and expectations. Hartup's second stage of friendship is 'normative', characterised by commitment to sharing, evolving during the fourth and fifth grade. Kerns, on the other hand, describes middle childhood (ages 8-12) as a time when establishing companions and avoiding loneliness and isolation from the peer group is emphasised. H.S. Sullivan (1953) argues that between the ages of 4 and 8 years children move from relying on adults for social and emotional needs, to their playmates as friends, and that from ages 8 to 11 'chumship', the development of a one-on-one relationship with a peer, is dominant, functioning to prevent loneliness, enhance self-esteem, foster sensitivity to others' needs as well as interpersonal competence.

In early adolescence, Hartup (1989) describes an 'empathic' stage of friendship, in which the key features are the development of understanding and self-disclosure, as well as the sharing of common interests. The quality of friendships

change, with an increase in intimacy (Buhrmester, 1990, 1996) and clearer differentiation of one or two 'close' friends among a wider, but more peripheral peer network (Berndt, 1996). Kerns' (1996) third phase of friendship in adolescence (ages 13-19) also notes intimacy as a distinct feature, functioning to allow adolescents to meet their socio-emotional needs and safely explore issues of identity.

Need fulfilment, interpersonal competence and their reciprocal effects within the developmental context of friendships in early adolescence has been the focus of Duane Burhmester's research for a number of years (1990, 1996). He describes his "neo Sullivan" approach (1996, p.159), taking concepts from Sullivan (1953), Maslow (1971), and Rogers (1951), who emphasise the relevance of social need fulfilment for well-being. Sullivan argued that the developing child's sense of self is partially a function of its relationships with significant others, particularly parents and friends. The nature, rather than the extent, of interpersonal relationships is emphasised, with fulfilment of social needs such as companionship, tenderness (secure attachment), acceptance and intimacy shaping the individual's personality and sense of well-being. Similarly Rogers (1951) emphasises supportive relationships and positive regard from significant others as being essential for self-esteem.

Based on a series of studies with adults, Buhrmester (1996) suggests that there are three dimensions of personal needs which fit with earlier theorists' concepts. The first factor, which encompasses Erikson's (1968) developmental theory, is defined as 'agentic needs' which include "needs for achievement, power/authority, recognition/status, approval/acceptance, autonomy, identity and self-esteem." The second factor, which relates to Sullivan (1953), "represents communal needs, such as needs for affection/love, intimacy, support,

companionship, nurturance, fun/enjoyment, and sexual fulfillment” (p.160). The third factor, ‘survival needs,’ include physical safety, food, health, and shelter, and represents Maslow’s (1971) notion that basic needs have to be met before other hierarchical factors can be addressed.

From a developmental and lifespan perspective, Buhrmester (1996) provides a conceptual framework to explain how the importance of various needs and concerns change, particularly during childhood and adolescence. Taking Maslow’s (1971) concepts, social and cognitive theories of social learning and personality (Bandura, 1986; Mischel, 1990), concepts such as goals, plans and strategies (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990; Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and attachment theory’s model of the need for ‘felt security’ in relationships (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986, cited in Buhrmester, 1996), Buhrmester defines clusters of needs as “preoccupying concerns” which become prominent at different stages of development. He proposes that multiple factors such as “biological maturation, cognitive development, cultural expectations, and individuals’ histories of experiences probably converge to influence concerns that youngsters are consciously and unconsciously preoccupied with at any point in development” (pp.163-4). Such concerns generate a “need” for social input/outcomes which in turn lead to “sought after provisions/features of relationships” (p.164). In early adolescence, concerns centre around exploration and expression of the self, as well as social validation (Burhmester, 1996). Intimacy in friendships, defined as “self- disclosure and sharing of private thoughts” (Santrock, 1997, p. 327), develops in young adolescents as close friends become allies, confidants, and sources of support (Blyth & Traeger, 1988; Harter, 1990; Richey & Richey, 1980).

2.3.2 Supportive relationships in adolescence

Until the mid 1980s, reviews of literature showed a lack of consensus in defining the concept of social support (see Gottlieb, 1981; Vaux, 1985). Vaux construes it as a “meta-construct with at least three facets: resources, behaviours, and subjective appraisals” (p.9). Resources are those relationships in which there are potentials for behaviours and feelings of support, usually to be found in social networks. Behaviours are those specifically supportive, such as listening, or giving concrete help. Subjective appraisals include the perception and satisfaction with the amount and quality of actual or available support, and beliefs concerning feelings of being cared about by family, friends, and other significant people (Vaux, 1985).

Social support can be viewed from a developmental and interactive perspective (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Newcomb, 1990). It is seen as a reciprocal process that evolves throughout the lifespan, a resource derived from interaction between “the personal characteristics of the individual and those who occupy the same social milieu” (Newcomb, 1990, p. 56). The first supportive relationship evolves from the attachment between infant and parent figure, with the attributes of the child and responses of the primary caregiver forming the basis for future expectations and reliance on social support (Newcomb, 1990).

Berndt (1996) identifies four types of social support that correspond with features of close friendships. First, *informational support* such as advice about personal concerns and other topics occurs in conversations which are part of intimate friendships. Second, in adolescence, the prosocial behavior of friendship can provide practical, task-oriented *instrumental support* such as helping each other with homework. Third, *companionship support* is provided and is the most consistent function of friendship across the lifespan, from playing in childhood to ‘hanging

out', and 'doing things together' in adolescence and adulthood (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). The fourth type, *esteem support* overlaps with other kinds of support whereby friends value loyalty and trust, give encouragement and socially validate one another (Buhrmester, 1996).

The positive aspects of adolescent friendships have been supported by other researchers. Individuals with close, supportive friendships have been found to be high in self-esteem, not depressed or lonely, and have positive interactions with peers (Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993; Buhrmester, 1990; Parker & Asher, 1993). However a cautionary note is added to interpreting data that uses self-report measures, as adolescents' perceptions of themselves and perceptions of friendship can derive from their fundamentally positive or negative view about life in general, reinforcing the argument that multiple factors interplay in adolescent adjustment (Berndt, 1996; Buhrmester, 1996; Tevendale, DuBois, Lopez, & Prindiville, 1997).

It was noted earlier that friendship and peer networks become more important in adolescence, as family relationships become redefined. In early adolescence, especially soon after the onset of puberty, it has been argued that there is a degree of emotional distancing from, and de-idealisation of, parents, as issues of autonomy and independence become preoccupying concerns (Holmbeck, 1996; Steinberg, 1990). However, the process of individuation in adolescence does not imply abandonment of the centrality of relationships with parents. It has been noted, for example, that adolescents and their parents share similar values, and that adolescents tend to choose friends with the same values (see Holmbeck, 1996; Steinberg, 1990). In adolescence, relationships with parents can be transformed to that of mutual cooperation. As well as friends and peers, parents can continue to be sources of support (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Feiring & Taska, 1996; Holmbeck, 1996;

Kirchler, Palmonari, & Pombeni, 1993; Kureta & Janzen, 1996; Paterson, Field, & Pryor, 1994; Shulman, 1993).

Over the years, a number of studies have examined the developmental aspects of preferred sources of support, noting age and gender differences. Vaux (1985), in a qualitative review of the literature, concluded that during adolescence, peer and teacher support increases with age, and that family support increases for girls, but decreases for boys. However Vaux reported disparate findings in the studies, which he attributed to methodological differences, especially in failing to differentiate between facets and modes of support.

An earlier study by Burke and Weir (1978) for example, looked at gender differences in adolescents' ($N = 274$, aged 13-20 years) reported life stress and social support from parents and peers. No gender differences were reported in parent support, but significant differences were found in peer support, with females more likely than males to confide in their peers (usually same-sex) concerning problems and anxieties. However, females reported significantly more stress than males, particularly concerning peer acceptance, opposite sex relationships, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. The researchers concluded that adolescence for females presents a greater strain, proposing that, until puberty, girls are raised with a bisexual identity, being rewarded for feminine and competitive activities. In adolescence social expectations become more ambiguous for girls, with a resulting uncertainty and delay in self-identity development (see also Cunningham, 1990; Slee, 1993, for discussion on this).

However, Burke and Weir's (1978) conclusions are tenuous given they were drawn by comparing gender on support, stress, and well-being, without analysing associations among variables. As Vaux (1985) noted, boys may simply underrate

their stressful experiences, a notion which has been supported by more recent research (e.g., see Frydenberg, 1997). Newcomb (1990) proposed that, in adolescence, family and parent support should be the most stable system, having evolved from early childhood, whereas peer and other adult support is in a state of flux. Using two sets of data a year apart from an ongoing longitudinal study of 854 older adolescents, Newcomb found that family and parental support was more stable over time than peer and nonfamiliar adults. In males, perceived parent and family support was significantly correlated with extraversion and self-confidence, whereas in females peer support was influenced by positive self-esteem. Overall, however, gender differences on self-esteem and social support were not supported. Newcomb concluded that “early self-esteem increased later support from peers for both sexes and support from adults for girls (1990, p.54).

Furman and Burhmester (1992) examined perceptions of personal relationship networks across pre, early, middle and late adolescence ($N = 549$). Parents were perceived as being most significant for pre-adolescents and equally as supportive as same-sex friends in early adolescence. Greater reliance on peers was perceived by middle and late adolescence, suggesting that with age adolescents seek more support from peers in order to explore their evolving identity. Burhmester (1996), using aggregates of data from other studies, further highlights age trends in reported self-disclosure to parents and peers. During early and middle adolescence there is an increase “in the *relative* importance of friends as confidants...while dependence on parents falls” (p.167). However, it can be argued that utilisation of parents or friends as confidants depends on the situation or concern, and gender (e.g., see Coleman & Hendry, 1999 for review).

Consistent gender differences have been found in the features of friendship which may influence the support and fulfilment of particular social needs. From Maccoby's (1990) work, Burhmester (1996) notes that whereas boys' friendships in adolescence tend to focus on agentic needs and concerns, girls' focus more on communal. The basis of same-sex friendship in boys tends to be more status-oriented, with the sharing of attitudes and activities, particularly competitive sports and games (Heaven, 1994; Maccoby, 1990; Richey & Richey, 1980). Although they may use friends for instrumental and companionship support, adolescent boys have been found less likely than girls to turn to friends for social support with personal concerns, preferring to confide in parents, siblings, and other relatives (Frydenberg, 1997).

In the earlier discussion on coping (section 2.1.4) it was noted that Social Support as a coping strategy is used more consistently by girls than boys (Frydenberg, 1997). In early adolescence, girls' same-sex friendship tends to be based on verbal communication and self-disclosure (Heaven, 1994), with increasing evidence to suggest that their interactions are more intimate and supportive than boys' and function to fulfil communal needs (Burhmester, 1996). However, one might speculate, that in a boarding school environment, where same-sex peers share the same dormitory, intimate friendships may develop sooner (Heaven, 1994), and serve to fulfil communal agentic needs for both young adolescent girls and boys, when away from home. As Burhmester points out, although "possible links between gender differences in friendships and agentic and communal needs are at this time largely speculative...constructs of concerns and needs provide a conceptual means of linking changes in the nature of friendship to more basic developmental considerations" (1996, p. 181).

As the nature of friendship changes in early adolescence, so does the nature of individual interpersonal competence. In order to establish close friendships, Burhmester (1990) suggests four major changes that need to be mastered. As friendships become more focussed on communication by talking, there is firstly, the need to be able to strike up and maintain interesting conversations; secondly, the ability to initiative making plans, for example by contacting new friends; thirdly, to be able to appropriately disclose personal thoughts as well as provide emotional support; and fourthly, being able to deal with disagreements and conflicts of interests, whilst maintaining the friendship. The overall findings in Burhmester's research indicated that qualities of friendship in early adolescence are associated with the above competencies, and as such, are important correlates of personal well-being.

2.3.3 Peer groups in adolescence

The discussion so far has concentrated on the nature and positive functions of close friends in adolescence; as a source of individual support, and for psychological well-being. However, the wider context of relationships within peer groups also needs to be considered (Berndt, 1996). The establishment of close dyadic friendships and peer acceptance can be differentiated as separate entities along the continuum of peer relationships, which are influenced by, and influence, the adolescent's social development and competence (Burhmester, 1996; Kerns, 1996; Kirchler et al., 1993; Serifica & Blyth, 1985).

Serifica and Blyth (1985) provide a comprehensive historical review of research on peer groups, noting that it was only in the 1960s that interest burgeoned in examining normal adolescent peer groups' formation, structure and activities. The

authors cite major studies such as Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood and Sherif, who, in 1961, found that adolescents in close proximity (such as sharing a room) develop hierarchical structures and norms, and James Coleman (1961), who found that the leading, popular groups in high schools consisted of athletes and popular girls.

Within the peer group, as well as individual friendships, relationships can also be categorised as cliques and crowds (Dunphy, 1963, 1972). Based on Australian naturalistic observation research, Dunphy proposed five developmental trends of groupings from early to late adolescence. The 'pre-crowd' stage is identified in pre and early adolescence, and involves isolated same-sex 'cliques', small groups of from five to nine people, who are close friends, who talk and share leisure activities. Although friends most typically live in the same neighbourhood, and are similar to each other, cliques most often develop at school, are age-related, and can carry over into after-school activities. Like individual close friends, cliques have important functions, giving support and companionship, providing a source of self-esteem, and are a vital context in which social competency and strategies are learnt (Brown, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Dunphy, 1972; Gavin & Furnham, 1989; Heaven, 1994; Slee, 1993). Within cliques are leaders and followers, especially in early adolescence (Gavin & Furnham, 1989), with the leaders tending to "push other members toward more advanced levels of development" (Dusek, 1991, cited in Heaven, 1994, p.81).

The second stage of peer groups identified by Dunphy (1963, 1972) involves the 'beginning of the crowd' in which the isolated unisex cliques develop group to group interactions. Cliques then become more heterosexual in composition at the third stage, around middle adolescence. Some members of the clique may start dating, and from there on, in the fourth stage, the fully developed crowd becomes re-

organised into heterosexual cliques. By late adolescence, the crowd starts to disintegrate and loosely associated groups of couples emerge. Thus 'crowds' in adolescence can be defined as large, less close-knit groups, that consist of a number of cliques that associate with one another through school or the neighbourhood, and can contain members of both sexes, with the purpose of facilitating heterosexual contact (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Dunphy, 1972). Whereas cliques provide small group cohesion and security (similar to the family), the crowd functions as the avenue for organised, larger activities such as parties, and other settings for interactions (Santrock, 1997).

Peer groups provide an avenue for the adolescent to explore social roles, and also sets norms for behaviour (Kirchler et al., 1993). Rituals are dictated, including activities, dress mode, codes of conduct and the like, according to the type of group the individual may identify with, such as 'nerds' or 'sporty' (Brown, 1996; Coleman & Hendry, 1999). However, Brown (1990) suggests that, rather than joining a particular crowd, youths "are thrust into one by virtue of their personality, background, interests and reputation among peers" (p.183). In most schools, dominant 'crowd' groups are perceived as academically and socially competent (for a review, see Downs & Rose, 1991).

There has been considerable debate on the negative as well as positive influences that friends and peer groups engender, particularly in relation to peer pressure to conform, with peer acceptance or rejection proposed as potential indicators of psychological well-being (e.g., Gavin & Furnham, 1989; Parker & Asher, 1987; Sletta, Valås, Skaalvik, & Søbstad, 1994). Heaven (1994) notes that whereas some researchers suggest that group conformity is strongest during middle adolescence, others suggest a linear increase with age. Gavin & Furnham (1989) for

example, found higher conformity to group norms in early adolescence than later, and that young adolescents were more concerned about being in a 'popular' group than in later adolescence, suggesting that being popular enhances self-esteem and identity formation at that stage of development.

Peer pressure has been an area of research interest over the years, a detailed review of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Berndt (1996) however notes that authors who have concentrated on the negative outcomes of peer pressure have tended not to differentiate peers within a given environment. He cites as examples Bronfenbrenner (1970), who examined the pressure on adolescents by peers at boarding school in Russia, in which overall effects were weak, and Coleman's earlier research (1961) which suggested that social class was an influential factor, but was later refuted by Cohen (1983, cited in Berndt, 1996) who maintained that friends, rather than peers per se, influence conformity. Berndt argues from his review of literature, that whereas friendship groups function to act as rewards such as companionship, and as referents, coercion "is uncommon in adolescents' friendship groups because it can often be resisted...an adolescent can easily escape from pressure in one group by leaving that group and joining another" (1996, p.73). However, it has also been argued that there is susceptibility to "peer influences at certain times, under specific conditions" (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Thus, in a specific situation such as residing at a boarding school, the perceived need to conform to the dormitory group's values, standards, and behaviours, could be of importance and concern to young adolescents in their first experience of being away from their family setting, and may affect individual perception of peer acceptance and ability to adapt to that setting, particularly if lacking in interpersonal competence and self-esteem.

It remains unclear to what extent peer pressure influences adolescents to become involved in behaviours in which they normally would not engage, with research indicating that neutral or prosocial behaviours are more common than anti-social, particularly in early adolescence (e.g., Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; McIntosh, 1996). However, susceptibility to antisocial behaviour has been linked with a number of factors. As just one example, Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, and Skinner (1991) propose a three-stage social interaction model which emphasises the importance of the parent-child relationship (as previously discussed in section 2.2). The first stage is that maladaptive parent-child interactions, (for example parenting style, communication, and family stressors) generate anti-social behaviour, which in turn influences school performance and the likelihood of peer rejection. The second stage is failure at school, and further failure with the peer group. Thirdly, failure, being disliked and anti-social, leads the adolescent to seek social settings that generate reinforcement, via anti-social behaviours. Such behaviours thus contribute to perpetuate the cycle of failure and rejection by peers.

2.3.4 Peer rejection, neglect and isolation

It has been suggested that although most children are involved in some form of friendship by middle childhood, between 11% and 40% are not (see Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996). By middle childhood and in early adolescence, displaying pro-rather than anti-social or withdrawn behaviours, being sincere and caring, managing conflict, and not engaging in negative self-representation contribute to being accepted by peers (Jarvinen & Nichols, 1996; Sletta et al., 1994; Wentzel & Erdley, 1993).

Categories of social status of peers have been classified by Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982) into five distinct groups: popular, average, controversial (who receive positive and negative nominations from peers), neglected (neither strongly liked or disliked), and rejected. Those who are rejected have very few friends at school or home, are usually actively disliked by their peers or perceived as different, often because of their lack of social skills and/or aggressive and disruptive behaviour (Asher & Dodge, 1986; Merten, 1996).

A number of perspectives have been postulated to account for peer rejection. French and Waas (1985, cited in Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993) identified five patterns of behaviour in elementary-aged children which could also account for rejection in young adolescents: “(a) antagonism toward authorities, (b) social withdrawal combined with hostility, (c) seriously disturbed behaviour patterns, (d) aversive and domineering behaviour toward peers, and (e) appropriate social behaviour but severe mental or physical disabilities” (p. 212). Once labelled, rejected youngsters can have difficulty in changing their behaviours, or become more accepted by peers, unless they can start again by changing schools (Kinney, 1993), or respond to social skills intervention programmes (e.g., Murphy & Schneider, 1994).

An area of major concern, particularly within the school setting, is peer victimisation, or bullying, which has become increasingly associated with youth suicide (see Rigby, 1998). Bullying is identified as a type of aggression that involves physical and/or verbal harassment (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988), and can take the form of name-calling, being picked on by other peers, being physically attacked, or ridiculed (Rigby & Slee, 1991). It has been estimated that approximately one in seven Australian children report being bullied on a weekly basis by their peers

(Rigby, 1998). In the 1993 Western Australian Child Health Survey (WACHS) of 273,000 school students aged 4 to 16 years (Zubrick et al., 1997), almost 14% (14,500) of 12-16 year-old adolescents reported having been victims of bullying within the previous six months. From that survey it was also estimated, from teacher and parent reports, that around 5% (14,600) of all the students showed behaviours characteristic of bullying, with more prevalence amongst boys (8%) than girls (3%), although it was noted that girls' bullying behaviour could be more covert (see also Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993; Rigby & Slee, 1991). Self-report data from a South Australian study of 450 boys and 395 girls aged 12-16 (Rigby, 1998) indicated that 13.4% and 9.1% of boys and girls respectively were victims, 17.3% and 9.6% bullies, and 6.0% and 1.3% bully-and- victims.

When asked, bullies claim not to know why they behave the way they do (Merten, 1996). Whilst some research suggests hormonal changes influence aggressive behaviour (see Heaven, 1994; Richards et al., 1993), extensive research with Scandinavian students by Olweus (1984, cited in Coleman & Hendry, 1999) suggests that bullies "tend to be anxious, passive and insecure. They feel ashamed, unattractive, abandoned, without friends" (p.153). The WACHS found that 78% of those students who bullied lived in families with parenting styles other than authoritative. They also noted that the "potential for students to develop bullying behaviour in response to being bullied themselves is suggested by the finding that almost one in four students who were victims of bullying (23 per cent) were also involved in bullying others, in contrast to only 3 per cent of students who were not victims of bullying" (Zubrick et al., 1997, p. 51).

Rejected adolescents often have severe adjustment and mental health problems, and are more vulnerable to psychological stress as they have reduced peer

support and acceptance (see Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Parker & Asher, 1987; Zubrick et al., 1997). It has been found that bullies and victims are lonely, and have high levels of depression. However, victims have been found to have lower self-esteem than non-victims and some bullies (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Zubrick et al., 1997). Although some victims can be described as 'provocative', displaying aggressive, and bullying behaviors, Olweus (1989) indicates that victims tend to be anxious, sensitive and quiet and that "the behaviour and attitude of the victims seem to signal to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted" (p.16). Furthermore, in their Australian study of secondary school students, Slee and Rigby (1993) found introversion, and not necessarily anxiety, to be characteristic of victims. However, in contrast to bullies, who viewed school negatively, those who were victimized did not necessarily dislike school, which led the researchers to suggest that perhaps such students, who had low self-esteem, viewed life more pessimistically, and so saw no difference between life in or out of school. In this respect, low self-esteem and negativity may be a cause and effect of victimisation and rejection, or neglect by peers.

There are many factors that may affect an adolescent's acceptance by peers. Some students are simply less popular than others, tending to be ignored or 'neglected' (Asher & Dodge, 1986; George & Hartmann, 1996). Socio-economic status, ethnicity, intelligence and ability, physical attractiveness and specific talents, may all influence entry into peer groups (Conger & Galambos, 1997). In young adolescence, physique and body image are important concerns, with athletic ability and physical assertiveness contributing particularly to male peer group acceptance. Perception of physical attractiveness has been found to be more important in girls'

than boys' groups, probably given its stronger association with gender role development and self-image (see Coleman & Hendry, 1999). However, social skills also play a more important role in girls' peer acceptance (Conger & Galambos, 1997).

As in close friendship development, lack of appropriate interpersonal competencies can contribute to peer neglect. However, although it has been noted that there is a paucity of studies distinguishing between the consequences of rejection and neglect (Conger & Galambos, 1997), it has been suggested, from teacher and parent ratings of personality of behaviour, that neglected adolescents differ little from average-status students (French & Waas, 1985). Although neglected students have few friends, and tend to be shy, withdrawn, and solitary, they are not inevitably lonely and there are no conclusive indications of long-term adjustment difficulties (see Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993).

Given that new roles and skills are explored and developed in adolescence, it is not surprising that many adolescents report social interaction difficulties at some time or another (de Armos & Kelly, 1989). These authors note that Zimbardo, in 1977, reported that 54% of a large sample of seventh and eight grade students considered themselves to be excessively shy, which confirmed other survey-based research in the 1970s "that from 11.5 to over 50% of adolescents consider shyness, social anxiety, and social inhibition to be significant personal problems" (de Armos & Kelly, 1989, p.84). However, de Armos and Kelly also noted that terms such as 'socially deficient' 'shyness' and 'loneliness', whilst often described in social development literature, have not always been clearly differentiated or operationalised.

Marcoen and Goossens (1993), in their review of theoretical bases for research on loneliness, point out three distinct concepts: loneliness, attitude to aloneness, and solitude. They suggest that although theorists vary in their definitions, solitude can be construed as a desire to be alone, in which positive, active and constructive use of time is spent. In this respect, the shyness or withdrawal associated with neglected students can have some positive outcomes for them, in that they may use their time alone to concentrate on creative pursuits, relax, or clear their minds (Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993; and see Korpela & Hartig, 1996). Larson (1997) argues that voluntary periods of solitude increases with age, noting that “... in early adolescence solitude comes to have a more constructive role in daily life as a strategic retreat that complements social experience” (p.80). Marcoen and Goossens (1993) add that European philosophers and theorists from phenomenological and psychoanalytic traditions regard being able to constructively use “Einsamkeit” (being alone) as a sign of emotional maturity and strength.

The individual’s attitude to being alone, however, is an important determinant of perceived loneliness and isolation. In a study of British adolescents, Coleman (1974) found that early adolescents (age 11 to 13 years) reported the highest levels of anxiety about solitude. Other studies have examined attitudes to being alone, with Coleman and Hendry (1999) noting the importance of differentiating between voluntary solitude and involuntary separation from family and friends (such as relocation to secondary school or boarding for the first time).

Furthermore, Marcoen and Goossens (1993) describe two distinct dimensions of attitudes to aloneness that address reactions rather than specific situations: “aversion to aloneness” and “affinity for aloneness” (p.198). Some people may enjoy periods of aloneness, with benefits as previously described, and may even actively

prolong the situation where possible. On the other hand, those who have an aversion to aloneness may feel uneasy or even afraid to be alone for any period of time, and actively seek ways of ending the situation. Marcoen and Goossens developed a four-scale multi-dimensional instrument to measure these constructs, as well as two types of loneliness experienced in important relationships in adolescence, namely parents and peers. From developmental theories such as Erikson (1968), Marcia (1980), and Bowlby (see 1982), they related loneliness to characteristics of personality and identity formation, including attachment style, arguing that adolescents who were 'securely attached' were more positive about loneliness, than those 'dependently attached'. Non-linear trends for parent and peer-related loneliness were reported from their research (see 1993), indicating that during the transition year to secondary school (Grade 7 in Belgium), both parent and peer-related loneliness was lower than expected. They surmised that parents pay close attention to adolescents' adaptation to the new setting, and so are perceived as supportive, and that, although young adolescents may feel lonely in relation to their peers at first, this is short-lived as they soon develop new friendships. However, the authors noted flaws in their findings, and proposed that longitudinal research that follows a group of students throughout the first year of secondary school can help further explore such issues (see also Goossens, Marcoen, Van Hees, & Van de Woestijne, 1998).

In an Australian review of research, severe loneliness has been estimated to affect 22% of adolescents (Wildermuth, 1990). It has been defined as "an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/or lacks appropriate partners for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy" (Rook, 1984, p. 1391). Loneliness, therefore,

is a subjective experience, whereby interpersonal and social needs are not being met. It can be short-lived or long-term, with consequences for later adaptation. Lonely adolescents are, as Berndt and Savin-Williams note “often anxious, depressed, alienated, self-conscious, and introspective. They feel inferior to others, believe they cannot control the events in their lives, have poor social skills, and suffer from medical problems ...” (1993, p. 213). Although loneliness can occur at anytime across the lifespan, it is thought that the many developmental changes of adolescence make young people particularly prone to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Wildermuth, 1990).

In summary, there are many contributing factors that may influence young adolescents’ perception of their ability to establish and maintain friendships, feel supported and accepted, rejected or neglected by their peers, with consequences for psychological well-being and ability to cope with concerns and transitions. Before exploring the context of the new school setting, the next section reviews depression, a mood disorder which is strongly correlated with loneliness (e.g., Brage, Merideth, & Woodward, 1997; Koenig et al., 1994), and a common characteristic problem of adolescence, which can also impact on an individual’s perception and experience of the transition to secondary school.

2.4 Depression in adolescence

2.4.1 Historical overview

Until recently, it was assumed that affective or mood disorders such as depression were not commonly found in children and adolescents (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Heaven, 1994). Historically, psychoanalytic theorists argued against depression manifesting in children on the grounds that the superego was not

well formed until adolescence, whilst others argued for symptoms to be part of the normal process of the 'storm and stress' of adolescent development. Only in the last two decades has research recognised that, as well as transient reactions to development and environmental stressors, depressive symptomatology in children and adolescents can be analogous to adult mood disorders (Cantwell, 1996; Clark & Mokros, 1993; Petersen et al., 1993; Reynolds, 1987). It is acknowledged that very young children can display emotions such as anxiety and despair (as in separation anxiety), but are unable to articulate their feelings as such. By adolescence however, the processes of cognitive development can enable the young person to more accurately verbalise and report their feelings (Heaven, 1994).

More recently there has been a burgeoning interest in the early onset of mood disorders (Orvaschel, Beerferman, & Kabacoff, 1997). An increasing prevalence of depression has been found in adolescents since World War II, with its onset occurring at earlier ages and remaining stable over time (Chen & Li, 2000; Klerman & Weissman, 1989). Also of concern are the almost epidemic proportions of suicidal thoughts and behaviours reported in adolescents, with suicide being one of the leading causes of adolescent death in contemporary Western society (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998; Clark & Mokros, 1993; Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health, 1995). The Western Australian Child Health Survey, for example, found that one in six of the 12 to 16 year olds had reported having suicidal thoughts in the previous six months, a third of whom had also deliberately tried to harm themselves in some way (Zubrick et al., 1997). As the authors pointed out: "Many adults find it hard to accept that young people emerging from childhood can feel the degree of sadness, hopelessness and despair that can lead to suicide" (p. 53).

2.4.2 Manifestation and assessment of depression in adolescence

The term depression is commonly used to describe a range of emotions and symptoms, along “a continuum of severity that can be considered as moving from sadness through depression to unendurable despair...” (Frydenberg, 1997, p.146). Whereas sadness per se is a recognised universal emotion, the literature describes three main categories and levels of depression manifested in adults which have also been identified in adolescents: depressed mood, depressive syndromes, and clinical depression (Angold, 1988).

Depressed mood is a common experience, reported as a single symptom of dysphoric affect such as feeling ‘down in the dumps’, blue, sad, or unhappy, and which may occur for varying periods, often in response to specific situations, such as failing a task, loss, or conflict in a relationship (Petersen et al., 1993). Studies of nonclinical subjects have indicated that between 15-40% of adolescents experienced a degree of depressed mood in the preceding six months, depending on the measures used (Compas, Ey, & Grant, 1993; Petersen et al., 1993). On its own, depressed mood cannot necessarily be regarded as an indication of psychopathology, but can be an important sign, depending on its severity, chronicity, and presence of other symptoms (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Reynolds, 1987).

The second category of depression are depressive syndromes, clusters of emotions and behaviours or symptoms which co-occur with the depressed mood. One syndrome reliably identified in adolescents reflects anxiety as well as depression, and includes symptoms of feelings of loneliness; the need to be perfect and fearing doing something wrong or bad; feeling unloved and paranoid that others are out to get the individual; suspicious; generally fearful and nervous; feelings of guilt and worthlessness; worry; and self-consciousness. Around 5 to 6% of

adolescents have been identified as having symptoms severe enough in this syndrome to warrant concern (Compas et al., 1993), and in the Western Australian Child Health Survey, from parent and teacher reports, 4.8% of 12 to 16 year olds displayed clinically significant levels of anxious and depressive symptoms (Zubrick et al., 1997). Evidence from diagnostic studies suggest that anxiety and depression frequently co-occur, and are sometimes subsumed under the term 'negative affectivity' (see Boyd & Gullone, 1997 for further discussion).

Clinically significant depression, the third category, is diagnosed according to the presence, duration, and severity of sets of symptoms, such as those classified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000) or the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10; World Health Organization, 1996). Depressive Disorders (also referred to as Mood Disorders, APA, 2000) include Major Depressive Disorder and Dysthymic Disorder. Adolescents may experience symptoms consistent with a Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), which is marked by one or more Major Depressive Episodes. Criteria for diagnosis include five or more of the following summarised symptoms, which have to be experienced for most or nearly every day for at least a two-week period, at a level differing from previous functioning: (1) depressed or irritable mood, (2) markedly decreased interest or pleasure in activities, (3) significant weight loss or gain, (4) insomnia or hypersomnia, (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation (observable by others), (6) fatigue or loss of energy, (7) feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt, (8) reduced ability to concentrate or indecisiveness, (9) recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation. Major Depressive Episodes in adolescents are also often associated with other

disorders such as behavioural and attentional deficit disorders, anxiety, substance-related and eating disorders (APA, 2000; Petersen et al., 1993).

The DSM IV-TR acknowledges that although the basic criteria for a Major Depressive Episode for children and adolescents are classified the same as for adults, symptom presentation may differ with age, noting that children are more likely to present with somatic complaints, irritability and social withdrawal, and that hypersomnia and motor retardation are less likely in prepuberty than in adolescence (APA, 2000). Manifestation of symptoms also depends on biological, social, psychological and cognitive development (Conger & Galambos, 1997), and Frydenberg (1997) notes that, whereas American research emphasises reliance on DSM criteria, writers in the United Kingdom and Australia argue that developmental and competency criteria must be addressed (see also Cichetti & Toth, 1998).

In young adolescence, it has been suggested that individuals are less likely to express or exhibit their feelings openly and may deny negative self-talk and attitudes (Conger & Galambos, 1997). Instead depression may manifest as feelings of boredom and not looking forward to things as much as previously, having bad dreams, and having stomach aches (Kashani, Rosenberg, & Reid, 1989), and other somatic complaints (e.g., Larsson, 1991). Restlessness and avoidance of being alone, as well as an exaggerated need for new activities, and difficulty in concentrating at school have also been noted (Kovacs, 1989). However, it is recognised that some of these characteristics are commonly found in adolescence, and therefore the severity and persistence of symptoms need to be monitored (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Reynolds, 1987).

It has been suggested that although it is becoming more common for a first depressive episode to occur in adolescence, individuals who experience depression

in childhood are more likely to have recurrent, severe episodes in adolescence (see Roberts, 1999). Dysthymic Disorder, in which the essential feature is “a chronically depressed mood that occurs for most of the day more days than not for at least 2 years” (APA, 2000 p. 370.), in adults shares similar symptoms with major depression, but is differentiated on the bases of severity, chronicity and persistence. Although less severe in symptom distress, it is more chronic, and may present with an insidious onset in childhood and adolescence. In youngsters, mood may be more irritable than depressed, and for diagnostic purposes, the minimal duration is one rather than two years. Two or more of symptoms of changed eating and/or sleeping patterns, low energy or fatigue, low self-esteem, poor concentration or difficulty in decision-making, and feelings of hopelessness have to be present while depressed, with the person not being symptom-free for more than two months at a time (APA, 2000).

It has been noted that there is a paucity of longitudinal research exploring the development of depression in children and adolescents, and that although the prevalence is being recognised, it is suggested that 70-80% of depressed teenagers receive no treatment (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998). Reynolds (1987) argues that depressive symptomatology should not be viewed as a normal part of adolescent development, and that Dysthymic Disorder is particularly relevant to the assessment of depression in school-based populations of adolescents, given that some adolescents remain depressed for extended periods, with consequences for their long-term psychological well-being.

Standardised methods of assessment of depression in adolescence have been developed in recent years, mainly modified from adult self-report or interview-based measures (see Clark & Mokros, 1993 for a review). The most commonly used scale

for adults is the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II, Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996), which is also used for adolescents of 13 years and older. Reynolds (1987) however designed a scale specifically for adolescents (RADS) that measures the severity of depressive symptomatology on a continuous score, and which is used in this study (see Method, section 4.3.1). Although a formal diagnosis of depressive disorder is not obtained from the RADS, Reynolds provides a cut-off score, determined from frequency of distribution of scores of 5,000 adolescents in the United States, which can distinguish depressed from nondepressed subjects, and provides the basis for a multiple-stage screening procedure. Reynolds notes that 10-15% of adolescents score at the cut-off or higher on a single administration of the RADS, and so retesting and structured interviews can be vital to prevent false positives and give a clearer picture of prevalence and severity of symptomatology. The RADS has been found to be a reliable measure of depressive symptomatology in Australian adolescents (e.g., Boyd & Gullone, 1997; De Ross et al., 1999), with females reporting significantly more symptoms than males, as in the United States (Macleod, 1995).

Some would argue that the relatively high rates of identified depressive symptomatology confirm the notion of adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' whereas others suggest that the low rate of 'severe' depression argues against the notion (see Clark & Mokros, 1993, for more detailed discussion on this). What is becoming clear is the marked rise in the report of depressive symptoms from childhood to adolescence, and the gender difference, with twice the prevalence rates for females than males, especially from the age of 13-14 years (e.g., Kazdin, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Petersen et al., 1993). It is therefore important to examine developmental processes and factors that may contribute to vulnerability or

resistance to depressive symptomatology, or negative affectivity in young adolescents.

2.4.3 Developmental processes: Risk and protective factors for depression

It is recognised that there is a complex interplay of biological (e.g., genetic, neurophysiological, hormonal), psychological (cognitive and emotional) and social factors involved in the manifestation and persistence of depressive symptomatology, a number of which have already been mentioned in previous sections of this paper.

Although not directly investigated in this thesis, a considerable amount of research has concentrated on developmental processes and biological markers of depression. Whereas there is still limited information on adolescent populations, levels of cortisol and growth hormone secretions and sleep parameters have shown distinctions between depressed and nondepressed adolescent subjects (see Clark & Mokros, 1993; Cantwell, 1996). Similarly, hereditary genetic markers have been found. For example, one study of sets of twins aged 8-16 years found depressive symptoms to have a 79% genetic component, which however was identified only in the 11-16 year olds, and not the younger sets (Thaper & McGuffin, 1994). In another study, Kaslow and colleagues (1994) found parental depression to be a major risk factor for their offspring. Whereas most research has examined correlates between mother and adolescent depression, more recent studies have also identified links between fathers' and adolescent depression (De Ross et al., 1999; Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1995). Yet it remains unclear to what extent genetic vulnerability, rather than other individual factors and the home and social environment, are causal in the onset of depression.

Given the evidence for the marked gender difference in the prevalence of depression, much research has concentrated on the developmental changes of puberty and its correlate with depression. Although biological influences have been noted (see Buchanan et al., 1992, Hill, 1993; Richards et al., 1993 for reviews), findings remain inconclusive. Early pubertal maturation is thought to play a role in both sexes. Rutter (1986, 1989, cited in Conger & Galambos, 1997) in reviewing his extensive English study of the population of the Isle of Wight noted that, in boys, moodiness, depression and low self-depreciation increased with age, with only one in nine of 10-11 year olds reporting symptoms, compared with up to 40% of 14-15 year old boys. Yet in the latter age group, very few of those who were prepubescent displayed depressive symptoms, compared with almost a third of those who were post pubescent. Other studies have noted that early menarche in girls is associated with more depressive symptoms than those 'on-time' or late onset (e.g., Petersen, Saragiani, & Kennedy, 1991; Rierdan & Koff, 1991). Given that girls generally experience pubertal changes about two years earlier than boys (Tanner, 1991), if biological factors are causal, it might be expected that in early adolescence, there is a higher prevalence of depressive symptomatology in girls than boys.

However other explanations for the gender differences in adolescent depression have been proposed, yet require further clarification. Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1994) for example argue that girls are subject to, and experience more perceived stressors than boys, such as early puberty, sexual abuse, difficulties with interpersonal relationships, particularly family members, and negative life events, and that this higher prevalence explains the higher rates of depression. There would appear to be some evidence for the association between higher prevalence of stressors and depressive symptoms in adolescent girls (see for example Burke &

Weir, 1978; Ge et al., 1994) and the reader will recall that it was argued that girls may experience more discontinuity than boys in the transition to adolescence, given the more ambiguous social expectations (Cunningham, 1990; Slee, 1993). Yet there is no clear extensive evidence for associating gender difference in depression with the prevalence of stressors per se (Conger & Galambos, 1997).

On the other hand many other factors may be associated with risks or buffers for depression, particularly self-esteem (e.g., Kuperminc, Blatt, & Leadbetter, 1997; Orvaschel et al., 1997; Owens, 1994; Robinson et al., 1995) and coping styles (e.g., Frydenberg, 1997). It will be recalled that although girls tend to seek more social support for problems than boys, they are also more likely to use emotion-focussed strategies, or 'ruminative' coping, that does not necessarily solve a particular problem, and so could intensify negative affect rather than alleviate it (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Other individual differences as discussed in the previous sections on identity formation and self-concept, coping, family and peer contexts also need to be considered in relation to depression (see Cicchetti & Toth, 1998; Roberts, 1999 for further review of literature).

Cicchetti and Toth (1998) in their review article on the development of depression, highlight that single risk factors can rarely be distinguished. They present an ecological transactional model to provide a framework for understanding the relevance of multiple factors, the details of which is beyond the scope of this review. In summary, however, they address the interactions of biological factors with cognitive (social cognition, information processing, attributional style), socioemotional (affect regulation, attachment organisation, self-esteem, interpersonal relations) and representational (internal representation, self-schemata and self cognitions) pathways to depression. The authors also point out that as children and

adolescents are often not able to control their environment, contexts such as the home and school can play an important role in the development of depression.

Whereas risk factors for depression is becoming an area of extensive research, there appears to be less documentation on the buffers or protective factors (Roberts, 1999) to account for the majority of adolescents who report that they do not have problems (e.g., Zubrick et al., 1997). However, as discussed in previous sections, it becomes apparent that positive self-concept, functional coping strategies, and supportive relationships, such as parents and friends, can be protective factors for psychological well-being (Heaven, 1994; Petersen et al., 1993; Rice, Herman, & Petersen, 1993) and consequently for adaptation to new settings such as the transition to secondary school.

In summary, the review of the literature so far has identified many individual factors which may influence depressive symptomatology in adolescence, as well as other indicators of psychological well-being such as self-concept and ability to cope with potentially stressful events. Whilst many individual factors vary, the transition to secondary school is an experience commonly shared by young adolescents, and is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: THE TRANSITION TO SECONDARY AND BOARDING SCHOOL

3.1 The school environment in adolescence

The transition from elementary or primary school, to high or secondary school is regarded as a normative but important and potentially stressful life event (Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Seidman et al., 1994) which has engendered research interest, particularly following the pioneering longitudinal Milwaukee study in the mid to late 1970s by Simmons, Blyth and colleagues (see Simmons & Blyth, 1987). However, there has been criticism that, until recently, much of the research has concentrated on psychosocial correlates of single areas of individual functioning, particularly academic achievement, rather than psychological well-being (Heaven, 1994; Wallis & Barrett, 1998; Zubrick et al., 1997).

The transition to secondary school is regarded as significant, as it is a 'discontinuous' change (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987) that occurs at the time of other major developmental physiological, cognitive, and emotional changes, and new role demands, as discussed in the previous sections of this thesis. As well as the social context of home and peers, the school environment is an important influence in the adolescent's psychosocial functioning and subjective sense of well-being (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). However researchers do not agree on the extent to which the school transition is regarded as stressful by young adolescents (e.g., Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan, 1996; Wallis & Barrett, 1998), and perceived adjustment may well depend on the impact of cumulative change and stressors, as well as the school environment and its processes (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Robinson et al., 1995; Simmons et al., 1987).

One of the first studies to examine school environment variables was conducted by Rutter and colleagues in 1979. In their sample of 12 London secondary schools it was found that, after adjusting for student variables, school characteristics were distinct predictors of differences in student outcomes. Variables included environmental comfort, provision for student responsibilities, as well as staff teaching styles, expectations and effectiveness. More recent studies have further explored attributes of the school environment and processes, particularly in relation to person-environment fit (Eccles et al., 1993).

The potential for incongruence between adolescent developmental needs and the school environment have been examined at both macro and micro levels (Eccles et al., 1996). At the macro level, one of the most common changes for young adolescents moving from primary to secondary school is the transition from having one teacher and a small class size to a larger school and the number of teachers encountered on a daily basis. School size and its organisation can contribute to an individual's feeling of anonymity and can be a cause of stress if separated from close friends and established peer networks, and familiar surroundings (Eccles et al., 1996; Heaven, 1994; Simmons et al., 1987). In an Australian study, Cotterell (1992) found that students who moved from a small elementary school to a large secondary school were significantly more anxious and reported enjoying school less than those who had attended a large elementary school. In Japanese research, as well as heightened loneliness and anxiety, there has also been evidence of more school refusal by those moving from a small elementary to large junior high school (see Yamamoto & Ishii, 1995).

In the United States, Simmons and her colleagues have argued that the move to junior high (secondary) school at the same time as coping with other

developmental transitions put youngsters at risk for negative outcomes. In line with Coleman's (1974) focal theory, they suggest that it is more beneficial for adolescents to experience gradual adjustment to one change before another comes into focus. This hypothesis has been tested in studies which have examined the timing of school changes, particularly with the introduction in the United States of the concept of middle school (with varying patterns of grades 5-7, 5-8, 6-8, 7-9) in which classes tend to focus less on academic matters and more on young adolescent developmental needs. In contrast to peers who remained in the same school setting until the ninth grade, evidence has been found for negative changes in young adolescents who moved to high school earlier, with less participation in extracurricular activities, and initially lower school grades, particularly in boys, and decline in self-esteem, especially in girls (Alspaugh, 1998; Eccles et al., 1996; Simmons et al., 1987; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994).

Eccles and colleagues (1993, 1996), in reviewing literature and their own studies, offer explanations for these findings, by examining five patterns of negative school-related changes at the micro level. Firstly, they point out, that compared to elementary school, the secondary school classroom is characterised by more teacher control and discipline, with less opportunities for student choice and autonomy at a time when identity exploration is occurring (see also Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Early pubertal timing in females has been found to be a particular factor in the mismatch between perceived need for autonomy and decision-making opportunities at school (Eccles et al., 1996), and may partially account for females being more at risk for negative reactions to the transition to secondary school (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

Secondly, the quality of student-teacher relationships changes, with the potential for less personalised and positive interaction, which may lead to young adolescents turning to their peers, rather than teachers, for support and guidance (Eccles et al., 1996). Whereas conformity to authority may lead to higher regard of the student by the teacher (e.g., Wires et al., 1994), the nonconforming student, who may be more physically mature, independent, assertive and active, may be stereotyped negatively by teachers, and therefore be disadvantaged (Conger & Galambos, 1997).

Thirdly, at secondary school there is a shift toward more “whole-class task organisation” (Eccles et al., 1996, p.256) rather than small group or individual instruction. This can lead to increased social comparison and competitiveness, which can have negative as well as positive consequences for adolescents’ self-concepts and motivation. Fourthly, junior high teachers have been found to perceive themselves as less effective than their elementary counterparts, which may impact on students’ learning. This may also be coupled with the fifth pattern of change distinguished by Eccles, in which it is argued that high school teachers’ expectations change; that they use stricter grading practices, all of which can impact on the young adolescents’ perception of their academic ability, and overall self-esteem, in their first year of secondary school.

The person-environment fit and processes of the school therefore can have an impact on the young adolescent’s perception of a particular school setting. Differences in ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender differences in treatment, and expectations by teachers, as well as differences between same-sex and coeducational schooling have also been examined in the literature, but mainly in regard to educational aspirations and achievements. However, as not the main focus of this

thesis, these issues will not be discussed further as such (but see Conger & Galambos, 1997; Filozof et al., 1998; Poole, 1990; Seidman et al., 1994; Zubrick et al., 1997). In summary, although educational systems vary across the world, in America, Britain, and Australia evidence suggests that new directions and innovations of school processes are required, in response to changing community and adolescent needs (e.g. Conger & Galambos, 1997; Zubrick et al., 1997).

3.2 Adolescents' perception and adjustment to secondary school

Research indicates that boys and girls perceive school differently, and that generally girls have a more positive attitude than boys. In a British study of 2000 teenagers, aged 10-17 years, boys had more negative expectations about school, were less optimistic, and were more likely to anticipate that teachers would not like them (Furnham & Gunter, 1989, cited in Heaven, 1994). Poole (1990), in her review of Australian studies, notes that adolescents have quite strong views on the structure and organisation of their schools. As well as perceiving an uninviting environment and lack of support, studies indicate that students are particularly unhappy with "the authoritarian nature of schools, rules and discipline, and teacher styles of discipline implementation" (p.84), and many find school alienating and impersonal, especially during the transition year from primary to secondary school. In the more recent Western Australian Survey, although most (78%) adolescents liked school to some extent, almost one in five (19%) disliked, or felt alienated, from school (Zubrick et al., 1997). A French study which examined sources of anxiety in adolescents aged 12 to 16 years, found that school-related worries were reported by more than half of the 180 subjects (Rodriquez-Tomé & Bariaud, 1990).

Various Australian studies have explored the perception and impact of daily hassles and worries in adolescence (e.g., Fallon & Bowles, 1999; Garton & Pratt, 1993; Heubeck & O'Sullivan, 1998; Rehfeldt, 1988). Hassles can be defined as those "irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterise everyday transactions with the environment " (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981, p. 3), and can be greater predictors of stress and well-being than major life events (Kanner et al., 1981; Rowlinson & Felner, 1988). However Heubeck and O'Sullivan (1998) note that very few studies have explored daily school hassles experienced in early adolescence. These researchers explored the nature of school hassles as perceived by 210 Australian students aged between 11 and 13 years, half of which were in their last primary year and the others in the first year of high school. Specific hassles within the school context over the previous six months were reported by many of the respondents. A comprehensive list categorised hassles as peer-related (e.g., 'being left out,' 'swearing'), scholastic (e.g., 'sitting for a test,' 'too much homework'), teacher hassles (e.g., 'the classroom is too noisy,' 'a teacher does not listen to me'), and home-related (e.g., 'parents give me too many jobs,' 'parents want me to do better'). These categories bothered students 'somewhat' or 'a lot' as follows: peers: 13% to 64%; scholastic hassles: 17% to 47%; teachers: 31% to 43%, and home-related items 18% to 31% of students. Gender differences indicated that boys perceived more school-related hassles from home, with pressure to perform better and parents being critical, and more hassles with teachers. Girls, on the other hand, were bothered by peer-related hassles. However, although it was predicted that the hassles would be more pronounced in the early high school students, given that the transition is potentially stressful, this was not the case, with all significant year differences found in the late primary school group.

In the United States, Berndt and Mekos (1995) in their review of the literature pointed out that the argument for the transition to junior high school as stressful is debatable. Although researchers such as Simmons and Eccles provide evidence that inherently it is, others argue that whereas some aspects may be viewed negatively, the transition can also have positive effects on adolescent self-esteem and adjustment (e.g., Nottelmann, 1987; Proctor & Choi, 1994). Berndt and Mekos also noted that very little research has explored adolescents' perceptions of the stress associated with the move to high school, and suggested that, rather than focussing on why the transition may be stressful, researchers should address how adjustment is affected by particular aspects of the experience.

This was the focus of Berndt and Mekos' (1995) longitudinal study ($N = 101$) in which they explored adolescents' perceptions of the stressful and desirable aspects of the transition to junior high school before and after the transition. They derived four categories for examining positive comments: peer relationships, academic matters, school environment, and independence. For negative comments, the first three categories were used, with the addition of victimisation. In summary, results indicated that positive comments, such as 'meeting new people,' 'you get new teachers,' 'we can pick our classes' and 'we're more independent' outweighed the negative (e.g., 'lose old friends,' lots of homework,' and 'food isn't good') before and after the transition, suggesting that, although the youngsters expected some aspects to be stressful, overall it was more desirable than stressful, with continuity of perceptions throughout the first year. Whereas before the transition, girls made more negative comments about perceived changes in peer relationships, and boys were concerned about victimisation, there were few gender differences after the transition, with both positive and negative comments focussing on concerns about academic

work and the school environment. The authors concluded that the shift in focus implied that “once in junior high school, they (the students) became less concerned about peer relationships and more concerned about their education and the daily routines of school” (p. 137). However, although other variables such as grades and conduct influenced the perceptions of the transition, the correlations between perception and adjustment (grades, teacher ratings of behaviour, and student popularity) were modest and many other individual factors were not accounted for.

Previous sections of this thesis have explored individual aspects of identity formation, self-concept, and coping, particularly within the context of home and peers, and depression, which may be risk or protective factors in how the transition to secondary school may be experienced. In reviewing aspects of their large-scale longitudinal study (the MSALT), Eccles and colleagues (see Eccles et al., 1996) also found that experiencing concerns and self-consciousness at school, particularly in relation to maths ability, meeting deadlines, and being socially accepted by peers, were associated with lower self-esteem over the transition period. Of particular note, Eccles found that perceptions of peer-related social skills and physical appearance contributed strongly to adolescents’ adjustment to the school transition. Conversely, positive self-concept in both academic and nonacademic domains was associated with higher self-esteem (see also for example, Owens, 1994; Zubrick et al., 1997).

In a recent Australian longitudinal study, Wallis and Barrett (1998) examined adjustment to the transition from Catholic primary school (Year 7) to high school (Year 8) in 110 Queensland adolescents aged between 12-14 years. They explored the impact of the transition at both group and individual levels, and assessed psychological adjustment using structured clinical interviews, as well as other norm-based rating scales for students, teachers and parents, in order to examine school,

family and peer contexts at pre-transition (during the last month of Year 7) and post-transition (the beginning of the second term of Year 8). Overall results indicated that adolescent adjustment either improved or did not change across the transition period. However 11% of boys and 10% of the girls experienced a marked decrease in adjustment, although the changes did not suggest discontinuity occurring across the transition period. In Grade 8, 13% of boys and 15% of girls were found to have a diagnosable DSM-IV psychological disorder, with more girls than boys suffering from internalising disorders such as depression, and a further 15% of boys and 15% of the girls displaying features of emotional and behavioural disorders, especially internalising disorders.

Of particular note in the study was the prediction, from self-report and teacher ratings of adjustment, and adolescents' ratings of perceived interparent conflict, and felt acceptance (supportive family environment) in Grade 7, for absence or presence of emotional and behavioural problems in Grade 8 in almost 77% of cases. However, in discussing the limitations of their study, Wallis and Barrett (1998) noted that other factors such as moving to a school with known peers may make the transition seem less stressful.

This brief overview of studies related to the context of secondary school highlights the complex interplay amongst a number of contexts such as family and peer relationships, and individual factors that can influence adolescent adjustment and perception of the transition to secondary school. Another factor, which may have particular impact, is when a young adolescent is also confronted with the transition from living at home, to boarding at the new secondary school. The next sections examine firstly the effects of geographical relocation, and the experience of the transition to boarding school from adult and student perspectives, and then

finally the concept and experience of homesickness, as factors which may influence adolescents' adaptation to the transition to secondary boarding school.

3.3 Relocation and the transition to boarding school

3.3.1 Geographical relocation

In recent times, as well as movement of peoples for various reasons such as war and famine, geographical relocation in industrial countries has increased. Approximately 20% of the American population moves every year and almost 45% relocate once or more every five years. Similar five-year mobility rates have been reported for Australia (48%), Canada (44%), Japan and Britain (36%) (see Fullilove, 1996; Starker, 1990; Stokols et al., 1983). The more recent Western Australian Child Health Survey found that almost 27% of families with children aged between 4 and 16 years had been living in their current home for two years or less (Zubrick et al., 1997).

Relocation denotes environmental change. Fisher (1990a) defines change as an "abstract representation of a situation where there is removal of the known, familiar, predictable or secure, and replacement by the new and different" (p.54). Whereas the relocation to secondary school can be described as a normative change, the timing and planning of which is mainly predictable, residential relocation can be described as a nonnormative transition (Vernberg & Field, 1990) which is considered to be a potentially stressful life event (Holmes & Rahe, 1965).

There is a growing literature on the costs of relocation in terms of physical and emotional well-being (e.g., Brett, 1982; Brown & Perkins, 1992; Fisher & Cooper, 1990; Fried, 1963; Fullilove, 1996; Hormuth, 1990; McCollum, 1990; Stokols et al., 1983). It has been argued by some that increased mobility reduces the

sense of social cohesion and weakens the stability and traditions of communities (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Stokols et al., 1983). Research on inner-city communities has revealed that for many urban residents the cohesion provided by their neighbourhood social network is imperative for a sense of personal identity and psychological well-being (e.g., Fullilove, 1996; Mesch & Manor, 1998).

The classic longitudinal study conducted in Boston's West End by Fried (1963), highlights the importance of neighbourhood ties. Five hundred residents were interviewed before and after being compulsorily relocated from their neighbourhood which was demolished to make way for redevelopment. Although there were benefits of better housing and opportunities for upward social mobility, respondents expressed severe grief for their 'lost home'. Fried noted reactions of extreme sadness, depression and other symptoms of generalised distress, as well as an increase in physical ailments. The most severe and prolonged reactions were found in those who had expressed positive feelings about their neighbourhood and whose good friends were close neighbours. Follow-up after one year revealed that over 50% of respondents remained sad and depressed, reporting that they missed their home and its fixtures, familiar objects, places, friends and other familiar faces. After two years, 25% of respondents were reportedly still affected by the move. Fried explained this prolonged grief reaction as a response to losing stable social networks regarded as essential for an individual's sense of group and spatial identity, and integral to human functioning. Consequently, involuntarily removal from the familiar milieu can lead to a sense of lost identity.

The theoretical significance of the physical environment in forming and maintaining self-identity was not fully addressed by Fried, nor did he examine children's responses to relocation. However the study is perhaps a rare example of

homesickness being described and documented in people involuntarily relocated not far from their original home, and indicates that for some individuals the reactions are not transitory (cf. Brewin et al., 1989). On the other hand, there has been argument against the notion of mobility affecting social ties and friendship. Shumaker and Conti (1985) for example noted that most moves are not long distant, and even those that are, do not necessarily mean the loss of friendships, given today's travel and communication technology.

Hormuth (1990) notes that most previous psychological research on relocation focussed on the negative consequences of forced involuntary moves connected with employment, urban renewal, and institutionalisation. He identifies that more recent research on relocation can be divided into three main areas of psychological interest: reasons and decisions concerning moves, the psychological outcomes and coping used, and thirdly, as a life event, the processes of change in the person-environment relationship. However it would appear that most research has focussed on adult populations, with less emphasis on children and adolescents' reactions per se until more recently (e.g., Fisher & Hood, 1988; Vernberg & Field, 1990).

Vernberg and Field (1990) comment that whereas most research on children has concentrated on changes which have involved separation from attachment figures, there have been relatively few studies that have examined children's reactions to the transitions of changing schools and residence. These authors suggest, from models of change such as attachment theory, interruption (discrepancy) theory and control theory (see Fisher & Cooper, 1990), that identifying adaptational tasks that need to be negotiated, and the multiple factors that can affect potential success or not, underpin understanding of how children and

adolescents may be affected by transitions. In moving to a new school and relocating, the individual has the dual task of separating from old familiar settings and peers and forming new friendships in the new setting. As Zubrick and colleagues commented: "Where family relocation involves a move to another neighbourhood it may entail a change of school and the disruption of local friendships and social support networks for both children and parents" (1997, p. 23).

An American longitudinal study by Vernberg (1990, cited in Vernberg & Field, 1990) looked at mobile young adolescents starting a new school compared with peers who had lived in the same home for the previous two years or more. Verberg found that the recently relocated youngsters, especially those who had moved a long distance, reported less contact with peers and less intimacy in friendship throughout the first nine months, and relocated boys in particular reported more incidents of rejection, teasing and bullying. It was suggested that girls are more advanced in their social skills and so more able to initiate friendships than boys, especially at a time when tasks include adapting to a new residence. Vernberg also found a link between a supportive family environment and less self-reported levels of depression over the nine-month period in the young adolescents who had moved. This study once again highlights the complex factors that can affect individual reaction and adaptation to new settings.

The transition to boarding school is a specific type of relocation in that it is temporary, often involuntary, but reversible (Fisher et al., 1984). Entry into school or college has been described as a "critical person-in-environment transition" (Wapner, 1981, p. 223) in that there is movement from a situation where home living and school are normally separate, to a setting in which they merge. Therefore in moving from home to boarding school for the first time, the dual task of adapting to a new

school and a new ‘home’ exists, although the family home setting and friendships are not necessarily lost as permanently as in family residential relocation. The next section examines how the transition to the institution of boarding school is perceived: from both adult and students’ viewpoints.

3.3.2 The transition to boarding school: Adult perceptions

“ The transition from home life to life at boarding school is a major step which has emotional impact not only on the child involved but also on his or her parents and family”

(Ellis, 1994, p.6)

The institution of the boarding school was established in pre-Victorian England when children from upper class families were sent to be educated at residential monastic schools (Vercoe, 1998). The tradition of private education for the privileged has continued to a certain extent, although today there are other compelling reasons for some parents to send their children to boarding school.

Jolly (1987) for example in describing military families in the U.K. notes that because these families move frequently, the children may attend numerous schools, with lack of continuity in education. Boarding school is often considered the best option to overcome this disruption, although there are disadvantages as well as advantages. If the choice of school is good, benefits include not only a steady education, but also the chance for the student to develop and maintain friendships. If parents, especially fathers, are away for extended periods, it also allows the boarder to establish relationships with other adults such as teachers and pastoral care staff. Staff have noted that boarders from military families tend to be happy and well-adjusted. “Security, a feeling of belonging, continuity in the school curriculum and lasting friendships, these things *are valued* by children who know what ‘educational

turbulence' is about" (Jolly, 1987, p.65). On the other hand, the choice of boarding school may not always be suitable. Some students find it hard to adapt, and cannot cope with the separation from their parents. Similarly some parents cannot deal with being parted from their offspring for 40 weeks a year, and prefer that the family unit stays intact.

In Australia and New Zealand the main reason for boarding, especially at secondary school level, is the family's geographical remoteness from state schools, or the lack of suitable sporting, social, or cultural opportunities in the local area (Ellis, 1994; Munro & Fairbrother, 1998; Vercoe, 1998). In New Zealand, where 4% of secondary school students are boarders, there is a weak link between boarding and private education as most schools that provide boarding facilities are state run, and few schools are exclusively for boarders (Vercoe, 1998).

There is a complexity of tasks and care required by staff of schools that cater for boarding students (Lynch, 1998; Munro & Fairbrother, 1998). Munro and Fairbrother in presenting a holistic approach to wellness in the boarding school environment in New Zealand note that all students who start boarding are potentially emotionally vulnerable, as they have to deal with a certain amount of grief and loss, having been confronted with leaving home prematurely. Young adolescents may feel a sense of alienation, resentment and rejection, whereas parents may experience similar separation issues, feel guilty about handing over responsibility, and need to redefine their role whilst their youngsters are in the care of others (Ellis, 1994).

Father O'Kelly (1991), in addressing the modern challenges facing Catholic boarding schools in Australia suggests that the schools "are charged to be in *loco parentis*." (p.47), and as such face the task of taking greater responsibility for the students' formation. Perhaps more than day staff, those responsible for boarders are

aware of the pressures students impose on themselves, as well as pressures from peers, parents, teachers and others. Boredom and anger, common reactions in adolescence, may not be adequately expressed in the controlled boarding environment, and may manifest in withdrawal or depression. O'Kelly also comments that as surrogate parents, the role of the boarding staff may be that of "baby-minder" or "to provide some healing through distance" if the student is boarding because of parental relationship breakdown or family conflict (1991, p.49).

Given the large numbers of students, there are inevitably more restrictions at boarding school than in the average family environment, which makes it hard to fulfil the 'home away from home' concept (O'Kelly, 1991). Whilst many youngsters look forward to the challenge of leaving home to start secondary school, Ellis (1994) points out that the transition can be particularly difficult for the family that is "characteristically a close-knit, interdependent unit working in a rural context" (p.6). Whereas the boarding experience can on the one hand allow the adolescent to develop a greater appreciation for family members and home, the institutional setting, with its numerous controlling adults, rules and regulations, lack of privacy and freedom, as well as not being able to escape from troublesome peers, can make adaptation to boarding school hard for some. Therefore it is recognised that careful induction of new boarders, awareness of difficulties, and appropriate actions as well as a conducive environment for every-day living is essential for the boarding students' well-being and adaptation to their new setting (Ellis, 1994).

However in order that quality care can be provided, it has also been recognised more recently that gaining insight into the experiences and opinions of boarding school students is important. As Vercoe (1998) notes, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recommends that children should be allowed

to participate in decisions that affect them. Yet there appears to be limited research that explores adolescents' subjective views and experience of boarding school (Downs, 1994; Morgan, 1993; Vercoe, 1998), and therefore is the major focus of this thesis.

3.3.3. Students' perception of boarding school

In Britain, in response to the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 1989, which stated that boarding schools had a "statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarding pupils" (Morgan, 1993, p.iii), a comprehensive survey and analysis of 2,600 students' views on boarding was undertaken in 22 Oxfordshire independent schools (Morgan, 1993). Respondents ages ranged from 7 to 20 years, and included 762 (29%) pupils from preparatory schools (median age 11), 1,718 (66%) from secondary schools (median age 15), as well as 50 (2%) from special schools (median age 15) and 71 (3%) from boarding college students (median age 17). As it is not feasible to present all data from this thorough report, for the purpose of this thesis, three aspects are pertinent: pupils' specifications for boarding; positives and negatives about boarding; and pupil welfare.

Firstly, from the surveys of all respondents, as well as a number of exchange visits and discussions with some pupils, a 'best buy' summary was compiled of what students thought should be provided by their boarding school. Most of the 63 provisions noted were concerned with the physical environment and its impact on individual comfort, independence and privacy. Of specific note are the first three criteria: 1) " enough space in dormitories, recreation areas and dining rooms for boarders not to be crowded in by the weight of numbers or to feel claustrophobic; and the means to keep as much modesty about their bodily functions as pupils feel

they need;” 2) “the opportunity to be alone and to escape from the company of others;” and 3) “positive support for homesick pupils” (Morgan, 1993, p.12).

The second area of interest was the responses to the two best and two worst aspects of being a boarder. Given the age medians, both preparatory and secondary schools are presented, with the most common answers given with percentage of respondents in brackets. The best things about being a boarder in preparatory schools were: friends (56%), activities (21%), facilities (18%), free time (17%), learning independence (15%), and food (11%). In secondary school boarders, friends was also the best aspect (71%), followed by learning independence (27%), ease of work (18%), facilities (14%), no travelling (14%) and ‘helps relations with parents’ (11%). Morgan notes that friendship was “stated by over half of the preparatory pupils, and grows in importance as the pupils progress into the secondary age range, where seven out of 10 pupils rate it as the best aspect of boarding” (1993, p.23). This finding was also highlighted in the Australian study of homesickness in 212 adolescents at boarding school (Downs, 1994) in which friends were named by 58% of respondents as the most frequently liked aspect of the school environment. Similarly in a more recent survey of older adolescents ($N = 77$) in New Zealand, friendships and acquiring independence were highlighted as the best aspects of boarding (Vercoe, 1998).

In the British survey, the most commonly reported worst thing about being a boarder across all respondents was notably homesickness (Morgan, 1993). In preparatory pupils it was reported by 68%, in secondary schools by 37%, and in the special schools by 57%. Again this finding was similar to the high incidences of homesickness reported in studies in Scotland (Fisher et al., 1984, Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1986) and Australia (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1990). The other common

dislikes about boarding in Morgan's survey were for younger students rules and discipline (34%) and food (15%), and for secondary pupils, missing social life (30%), rules and discipline (27%). This aspect was also reported in Vercoe's (1998) study in which boarding students were found to be discontented with their 'social opportunities' and restrictions, compared with their day student cohort. Similarly in the Australian study, rules and lack of freedom were the most consistent source of dissatisfaction with the school environment and two thirds of the respondents did not think they had enough privacy (Downs, 1994).

Student welfare was another major aspect of the Morgan report. Knowing who students would turn to with a serious problem or worry is essential, as safeguarding and promoting welfare are key elements of the Children Act (Morgan, 1993). The survey showed overwhelmingly that parents (preparatory 91%, secondary 83%) and friends (secondary 84%, preparatory 79%) were the most likely to be approached for serious problems. From this Morgan makes two important points: that parental access to boarders is an important welfare issue, and that given that friends play an important role in social support, the supporter, as well as the supported, needs to be aware of, and comfortable with, seeking adult support. In this respect, the boarders' views of the type of boarding staff they preferred is relevant. Essential characteristics of staff were reported as kind (preparatory 53%, secondary 24%), understanding (secondary 49%, preparatory 27%), good discipline (preparatory 22%, secondary 19%), friendly (secondary 20%, preparatory 13%), good-tempered (secondary 18%, preparatory 13%), not too strict (preparatory 13%) and have own family (secondary 14%).

Overall the Morgan report provides useful insight into students' perceptions and opinions about boarding school life, and the importance of understanding what

issues are relevant from their perspective. Although many positive aspects were noted, it is of concern that homesickness was not only seen as the worst aspect of being a boarder, but ‘needing positive support for homesick pupils’ was high on priorities of what a boarding school should provide. The incidence rate varied considerably across schools, ranging from 28% to 91%, but Morgan found that although homesickness decreased with age, it was still reported by more than a third of secondary students as the “ largest single ‘bad thing about boarding’”(p. 23) and concluded that “ homesickness must be one of the key welfare issues regularly assessed...” (1993, p.24). Furthermore students had both positive and negative opinions on how schools reacted to their homesickness. On the positive side were comments referring to being taken care of, but on the other hand common negative remarks included “teachers not knowing what you mean by ‘homesickness’”(p.24).

Understanding homesickness therefore is important for examining how it may influence young adolescents’ experience of their transition from home to secondary boarding school. The next section explores the concept and recent literature in this under-researched area of psychology.

3.4 The concept of homesickness

3.4.1 Nostalgia revisited

“ The experience which divided my life, at the age of nine, from all before and after was the shock of homesickness when I arrived at school. This homesickness took a double form. On the one hand it was a violent rejection by my senses of everything around me. My palate refused to taste food, my eyes loathed everything they saw. To hear or to feel anything connected with the school was a kind of sickroom duty

interrupting my desire to think my own thoughts and be alone. On the other hand, my mind was filled with the overpowering images of home. If I closed my eyes for an instant, there was not a single scene I imagined at home (and I could not stop myself imagining!) which did not overpower me with nostalgia. A corner of the scullery, Ella scrubbing the floor, a sign in the road below my window, creaking in the wind at night: just such irrelevant things provided me with the question I was for ever asking myself: How could I for a single moment ever have imagined that I was unhappy at home and that I wanted to leave?"

Spender, 1953 (p.283).

Homesickness is a term which occurs in a number of languages and appears to be commonly understood as a reaction to relocation (Fisher et al., 1986). The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a depressed state of mind and body caused by a longing for home during absence from it; nostalgia" (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 330). However there is no formal recognition of the term per se in modern psychological literature and, until very recently, very little research had been conducted to explore the concept and its consequences for well-being (Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1989; Van Tilberg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996). Subsumed within the plethora of literature on relocation, homesickness had tended to be an ill-defined generic term, which failed to fully explain the condition.

Whilst the early Greek physician Hippocrates related homesickness to excessive black bile in the blood (Zwingmann, 1959, cited in Thurber & Sigman, 1998), the notion of homesickness as a condition having an impact on health and well-being was first documented in medical texts by 17th century Swiss physicians

(see Davis, 1979; Fisher, 1989; Van Tilburg et al., 1996). At that time, equivalent words to homesickness such as the German 'heimweh' and French 'maladie du pays' were used to describe what were considered to be unpleasant but common reactions to geographical relocation. However, extreme distress observed among Swiss mercenaries fighting abroad led physicians to coin the term 'nostalgia'. This was derived from the Greek words 'nostos' meaning to return home and 'algia,' a painful condition - hence "a painful yearning to return home" (Davis, 1979, p.1). Davis quotes Johannes Hofer's "Medical Dissertations on Nostalgia" (originally published in 1688 in Latin and translated into English by Anspach, 1934) in which symptoms of nostalgia included " despondency, melancholia, lability of emotion including profound bouts of weeping, anorexia, a generalised 'wasting away' and not infrequently, attempts of suicide" (1979, p.1).

Having assigned such symptoms to a diagnostic category, attempts were made to identify causal factors involved in nostalgia. In 17th and 18th century texts, physiological theories included such notions as animal spirits vibrating through areas of the midbrain which contained traces of the homeland, or changes in atmospheric pressure from descending the Alps affecting the bloodflow to the brain with subsequent "affliction of sentiment" (see Davis, 1979, p.2). Alternative explanations examined personality traits such as emotional instability, whilst other theorists emphasised environmental factors such as change in food and customs (see Fisher, 1989). Although today some of the early physiological explanations may appear somewhat bizarre, most theories included the necessary (but not sufficient) condition of " sudden alteration, sharp transition, or marked discontinuity in life experience..." (Davis, 1979, p.2).

Although importance was attached to the experience of homesickness in earlier history, and has been a topic for writers (e.g., Bail, 1980; Spender, 1953), there appears to have been a paucity of psychological research on the topic per se until the 1980s (see for example Brewin et al., 1989; Fisher, 1989). This may in part be due to a semantic drift that occurred in the 1950s. Davis (1979) reports that until that time the term nostalgia was mainly used only by psychiatrists, psychologists and academics. It gradually lost its medical connotations and by the mid-1950s had drifted into popular parlance to become more associated with the concept as it is understood today, that of a longing for, or thoughts of bygone days, without strong negative emotions (see Fullilove, 1996). For example, Davis surveyed a group of American undergraduates who identified nostalgia with more positive connotations such as “warm old times,” “childhood” and “a nice sort of sadness” rather than “homesickness” (1979, p.4). Hence, as Davis notes, one cannot easily explore the nature of ‘homesickness’ by examining the etymology of ‘nostalgia’.

However, in revisiting nostalgia, interesting points emerge which can be used to explore the concept of homesickness and its implications for psychological well-being today. The underlying necessary but not sufficient antecedent is geographical relocation from one’s home. Environmental considerations and individual vulnerability factors may also act as antecedents and maintaining factors for the experience (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1984), which are explored in this thesis.

3.4.2. Contemporary research on homesickness: An overview

Although contemporary psychological literature on homesickness tends to be limited and confusing, there have been attempts to better define the concept, its symptoms and prevalence, as well as propose causal theories and models of risk and protective factors (e.g., Fisher & Cooper, 1990; Thurber & Sigman, 1998; Van

Tilburg et al., 1996). There appears to be consensus of opinion that homesickness is a psychological state of distress experienced as a consequence of “an actual or anticipated separation from home” (Thurber & Sigman, 1998, p.903). Shirley Fisher and colleagues, in various studies of university students and boarding school pupils in Britain (see Fisher, 1989), found dominant features of homesickness to be preoccupation with, and emotional reactions to, thoughts of home, family, friends, objects at home and routines, as well as negative feelings about the new environment. Fisher subsequently defined homesickness as a “complex cognitive-motivational-emotional state focussed on missing home” (1989, p.31) “accompanied by past-centred ruminative activity”(p.107).

As well as the cognitive symptoms of missing home with obsessional thoughts and idealisation of the home environment, academic difficulties and absent-mindedness have been reported in homesick first year university students (Burt, 1993; Fisher, 1989; Fisher & Hood, 1987). Physical, behavioural, and emotional symptoms have also been noted as manifestations of homesickness (Van Tilburg et al., 1996). The most frequently reported somatic complaints include gastrointestinal upset, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, headache and tiredness and other minor, nontraumatic ailments (Fisher et al., 1986; Thurber, 1995). Internalising and externalising behavioural problems have also been identified in preadolescent and adolescent boys (Thurber, 1995). Emotional reactions include depressive and anxiety symptomatology (Archer, Ireland, Amos, Braod, & Currid, 1998; Brewin et al., 1989; Fisher, 1990b; Hojat & Herman, 1985; Thurber, 1995). Social withdrawal, feelings of loneliness, insecurity, lack or loss of control, disrupted identity and lower self-esteem have also variously been associated with homesickness (e.g., Brown & Perkins, 1992; Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1990; Thurber & Sigman, 1998).

As a psychological 'state', homesickness is liable to change over time, with severity and frequency of symptoms varying according to adaptation or not to a particular situation (Fisher, 1989; 1990b). This leads to some confusion in the literature as to whether or not homesickness is a specific syndrome which can be distinguished from other diagnosable disorders such as separation anxiety, phobia, reactive depression, or adjustment disorder, and to what extent it is a pathological or normal phenomenon (see Van Tilburg et al., 1996).

Research suggests that homesickness can be experienced at any age and across cultures (Baier & Welch, 1992; Fisher & Cooper, 1990; Thurber & Sigman, 1998; Van Tilburg et al., 1996). Yet the prevalence rate is hard to establish, particularly as little is known about the general population's reactions to spending various periods away from home for different reasons such as training, employment commitments, and institutionalisation. Fisher (1990b) points out that "many adults have confessed informally that they often experience considerable homesickness and distress but could not admit it to anyone" (p.154).

In studies where the term homesickness has been provided to newly resident students, 50 to 75% of respondents endorsed it anonymously, as opposed to less than 40% when identified. Less than 20% of respondents used it to spontaneously describe their reactions to the new environment (Fisher, 1990b; Fisher & Hood, 1987). Baier and Welch (1992) in their analysis of the concept of homesickness found that older children and adults tend to deny or feel embarrassed by the experience, and children are generally encouraged by adults to suppress any feelings of sadness. Fisher suggests that unlike bereavement, the grief-like symptoms of homesickness can be seen as shameful and socially undesirable, especially if being judged on ability to fit in or adjust to novel surroundings. Interestingly however, in

personal reading over the years of a weekly Australian edition of a British newspaper, I have noticed an increase in anecdotal articles advising expatriates and their families on strategies for dealing with culture shock, homesickness, and adjustment to living overseas (and see Furnham, 1990). Furthermore, in an Australian study on homesickness in boarding secondary school adolescents, when asked whether or not it was ‘whimpish’ to admit to being homesick, 87.26% of the 212 students surveyed responded it was not. However, of the remaining 12.74%, more boys than girls agreed it was (Downs, 1994).

Empirical studies on homesickness to date have been fairly limited in adult populations to migrants and refugees (e.g., Eisenbruch, 1990; Hojat & Herman, 1985), military conscripts (e.g., Eurelings-Bontekoe, Duijsens, & Verschuur, 1996), Dutch women (Eurelings-Bontekoe, Brouwers, Verschuur, & Duijsens, 1998, and see Van Tilburg et al., 1996), overseas scholars and students (e.g., Carden & Feicht, 1991; Lu, 1990; Miller & Harwell, 1983), resident university students (e.g., Archer et al., 1998; Brewin et al., 1989; Burt, 1993; Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Fisher, Murray, & Frazer, 1985) and resident student nurses (e.g., Porritt & Taylor, 1981). A comprehensive overview of the measures used and the findings of 26 studies is reported in Thurber and Sigman’s (1998) examination of homesickness.

Thurber and Sigman (1998) also provide a useful table of 17 causal theories or ideas used in contemporary research on homesickness in adults, adolescents, and children. Although emphasis varies, “most are inherently transactional, integrating characteristics of the person, the environment, and the circumstances surrounding the separation” (p. 903). One conceptualisation of homesickness is that of a grief reaction, as described earlier in Fried’s (1963) study. Based on the theory of attachment and loss (see Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1982),

it includes the notion of insecure early attachment to key people resulting in reluctance to leave those figures, with increased attachment behaviour, anxiety, and distress ensuing when separation occurs.

Porritt and Taylor (1981), in their Australian study of student nurses, used this assumption to construct a scale to measure homesickness symptoms. A questionnaire was administered to 185 student nurses four or ten months after their initial training. Binary-scored items included statements such as 'I felt sad when I thought of home' (grief-based), and 'I wanted to go back home' (attachment-based). Results indicated that items formed an internally consistent scale, significantly related to the total score, particularly with the item 'I felt homesick', reported by 42% of the respondents. Measured by the number of symptoms, homesickness was found to decline over time, especially in those with easy access to home. Conversely, recency of separation increased the likelihood of greater symptom reporting. In follow-up interviews with 35 respondents, 13 continued to be homesick. No apparent differences were distinguished in coping strategies, but the still homesick tended to seek support from each other and also reported more problems. This confounds whether or not homesickness is offered as a reason for problems (as predicted by attachment theory) or the need for attachment increases when problems are encountered, as was reported by most subjects.

Although Porritt and Taylor's study was retrospective, with the possibility of recall bias, and with no credible data on attachment security, the authors concluded that theories of attachment and loss are implicated in the development of homesickness, particularly during adolescence when self-reliance is still maturing. However attachment theory alone does not adequately account for the concept.

The theoretical underpinnings of loss and grief models are usually appropriated to permanent losses. Leaving home to attend residential institutions such as hospital, college, or boarding school, is a relocation not necessarily incurring loss. In most instances the adolescent knows that home, family, friends, and the environment still exist. These things are missed, rather than lost, as contact may still be made, and returns home usually anticipated and planned. Therefore as Fisher notes, "the loss experienced represents termination of immediate physical proximity rather than total loss" (1989, p.14). A grief response may be experienced when an individual is separated from loved ones (Fisher, 1989; Furnham & Bochner, 1986), but the overall reaction may be attributed to broader individual and environmental factors, as will be examined in this thesis.

In a longitudinal study of 80 British first year undergraduates, Brewin et al. (1989) took four theoretical perspectives from 'culture shock' literature: attachment theory, expectancy theory, social support, and social affiliation (see Furnham & Bochner, 1986) to explore psychological determinants of homesickness, particularly confiding behaviour, as well as demographic variables. It was predicted that frequency of homesickness reporting would be associated with prior expectation of its occurrence, based on the cognitive theory that conscious or unconscious expectations are a central construct in perception, emotion, and behaviour (see Brewin, 1988). Variables included consensus judgment of frequency of homesickness, anxious attachment and dependency on others, and measures of demographic distance from home and past absences from it.

Results indicated homesickness to be a fairly common, but short-lived phenomenon, with 39% of respondents reporting the experience for a mean period of 2.4 weeks. The incidence rate was close to Porritt and Taylor's (1981) 42%, but

considerably lower than the 60-70% reported in other comparable studies (e.g., Fisher et al., 1985; Fisher & Hood, 1987). Possible explanations offered included low geographical distance from the university (cf. Fisher et al., 1985), and a wider age range of students. Other results yielded significant support for attitudinal variables, particularly anxious attachment and reliance on others. Expectation of occurrence of homesickness in others as common, predicted homesickness reporting, and reporting was significantly associated with fewer previous absences from home. Females were more likely than males to cope by discussing their homesickness with peers, finding out if others felt the same, or looking for cheerful company.

Although the study identified determinants of homesickness reflected in other research (see Fisher, 1989), and identified gender differences in coping, Brewin concluded that there was a need for further clarification of the concept of homesickness, which has led to more recent research in the area (e.g., Thurber & Sigman, 1998). Studies discussed so far in this review involved older adolescents' (and adults') transition to college, where it might be assumed that the relocation was anticipated and chosen. However, it would appear that there remains a paucity of research that examines the experience of homesickness in younger adolescents and children.

Notable recent research in the area has focussed on studies of residential summer camps for youngsters (age ranges from 8 to 16 years) in the U.S.A. (Thurber, 1995; Thurber & Sigman, 1998; Thurber & Weisz, 1997; Zimmerman & Bijur, 1995). From their studies, and references to conventional wisdom (e.g., from nurses and counsellors) Thurber and Sigman (1998) present a comprehensive empirical synthesis of preliminary models of risk and protective factors for childhood homesickness. In particular, they suggest a predisposition to

homesickness based on interpersonal attitudes and perceived control as key factors. These elements, combined with limited previous separation experience, were found to account for 69% of the variance in boys' homesickness reporting. The authors examined a number of factors, for example noting that "homesickness is not synonymous with negative emotion" (p. 928). Whereas homesickness did not necessarily predict negative emotion, negative attitude to the new environment and perceived low control were strong predictors of negative emotions. The authors incorporate a number of theories, including those posited in the research on university students and boarding school children (e.g., Fisher, 1989). However their findings, which are variable, are restricted by their main focus on boys' experience.

On the other hand, Thurber's research also provides a useful basis for examining coping in homesick students, a topic which, until recently, has been neglected (Downs, 1994; Thurber & Weisz, 1997). In a summer camp study of 1032 boys and girls, the most effective way of coping with homesickness was reported to be participating in physical and other activities, which enabled students to make new friends. Other strategies included writing home and distracting oneself in order not to think about home (Thurber & Weisz, 1997). Writing about thoughts and feelings has also been found to accelerate the coping process in college students (Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990).

Although the outcomes noted may be applicable to other populations, it seems that very little empirical research has explored homesickness in boarding school students.

3.4.3. Homesickness research in boarding school students

The only substantial research specifically examining homesickness in boarding school students appears to have been conducted by Fisher and colleagues in Scotland (Fisher et al., 1984,1986) and in Australia (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1990). Fisher (et al., 1984) pioneered the research by conducting a diary style analysis of problems, worries, and spontaneous reporting of homesickness, over a two-week period on arrival at boarding school ($N = 50$, aged 13 to 16 years). The theoretical underpinning was based on Stokols and Shumaker's (1982) argument that adjustment to a relocation is influenced by the strength of attachment to the new setting, depending on the "perception of person-environment congruence, or the belief that one's important goals and activities are accommodated by existing environmental conditions" (p.158). Emphasis is on commitment to new sources of information, and a tendency to explore the new environment. Fisher and colleagues predicted that pupils would report more school-focussed problems, because of circumstantial demands, and more home worries if geographical distance and separation factors were influential. Decision control to go to the school, previous boarding experience, and sibling presence at school were among factors examined.

Results indicated a homesickness reporting incidence of just 16% (4 males and 4 females) which made comparisons of demographic variables impossible. However overall results indicated that worries were home-related and were expressed in terms of 'concern' or 'missing' which as other studies confirm, are indications of homesickness (see Fisher, 1989). Age, demographic distance, and decision involvement did not influence the extent of problem or worry reporting. As predicted, school problems were greater and increased by the presence of siblings (who were perhaps a cause of conflict or competitiveness).

Subsequent studies have included the term 'homesickness' being provided for subjects to define and indicate whether or not they experienced it at boarding school (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1986, Fisher et al., 1990). Fisher, Frazer and Murray (1986) reported three studies - two diary style analyses, and one retrospective study. In the latter, ($N = 117$, aged 11-14 years), boarders were surveyed at the end of their first year, with questions including items on demographic factors, decision control and so forth. Incidence of homesickness reporting was 71%, with consensus between the homesick and non-homesick on the definition of the term. However, no age or gender differences were found, nor was decisional control influential. On the other hand previous boarding experience and sibling presence had an ameliorating effect on homesickness.

Fisher (1989) integrated her research on boarding school children with her more extensive work on homesickness in university students (Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Fisher et al., 1985) to provide a composite "multi-causal descriptive theory of homesickness" (1989, p.113). Essential factors are the separation from the home environment and the experience of a new environment. Central to the model is Mandler's (1975, 1990) interruption (discrepancy) theory, the assumption being that when attentional resources are dominated by past plans, interruption causes tension and psychological disturbance, and compulsive thoughts of home prevail. Along with loss and withdrawal, Fisher also proposes that psychological addiction to the previous home environment (such as 'my own room') plays a role, particularly if there is dissatisfaction with the new environment. The new environment may create homesickness if there is job strain (perceived high demand and low control), if role changes cause anxiety and low self-concept (see Fisher et al., 1990), if the

environment is incompatible with expectations, and/or exploratory tendency and commitment to the new setting is low (Stokols & Shumaker, 1982).

In an Australian study, Fisher, Elder, and Peacock (1990) examined homesickness in three groups of pupils: previous boarders, previous day pupils and new pupils ($N = 112$, aged 14-16 years), residing at an 'outward bound' school for one year in the Australian Bush. The incidence of homesickness (77.7%) was high, with a significantly higher frequency in girls (83%) than boys (75%). Those who had previous experience as pupils at the school were less homesick than new pupils. Those who were homesick also perceived greater demands and low control over the setting. However limitations of the study are noted, given that the survey was conducted on one occasion only, six weeks into the year, and the setting was not typical of boarding schools in general.

From her overall research into homesickness, Fisher summarised a number of key features and symptoms, and derived a diagnostic test, the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI), for the assessment of homesickness and distress following the transition from home to residence at school or university (see Fisher, 1989). The second version of the DRI, a 26 item three-category rating scale has been variously used in recent studies in Australia (Burt, 1993; Burt, Strongman, & Costanzo, 1998; Downs, 1994) and New Zealand (Ward & Kennedy, 1993), and is used in this study (see Method, chapter 4, for further details). Although the DRI has been criticised for its limitation to specific populations (Van Tilburg et al., 1996) and other questionnaires have been devised for adult populations (e.g., Archer et al., 1998; and see Eurelings-Bontekoe et al., 1998), the DRI provides a useful and functional tool for examining the concept of homesickness in adolescents.

Fisher's work has also provided a number of principles which are useful in understanding the concept of homesickness, although her approach reveals little information regarding how the cognitions evolve. Consequently, in a more recent study (Downs, 1994), and as a precursor to this thesis, it was proposed that the concept of place identity development (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987), as well as other environmental and individual factors, may provide an integrative developmental-psycho-social environmental framework from which the concept of homesickness could be further explored. As described earlier, the development of place identity, as a substructure of self-identity, is built on the ability to adapt to new settings and become increasingly independent of childhood places and people (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). It is proposed that homesickness in adolescents may in part be a manifestation of the normal process of adjusting to missing the past environment. Perhaps only a prolonged preoccupation with previous settings is maladaptive, if for example it impedes the ability to become independent (e.g., Shulman & Prechter, 1989), or manifestations such as depression or low self-concept persist.

Fisher briefly commented on self-esteem, social support, and depressive tendencies (see 1989), but not within the research on younger adolescents. Although she generally reported no age or gender differences in homesickness reporting except in the Australian study (Fisher et al., 1990), it remained unclear as to whether or not direct comparisons had been made at different stages of adolescence. There had also been no clear evidence of exploring coping styles and strategies or the role that loneliness may play in determining the experience of homesickness at boarding school. Therefore in a descriptive study of homesickness in boarding school students in rural, remote North Queensland (Downs, 1994), a number of environmental and individual vulnerability factors were briefly explored: geographical and home

environmental features, mobility history, boarding school history, school environmental factors, self-esteem, loneliness, interpersonal locus of control, social support, and coping strategies.

A questionnaire survey of 212 boarding students in Year 8 ($n = 74$, aged 12-14 years) and Year 11 ($n = 138$, aged 15-23 years) was conducted in the first two weeks of the third term of the year. Homesickness definition, features, incidence, and coping strategies used, were assessed by self-report responses to direct questions and Fisher's (1989) Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI). In defining the term homesick, the most frequent features reported were missing home (80.66%) and missing family (60.38%) which concurred with previous findings (Fisher et al., 1986). Older adolescents defined more feelings such as sadness (40%) and included environmental features other than home (such as climate, vegetation).

Both the DRI and self-report measures indicated that over 80% of respondents experienced homesickness to some extent during the year with no marked age or gender differences. The overall incidence was higher than the 50-70% rate in the British research (Fisher, 1989), but comparable to the Australian Bush study (Fisher et al., 1990). Similarly, the self-report measure of continuous or severe homesickness was higher at 25.45%, although the DRI yielded 12.26%, comparable to Fisher's estimates of 10-15%. Coping strategies used to deal with homesickness indicated that 'keeping feelings to oneself' (87.79%) and 'looking for cheerful company' (84.3%) were most commonly used by all those experiencing homesickness, regardless of age or gender. However girls tended to confide in friends more than boys, consistent with Brewin and colleagues (1989).

Within the scope of this review, it is not feasible to detail all results of environmental factors examined, so a summary only will be provided (see Downs, 1992, for full details). The study encompassed respondents from greater geographical distances and more diverse backgrounds than other cited research yet no distinct associations were found between geographical distance or home backgrounds and homesickness reporting. Responses to what students liked and missed most about their home environment corresponded with homesickness definitions. The finding that between 25-27% of respondents had no negative comments to make about home supported Fisher's (1989) principle that homesick subjects more readily perceive positive than negative aspects of home. Positive evaluation of home also fits with the concept of place identity.

Other factors such as mobility history indicated that past places and people were missed to a considerable extent by those who had moved. Whereas there were no gender differences, and no apparent direct association with homesickness reporting, younger adolescents missed people more than the older students. Contrary to previous research (e.g., Brewin et al., 1989; Fisher, 1989), there was no evidence to suggest that previous boarding or absences from home ameliorated homesickness. However not wanting to attend boarding school was associated with homesickness, although decisional control and presence of siblings was not.

In examining school factors, regardless of age or gender, peers were considered an important source of satisfaction. Environmental features of the school revealed similar trends to those reported at home, with satisfaction depending on the home background. For example, those from drought-stricken properties liked the vegetation and sports facilities, whereas dislikes focussed on living arrangements. Lack of freedom, independence, and privacy were the most salient sources of

discontent with the school environment and were associated with homesickness, suggesting that perhaps homesickness in adolescents is partly a manifestation of conflict between adapting to a restrictive environment whilst attempting to develop and maintain a sense of self (Downs, 1994).

Individual factors such as low self-esteem, loneliness and external locus of control revealed patterns of association with homesickness, although the relationships remained unclear. For example over 93% of respondents had medium to high self-esteem, based on Rosenberg's (1965) scale, with no marked differences between age or gender. However a greater percentage of those with low self-esteem were high on homesickness measures, which was contrary to Fisher's (1989) findings of no significant association between homesickness and self-esteem in university students.

Comparable to the results on self-esteem, over 70% of respondents were low on both parent-related and peer-related loneliness, with no significant differences between age or gender, which was contrary to previous research (Marcoen & Brumagne, 1985). There was an association between peer-related loneliness and homesickness (DRI), but the overall rate of homesickness (80%) was antithetical to the overall incidence of loneliness (< 26%). As there was no clear pattern of association between loneliness and self-reported homesickness, it was noted that items relating to loneliness in the DRI may have confounded the results, and that the association may only be pertinent to those who reported extreme peer-related loneliness, given that they also reported low self-esteem.

Another individual characteristic found to be associated with loneliness and self-esteem was interpersonal locus of control. Consistent with previous research in Australian adolescents (e.g., Craig, 1988; Millard, 1989), there was a relationship

between those classified as having external locus of control in situational interaction with others, peer-related loneliness and low self-esteem. However those respondents also reported more severe homesickness, which might suggest that whereas internal locus of control could be a protective factor when under high stress (Luthar, 1991), external locus of control may be a determining characteristic for severe homesickness, which supports Fisher (1989) and Thurber and Sigman's (1998) theories.

Supportive relationships were also examined. Parents were named as an important source of support by more younger adolescents, who also maintained contact with home more frequently than older adolescents, supporting the notion that in early adolescence, parents remain the most significant source of support (e.g., Furman & Burhmester, 1992; Morgan, 1993). However, overall, peers were most frequently named, especially by girls, as a potential source of support for personal problems. As no differences within grade or gender were evident for chosen support for an academic problem, it could be argued that although peer support becomes increasingly important for most adolescents, choice of support for personal problems is influenced by age and gender. This was consistent with the finding that more girls than boys discussed homesickness with friends as a coping strategy.

Based on items from the COPE scales (Carver et al., 1989), active and/or problem-focussed strategies were most commonly reported by over 90% of respondents as ways of coping used to deal with stressors, and were positively associated with self-esteem. Although most items revealed few differences between age or gender, girls were more inclined to talk to others or vent their feelings. In contrast with the majority of students, those who reported that they never used active or positive reinterpretation as coping strategies were the most homesick.

As the study was broad and descriptive, there were methodological limitations, with reduced reliability and validity of measures (see Downs, 1992). However from the findings, it was proposed that the theoretical approach of identity development provides a useful framework for examining the concept of homesickness. The high incidence suggests that homesickness is a common experience in adolescents at boarding school. As part of the developmental process it could be argued that homesickness is an adaptive process of adjusting to missing past satisfactory environments when confronted with the discrepant setting of boarding school. Rather than being a completely negative experience, homesickness reaffirms positive relationships with home (Brewin et al., 1989). Therefore it is not necessarily a maladaptive experience, so long as the emerging identity of the adolescent and psychological well-being is not threatened.

There remain many unanswered questions in exploring the concept of homesickness, how it impacts on adaptation to new settings, and what interventions can be utilised to minimise the experience (Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1990c; Thurber & Sigman, 1998; Van Tilberg et al., 1996). Further research is needed, for example, to examine more specific factors such as self-concept and coping, which appear to be pertinent to the very homesick, and which are included in this thesis in exploring how young adolescents generally experience the transition to secondary school and specifically when boarding for the first time.

3.5 Objectives of the present study

'Adjustment or turmoil'?

Review of the literature demonstrated that interest in adolescence has burgeoned in recent years. In contemporary psychological research, it is recognised that adolescence encompasses a period of great developmental change, with increasing acknowledgment of the complexity of biological, psychological and social contextual factors which can influence healthy identity formation and psychological well-being. Adolescence demands a capacity for effective coping and adaptation to a number of new challenges and changes, and for the young adolescent this includes coping with the potentially stressful transition from primary to secondary school, and for some, the added transition of leaving home to board for the first time at the new school.

Are these transitions perceived positively in terms of 'adjustment' to the normative developmental processes of adolescence or is this a time of 'storm and stress,' of 'turmoil'? If there is a perception of 'turmoil' is there any single factor which may help distinguish those at risk of poor adjustment with implications for interventions? The objective of the present study is to explore these issues, with specific emphasis on three of the under-researched areas on contemporary adolescence.

1. Adolescents' subjective perceptions

The main focus of the study is to further knowledge of adolescence by gaining insight into young adolescents' viewpoints of their experiences in adapting to the transition to secondary school. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, until recently there has been under-representation of research on adolescence that includes

subjective, descriptive data. Yet, from an integrative lifespan developmental and ecological theoretical perspective of identity formation, how adolescents experience their world: the contexts of home, school, and peers, partly determine who they are and become, and vice versa. Therefore this study concentrates on selected self-report measures of psychological well-being and the adolescents' experiences of their social worlds rather than other areas of functioning such as academic performance, or others' definitions of 'adjustment'. In examining a number of psycho-social and environmental factors that can contribute to perceived adaptation, some of the factors: depression, homesickness, self-concept and coping, can also serve as affective, cognitive and behavioural indicators of adjustment, which can be compared with previous research.

2. Longitudinal study

In exploring the adolescents' experiences of the transition to secondary and boarding school, this study uses a longitudinal approach in order to monitor the changes and processes of adaptation from a life-span developmental perspective. Longitudinal research provides a richness of information that cannot easily be gained in 'snapshot' cross-sectional studies, yet remains a relatively uncommon approach, particularly within the Australian context (but see Wallis & Barrett, 1998). This is surprising, given that longitudinal studies are particularly important in examining processes of change; in assessing psychological states such as depression and homesickness, or reactions to life events such as family situations and relocation to boarding school, all of which can be expected to change over time (e.g., Fisher, 1989; Reynolds, 1987).

3. Reactions to relocation

The paucity of research into young adolescents' reactions to relocation, especially to boarding school in Australia, behoves its inclusion as the third main theme of this study; that of exploring homesickness, particularly from the theoretical perspective of identity formation that includes the concept of place identity (Downs, 1992; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Not only is there a need for research into the effects of relocation in general, including relocating from primary to secondary school, but for many adolescents who live in rural, remote areas of Australia, boarding school is the only viable option for secondary education. Does the new boarding experience impact specifically on this group of adolescents' perception of the transition to secondary school, and their psychological well-being?

In this study, these questions are explored by comparing day students with boarders. Gender comparisons are also examined given that the literature indicates possible differences on a number of factors.

The study therefore proposes to:

1. Explore how young adolescents generally experience the transition to secondary and boarding school over the first year.
2. Examine the following psycho-social and environmental factors in relation to the impact on perceived adaptation and indicators of adjustment:
 - Home environment and family context
 - School environment and context of peers
 - Impact of life events
 - Concerns and coping

Self-concept

Depression

Homesickness

3. Examine the relevance of the concept of place identity, from the integrative developmental perspective of identity formation, in the context of the students' perceived adaptation to the transition to secondary and boarding school.

Questions to be explored

1. In examining the adolescents' perspectives of their experiences and adaptation, is the transition to secondary and boarding school a time of 'turmoil' or a process of normative 'adjustment'?
2. Do the adolescents' perceptions of their social contexts of home, school and peers influence their perceptions of themselves and their experience of the transition to the new school setting? Do these perceptions change over time?
3. From the indicators of adjustment, what are the factors that can help distinguish those at risk of poor adaptation to secondary school, with implications for early interventions?
4. Can homesickness be isolated as a separate phenomenon, and to what extent does it impact on perceived adaptation to the new settings of secondary and boarding school?

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

4.1 Introduction: Rationale for study design

This study was devised as a repeated measures design intended to produce longitudinal data regarding adolescents' experience of their adjustment to secondary and boarding school. However events rendered this ideal unachievable in its original format, so rather than abandoning the longitudinal character of the study, the design was adapted by reducing the repetition of some measures and incorporating additional elements.

One problem which hampers longitudinal research is that of attrition rates. Although the planned sample constituted the population of Year 8 students at two schools, at the commencement of the study, 74 students were involved. For purposes of quantitative analyses, this constitutes a small N, making attrition a highly salient design concern. In this population, natural attrition could be anticipated by way of students leaving the school during the year and attrition by choice arising from adolescents changing their minds about participation for reasons pertaining to the study itself, or because of social or other pressures.

When it became evident that volitional attrition would affect the longitudinal design, principles from the Action Research paradigm were used to structure adaptations to the original method. The Action Research paradigm owes a strong legacy to Lewin (1946, 1948), and embraces a number of methodologies and specific techniques (Dick, 1993; Ketterer, Price & Politser, 1980). It is beyond the scope or intent of this section to review these; rather what is salient is the philosophy common to approaches within this problem-focussed paradigm of using data (which may be quantitative, qualitative, or both) from the situation to frame the next stage of

research and/or action, the data from which is in turn used to frame the subsequent stage of research and/or action in what may be described as a cyclic, iterative or spiral process. Rigour is achieved through the iterative process by comparing resulting data with the original intellectual framework. Action Research is useful in situations in which it may be impossible to apply stringent methods for practical reasons, where flexibility may be required, and/or where ecological validity is more salient than repeatability (Dick, 1993).

In this case as will be explained, adaptations were required because: (i) respondents expressed unwillingness to complete one particular questionnaire with the frequency specified in the initial design, (ii) gender differences emerged with regard to willingness to sustain participation and (iii) a tragic event affected the capacity of some students from one school to sustain participation as designed. These circumstances constituted a need for flexibility to respond to practical issues which made strict adherence to the positivistic framework unethical. To have attempted to adhere to the original design would have compromised repeatability in any case due to attrition rates and/or the accuracy of data collected under the circumstances. The eventual design is illustrated in Table 1 after explanation of these events.

The original design of the study was such that it would allow for ongoing, in-depth monitoring of all participants throughout their first year at secondary school. The focus was on their experiences: their thoughts, feelings, and reported coping behaviours, rather than how they were viewed or assessed by parents, peers, teachers or academic achievement. Criticism might be levelled at the lack of such comparative data, for evaluation of discrepancies say between perceived and objective assessment of well-being, but this was the whole point of this study in that

adults and researchers tend to deem what is 'right' or 'adjusted' from their perspective rather than from the adolescents'. There is a need for data that allows adolescents to describe their individual perceptions of their experiences and reactions to events and transitions in their lives (Morgan, 1993; Slee, 1993; Zaslow & Takanishi, 1993), and so was the main focus of this study.

The original intention was that baseline data would be collected at the beginning of the year and then measures, including self-report scales, questionnaires and individual interviews be repeated twice during each of the four terms at set times. From this, it was proposed that the process of coping and adaptation would be monitored and analysed, given that there is an apparent lack of literature addressing the process of coping with change (Hormuth, 1990; Jackson & Bosma, 1990).

As previously described, one aim of the study was to identify those students whose responses indicated that they were not adapting to the transition, in order that future strategies might be devised for schools to use to minimise the impact of identified factors. Of course there are many factors that influence and account for what, how and why a person thinks, feels or behaves the way they do. This is always a dilemma in research. How much, of what sort of data is it feasible to collect and analyse? In dealing with young adolescents I was very aware of the importance of balancing my interests with how much they would agree to do whilst maintaining their continued involvement, trust and response accuracy over a period of ten months. This proved to be a major issue in the design.

However, the first issue for consideration was the viability of obtaining measures before the students arrived at the new school. Aspects of personality traits and mood states, preconceived notions of how they expected to find secondary school and/or boarding school would have been useful baseline data (see Fisher,

1989). However this was not logistically feasible. Total enrolment numbers were not known until the first week of term; many students were from remote areas; and also school, parental and individual students' consent needed to be clarified. Consequently it was not seen as possible or practical to obtain measures before school started. As it turned out, the final number of participants could not be determined until the second week of the first term and a number of students who arrived late because of floods were excluded, as the study had already commenced.

The second issue, and one which persisted throughout the year, was the arrival of new students (who were excluded from study) and the departure of some, as well as the fickleness of some female students, knowing that it was not compulsory for them to participate in the study and that they could withdraw at any time. As will be apparent in the results, this became particularly problematic with a number of the girls withdrawing in Term Two, participating in Term Three, then withdrawing again in Term Four.

It should be explained that the participants were from two single sex schools and that the problem was only encountered with the female students and can be accounted for, in part, by particular factors. It was evident that the girls were less conforming and more questioning than the boys. They were also initially very open in discussing personal details and problems during interviews conducted at the beginning of the year, but a number refused to continue to participate in the study during Term Two onwards, resulting in fluctuating numbers of participants throughout the study.

A compounding factor with the female students was a critical incident which took place a month after the study commenced. A tragic fatal accident had shocked the class. The principal requested that I debrief the class and teachers. This posed

an ethical dilemma, in that I had established my role as researcher, not counsellor. However, due to the isolated location, lack of resources, my established rapport with the students, and the immediacy of the situation, there appeared to be no viable ethical option. During the debriefing, in which the students were encouraged to express their feelings, verbally and in writing, a small group expressed their anger at me for “*using this tragedy for your experiment*” and for being “*too personal.*” A number of the female students subsequently refused to participate fully in the study.

By the end of Term Two three problems were evident: firstly one third of the female students declined to complete measures. Secondly many students (male and female) complained about having to fill in one particular measure, the Adolescent Coping Scale, which was the main tool for monitoring coping behaviours (see section 4.3.4). Thirdly although the boys expressed interest in being interviewed, the girls were more reticent. It was therefore felt that if that issue was pursued and the other measures repeated in Term Three, not only would more students be likely to drop out, but the accuracy of responses would be put in jeopardy.

To rectify these problems, group process sessions were conducted in Term Three and other measures omitted. The objective of the group process was firstly to increase interaction and cooperation amongst students and the researcher. Secondly it allowed the students to develop a problem-solving approach to issues, and have an awareness of useful coping strategies. The process also enabled other measures to be repeated in Term Four.

Although the final design (see Table 1 below) at first may seem scientifically questionable, in retrospect the introduction of the group process allowed for a richness of data that may otherwise not have emerged. The philosophy behind this study was, that in order for young adolescents to express their experiences, scales,

questionnaires, interviews and the group work had to be tailored to reflect most accurately their perceptions, rather than be most easily statistically analysed and interpreted for statistical inference!

Table 1

Overview of Data Collection

Term	Week	RADS	DRI	SDQ-II	ACS	LES	Other
1	1/2 7	*	*	*	*	*	Interview
2	2 7	*	*		*		Questionnaire
3	5/6						Group Process
4	2 7	*	*	*		*	Questionnaire Questionnaire/ Interview

RADS = Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale

DRI = Dundee Relocation Inventory

SDQ = Self Description Questionnaire-II

ACS = Adolescent Coping Scale

LES = Life Events Scale

4.2 Participants

The participants were a non-random sample of first year (Year 8 in Queensland) secondary school students enrolled at two Catholic Colleges in a rural remote town in North Queensland. Both schools were under the same managerial umbrella, and catered for day and boarding students. One school was for girls only, and the other for boys. However some activities and facilities were shared and girls in Years 11 and 12 received their schooling at the boys' college.

At the commencement of the study, 74 students were included. These comprised 35 day students (7 males and 28 females) and 39 boarders (22 males and 17 females). The age range was 12 to 14 years ($M = 12.8$, $SD = 0.6$). Fifty-seven students (77.03%) were of Anglo-Australian descent, whilst 9 (12.16%) were from Europe or Asia and 8 (10.81%) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Consent for participation in the study was obtained from the Catholic Education Office, and the principals of the schools. The principals undertook responsibility for obtaining consent from parents by sending copies of the author's letter to them (see Appendix A1). Individual, written consent was obtained from the students by the author at the first meeting with them (see Appendix A2).

4.3 Measures and Questionnaires

This section describes the measures, self-report questionnaires, interview structure, and group process used in the study.

4.3.1 Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale

The Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale, or RADS (Reynolds, 1987), assesses the extent to which adolescents report a range of symptomatology associated with depression. It was designed specifically for use with individuals or groups, in junior or senior high school settings, as well as a tool for clinical assessment. However, the RADS does not formally diagnose depressive disorders, rather it is a self-report measure of the severity of symptoms. The questionnaire consists of 30 items, with a four-point response scale: almost never, hardly ever, sometimes, most of the time. Respondents are directed to answer each item according to how they usually feel. As well as statements which positively endorse

depressive symptoms (e.g., 'I feel sad'), there are also seven items which are reverse scored (e.g., 'I feel happy'). Scores can range from 30 to 120, so that the higher the score, the greater the level of depressive symptoms being reported. A cut-off score of 77 and above has been determined by Reynolds (1987) as indicative of clinical depression. There are also a number of critical items (questions 6, 14, 20, 26, 29 and 30) which can further discriminate between depressed and non-depressed individuals.

Reynolds reported high internal consistency reliability coefficients (.91 to .94) for the RADS and test-retest reliability at six and twelve weeks of .80 and .79 respectively. Validity was also clearly reported with studies supporting firm relationships between the RADS and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale as well as with a number of related constructs, such as anxiety, and self-esteem (see Reynolds, 1987; Reynolds & Mazza, 1998).

4.3.2 Homesickness and the Dundee Relocation Inventory

At the beginning of Term One, before completing the Dundee Relocation Inventory (see below), students were instructed to provide their own definitions of homesickness by responding to the following question: "So that I know what people generally understand by the word HOMESICK, please write in the space below, what you think it means." Features of definitions were coded into six categories according to previous research (Downs, 1992; Fisher et al., 1986), namely missing or wishing to be at home, missing family, missing friends, missing other environmental aspects or way of life (including activities), missing specific objects or pets, and symptoms or feelings (e.g. feel sad, do not feel comfortable).

The Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI), is a self-report questionnaire devised in Britain by Fisher and Murray (see Fisher, 1989) as a diagnostic tool for the assessment of homesickness and distress following transition. The questionnaire (see Appendix B1) has 26 items, (including two dummy questions: one and two) which load on four factors: general adaptation (e.g., 'I feel unsettled here'), home factor (e.g., 'I miss my family'), satisfaction (e.g., 'I feel excited about work here'), and a social factor (e.g., 'I feel needed here'). As the examples indicate, there is a balance between pleasant and unpleasant items. Responses are scored from zero to two on a three-category scale: never, sometimes, or often, with reversed scoring for pleasant items. Scores can range from 0 to 52, so that the higher the score, the greater the level of symptoms associated with homesickness and/or dissatisfaction with the new environment. Fisher (1989) determined a cut-off score of 17 discriminated between homesick and non-homesick, which was also used in this study and by the current author in previous research (Downs, 1992).

As homesickness is considered to be a response to a given transition such as moving away from home, or changing schools, it is a 'state' characteristic that is liable to change over time. Consequently, as Fisher (1989) pointed out, test-retest reliability of the DRI is difficult to establish in the homesick, but should be more stable in the non-homesick. Fisher reported a retest correlation coefficient of .71 and .81 at two weeks and six months respectively for 34 non-homesick students, compared with .59 and .21 for 54 students who were homesick ($p < .05$). Fisher also noted that construct validity is hard to establish with the scarcity of existing data on homesickness and 'diagnosed' criterion groups. However, a sample of boarding school subjects ($N = 31$, aged 11-13 years) who completed the DRI were

independently rated for homesickness by a housemaster, producing a correlation coefficient of .40, $p < .02$ (Fisher, 1989).

4.3.3 Self Description Questionnaire-II

The Self Description Questionnaire-II is one of three instruments developed by Marsh (1990) to measure self-concept. Whereas the SDQ-I (1988) is designed for use with primary school aged children, and the SDQ-III (1991) for college students, the SDQ-II is specifically for use with younger adolescents in grades 7 to 10. Developed from Shavelson et al.'s (1976) hierarchical model of self-concept (see chapter 1, section 1.2.3), with norms based on 5,494 Australian students, the questionnaire consists of 102 items. These items produce 11 scales that measure distinct facets of self-concept: three academic areas (Maths, Verbal, and General School), seven non-academic facets (Physical Abilities, Physical Appearance, Peer Relations: divided into Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Relations scales, Parent Relations, Emotional Stability, and Honesty-Trustworthiness) as well as a General Self scale, based on Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale. The eleven scales can be summed to give a Total Self-Concept score. Scores are derived from responses to straight-forward sentences (e.g., 'I hate reading', 'I am honest') on a six-point rating scale: False, Mostly False, More False Than True, more True Than False, Mostly True, or True. Each scale has 8-10 items, with half of the items negatively worded.

Raw scores are converted to percentiles and standard scores (non-normalised *T* scores, with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10) based on norms tables, which are separate for males and females, given that responses vary by gender. Using *T* scores allows individual profiles to be produced. Although there are no cut-off points to depict 'low' or 'high' self-concept, Marsh suggests that *T* scores of 30

and less indicate a particular concern for the individual, as opposed to a realistic view of a facet of self (see Marsh, 1990, for further details). Factor scores can also be calculated.

High internal consistency for the SDQ-II was reported by Marsh (1990), with coefficient alphas ranging from .83 to .91 for the specific scales, and .94 for Total Self-Concept. Stability of responses over time was also reported, as well as strong evidence of construct validity, providing support for the SDQ-II as a psychometric tool.

4.3.4 Adolescent Coping Scale

The Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) is a self-evaluation inventory that assesses the use of 18 distinct coping strategies. Developed in Australia by Frydenberg and Lewis (1993a), the instrument is designed for use with adolescents in the age range 12 to 18 years, and can be administered individually or in a group setting. Coping behaviour responses can be assessed utilising the General Form (for general concerns) or Specific Form (for a particular concern), with two versions of the inventory available, the Short or Long Form. For the purpose of the current study, the General - Long Form and Specific - Long Form were used. These forms are identical apart from different wording in the instructions. The questionnaire comprises 79 items (and one open-ended question) which are rated on a five -point Likert scale: 1 - doesn't apply or don't do it, 2 - used very little, 3 - used sometimes, 4 - used often, and 5 - used a great deal. Responses are totalled and scores adjusted according the number of items included for each of the 18 coping strategies, after which scale totals can be transferred to a profile chart (see chapter 5 for examples).

Although eighteen distinct behaviours can be measured by the ACS, with construct validity clearly reported, Frydenberg and Lewis (1993a) point out that strategies are not likely to be completely unrelated. Internal consistency coefficients for the ACS were reported to range from .54 to .84 for the General Form and from .62 to .87 for the Specific Form. Stability of responses over time was reported to be moderate and fulfilled the criteria for test-retest reliability, although a number of individual items on both the General and Specific Forms were not significantly correlated (See Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a for further details). However, Frydenberg (1997) commented that “stability of response is not an entirely appropriate way to assess reliability of students’ coping responses, since coping is perceived as a dynamic phenomenon” (p.63).

4.3.5 Life Events Scale

The Life Events Scale (LES) is a survey developed by Adams and Adams (1991). The questionnaire (see Appendix B2) comprises 13 discreet personal and family events which could be considered stressful for adolescents (e.g., divorce/separation of parents). Respondents rate the extent to which the event negatively affects them on a five - point scale from 0 (not at all) to 4 (a great deal). If the event has not occurred, a separate column (not applicable) is circled. “Scoring has been to use the numbers you see on the form for each item; we have not devised any way to aggregate the scores across items...” (J. Adams, 1994, personal communication).

4.3.6. Semi-structured Interview: Term One

An interview format (Appendix B3) was constructed as a guide for the researcher, with extra notes taken as necessary, depending on responses. Items were incorporated to ascertain, at the beginning of the first term, the students' perceptions of their home and school life, current personal problems and usual ways of coping. Demographic details were also included. Questions relating to puberty were originally included, but discarded as they were seen to be intrusive and not appropriate to the study.

The interview format produced nominal and ordinal data which were collapsed into a number of categories and themes for descriptive analyses (and inclusion of quotes). The categories were primarily constructed on the bases of the frequency of responses, but where possible, were consistent with the literature, previous research and concepts (e.g., Downs, 1992; Fisher 1989). In the data-driven categorisations, reliability of the classifications was established by giving responses to an independent judge immediately after data collection, with a follow-up of a random sample of responses twelve months later. On both occasions agreement of categories were at acceptable levels (greater than 85%). Hence data analyses proceeded.

4.3.6.1 Demographic and home environmental factors

Demographic details included age, gender, and ethnic background (see section 4.2). Family composition was coded into categories according to whether the students lived with one or two parents and siblings or not, in a blended family, or other setting. Head of household occupations were categorised as professional, pastoral, trade/skilled workers, clerical and service, unskilled, and unemployed.

In order to examine the concept of place identity (Downs, 1992; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987), and given that no standard measures are available, especially for adolescents (Lalli, 1992), the 'home' section (questions 1 to 11) contained items specifically constructed to ascertain type of home background and mobility history (see Brewin et al, 1989; Fisher & Hood, 1988), and attachment to previous and current home environments. Home location was divided into five categories: Local (that is within the town or surrounding areas of the school), Other town or city in Queensland or Interstate, Queensland bush/property, Aboriginal community, and Overseas. Mobility history was divided into four categories depending on length of time lived in the current home location: all of the respondent's life, over five years, two to five years, and less than two years. Those who had moved (question 4) once, or more than once, were asked if and what or who they missed about their previous home(s). Responses were classified as per previous research (Downs, 1992) into categories of people (family, friends) and environmental factors (e.g. lifestyle, places, weather, activities) on a three-point scale: 0 (nothing or not much missed), 1 (missed a bit) and 2 (missed a lot).

Perceived important aspects of home (questions 5) and what or who are missed when away from home (question 7) were categorised according to responses but also consistent with classifications previously used by the author namely: family, friends, animals, activities, and environmental aspects. 'Who' they were closest to at home (question 6) was divided into parents, siblings, other relatives, and pets. Students were also asked directly if they felt homesick (question 8). Replies were rated on a scale from 0 - not at all to 2 - often, consistent with other measures of homesickness (Fisher, 1989).

Things disliked about home (question 9) were coded into five categories: conflict/problems with people; environmental issues, jobs and rules; boredom and loneliness (including lack of activities); and nothing disliked. Questions 10 and 11 were designed to extract more specific details on students' perceptions of places that they prefer (Altman & Low, 1992; Korpela, 1989, 1992; Sommer, 1990), and were categorised according to types of place (e.g., bush, towns); specific environmental features or qualities; specific activities or people; and a miscellaneous category.

4.3.6.2 School history and environmental factors

Research into homesickness (Brewin et al, 1989; Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1989) has produced conflicting results concerning the ameliorating effects of previous experience of boarding, sibling presence, decisional control in school choice, feelings and met expectations about being at the school. These items (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) were measured using binary responses, with questions based on previous research by the author (Downs, 1992).

Early impressions of likes and dislikes about the school were examined in items 5 and 7, with responses coded into categories concerning people, school work, environmental factors, conditions (e.g., rules, privacy), sport, other activities, and home. Question 8 "Do you feel at home here?" specifically for boarders, was binary coded, with other questions to ascertain their initial reaction to the new setting added and categorised as above according to responses.

4.3.6.3 Individual factors

This section focussed on allowing the students to voice any concerns about school or home that might influence their adaptation to the new school, and were categorised as above. Question 3 “How do you usually cope with things that worry you?” was included, coded according to, and for comparison with, responses on the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993a).

4.3.7 Questionnaires

Questionnaires (Appendices B4 and B5) were devised with items 1 to 4 targeting the students’ positive and negative experiences of school. Consistent with other data, responses were categorised into issues concerning people, school work, sport, activities, conditions, the environment, and home. The other six items for boarders only were questions used in a previous study (Downs, 1992). They were constructed to measure the perceived sense of spatial autonomy, privacy and independence of thought or action, in the school setting, based on the theoretical framework of identity development (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987; Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987). Responses were rated on a three-point scale: 0 - Never, 1 - Sometimes, and 2 - Often. This questionnaire was administered in week two of Terms Two and Four.

Another questionnaire (Appendix B6) was administered in week seven of Term Four. This was specifically designed to allow students to reflect on aspects of the school year. The first two items evaluated the usefulness of the Group Process (see section 4.3.8.). Individuals were asked what, for them, was the most important issue that came out of the group session (question 1). Data-driven categorisations were classified as self - focussed, other people focussed, activities, sport, conditions,

or the environment. How problems could be solved (question 2) was coded as per the Adolescent Coping Scale.

Items 3 to 5 targeted activities (but were not analysed). Questions 6 to 9 addressed the process of respondents' maturation of self-concept, adaptation and overall satisfaction with the new setting over the year. Thus question 6 asked "In what ways do you think you have changed as a person during this year?" Categories were data-driven and fitted aspects of the SDQ-II scales, whilst four point scales were used to determine adaptation, level of happiness and looking forward to the next year (items 7 to 9). Item 10, which was binary coded, examined whether or not students were continuing at the same school the following year. A final comment asked students to indicate their willingness "to have a chat" with the author individually. This acted as the basis for a voluntary final interview, in which students were asked to comment on any aspect of their year at the school. These responses were recorded verbatim.

4.3.8 Group Process

A group facilitation process was constructed, based on the concept of the Nominal Group Process or Technique (NGT) (see Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1986). NGT has been found to be a robust process, which is particularly useful for large groups and where time is limited (Dick, 1991; Moore, 1994). Such a process enables information and ideas to be generated at individual, small group and whole group levels, thus encouraging participation of each group member and the pooling of ideas.

In order to generate ideas, Edward de Bono's (1982) thinking and creativity tools the "PMI" and "Alternatives" were utilised. The PMI is a timed exercise, in

which respondents are directed to first think of the Positive or good points (P) about a given topic or statement, then the Minus points (M) and finally the Interesting (I) points. The 'I' points, which can be either or neither negative nor positive, serve the purpose of exploring matters "outside of the judgement framework" (de Bono, 1982, p.23) and allow expansion of ideas. In this study the PMI was used to explore the students' thoughts and feelings about "starting high school".

The "Alternatives" tool was used as a creativity spark. In this task, respondents are presented with a non-specific drawing (see de Bono 1982, p.27) and instructed to generate as many alternative suggestions for the possibilities of what the drawing may represent. Further details of the content of the group process are explained in the procedure (section 4.4.2.) and results (section 6.4) respectively.

4.4 Procedure

4.4.1 Preliminary proceedings

The author had previously undertaken research (Downs, 1992) at the two colleges used in the present study, so was familiar with the environments and knew the principals, who were keen that further research be conducted at their schools. Prior to the commencement of the school year the principals were consulted individually about the proposed design of the forthcoming study, and examples of questionnaires were presented. Arrangements for parental consent were confirmed (see section 4.2), and estimates of expected enrolment numbers for Year 8 students for the year established. The schools' year planner and term timetables were used to arrange mutually suitable dates and times for the study to be conducted, ensuring that visits to both schools occurred during the same week and that repeated measures were conducted at the same time of day, to minimise confounding factors.

Prior to the commencement of the study, as the author was unfamiliar with the administration of the Adolescent Coping Scale and Self-Description Questionnaire-II, these, as well as the Term 2 questionnaire, were given to 5 students (2 males and 3 females) about to enter a local High School, in order to ascertain length of time taken to complete, and level of difficulty. These factors have been found by the researcher to be important considerations when administering questionnaires to young adolescents in the school setting, as time allocation (e.g., one or two 50 minutes periods) is arranged prior to administration, and is usually not flexible. Time management therefore had to take into account 'settling down', introductory statements and instructions, as well as completion time for the measures for each particular visit. It was vital that the slowest student was not pressured to skip answers, nor those who finished quickly to get restless or disruptive. In this regard, at each visit, the researcher ascertained from staff and students that students had reading material or some alternative activity to do, whilst waiting for others to finish. Students who decided not to participate at a particular visit were given school work or were relocated to another area. Staff members were not present during the study, except for a boarding master who assisted one student who had reading difficulties.

4.4.2 Study procedures

The study commenced in the first week of Term One at the beginning of February and finished in the seventh week of Term Four, mid-November. Table 1 is reproduced below as a reminder of the final design of the data collection.

Table 1

Overview of data collection

Term	Week	RADS	DRI	SDQ	ACS	LES	Other
1	1/2 7	*	*	*	*	*	Interview
2	2 7	*	*		*		Questionnaire
3	5/6						Group Process
4	2 7	*	*	*		*	Questionnaire Questionnaire/ Interview

RADS = Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale

DRI = Dundee Relocation Inventory

SDQ = Self Description Questionnaire-II

ACS = Adolescent Coping Scale

L.E.S. = Life Events Scale

4.4.2.1 Term One

In the first week of the first term, the researcher was introduced to the Year 8 students, in their 'home' classroom, by the principal of the respective school. The introduction indicated that the author would be visiting on a number of occasions throughout the year to conduct research on how students felt about being at their new school. The respective Year 8 teacher was also present whilst the researcher outlined briefly the format of the study, *"that over the year I will be asking you to fill out some questionnaires and talk to me about yourselves, so that I can find out more about how young people experience and cope with starting high school."* Consent forms were completed (Appendix A2), on which was a space for a code number. The author allocated code numbers individually to participants according to

whether they were male or female, day or boarding students. For example, the code MD1 indicated that at the boys' school, subject number one was a male day student, whilst code FB1 indicated that, at the girls' school, subject number one was a boarder. Students were instructed to write their code number in a safe place such as their diary, not to disclose it to other students, and told that they would be using their code number only on all questionnaires to ensure confidentiality. The consent forms allowed the researcher to have access to the students' names for comparison with attendance noted in the class register. Students were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that there were no right or wrong answers to anything they would be asked to comment on in the study.

At the first visit to each class in week one, the Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II), Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS), Life Events Scale (LES) and Adolescent Coping Scale – General were administered. Taking one and a half hours to complete, this was the longest 'test battery' of the study. Students appeared to concentrate well and were encouraged to raise their hands if they had queries about instructions or particular words. The Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) was not administered on the first occasion, given that the students had only been at the school for two days.

A week later the DRI was administered and interviews conducted with each student who had agreed to participate in the study. During this time, students who had arrived at the school after the first visit, (a number were delayed because of floods) completed the other measures. No students commencing after the second week were included in the study (although a number filled out the questionnaires anyway).

Interviews were conducted during class periods for day students. A separate room, away from the classroom, was made available to the researcher so that confidentiality could be maintained. For boarding students, interviews were conducted during evening study periods and at the weekend. Interviews took from 20 to 40 minutes each, according to the students' willingness to talk about issues. As well as the semi-structured questions as per the interview format, the researcher reviewed the completed Life Events Scale (LES) and Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) with individuals if their responses had indicated a number of issues that might be causing them distress. This acted as a useful screening process for being aware of those who might be in need of further support. Such students were asked about support being received and/or any appropriate action was followed up as necessary. Overall, interviews took four and a half days to complete. Notes were taken by the researcher during and after each interview.

The next set of data was collected five weeks later, in Week 7 of the first term, with repeated administration of the RADS and DRI. However, as noted in section 4.1, an interim visit had been made to the girls' school two weeks earlier to debrief the class following a critical incident. At that time, a number of students indicated their feelings about the author's involvement in that process, and subsequently dropped out of the study.

4.4.2.2 Term Two

The next visit occurred in Week 2 of Term Two. Unfortunately, the day set by the schools was a public holiday. Although not given the day off, the students at both schools had been involved in a parade early that morning, and were somewhat agitated during my visit. The Term 2 questionnaire, RADS, DRI, and ACS-Special

were administered. There was a noticeable reluctance from both the boys and girls to do the ACS - special concerns, with comments on its length and repeated types of questions. The situation at the girls school was also compounded by the boarding students having been in trouble the previous evening. A number were somewhat belligerent and refused to participate.

The next set of data collection (RADS and DRI) took place in Week 7, exactly three months after the commencement of the study. At that time, there was a noticeable difference in the attitude of the boys versus the girls. Whereas the boys were good-humoured, keen to participate and wanted to know when they were going to be interviewed again, the girls (who were having a maths test that day) were more reticent, with one third of the original participants refusing to be involved in the study on that occasion.

Consequently, the researcher consulted the principal and teachers to obtain feedback about the problems encountered. It was reported that there was a nucleus of rebellious students, but that as a class the Year 8s were particularly mature and independent-minded. Keeping in mind that the study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of the adolescents, the author decided to tailor the study to meet that objective, by allowing the students to voice their opinions. It was subsequently decided to hold a group process-type session at each school in Term Three, rather than attempt to repeat measures or interview reluctant students.

4.4.2.3 Term Three

Group processes were conducted in August, in Weeks 5 and 6 of Term Three for the boys and girls respectively. A three-hour morning session was allocated, which included a special morning tea. Different rooms from the usual classrooms

were provided; the boys used a large boarders' study room, and the girls used the boarders' common and games room. As the sessions replaced normal school activities, all Year 8 students were required to attend (at the request of the principals). This was fortuitous as it allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information from all students, both study participants and drop-outs.

The same format for the session was used for both the boys and girls. However, having encountered some difficulty in running the boys' group alone, the researcher enlisted the help of a colleague to 'scribe' results at the girls' session. This did not appear to impact negatively on the girls' responsiveness.

1. Introduction: Icebreaker, ground-rules and group formation

Consistent with other occasions during the study, the students were left with the researcher and reminded that the information discussed would remain confidential. The students were thanked for their input to the study so far, and were told:

" I am getting an idea of some of your experiences and feelings about being here at high school. Now I need your help - you're the experts at changing schools, because you know what it is like. I need you to help me work out what people need to do to feel OK about starting secondary school. We are going to do this by doing some different activities this morning".

As an icebreaking exercise, students were instructed to write their first name on a label, then turn to the next person and write a positive word for each letter of their neighbour's name (e.g., Diane = Daring, Interesting, Affectionate, Nice, Energetic). Two minutes were allowed in order to practice working within a limited time.

Ground rules were then established, emphasising that there were to be no criticisms or put-downs of others' ideas, that it was not a competition (apart from generating ideas), and that opinions, ideas, and creative suggestions were being sought.

Groups were formed by numbering the students off from 1 to 5, and then allocated areas of the room according to their number; for example, Group 1 consisted of all the 'ones.' This method of grouping was used to prevent segregation of cliques or class isolates. Each student was then given a small notebook which they identified with their individual code number as well as the group number. Those students not originally included in the study were allocated individual numbers at that stage.

2. PMI

The PMI was introduced as "*a special way to help people think about things - like if you're eyesight is not good, when you put your glasses on, you can see more clearly, and react to things you see.*" Plus, Minus, and Interesting points were explained with three columns headed on a white board. Students were then instructed to write in their individual notebooks, without conferring, the plus points to the statement 'All cars should be yellow' which was used as a practice run. After one minute, individuals were asked to confer with each other in their small group to come up with a list of ideas which one person wrote on to a sheet of butcher's paper. After two more minutes, a nominated spokesperson from each group in turn presented different ideas to the whole group. This process was then repeated for Minus and Interesting points.

After the PMI practice run, the exercise was repeated using the statement ‘Starting High School at (name of school). The only change in the format was that, as each group presented two rounds of their ideas to the whole group, the researcher recorded the responses onto an overhead, in order to preserve all data.

3. Nominal Group Technique

After a morning tea break, students returned to their groups and the “Alternatives” task was presented briefly as a way to get them back into thinking creatively (see Method, section 4.3.8). Following this, the students were informed that they were going to look at some key issues about being at High School.

The statement “The best things for students to do or be in order to get used to High School are...” was presented. The students were instructed to first write their individual list of ideas in their notebooks, without conferring. After five minutes, they were then asked to rank order their list in order of perceived importance. Each person then contributed their most important point to their group which was written down on butcher paper. If a point had already been contributed, the point ranked second on the individual’s list was presented. The group then voted amongst themselves to rank order the new list. The two most important points of each group was presented to the whole group and these were noted on an overhead.

This process was then repeated for the statement “The best things for the school to do or be in order for students to get used to High School are...” Time constraints restricted the small group contribution to the whole group as the first ranked point only.

Further ranking of the whole group list was not attempted as maintenance of attention was difficult. In two of the boys’ groups, the students had chosen to draw a

redesigned school environment on their butcher paper. These were displayed to the whole group and the session was subsequently opened to general comments and discussion.

The session concluded with an evaluation of the morning by individual answers in their notebooks to the following questions: 1) What were the good things about this morning's session? 2) What things were not so good? 3) What else could we have done?

4.4.2.4 Term Four

In October, during Week 2 of the final term, the RADS, DRI, and SDQ-II were readministered. The author decided not to attempt to readminister the ACS, given the earlier resistance to it. Questionnaire Term 4 (similar to Term 2) was also administered.

The final visits took place in Week 7, at which time the RADS, DRI, and LES were administered, as well as a final questionnaire which addressed the group process and overview of the year. At that time, the female students who had dropped out of the study were asked to write down on a piece of paper their reasons for doing so. Everyone was thanked for their participation throughout the year.

The final questionnaire also asked students to indicate their willingness or not to have a final word with the author on an individual basis. These brief interviews were conducted in the same manner as in Term One, and allowed the students to make any overall observations about their year at the new school.

CHAPTER FIVE: INDICATORS OF ADJUSTMENT - QUANTITATIVE DATA

5.1 Introduction: Rationale for data sets and statistical approach

The original sample at the beginning of the school year consisted of 74 students. Given that the study was conducted over a period of ten months, it was to be expected that the number of respondents would fluctuate according to natural attrition, or absence on a given day of data collection. However, as previously described, discrepancy in respondent numbers over time was mainly accounted for by the partial or total withdrawal from the study by approximately one third of the female students. This was of particular concern, given that by the end of the study only five of the original seventeen female boarders remained full participants.

Given these discrepancies, different sets of results will be presented. The 'initial sample' is the total number of participants (74) at the start of the year. However, as the study was longitudinal, it was necessary for quantitative analyses of the repeated measures to be confined to those who participated on each occasion of data collection. Therefore another set of analyses is based on those participants, and is described as the 'core group'. This group is also used for comparison in examining six individual profiles (chapter 7). On the other hand, in order to retain the richness of information, especially when comparing quantitative with the qualitative data (chapter 6), where appropriate, results for all participants at any given time are included and described only as the 'respondents'. Table 2 summarises the specific data sets.

Table 2

Data Sets used in Results

Respondents	Initial Sample	Core Group	Profiles
Total	74	42	6
Male	29	22	3
Female	45	20	3
Day	35 (7M, 28F)	22 (7M, 15F)	2 (1M, 1F)
Boarders	39 (22M, 17F)	20 (15M, 5F)	4 (2M, 2F)

As the study was essentially exploratory with no specific hypotheses, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) are reported initially in this chapter. Where appropriate, paired and independent (2 tail) t-tests, or Mann-Whitney U statistics are then used in examining differences between groups. One way ANOVAs with post hoc Scheffé F-tests are reported in examining changes over time and between groups, and Eta square values calculated to determine the amount of variance which could be attributed to differences on certain measures where the data was highly skewed. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were conducted to determine the relationships amongst measures.

This study was not designed as a controlled experiment and the subjects were not a random sample, so it is emphasised that results cannot be generalised to other populations of adolescents and that due caution is exercised in reporting statistically significant differences and associations amongst measures. For the purpose of describing the findings of this study, statistical significance is noted at an alpha level of .05. However given the small and fluctuating sample size and large number of correlations calculated, and hence the risk of Type I error, although findings at $p < .05$ are reported as significant, results at $p < .01$ are considered to be more meaningful.

In presenting the quantitative results, this chapter examines the students' responses over time on the repeated measures of depression, homesickness, coping strategies and self-concept, and the correlations amongst these measures. Responses at the beginning of Term One include the initial sample ($N = 74$) to give the overall picture, which is compared with the core group of participants ($N = 42$). The core group is then used as the sample for examining changes over time in depression and homesickness, whereas the total number of respondents is used for other measures and in examining associations amongst measures.

5.2 Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale

The Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) measures the extent to which students report symptomatology associated with depression. Scores can range from 30 to 120, with the higher the score on the scale, the greater the depressive symptomatology reported. The RADS was administered in Weeks Two and Seven in each of Terms One, Two and Four. Table 3 presents comparisons of RADS mean scores at the commencement of the study in Week Two of the first term of the school year.

Table 3

Comparisons of RADS Means and Standard Deviations by Set, Gender and Student Status at beginning of Term One

Initial sample (N=74)	n	Mean	(SD)	Core Group (N=42)	n	Mean	(SD)
Total	74	60.38	(14.72)	Total	42	57.21	(14.67)
Males	29	56.45	(15.32)	Males	22	53.77	(14.91)
Females	45	62.91	(13.91)	Females	20	61.00	(13.77)
Day	35	59.80	(16.26)	Day	22	56.14	(14.85)
Boarders	39	60.90	(13.39)	Boarders	20	58.40	(14.75)

The mean score for the initial sample ($N = 74$) was 60.38 ($SD = 14.72$). Independent t-tests found no significant differences between boys and girls or boarding and day students. However it is noted that the scores ranged from 35 to 104, with 8 girls and 3 boys obtaining the cut-off score of 77 or more which delineates severity of symptomatology associated with clinical depression (Reynolds, 1987).

Similarly, although the core group's ($N = 42$) mean score was 57.21 ($SD = 14.67$), in that group, scores ranged from 35 to 88 and included six students (3 boys and 3 girls) with scores of 77 or more. Overall, although not statistically significant, girls' scores were higher than boys'.

Table 4 shows the mean RADS scores of the core group throughout the year.

Table 4

RADS Means and Standard Deviations for Core Group Throughout the Year

Term	Mean	(SD)
One ₁	57.21	(14.67)
One ₂	50.55	(12.08)
Two ₁	49.33	(12.61)
Two ₂	50.83	(16.09)
Four ₁	51.76	(14.35)
Four ₂	50.48	(13.36)

One way repeated measures ANOVAS and Post hoc Scheffé F-tests were performed to examine overall differences over time, and by gender and student status. There was a significant difference in overall reporting over time, $F(5, 251) = 3.28$, $p < .01$, with Scheffé post hoc analysis indicating a significant reduction in reporting of depressive symptoms at the beginning of Term Two compared with the beginning of Term One. Although there was no significant difference in the boys' scores over time, there was a significant change in the girls' scores, $F(5, 119) = 3.11$, $p < .01$, with post hoc analysis indicating a significant decrease from a mean of 61

($SD = 13.77$) at the beginning of Term One to a mean of 50.95 ($SD = 15.79$) at the end of Term Two. However the 15 female day students accounted for this decrease, whereas there was no significant change in the boarders.

Unpaired t-tests (2 tailed) were used to examine gender differences. Whilst not significantly different in the first two terms, at the end of the year the boys' mean score of 46.14 ($SD = 10.8$) was significantly lower than the girls' mean score of 55.25 ($SD = 14.51$), $t(40) = -2.32$, $p < .03$.

In comparing day and boarding students, overall there were no significant differences, nor were there any significant changes over time in the boarders' level of depressive symptomatology. However, as Table 5 illustrates, there was a marked difference in the scores of male and female boarding students throughout the year, with the girls scoring significantly higher at the end of both the first and last term of the year.

Table 5

Comparisons between Male and Female Boarders on RADS Scores Throughout the Year

Term	Males (n = 15)		Females (n = 5)		Z	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
One ₁	56.53	(15.59)	64.00	(11.43)	11.5	ns
One ₂	49.27	(12.16)	66.00	(14.53)		.02
Two ₁	50.00	(13.35)	62.80	(5.50)	5.0	ns
Two ₂	51.47	(18.64)	56.40	(16.81)		ns
Four ₁	53.80	(18.59)	57.40	(12.40)	5.0	ns
Four ₂	46.07	(10.71)	69.60	(15.58)		.01

However it should be noted that only five female boarders remained in the study throughout the year and, as other results will highlight, these particular students mainly accounted for the higher levels of reported symptomatology.

In summary, the level of depressive symptomatology reported by students, as reflected in repeated measures of the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale, decreased significantly from the beginning of the first term to the second term, particularly in female day students. For the remainder of the year, scores remained relatively stable, with girls consistently reporting higher levels of depressive symptoms than boys.

5.3 Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)

The Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) is a scale designed to measure the extent to which respondents report homesickness. With a possible score range of 0 to 52, the higher the score, the greater the level of symptoms associated with homesickness. The cut-off mean score of 17 and above has been found to discriminate between those who are homesick and those who are not (Fisher, 1989). The following results describe students' responses over the year.

The DRI was administered in conjunction with the RADS in Weeks Two and Seven of Terms One, Two and Four. Table 6 presents comparisons of DRI mean scores at the beginning of the school year.

Table 6

Comparisons of DRI Means and Standard Deviations by Set, Gender and Student Status at the Beginning of Term One

Initial sample (N=74)	n	Mean	(SD)	t	p	Core group (N=42)	n	Mean	(SD)	t	p
Total	74	17.68	(10.61)		ns	Total	42	15.71	(10.21)		
Male	29	19.45	(9.57)			Male	22	17.82	(9.35)		
Female	45	16.53	(11.19)		ns	Female	20	13.40	(10.85)		ns
Day	35	9.46	(6.74)			Day	22	8.55	(5.85)		
Board	39	25.05	(7.60)	-9.3	.0001	Board	20	23.60	(7.90)	-7.07	.0001

It can be seen there were no significant gender differences in homesickness reported from either the initial sample or core group at the beginning of the first term. However, homesickness was best discriminated by comparing day and boarding students, with significantly higher levels of symptoms reported by the boarders. This pattern continued throughout the year (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparisons Between Day and Boarding Students on DRI Scores Throughout the Year

Term	Day (n=22)		Boarder (n=20)		Unpaired t
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	(df 40)
One ₁	8.55	(5.86)	23.60	(7.90)	-7.07***
One ₂	8.09	(5.91)	21.15	(8.35)	-5.89***
Two ₁	7.82	(6.55)	24.30	(9.73)	-6.49***
Two ₂	7.05	(7.27)	19.30	(9.60)	-4.69***
Four ₁	8.86	(8.41)	22.20	(9.32)	-4.88***
Four ₂	7.41	(8.11)	19.25	(9.52)	-4.35***

p < .0001

One way repeated measures ANOVAs and post hoc Scheffé F-tests revealed no significant changes in overall mean scores throughout the year, nor by gender or student status. However, although day students' scores remained stable over time, there were marked differences in the boarders' level of homesickness reporting (Table 8).

Table 8

Comparisons between Male and Female Boarders on DRI Scores Throughout the Year

Term	Male (n = 15)		Female (n = 5)		Z	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
One ₁	21.47	(7.87)	30.00	(3.32)		ns
One ₂	17.87	(5.58)	31.00	(7.78)	3.5	.003
Two ₁	21.80	(8.68)	31.80	(9.61)		ns
Two ₂	17.07	(9.03)	26.00	(8.80)		ns
Four ₁	21.02	(9.23)	25.20	(9.99)		ns
Four ₂	16.33	(6.47)	28.00	(12.51)	14.5	.004

Whereas the level of the boys' homesickness decreased at the end of each term, the girls' did not. However, as mentioned previously, only five female boarders remained in the study, and their high levels of homesickness accounted for the marked gender difference in homesickness reported by boarders, particularly at the end of both the first and last terms.

In summary, overall mean scores of the Dundee Relocation Inventory indicated a stable pattern of homesickness reporting over the school year. However, there was a consistent pattern of the five girls remaining much more homesick than the boys.

5.4 Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II)

Marsh's (1990) Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II) measures eleven distinct facets of students' self-reported perception of themselves: three areas of academic self-concept (Math, Verbal and General School), seven non-academic facets (Physical Abilities, Physical Appearance, Peer Relations - same and opposite sex, Parent relations, Emotional Stability, Honesty and Trustworthiness), and General Self-Concept. The eleven scales can be summed to present a Total Self-Concept score. Raw scores are converted to *T* scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. In the current study *T* scores (rather than factor scores) were used in presenting the group results of respondents, allowing for "normative and ipsative" analyses (Keith & Bracken, 1996, p.149) and for individual profiles to be examined (see chapter 7). The SDQ-II was administered at the beginning of the first term and repeated at the beginning of the last term. Table 9 presents the first term's results for both the initial and core sample.

Table 9

SDQ-II Mean *T* scores and Standard Deviations for Initial Sample and Core Group at the Beginning of Term One

SDQ-II Scale	Initial Sample (N = 74)		Core Group (N = 42)	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Math	52.43	(10.04)	54.02	(9.55)
Physical Appearance	46.61	(7.59)	47.86	(7.54)
General Self	48.77	(8.93)	50.26	(8.6)
Honesty Trust	53.15	(8.34)	55.88	(6.01)
Physical Ability	51.26	(7.66)	51.69	(7.96)
Verbal	46.11	(10.24)	47.76	(11.02)
Emotional Stability	47.88	(10.58)	48.62	(11.27)
Parent Relations	53.07	(7.44)	55.52	(4.88)
General School	48.96	(9.09)	51.38	(8.72)
Same-Sex Relations	50.58	(10.17)	52.36	(9.63)
Opp.-Sex Relations	46.16	(9.79)	46.31	(9.52)
Total Self-Concept	49.26	(9.08)	51.76	(9.05)

Unpaired *t* tests found that overall, there were no significant gender differences or differences between boarders and day students at Term One. Similarly there were no significant gender or status differences when the questionnaire was readministered at the beginning of Term Four.

Paired *t* tests were used to compare individual scales. Although there were no changes over the year generally in boarding students or males, there were significant changes reported by the female day students (Table 10).

Table 10

Significant Changes on SDQ-II Scales in Female Day Students

SDQ-II Scale	Term One (n = 15)		Term Four (n = 15)		t (df 13)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Math	55.27	(7.45)	61.00	(6.07)	-2.84	.01
Hon Trust	54.00	(6.50)	58.73	(4.98)	-3.63	.002
Verbal	48.07	(9.54)	54.33	(9.63)	-3.19	.01
Total Self Concept	50.47	(8.52)	55.07	(9.26)	-2.61	.02

Whereas concern about mathematical ability was commonly described by the girls at the start of the year, their improved perception of their ability in this area was reflected in higher scores on the *Math* scale in Term Four. Similarly, *Verbal Ability*, *Honesty*, *Trustworthiness* and *Total Self-Concept* improved over time.

In summary, results of the Self Description Questionnaire-II indicated that students overall maintained stable, average perceptions of themselves, and that female day students in particular reported improved perception of themselves at the end of the year. Admittedly, mean *T* scores do not reflect individual differences, which will be reflected in chapter 7. However these findings are consistent with recent research that indicates that self-concept is generally stable over time (Marsh, 1990).

5.5 Adolescent Coping

This section examines ways in which students reported coping with concerns as reflected in their responses on the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS). This self-evaluation questionnaire assesses the extent to which respondents use 18 distinct coping strategies: Social Support (Soc Sup), Focus on Solving the Problem (Solv Prob), Work Hard and Achieve (Work), Worry (Worry), Invest in Close friends (Friends), Seek to Belong (Belong), Wishful Thinking (Wish Think), Not Coping (Not Cope), Tension Reduction (Tens Red), Social Action (Soc Ac), Ignore the Problem (Ignore), Self-Blame (Self Bl), Keep to Self (Keep Self), Seek Spiritual Support (Spirit), Focus on the Positive (Foc Pos), Seek Professional Help (Prof Help), Seek Relaxing Diversions (Relax) and Physical Recreation (Phys Rec). An open-ended question was not analysed as only one respondent commented.

The ACS (General Long Form) was administered in Week 2 of the first term, when students rated strategies according to how they generally dealt with concerns. The questionnaire (Specific Long Form) was then re-administered ten weeks later in Week 2 of the second term with students rating strategies used for a self-designated specific concern. Given that the ACS was not repeated after the second term, results of all respondents are presented in this section.

5.5.1. General Coping

Figure 1 presents the initial sample ($N = 74$) and then all respondents' ($N = 57$) profile chart of the coping strategies used for both general and specific concerns. The mean scores and standard deviations as well as comparisons by gender and student status for general coping are to be found in Appendix C1.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Group Profile of Coping Strategies

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Group N = 74 TERM ONE
N = 57 TERM TWO

Date FEB
APRIL

Form General
 Specific

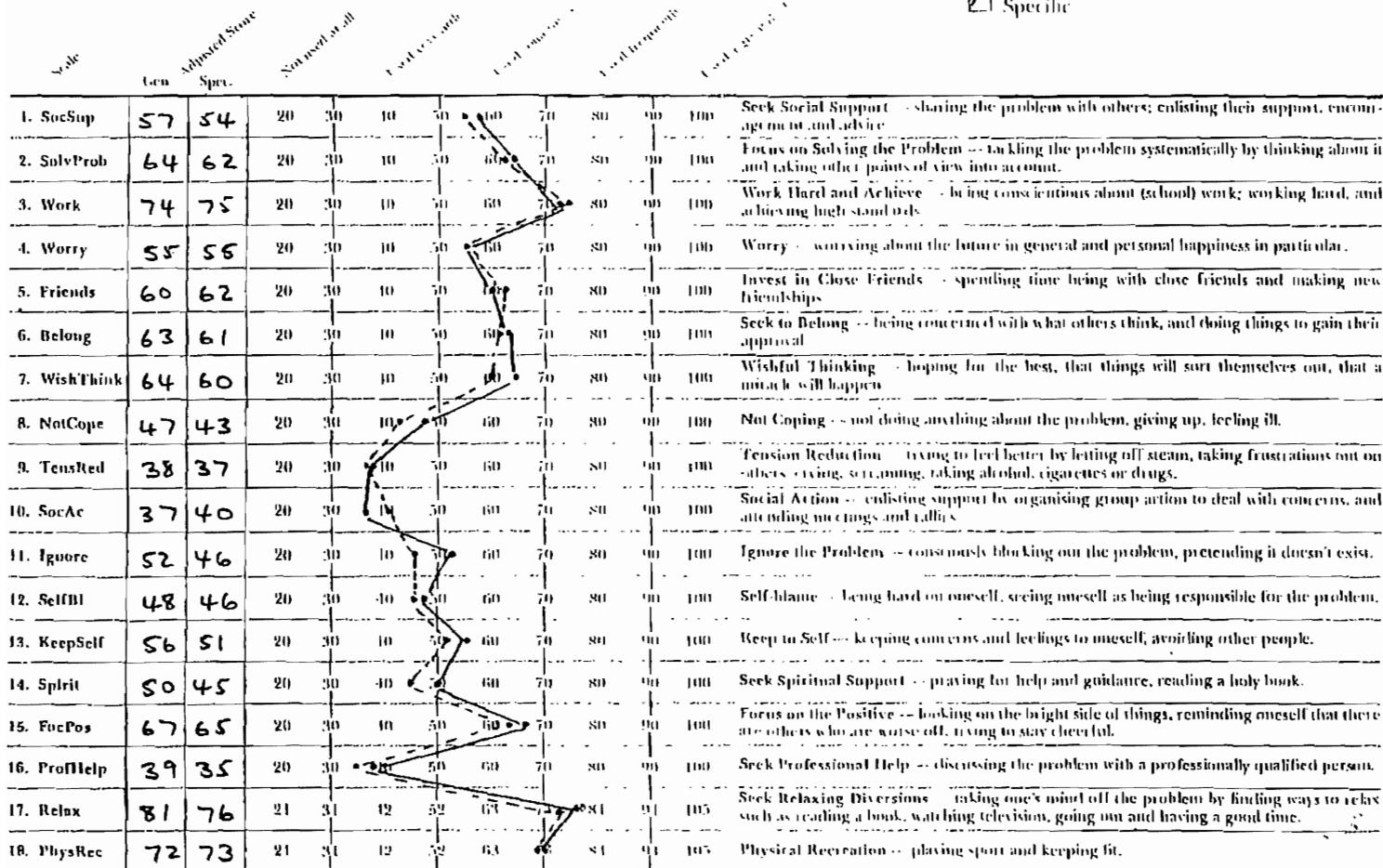


Figure 1. Respondents' group profiles of coping strategies for general concerns.

It can be seen from Figure 1 that strategies of *Seeking Relaxing Diversions*, and *Work Hard and Achieve*, were reported as being “used frequently” for coping with general and specific concerns, whilst *Social Action*, *Tension Reduction*, *Seeking Help*, *Not Coping* and *Self Blame* were reported to be “used very little”. There were no significant differences overall between the group profiles on general and specific coping strategies.

There were significant gender differences in general coping with females scoring higher on scales associated with non-productive coping (Table 11).

Table 11

Significant Gender Differences in General Coping Strategies

ACS Scale	Male (n = 29)		Female (n = 45)		Unpaired t (df 72)
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Worry	50.48	(16.61)	58.31	(15.87)	-2.04*
Wishful Thinking	58.35	(17.49)	67.20	(15.58)	-2.27*
Not Coping	43.03	(13.39)	49.69	(11.49)	-2.28*
Tension Reduction	34.21	(11.39)	40.09	(11.62)	-2.14*

*
p < .05

The scale *Tension Reduction* incorporates items on a number of behaviours which may be used to release tension. These include crying and screaming, taking frustrations out on others, changes in eating, drinking, sleeping patterns, drug, alcohol and cigarette usage. The significant gender difference in using *Tension Reduction* as a general coping strategy was accounted for by the item “cry or scream” which on a scale of 1 to 5 the girls reported using very little ($\bar{M} = 2.29$, $\underline{SD} = 1.1$) compared to the boys who tended to report not using it at all ($\bar{M} = 1.59$, $\underline{SD} = .82$), unpaired $t(37) = -2.95$, $p < .01$.

In comparing day and boarding students' general coping, day students' use of *Wishful Thinking* "sometimes" ($M = 67.89$, $SD = 16.28$), was significantly higher than the boarders ($M = 60$, $SD = 16.59$), unpaired $t(72) = 2.06$, $p < .05$. Similarly the frequent use of *Seeking Relaxing Diversions* was higher in day students ($M = 85.2$, $SD = 12.3$) than boarders ($M = 77.9$, $SD = 14.73$), unpaired $t(72) = 2.3$, $p < .05$. In boarding students, the use of *Tension Reduction* was again highlighted as being a strategy used little, but significantly more by the girls ($n = 17$) than boys ($n = 22$), with means of 41.88 ($SD = 12.07$) and 33.82 ($SD = 10.01$) respectively, $t(37) = -2.24$, $p < .03$.

5.5.2 Specific Coping

Specific coping examined the use of strategies in relation to a specific concern or problem that the students chose individually. Of the 57 students who participated in the study at the beginning of Term Two, 30 (51.72%) indicated a school-work related problem, such as homework, particular subjects, or worrying about tests. Ten students (17.24%) specified homesickness (missing home, parents). The remainder included personal problems with bullying or making friends ($f = 6$, 10.35%), concern about the environment ($f = 4$, 6.9%), the future ($f = 3$, 5.17%), and one response each on "personal health", "personal" problem, "life", and "social life".

Given the low frequencies of some of the specified concerns with no ambiguities, in order to examine differences in coping strategy responses, the specific concerns were collapsed into two categories: school-work related problems and personal concerns. As can be seen in Table 12 unpaired t tests revealed significant differences between the two categories of concerns on a number of coping strategies.

Table 12

Significant Differences in Specific Coping Between Schoolwork and Other Concerns

ACS Scale	Specific Concern				t (df 55)
	School Work (n = 30)		Other (n = 27)		
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Solve Problem	66.40	(12.32)	57.95	(17.88)	2.10*
Worry	59.47	(13.56)	50.67	(14.59)	2.36*
Belong	65.73	(13.23)	56.59	(11.35)	2.78**
Wishful Thinking	65.20	(16.01)	54.22	(14.82)	2.68**
Focus Positive	70.33	(14.91)	58.15	(14.62)	3.11**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Whilst all of the significant differences in strategies remained within the category of “used sometimes”, focusing on *solving the problem* and being optimistic (*Focus Positive*), which are regarded as functional, productive strategies, were reported more by those with school-work related concerns. However less productive strategies such as worrying, being concerned what others would think and wanting their approval (*Seek to Belong*) and hoping for the best (*Wishful Thinking*) were also reported more by the group with school-work concerns.

As in general coping, significant differences in overall specific coping were found in comparing gender and student status. Boys tended to *Ignore the Problem* “sometimes” ($M = 50.37$, $SD = 17.26$) compared to the girls ($M = 41.83$, $SD = 11.18$) who reported using that strategy very little, $t(55) = 2.24$, $p < .03$. Boarders tended to keep their feelings and concerns to themselves and avoid others (*Keep to Self*) “sometimes” ($M = 56.58$, $SD = 15.66$) whereas day students ($M = 45.19$, $SD = 15.2$) used that strategy “very little,” $t(55) = -2.77$, $p .01$. Day students also reported frequently using *Focus on the Positive* ($M = 70.39$, $SD = 15.93$) compared with the

boarders ($M = 59.68$, $SD = 14.31$) who used it sometimes, $t(55) = 2.67$, $p = .01$. There were no significant differences between male and female boarders in specific coping.

Overall therefore, the adolescents in this study reported using functional and productive coping strategies such as *Seeking Relaxing Diversions* and *Work Hard* for both general and specific concerns. However, in general coping, female students, especially boarders, scored higher on non-productive scales such as *Tension Reduction*. In specifying problems, half of the students indicated concerns about school-work and tended to use functional problem solving and a positive approach as specific strategies more for dealing with their worries than those reporting other specific concerns. However boys tended to “ignore” their problems more than girls, and boarders scored higher on keeping their feelings to themselves and avoiding others.

The extent to which the measures examined so far, that is, levels of depressive symptomatology, homesickness, facets of self-concept and coping strategies, correlated with one another are presented in the following sections.

5.6 Correlations amongst measures

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to determine the relationships amongst measures. Responses of all participants were included, as although numbers varied, the results obtained were not markedly different from the core group and so did not distort the findings.

5.6.1 Depression and Homesickness

Table 13 presents correlations between the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) scores and Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) scores for each administration.

Table 13

Correlations Between RADS and DRI Scores by Gender and Student Status over the Year

Term	Total N 74 - 54	Male n 29 - 25	Female n 45 - 29	Day n 35 - 27	Boarders n 39 - 27
One ₁	.31**	.55**	.24	.42**	.44***
One ₂	.67***	.70***	.71***	.54***	.82***
Two ₁	.55***	.63***	.58***	.43*	.57***
Two ₂	.67***	.72***	.67***	.37*	.87***
Four ₁	.50***	.71**	.46**	.07	.75***
Four ₂	.53***	.10	.77***	.29	.71***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

It can be seen that there was a significant positive relationship between depressive symptomatology and levels of homesickness, particularly in boarding students. However it is interesting to note that the weakest correlation was at the beginning of the first term, and, as Table 14 shows, accounted for only by the male boarders and female day students, with no significant correlation in scores for female boarders at that time. This contrasted with a strong correlation for female boarders at the end of Term One.

Table 14

Comparisons between Day and Boarders by Gender in Correlations Between RADS and DRI

Term	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22-15)	Day (n = 28-20)	Boarders (n = 17-8)
One ₁	.41	.49*	.49*	.22
One ₂	.85**	.68***	.53**	.88***
Two ₁	.34	.58**	.55**	.43
Two ₂	-.03	.83***	.44*	.88**
Four ₁	-.19	.78***	.23	.58
Four ₂	-.25	.23	.50*	.76**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

A pattern emerged amongst the female boarders, whereby there were significant correlations between depression and homesickness at the end of each term in contrast to the beginning. Associations between the two measures for male boarders remained significantly moderate to strong until the end of Term Four, whereas for the day students correlations between depression and homesickness were generally weak or negatively associated. In contrast, correlations for female day students were significant on all but one occasion.

In summary, there were clear indications of a positive relationship between scores on the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale and homesickness as measured by the Dundee Relocation Inventory. However the weakest relationship was revealed at the beginning of the first term at which time, it will be recalled, students generally reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms. It is also noted that although the level of the females' depression and homesickness were higher than the males there were fluctuating correlations between these measures in female boarders with stronger relationships revealed at the end of each term. As previously reported,

the few female boarding students who remained in the study throughout the year were particularly homesick and may account for the apparent discrepancies.

5.6.2 Depression and Self-Concept

5.6.2.1 Term One

Table 15 presents correlations between the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale and the twelve self-concept scales of the Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II) in Term One.

Table 15

Correlations between Depression and Self-Concept in Term One

SDQ-II Scale	Total N = 74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=35	Boarder n=39
Math	-.37***	-.41*	-.36*	-.27	-.5***
Phys App	-.51***	-.62***	-.43**	-.47**	-.55***
Gen Self	-.62***	-.64***	-.63***	-.63***	-.61***
Hon Trust	-.39***	-.54**	-.29*	-.32	-.47**
Phys Ab	-.09	-.08	-.09	.01	-.21
Verbal	-.34**	-.46**	-.20	-.31	-.37*
Em Stab	-.61***	-.63***	-.57***	-.63***	-.60***
Par Rel	-.43***	-.27	-.55***	-.59***	-.26
Gen School	-.56***	-.58***	-.54***	-.62***	-.49***
Same Sex Rel	-.43***	-.57***	-.33*	-.55***	-.28
Opp Sex Rel	-.17	-.58***	-.15	-.17	-.25
Total Self-Concept	-.68***	-.74***	-.61***	-.66***	-.70***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Overall, there was a significant negative relationship between the level of depressive symptomatology and virtually all facets of self-concept, with the exception of perceptions of physical ability and relationships with the opposite sex. However, in comparing males and females by status, there were noticeable differences (Table 16).

Table 16

Gender by Student Status Correlations Between Depression (RADS) and Self-Concept (SDQ-II) in Term One

SDQ-II Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Math	-.13	-.60**	-.36*	-.40
Physical Appearance	-.61	-.56**	-.34	-.70**
General Self	-.52	-.65**	-.64***	-.71**
Honesty Trust	-.82*	-.43	-.16	-.60*
Physical Ability	-.02	.01	.07	-.51*
Verbal	-.52	-.42	-.21	-.19
Emotional Stability	-.52	-.63**	-.60***	-.56*
Parent Relations	.16	-.21	-.62***	-.41
General School	-.35	-.60**	-.64***	-.36
Same-Sex Relations	-.69	-.66***	-.54**	.18
Opp.-Sex Relations	-.78*	-.46**	.18	.06
Total Self-Concept	-.64	-.74***	-.61***	-.69**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

In particular, the correlations for male day students were markedly weak compared to male boarders. This was in contrast to female day students, in which higher scores of depression were significantly correlated with lower scores on seven self-concept scales. Note also that there was a stronger correlation in female day students on *Parent Relations*, *General School*, and *Same-Sex Relations* than in female boarders, and that these results were also in direct contrast to the male students. It can be seen that in a number of areas, there were similarities between male boarders and female day students.

ANOVAs with post hoc Scheffé F-tests and Eta squares were calculated to examine the variances in the students' perceived self-concept that could be explained by their level of depression. RADS scores were divided into three categories of depressive symptomatology: *Low*, *Medium* and *High*. Scores in the *Low* category

were in the range of 30-49 ($\underline{M} = 43.19$, $\underline{SD} = 4.19$), *Medium* category scores ranged from 50-62 ($\underline{M} = 57.095$, $\underline{SD} = 3.19$), and *High* scores from 63-120 ($\underline{M} = 73.81$, $\underline{SD} = 9.96$). Recall that eleven students scored above the cut-off for 'clinical depression' at the beginning of Term One. The mean for the *High* category was almost at that level, indicating that respondents in the *High* group reported a substantial degree of depressive symptomatology. These cut-offs concurred with other research (Adams & Adams, 1991, Reynolds, 1987) as discussed in Chapter 4 (Method).

Table 17 presents significant variances in facets of self-concept that were explained by the level of depression. Overall, 43% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept* was accounted for by the level of depressive symptomatology, with significant differences between each group means. The scale *Emotional Stability*, which describes "emotional well-being and freedom from psychopathology" (Marsh, 1990, p.2) produced a variance of 31% that could be explained by depression. This was not surprising given that the scale includes items related to depression, for example 'I am often depressed and down in the dumps' and that some questions are similar to items on the RADS ('I worry more than I need to'). However, items referring to anxiety and other signs of emotional instability are also included in the scale. It can also be seen that depressive symptomatology accounted for almost 30% of the variance in students' perceptions of their self-esteem (*General Self*) as well as their *General* ability at *School* (29% of the variance), and that depression was also an important factor in perception of their *Physical Appearance*.

Table 17

Significant Variances in Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) Explained by Levels of Depression (RADS) in Term One

SDQ-II Scale	Low (n=21)		Depression Medium (n=21)		High (n=32)		F (df 2,73)	Significant Contrast (Scheffé Test)	Eta ²	p
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)				
Math	55.91	(9.07)	55.76	(8.39)	47.97	(10.12)	6.40	L>H, M>H	.15	.003
PhysApp	51.38	(4.80)	48.43	(7.47)	42.28	(6.90)	13.33	L>H, M>H	.27	.0001
GenSelf	54.57	(4.65)	51.14	(6.70)	43.41	(9.40)	15.22	L>H, M>H	.30	.0001
HonTrust	58.09	(4.56)	53.57	(7.45)	49.63	(9.22)	7.80	L>H	.18	.001
Verbal	53.52	(6.93)	42.76	(9.99)	43.44	(9.97)	9.52	L>H	.21	.001
EmStab	54.38	(5.95)	51.33	(10.92)	41.34	(9.11)	15.70	L>H, M>H	.31	.0001
GenSchool	56.05	(5.43)	49.09	(7.51)	44.22	(9.06)	14.79	L>M, L>H	.29	.0001
Same-Sex Rel	57.09	(6.11)	50.43	(9.68)	46.41	(10.6)	8.43	L>H	.19	.001
Total Self Concept	57.24	(4.77)	50.62	(6.86)	43.12	(8.12)	26.66	L>M>H	.43	.0001

In summary, at the beginning of the first term at secondary school, it was evident that depressive symptomatology was significantly associated with the students' perception of themselves on nearly all facets of self-concept, in that the more depressed they were, the lower their opinions of themselves. There were marked gender differences, with stronger negative correlations for females, especially day students. Overall, up to 43% of the variance in self-concept could be explained by the level of depressive symptomatology.

5.6.2.1 Term Four

The Self Description Questionnaire-II was readministered nine months later, at the beginning of Term Four. Correlations between the SDQ-II and Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (Week 2, Term Four) are presented in Table 18. There were noticeable differences compared with Term One.

Table 18

Correlations between Depression (RADS) and Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Total N=56	Male n=26	Female n=30	Day n=29	Boarder n=27
Math	-.39**	-.27	-.53**	-.20	-.42*
Phys App	-.35*	-.33	-.37	-.29	-.46*
Gen Self	-.46***	-.50*	-.46*	-.32	-.61***
Hon Trust	-.38**	-.35	-.43*	-.34	-.41*
Phys Ab	-.54***	-.53*	-.60***	-.51**	-.61***
Verbal	.20	.10	-.13	-.09	-.26
Em Stab	-.51***	-.72***	-.31	-.30	-.64***
Par Rel	-.01	-.02	-.02	.06	-.05
Gen School	-.36**	-.22	-.52**	-.24	-.47*
Same-Sex Relations	-.33*	-.43*	-.23	.07	-.54**
Opp.-Sex Relations	-.34	-.40	-.29	-.22	-.51**
Total Self-Concept	-.51***	-.47*	-.58**	-.32	-.66***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Whereas in Term One students' perception of their *Physical Ability* was not particularly associated with depression, nine months later there was a significant negative correlation both across gender and student status. For day students overall, this was the only facet of self-concept significantly related to depression. It is also noted that whereas in Term One there was a significant relationship between depression and *Emotional Stability* in female students, this was not so at the beginning of Term Four, not even in the female boarders, as Table 19 illustrates. This was in marked contrast to the male boarders, in whom depression was strongly associated with emotional instability in Term Four.

Table 19

Gender by Student Status Correlations between Depression (RADS) and Self-Concept (SDQ-II) in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 19)	Day (n = 22)	Boarder (n = 8)
Math	.51	-.48*	-.50*	-.71*
Physical Appearance	.41	-.50*	-.42	-.45
General Self	.39	-.66**	-.45*	-.74*
Honesty Trust	.12	-.41	-.40	-.61
Physical Ability	.07	-.63**	-.59*	-.83*
Verbal	.43	-.21	.02	-.35
Emotional Stability	.01	-.84***	-.37	.26
Parent Relations	.45	-.07	.04	-.14
General School	.42	-.44	-.46*	-.71*
Same-Sex Relations	.65	-.71***	-.16	.09
Opp. Sex Relations	.45	-.59**	-.36	-.18
Total Self-Concept	.56	-.69**	-.55**	-.72*

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Peer relations (*Same-Sex*) also continued to be strongly associated with depression in male boarders, whilst not significantly so in females. Overall, correlations for male boarders were comparable to the beginning of the year, with

the exception of their perception of *General School*, in which there was no significant association with depression in Term Four. In contrast, correlations for female boarders were markedly weaker at the beginning of Term Four. Recall however, that although females generally reported higher levels of depressive symptomatology than boys, the female boarders scored higher at the end rather than the beginning of Term Four. Table 20 presents significant variances in the self-concept scales which were accounted for by the levels of depression at the beginning of Term Four.

Table 20

Significant Variances in Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) Explained by Levels of Depression (RADS) in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Low (n=26)		Depression Medium (n=22)		High (n=8)		F (df=2,55)	Eta ²
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Math	57.65	(10.55)	56.09	(8.46)	47.25	(10.33)	3.54	.12*
Phys App	49.69	(10.33)	44.55	(8.88)	39.88	(6.96)	3.96	.13*
Gen Self	52.54	(8.55)	49.23	(8.78)	41.0	(8.44)	5.50	.08**
Hon Trust	58.27	(6.43)	56.91	(5.61)	50.75	(5.04)	4.93	.16**
Phys Ab	54.89	(7.73)	50.46	(8.35)	42.63	(9.43)	7.05	.21***
Em Stab	55.35	(8.78)	52.91	(8.78)	45.63	(12.19)	3.88	.13*
Gen Sch	54.85	(10.60)	50.36	(9.12)	44.13	(11.47)	3.65	.12*
Tot S-Con	56.54	(9.90)	51.27	(8.44)	42.38	(10.14)	7.25	.21***

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Given the small number in the High depression group, it is not possible to comment on significant differences between groups. However it can be seen that, as in Term One, the means differed in the expected direction: the greater the level of depressive symptomatology, the lower the perception of self. Generally the variances were lower than in Term One, with depression accounting for 21% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept*, compared to 43% in Term One, and 13% of the

variance in *Emotional Stability* compared to 31%. However, 21% of the variance in perception of *Physical Ability* was explained, in contrast to no significant association with levels of depression at the beginning of the year.

To summarise, although there was a significant negative association between depression and most aspects of self-concept at the beginning of the school year, correlations were weaker nine months later, with a noticeable decrease in the association between measures in the female respondents. There was a shift in emphasis in *Physical Ability*, which, in contrast to Term One, was significantly associated with depression in Term Four. Generally the amount of variance in facets of self-concept explained by depression was less in Term Four than Term One.

5.6.3 Homesickness and Self-Concept

5.6.3.1 Term One

In contrast to depressive symptomatology, at the beginning of the school year there were few significant correlations between homesickness (DRI) and self-concept scales (SDQ-II), as can be seen in Table 21.

Table 21

Significant Correlations Between Homesickness (DRI) and Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) in Term One

Group	n	SDQ-II Scales			
		Hon Trust	Verbal	Par Relat	Gen School
Total	74		-.26 [*]		-.25 [*]
Males	29	-.42 [*]	-.47 [*]	-.49 ^{**}	-.47 [*]
Days	35				-.37 ^{**}
Boarders	37		-.39 ^{***}		
Male Boarders	22			-.47 [*]	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .02$

*** $p < .01$

Only four facets of self-concept were significantly negatively associated with homesickness, and were generally accounted for by the male students. Note that the only significant relationship between the measures overall (and for boarders) was on the *Verbal* scale, which includes items such as 'I hate reading' and 'I have trouble expressing myself when I try to write something'. Interactions with parents (*Parent Rel*) with items such as 'I get along with my parents' and 'I do not like my parents very much' was also significantly associated with homesickness in male boarders, so that the better the relationship the less homesick and vice versa. For day students generally, perception of *General School* was the only significant correlation with homesickness.

5.6.3.2 Term Four

A different picture emerged at the beginning of Term Four (Table 22), with most facets of self-concept having significant negative correlates with the Dundee Relocation Inventory.

Table 22

Correlations between Homesickness (DRI) and Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Total N=56	Male n=26	Female n=30	Day n=29	Boarder n=27
Math	-.37**	-.26	-.31	-.44*	-.14
Phys App	-.23	-.40	-.20	-.20	-.32*
Gen Self	-.43**	-.55**	-.36	-.56**	-.41*
Hon Trust	-.35**	-.27	-.41*	-.54**	-.23
Phys Ab	-.36**	-.38	-.36	-.35	-.44*
Verbal	-.28*	-.14	-.45*	-.41*	-.21
Em Stab	-.33*	-.63**	-.18	-.20	-.36
Par Relations	-.20	-.20	-.15	-.40*	-.02
Gen School	-.44**	-.26	-.54**	-.63***	-.39*
Same-Sex Relations	-.56***	-.55*	-.60***	-.54**	-.57**
Opp.-Sex Relations	-.21	-.39	-.10	-.13	-.39*
Total Self-Concept	-.52***	-.50*	-.54**	-.60***	-.49**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note that, in contrast to Term One, the scale *Same-Sex Relations* was particularly negatively associated with homesickness and was the strongest correlation for girls generally. For day students, as in Term One, the *General School* scale continued to be the strongest negative correlation, particularly in female day students, as Table 23 shows.

Table 23

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations between DRI and SDQ-II in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Male Boarders n = 19	Female Day n = 22
Gen Self	-.52 [*]	-.62 ^{**}
Verbal	ns	-.46 [*]
EmStab	-.67 ^{**}	ns
GenSchool	ns	-.72 ^{***}
Same-Sex Relations	-.65 ^{**}	-.58 ^{**}
Total Self-Concept	-.51 [*]	-.69 ^{***}

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Total Self-Concept was strongly negatively related to homesickness in female day students, whereas for female boarders there were no significant correlations on any facets of self-concept. In contrast to Term One, for male boarders, *Emotional (in)Stability* was significantly associated with homesickness. There were no significant relationships between measures for male day students. These results again highlight the similarities between the female day students and male boarders in that a number of facets of self-concept were associated with homesickness in Term Four.

To ascertain differences in self-concept between homesick and non-homesick students, and to what degree levels of homesickness could account for the variances in self-concept, the DRI scores were first divided into three categories of homesickness: *Low*, *Medium*, and *High*. The *Low* category scores ranged from 0 to 16 (\underline{M} = 7.31, \underline{SD} = 6.09), *Medium* category included scores from 17 to 25 (\underline{M} = 21, \underline{SD} = 3.01), and the *High* category had scores over 25 (\underline{M} = 30.64, \underline{SD} = 6.1). These cut-offs corresponded with the mean score of 17 previously reported as the

discriminator between non-homesick and homesick respondents, and 24 as the mean score for those who were moderately homesick. However, for clearer comparisons, the groups were then reduced to two categories: *non-homesick* (scores under 17) and *homesick* (scores of 17 and over).

As already mentioned, there were few significant correlations between homesickness and self-concept at the beginning of the year. Given the above-mentioned criteria, at the beginning of Term One 35 students were categorised as non-homesick with a mean score of 8.34 ($SD = 4.8$), whilst 39 students fulfilled the criteria for homesickness ($M = 26.05$, $SD = 6.55$). The only significant difference in the groups' self-concept, was on the *Verbal* scale. The non-homesick group's mean score of 48.63 ($SD = 9.92$) was significantly higher than the homesick's mean of 43.85, ($SD = 10.12$), $t(72) = 2.05$, $p = .04$.

Table 24 presents significant differences between the non-homesick group ($n = 29$, $M = 7.31$, $SD = 6.09$) and homesick group ($n = 27$, $M = 24.93$, $SD = 6.55$) on facets of self-concept in Term Four.

Table 24

Comparisons Between Non-homesick and Homesick Groups on Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II)

SDQ-II Scale	Non-homesick (n = 29)		Homesick (n = 27)		t	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Gen Self	52.66	(7.10)	46.30	(10.35)	2.70	.01
Hon Trust	58.38	(5.28)	54.82	(6.97)	2.17	.03
Par Rel	56.59	(4.07)	50.93	(11.27)	2.54	.01
Gen School	54.48	(9.57)	48.41	(11.01)	2.21	.03
Same-Sex Relations	53.97	(7.16)	46.70	(9.61)	3.22	.002
Tot S-Concept	56.00	(8.55)	48.63	(10.99)	2.81	.01

It can be seen that, as was indicated in the correlations (Table 22), interactions with peers of the same sex was perceived as significantly poorer in the

homesick group. Twenty one percent of the variance in this scale was explained by the level of homesickness, as Table 25 shows.

Table 25

Variations in Self-Concept Scales (SDQ-II) Explained by Levels of Homesickness (DRI) in Term Four

SDQ-II Scale	Low (n=29)		Homesickness Medium (n=16)		High (n=11)		F (df 2,55)	Scheffé Test	Eta ²
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)			
Gen Self	52.66	(7.10)	46.63	(11.0)	45.82	(9.84)	3.60	L>H	.12*
Par Relations	56.59	(4.07)	49.63	(12.98)	52.82	(8.40)	3.69	L>M	.12*
Gen School	54.48	(9.57)	50.75	(11.25)	45.00	(10.20)	3.53	L>H	.12*
Same-Sex Rel	53.97	(7.16)	49.0	(7.78)	43.36	(11.34)	6.90	L>H	.21***
Tot SConc	56.00	(8.55)	50.87	(11.62)	45.36	(9.57)	5.09	L>H	.16**

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

In summary, there did not appear to be a strong relationship between homesickness and self-concept at the beginning of the school year. However nine months later a clearer picture emerged. There were significant negative correlations on almost all aspects of self-concept, with particular similarities between female day students and male boarders. Homesickness accounted for almost 21% of the variance in the students' perception of their relationship with their *Same-Sex peers*, and significant differences were also detected between non-homesick and homesick students on *General Self, Honesty and Trustworthiness, Parent Relations, General School* and *Total Self-Concept*. Levels of homesickness accounted for 16% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept*. These findings were in marked contrast to the associations between depression and self-concept which were generally weaker in Term Four than in Term One. However, recall that the level of depression still accounted for 21% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept* in Term Four. The next sections examine the extent to which depression, homesickness and self-concept

were associated with coping strategies used by the students generally and for specific concerns.

5.6.4 Depression and General Coping

It was previously reported that, overall, students preferred to use functional and productive coping strategies in dealing with general concerns in their lives, as was reflected in scores on the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) at the beginning of Term One. In Table 26 the significant correlations between depression scores and general coping strategies are shown, whereas the full results can be viewed in Appendix C2.

Table 26

Significant Correlations between Depression (RADS) and General Coping Strategies (ACS) in Term One

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n = 29	Female n = 45	Day n = 25	Boarders n = 39
Soc Sup					
Solv Prob	-.25 [*]	-.42 [*]			-.35 [*]
Work	-.30 ^{**}		-.42 ^{**}		
Worry	-.36 ^{**}	.42 [*]			.46 ^{**}
Friends Belong W Think					
Not Cope	.52 ^{***}	.40 [*]	.58 ^{***}	.56 ^{***}	.54 ^{***}
Tens Red	.56 ^{***}	.63 ^{***}	.47 ^{**}	.47 ^{**}	.66 ^{***}
Soc Act Ignore					
Self Blame	.63 ^{***}	.65 ^{***}	.58 ^{***}	.72 ^{***}	.57 ^{***}
Keep Self	.47 ^{***}		.61 ^{***}	.58 ^{***}	
Spirit Foc Pos					
	-.28 [*]	-.54 ^{**}			-.29 [*]
Prof Help Relax					
	-.29 [*]	-.41 [*]			-.41 [*]
Phys Rec					

^{*} p < .05

^{**} p < .01

^{***} p < .001

Generally there were moderate to strong positive associations between depressive symptomatology and the non-productive coping strategies such as *Self-Blame*, *Tension Reduction* (crying, letting off steam), *Not Cope* (give up or develop psychosomatic symptoms) and *Keep to Self*. Similarly, there were negative relationships among depression and more functional strategies such as *problem solving*, *working hard*, *relaxation* and, as might be expected, *positive thinking*. However, as Table 27 shows, the significant correlation with positive thinking was confined to male boarders.

Table 27
Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations between Depression (RADS) and General Coping in Term One

ACS Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Solv Prob		-.47*		
Work			-.44*	
Worry				.70**
Not Cope		.48*	.59**	.63**
Tens Red		.71**	.45*	.53*
Self Blame	.91**	.62**	.67***	.48*
Keep Self			.63***	.59*
Foc Pos		-.44*		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

It is also noted that *Self Blame*, with significant correlations for all groups, was the only coping strategy associated with depression in male day students, and was the strongest correlation in female day students. On the other hand, keeping feelings to oneself and avoiding other people (*Keep Self*) was only significantly associated with depression in females, especially day students. Table 28 shows the

Table 28

Significant Variances in General Coping (ACS) Explained by Levels of Depression (RADS) in Term One

Coping Scale	Low (n=21)		Depression Medium (n=21)		High (n=32)		F (df 2,73)	(Scheffé Test)	Eta ²
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)			
Worry	47.24	(14.68)	51.05	(11.66)	63.25	(17.14)	8.29	L < H, M < H	.19**
Not Cope	38.48	(10.16)	46.67	(11.34)	53.00	(11.72)	10.7	L < H	.23***
TensRed	30.10	(9.35)	36.57	(8.42)	43.62	(12.25)	10.74	L < H	.23***
SelfBlame	36.19	(11.17)	43.81	(16.87)	57.97	(15.75)	14.46	L < H, M < H	.29***
KeepSelf	49.76	15.93)	52.86	(12.10)	61.09	(15.14)	4.19	L < H	.11*
Relax	88.00	13.93)	81.67	(12.19)	76.78	(13.83)	4.44	L > H	.11**

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001

significant variances in coping strategies could be explained by depressive symptomatology. Depressive symptoms accounted for almost 30% of the variance in reporting *Self Blame* as a coping strategy, with the *High* depression group using it “sometimes” compared with the *Low* group who used it “very little”. There were also significant differences between those groups on other non-productive strategies, with *Not Coping* and *Tension Reduction* having 23% of their variance accounted for by levels of depression. Overall, therefore, it was evident that there was a significant relationship between depression and use of non-productive coping strategies.

5.6.5 Homesickness and General Coping

At the beginning of the school year, unlike depression, homesickness (Dundee Relocation Inventory) did not correlate to any extent with aspects of coping, with no significant associations overall. For male students, *Seek Spiritual Support* ($r = -.395$, $p < .05$) and *Focus on the Positive* ($r = -.423$, $p < .05$) were negatively associated with homesickness, whilst for female students, using *Relaxing diversions* was the only significant negative correlation ($r = -.331$, $p < .05$). In day students, there was an association between homesickness and *Not Coping* ($r = .349$, $p < .05$), whilst for boarders overall, *Investing in Close Friends* ($r = -.361$, $p < .05$) and *Tension Reduction* ($r = .395$, $p < .02$) were the only correlations of significance. Levels of homesickness did not account for any variance. For the non-homesick group, *Relaxation* ($M = 84.8$, $SD = 13.23$) was the only strategy which differed significantly from the homesick group ($M = 78.26$, $SD = 16.65$), $t(72) = 2.05$, $p = .04$.

It is interesting to note that these results are similar to weak associations with other measures in Term One. Recall that the weakest correlation with depression was at the beginning of the year, and that also there were few significant correlations between homesickness and self-concept at that time.

5.6.6 Self-Concept and General Coping

5.6.6.1 Overall patterns of association

Table 29 presents the overall significant correlations between the 11 individual scales (and Total Self-Concept) of the Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II), and the 18 coping strategies of the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) at the beginning of Term One. The full set of correlations can be viewed in Appendix C3.

Whereas there were no significant relationships between self-concept and *Seeking to Belong* (being concerned about what others would think), *Social Action*, or *Seeking Spiritual Support*, particular patterns of association between other facets of self-concept and coping strategies emerged. Firstly, there were positive correlations between perceptions of self and functional coping, but *Work Hard and Achieve* was the only strategy significantly associated with most areas of self-concept. In section 5.5.1 it was noted that *Work Hard*, *Relaxation*, and *Focus Positively* were the most frequently reported strategies for general concerns. *Relaxation* was associated with *General Self* and *General School* as well as *Emotional Stability*, yet was the only strategy significantly positively related to *Same Sex* peer relationships. *Positive Focus* was related to *Emotional Stability*, and was also associated with feeling good about one's *Physical Appearance*.

Table 29

Significant Correlations between SDQ-II and ACS-General In Term One

ACS Coping Scale	Math	Phys App	GenSelf	Hon Trust	PhysAb	SDQ-II Scales			Gen School	SSex Rel	OpSex Rel	TotSelf Concept
						Verbal	EmStab	ParRel				
SocSup											.27*	
SolvProb				.28*							.28*	.25*
Work	.36***	.35**	.31*	.33**	.29*			.25*	.42***		.24*	.47***
Worry		-.26*	-.33***			-.29*	-.48***					-.33**
Friends											.39***	
Belong												
WishThink												-.25*
NotCope	-.45***	-.45***	-.49***	-.33**		-.26*	-.40***	-.30*	-.53***	-.25*		-.58***
TensRed	-.26*		-.47***	-.28*			-.53***	-.29*	-.30*			-.40***
SocAct												
Ignore				-.31**				-.28*			-.28*	
SelfBlame	-.34**	-.45***	-.59***	-.35**			-.52***	-.24*	-.40***			-.50***
KeepSelf		-.25*	-.38**	-.23*				-.37**	-.33**			-.35**
Spiritual												
FocPos	.23**	.31**					.29*					.29*
ProfHelp										-.29***		
Relax			.31*				.27*		.26*	.28*		.30**
PhyRec						.54***						

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

The second pattern of association was revealed in the negative relationships between non-productive strategies and most areas of self-concept. Recall again that these strategies were generally reported to be used "very little". Note that *Not Cope* was negatively associated with all facets of self-concept except *Physical Ability* and *Opposite-Sex* relations, and was the strongest (negative) correlation for *Total Self-Concept*. Similarly, *Self-Blame* was consistently negatively associated with self perception, particularly *General Self* (self-esteem) and *Emotional Stability*. It can also be seen that the non-productive strategies figured more prominently in areas such as perception of trustfulness and dependability (*Hon Trust*), *Parent Relations* and *General School* ability.

In Term One there were no significant gender or student status differences in self-concept, but there were noticeable differences in general coping, particularly in the use of non-productive strategies. These strategies were also significant when comparing associations with aspects of self-concept across gender and student status. Given that Table 29 presented the general picture, only specific facets of the SDQ-II across gender and status are reviewed here. It was reported in chapter 4 (Method) that the scale *General Self* examines overall self-esteem, *Emotional Stability* targets psychological well-being, *General School* reflects perceived ability, interest and enjoyment of school subjects, and *Parent Relations* examines perceived interactions with parents. As *Total Self-Concept* is the sum of the scales and is highly correlated with *General Self*, it has not been examined separately.

5.6.6.2 General Self and General Coping

Table 30 presents the significant correlations for *General Self* with general coping (see Appendix C4 for full results). Correlations for *General Self* with depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI) and *Emotional Stability* have also been included for easier reviewing of the inter-relationship among these factors.

Table 30

Significant Correlations between SDQ-II General Self and General Coping Plus RADS, DRI and Emotional Stability Correlations

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n = 29	Female n = 45	Day n = 35	Boarders n = 39
Work	.31**		.40**	.37*	
Worry	-.33**	-.43*			-.51**
Not Cope	-.46***	-.45*	-.49**		-.60***
Tens Red	-.47***	-.69***	-.37*	-.38*	-.54***
Self Blame	-.59***	-.57**	-.61***	-.69***	-.53***
Keep Self	-.38**		-.42**	-.38*	-.39*
Relax	.31**			.37*	
RADS	-.62***	-.64***	-.63***	-.63***	-.61***
DRI	-.14	-.35**	-.06	-.14	-.14
Emot Stab	.40***	.57**	.34*	.51***	.33*

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

It can be seen that the positive relationship between the functional strategies of *Work Hard*, and *Relaxation*, and self-esteem (*General Self*), were accounted for only by the day students. Overall there appeared to be a fairly even distribution of negative associations between the non-productive strategies and *General Self* across gender and student status. However, as Table 31 shows, boarding students mostly accounted for the significant correlations.

Table 31

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations Between SDQ-II General Self and General Coping

ACS Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Work				
Worry		-.52 [*]		-.54 [*]
Not Cope		-.58 ^{**}		-.68 ^{**}
Tens Red		-.77 ^{***}		
Self Blame		-.58 ^{**}	-.71 ^{***}	-.52 ^{**}
Keep Self				-.62 ^{***}
Phys Rec	.84 [*]			

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

For male boarders *Tension Reduction* was the strongest negative correlation with self-esteem, whereas for female boarders it was to *Not Cope*. For male day students self-esteem was associated with *Physical Recreation*, whilst for female day students the only correlation of significance was a strong negative association between *Self Blame* and self-esteem. Referring back to Table 30, note also that there were moderately strong negative associations between *General Self* and depression across all groups.

5.6.6.3 Emotional Stability and General Coping

Significant correlations between Emotional Stability and general coping are reported next (Table 32) with full results available in Appendix C5.

Table 32

Significant Correlations Between SDQ-II Emotional Stability and General Coping Plus RADS and DRI Correlations

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n = 29	Female n = 45	Day n = 35	Boarders n = 39
Work		.38*			
Worry	-.48***		-.46**	-.49**	-.47**
Not Cope	-.40***		-.42**	-.59***	
Tens Red	-.53***	-.52**	-.49**	-.47**	-.57***
Self Blame	-.52***	-.78***		-.48**	-.54***
Foc Positive	.29*	.48*			.44**
Relax	.27*	.47*			.46**
RADS	-.61***	-.63***	-.57***	-.63***	-.60***
DRI	-.05	-.15	-.05	-.17	-.10

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

The overall picture at first appears somewhat similar to that presented for General Self, except that there was a significant association with the functional strategy of *Positive Thinking*. However, note that *Self Blame* replaced *Tension Reduction* as the strongest correlation for males, specifically the boarders, as can be seen in Table 33.

Table 33

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations Between SDQ-II Emotional Stability and General Coping

ACS Coping Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Worry			-.43*	-.51*
Not Cope			-.67***	
Tens Red		-.53*	-.45*	-.61**
Self Blame		-.81***	-.43*	
Foc Positive		.44*		.48*
Relax		.47*		

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Compared with *General Self*, different patterns of associations emerged. Both male and female boarders accounted for the significant positive association between the functional strategy of *Positive Thinking* and *Emotional Stability*. On the other hand, there were more non-productive strategies significantly related to *Emotional Stability* in female day students, with *Not Cope* being the strongest negative association. For female boarders, however, *Tension Reduction* replaced *Not Cope* as the strongest negative correlation. Note also in Table 32 that, as with the correlations for *General Self*, there were moderately strong negative relationships between *Emotional Stability* and depression across all groups.

5.6.6.4 General School and General Coping

The trend of non-productive coping strategies producing the significant correlations was also highlighted on examination of academic facets of self-concept, such as *General School*, as Table 34 shows. (Full results can be viewed in Appendix C6).

Table 34

Significant Correlations Between SDQ-II General School and General Coping

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n = 29	Female n = 45	Day n = 35	Boarders n = 39
Work	.42 ^{***}		.65 ^{***}	.55 ^{***}	
Worry		-.43 [*]			
Not Cope	-.53 ^{***}	-.46 [*]	-.57 ^{***}	-.42 [*]	-.69 ^{***}
Tens Red	-.30 [*]	-.65 ^{***}			-.37 [*]
Self Blame		-.43 [*]	-.37 [*]	-.49 ^{**}	-.36 [*]
Keep Self	-.33 ^{**}		-.39 [*]		-.35 [*]
Relax	.26 [*]				

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

There was a moderately strong association between *Work Hard* and perceived ability and enjoyment of *General School* in females, both day and boarding students (Table 35), but there were no other significant correlations with functional, productive strategies.

Table 35

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations between SDQ-II General School and General Coping

ACS Coping Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Work			.65 ^{***}	.64 ^{***}
Worry		-.52 [*]		
Not Cope		-.63 ^{**}	-.49 ^{**}	-.74 ^{***}
Tens Red		-.71 ^{***}		
Ignore				-.57 [*]
Self Blame		-.44 [*]	-.48 [*]	
Keep Self				-.53 [*]

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

For boarding students, there was a similar pattern to the associations between non-productive coping and *General Self* (see Table 31), with strong negative correlations between *General School* and *Not Cope* for girls and *Tension Reduction* for boys. However, for female day students, whereas in *General Self*, *Self-Blame* was the only negative correlate, for *General School* there was also a significant negative relationship with *Not Cope*. It is noted that in contrast to the normed sample (see Marsh, 1990), in this study, the correlation for the total sample ($N = 74$) between *General Self* and *General School* was high ($r = .744$, $p < .001$), so these findings were not unexpected.

5.6.6.5 Parent Relations and General Coping

The correlations between *Parent Relations* and General Coping present a slightly different picture from the previous facets reported, as can be seen in Tables 36 and 37 (see Appendix C7 for full results).

Table 36

Significant Correlations Between SDQ-II Parent Relations and General Coping

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n = 29	Female n = 45	Day n = 35	Boarders n = 39
Soc Support	.27*				.39*
Work	.25*		.50***		
Not Cope	-.30*		-.39**	-.42*	
Tens Red	-.29*		-.35*	-.48**	
Ignore	-.31**	-.47*			-.55***
Self Blame	-.24*		-.37*	-.54**	
Keep Self	-.37**	-.47*	-.31*	-.36*	.41*

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 37

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations Between SDQ-II Parent Relations and General Coping

ACS Coping Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 22)	Day (n = 28)	Boarder (n = 17)
Soc Supp		.48*		
Solv Prob	-.93**			.50*
Work			.42**	.61**
Worry			.39*	
Belong	-.91**			
Wish Think	-.87*			
Not Cope			-.42*	
Ten Red			-.51**	
Ignore		-.48*		-.73***
Self Blame			-.57**	
Keep Self	-.76*	-.46*		
Spiritual			-.36*	

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Social Support was significantly associated with *Parent Relations* for male boarders. Note however the discrepant findings for the strategy of *Problem Solving*, in which it was positively associated with *Parent Relations* in female boarders, but negatively so for male day students. There were also negative associations with *Belong* (being concerned about what others think), *Wishful Thinking* and *Keeping feelings to Self* in male day students. Female day students' strongest negative correlations were similar to the findings for other areas self-concept, except that in this instance, *Worry* was positively associated rather than negatively, thus the better their interactions with parents, the more likely they were to worry about problems. Similarly, for male and female boarders, the better the relationship with parents, the less they were likely to ignore their concerns (and vice versa).

To summarise, self-concept correlated significantly with all but three facets of general coping (*Belong*, *Social Action*, and *Spiritual Support*). Significant positive associations for functional, productive strategies were limited, with *Work Hard* the only strategy consistently related to self-concept. *Relaxation*, the strategy most frequently reported to be used by the students, was significantly associated with positive perceptions of *Same-Sex relations*, *General Self*, *General School* and *Emotional Stability*. *Focussing Positively* was also associated with *Emotional Stability*. The most consistent pattern of association was that of higher, significant negative relationships between non-productive, dysfunctional coping strategies on all but two facets of self-concept. For male boarders and females, strategies of *Not Coping*, *Tension Reduction* and *Self Blame* were particularly negatively related to perceptions of *General Self*, *Emotional Stability* and *General School*, whereas for male day students (of which there were only seven) there were significant negative associations only in the area of *Parent Relations*, a facet of self-concept which revealed gender differences in the use of *Problem Solving* as a strategy for general concerns.

Generally therefore, these results indicated that students reporting a positive perception of themselves were less likely to use non-productive coping strategies, which concurs with the overall use of such strategies as "used very little" at the beginning of the year. Conversely, those reporting using non-productive strategies more also tended to have less favourable perceptions of themselves.

The next section examines the extent to which depression and homesickness were associated with coping strategies reported for specific concerns ten weeks later, at the beginning of Term Two.

5.6.7 Depression and Specific Coping

Earlier it was pointed out that there were no significant differences between the group profiles for General and Specific coping. Also, in Term One, students' responses indicated that in coping with general concerns, there was a significant relationship between depression and the use of non-productive coping, and a negative association with functional strategies. As Table 38 shows, this was also the finding for strategies used to deal with specific problems. (Full results are in Appendix C8).

Table 38

Significant Correlations Between Depression (RADS) and Specific Coping (ACS) in Term Two

ACS Scale	Total N = 57	Male n = 27	Female n = 30	Day n = 26	Boarders n = 31
Work			-.45*		
Friends	-.38**		-.46*	-.61**	
W Think		.42*			.45*
Not Cope	.41**		.47*	.53*	
Tens Red	.38**		.39*		.43*
Ignore			.49*		
Self Blame	.42**		.56**		.53**
Keep Self	.55***	.57**	.64***	.60**	.44*
Spirit				-.44*	
Foc Pos	-.34*		-.47**	-.46*	
Relax	-.41**		-.51**	-.58**	
Phys Rec	-.35**		-.40*		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Compared with Term One, there was a noticeable difference in Term Two, in that there were only two significant correlations for male students, with *Wishful Thinking* and *Keeping to Self* being positively associated with depression. For the females on the other hand (who, it will be recalled, generally scored higher on the depression scale), there were a number of significant relationships, accounted for mainly by the day students (Table 39).

Table 39

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations Between Depression and Specific Coping

ACS Coping Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 20)	Day (n = 19)	Boarder (n = 11)
Friends			-.62**	
Wish Think		.54*		
Not Cope			.53*	
Ignore			.57*	
Self Blame			.47*	.78**
Keep Self		.55*	.69***	
Foc Pos			-.48*	
Relax			-.66**	
Phys Rec				-.62*

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Self-Blame, which in Term One was the strategy most associated with depression in female day students, was, for specific concerns, the strategy most related to depression in female boarders, whereas *Keep to Self* was the most strongly related strategy with depression in day students. Note also, that there was a significant negative association with *Relaxation* and investing time in making or being with *Friends*, which fits with the finding in Term One (section 5.6.2.1) in which depression was associated with poorer perceived same sex relations in female day students.

Specific problems reported by the students were reduced to the two categories of school-related concerns and other personal worries. Table 40 shows the significant associations by category, with depression.

Table 40

Significant Correlations Between Specific Coping by Concern and Depression (RADS)

ACS Scale	School-work Concern n = 30	Personal Concern n = 27
Worry		-.39*
Wish Think		-.57**
Not Cope	.47*	.38*
Tens Red		.38*
Self Blame		.61***
Keep Self	.59**	.51*
Spiritual	-.51**	
Foc Pos	-.45*	
Relax		-.48*
Phys Rec		-.49*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Depressive symptoms were associated more with non-productive coping for personal concerns than school-related problems, which again concurs with the earlier finding of functional coping being more associated with school-related problems (section 5.5.2). At the beginning of Term Two, depressive symptoms accounted for 31% of the variance in reporting *Keep to Self* as a coping strategy for a specific concern ($F(2, 56) = 4.31, p < .02$), with Eta square (η) = .31, $p < .001$. The *High* depression group's mean score of 65 ($SD = 11.55, n = 13$) indicated that they used it 'sometimes' compared to the *Low* group ($M = 43.24, SD = 12.06, n = 29$) who used the strategy 'very little'. Similarly group means differed in the same direction on

two other non-productive strategies. Depression accounted for 15% of the variance in the use of *Tension Reduction* ($F(2, 56) = 4.82, p < .01, \eta = .15, p < .01$), in comparing the *High* group ($M = 44.31, SD = 10.39$) with the *Low* group ($M = 33.79, SD = 10$), as well as 14% in the variance of according *Self Blame* ($F(df 2, 56) = 4.31, p < .02$), with $\eta = .14, p < .01$. Whereas those high in depression blamed themselves for specific problems ‘sometimes’ ($M = 52.69, SD = 17.51$), those not depressed used that strategy far less ($M = 40.69, SD = 13.28$).

In summary, as with general coping, there was a significant relationship between depressive symptomatology and the reported use of non-productive coping strategies for specific concerns. However, compared with general coping in Term One, there were noticeable gender differences in Term Two with female day students accounting for most of the significant correlations. Keeping concerns to *Self* (and avoiding others) was the most strongly related strategy with depression for female day students, with levels of depressive symptoms overall accounting for 31% of the variance in that strategy.

That variance was comparable to the 30% variance in *Self-Blame* which was found to be the most strongly associated strategy with depression in Term One. In Term Two, *Self-Blame* was the strategy most associated with depression in specifying personal concerns, compared with school-related problems. These findings concur with the other results, linking higher levels of depressive symptoms with more use of coping strategies which generally were used the least.

5.6.8 Homesickness and Specific Coping

At the beginning of Term One, homesickness (Dundee Relocation Inventory) was not strongly associated with coping strategies used for dealing with general concerns (section 5.6.5), and its weakest correlation with depression was at that time. A different picture emerged in Term Two as can be seen in Table 41 (with full results in Appendix C9).

Table 41

Significant Correlations between homesickness (DRI) and Specific Coping in Term Two

ACS Scale	Total N = 57	Male n = 27	Female n = 30	Day n = 26	Boarders n = 31
Solve Prob	-.32*	-.57**			-.50**
Work	-.35*	-.41*		-.48*	-.42*
Belong	-.28*	-.51**		-.45*	
Not Cope	-.31*				
Tens Red	.44**	.44*	.50**		.53**
Keep Self	.40**		.50**		
Foc Pos	-.42**	-.50**		-.46*	
Relax	-.41**		-.48*		-.52**
Phys Rec		-.46*			
RADS	.55**	.63***	.59**	.43*	.58**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

There were a number of significant correlations for specific concerns, with negative associations between homesickness and functional strategies such as problem-solving, particularly in male students, and positive associations with non-productive coping. Note however, in Table 42, that these significant relationships were mainly confined to the male boarding students and that there were no significant correlations for homesickness with strategies, or depression (RADS), for female boarders.

Table 42

Significant Gender by Student Status Correlations Between Homesickness (DRI) and Specific Coping in Term Two

ACS Coping Scale	Male		Female	
	Day (n = 7)	Boarder (n = 20)	Day (n = 19)	Boarder (n = 11)
Solve Prob	-.91**	-.66**		
Work		-.48*		
Not Cope			.58**	
Tens Red		.57**		
Foc Pos	-.84*			
Prof Help			.46*	
Relax		-.47*		
Phys Rec		-.45*		
RADS	ns	.58**	.55*	ns

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Of interest too is that, although there was a stronger relationship with *Not Coping*, for female day students there was a significant association between homesickness and seeking *Professional Help*. However, in understanding these results, recall that the two main categories of specific concerns were schoolwork-related and other personal concerns (which included homesickness, reported by ten students). Table 43 presents the significant correlations, given the two categories.

Table 43

Significant Correlations Between Homesickness (DRI) and Specific Coping by Category of Concern

ACS Scale	School-work Concern n = 30	Personal Concern n = 27
Work		-.47*
Tens Red	.41*	.47*
Self Blame		.51**
Keep Self	.49**	
Prof Help		.39*
Relax		-.64***
Phys Rec		-.55**

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

It can be seen that personal concerns accounted for more of the associations with homesickness, which could be expected, given that homesickness was a concern embedded in the category. For school-work related problems the strongest relationship with homesickness was *Keep to Self*, which was also the case for depressive symptoms (section 5.6.7). However, for personal problems, the strongest correlation was the negative relationship with using *Relaxation* as a diversion.

Figure 2 presents the overall comparative profiles of the non-homesick and homesick groups and Table 44 shows the significant differences between the groups, with full results available in Appendix C10. At the beginning of Term Two, the mean DRI score for the non-homesick group ($n = 30$) was 7.44, ($SD = 5.54$) whilst the homesick group's mean score was 27.2 ($SD = 6.56$, $n = 27$).

Adolescent Coping Scale

Group Profile of Coping Strategies

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Group NOT HOMESICK n = 30 _____ Date _____
HOMESICK n = 27 - - - - -

Form General
 Specific

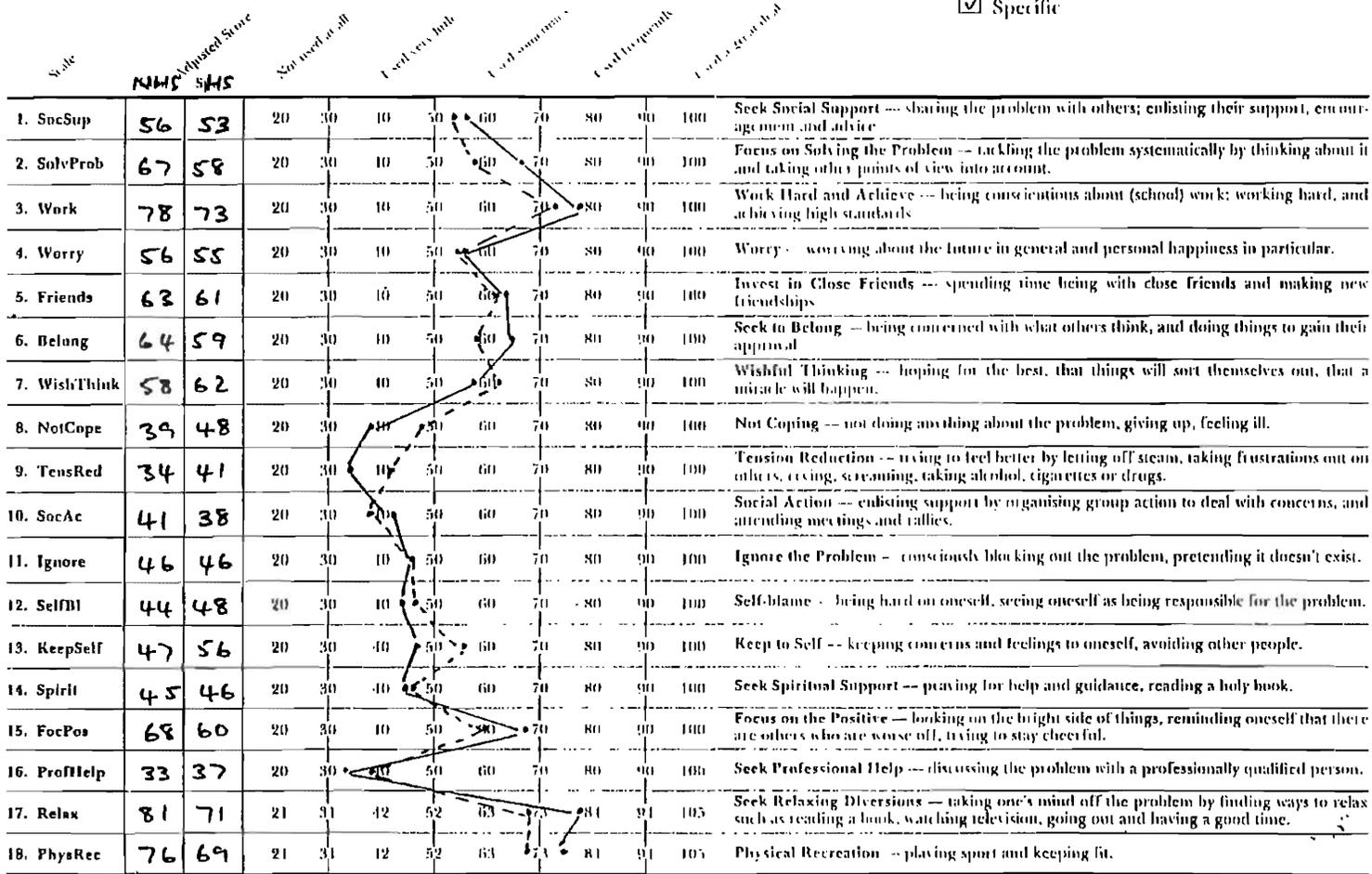


Figure 2. Non-homesick vs homesick group profiles of coping strategies for specific concerns.

Table 44

Significant Differences Between Non-Homesick and Homesick Students in Specific Coping

ACS Scale	Non-homesick (n = 30)		Homesick (n = 27)		t (df 55)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Solv Prob	66.54	(12.54)	57.78	(17.69)	2.18	.03
Not Cope	39.44	(12.95)	47.85	(14.49)	-2.34	.02
Tens Red	33.87	(9.02)	41.19	(11.63)	-2.67	.01
Keep Self	47.13	(16.56)	56.11	(15.02)	-2.14	.04
Relax	80.5	(16.42)	70.50	(13.99)	2.46	.02

It can be seen that the pattern of homesick students reporting significantly higher use of non-productive coping and less functional coping, concurs with other results presented so far. Table 45 shows the amount of variance in the strategies accounted for by homesickness.

Table 45

Significant Variances in Specific Coping Explained by Levels of Homesickness (DRI) in Term Two

ACS Scale	Homesickness						F (df 2,55)	Eta ²
	Low (n = 30)		Medium (n = 12)		High (n = 15)			
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Solve Prob	66.53	(12.45)	62.67	(13.14)	53.87	(20.22)	3.58	.12*
Tens Red	33.87	(9.02)	35.00	(5.15)	46.13	(13.08)	8.49	.24***
Keep Self	47.13	(16.56)	50.42	(11.57)	60.67	(16.24)	3.80	.12*
Relax	80.50	(16.42)	74.67	(10.48)	67.20	(15.83)	3.90	.13*

* $p < .05$

*** $p < .001$

Levels of homesickness explained 24% of the variance in the coping strategy of *Tension Reduction* with 'crying' and 'letting of steam' identified as the main items on that scale. Homesickness also accounted for 13% of the variance in *Relaxation*.

In summary, whereas homesickness was only weakly related to general coping in Term One, in Term Two there were a number of significant associations with strategies for specific concerns, mainly accounted for by the male boarding students. Specific personal concerns, which included homesickness, produced more associations with homesickness than did school-work related problems. There were also significant differences between the homesick and non-homesick group on a number of strategies, whereby the homesick reported using functional strategies such as *problem solving* and *relaxation* less than the non-homesick, and more non-productive coping such as *Tension Reduction*, a strategy which had 24% of its variance explained by levels of homesickness.

These results concur with other measures that have reflected the differences and associations between depression, homesickness, self-concept and the use of particular coping strategies. It was regrettable that the Adolescent Coping Scale was not readministered in Term Four, for further comparison, but a clear picture still emerged. The following section reviews the findings reported so far.

5.7 Summary of the indicators of adjustment

The objective of this study was to examine how adolescents experienced the transition to secondary school. The self-report repeated measures allowed some insight into how the students perceived their functioning and psychological well-being over the year.

5.7.1. Depression

Administration of the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) on six occasions throughout the year revealed that, compared with the beginning of the year, there was a significant reduction of reported depressive symptomatology ten

weeks later, at the beginning of the second term. During the rest of the year scores remained relatively stable, with the girls consistently reporting more symptoms than the boys.

There was a significant relationship between depression and homesickness, with the weakest association at the beginning of the first term, and fluctuating patterns throughout the year, particularly for the female boarding students.

A significant negative relationship was found between the levels of depressive symptomatology and self-concept. At the beginning of the year associations were significant on nearly all facets of self-concept, with stronger correlations for female students. Nine months later, in Term Four, correlations were weaker, with a noticeable decrease in the association between measures for the female respondents.

Higher levels of depression also accounted for the more frequent use of non-productive coping strategies and less use of functional or productive coping for both general concerns and specific problems.

5.7.2 Homesickness

The Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) measured the degree of homesickness and adaptation to the new setting reported by the students over the year. Homesickness was best discriminated in comparisons between day and boarding students, with significantly more symptoms reported by boarders. Whereas day students' scores remained stable over time, there were marked differences in the boarders' with the few female students still in the study at the end of the year remaining more homesick than the boys.

At the beginning of the year, when the relationship between homesickness and depression was the weakest, there were also few significant correlates between homesickness and aspects of self-concept and were mostly accounted for by the boys. However nine months later, at the beginning of Term Four, there were significant negative associations on almost all aspects of self-concept, with particular similarities between female day students and male boarders.

Homesickness also did not correlate to any extent with aspects of coping with general concerns in Term One, with no significant associations overall. However, a different picture emerged ten weeks later, at the beginning of Term Two. As with depression, higher levels of homesickness were associated with less frequent use of functional strategies and greater use of non-productive strategies.

5.7.3 Self-Concept

Marsh's Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ-II) examined eleven aspects of self-concept which could be summed to produce a *Total Self-Concept* score. The SDQ-II was administered at the beginning of the first and fourth terms. Overall the students reported, and maintained, stable perceptions of themselves, with no significant gender differences or differences between day and boarding students. However, female students' *Total Self-Concept* was higher in Term Four than at the beginning of the year.

Self-concept was associated with both depression and homesickness. At the beginning of the year 43% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept* was accounted for by levels of depressive symptomatology, but decreased to 21% in Term Four. However, at the end of the year, 21% of the variance in the perception of *Physical Ability* was also explained by the level of depression.

Whereas there was a weak association with homesickness in Term One, at the end of the year significant differences were found between the non-homesick and homesick groups on a number of self-concept scales. Almost 21% of the variance in the perception of *Same-Sex Relations* was explained by the level of homesickness, which also accounted for 16% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept*.

5.7.4 Coping strategies

The Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS Long Form) examined coping with general concerns at the beginning of Term One and then specific problems in Term Two. Group profiles indicated that students overall most frequently used functional and productive strategies for both general and specific concerns, whereas non-productive strategies were reported to be used very little. However, in general coping, female students, especially boarders, reported more use of non-productive strategies such as crying and letting off steam.

In specifying problems, half of the respondents indicated concerns about school-work, and tended to use more functional coping strategies than those specifying other personal issues, which included homesickness.

Coping strategies were associated with both depression and homesickness. In Term One, levels of depression accounted for between 23 and 30% of the variance in using three of the less productive strategies for general coping. Depressive symptoms were also associated more with non-productive coping for personal concerns in Term Two, and explained 31% of the variance in *Keep to Self* as a strategy.

Whereas general coping was not significantly related to homesickness in Term One, for specific concerns, the homesick group's use of non-productive coping

was significantly higher than the non-homesick who used more functional strategies. Levels of homesickness explained 24% of the variance in the use of *Tension Reduction* and 13% of the variance in *Relaxation*.

General Coping and self-concept were also related, with only three coping strategies not significantly associated with a facet of self-concept. Although *Work Hard* was the only strategy consistently related to positive self-concept, students reporting self-satisfaction tended to use the non-productive coping strategies very little. Conversely, use of those less functional strategies was associated with lower self-concept.

This chapter has examined the self-report repeated measures which indicated how students felt and thought about themselves, and how those feelings and thoughts interacted with their reported coping behaviours. Overall the results indicated that the adolescents had positive perceptions of themselves and used appropriate strategies to deal with general and specific concerns. However it was also evident that levels of depression and homesickness were significantly associated with poorer self-perceptions and less functional coping strategies.

The following chapter explores aspects of the students' background which may have influenced their experience of, and perceived adaptation to, secondary school: descriptions of who they were, where they came from, and what they thought and felt about home, school, and other events in their lives.

CHAPTER SIX: SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH INDICATORS OF ADJUSTMENT - QUALITATIVE DATA

6.1 Introduction to statistical analyses

The reader will recall that this study was essentially exploratory, focussing on the students' subjective experiences. This chapter presents results obtained from interviews and questionnaires. The data were either nominal or at the ordinal level (see chapter 4). Consequently, results of the descriptive data are reported as frequencies and percentages of responses. In the tables presented it will be found that percentages do not always sum to 100% nor the numbers to the total of respondents, as some responses contributed to more than one category. In those results, the frequency for each category is expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents on that particular questionnaire. Where applicable, results were also examined for relationships among factors and indicators of adjustment.

In keeping with previous research (Downs, 1992), where cross-tabulations were computed, Chi-square was found to be an inappropriate summary statistic, given that it is affected by sample size and skewness (de Vaus, 1990; Diekhoff, 1992). Instead, Phi (ϕ) for 2x2 tables, and Cramer's V (V) are reported, as both of these statistics are Chi-square based correlation-coefficients which are not affected by skewed data, are non-directional, symmetric, and measure non-linear relationships. However they do produce much lower co-efficients than other more commonly used measures of association (de Vaus, 1990).

Values for both Cramer's V and Phi range from 0 (no association) to 1.0 (a perfect relationship). However, under some conditions, Phi may not reach 1.0 although there appears to be a perfect association. It produces a lower co-efficient than Yule's Q, which is used in combination with the Odds Ratio. However Yule's

Q was not selected as it computes 1.0 when there is an empty cell, and may overstate relationships between variables. Similarly, Cramer's V was selected rather than the contingency co-efficient C, which is not recommended for table sizes less than 5 x 5 (H. Reynolds, 1984). Cramer's V is also more sensitive to a wider range of relationships than Lambda, which is not useful for highly skewed data (de Vaus, 1990).

In summary, where results revealed marked patterns, Phi and Cramer's V summary statistics are reported. As it would be inappropriate to interpret the correlations along the dimension of weak to strong relationships, in keeping with the exploratory nature of the study, reference is made to trends or patterns of association amongst factors.

The following sections describe the information obtained at the individual interviews which were conducted in the second week of the first term. Responses to some questions were combined or excluded, depending on their relevance and/or response rate. Factors are also examined for associations with other measures previously reported in chapter 5.

6.2. Term One: Initial interview and Life Events Scale

6.2.1 Demographic and home environmental factors

This section describes the students' backgrounds and their perceptions of their home environment.

6.2.1.1 Family composition

The majority of students ($n = 54, 77.14\%$) came from a nuclear family of two parents and siblings (except for two who were only children). Other compositions comprised 9 (12.16%) from a single parent household, 8 (10.81%) from blended

families and 3 students (4%) lived with relatives. There were no significant patterns of association between family composition per se and reported homesickness, depressive symptomatology, or self-concept, although specific facets of family life (discussed in section 6.2.4) were of significance.

6.2.1.2 Occupations of head of household

Occupations of parents were categorised as clearly as possible, given that some students were vague about the nature of the work their parents undertook. The mode ($n = 23$, 31.08%) was unskilled or semi-skilled types of employment such as mining and labouring. However, 17 (22.97%) students came from pastoral backgrounds with parents either owning or managing properties. Fifteen responses (20.27%) indicated trades or skilled occupations, whilst there were eight each (10.81%) of clerical and service, and professional occupations. Only three students had parents who were unemployed at the beginning of the school year. Again there were no significant relationships between parental occupation and other measures.

6.2.1.3 Home location and mobility history

Table 46 presents details of the students' home location.

Table 46

Frequencies and Percentages for Respondents' Home Location

Location N=74	f	(%)
Local	34	(45.95)
Queensland Town	20	(27.03)
Property	17	(22.97)
Aboriginal Community	2	(2.70)
Overseas	1	(1.35)
Total	74	(100.00)

It can be seen that 40 (54%) of the students were not local to the school area. As would be expected, given previous reported higher levels of homesickness in boarders than day students (see section 5.2.1), there was a pattern of association between home location and those classified as homesick with only 6 (15%) of the 40 non-local students classified as not homesick, compared with 34 (85%) who were homesick ($V = .71$). However, there was no pattern of association between home location and depression.

Table 47 presents results of the students' reported length of residence in their current home.

Table 47

Frequencies and Percentages for Respondents' Time of Residence in Current Home

Length of time in current home N=74	f	(%)
All of life	32	(43.24)
Over 5 years	13	(17.57)
2-5 years	11	(14.87)
Less than 2 years	18	(24.32)
Total	74	(100.00)

Forty-five students (60.8%) had either lived in the same home all of their lives, or for five years or more (thus for most of their elementary school life). However, more than half of the respondents in the study had moved at some time in their lives ($\underline{n} = 42$, 56.8%) with almost a quarter of the students ($\underline{n} = 18$, 24.32%) having lived in their current home for less than two years. There were no apparent trends of association between mobility history and levels of depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI), or self-concept (SDQ-II).

However, those who had moved ($\underline{n} = 42$), were asked to rate “*How did you feel about that? What or who did /do you miss?*” Table 48 summarizes the responses which were classified into the categories of *people* (family and friends) and *environmental* factors (e.g., lifestyle, places, weather, activities) on a three - point scale: 0 (‘nothing’ or not much missed), 1 (‘a bit’), and 2 (‘a lot’). It can be seen that over half of those who moved, did miss people from their previous home environments. Responses included comments such as:

“ *I keep up with friends from all over...write to them all to gossip and stuff... but I miss seeing my cousins at Christmas*” (Female Day student).

“ *I missed the kids in __ especially my best friend__ who I don't hear from no more*” (Male Boarder).

Table 48

Frequencies and Percentages for Classifications of Missing People and Environments for Respondents Who Had Moved Home

Classification $n = 42$	Missed People		Missed Environment	
	f	%	f	%
Nothing/not much	19	(42.86)	25	(59.53)
A bit	9	(21.43)	1	(2.38)
A lot	<u>15</u>	<u>(35.71)</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>(38.09)</u>
Total	42	(100.00)	42	(100.00)

Although less than half of the respondents mentioned missing environmental factors, many of those who did were quite specific about the aspects they missed. For example:

“ I’ve moved most of my life, but I always call __ home. Mum and Dad want to go back there. I miss the beautiful view. We lived on a mountain...went for bush walks and picnics” (Male Boarder).

“ It depends...this time it’s alright because I’ve got my own room. The house is better, so sometimes the house makes a difference...I miss the house at __. It had a tin shed there” (Female Day student).

6.2.1.4 Positive aspects of home

Students were asked when they thought of home, what they thought of first, and what was most important to them. Although some students distinguished between what they thought of first (e.g., the place) and what was most important to them (e.g., their family) many talked about a number of things they viewed as equally important. Consequently both parts of the question were combined. Frequency of responses is presented in Table 49.

Table 49

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Initial Thoughts and Important Aspects of Home

Aspects of home N=74	f	(%)
Family	51	(68.91)
Environment	30	(40.54)
Animals	13	(17.57)
Activities	5	(6.76)
Friends	3	(4.05)

There were no specific trends by gender. The students mentioned family members the most, but features of the home environment were also reported by at least 40% of the respondents. Comments included:

“ I think of (name of town) and my horse, Blackie. Most important is my family and having plenty of things to do” (Male Boarder).

“ My room ” (Male Day student).

“I think of my family, a good place to be in. I spend a lot of time with my sister and her family where I can be myself and relaxed” (Female Day student).

“The big shed. Most important is my family and pets. We have animals galore which wander all over the place” (Female Boarder).

When asked who they were closest to at home, 58 students (78.38%) named a parent, whilst 9 (12.16%) named a sibling and 5 (6.76%) other relatives. Two students (one male and one female) named their pets. Of the 44 students who had missed someone or something when they had been away from home, 34 (77.27%) named family or friends, whilst 4 (9.05%) mentioned environmental features such as the bush or actual home. Six students mentioned things such as their bed, computer games, or pets.

6.2.1.5 Homesickness

Questions were asked to gauge respondents' direct understanding and subjective experience of homesickness. Firstly, prior to the interviews, and before completing the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI), students were instructed to define the word *homesick* according to their understanding. Features of definitions given are presented in Table 50.

Table 50

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Reported Feature Categories of the Word *Homesick*

Feature Category	Total N = 55		Males n=21		Females n=34	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Home	39	(70.90)	16	(76.19)	23	(67.65)
Family	30	(54.55)	10	(47.62)	20	(58.82)
Friends	7	(12.73)	2	(9.52)	5	(14.71)
Feelings	10	(18.18)	4	(19.05)	6	(17.65)
Environment (lifestyle)	1	(1.85)	0	(0.00)	1	(2.94)
Objects (bed)	1	(1.85)	0	(0.00)	1	(2.94)

Note: One response was excluded from categorisation: "When you stay home and are not allowed to go anywhere."

The most frequent definitions referred to *missing or wishing to be at home* (71%) and *missing family members* (55%). Although there were no marked trends across gender, a higher percentage of the girls (59%) than the boys (48%) included missing their family in their definitions.

Secondly, at the initial interview, the question of who or what was missed when students were away from home gave similar responses to that of the most important aspects of home. Of the 43 who specified, 30 (69.77%) mentioned family members, 4 (9.3%) indicated the bush, and 3 each activities, friends, and animals.

Thirdly, students were asked directly if they felt homesick. The responses, categorised as *Low*, *Medium* and *High* levels of homesickness, were compared with the scores of the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) administered that week (Table 51).

Table 51

Frequencies and Percentages for Classifications of Homesickness by Self-Report and the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI)

Homesickness Classification	N=74	Self-report		DRI	
		f	(%)	f	(%)
Low		37	(50.00)	35	(47.30)
Medium		23	(31.08)	20	(27.03)
High		14	(18.92)	19	(25.67)
Total		74	(100.00)	74	(100.00)

Low	= 0 - 16
Medium	= 17- 25
High	= >25

It can be seen that there were associations between the two sets of measures ($V = .54$), with around 50% of the students reporting some degree of homesickness at the beginning of the year. Furthermore, as reported earlier in this chapter in relation to home location, and chapter 5 (section 5.3) homesick students were best discriminated by comparing day and boarding students. Thirty-two (82.05%) and 35 (89.74%) of the 39 boarders accounted for combined *Medium* and *High* categories of self-reported homesickness ($V = .68$) and DRI ($V = .79$) respectively.

6.2.1.6 Negative aspects of home

To contrast with the perceived important, positive aspects of home, students were asked what there was about home they did not like. Categories, determined by frequency of responses, are presented in Table 52.

Table 52

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Disliked Features of Home

Feature Category	N=74	f	(%)
Nothing		25	(33.78)
Environment		22	(29.73)
Bored/Lonely		14	(18.92)
People		12	(16.22)
Jobs/Rules		9	(12.16)

A third of the respondents could not think of any negative aspects about home. However, almost thirty percent had specific dislikes about their home environment, which included the climate, isolation, and lack of activities or facilities (e.g., swimming pool, shops, cinema). Although there were no marked gender trends in responses, some female students expressed worries about their environment, and conflict they had with people; for example:

“ I live in an old Queenslander (home) and I worry it will catch fire with the heat and wind. It's always too hot” (Female Day student).

“ Living out of town...Mum and Dad fighting makes me upset and I only have my brother to play with” (Female Boarder).

6.2.1.7 Preferred places

The students' identification of the sort of place that they felt the most comfortable or at home in is shown in Table 53.

Table 53

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Preferred Places

Type of place	N=74		Males (n=29)		Females (n=45)	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Country/bush	36	(48.65)	17	(58.62)	19	(42.22)
Small town	22	(29.72)	11	(37.93)	11	(24.44)
Large town/ city	9	(12.16)	2	(6.90)	7	(15.50)
Coast	3	(4.05)	2	(6.90)	1	(2.20)
Specific activity/people	10	(13.51)	5	(17.24)	5	(11.11)
Miscellaneous	9	(12.16)	2	(6.90)	7	(15.50)

Almost half of students' responses referred to features which could be identified as the outback or countryside with comments like:

"A farm or station ...where it's beautiful, with animals and the countryside" (Male Boarder).

" I like the country, but not too far in the bush, as couldn't have friends over" (Female Day student).

There was a pattern of association between home location and preferred places ($\chi^2 = .372$). Fifteen (78.95%) of the 19 students who came from a property or aboriginal community, preferred the bush. Similarly 29 (85.3%) of the 34 students who lived in a town preferred towns. However 12 (38.71%) of 31 local students mentioned the bush, which could be accounted for by the rural and remote location of the schools' town.

A number of students identified activities and people, as in:

" Somewhere with my friends, like at the swimming club" (Male Boarder).

" It doesn't matter where I am, as long as I'm doing family things like fishing" (Female Day student).

Other responses (miscellaneous) were less specific, referring to concepts such as safety and comfort:

“ Somewhere where there’s no fighting ” (Male Boarder).

“ Easy places where you can kick your shoes off ” (Female Day student).

Table 54 presents the responses to naming a favourite place in which to be alone.

Table 54

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Favourite Place to be Alone

Place	N=74		Males (n=29)		Females (n=45)	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Nowhere	26	(35.14)	11	(37.93)	15	(33.33)
Bedroom	14	(18.92)	3	(10.34)	11	(24.44)
Specific (outdoors)	13	(17.57)	5	(17.24)	8	(17.78)
Riding	10	(13.51)	5	(17.24)	5	(11.11)
Walking	9	(12.16)	4	(13.79)	5	(11.11)
Miscellaneous	<u>2</u>	<u>(2.70)</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>(3.45)</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>(2.22)</u>
Total	74	100.00	29	100.00	45	100.00

More than a third of the students could not think of anywhere they would go to be alone, and two female students specified that they would not want to be alone. The most common place named was the bedroom, which was nominated the preferred place by almost a quarter of the girls. Other places referred to the outdoors, with specific spots or features described:

“ I run up the back to sit on the rock and think... ” (Male Boarder).

“ A cubby in the bush ” (Male Day student).

“ I go down to the creek ” (Female Boarder).

“ Go to the kennel and play with the dog ” (Female Day student).

Outdoor activities were also mentioned by 19 (25.67%) of the respondents, including horse and motorbike riding, as well as going for a walk. Miscellaneous examples were: “*going to a friend’s place*” and “*into town*”.

To summarise briefly, most students were not local to the school area, and more than half had moved home at least once. Positive aspects of home, past and present, focussed on people and other features of the environment. Homesickness was defined in a similar way, and approximately 50% of students reported experiencing some degree of homesickness at the beginning of the year. A third of the students could think of no negative aspects of home, although around 30% were specific in their dislikes of environmental features of their home. Preferred types of place to be in tended to be associated with their home location, with almost half of the students preferring the countryside or bush. Whereas more than a third of students had no special place to retreat to, the bedroom was the most commonly named, and outdoor places and activities.

6.2.2 School history and environmental factors

This section focuses on the students’ early impressions of their new school. It also includes factors such as their previous boarding experience, knowing other students, decisional control in school choice, feelings about, and whether or not early expectations of, the school had been met. Results are examined for associations and comparisons with other measures.

6.2.2.1 School history

Results of items describing the students' school history, their positive or negative feelings about being at the school, and to what extent or not preconceived expectations had been met can be viewed in Table 55. Responses of "don't know", "sort -of", or "not really" which received no further elaboration, were coded as "No", whereas those responses indicating "mostly" were coded as "Yes".

Table 55

Frequencies and Percentages for School History Factors

Factor	N=74		Days (n=35)		Boarders (n=39)	
	Yes f (%)	No f (%)	Yes f (%)	No f (%)	Yes f (%)	No f (%)
Previous Boarding	5 (6.76)	69 (93.24)	0 (0.00)	35 (100.00)	5 (12.82)	34 (87.18)
Siblings/friends	68 (91.89)	6 (8.10)	33 (94.29)	2 (5.71)	35 (89.74)	4 (10.26)
Feel O.K.	60 (81.08)	14 (18.92)	32 (91.43)	3 (8.57)	28 (71.79)	11 (28.21)
Decision	34 (45.95)	40 (50.05)	18 (51.43)	17 (48.57)	16 (41.03)	23 (55.97)
Met expectations	55 (74.32)	19 (25.68)	29 (82.86)	6 (17.14)	26 (66.67)	13 (33.33)

Of the 74 respondents, only 5 (all males) had attended another boarding school previously, and were boarding for the first time at the new school. Only two of the five were categorised as *Low* on both homesickness (DRI) and depressive symptomatology (RADS) at the beginning of Term One.

The vast majority of the students knew others at the school, with just six stating they knew no-one. Boarders tended to have siblings or cousins at the school, or came with other students from areas where there was a primary school, but no

high school facilities. There was also an element of tradition, given that the colleges were the only Catholic secondary schools in the area, and that most of the local students had attended the same Catholic primary school. Of the six students who knew no-one, the two day students (one male and one female) were classified as low in homesickness and depression. The others (two male boarders and two female boarders) were categorised as high in both homesickness and depression. Two of these students (one male and one female) subsequently left the schools, because of their homesickness and inability to adjust.

Most students (81%) felt positive about being at the new school and that mostly it had met their expectations (74%) with an association between the two measures ($\phi = .35$). There was also some association between decisional control and feelings about the school ($\phi = .3$), with 32 (94%) of the 34 students who had input into the decision, reporting positive feelings about the school.

However, those who expressed negative feelings about the school had significantly higher levels of depression (RADS scores $\underline{M} = 69.7$, $\underline{SD} = 12.47$) compared with those whose feelings were positive (RADS $\underline{M} = 58.2$, $\underline{SD} = 14.44$, $\underline{U} = 235$, $p < .01$). This was also so for those who felt that their expectations were not met, (RADS $\underline{M} = 66.05$, $\underline{SD} = 13.28$) compared with those who responded positively (RADS $\underline{M} = 58.42$, $\underline{SD} = 14.79$, $\underline{U} = 343.5$, $p < .03$).

Similarly there was a significantly higher level of homesickness in those who did not feel positive about the school (DRI scores $\underline{M} = 27.21$, $\underline{SD} = 7.49$) compared with those who did (DRI $\underline{M} = 15.45$, $\underline{SD} = 10.2$, $\underline{U} = 153$, $p < .001$). Whereas 33 (55%) of the 60 students who felt all right about being at the school were classified low on homesickness, of the fourteen who did not like being there, only 2 (14.29%) were not homesick.

Homesickness was also significantly higher in those who had no decisional control (DRI \underline{M} = 20.38, \underline{SD} = 11.01) compared with those who helped make the decision (\underline{M} = 14.5, \underline{SD} = 9.31, \underline{U} = 474.5, $p < .02$). Fifteen (78.95%) of the 19 students who were classified as high in homesickness had no say in the decision to attend that school. Those whose expectations were not met were also more homesick (DRI \underline{M} = 22.63, \underline{SD} = 9.96) than those who perceived their expectations to have been met (DRI \underline{M} = 15.96, \underline{SD} = 10.37, \underline{U} = 335.5, $p < .02$).

6.2.2.2 Positive and negative aspects of the school environment

Early impressions of what the students liked and disliked about their new school were categorised according to frequency of responses, and are summarised in Table 56. Almost 60% of the students mentioned *people* as a positive aspect of school, with 34 (77.27%) of the 44 responses coming from the girls ($\phi = .41$). Most of the respondents mentioned friends and/or teachers. However, six girls stated that they liked not having boys at the school. Four female and two male students specified the boarding aspect as positive, particularly in making friends; for example:

“Being here is like a big sleepover, with the friends in the dorm that I have made since I’ve been here” (female).

“I see most of my friends every day now, instead of every few weeks, and I have made new ones who board” (male).

Nine students mentioned *people* as a negative aspect of school. Reference was made to being junior again, being teased or bullied, strict teachers and being surrounded by too many people. Seven of these nine students also had high levels of depressive symptomatology at the beginning of the year.

Table 56

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Features Liked and Disliked About the School

Feature category	Liked		Feature category	Disliked	
	f	(%)		f	(%)
People	44	(59.46)		9	(12.16)
Sport	28	(37.84)		2	(2.70)
Conditions	22	(29.73)		41	(55.41)
School Subjects	20	(27.03)		11	(14.87)
Environment	17	(22.97)		13	(17.57)
Activities	13	(17.57)		6	(8.11)
Holidays	2	(2.70)	Miss home	7	(9.46)
Everything	4	(5.41)	Nothing	7	(9.46)

Sport as a positive aspect of school was mentioned by a higher percentage of boys ($\underline{n} = 23$, 79.3%) than girls ($\underline{n} = 5$, 11.11%, $\phi = .69$), with particular reference to the variety of team sports offered. Other *activities* included such things as the cattle club, fishing, playing cards, watching videos and going out places. A perceived lack of activities and boredom were aspects of school disliked by just six respondents.

Conditions liked included responses about the food, tuckshop, degree of freedom and movement, for example:

“ *We watch some good videos; I don't have to walk far to school*” (Female Boarder).

“ *Can train early in the morning. The discipline is good*” (Male Day student).

However, conditions disliked were reported by 55% of the respondents, and mainly focussed on rules and regulations. Common examples were:

“ *Not allowed to walk on the grass. Have to wear socks up to the knees* (Male Boarder).

“*Strict rules in the boarding house. There's no privacy*” (Female Boarder).

Aspects of the *environment* were perceived as positive and negative. Positive features referred to sports fields and other aspects such as the set-up of buildings. Negative aspects included the hot climate and lack of air-conditioning, finding places, moving around too much (which was positive for others), and lack of dormitory space and privacy. *Missing home* was also a feature mentioned as a dislike by 7 boarders (with going home and holidays as the positive counterpart for two). All of these students reported being very homesick.

Boarding students ($\underline{n} = 39$) were also asked more specifically about their perceptions of the school environment in terms of if they felt at home or not and any aspects of boarding that were better or worse than home. Ten students (7 female and 3 male) stated that they had not settled, with four indicating that they thought they would given time (it was only their second week).

Positive aspects of boarding which were better than home were having the company of others ($\underline{n} = 2$), activities such as computer and television ($\underline{n} = 3$), and liking the dormitory ($\underline{n} = 2$). Worse than home was the lack of privacy and space ($\underline{n} = 8$) and homesickness ($\underline{n} = 4$). Examples of responses included:

“Yes I feel at home here, but keeping your gear together is hard as there’s not enough room for stuff. I can use the computer here” (Male Boarder).

“No, I haven’t settled. There’s no privacy...have to lock things away, and there’s nowhere to hang posters” (Female Boarder).

In summary, most students at the beginning of the year reported positive perceptions about being at their new school, with people and sport the main features liked, and rules the most disliked. Overall, those who reported negative perceptions of the school tended also to have higher levels of depression and were homesick.

6.2.3 Individual problems and ways of coping

Students were encouraged to voice any worries about school and/or home that they had or might have difficulty coping with, which could affect how happy they felt at the new school. Whilst the majority ($n = 50$, 67.57%) expressed no concerns about school, worries focussed predominantly on the work aspect ($n = 24$, 32.43%); specific subjects, homework, or tests. Five students (6.76%) worried about making friends or feared being teased or bullied. Two students were concerned about rules and another about compulsory sport.

There were no reported home concerns for over half of the students ($n = 44$, 59.46%). However, 13 (17.57%) expressed worry about family members' health and safety, whilst 10 (13.54%) were concerned about family discord. Other concerns were financial ($n = 2$), personal appearance ($n = 1$) and being in love ($n = 1$).

Students were asked how they usually coped with things that worried them. Responses were categorised according to the 18 items of the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) and compared with their individual rankings on the ACS (general), administered the previous week (see Appendix C11 for full results). The most frequent strategy ($n = 27$, 36.49%) was to *Seek Social Support* (by talking to others, often parents on the telephone, or asking a friend for advice), followed by attempts to *Focus on Solving the Problem* ($n = 17$, 22.97%) and *Seek Relaxing Diversions* ($n = 9$, 12.16%), for example play with cat, read a book. Although these were ranked slightly differently from the ACS order of *Seek Relaxing Diversions* ($n = 27$, 36.49%), *Work hard and Achieve* ($n = 12$, 16.22%), and *Physical Recreation* ($n = 8$, 10.81%), students overall reported using functional, productive ways of coping with their concerns (See also chapter 5, section 5.5.1). The impact of these worries and other events in the students' lives are examined next.

6.2.4 Impact of Life Events

In order to take into account other factors in the students' lives that may have influenced their perceptions of themselves, home and school, the Life Events Scale (LES) was administered during the first week, and reviewed with the students during the "any worries" phase of the individual interviews. Recall that the LES comprises 13 discreet personal and family events which could be considered stressful for adolescents and which are rated for negative effect on a scale from 0 (not at all affected) to 4 (a great deal). Table 57 shows the number of students who had experienced the events and the mean ratings of the negative effects. (Full results can be viewed in Appendix C12).

Table 57

Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Negative Effect for Responses to the Life Events Scale - Term I

Life Events	N=74			
	n	(%)	Mean	(SD)
Divorce/separation of parents	17	(22.97)	1.47	(1.46)
Alcoholism/drug abuse in family	12	(16.21)	1.25	(1.49)
Illness/Injury to family member	49	(66.21)	2.08	(1.47)
Death of family member or friend	57	(77.02)	2.86	(1.37)
Fighting/arguments within family	47	(63.51)	1.98	(1.31)
Abuse by family member	13	(17.51)	1.85	(1.82)
Unemployment of family member	22	(27.72)	1.36	(1.36)
Move to a new neighbourhood	42	(56.76)	1.31	(1.35)
Starting at a new school	74	(100.00)	1.69	(1.39)
Breaking up with boy/girlfriend	37	(50.00)	1.27	(1.26)
Failing a test or course	45	(60.81)	2.20	(1.36)
Getting into trouble with law	12	(16.21)	1.75	(1.82)
Personal injury/illness	47	(63.51)	1.75	(1.61)

The results indicated that *death of a family member or friend*, experienced by 77% of the students, *illness and injury to a family member* reported by two-thirds of the students, and *failing a test or course* by 61%, had the most negative effects. However there were no significant correlations between those experiences and

depression (RADs), homesickness (DRJ), self-concept (SDQ -II) or ways of coping (ACS).

On the other hand, there was a significant positive relationship between those experiencing *divorce/separation of parents* and levels of depression (Pearson's $r = .56, p < .02$), a negative association with the SDQ -II scale *Emotional Stability* ($r = -.69, p < .01$), and a positive relationship with the ACS scale *Wishful Thinking* as a coping strategy ($r = .57, p < .02$). Being negatively affected by *fighting/arguments within the family*, which was reported by 87% of the 47 students as an event was also associated with depression ($r = .39, p < .01$), and negatively related to self-concept in *Honesty and Trustworthiness* ($r = -.37, p < .02$), and *Parent Relations* ($r = -.39, p < .01$). There was also a greater tendency for these students to *Keep to Self* as a way of coping ($r = .47, p < .001$). The effect of *abuse by a family member* was also strongly related to higher levels of depression ($r = .76, p < .01$), and these students reported less use of *Seek Social Support* ($r = -.68, p < .02$) as a coping strategy. *Moving to a new neighbourhood* was positively associated with using the coping strategy *Seek to Belong* ($r = .36, p < .02$), whereas *starting at a new school*, which all students had experienced, was only significantly related to the use of *Wishful Thinking* as a coping strategy ($r = .31, p < .01$).

There were no significant correlations with the other surveyed life events. However it should be noted that a number of students reported more than one life event that affected them negatively. The extent to which a combination of events may have been associated with the overall perceived adaptation to the transition to high school, is examined more specifically in the profiles described in chapter 7. The following section provides a brief review and summary of the findings obtained in Term One.

6.2.5 Review and summary of results: Term One

In the first two weeks of Term One, as well as information from the individual interviews, a number of measures were obtained from the original sample of 74 students. Throughout the rest of the year however, numbers of respondents fluctuated considerably, so that longitudinal changes across time for specific measurements of depression, homesickness, and self-concept, were obtained from 42 students, whereas other results were based on the number of respondents at the given time (see chapter 5).

At the beginning of the year, the level of depression (RADS) reported by the 74 students was higher than at other measured times during the year, with no significant differences between boys or girls, or boarding and day students. However 11 students' scores were high enough to indicate symptomatology associated with clinical depression. Female boarders tended to account for the higher levels of depression, with significantly higher scores than the male boarders at the end of Term One.

There was a significant but weak relationship between depression and homesickness (DRI) at the beginning of the first term. Homesickness was best discriminated in comparisons between day and boarding students, with significantly more symptoms reported by boarders. More than half of the initial sample of students ($n = 40$, 54%) were not local to the school area, and only 6 (15%) of those students were not homesick. However, there was no association between home location and depression, nor mobility history with depression or homesickness.

Students defined features of homesickness in a similar manner to positive aspects of home, which focussed on people, especially family and friends, and other features of the environment. A third of the students could not think of any negative aspects of their home and more than half ($n = 44$, 59%) had no concerns at home. However, almost 30% of students were specific in their dislikes of environmental features of their home. Preferred places tended to be associated with students' home location, with almost half preferring the countryside and outdoor activities, which was also the most commonly named place to go to be alone, apart from the bedroom.

Perceptions about the new school were mostly positive at the beginning of the year, with people and sport the main features liked, and rules the most disliked. Only six of the 74 students stated that they knew no-one at their new school, and four of those students were both very homesick and depressed. Those who reported negative perceptions about the school and whose expectations had not been met were more depressed and homesick than those who were positive, and those who had little say in the decision to attend the school were also more homesick.

There was a weak association between homesickness and self-concept (SDQ-II) at the beginning of the year. Overall, students reported positive perceptions of themselves, with no significant gender difference or difference between day and boarding students. However, 43% of the variance in *Total Self-Concept* was accounted for by depressive symptomatology. There were significant negative associations on nearly all facets, with stronger correlations for female students than male. Those who were negatively affected by divorce and separation in the family were more depressed and lower on *Emotional Stability*, and being affected by family arguments and fights was associated with higher levels of depression and negatively related to perceived *Honesty and Trustworthiness*.

The Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) was used in Term One to examine how students generally coped with problems in their lives. The results were compared with responses to how they coped with any worries or concerns they voiced at the initial interview. Overall, although ranked in slightly different orders, students most frequently used *functional, productive strategies* for their concerns about school or personal worries. However, females, especially boarders, reported more use of non-productive strategies such as crying and letting off steam.

Coping strategies were associated with depression and homesickness. In Term One, levels of depression accounted for between 23 and 30% of the variance in using non-productive coping. Non-productive coping such as *Wishful Thinking* was positively associated with those more affected by divorce and separation in the family, and moving to the new school, whereas *Keep to Self* was more often used by those affected by fights and arguments. The effect of abuse by a family member was related to higher levels of depression and less use of *Seek Social Support* as a strategy.

General ways of coping and self-concept were related at the beginning of the year. Most students reported satisfaction with themselves and tended to use *functional coping strategies*. However it was also evident that levels of depression and homesickness were significantly related to students' poorer perceptions of themselves and use of less functional strategies.

This section has examined how the perception of the students' surroundings, at home and at school, and the effect of certain events in their lives may have influenced their initial experience of the transition to the new school. Whereas most students were positive, negative perceptions and experiences were significantly

associated with depression, homesickness, self-concept and coping. The following section examines the students' perceptions in Term Two.

6.3 Term Two: Questionnaire - Perceptions of school

At the beginning of Term Two students were asked to write what the best thing was about being at the new school in Term One (Appendix B4, question 1), and what they were particularly looking forward to in Term Two (question 3). Responses were categorised as shown in Table 58. As only three respondents mentioned more than one feature, the first response was categorised.

Table 58

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Categories of Best Things about Term One and Looked Forward to in Term Two

Feature category	Term One Best thing		Term Two Looked forward to	
	f	(%)	f	(%)
People	40	(67.80)	1	(1.69)
Sport	5	(8.47)	16	(27.12)
Conditions	0	(0.00)	0	(0.00)
School Subjects	1	(1.70)	6	(10.17)
Environment	7	(11.86)	0	(0.00)
Activities	1	(1.70)	18	(30.51)
Home/holidays	0	(0.00)	16	(27.12)
Nothing	<u>5</u>	<u>(8.47)</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>(3.39)</u>
Total	59	(100.00)	59	(100.00)

$\underline{n} = 59$

Similar to the beginning of the year (Table 56), the best thing about being at the new school in Term One for 67% of the respondents was meeting new *people*, in particular making new friends. This was reported by more girls ($\underline{n} = 25$, 62.5%) than boys ($\underline{n} = 15$, 37.5%, $\underline{V} = .46$). Environmental features liked best included ambiguous statements such as “*getting away from primary school*” and “*being in a new place*”

Activities were most looked forward to in Term Two by 30% of the respondents, with particular focus on Friday afternoons when the schools had joint activities, so allowing students to mix with the opposite sex. Other activities included excursions and camping trips. *Sport* was the main focus for 27%, with no particular pattern of association for gender or boarding status. Similarly there were no particular trends for the 27% who were mainly looking forward to the *holidays and/or going home*.

Missing family and/or leaving home was the hardest thing to cope with in the first term (question 2) for 44% of the respondents (Table 59). Of the 26 respondents in that category, 24 were boarding students. Indeed, 24 (75%) of the 32 boarders mentioned leaving home as the hardest thing to cope with, including all 12 female boarding respondents ($\underline{V} = .8$). There was also a positive association between the *home* category and homesickness classification (DRI) at the beginning of Term Two ($\underline{V} = .47$).

Table 59

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for the Hardest Things in Term One and Term Two

Feature Category	Hardest thing to cope with			
	Term One		Term Two	
	f	(%)	f	(%)
People	4	(6.78)	6	(10.17)
Sport	0	(0.00)	1	(1.70)
Conditions	3	(5.08)	2	(3.39)
School Subjects	17	(28.81)	33	(55.93)
Environment	6	(10.17)	0	(0.00)
Activities	0	(0.00)	0	(0.00)
Homesickness	26	(44.07)	6	(10.17)
Nothing	<u>3</u>	<u>(5.09)</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>(18.64)</u>
Total	59	(100.00)	59	(100.00)

There were no patterns of association in those who found the school-work the hardest aspect of the first term. *Conditions* mentioned by three respondents (male boarders) consisted one each for dealing with rules, the food, and lack of privacy. The category *People* included finding it hard not having the opposite sex around ($\underline{n} = 2$) and bullying ($\underline{n} = 2$).

Table 59 also shows that concern about school-work was considered the anticipated hardest thing to deal with in Term Two (question 4), reported by 33 (56%) of the 59 respondents. This result is similar to the 53% ($\underline{n} = 30$) who specified a school-work related problem, of the 57 respondents who completed the Adolescent Coping Scale at the beginning of the second term (see section 5.5.2 in chapter 5).

For those who specified *people*, rejection, “*bigger kids*”, and “*having fights and arguments*” were the focus of concern. Features of homesickness (for example “*being away from parents again*”) was anticipated to be the hardest aspect of Term Two for six boarding students, all of whom were classified high in depressive symptomatology and homesickness at the beginning of that term.

Boarding students’ perceptions of their spatial autonomy, privacy and degree of independence was examined at the beginning of Term Two (boarders only questions 1-6) with responses shown in Table 60.

Table 60

Frequencies and Percentages for Boarders' Perceived Freedom, Privacy and Independence at School: Term Two

Statement	Responses					
	Never		Sometimes		Often	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Enough free time	2	(5.88)	16	(47.06)	16	(47.06)
Routine restricts freedom	4	(11.77)	26	(76.46)	4	(11.77)
Pursue own interests	6	(17.65)	18	(52.94)	10	(29.41)
Bored at weekends	12	(35.29)	18	(52.94)	4	(11.77)
Enough activities	5	(14.71)	20	(58.82)	9	(26.47)
Enough privacy	6	(17.65)	21	(61.76)	7	(20.59)

$n = 34$

Although the most frequent response was “sometimes” to all questions, the highest mean rating was obtained for “*having enough free time*” ($M = 1.41$, $SD = .61$), which was only estimated as “never” by two students. However, 30 (88%) of the 34 boarders felt their freedom was restricted to some extent by the daily routine ($M = 1$, $SD = .49$). There was only one significant gender difference, in which the girls were less satisfied with the perceived amount of privacy ($M = .71$, $SD = .61$) than the boys ($M = 1.25$, $SD = .55$, $U = 79.5$, $p < .02$). There were no patterns of association with depression or homesickness.

6.4 Term Three: Group Process

As described in chapter 4, group sessions were conducted in Term Three, using “Plus, Minus, and Interesting” points about starting the new school, to generate thinking and discussion about the process of adaptation to the new setting.

Given the quantity of data obtained, it is not practical to report all results. Examples of individual responses are given in chapter 7, in which a number of profiles are presented. Whereas more detailed group responses can be viewed in Appendix D, the following sections present an overview of the boys' (six groups, $n = 32$) and girls' (nine groups, $n = 48$) group results.

6.4.1 Plus, Minus and Interesting points about starting high school

Plus points about starting high school were similar to the positive aspects reported at the beginning of the year and in Term Two. Both the boys' and girls' groups mentioned meeting new people and friends, the new setting, subjects, and sport. Aspects of changes in themselves were also noted, for example: "*Learn more responsibilities about life,*" "*feel grown up*" (girls) and "*big step in life,*" "*better knowledge of self, decisions*" (boys). The girls also commented that "*most of the boys are more mature,*" and the boys included "*learning to live without parents and be more independent*" as positive.

Minus points about starting high school focussed more on conditions than was reported in questionnaires over the year. The boarders' responses tended to dominate this section, with comments on being away from home, problems with peers and teachers, and conditions, such as: "*missing home activities*" "*living with teachers,*" "*getting locked out,*" "*asking permission to go out,*" and "*going to bed early*" (boys). The girls' responses were similar and also included "*not enough space or privacy,*" and "*don't lead a proper life. Only mix with boys and other people on Friday afternoons.*"

Interesting points, which could be viewed as positive or negative aspects about being at the school, included “*different foods*” and “*playing jokes on people*” (boys) and “*don’t always know what the next day holds*” and “*getting older*” noted by the girls.

6.4.2 Nominal Group Technique

The second part of the group session used nominal group process to generate thoughts about what students, and the school, could do to best help students adapt to high school. Results indicated that the students thought that having a positive, responsible attitude and interacting with others were the best things for students to do or be. From the boys’ six groups, the most important points ranked first and second respectively were (as recorded verbatim):

1. Join in; don’t hang around ‘geeks’.
2. Be kind; have fun.
3. Try to get along with people; make friends.
4. Get involved in sport; don’t hang around drugs.
5. Help and respect students/teachers; give everything a go.
6. Be tough, clever, cool; be kind, generous, good person.

The girls had similar views. The nine groups’ rankings were:

1. Be positive and have a go; always be cooperative.
2. Work hard; never judge people by their looks.
3. Be yourself; join in.
4. Spend a couple of days getting to know everyone; be friendly.
5. Don’t bitch; don’t spread rumours.
6. Have manners; join sports teams.

7. Be outgoing and easygoing; have a good sense of humour.
8. Don't be shy; do your best in school and sports.
9. Be nice to people; participate in most activities.

The one most important thing the school could do or be was ranked by each boys' group as:

1. Teachers be more understanding re students' problems.
2. Have an account for the tuckshop.
3. Study in the afternoon, so can play when it's cool.
4. Have better facilities (motorbikes!)
5. Shorter classes.
6. Coed.

The girls also presented some practical suggestions:

1. Cattle/horse club to help bush people settle in more.
2. Have a sister and brother system (with the Year 10s).
3. Teachers should "loosen up" because you are new, don't throw in the deep end.
4. Helps if the teachers are nice.
5. Have a welcoming lunch so we can get to know each other.
6. Teachers should control their tempers more.
7. Teachers to explain things thoroughly.
8. Teachers help more in our struggle, get more involved.
9. More pastoral care.

The comments then led to open general discussion. With the boys, practical solutions to some issues were raised which allowed coping strategies to be discussed. For example, peer pressure to smoke, adapting to rules, lack of privacy and security generated debate on the best ways to deal with things that could or not

be changed. Two groups devised plans of how they would redesign the physical environment. The girls focussed more on venting their grievances about boarding issues, as there seemed to be more strict rules than at the boys' school. However, practical issues and solutions were also discussed, such as the need to raise money for facilities, and the need for an outside counsellor for individual problems. The issue of coeducation was a common theme. The respondents' evaluation of the group sessions indicated that the amount of writing, length of time, and noise factors were seen as problematic for some and other suggestions included more talking rather than writing, and requests from some to discuss issues on an individual basis. However they also generally found the process useful for thinking about problems, expressing their feelings and hearing what others thought and felt. It also allowed all students to be involved, which was useful, given that a number had withdrawn from the other formal parts of the study.

The next section presents results of the questionnaires and interview held in Term Four.

6.5 Term Four

6.5.1 Questionnaire: Week Two

At the beginning of Term Four, a similar questionnaire to that in Term Two was administered, except that questions 1 and 2 addressed the best and hardest things about being at the new school over the year, rather than just the previous term (see Appendix B5). As Table 61 indicates, the category of *people*, which consisted of meeting new people and making new friends, was the best thing about being at the new school over the year for more than half of the 57 respondents, and was reported by more of the girls ($\underline{n} = 21, 65.63\%$) than boys ($\underline{n} = 11, 34.37\%$, $\underline{V} = .568$). This

corresponded with the students' perceptions at the beginning of the year (Table 56, section 6.2.2) and at beginning of Term 2 (Table 58, section 6.3). In Term Four, *Sport* was reported only by boys, whereas *Activities* was reported exclusively by girls. There were no marked trends for days or boarders, except that all of those who reported the new school environment the best thing, were day students ($\bar{V} = .49$).

Table 61

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for the Categories of Best Things about the Year and Looked Forward To in Term Four

Feature category	Year		Term Four	
	Best thing (n=57)		Looked forward to (n=53)	
	f	(%)	f	(%)
People	32	(56.14)	1	(1.89)
Sport	9	(15.79)	7	(13.21)
Conditions	0	(0.00)	0	(0.00)
School Subjects	5	(8.77)	4	(7.54)
Environment	5	(8.77)	0	(0.00)
Activities	4	(7.02)	10	(18.87)
Home/holidays	0	(0.00)	31	(58.49)
Nothing	<u>2</u>	<u>(3.51)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(0.00)</u>
Total	57	(100.00)	53	(100.00)

Whereas going home and/or holidays was reported as being looked forward to the most by 27% of the respondents in Term 2, by the beginning of the final term, this increased to 58%, with no trends across student status or gender. The only pattern of association was in the category *Activities*, specifically speech day, reported by 9 girls and only one boy ($\bar{V} = .49$).

The hardest thing to cope with over the year and anticipated in the fourth term, as Table 62 indicates, was school-work related, especially the thought of end of year examinations. In reporting aspects of *People* as the hardest thing to cope with, responses included leaving friends at the end of the year, losing friends, and bullying. There were no patterns of association across gender or boarding status.

Table 62

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for the Hardest Thing about the Year and to Cope With in Term Four

Feature Category	Hardest thing to cope with			
	Year		Term Four	
	f	(%)	f	(%)
People	12	(23.53)	7	(13.73)
Sport	0	(0.00)	0	(0.00)
Conditions	5	(9.80)	0	(0.00)
School Subjects	20	(39.22)	39	(76.47)
Environment	3	(5.88)	1	(1.96)
Activities	0	(0.00)	0	(0.00)
Homesickness	10	(19.61)	2	(3.92)
Nothing	<u>1</u>	<u>(1.96)</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>(3.92)</u>
Total	51	(100.00)	51	(100.00)

n = 51

All of the respondents who found *homesickness* and *conditions* (staying organised, complying with rules) the hardest were boarders ($\bar{V} = .72$), but, unlike Term Two, there were no general associations between the *homesickness* responses and levels of homesickness or depression in Term Four.

Boarding students' perceptions of their freedom, activities and degree of privacy were again gauged in Term Four, with results presented in Table 63. As in Term Two (Table 60) 'sometimes' was the most frequent response to all statements. Paired t tests detected no significant differences in responses between Term Two and Term Four. However, as in Term Two, female boarders were less satisfied with the perceived amount of privacy ($\bar{M} = .29$, $\bar{SD} = .49$) than the males ($\bar{M} = 1$, $\bar{SD} = .67$, $U = 29$, $p < .02$). There were no patterns of association with depression or homesickness at the beginning of Term Four.

Table 63

requencies and Percentages of Responses for Boarders' Perceptions in Term Four

Statement	Never		Responses Sometimes		Often	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Enough free time	2	(7.69)	18	(69.23)	6	(28.08)
Routine restricts freedoms	2	(7.69)	20	(76.92)	4	(15.39)
Pursue own interests	4	(15.38)	18	(69.23)	4	(15.39)
Bored at weekends	5	(19.23)	15	(57.69)	6	(23.08)
Enough activities	7	(26.92)	16	(61.54)	3	(11.54)
Enough Privacy	9	(34.61)	13	(50.00)	4	(15.39)

$\underline{n} = 26$

6.5.2 Questionnaire: Week Seven

The final questionnaire (see Appendix B6) allowed students to reflect on other aspects of the school year that were not covered in previous questions. Of the 39 responses to “*What for you was the most important issue that came out of the group session we held last term?*” (question one), 16 (41.03%) were self-focussed with answers such as “*it helped me to be optimistic*” (Male Boarder), “*being able to tell someone what I wanted without being told it was wrong to want it*” (Female Boarder), “*to express my feelings about things*” (Male Day student).

Focus on other people was also seen as an important outcome of the group session ($\underline{n} = 14$, 35.9%), with responses such as: “*working together*” (Male Day student), “*we got to know what other people said and think*” (Female Day student), although a few ($\underline{n} = 3$, 7.69%) felt that there was nothing important for them as they perceived the session focussed solely on boarding students. Three students also alluded to the environment of the school, whilst three commented on conditions, such as:

“ The issue about having time to yourself (not enough privacy). The teachers have quiet time but it’s not enough...seriously we need more spare time” (Male Boarder).

“The group all agreed that this school needs more area so that we have more freedom” (Female Boarder).

Question 2 required students to provide solutions to two problems raised in the group sessions. Most responses only provided one problem and solution and mainly focussed on issues to do with other people. Ten students (4 males, 6 females) referred to insufficient contact with the opposite sex, and provided problem solving strategies of making the schools co-ed campuses ($n = 5$) and more social activities ($n = 5$).

Other solutions to problems to do with other people fitted into the coping strategies of using social support and action. Male responses with specific problem (P) and solution (S) included:

P “ Getting into trouble for something you haven’t done” S “ talk to teachers.”

P “Bullying” S “go tell someone.”

P “When there are people you don’t know, S ask someone who knows them.”

P “With fights at home, S have a family discussion or meeting.”

Female responses also included:

P “If you have a problem S you need to talk to someone” and

P “Need someone you can talk to” S “ get a year 11 or 12 to talk to us as they went through the same thing.”

Some situations were perceived to be best dealt with by ignoring or avoiding the problem, such as:

P “ Fights at schools, bullies” S “ mind your own business, don’t annoy them.”
(Male).

P “ People with drugs” S “ Leave them alone, avoid them” (Male).

Homesickness, mentioned by three respondents was solved by “talking to others,” “going home often” and “ doing things to distract yourself.”

Solutions to other problems to do with the environment, conditions and sport, provided concrete, problem-solving strategies, such as:

P “ Too hot in the day to play” S “ Have time to play at night.”

P “ The school lay out needs changing S “Rebuild some areas.”

P “ Not allowed to ride” S “Can, if have a note from your parents.”

P “ Not enough freedom, privacy” ($n = 4$) S “Allowed out more often” “More spare time.”

P “ Not enough inter-school sports” S “ Competitions” ($n = 3$).

In summary, at the end of Term Four solutions given for problems focussed on social support in dealing with people, and concrete strategies for solving other problems. These results are similar to the most frequent ways of coping identified at interview at the beginning of the year (see section 6.2.3).

Students were also asked to look at what ways they thought they had changed as a person during the year (question 6). Of the 55 responses, 34 (61.82%) commented on aspects of themselves that focussed on their self-satisfaction and confidence, such as becoming more mature, responsible, confident, and independent. Examples were:

“ I am more confident, more serious and a better socialiser” (Male Boarder).

“ I am not as quiet. I have opened up a lot” (Female Boarder).

“ I think I have become a kinder person” (Female Day student).

Thirteen students (23.64%) mentioned peer and parent relationships with comments such as:

“ Had more friends this year ” (Male Day student).

“ My personality has changed. I act better towards my friends ” (Female Boarder).

“ I appreciate my friends and family at home a lot more ” (Female Boarder).

There was also a changed perception for 8 (14.55%) students concerning their school work with remarks like:

“ To be more responsible and study a lot harder ” (Male Boarder).

“ I have learnt to use my brains a lot more. I am more confident in doing my best ” (Female Boarder).

There were also comments on awareness of physical changes ($\underline{n} = 11$), physical ability in sport ($\underline{n} = 2$) and increased “toughness” (mentioned by male students). Only six students responded that they could think of nothing, and one boy commented on *“being the smallest again”* at the school.

Overall, these results concur with the results of the SDQ-II (see chapter 5, section 5.4). Most students’ self-concept was positive with perceived positive changes over the year.

Similarly, most students indicated that they had adapted to the new school (question 7), with no significant differences in gender or status. On a scale from 0 to 3, with a mean score of 2.2 ($\underline{SD} = .84$) only 3 (5.36%; 1 male and 2 females) of the 56 respondents indicated that they had not adapted at all. There was a significant negative relationship between perceived level of adaptation and depressive symptomatology (RADS) at the end of the year ($\underline{r} = -.35$, $\underline{p} < .01$) and homesickness (DRI, $\underline{r} = -.51$, $\underline{p} < .001$).

The degree of happiness at the school ($\underline{M} = 1.84$, $\underline{SD} = .84$) was perceived as “not at all” for 4 (7.14%, 1 male and 3 females) of the respondents. There was a significant positive relationship between perceived level of adaptation and level of

happiness ($r = .69, p < .001$). Happiness was also negatively related to both depression ($r = -.43, p < .01$) and homesickness ($r = -.38, p < .01$).

The degree to which students looked forward to Year 9 ($M = 2.21, SD = .84$) was not significantly related to adaptation or level of happiness. However, 8 (14.29%) of the respondents were not continuing at the same school the following year, including the four students who reported not being at all happy at the school. Although there was no significant association with homesickness, looking forward to the next school year was negatively associated with depression ($r = -.64, p < .001$).

6.5.3 Impact of Life Events: Term Four

As at the beginning of the year, (see section 6.2.4) the Life Events Scale was administered at the end of Term Four, to take into account any other factors which may have influenced the students' perceptions of themselves and the school at the end of the year. Results (see Appendix C13) indicated that starting the new school still negatively affected 39 students at the end of the year, with a mean score of 2.07 ($SD = 1.24$). There was a significant positive relationship between this event and homesickness (DRI) at the end of Term Four ($r = .33, p < .05$). Breaking up with a boy or girlfriend was reported by 36 students ($M = 2.14, SD = 1.33$) and was significantly associated with depression ($r = .38, p < .05$). Failing a test also negatively affected 32 students ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.24$) and was significantly associated with depression ($r = .44, p < .02$) and homesickness ($r = .39, p < .05$). There were no significant relationships with events and aspects of self-concept.

6.5.4 Final Interview

Students were given the opportunity to talk about any aspects of their year. Eighteen boys and 23 girls provided a variety of responses, which summarised their perceptions, and presented an overview of the results already discussed in this chapter. The following are a selection of responses. Firstly, from the boys:

“ I’d boarded before, so knew what to expect. I really enjoy the Cattle club and going fishing on Sundays. We get up at 6am and have a bit of a camp. It makes it more like home life ” (Boarder).

“ Sometimes I feel a bit left out, because my mates board, and have all the fun. I have got some good mates ” (Day student).

“ Grade 8 is really a settling in time. I reckon boarding would be better because they work as a team and get more involved in things. School’s OK, but would be better if it was coed. The grounds need more toilets. We should do some fund raising ” (Day student).

“ In the first year I think we should be allowed to go home earlier or our parents should be allowed to visit. I get homesick. There’s not enough privacy. I’ve built a cubby down the back of the oval across the fence, although you’re not allowed. This term’s been better since they’ve changed the time of big break, and at weekends there’s no forced study ” (Boarder).

The girls also commented on the lack of privacy:

“ There hasn’t been enough privacy, there are too many in a room, picking fights. If the boarding was better it would be OK. I am growing up, standing on my own two feet, but I reckon it makes you too independent too soon ” (Boarder).

“It’s pretty good here, meeting new friends. Term Three was more upsetting, a slow term, and I was very homesick. I talked about it to my group of friends. There aren’t enough weekend activities (Boarder).

“ School’s pretty good, although I was very nervous and shy at the beginning of the year (Day student).

“ I’m quite happy now, it’s really fun. I was really homesick when I came. In Term Three I changed to a day bug, staying with my Aunt, but I still go to after school activities.”

6.5.5 Review and summary of results: Term Four

In summary, most respondents, on reflection of the year at the new school, indicated that the experience had been positive, having made new friends, and enjoyed sports and activities. Although the thought of examinations and other aspects of school work was the hardest to deal with in the last term, the prospect of the holidays or going home was the most looked forward to by more than half of the respondents.

The group process held in Term Three helped students feel more comfortable in sharing and talking to others about their problems, a coping strategy which was reported to be used the most often both at the beginning and end of the year. One outcome of the group session was that students thought that having a positive attitude, being responsible and participating in activities were the best strategies to use in order to adapt to the new school.

At the end of the year, students perceived positive changes in themselves, in particular that they were more mature and confident. Most students felt that they had adapted to the new school, were happy, and looked forward to the next year.

However, those who had not adapted and/or were unhappy at the school were more depressed and homesick as were those negatively affected by events such as starting at the new school, failing tests or break-ups with boy/girl friend. However, unlike the beginning of the year, the impact of life events at the end of the year did not generally impact negatively on facets of self-concept.

This chapter has examined the students' perceptions of their home and school life and how the effects of certain events in their lives may have influenced their initial impression, and then overall experience of the transition to the new school. Unfortunately, some of the students who were initially in the study at the beginning of the year did not complete it. Four male and three female boarding students (including three Aboriginal and Islanders) left within six months, all of whom were very homesick and unhappy at the beginning of the year. Also a number of female students were unwilling to continue with the study after the first term, although they did participate in the group sessions in Term Three. At the end of the year, they were asked to write down why they had withdrawn. The common theme was:

“ I left the study because it was boring. I kept filling out stupid forms.” (Day student, who commented that the group session allowed her to let her feelings out). The other reason commonly given was a perceived invasion of privacy:

“ I think you are being a bit too personal in my life and maybe in everyone else's life” (Day student who in the group session commented that she could speak her mind). Overall however, the longitudinal nature of the study allowed for all members of the study to be included to some extent in examining their experiences of the transition to secondary and boarding school.

The following chapter presents six profiles that reflect some of the individual factors and differences in perceived adaptation to the new setting.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INDIVIDUAL PROFILES

7.1. Introduction

In the following sections six individual profiles, using pseudonyms, are presented. These illustrate differences in factors which may have influenced the students' perceptions of their adaptation to the new setting of high school.

It will be recalled from chapter 4, that although 74 students were included in the study at the beginning of the year, only 42 students completed all measures (see Table 2). This core group was used as the sample for examining changes over time in the repeated measures of depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI) and self-concept (SDQ-II), whereas on other factors, such as the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) and the descriptive data, all respondents were included.

In examining the profiles, the core group will be used for comparisons. However, as there were only 7 male day students, and 5 female boarders in that set, where applicable, results from the other subsets of the core group will also be examined.

The first case study examines the profile of a male day student who, over time, adapted well to high school.

7.2 Profile One: "John"

John was 12 years old at the start of the study, having been born in a large Queensland city, but moved to the study locality when he was one year old. He lived at home on a small property on the outskirts of town, with his parents, older brother and younger sister. His father had a professional occupation. When John thought of home, he initially thought of his animals, especially his dog. He was

closest to his Mum. When he went away on holidays, he missed his computer at home. The main thing that John did not like about his home was that there was no cinema and not much to do in town. However, he felt most at home in the bush, because there was plenty of space and he could make a lot of noise. If he wanted to be alone, he would go for a walk or ride his motorbike.

Many of John's friends from Year 7 started at high school with him, and John's brother was already at that school. John felt good about being there, and although he had no say in the decision, was happy to go to the school as his brother liked it. John liked the swimming pool and sports facilities and thought it was a better school than others. It had met his expectations. At the beginning of the year, his main dislike was finding it hard to fit in homework with chores at home. His worries about school focussed on his concern about Maths, but he thought the teacher was approachable. He did not have any worries at home, and normally coped with things by "*working it out*" himself. Life events that had negatively affected John at the beginning of the year were *death of family member or friend* (rated 2 on a scale of 0-4), *starting a new school* (2) and *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (2).

Table 64 shows John's scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, compared with the core group. John's results indicated that his level of depressive symptomatology over the year remained below the white male standardisation sample's mean score of 58.81 (Reynolds, 1987, p.14), and was comparable to this study's core group's mean scores.

Table 64

John's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group over the Year

Term	RADS n = 42			DRI n = 42			SDQ-II n = 42		
	John	M	(SD)	John	M	(SD)	John	M	(SD)
One ₁	45	57.21	(14.60)	17	15.71	(10.21)	63	51.76	(9.05)
One ₂	42	50.55	(12.08)	6	14.31	(9.68)			
Two ₁	31	49.33	(12.61)	11	11.63	(1.79)			
Two ₂	57	50.83	(16.09)	12	12.88	(10.40)			
Four ₁	48	51.76	(14.35)	14	15.21	(11.04)	65	53.36	(10.20)
Four ₂	40	50.48	(13.36)	16	13.05	(10.56)			

John's scores on the homesickness scale (DRI) were also mainly comparable to the group's. However, it will be recalled that homesickness scores could range from 0 to 52, and that the cut-off score of 17 distinguished those who were homesick from the non-homesick. In this study, homesickness was best discriminated by comparing day and boarders (see chapter 5, Table 7). In this respect John score of 17 at the beginning of the first term indicated that he was homesick. His responses on the DRI at that time reflected that he felt unsettled and uneasy in his new school setting, and that he often wished he could be at home. At the end of the year, although settled, his responses again indicated a preference for, and thinking about, being at home. This may have been influenced by a change in the reported impact of life events at the end of the year, whereby *alcoholism/drug abuse in the family* was rated as negatively affecting John between moderately and a great deal (3, on a scale of 0-4), as well as *fighting/arguments within the family* (2), and *abuse by a family member* (1). However, John's perception of himself was positive and remained

stable over the year, with above average *T* scores of 63 and 65 for *Total Self-Concept*, and *General Self T* scores of 60 and 58.

John indicated that he used functional coping strategies for both general worries, and his specific concern about exams. His most frequent method of coping was *Physical Recreation*, *Seek Relaxing Diversions* and *Investing in Close Friends* (see Figure 3).

In Term Two, John's reflection of the first term indicated that the best thing about being at the new school was "*getting away from primary school and meeting new friends*". He particularly looked forward to sports in the second term. Leaving some of his friends was the hardest thing to cope with in the first term (which may also have accounted for his homesickness at the beginning of the year), and exams and assignments the anticipated hardest thing to deal with in Term Two. This did not change at the end of the year, in that "*block exams*" were seen as the hardest thing to deal with over the year, and homework as the hardest thing in the last term. On reflection of the year, "*bigger and better equipment and playing fields*" were seen as the best thing about the year, with sports remaining uppermost in what was looked forward to.

At the group process held in Term Three, John's plus and minus points about being at High School focussed on the features already mentioned above. The interesting aspect was "*knowing it's your job to pass exams.*" John noted that being kind was the best thing to do to get used to High School, and that "*no punishments*" the best way the school could help students adapt. He thought the group session "*got our brains thinking*" but there was too much talking and not enough activities.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

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Name "JOHN" Date _____

Form General

Specific

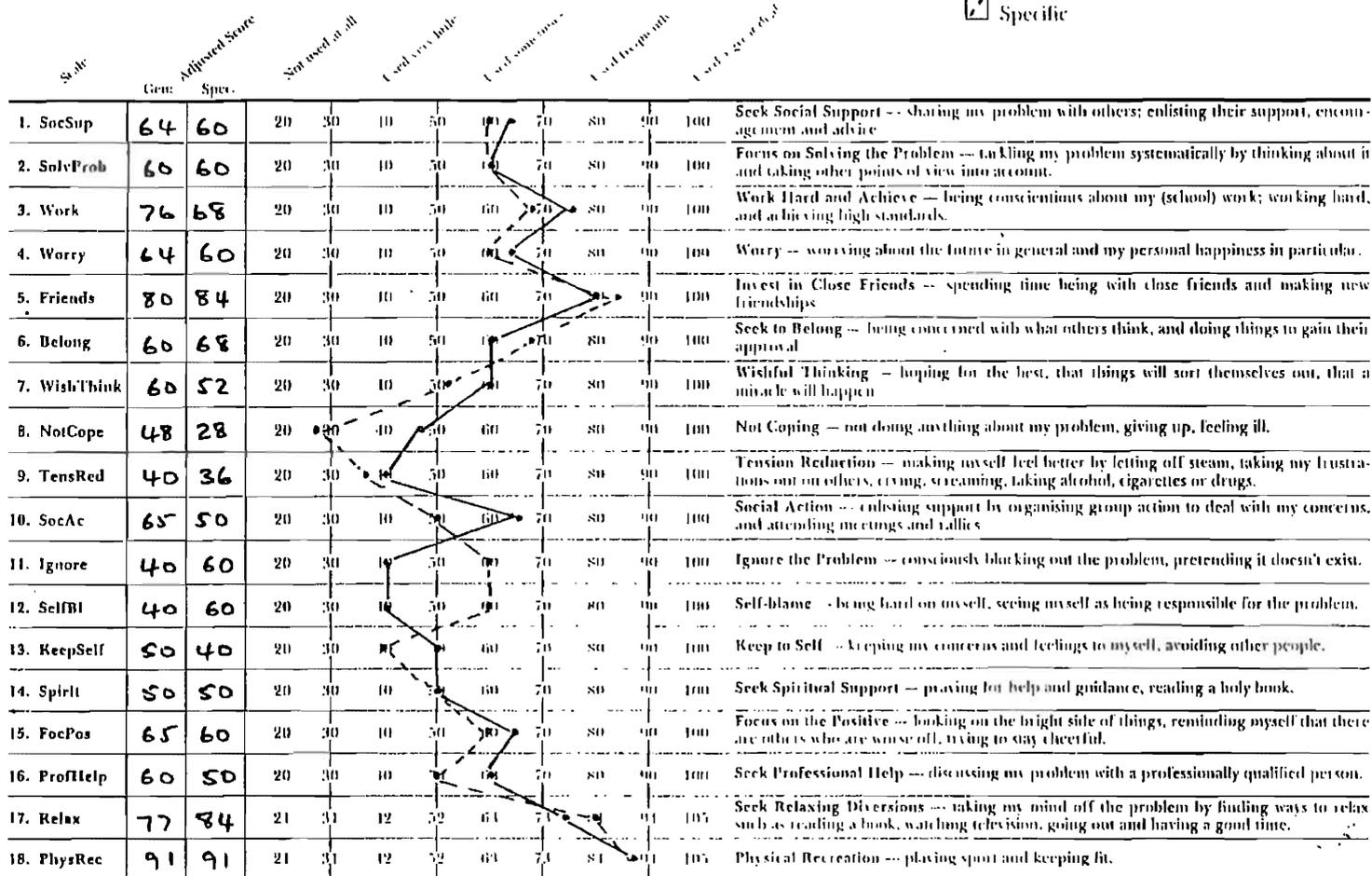


Figure 3. "John's" profile of coping strategies.

In Term Four, John thought that the most important issue that came out of the group process was talking about co-ed options. Particular problems of “*saying something stupid, or swearing*” could best be solved by confronting the issues and apologising. John thought that he had changed over the year in that he had more friends. He also indicated that he had adapted very well (3, on a scale of 0-3) was happy (2) and looked forward to Grade 9 very much (3). At the final interview, John’s idea about co-ed options was that by sharing subjects with the girls’ school, perhaps he could learn to cook, and the girls could have better access to computer facilities.

In summary, John’s profile reflected the general results of the study. He enjoyed and felt comfortable in his home environment, identifying with the countryside in which he felt most at home. His family and friends were important to him, although at the beginning of the year this was reflected in being somewhat homesick, in missing old friends, and often wanting to be at home. However he enjoyed making new friends, was happy with the new school environment, (especially the playing fields), focussed on sport and became more aware of his responsibilities for his own behaviours. John’s self-concept was above average for his cohort and he used functional and productive coping strategies to deal with issues of concern.

John’s profile illustrates the process of identity formation and maturity in the transition period of adolescence including positive place identification with, and adaptation to, the new setting, whilst remaining attached to the home environment. The second profile is that of a female day student who, at first, appeared to experience difficulty in adapting to the transition to high school.

7.3 Profile Two: “Mary”

Mary was 12 years 6 months old at the beginning of the study. She had lived all her life in the local town, with her parents, and older brother, who had recently left home. Her parents owned a business, and also had a property which they visited occasionally. When Mary thought about home, she thought about her parents. She was closest to her mum, but also had a dog and cat that she loved. She did not really miss anything when she was away, but when her parents went away, she missed them a lot. Mary could not think of anything that she disliked about home, and she felt most comfortable in a place where there were neighbours. When she wanted to be alone, she would sit under a shady tree in the front yard with her cat.

Like John, many of Mary’s friends from primary school were with her at the new school. She liked being there, although she had no say in the decision. The school had met her expectations and she liked meeting new friends and changing classrooms for different subjects. At the beginning of the year, Mary could not think of anything she disliked about the school, as she thought it was all very exciting. However she was worried about being around people she did not know, especially the older students and teachers. At home Mary worried about her parents fighting, and she coped by being sad and anxious. Life events that negatively affected Mary at the beginning of the year were *fighting/arguments within the family* (4, a great deal), *starting a new school* (2), and *personal illness* (4).

Table 65 presents Mary’s scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI), and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, compared with all female day students (n=15) in the core group. Comparisons with the total core group (n=42) can be viewed in Table 64.

Table 65

Mary's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group Female Day Students over the Year

Term	Mary	RADS n=15		Mary	DRI n=15		Mary	SDQ-II n=15	
		M	(SD)		M	(SD)		M	(SD)
One ₁	89	60.00	(14.68)	2	7.87	(5.04)	35	50.47	(8.52)
One ₂	48	49.67	(9.19)	7	8.00	(6.47)			
Two ₁	44	48.40	(11.69)	1	6.87	(6.93)			
Two ₂	43	49.13	(15.62)	1	5.80	(7.92)			
Four ₁	55	51.47	(11.78)	0	5.80	(7.78)	53	55.07	(9.26)
Four ₂	48	50.47	(10.87)	0	5.47	(8.19)			

Given the cut-off RADS score of 77 and above distinguishes depressed from non-depressed respondents (see Reynolds, 1987), at the beginning of the year, Mary score of 89 (97th percentile) was consistent with a clinically significant level of depression. However, Reynolds (1987) suggests a strong relationship between the RADS and anxiety measures, and at interview, Mary indicated that she was both sad and anxious about her family situation, and nervous around older people at school. By the end of the Term One Mary's symptoms had diminished and throughout the remainder of the year her RADS scores were below the white female standardisation sample's mean score of 59.49 (Reynolds, 1987, p.14) and consistent with the mean scores of her cohorts in this study.

Results of the DRI indicated that Mary was not at all homesick or unsettled in the new setting. However the below average *T* score of 35 for Total Self-Concept indicated that Mary had a low opinion of herself at the beginning of the year. This was particularly evident in her evaluation of her ability and enjoyment in English

and reading (*Verbal subscale*, $T = 31$), emotional well-being (*Emotional Stability* $T = 34$) and self-worth and confidence (*General Self* $T = 37$). By the end of the year, however, Mary's *Total Self-Concept* had risen to be within the average range of her cohort. Although her general self-esteem was still below average ($T = 42$), it had improved considerably, and her perception of her *Emotional Stability* ($T = 55$) was within the average band.

The ways of coping that Mary reported using for general concerns at the beginning of the year (Figure 4) reflected the overall findings in the study that non-productive coping, used more by girls than boys, was associated with higher levels of depression and lower perception of self (see chapter 5, section 5.6.2.1). Mary's coping profile indicated that in general she hoped for the best, blamed herself for problems and kept her concerns and feelings to herself. However she did also report frequent use of the functional strategies *Seek Relaxing Diversions*, *Physical Recreation* and *Focus on the Positive*. Note also, that in specifying exams as a concern in the second term, Mary reported use of appropriate strategies such as *Focus on the Positive* and *Work Hard and Achieve*.

In Term Two, in looking back at the first term, Mary, like John, mentioned meeting new friends as the best thing about being at the new school. She thought that exams were both the hardest thing to cope with at the beginning of the year and second term. She was particularly looking forward to the camp planned for Term Two. In Term Four, homework and assignments remained the hardest aspects to deal with. Meeting new friends and taking a wider range of subjects were reported as the best things about being at the school that year, with activities again mentioned as being looked forward to the most.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

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Name "MARY" Date _____

Form General

Specific

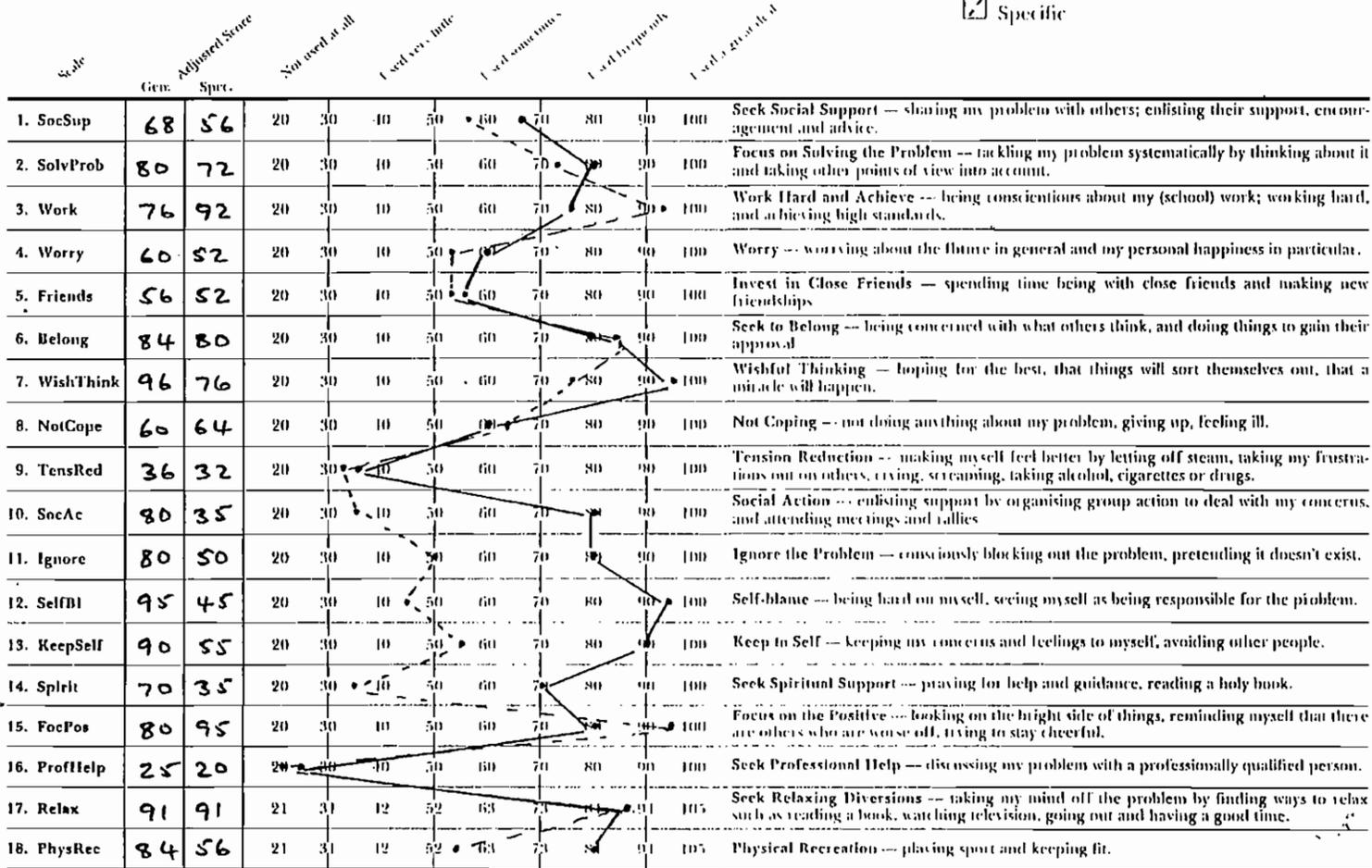


Figure 4. "Mary's" profile of coping strategies.

At the group session in Term Three, Mary's plus points about being at High School included "*new friends, different teachers, and the big area.*" The minus points were "*more homework, we're now the babies, strict uniforms, having to make new friends.*" The food was interesting. She thought that, in order to get used to High School, students should "*be good in class, try to make friends, and participate in activities.*" She thought the school could provide more pastoral care. Mary thought the group session "*might get something done about our problems*" but she did not like the thinking activities and thought the session was too long.

In Term Four, Mary's thoughts on the group session had changed somewhat, in that she saw no important issue for her to come out of the session as "*it was all about the boarders and their problems.*" She did not do the section on problems and solutions. However she thought that she had changed over the year in that she had more self-confidence (also reflected in the improvement in her SDQ-II scores) and that she worked a lot harder. Mary indicated that she had adapted very well (3), was very happy (3), and was looking forward to Grade 9 (2). At the final interview, Mary commented "*School's pretty cool. I was very nervous at the beginning of the year, because basically I was shy, but all that's changed now.*"

That final comment summarises the process of change that occurred for Mary during the first year at High School. Although Mary indicated that she was happy with the school right from the beginning of the year, and could not think of anything she disliked about home, she also indicated that she worried about being around new people and problems at home. *Fighting/arguments within the family and personal illness/injury* which negatively affected Mary a great deal (4) at the beginning of the year had not changed at the end of the year. In Term Four she also indicated that

death of a family member or friend had affected her a great deal (4), but unlike Term One, *starting at a new school* now no longer affected her (0).

Mary's profile highlights the usefulness of longitudinal studies. The first set of results at the beginning of the year may have led to the assumption that she was experiencing difficulties that would put her at risk for not adapting to the transition to secondary school. Yet the subsequent results and comments over the year suggest that home factors and shyness may have been the major contributors to her level of depression and low self-esteem at the beginning of the first term. The symptoms apparently diminished during that term and by the end of the year, although the problems at home had not changed, Mary perceived herself as more confident and outgoing, enjoying new friendships and activities.

Mary's profile, like John's, reflected day students' experiences of the transition to secondary school. The following profile looks at the experiences of a male boarding student.

7.4 Profile Three: "Mark"

Mark was 12 years 8 months old at the start of the study. He was born and raised on a large property some distance from the school location. His parents had a strong pastoral background and three older brothers helped their father work the property. Mark also had an older sister who lived at home and helped run the station. The family were about to live on a second property which they had recently taken over, and Mark would be staying there for the first time at the end of the term. He was not sure which home he was going to prefer as both places had good and bad points. However, when he thought of home, he thought of the first property, with his dog and his tree house being most important to him. He was closest to his sister.

When Mark was away from home, he missed an elaborate fantasy game he had devised and played around the property. It was very complex and he had played it for many years, as he did not have many friends and his siblings were much older than he. At interview Mark reckoned he was not homesick, but missed the animals. The only thing he did not like about home was fixing fences, and other chores, although he loved mustering. He felt most comfortable out in the bush but did not mind being in town. Mark had secret, hidden places on the property that he retreated to when he wanted to be alone.

This was the first time at boarding school for Mark, but he had older cousins there. Although he had no say in the decision to attend the school, it was a family tradition and Mark felt all right about being there. He liked being with friends, and liked the tennis courts, and activities such as Art. The school had met his expectations so far, and was easier than he had anticipated, as he thought there would be more homework. However, he did not like the food, compulsory swimming, and had a problem with the lack of privacy. He was worried about how he was going to be able to play his game at school, and was also concerned about compulsory sports trials. He had no concerns at home. Mark's usual way of coping with worries was to get immersed in his complex game. Life events that negatively affected Mark at the beginning of the year were *illness/injury to family member* (3), *death of a family member or friend* (4), *fighting/arguments within the family* (1), *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (1), *failing a test or course* (2), and *personal illness/injury* (2).

Table 66 shows Mark's scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI), and Total-Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, as well as mean scores for all male boarders ($n = 15$) in the core group. Mark's results indicated that his level of

depressive symptomatology was consistently average throughout the year (recall standard sample $\bar{M} = 58.81$) and that he was not homesick. He maintained a positive perception of himself over the year, with his general self-esteem increasing from T 54 at the beginning of Term One to T 60 in Term Four.

Table 66

Mark's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group Male Boarders over the Year

Term	Mark	RADS n = 15		DRI n = 15			SDQ-II n = 15		
		M	(SD)	Mark	M	(SD)	Mark	M	(SD)
One ₁	48	56.53	(15.59)	10	21.47	(7.87)	55	50.67	(9.29)
One ₂	49	49.27	(12.16)	14	17.87	(5.58)			
Two ₁	54	50.00	(13.35)	16	21.80	(8.68)			
Two ₂	54	51.47	(18.64)	8	17.07	(9.03)			
Four ₁	57	53.80	(18.59)	13	21.20	(9.23)	57	51.00	(10.82)
Four ₂	50	46.07	(10.71)	14	16.33	(6.47)			

Figure 5 shows that in coping with general concerns, Mark used the productive, functional strategies *Focus on Solving Problems* and *Seek Relaxing Diversions* a great deal. In dealing with his specified problem of lack of privacy, the strategy of *Keep to Self* was utilised the most as well as frequently using *Focus on Solving the Problem*.

In Term Two, like John and Mary, Mark commented on making new friends as the best thing about being at the new school in Term One. He also mentioned the variety of subjects. Mark looked forward to the Friday afternoon activities in Term Two. He had found "not getting as much time on my own" the hardest thing about the first term, but anticipated that Japanese was going to be the hardest thing to deal with in the second term.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

© 1993 Erika Frydenberg, Ramon Lewis

Name "MARK" Date _____

Form General

Specific

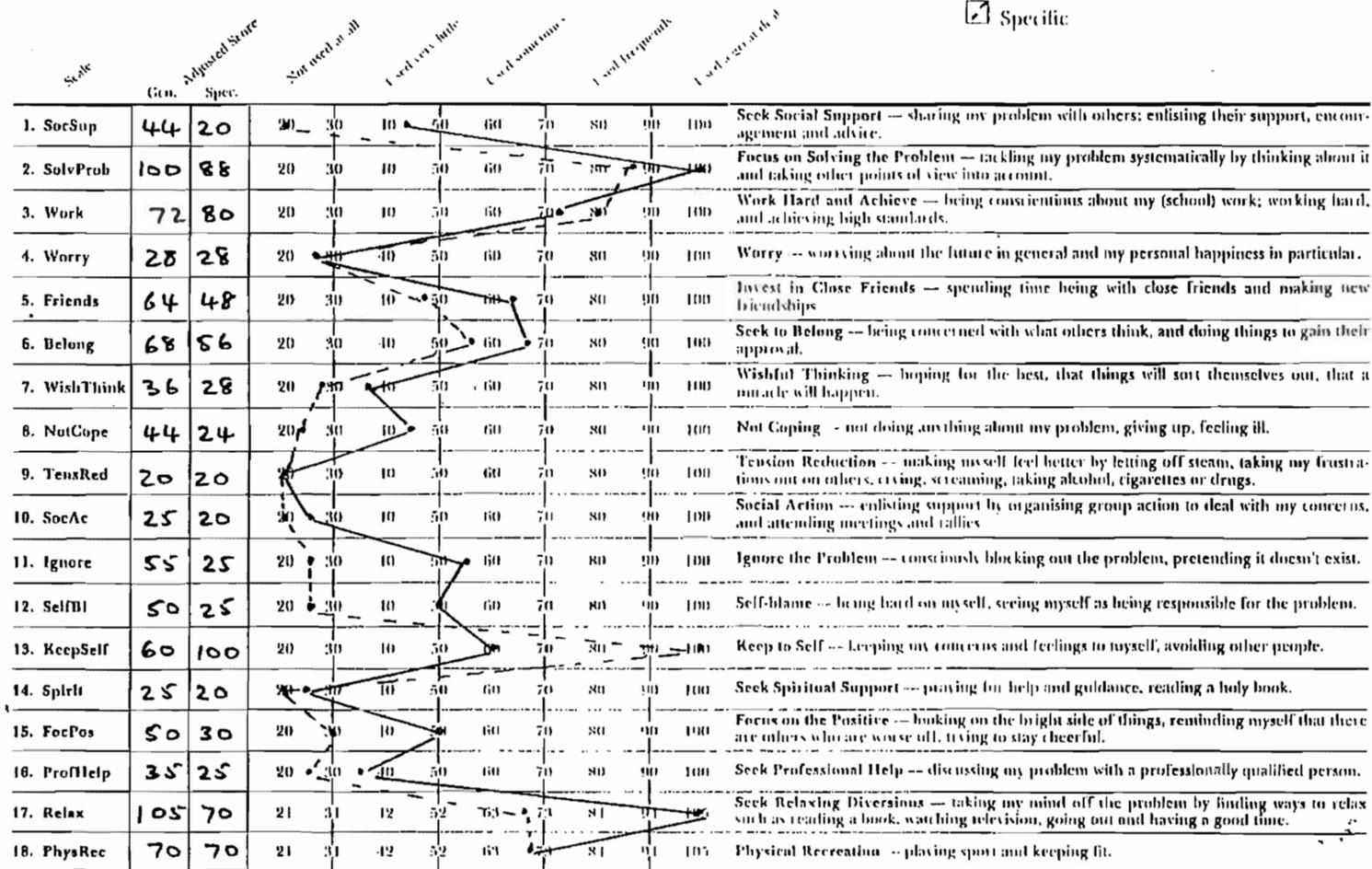


Figure 5. "Mark's" profile of coping strategies.

In answering the boarders' questions (see Appendices B4 & B5) Mark thought he 'never' had enough free time at boarding school, and that the daily routine 'sometimes' restricted his freedom. He was able to pursue his own interests and hobbies 'sometimes' and 'never' got bored at weekends. There were 'often' enough activities after school and at weekend, but he 'never' had enough privacy. These responses were repeated in exactly the same way at the beginning of Term Four. In the last term, Mark reiterated that making friends and finding new opportunities was the best thing about being at the new school that year, and he was looking forward to being in the tennis team that term. However the hardest thing he had to cope with over the year was "*defending myself, and independence,*" whereas final exams were going to be hard in Term Four.

At the group session in Term Three, Mark's plus points about the school were "*meet new friends, opportunity to play more sport, learn new subjects (Art). Able to spend more time with friends. Learn to be self confident, independent.*" However minus points included:

"Meet new enemies, spend more time with them, higher expectations, see family and friends at home less, food isn't as good as the food at home. Need to depend on yourself, set own times for study, etc." Interesting points were:

" My brothers fought until they went to (this school). They became friends. It's like an initiation, same thing's happened to me. I learnt all new ideas for torture, learnt new swear words, new tricks for gambling."

Mark declined to comment on what students could do to help them adjust. He wrote:

"This section is about what I could do to fit in better at high school, and if I told you, you'd think I was insane. The thing I enjoy most are writing stories and drawing the fantasial world. That is a hint about what I do."

However his comments on what the school could do were:

“Get better books in the library. Allow people to have more spare time, to give them more privacy, allowing them to sort out their problems and think about life and its problems (emotionally). Ninety nine percent of the time in school and after, has to be spent with other people. I would like more games, physical and board games to be introduced.”

Mark noted that the group session allowed a little time to think about what was important, but he did not like having missed out on a period of Art. He also commented that he would have preferred to talk about personal issues on a one to one basis with me.

In Term Four, Mark wrote that the important issue to come out of the group process remained the theme of privacy:

“The issue about having time on your own (not enough privacy). The teachers have quiet time, but it's not enough, it's a quarter of an hour and we just sit on our bed. We do plenty enough school, but quite seriously we need more spare time.”

Life events that negatively affected Mark in Term Four included *illness/injury to family member* (4, a great deal, up from 3 in Term One), *death of family member or friend* (4, same as Term One), *fighting/arguments within the family* (1, same as before), *move to new neighbourhood* (2, new item) *starting a new school* (1, up from 0), and *failing a test or course* (3, up from 2).

Mark thought that he had changed over the year in that he was “*more confident, more serious, and a better socialiser.*” He thought that he had adapted to being at the school very well (3), was happy (2) and was looking forward very much to Grade 9 (3). At the final interview he further commented on the need for spare

time, but otherwise had felt that life as a boarding student was fun, and that he had adapted well.

In summary, although this was Mark's first boarding experience, and he was used to life in the bush, his reflections indicated that he adapted well to the new environment. His main concern throughout the year was the perceived lack of free time and privacy as a boarder, which he dealt with by attempting to get time to himself. Yet Mark did not appear to get depressed, was not particularly homesick, used functional coping strategies, and had a positive perception of himself. He had enjoyed making new friends and being involved in sports and new activities, and by the end of the year, reflected that he had changed by being more confident and better able to socialise. As with John and Mary, Mark's profile illustrates the process of maturity and adaptation to the setting, with the added dimension of the boarding experience, which generally was viewed positively. The next profile is that of a female boarding student, who experienced difficulty with homesickness.

7.5 Profile Four: "Tina"

Tina was 13 years and one month old at the beginning of the study. Like Mark, she had lived all of her life on a large, isolated property hundreds of kilometres from the boarding school. Tina's family consisted of her parents and a younger brother. Her father was the station manager, and there was concern about severe drought conditions. When Tina thought about home she thought of her family. She was close to everyone, and missed them when she was away. She rated herself as being very homesick, which was made worse by talking about her family. She could not think of anything she disliked about home. Tina felt most at home in

the bush, because it was freer and safer than towns. A favourite place to be alone was down at a creek, but usually the family would go there together.

This was Tina's first experience of boarding school. She had one friend at the school, who came from the same area. At the beginning of the year Tina did not like the school very much. She had no say in the decision to attend that school, but it was the nearest for boarding, and her Mum's friend had thought it offered a good education. Tina's parents also had friends in the town who Tina could visit. She did like the sport and activities. When Tina arrived at the school she was worried as she did not know what to expect. She did not like the fact that other *"kids tell you things and you don't know if they are true,"* and she also did not like being away from home. She missed the freedom and was worried that she was not going to be allowed to stay overnight with the friends in the town, as the rule was that students could only stay with their parents. Tina was not sure how well she would settle, thinking it would depend on how she handled the school work and how she would feel after the first holidays. She was not concerned yet about any aspect of school, but admitted she worried over little things. She was concerned about her family, especially because of the drought. She coped with things that concerned her by talking to her parents, so now she was at boarding school she was telephoning them every day. Life events that negatively affected Tina at the beginning of the year were: *illness/injury to family member (2), death of a family member or friend (3), fighting/arguments within the family (1), starting at a new school (4), breaking up with boy/girlfriend (2), and failing a test or course (4).*

Table 67 presents Tina's scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, compared with the mean scores for all females in the core group.

Table 67

Tina's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group Female Students over the Year

Term	RADS n = 20			DRI n = 20			SDQ-II n = 20		
	Tina	M	(SD)	Tina	M	(SD)	Tina	M	(SD)
One ₁	63	61.00	(13.76)	33	13.40	(10.85)	64	51.15	(8.95)
One ₂	69	53.75	(12.62)	28	13.75	(12.16)			
Two ₁	62	52.00	(12.17)	23	13.10	(13.32)			
Two ₂	60	50.95	(15.80)	24	10.85	(11.96)			
Four ₁	51	52.95	(11.90)	22	10.65	(11.83)	61	55.10	(9.32)
Four ₂	71	55.25	(14.51)	34	11.10	(13.51)			

Tina's results indicated that she was not particularly depressed at the beginning of the year, her score being on the 55th percentile rank for her sex and age group (see Reynolds, 1987). However, as Table 67 shows, although there was a general decrease in the females' (n = 20) RADS scores after the beginning of Term One, Tina's scores remained higher, apart from the beginning of Term Four. It will be recalled however that the level of depression in the five female boarders who remained in the study throughout the year was consistently higher than the day students and male boarders (see chapter 5, Table 5).

Similarly, the level of homesickness in the female boarders remained higher than the male boarders (see chapter 5, Table 8) and Tina's DRI results highlight the comparison with all the female students in the core group. She remained homesick throughout the year, and was particularly so at the beginning of the first term and at the end of the year. Note also that although Tina's overall self-concept remained

above average throughout the year compared with her cohort, her perception of *Emotional Stability* remained below average ($T = 39$ and $T = 41$ respectively), and her *Same Sex Relations* changed from above average at the beginning of the year ($T = 63$) to just below average at the end of the year ($T = 47$).

Tina's profile of coping strategies (see Figure 6) indicated that for general concerns she used productive coping such as *Work Hard and Achieve*, *Seek Social Support* and *Focus on Solving the Problem*. In describing homesickness as her specific concern in Term Two, Tina also reported using functional strategies such as *Seek Relaxing Diversions* and *Focus on the Positive*.

In Term Two, Tina's reflection on the best thing about being at the new school in Term One was meeting new people, and she was particularly looking forward to playing sport in Term Two. However, being away from home had been the hardest thing to cope with in the first term and was anticipated to be so in the second term. In answer to the other boarders' questions Tina thought she 'often' had enough free time at boarding school, but answered 'sometimes' to thinking the daily routine restricted her freedom, ability to pursue her own interests, boredom at weekends, enough activities, and privacy. However, in Term Four, Tina noted that she did not "really" have enough privacy, and that she was 'never' bored at weekends. Other responses were 'sometimes'. In reviewing the year, meeting new friends and people remained the best thing about being at the new school, and "moving away from home" the hardest thing to cope with over the year. Tina was particularly looking forward to speech night and the end of the school year, and thought that the "large" exams would be the hardest thing to cope with in Term Four.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

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Name "TINA" Date _____

Form General

Specific

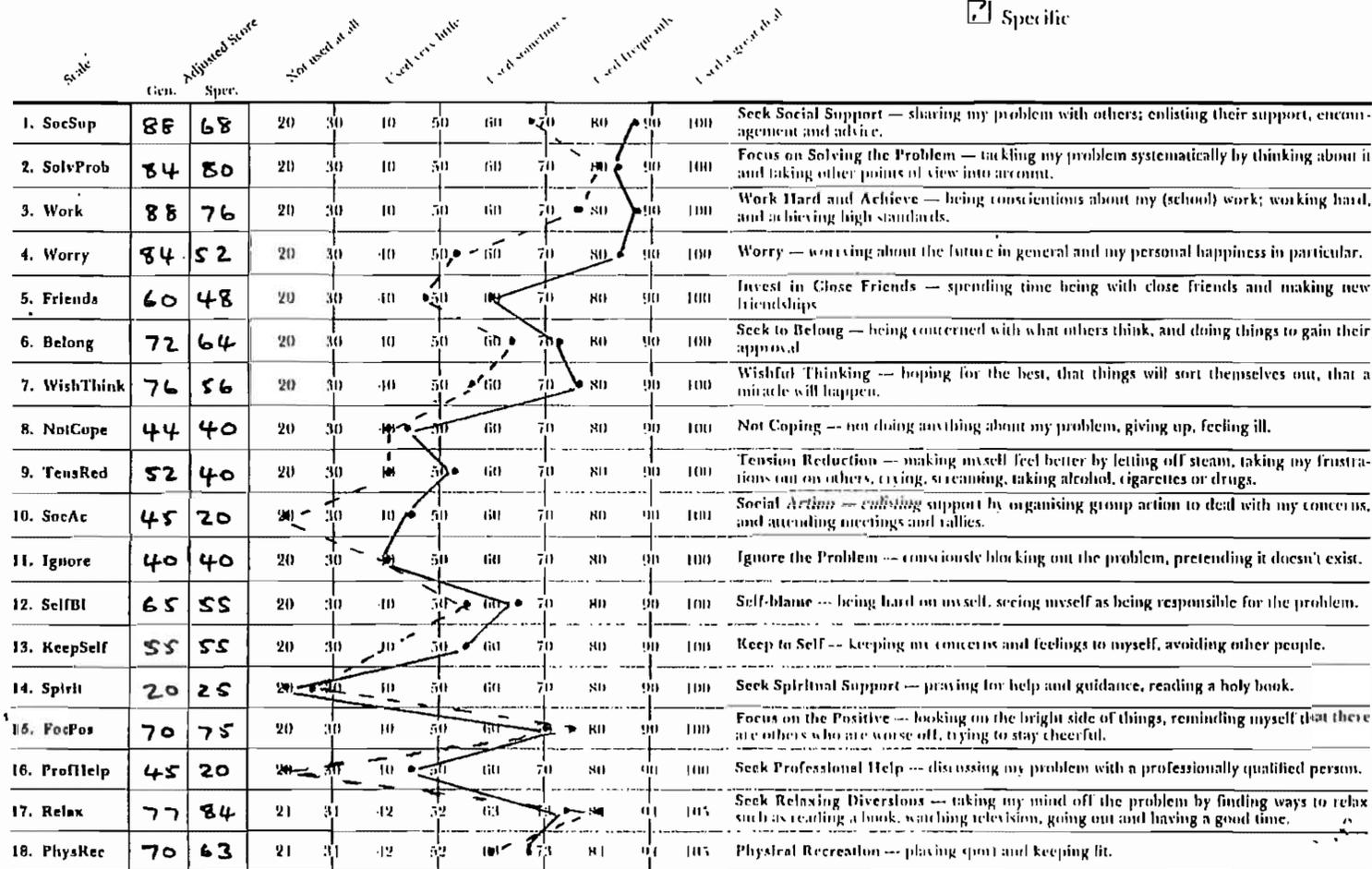


Figure 6. Tina's profile of coping strategies.

In Term Three's group session, Tina's plus points about starting High School were " *meeting new people, wide range of subjects, sporting activities, some of the nice people*" whereas the minus points were " *leaving old friends, some of the self-centred people, boarders have to leave home and some boring subjects.*" No interesting points were noted. In order to adapt, Tina thought that students should: " *ask older girls to help you, pastoral care, try to make friends, keep busy, play sport, work hard, do your best at everything, always do your homework, don't judge people by their looks.*" She thought that the school could: " *Make students more welcome, explain things more clearly, let us talk more to the older grades to help us get used to things, don't be so strict for the first bit of the year, but still be fair.*" Tina thought that the group session was good in that " *we have been able to express our feelings that we haven't been able to before.*" She wrote no negative comments.

In Term Four, Tina wrote that " *we got to show how we felt about some problems around the school*" as the most important issue to come out of the group session. The problem of homesickness she felt was best solved by " *having someone close to talk to and things to keep people occupied.*" Tina thought that she had changed as a person during the year in that she had " *sort of grown used to living here but need more activities to keep busy.*" She indicated that she thought she had not adapted very well (1 on a scale of 0 to 3), was not happy (0.5) and was not particularly looking forward to Grade 9 (1). On the Life Events Scale in Term Four, as in Term One, Tina indicated that *starting at a new school* negatively affected her a great deal (4), *illness/injury to family member* (3, up from 2 in Term One) and *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (2, same as before).

At the final interview, Tina commented that homesickness had been a “*real problem*” for her, and she continued to telephone home a lot. She found that she wanted more access to sports with the teams in town, and that she needed to do more “*physical stuff*”. She felt that she did not have enough privacy. Some weekends were “*OK*” if they were doing something specific, but often she felt depressed. Term One was “*bad*,” Terms Two and Three were “*OK*” but in Term Four she felt very low again, and stated that she was often so upset that she did not work well. She summed up the problem as “*we have spare time on the weekend when we don’t need it, but when we need space, we haven’t got it.*”

Tina’s profile illustrates an example of a boarding student who identified very much with her home life, in that she could think of no negative aspects, and remained homesick throughout the year. Her level of depressive symptomatology, although not clinically significant, was, like the other female boarders, higher than the male boarders or day students’ mean scores, especially at the end of the year. Tina however reported using functional coping strategies, although it has been argued (Brewin et al., 1989) that constant reminders, such as daily contact with family, may have an exacerbating rather than ameliorating effect on homesickness. However Tina also noted that distractions, such as activities, were useful in dealing with homesickness (see also Fisher, 1989).

Although Tina enjoyed making new friends and playing sports, and her concept of herself overall remained positive during the year, right from the beginning of the year she indicated that she did not like the new school. Her perceptions at the end of the year indicated that she still did not identify positively with the school setting, with homesickness reported as the main factor which hindered her ability to adapt.

The next profile is that of male boarder who also experienced difficulties in the transition to high school.

7.6 Profile Five: “Tony”

Tony was 13 and a half years old at the beginning of the study. Like Mark and Tina, Tony had also been raised on a property, but it was less isolated, and only a few hours from the boarding school. His family consisted of his parents, younger brother and sister, and his grandfather who lived with the family and continued to work the property. When Tony thought of home, he thought of his family. He was closest to his Dad. When away from home he missed the open spaces. He said he was very homesick, and was tearful whilst talking about his home. Like Mary and Tina, he could think of nothing that he disliked about home. He felt most comfortable in open spaces. He would go down to a creek with his dog when he wanted to be alone. At the school, he had found himself a place at the back of the oval, where no one could spot him, when he wanted to be by himself.

Tony had not been to boarding school before, but he had cousins at the same school. His parents had suggested he go there, but the final decision was his. He thought he would like it once he got over missing home. He liked the fact that he would learn more than he did before with Distant Education. He was pleased to find that he was already ahead in science and language. The school had met his expectations, and there was nothing he disliked. He thought that boarding would be all right once he had adjusted. Tony had no concerns about school, but he was very worried about an old member of staff on the property whom he had known all his life. He was worried that something would happen to her while he was away, so telephoned home every weekend. In general he coped with concerns by keeping

them to himself. Life events that negatively affected Tony at the beginning of the year were: *illness/injury to family member* (1), *starting at a new school* (1), and *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (1).

Table 68 presents Tony's scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI), and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, compared with the mean scores for all males in the core group.

Table 68

Tony's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group Male Students over the Year

Term	RADS n = 22			DRI n = 22			SDQ-II n = 22		
	Tony	M	(SD)	Tony	M	(SD)	Tony	M	(SD)
One ₁	39	53.77	(14.91)	13	17.82	(9.35)	64	52.32	(9.31)
One ₂	36	47.64	(11.05)	18	14.82	(6.97)			
Two ₁	65	46.91	(12.79)	33	18.00	(9.57)			
Two ₂	82	50.73	(16.72)	32	14.73	(8.61)			
Four ₁	105	50.68	(16.54)	48	19.36	(8.58)	31	51.77	(10.90)
Four ₂	40	46.14	(10.80)	22	14.82	(6.75)			

It can be seen that at the beginning of the year Tony was not depressed. The results of the DRI indicated that although he missed his family and wanted to go home more often, he felt optimistic about life at the school, felt secure there and had friends. His self-concept was above average. However by the end of the first term, there were indications of homesickness, and by the end of Term Two, there were indications of severe homesickness and a clinically significant level of depression. At the beginning of Term Four, Tony's level of reported depressive symptomatology, homesickness and poor self-concept (*Same-Sex Relations* $T < 24$, *Emotional Stability* $T < 26$) led the researcher to talk with him and then approach his

boarding master. It transpired that there was a serious problem with bullying that had not been addressed. The difference in results at the end of Term Four were indicative of resolution of the matter.

Tony's preferred ways of coping as shown in Figure 7 indicated that he had a strong spiritual belief, and used prayer the most frequently for both general concerns and his specified problem of homesickness in Term Two. For general concerns he also sometimes used the functional strategies of *Seek Social Support*, *Focus on the Positive*, *Seek Relaxing Diversions* and *Physical Recreation*. However, in dealing with his homesickness, although he used functional strategies such as *Work Hard and Achieve*, Tony preferred to keep his feelings to himself. This preference for non-productive coping strategies in dealing with a personal difficulty has been shown to be associated with higher levels of depression and homesickness and lower perception of self (see chapter 5, sections 5.6.7. & 5.6.8), which was so for Tony particularly at the beginning of Term Four.

In Term Two, in common with others, Tony noted that meeting new people was the best thing about being at the new school in the first term. However, in Term Two he was particularly looking forward to the holidays. Like Tina, for Tony the hardest thing about the previous term and anticipated for Term Two was being away from home. His responses to the boarders' questions were also identical to Tina's in that he 'often' had enough free time, and responded 'sometimes' to the other items on activities, boredom and privacy. However, also like Tina and Mark, in Term Four, Tony felt that he 'never' had enough privacy at boarding school. He also was 'often' bored at weekends. On reflection of the year, Tony thought that the sport was the best thing about the year, and in Term Four was looking forward to playing tennis, and finishing Grade 8. The hardest thing to deal with had been being bullied,

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

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Name "TONY" Date _____

Form General

Specific

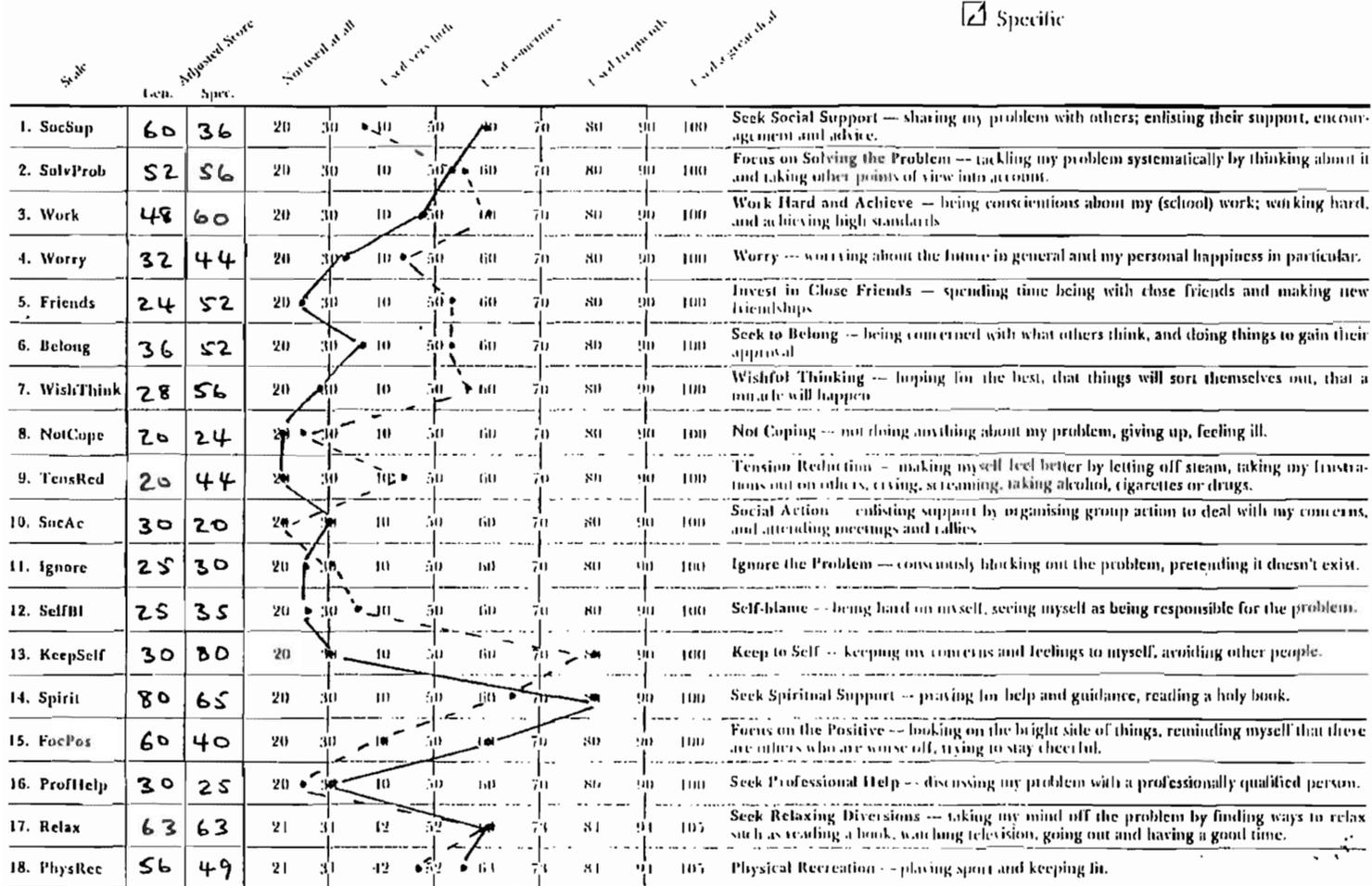


Figure 7. "Tony's" profile of coping strategies.

and this was anticipated for Term Four. However, as mentioned earlier, intervention took place once this problem had been identified.

At the group session in Term Three, Tony noted the plus points of starting high school to be “*you play more sport, more advanced learning, mix and get used to being around more kids, and better tuck shop.*” The minus points however were “*bullies, boarders' food, getting caught with pornographic material and getting your towel stolen in the showers.*” Interesting points were “*crafty jokes and learning new swear words.*” Tony thought that it was important to make friends and be popular, in order to get used to the school. As for the school, he had practical suggestions such as “*improve the food, get a new PA system, have lights on the ovals, have an allowance per week for the tuck shop, and get more computers.*” Tony thought that the session had been useful in that “*we were able to tell someone about our problems with the school*” but that there was “*too much writing and the session was too long.*” He added that he would have liked to have talked more about privacy.

In Term Four, Tony did not respond to the most important issue to come out of the group session or choose particular problems. However he saw “*talking through them or forgetting about them*” as solutions to problems. Tony thought that he had changed during the year by becoming more interested in sports. On a scale of 0 to 3, he thought that he had not adapted very well to the school (1), was somewhat happy there (1.5), and was quite looking forward to Grade 9 (2). Life events negatively affecting Tony at the end of the year were: *illness/injury to family member* (1, same as Term One), *death of family member or friend* (3, new item), *starting at a new school* (2, up from 1), *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (2, up from 1) and *failing a test or course* (1, new item). At the final interview, Tony appeared subdued in that he would not talk about the bullying and did not disclose who had

died at home. He did say that Terms One, Two and Three had been very hard to cope with and that although he had made friends (including Mark) who he could talk to about things, he missed *“having somewhere to go to be private or be on your own.”* He thought that the following year might be better, now that he had *“sorted out how to deal with things a bit better.”*

Tony’s profile illustrates an example of a boarding student who remained very attached to his home life and environment, and who tended to keep his worries and concerns to himself. Although at the beginning of the year Tony appeared optimistic about the new school, and felt good about himself, his homesickness and bullying experiences severely affected his emotional well-being for most of the year. However the group process may have been instrumental in helping Tony feel more comfortable with talking about issues, given that he acknowledged later that this was a good way to deal with problems. There were also indications at the end of the year that he was starting to feel more confident again, having worked out how to deal with issues differently.

7.7 Profile Six: “Helen”

Helen was 12 years 11 months old at the beginning of the study. She had been born in the town of the study’s location but had moved three times during her lifetime, to very small, isolated country towns. Helen had missed friends considerably when she had last moved. Her current home, a small house with a large yard, was located a few hours drive from the school, and she had lived there for one year, with her parents and younger sister. Her father had a semi-skilled occupation in a government department. When she thought of home, Helen thought of her Mum, to whom she was closest. When away from home, she missed her Mum and

her pets. She admitted to being very homesick, and like Tony, was tearful whilst talking about home. As with the other boarders profiled, Helen could think of nothing she disliked about home. She also felt most comfortable in open spaces, and rode her horse when she wanted to be alone.

This was Helen's first experience of boarding school. She had no say in the decision to attend the school, but felt all right about that as there was no school near her home, and friends and an older cousin were also boarding at the same school. However Helen did not like the school, it had not met her expectations and she could not think of anything positive about it. She disliked the fact that she could not see her Mum each day. She did not feel comfortable at the school because she was very homesick and had never been away from home before. Helen was worried about how she would cope with the school work, as she had previously used Distant Education and had always had her Mum there to help her with her lessons. She commented that she was not coping well, and although she talked to her cousin about things, she had stomach aches from crying so much, and did not feel good about herself. She had no worries at home. When asked how she normally coped with things that worried her, Helen said she did not know, but added that she would prefer to feel better about herself. Life events that negatively affected Helen at the beginning of the year were *death of a family member or friend (2)*, *move to new neighbourhood (2)*, *starting at a new school (1)*, *breaking up with boy/girlfriend (3)*, and *personal illness/injury (2)*.

Table 69 presents Helen's scores for depression (RADS), homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) over the year, compared with the mean scores for all females in the core group.

Table 69

Helen's Scores for Depression (RADS), Homesickness (DRI) and Total Self-Concept (SDQ-II) Compared with the Core Group Female Students over the Year

Term	RADS n = 20			DRI n = 20			SDQ-II n = 20		
	Helen	M	(SD)	Helen	M	(SD)	Helen	M	(SD)
One ₁	84	61.00	(13.76)	33	13.40	(10.85)	35	51.15	(8.95)
One ₂	71	53.75	(12.62)	34	13.75	(12.16)			
Two ₁	71	52.00	(12.17)	44	13.10	(13.32)			
Two ₂	78	50.95	(15.80)	40	10.85	(11.96)			
Four ₁	78	52.95	(11.90)	32	10.65	(11.83)	37	55.10	(9.32)
Four ₂	73	55.25	(14.51)	25	11.10	(13.51)			

Helen's results indicated that at the beginning of the year she reported symptomatology that was indicative of a clinical level of depression. This was discussed with her at interview, and she admitted to being an extreme worrier and anxious about school work. (Recall also that Mary's level of depression was associated with anxiety). On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being very sad and 10 very happy, Helen reported being at the level 5. However, as Table 69 shows, her level of depressive symptomatology remained consistently higher than that of her cohorts throughout the year, although it will be recalled as mentioned in Tina's profile (see section 7.5) that the female boarders' RADS scores were higher than day students overall. Helen also remained very homesick (DRI), and her self-concept was well below average. Her self-esteem (*General Self*) was particularly low at the beginning of Term One ($T = 28$), as was *Emotional Stability* ($T = 30$). At the end of the year, Helen's overall concept of herself had changed little. Indeed, her perception of her ability and enjoyment of school (*General School*) declined further from a low $T = 36$

at the beginning of the year to $T = 25$ in Term Four. However her perceived *Emotional Stability* had improved to within normal range at the end of the year ($T = 49$).

Helen's coping profile (see Figure 8) indicated that for general concerns she frequently used *Physical Recreation* and functional strategies such as *Seek Social Support* and *Focus on Solving the Problem*. However in defining homesickness as her specific concern in Term Two, the functional strategies were used "sometimes," as was the non-productive strategy *Wishful Thinking* which was previously reported as not used at all for general concerns.

In Term Two, Helen's negative perception of school continued, in that she perceived "nothing" as the best thing about being at the new school in Term One. Like Tony, in Term Two Helen looked forward to the holidays. Like Tina and Tony, for Helen leaving her parents had been the hardest thing to cope with in the first term and was anticipated to be the hardest thing to deal with in the second term. Responses to the boarders' questions indicated that Helen 'never' thought the daily routine restricted her freedom, but also that she 'never' had enough privacy at boarding school. 'Sometimes' were the responses given to the other items on activities and boredom. In Term Four, responses to all items were 'sometimes.' On reflection of the year, Helen thought that "meeting new people" was the best thing about being at the school, which was in keeping with the majority of the girls' responses (see section 6.3). However, like Tina, being away from home remained the hardest thing for Helen to cope with over the year, with her particularly looking forward to going home at the end of the final term.

Adolescent Coping Scale

Individual Profile of Coping Strategies

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Name "HELEN" Date _____ Form General

Specific

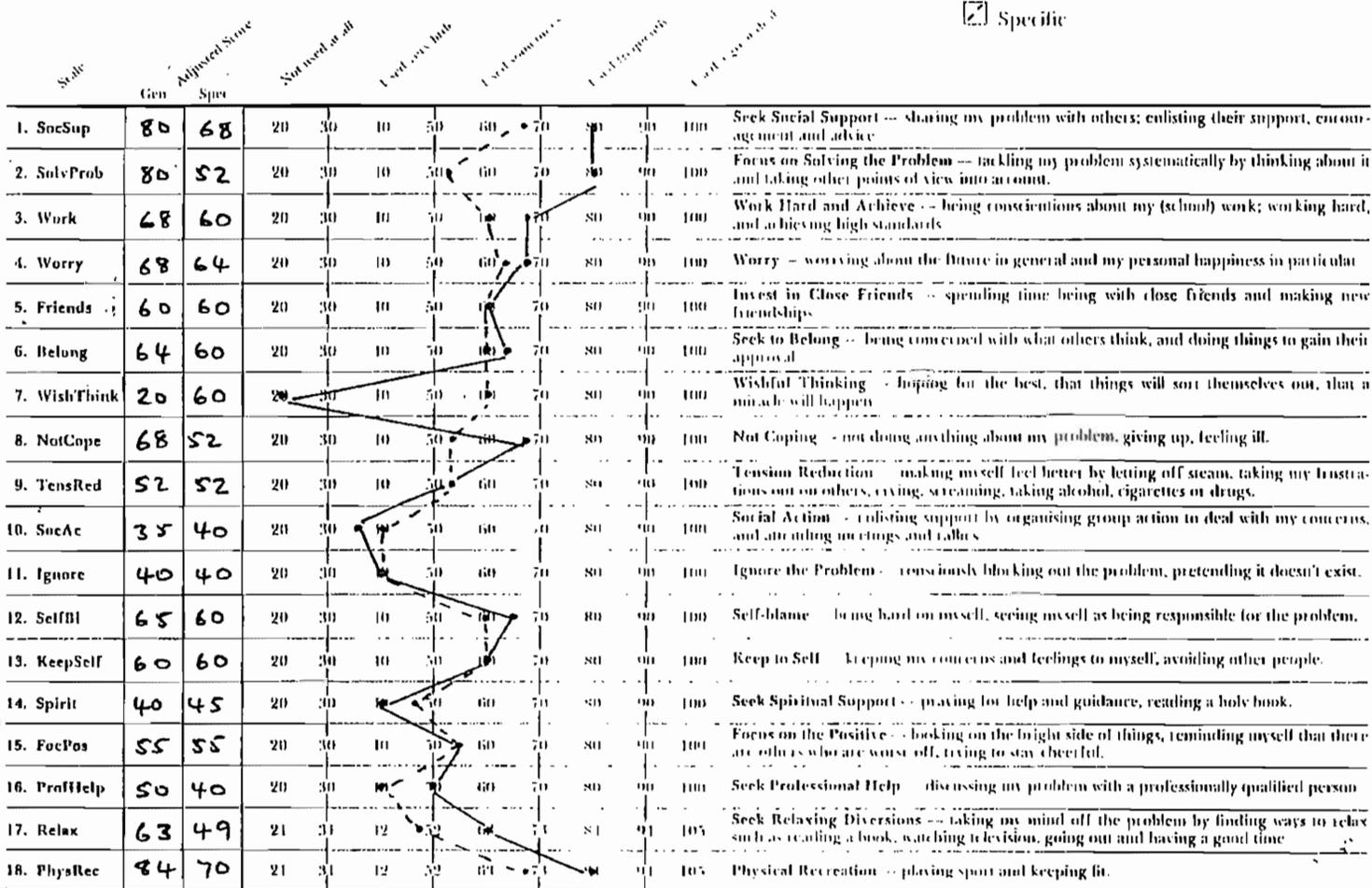


Figure 8. "Helen's" profile of coping strategies.

In Term Three's group session, Helen noted the plus points to starting high school to be "*meet new people, a teenager, different subject and more sport opportunities.* The minus points were "*harder work, leave home if a boarder, too much homework and have to wear sucky (sic) uniform.*" The interesting point was "*timetables.*" In order to adapt, Helen suggested that students should be "*a really nice person, get into a lot of sport, and don't think about home much.*" No comments were noted about what the school should do or be to help students adapt. However Helen thought that the group session was good in that "*we could talk about the good and bad things about school,*" although "*everyone was being noisy.*" She would have liked more on "*sex education*".

In Term Four as with Tony, Helen did not note any important issue to come out of the group session, but thought that "*talking about and telling someone about problems*" as solutions. She did not know how she had changed over the year, but on a scale of 0 to 3, thought she had adapted quite well (2), was somewhat happy (1.5) and looking forward to Grade 9 (1.5). However, life events that negatively affected Helen at the end of the year were *starting at a new school* (4, up from 1), *breaking up with boy/girlfriend* (4, up from 3) and *failing a test or course* (4, new item). At the final interview, Helen, like Tony, was quite subdued, and although she had volunteered to talk, had very little to say, except that the year had been hard, that she did not like school, and could not wait for the Christmas holidays.

Helen's profile presents an example of a boarding student who from the outset, appeared to have difficulty in adjusting to, and identifying with, the new environment of the school. She was very attached to her home, and her mother in particular, and could think of no negative aspects about home, or any positive aspects about the school. Although she had no concerns at home, Helen worried

about school, had poor self-esteem, and self-perception of her academic ability and emotional stability. Her levels of depressive symptomatology and homesickness remained elevated throughout the year. However she generally used functional coping strategies and her comments at the group session and reflection at the end of the year indicated that she had insight into useful things to be and do to adapt to secondary boarding school. Like Mary, this profile illustrates the usefulness of longitudinal studies, in that subtle changes in thinking appeared towards the end of the year. It would have been interesting to see how Helen's attitude to the school developed and changed over the following years.

7.8. Summary of profiles

The six profiles presented illustrate many of the similarities and differences in the experiences of the transition to the new school setting reported by the students in this study. In all of the profiles, home life was perceived positively. John was an example of a day student who at first experienced a degree of homesickness, for things past (old friends) and preferred (being at home), but who enjoyed school life, and felt good about himself. He, like the majority of those in the study, perceived at the end of the year that he had adapted well to high school.

The other day student, Mary, highlighted the usefulness of longitudinal studies. Although she was excited about being at the school, at the start of the year her concerns at home, level of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and low self-concept, indicated that she might experience difficulty in adapting to high school. However, once she overcame her shyness, although problems at home did not change, she perceived herself as more confident and adapted well to the new school setting.

The profiles of the boarders, Mark, Tina, Tony, and Helen illustrated how perceptions of home and living in the school environment can influence the experience of the transition to high school. Mark, Tina and Tony were from properties, and Helen from a small country town. All were used to freedom and preferred open spaces. All had someone they knew at the boarding school. Whereas Mark and Tony felt positive about the school at the start of the year, Tina and Helen did not and their perceptions did not change over the year. Although Tina's self-concept was positive, homesickness was seen as the main factor hindering her ability to identify positively with the school setting.

Helen's difficulties were compounded, not only by homesickness, but by negative affect and a low perception of herself, which did not improve particularly by the end of the year. Although she indicated the general use of adaptive coping strategies, Helen remained focussed on home, with little evidence to suggest positive identification with the school setting.

Homesickness was also very problematic for Tony, and was compounded further by his being the victim of bullying, and his preference for keeping his problems to himself. His negative experiences affected his emotional well-being and self-concept, but intervention was possible once problems were identified, and at the end of the year he felt more optimistic about going on to Grade 9.

Mark was not depressed or homesick at boarding school, but like Tina and Tony, found that the lack of privacy was problematic. However Mark perceived that he learned to socialise and had become more confident. Other comments about the positive aspects of school, such as meeting people, making friends and participating in activities indicated adaptation to the boarding experience, and the transition to high school in general.

The following chapter discusses more fully the general findings of this study and identifies contributing risk factors, buffers and indicators of adjustment which may distinguish how adaptation to secondary and boarding school may differ in young adolescents.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

This longitudinal study explored young adolescents' perceptions of how they generally experienced the transition to secondary and boarding school in a rural, remote location in Australia in the mid 1990s. The objective was to add to the body of psychological knowledge on the issue of adolescent adjustment or turmoil. This was achieved by examining the students' subjective perceptions of themselves and their social contexts over the school year; by exploring changes over time and how psycho-social and environmental factors contributed to both perceived adaptation, and in terms of measurements of adjustment. Of particular interest was the relevance of the concept of place identity as part of identity formation and its contribution to understanding the effects of relocation to boarding school, and more specifically the phenomenon of homesickness, and its potential effect on adjustment. These issues were explored by comparing day students with boarders and examining gender differences. The study sought to identify factors that may help distinguish those at risk for poor psychological adjustment to secondary and boarding school, with implications for early interventions.

In the previous chapter, the presentation of six individual profiles provided different illustrations of how factors variously interacted in the adolescents' subjective experiences of the transition throughout the first year. The following sections integrate and discuss the findings that provided the general longitudinal picture. First of all, contributing buffers and risk factors for potential adjustment are examined: the students' perceptions of themselves, their home environment and family context, the impact of events in their lives, and their initial reactions to the

new school environment at the beginning of the year. This is followed by discussion of the changes that took place over time and how these contributed to the perceived adaptation and indicators of adjustment at the end of the year.

8.2 Contributing buffers and risk factors for potential adjustment

8.2.1 The adolescents' perceptions of themselves

In examining the process of identity formation it has been noted that developmental tasks include attainment of emotional well-being (Erikson, 1968; Newman & Newman, 1988), as well as a heightened awareness of the multifaceted nature of self (Marsh, 1990), which includes development of social self (Harter, 1990). In this study self-report measures of depression, self-concept and coping were used as exemplars of affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of adjustment and well-being. One of the limitations of this study was the lack of baseline data of psychological well-being before the students made the transition to secondary school. In order to provide a benchmark for comparisons throughout the year, these aspects were assessed in the first week of the first term, whereas homesickness, considered a distinct phenomenon, was assessed in the second week, at the time of the initial interviews.

8.2.1.1 Depression

Whilst the overall sample ($N = 74$) at the beginning of the year reported depressive symptomatology ($M = 60.38$, $SD = 14.72$) at a level comparable to Reynold's (1987) normed sample ($M = 60.18$, $SD = 14.29$), with no significant gender or student status differences, 14.9% (8 girls and 3 boys) of the original respondents in the study obtained scores which were suggestive of levels associated

with clinical depression. These findings were consistent with other research which indicates a similar prevalence of depression in adolescents (e.g., Boyd & Gullone, 1997; Compas et al., 1993), especially in girls (e.g., De Ross et al., 1999; Petersen et al., 1993). Reynolds however cautions against false positive results. Although 10-15% of adolescents score at the cut-off or higher on a single administration of the RADS, retesting and interviews are essential to establish the significance of symptomatology over time. Consequently, in isolation these initial findings represented only a snapshot of the level of depression in this sample of adolescents at the beginning of their transition to secondary school.

8.2.1.2 Self-concept and coping

However, levels of depression at the start of the year correlated with self-concept and coping. Of particular significance was the finding that 43% of the variance in Total Self-Concept was accounted for by levels of depression (see Table 17) and that levels of depression accounted for between 23 and 30% of the variance in the use of non-productive coping for general concerns (Table 28). These results support the notion that self-esteem and coping are associated with risks or buffers for depression (e.g., Frydenberg, 1997; Kuperminc et al., 1997; Orvaschel et al., 1997). However, given that there were no earlier baseline measures, it could not be determined whether depression was potentially an indicator of poor self-concept and coping or vice versa, particularly if examined in isolation without taking into account other factors and contexts such as difficulties with family or peers (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998). This again highlighted the importance of using a longitudinal approach that could monitor the level of depression and its correlation with self-concept and coping throughout the year.

It has only been in recent years that interactions between the domains of coping and self-concept have been demonstrated (Bosma & Jackson, 1990). In this study, at the beginning of the year the adolescents generally reported positive perceptions of themselves with no significant differences in gender or between day and boarding students. Facets of self-concept and general ways of coping were significantly related on all but three of eighteen strategies at the start of the year (Table 29). These associations were consistent with other Australian research using the same measures, in which self-concept was predictive of sixteen strategies, including low emotional stability being related to non-productive coping (Boldero et al., 1993). In the present study, those who tended to have less favourable perceptions of themselves also indicated more potential use of non-productive coping. This finding supports previous German research which suggests that problem avoiders are more depressed in their self-concept, especially girls in early adolescence (Seiffge-Krenke, 1990).

Although in this study there were no overall significant gender differences in self-concept, significant associations were found between facets of self-concept and coping strategies, both by gender and between day and boarding students. Whilst most students reported the use of functional coping strategies, previous findings of gender differences in coping (e.g., Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993b ; Seiffge-Krenke, 1993) were supported to a certain extent as the girls (especially boarders) used more non-productive coping such as *Tension Reduction* in dealing with general concerns. On the other hand there was no significant gender difference in the use of *Seek Social Support* which, usually attributed more to girls, was reported in the interviews to be used equally frequently by boys (cf. Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991). For male boarders and females, strategies of *Not Coping*, *Tension Reduction* (especially crying

and letting off steam) and *Self Blame* correlated with lower perceptions of *General Self*, *General School* and *Emotional Stability*. These mixed results initially reflected similarities between male boarders and female students, but also highlighted the need for further comparisons over time, as well as exploration of how the boarding experience and homesickness may have accounted for these effects.

8.2.1.3 Homesickness

Homesickness, which contains a negative affect component (e.g., sadness), was only weakly associated with depression and self-concept, and not significantly so with general coping at the beginning of the year. This initial result provided evidence that homesickness is a distinct phenomenon from depression per se, given that the high incidence of reported homesickness (including up to 90% of boarders) at the start of the year (see Table 51) was antithetical to the overall levels of depressive symptomatology.

The description and prevalence of homesickness, which was best discriminated in boarders, concurred with previous Australian and British research (e.g., Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1990; Morgan, 1993). Yet it was interesting to note that the use of the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI), which loads on four factors (general adaptation, home, satisfaction, and a social factor) helped identify that some day students presented as ‘homesick’ at the start of the year, as shown in Profile One, “John” who scored high on items of adaptation such as “*I feel unsettled here*”. This initial finding tentatively supported the relevance of the concept of place identity, but as with other measures, it was important to examine the longitudinal picture in order to gauge its overall relevance to adjustment.

In summary, the findings from the self-report measures in the first two weeks of the first term provided evidence that the adolescents in this study generally arrived at secondary and boarding school with a good sense of psychological well-being as measured by their normal levels of depressive symptomatology, positive perceptions of themselves and their use of functional coping. However, a picture started to emerge of relationships amongst measures, and a high rate of homesickness in boarding students.

8.2.2 The home environment and family context

It has been proposed in this thesis that the physical world socialisation of childhood, dominated by the home and school settings, is integral for the development of place, and subsequently, self-identity. Place identity integrates and evaluates cognitions to allow adaptation to many settings, so that, as self-identity develops, an individual gradually becomes independent of the people and places of childhood. Attachment to that particular past environment and the people in it may depend on the length of time spent in the setting and perceived satisfaction with it. Disruptions, such as frequent moves or family discord may lead to fragmented self-concept or a sense of rootlessness (Hormuth, 1990; Proshansky et al., 1983).

The results of this study indicated that all of the young adolescents viewed some aspect of their home environment positively, and that most had a strong attachment to it. Yet more than half had moved at some time in their lives and almost a quarter had lived in their current home for less than two years, mobility rates comparable to international and Australian trends (e.g., Starker, 1990; Zubrick et al., 1997). In this study, as previously (Downs, 1994), there was no evidence that family mobility history was associated with homesickness, nor in this case with

depression or self-concept, suggesting that moving home frequently per se is not necessarily detrimental to identity formation or perceived well-being and adjustment in young adolescence. Instead it could be argued that as place identity integrates cognitions to allow adaptation to many settings, selective resources are acquired and utilised that allow adaptational tasks to be successfully negotiated (Fisher & Hood, 1988; Vernberg & Field, 1990). The only strategy significantly associated with *moving to a new neighbourhood* (Life Events Scale) was one concerned about relationships with others (*Seek to Belong*) which, rather than being considered as non-productive coping, could be regarded as an adaptive approach to establishing new connections and friendships, given that these are disrupted in relocation.

In this study over half of those who had moved, missed people, especially friends and relatives, whereas less than half commented on missing the physical environment as such. Yet the comments about the environment indicated identification with surroundings or a particular aspect of a previous house or location. All of these aspects of previous home life which were missed concurred with the students' definitions of homesickness, as in previous research (Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1989). In describing positive aspects of their current home life, it was also apparent that, as well as family members, the physical environment was an important element to the youngsters. Given that the study was conducted in a rural, remote Queensland town, and that only 27% came from other towns or cities, it was not surprising that most students identified with their home geographical location, especially the bush, and that pets and animals were included as important aspects of home life (see also Hickrod & Schmitt, 1982). Similarly preferred places tended to reflect the home location and its activities, suggesting that for most adolescents, there was positive place identification with their home environment.

Having one's own space and personal possessions are important aspects for the development of spatial autonomy and attainment of privacy, and adolescents have been found to feel most at home in their own bedroom (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Korpela, 1992). In this study the bedroom was a preferred place to be alone for almost 25% of the girls, although around half of the sample specified outdoor spaces, places, and activities, again reflecting the positive connection many felt with the outdoor environment, suggestive of bias toward memories of outdoor settings (e.g., Chawla, 1990) and the restorative value of the physical environment (Korpela & Hartig, 1996). On the other hand, the finding that a third of the respondents did not stipulate a place, or even stated that they did not want be alone, could have been an indication of a less well-formed sense of the need for privacy in early adolescence, or greater reliance on the company of others for reasons not explored (see Coleman, 1974; Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

A third of the students also could not think of any negative aspects of their home, a finding similar to previous research which suggested that homesick students more readily perceive positive aspects of home than negative (Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1989), which was also highlighted in the profile of "Tina". However almost 30% had specific dislikes or concerns about their home environment, such as climate, isolation, or lack of facilities. Being able to distinguish negative as well as positive aspects of home concurs with Proshansky and Fabian's (1987) broader concept of place identity (cf. Harris et al., 1996).

Of importance to how young adolescents view their home environment overall is how they perceive the people in it. The majority (77.14%) of the respondents in this study came from a nuclear family of two parents and siblings. Holmbeck (1996) noted that where intact families have been the focus of

investigations of changes in families, less than 10% of such families report chronic parent-adolescent relationship difficulties. In this study, there were no overall patterns of association between family composition per se and self-concept. The positive scores for the facet of parent relations at the start of the year (see Table 9) concurred with other recent research in which adolescents have tended to report good relationships with their parents (e.g. Jackson et al., 1998; Noller & Patton, 1990).

Positive family climate has also been associated with functional coping (Frydenberg, 1994, 1997), and was supported in this study in comparing *parent-relations* and general coping (see Tables 36 and 37), in which interesting gender and student status differences emerged. Whereas other studies suggest that girls generally use more emotion-focussed strategies and social support than boys, and boys are more private (Frydenberg, 1997; Seiffge-Krenke, 1990, 1993), the male day students indicated that they were less likely to actively solve problems, or *Seek to Belong* but were also less likely to keep a problem to themselves the better their relationship with their parents. Both male and female boarders were also less likely to ignore their concerns, and social support was positively associated with parent relations for male boarders. Interactions with parents was also significantly negatively related to homesickness in male boarders, suggesting that relationships with parents can play an important role in how young adolescents, especially males, cope with concerns, which is in keeping with other literature on supportive relationships (e.g., Frydenberg, 1997; Furnham & Burhmester, 1992).

Similarly a link has been noted between a supportive family environment and less self-reported levels of depression in young adolescents who have moved home location with their family (Vernberg & Field, 1990). Such a link could also

partially account for the finding that although not living in the same location as the school was associated with homesickness in boarders, home location per se was not associated with depression. It could be argued that a positive family climate, as measured by adolescent-parent relationships, contributes as a buffer for not only how youngsters generally adapt to home relocation but possibly in how they deal with relocating to a new school.

On the other hand, adolescents' perceptions of problems within the family can also impact on their sense of well-being. Although over half of the students at the initial interview reported that they did not have concerns at home, some expressed worry about the health and well-being of family members or concerns about discord. The Life Events Scale (see Table 57 and Appendix C12) indicated that although *death of a family member or friend* was experienced by 77% of the initial sample, and negatively affected almost half of them 'a great deal', there was no apparent relationship between that event or *illness and injury to a family member* and depression, homesickness, self-concept or coping. Again this may have reflected a positive and supportive home climate, given that at interview a number of students indicated that they talked to their parents or other family members about their worries.

However those who indicated from the Life Events Scale that they were negatively affected by events such as divorce and separation, family conflict and abuse, had higher levels of depression and lower perceptions of themselves in specific areas (such as emotional stability, honesty and trustworthiness), which concurs with other literature on depression (e.g., Adams & Adams, 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Roberts, 1999). It has also been noted that ongoing conflict within the family may be more relevant than parental separation or divorce in an

adolescent's perception of stress and ability to cope (Buchanan et al., 1991; Coleman & Hendry, 1999), and that a negative family climate is associated with more use of non-productive coping (Adams & Adams, 1991; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1994, 1996). This was supported in this study with the use of *Keep to Self* being used more as a general coping strategy by those affected by family fights and arguments, and less use of *Seek Social Support* by those who reported abuse as problematic. This perhaps is suggestive of youngsters adopting general styles of coping from specific family contexts where non-productive coping has been vicariously learned or been found to work to prevent the escalation of negative situations.

However it is acknowledged that the connections between Life Events and other factors discussed so far are speculative, given that students were not asked specifically how they coped with life events as such unless they were mentioned at interview, or how an accumulation of unknown stressors or hassles as well as other physical developmental and social factors which were not explored, may have interacted. Yet Profile Two, that of a day student, provided a good example of how family discord worried and affected "Mary" a great deal, how she coped by being 'sad and anxious', kept her feelings to herself, had high levels of depression, and poor self-esteem. Taken together, the family context and her self-perceptions at the beginning of the year could have indicated that Mary would be at risk for poor adaptation to the new setting of secondary school.

In summary, exploration of the adolescents' perceptions of their home environment provided evidence for the salience of past and present cognitions which have to be taken into consideration when examining how a new setting such as secondary school initially may be perceived, especially if boarding. All students in this study had positive perceptions of their home life, but many could also

distinguish negative aspects, in keeping with the broad concept of place identity. The family context, especially the students' perceptions of relationships with their parents and family stressors provided evidence for the salience of the social context of the family contributing as buffering or risk factors for depression, self-concept, preferred ways of coping, and homesickness.

8.2.3 Initial perceptions of the school environment

Much of the formative years of childhood and adolescence are spent in school, a sociophysical setting which is considered to be important in the development of self-identity (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Yet it will be recalled that some of the youngsters in this study had not physically attended a primary school because of their isolated home location. Profiles five and six, "Tony" and "Helen", provided examples of such students. From the perspective of place identity and person-environment congruence, previous experiences of school life, and preconceived ideas of what secondary and boarding school would be like could be expected to contribute to the adolescents' initial perceptions and feelings about the new school setting.

Previous research on homesickness (Brewin et al., 1989; Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1989) has produced conflicting evidence for the ameliorating effects of knowledge of and decisional control in the choice of school, the presence of siblings and friends at the same school, previous boarding experience, and whether or not students' expectations are met. In this study, as presented in Table 55, only five boys had boarded before, a number too small to be of statistical significance, although the trend indicated a lack of an ameliorating effect (see also Downs, 1992, but cf. Fisher et al., 1986). On the other hand 92% of the original sample knew others at the new

school, including all but four of the boarding students. Those four were particularly homesick and depressed, and two left because of homesickness, which suggests that the initial lack of an established peer network may have contributed to their inability to adapt to the new environment.

Similarly having a say in the choice of school, reflecting the importance of some sense of control and inclusion in decisions (Fisher, 1989, 1990; Mandler, 1990; Vercoe, 1998), contributed not only to positive feelings conveyed about starting the new school, but also had an ameliorating effect on homesickness, given that the highest rates of initial homesickness were in those who had no say in the decision. This finding supported Fisher's notion of lack of decisional control over a move being a vulnerability factor in homesickness reporting in university students, which however was not demonstrated in previous studies of boarding school children (Downs, 1992; Fisher et al., 1986). Fisher suggested that the discrepancy in the findings could be explained by younger students' lack of expectation to have control over such a decision at a stage of development when parental authority is paramount. Yet the results of the present study indicated that being involved in the decision-making process contributed significantly to positive feelings about starting the new school. Such a finding may have reflected the modern trend of including youngsters in decisions which affect their lives (see Vercoe, 1998), and indicative of authoritative parenting style and good communication within the family (e.g., Jackson et al., 1998), which although not directly assessed in this study was reflected in students' reports of positive relationships with their parents.

In this study over 80% of the students expressed positive feelings initially about the new school. There were no significant gender differences although it has previously been found that girls have a more positive attitude toward school than

boys who tend to have more negative expectations (Heaven, 1994). However the findings that homesickness and depression were more prevalent in those whose expectations were not met and who expressed negative feelings about being at the school, provided evidence for the salience of negativity in first perceptions of a new setting. Given that levels of depression accounted for significant variances in many areas of self-concept (Table 17) including 29% of perceived general ability at school, it was not surprising that those with poor perceptions of themselves had difficulty in feeling positive about being at the new school. The profile of "Helen" provided a good illustration of the relevance of these factors.

The students' responses to the perceived positive and negative aspects of the school environment concurred with other Australian and overseas studies (e.g., Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Downs, 1994). For girls, friends were a prominent feature of the positive aspects, whilst boys focussed more on sports. This initial finding demonstrated gender differences in the importance attached to peers for communal and agentic needs (Burhmester, 1996; Heaven, 1994). That most came to the new school with an established network of friends or relatives may also have contributed to the positive perceptions of well-being reported by the majority of the students at the start of the year. Conversely, difficulties with peers or other people contributed to high levels of depression, a finding consistent with the literature on peer acceptance and interpersonal competence (e.g., Burhmester, 1990; Conger & Galambos, 1997).

Also consistent with the literature were the adolescents' perceptions of conditions and the environmental aspects of the new school at the beginning of the year. As in previous Australian research (Downs, 1994; Poole, 1990) being unhappy with the authoritarian style of discipline and rules was the main focus of discontent reported by 55% of the students, although this was offset by positive comments on

the amount of freedom or other features of the environment, such as sporting facilities. For boarding students the more specific questions about their initial reactions to their new 'home' found that most were starting to settle in with only a few students commenting on aspects which were better or worse than home. Similarly, the majority of students had no specific school-related worries at the start of the year, although a third voiced concerns about school-work or other aspects, as the profiles of Mary, Mark, and Tina illustrated.

The overall positive initial impressions of the new school concurred with the generally positive perceptions that the students had about themselves at that time, but may also have reflected excitement and enthusiasm for starting secondary school. However the negative comments, particularly the concerns about school-work, rules, and discipline, indicated that aspects of the new setting were perceived as potentially stressful and possibly incongruent with the adolescents' previous experiences. In this respect it was useful to examine how the students' initial perceptions of the school and measures of adjustment changed or not over time.

8.3 The longitudinal picture and changes over time

8.3.1 Term Two: Perceptions of school and indicators of adjustment

In asking the students to reflect on the best thing about the first term and what they looked forward to in the second term, it became evident that making new friends, reported by 67% of the respondents was of particular importance, especially for girls, as well as group activities, which included sport and functions that allowed the students to mix with the opposite sex. These responses highlighted the significance of peer interaction and development of friendships in early adolescence (e.g., Brown, 1990; Burhmester, 1996; Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Yet, as the

literature also suggests, the family remains important. This was demonstrated in the finding that for boarders leaving home was the hardest thing to cope with in Term One (see also Morgan, 1993), and that 27% of respondents focussed on holidays and going home as being most looked forward to in Term Two.

At the beginning of the year, and on reflection of the first term, less than a third of students reported worries about school-work. In contrast, at the beginning of Term Two concerns in this area became more apparent as 33 (56%) of the 57 respondents anticipated it would be the hardest thing to cope with that term (see Table 59), as well as being cited by more than half in reporting their coping with specific concerns. This finding, with no significant gender difference, indicated an early shift in focus to academic matters (Berndt & Mekos, 1995), and could have reflected the change in teachers' expectations and grading in secondary school, which can impact on young adolescents' perceptions of their scholastic ability (Eccles et al., 1996), and so be a source of hassle and stress during the transition to secondary school (Heubeck & O'Sullivan, 1998).

Although worrying, being concerned what others would think and needing their approval, as well as wishful thinking, were reported to be used significantly more for school-related concerns than personal worries, predominantly productive and functional coping strategies were reported. The common use of the coping strategies *Work Hard and Achieve*, *Physical Recreation*, *Seek Relaxing Diversions* and *Focus Positively* for general and specific school-related or personal concerns supported Frydenberg's (1997) suggestion that as younger adolescents view the transition to secondary school enthusiastically, they tend to use functional rather than tension-reducing strategies. However coping may also be a reflection of the age of the respondents and their lack of sophisticated cognitive processing and

independence (Losoya et al., 1998), as well as more specific factors such as the family context, parental role models (Eisenberg et al., 1996), or the direct influence of other adults or peers (Compas, 1998; Lade et al., 1998).

There were however significant differences in coping with specific concerns, in which boys tended to ignore their problems more than girls (see also Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993b), and boarders kept their feelings and concerns to themselves and avoided others more than day students. The latter finding may have reflected the different nature of personal concerns, such as homesickness in boarders, or difficulties with peers, compared with those respondents whose specific concerns were school-work related, in which coping focussed more on being optimistic and solving the problem.

The overall findings concurred with transactional and state-trait notions of coping (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1994; Lazarus, 1991; White et al., 1995). Whilst the results indicated that, whatever the concern, students used a stable hierarchy of functional strategies over time, differences were noted in more use of non-productive coping by girls, and by boarders with certain personal concerns. Yet it is proposed that the use of those strategies may not necessarily reflect 'dysfunctional' coping, but rather, inherent gender differences (Frydenberg, 1997) or the need to 'manage' a specific situation such as being away from home, which cannot be changed in the short-term (Weisz et al., 1994). However the efficacy of the coping can be better determined by how the concerns and strategies used related to other indicators of adjustment (Compas, 1998).

In comparing the levels of depression from the beginning of Term One to the end of Term Two, changes over time were evident. As presented in Table 4 there was a significant reduction in the overall level of reported depressive

symptomatology from the beginning of Term One to the start of Term Two. Also of note was the significant decrease in the day girls' scores at the end of the second term, exactly three months after the commencement of the study, and in spite of the tension of an impending Maths test at the time of administration of the RADS. These results could suggest that at the beginning of the year, the stress of the new environment was reflected in higher levels of emotional instability (but for the majority within normal range) and that symptoms reduced as adjustment and positive identification with the setting took place.

However, as in Term One, there remained a strong association between the level of depressive symptomatology and non-productive coping with specific concerns, but with a noticeable reduction in the correlations for male students, with female day students accounting for most of the significant relationships (Table 38). This finding was in keeping with the literature that cites gender differences in both depression and coping styles, as discussed earlier. Of note, were the findings that using the strategy of keeping one's feelings to oneself and avoiding others was the most strongly associated strategy with depression in the female day students, that levels of depression overall accounted for 31% of the variance in using such a strategy, and that there was also a strong negative relationship between the strategy of investing time in friendships and depression. These results would suggest that those who were having difficulty with peers or other personal concerns, and were depressed, could have more difficulty in adapting to the new school, given that they were more likely to withdraw from people at a time when developing friendships are important and interpersonal competence needs to be mastered (Burhmester, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Slee & Rigby, 1993).

A picture was also emerging for the boarders. Not only were the girls significantly more depressed than the male boarders at the end of the first term, they remained more depressed and homesick throughout the second term (see Table 8), having anticipated that being away from home again would be the hardest thing to cope with. However the expectation of homesickness in Term Two may have led to the increased reporting (Brewin et al., 1989).

At the start of the year there was only a weak relationship between homesickness and depression, and no association between general coping and homesickness. By contrast, in Term Two homesickness was associated with depression, and, as with depression, levels of homesickness also explained the variances in non-productive coping for specific concerns (see Table 45). This finding concurred with previous research in which non-productive coping was associated with homesickness (Downs, 1994). Yet, as in Term One, it was the boys, rather than the female boarders, who mainly accounted for these findings, although there were indications that some day students were also not adapting to the new environment (see Tables 41 & 42). Given the gender differences in these findings, it could be surmised that whereas for the girls the basic higher level of depressive symptomatology was pertinent to ways of coping, for boys, homesickness, plus or minus depression, accounted for the greater use of non-productive coping (as illustrated in the profile of "Tony"). Although not directly asked, it may have been that the homesick boys knew that they could not solve the problem but thought it whimperish to share their concerns with others (see Downs, 1992; Fisher, 1990), or a threat to their self-esteem (Fallon & Bowles, 1999). Similarly unresolved problems encountered at school in Term One may have contributed to negative cognitions

about forthcoming terms and so contributed to homesickness and depressive symptomatology.

The findings in Term Two started to produce a mixed picture of overlap yet fluctuating correlations between depression and homesickness (see Table 14), indicative of Fisher's (1989) suggestion that depressive tendencies exacerbate homesickness reporting, or vice versa (see also Thurber & Sigman, 1998). The profiles of boarding students "Helen" and "Tony" illustrated these interactions: for Tony, homesickness increased as his level of depression rose toward the end of Term Two and into Term Four (when it transpired that bullying had been experienced); for Helen her negative affect and homesickness continued to pervade her negative perceptions of the school, with indications in Term Two that she had not become attached or committed to the new setting.

On the other hand, Helen's responses to aspects of the boarding experience, which tapped into perceptions of spatial autonomy, privacy and independence, reflected the overall findings (Table 60). There appeared to be consensus amongst the boarders that they had enough free time, but that their individual freedom was restricted by the daily routine. Yet in contrast to previous findings (Downs, 1992), there was no association between those responses and homesickness or, in this study, depression. This however may have been an artefact of the students' mode of responding 'sometimes' to all questions which highlighted the limitations of using a three-category scale and reporting such quantitative findings without including other qualitative sources (such as the outcomes of the group sessions which are discussed later).

However the significant finding that the girls were less satisfied with the amount of privacy than the boys reflected aspects of place identity: differences in the

dormitory settings and restrictions were incongruent with home settings in which the privacy of the bedroom or other some other special place could be accessed (Fisher, 1989; Korpela, 1992). Similarly girls' earlier maturation than boys (Tanner, 1991), and their differences in pubertal timing, relative to peers, may also have lead to a perceived need for individual privacy in the boarding context. Privacy and a sense of spatial autonomy, which is curtailed in the institutional setting of school is an important factor in identity formation, especially in developing a sense of independence (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). This factor was pertinent to this study, given that the Year 8 girls were reported by the teaching staff to be particularly mature and independent-minded (see also Eccles et al., 1996).

It was also more evident in the girls than boys that cliques had formed with leaders and followers (Gavin & Furnham, 1989). Whereas all of the boys continued to 'conform' to the researcher's requests, which was perhaps indicative of the developmental stage of identity foreclosure (e.g., Benson et al., 1992; Kroger, 1989), a third of the girls, mainly boarders, who were closely 'affiliated' (Kegan, 1982), chose to withdraw from the study during Term Two. This lead to the introduction of group sessions in Term Three, in which all of the Year 8 students once more participated.

8.3.2 Term Three: Opinions about school life

It will be recalled that a group process was devised (see section 4.3.8.) based on the Nominal Group Technique (Delbecq et al., 1975) and de Bono's (1982) 'Plus, Minus, and Interesting' (PMI) thinking exercise, in order to generate discussion and feedback from the adolescents about their perceptions of the transition to secondary school, adaptation and coping processes. Although the nature of the original design

of the study changed by replacing repeated measures and individual interviews with group work in Term Three, using principals from the Action Research paradigm offered the opportunity for “change, and learning” for the participants (Dick, 1993, p.2). This was reflected in the group process by the range of topics covered, the students’ participation and interaction with the researcher, their learning and evaluation of the session, as well as the contribution of the findings from the group process to the overall picture of the students’ experiences over time.

Gender similarities and differences in opinions were highlighted. Similarities included the ‘plus’ points about starting high school which concurred with the responses in Term Two. Meeting new people and friends, sport and activities continued to be the main focus, and denoted stability of perceptions over time. However both the boys and the girls commented that the boys were becoming more mature and independent-minded which confirmed previous comments on the girls’ earlier maturity in aspects such as independence. This developmental process was also reflected in opinions on the ‘minus’ points of starting high school, which tended to be dominated by the boarders, who, as well as commenting on the difficulties of being away from home, took the opportunity to voice their discontent about the conditions at school. The comments focussed on issues similar to students’ views of boarding in Britain (Morgan, 1993). Although there were more similarities between the boys and girls in referring to issues of privacy, discipline and rules, the boys tended to focus more on peer pressure issues (stealing, bullying, drugs) and other practical issues, whilst the girls continued to voice more concern about spatial autonomy, and the desire for greater freedom, particularly in having more contact with the opposite sex. To what extent this gender difference reflected a more advanced stage of development and identity formation in the females (Eccles et al.,

1996; Newman & Newman, 1988) or a greater level of restriction on the girls, remained unclear; possibly a combination of factors accounted for this difference.

Gender differences were also evident in the use of the discussion time at the end of the sessions. Whereas the issue of coeducation was a common theme, the boys were more problem and solution-focussed, keen to discuss how to cope with practical issues such as peer pressure or rules that did not make sense. Two groups had used earlier group-work time to create maps to denote physical environmental improvements of the school. This provided discussion and useful information concerning the relevance of place identity. The students highlighted discrepancies between the freedom of activities and space in their home environments and the physical environment restrictions at the school (such as the rules of not walking on the grass, not riding the horses), which may have accounted for boarders' difficulties with homesickness (see also Morgan, 1993). The girls preferred to vent their feelings and used the discussion time to be heard; seeking emotional support for issues that were perceived as difficult or 'unfair', but also including practical solutions. These findings again supported the literature on gender differences in approaches to problems (Frydenberg, 1997), as well as complementing the results from the quantitative data.

The benefit of examining both quantitative and qualitative data was further demonstrated in the use of the Nominal Group Technique to generate ideas of what young adolescents should do or be to help themselves adapt to secondary school; the premise being that those who were coping well would share their views, which could help others who perhaps were adapting less well. The findings that the students overall valued a responsible attitude and the need to interact with others in a positive manner (see section 6.4.2), indicated that they were developing insight into psycho-

social aspects of themselves and others (Harter, 1990) and using adaptive methods of coping with the transition by being committed to the new setting and the people in it (Stokols & Shumaker, 1982). This finding was congruent with the concept of the development of place identity as part of identity formation, in the adolescents' integration and evaluation of both positive and negative cognitions about the new setting (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987), and their attempt to deal functionally with discrepancies.

Incongruence between developmental needs of the adolescents and the school environment (Eccles et al., 1996) were explored by asking what the schools could do to help students get used to high school. Although facilities were highlighted by the boarders (cattle/horse club for the bush girls, and motorbikes for the boys), the responses indicated that both the boys and girls perceived that the teachers' attitudes could be more supportive and understanding. This finding supports Eccles' comments on the pattern of change in the quality of student-teacher relations which can impact negatively on students in their first year of secondary school; especially for females who may be more mature and nonconforming, and for boarding students where the institution of the school is also their home.

In this respect, concern about adult support concurred with findings of the British survey of boarding school issues (Morgan, 1993). In that report, a major focus was on student welfare and identifying who pupils would turn to with serious problems and worries. That parents and friends were more likely to be approached than boarding staff or teachers highlighted the need for students to feel comfortable seeking support from adults at school, especially if homesick. As in this study, being understanding and friendly were considered by secondary students in Britain to be essential characteristics of boarding staff.

Similarly in Australia and New Zealand it has been acknowledged that staff at boarding schools have complex tasks as surrogate parents, and that a supportive environment is essential for boarders' well-being (Munro & Fairbrother, 1998; O'Kelly, 1991). It has also been recognised that the discipline required in the boarding environment is not conducive to adolescents being able to adequately express common emotions of boredom, frustration, and anger, and that nonconforming behaviour or defensive strategies and attitudes may be misinterpreted or punished (Heaven, 1994; Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987). A useful outcome of the group work in Term Three was the students' evaluation of it at the end of the session (see Appendix D). As well as finding it enhanced their thinking ability, the girls especially noted that they could express their feelings openly and hear others' views. Many also commented that they would have liked to have had more discussion. These findings highlighted the importance of the young adolescents being able to share their thoughts and feelings with their peers and supportive adults, and to be able to have their opinions heard.

8.3.3 Term Four: Perceptions of school life over the year

At the beginning of Term Four when students were asked to reflect on the best things about school over the year, there were no changes in the perception that meeting new people and friends were the most positive aspects for many, particularly girls. Gender differences were more evident however in only boys mentioning sport, and only the girls mentioning activities. This may have been a reflection not only of the emphasis placed on certain activities at the respective schools, but also the value placed on sport and competitiveness in Australian boys (Slee, 1993). Overall, with no specific trends for boarders or day students, the

findings confirmed that establishing peer relationships and positive interactions with others were especially important throughout the first year of high school. These findings concurred with previous longitudinal research in the USA (Berndt & Mekos, 1995), as well as surveys on secondary boarding students in Britain, New Zealand and Australia (Downs, 1994; Morgan, 1993; Vercoe, 1998). The students' subjective perceptions further confirmed the significant role peer groups play in young adolescents' daily experiences and thus in their development of social self as part of identity formation (Heaven, 1994; Kegan, 1982; Newman & Newman, 1988).

Over the year however, home life had not lost its significance. In Term Four, responses doubled to over half of the students reporting going home or the holidays as being looked forward to the most (Table 61). This was not unexpected at that time of year, particularly given that school-work and end of year examinations were anticipated by 76% to be the hardest thing to deal with. That school-work related issues had been the most difficult aspect of the year for almost half of the students (Table 62) provided further evidence for the consistency of academic worries as a specific focus of concern during the transition period. In terms of identity formation, this focus reflected the task of resolving the conflict between industry and inferiority (Erikson, 1968) and concentrating on specific issues as they arose, as suggested in Coleman's (1974) focal theory.

On the other hand there was less focus on missing home in Term Four, with ten students (19.61%) reporting it to be the hardest thing about the year, compared with 26 (44%) on reflection of Term One. This finding was consistent with other research that suggests that homesickness is common but mainly short-lived (Brewin et al., 1989; Porritt & Taylor, 1981), although 10% to 25% of students report continuous difficulties, depending on measures used (Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1989).

However, in contrast to Term Two, in Term Four there was no significant relationship between homesickness as the hardest thing to cope with, and quantitative measures of homesickness and depression, which were lower than at the start of Term Two. This finding suggests that most students initially may have felt more emotional about home whilst they were uncomfortable with the new setting which was incongruent with their past experiences. As they adapted to the transition, focus shifted to other salient concerns, such as work and people. Difficulties with people or leaving friends made throughout the year was of concern to over a third of the respondents in Term Four, a finding which again highlighted the increasing importance attached to peer relationships in early adolescence.

The boarders' perceptions of their freedom, privacy and independence, as gauged by responses to the questionnaire (Table 63) did not change over the year, nor were there associations with levels of depression or homesickness, as in Term Two. As discussed previously this finding may have been due to the construction of the questionnaire, although, as indicated from the group sessions, the girls continued to express more concern about the lack of privacy. On the other hand, it could be argued that as the boarding environment had not changed, consistency of perceptions could be expected and this was reflected in the responses. The profile of "Mark" provided an example of a male boarder who was not depressed or overtly homesick, yet the issue of lack of privacy at boarding school remained a salient focus of concern for him throughout the year.

The final questionnaire toward the end of the fourth term provided further feedback not only of the students' perceptions of school-life, but also changes in their thinking about themselves and others. Examining their reflections of important issues from the group sessions provided evidence of the usefulness of the group

process as a thinking and learning tool. Of the 39 respondents, 41% focussed on aspects of themselves such as developing optimism and being able to express their feelings, whilst another 36% acknowledged the usefulness of working together in order to find out what others thought.

The use of these and other functional strategies was further confirmed in the responses to providing solutions to issues raised in the group sessions. Although a limitation of this study was the decision not to repeat the administration of the Adolescent Coping Scale for reasons cited in chapter 4 (Method), the overall comments from the group work both in Term Three and at the end of the year yielded similar responses to the beginning of the year about the common use of functional and productive coping. As well as suggesting practical strategies for certain problems, people featured prominently, both as issues and solutions. The finding that referring to others was commonly reported suggested a possible increase in the use of people-focussed approaches to problem-solving over the year. On the other hand avoidant coping was also highlighted as a strategy in coping with drugs and fights at school, a finding which suggests flexibility in the selection of non-productive strategies for specific issues which can be regarded as functional rather than reflecting an inability to cope (Frydenberg, 1997).

The students' reflections on school life over the year provided useful insight into both the consistency of thinking and coping but also the changes of focus of concern and ways of dealing with them. Of further interest was how the students' perceived that they had changed and adapted to secondary school or not, and how those responses related to the other measures used as indicators of adjustment.

8.4 Perceptions of change, adaptation and indicators of adjustment

8.4.1 Perceived changes and adaptation

It has been suggested that, in coping with change, adolescents contribute to their own development and sense of self (Bosma & Jackson, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1999), which is integral to identity formation. As a hypothetical construct, self-concept is useful in both explaining and predicting behaviour, and as an outcome and mediating variable in examining other outcomes (Marsh & Hattie, 1996); in this case, perceived adaptation to secondary school. Marsh (1990) identified hierarchical general self-concept to be stable over time, as well as noting changes in developmental and situation-specific facets and some gender differences. Math self-concept for example, which has been found to favour boys, has been attributed to sex stereotypes and age.

In this study, the majority of adolescents maintained stable, positive perceptions of themselves over the year. Although there were no overall significant differences between gender or status at the beginning or end of the year, the girls' perception of their Math Ability improved in Term Four (see Table 10). The girls also perceived improvement in the areas of Verbal Ability and Honesty and Trustworthiness, facets which stereotypically favour girls. These results provided further support for the hierarchical nature and developmental process of self-concept, as part of identity formation, with growth particularly noted in the girls.

Self-concept has both descriptive and evaluative aspects (Marsh, 1988). However the students' responses to how they perceived that they had changed over the year demonstrated awareness of growth in personality and social self; development that cannot readily be detected by group analyses of measures such as the SDQ-II in isolation. In Term Four almost 62% of the 55 respondents recognised

their development of confidence, maturity, independence and responsibility, whilst another 24% referred to appreciating others more. These findings, which can be seen as positive signs of adjustment (Heaven, 1994), and were illustrated in the profiles of “John”, “Mary”, and “Mark”, once more demonstrated the reciprocal influence of the social context of school and peers on identity formation in adolescence.

Not only did most of the students perceive positive changes in themselves, but the vast majority also perceived that they had adapted to the transition to high school, were happy and looked forward to the next year. This finding of satisfaction with school was consistent with the Western Australian Survey (Zubrick et al., 1997) in which 78% of adolescents liked school to a certain extent. Furthermore, in this study the significant negative relationships between reported adaptation to secondary school and the measures of depression and homesickness, and those measures' association with self-concept, confirmed that the selected indicators of adjustment reflected essential aspects of the adolescents' psychological well-being over the year.

8.4.2 Indicators of adjustment at the end of the year

8.4.2.1 Depression

In examining levels of depression over the year a picture emerged and significant differences were found. At the start of Term Four, 14.3% (n=8) of the 56 respondents were categorised as high in depressive symptomatology (see Table 20), a percentage similar to that at the beginning of the year (14.9%). This finding confirmed other reports of the prevalence of depression, with indications that symptoms can persist over time (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998; Reynolds, 1987). Marked gender differences have also been previously reported with adolescent girls displaying higher levels of depressive symptoms than boys (De Ross et al.; Kazdin,

1993, Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Petersen et al., 1993). In this study, significant gender and student status differences emerged over time which indicated that the boarding females reported consistently higher levels of symptomatology than the boys, whose scores remained relatively stable over time (see Table 5). This would suggest that, for the core sample of five female boarders who remained in the study, depressive symptomatology was potentially more problematic. It is interesting to note that their levels of depression were higher at the end of Term Four than at any other time, compared with the male boarders' scores which were at their lowest at the end of the year.

Although the reason for these results is unclear, the findings of associations between the Life Events Scale, depression and homesickness in Term Four (section 6.5.3), illustrated by the profiles of boarders "Tina" and "Helen" provided some insight. Both girls remained very homesick and for Tina decline in peer-relationships and being strongly negatively affected by being at the new school were problematic. For Helen, her overall low self-concept, as well as being severely negatively affected by the life events of starting the school, failing tests, and breaking up with boy/girlfriend were highlighted. Although the female boarding sample was too small to make general inferences from these findings, it could be surmised that an accumulation of perceived stressors negatively impacted on adaptation, which supports previous research (Daniels & Moos, 1990; Eccles et al., 1996; Feldman & Elliott, 1990; Heubeck & O'Sullivan, 1998; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Unfortunately a limitation of this study was not only the volitional attrition rate of boarding girls, but also boys who left the school before the end of the year. Many of those students had reported high levels of depressive symptomatology and homesickness at the beginning of the year.

8.4.2.2 Homesickness

As a psychological 'state' it has been noted that homesickness reporting is liable to change over time, with severity and frequency of symptoms varying according to perceived adaptation to a particular situation or not (Fisher, 1989; 1990). Whereas the findings generally suggested that the day students overall were not homesick, there was substantial evidence of variable, yet persistent homesickness throughout the year in the boarders, as shown in Table 7. At the beginning of Term Four, 27 (48%) of the remaining 56 students in the study were categorised as homesick (see section 5.6.3.2), with 11 (19.6%) classified as severely so. These rates concurred with the previous Australian and British research in boarding students, although most studies, which were cross-sectional, found no significant gender differences (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1984, 1986; Morgan, 1993). Of interest in this longitudinal study was the finding that the boys were less homesick at the end of each term, compared with the girls, who were more homesick at the end of Term Four than at the beginning (as in Term One). It could be argued that for the boys, homesickness was an adaptive process of adjusting to missing their home environment each time they returned to the discrepant boarding environment (Downs, 1994), but as the term progressed they focussed more on school commitments.

The girls on the other hand remained very homesick as well as more depressed. Although statistically it could not be inferred that homesickness was causal to depression or vice versa, the profiles of "Tina" and "Helen" provided evidence of their strong attachment to their home environment and past satisfying experiences which were highly incongruent with their view of boarding school; how

their homesickness interfered with their ability to concentrate on school-work, and impacted on their psychological well-being. These findings were consistent with Fisher's (1989) multi-causal model of homesickness, and indicates it to be a distinct phenomenon which manifests emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally (Van Tilburg et al., 1996).

Although the symptoms of severe, prolonged homesickness could be regarded as pathological and classified as an Adjustment Disorder (APA, 2000), it is argued that homesickness can be discriminated from, but include depressive symptomatology, as suggested by the original concept of 'nostalgia' (Davies, 1979), and more recent research (Thurber & Sigman, 1998). There were significant positive relationships between the two measures, which was to be expected given that some items of the scales overlapped. However the weaker relationship at the beginning of Term One and the fluctuations throughout the rest of the year (see Tables 13 & 14) provided enough inconsistencies to suggest separate concepts: one can be homesick but not depressed (for example "John" and "Tina" at the start of the year), depressed but not homesick ("Mary"), increasingly homesick and depressed ("Tony") or more depressed and less homesick ("Helen"); all of which may depend on the individual's perception of specific stressors, coping strategies, and self-concept.

8.4.2.3 Self-concept and depression

It can be argued that negative affect and homesickness engenders negative cognitions about oneself and surroundings (Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1990; Tevendale et al., 1997; Thurber & Sigman, 1998), and that findings might be influenced by using only self-report measures without other objective forms of assessment of adjustment. Yet in focussing on the adolescents' subjective responses, the marked differences in

the correlations between self-concept and depression and homesickness at the beginning of Term Four compared with Term One provided further evidence of the usefulness of longitudinal research in examining the adolescents' perception of themselves over time.

Whereas at the beginning of the year a significant negative relationship was found between levels of depression and nearly all facets of self-concept, nine months later a different picture emerged in which correlations were weaker in the females, with levels of depression not significantly different from the boys' at the beginning of Term Four. As presented in section 5.6.2.1, depression accounted for 21% of the variance in Total Self-Concept in Term Four compared with 41% at the beginning of the year. Of particular interest in Term Four was the finding of the negative association between depression and perception of *Physical Ability*, across both gender and student status, but particularly in male boarders (see Tables 18 and 19). Perceived lack of physical ability explained 21% of the variance in levels of depression.

This finding supported the Australian masculinity model (Antill & Cunningham, 1980; Slee, 1993), in which high masculine traits, reflected in sporting prowess and physical ability, benefit both boys and girls (Cunningham, 1990) and is related to high self-esteem and peer acceptance, especially in boys (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Markstrom-Adams, 1989). It has also been argued that gender-related roles become more distinct at puberty, as a consequence of social pressures (Hill & Lynch, 1983). It could be surmised that, in the boarding setting particularly, being physically assertive and involved in sporting activities would be seen as essential criteria for boys being accepted by their peers (Coleman, 1961). In this respect, peer relations, which, like sport, were reported as important aspects of

school-life, continued to be strongly negatively associated with depression in the male boarders. It could be argued that there is greater susceptibility to peer pressure in the boarding setting, as there is little opportunity to escape from the environment (cf. Berndt, 1996). Such lack of control over the environment in conjunction with not being able to conform to the dormitory group's standards and behaviours, could therefore influence levels of depression (and homesickness) and perception of peer acceptance in vulnerable boarders.

What could not be determined, however, was whether depression was a cause or effect of negative self-perceptions, given the multiple factors that interplay in adolescent adjustment. However it was interesting to note that, in contrast to the start of the year, there were no significant relationships between the Life Events Scale and self-concept. This was demonstrated in "Mary's" profile. As discussed in section 8.2.2, the data at the beginning of the year suggested that family circumstances may have contributed to Mary's depression and low self-concept, and that she would be at risk of not adapting to the new school environment. However, although her family situation did not change, she used functional coping, developed more confidence in herself over the year, and perceived that she had adapted well. Furthermore, in contrast to Term One, there was no relationship between depression and Parent-Relations (SDQ-II) in Term Four, which again may have indicated the students' shift of focus away from home problems to school and peer-related concerns (Burhmester, 1996), and that those concerns contributed to depressive symptomatology (Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Slee & Rigby, 1993). This was illustrated for example in the profile of "Tony" whilst he was the victim of bullying.

8.4.2.4 Self-concept and homesickness

In Term Four homesickness was associated with most facets of self-concept, in marked contrast to the beginning of the year. This again demonstrated a distinction, yet overlap, between depression and homesickness. As described in section 5.6.3.2 (see Table 25), levels of homesickness explained 16% of the variance in Total Self-Concept and almost 21% of the variance in same-sex peer relationships. Although in the general findings homesickness was discriminated and discussed as a boarding issue, there emerged interesting similarities between female day students and male boarders over time. Not only were there similarities in the negative correlations between self-concept in Term One (e.g., perceptions of school ability, self-esteem and emotional stability) and depression, as well as the use of more non-productive coping for general concerns, but also in the negative relationships between the same aspects of self-concept, with the addition of same-sex relationships, and homesickness in Term Four (Table 23). This concurs with other research which found associations among homesickness, coping, low self-esteem and feelings of loneliness in relation to peers (Downs, 1994; Thurber & Sigman, 1998), and highlights the significance of the concept of homesickness as a factor in adolescents' adaptation to the new setting of secondary school.

In this study the life event of starting the new school still negatively affected 39 students to a certain extent and was positively associated with homesickness at the end of the year. This finding supports the usefulness of Fisher's (1989) Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) as a measure of homesickness with factors which load not only on missing home per se, but also on general adaptation, satisfaction with the environment and a social factor, which includes loneliness, but was not examined in this study. However it was demonstrated that the factors measured by the DRI were

pertinent to day students as well as boarders in determining their adaptation to the new setting; factors, which this thesis argues, are also congruent with the concept of place identity (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987).

8.5 Place identity and its relevance to adjustment

In considering the concept of place identity as part of identity formation, Proshansky and colleagues (1983, 1987) argued that socialisation occurs in real-life settings, that every social environment is to be found in a physical context, and therefore the physical environment comprises an integral part of an individual's development and self-concept; development and changes which continue throughout the life-span (Baltes et al., 1980; Hormuth, 1990). In adolescence, three main settings influence psychosocial functioning and subjective sense of well-being: the home, its surrounding environment, and the school.

8.5.1 The home setting

In this study it was shown that the home context and its environment was important to the students, and that positive aspects heavily outweighed the negative. That many could not identify negative aspects of home highlighted the strong attachment the young adolescents had to their home environment at the start of the year. Aspects of home life missed concurred with definitions of homesickness, and those who were homesick reported missing not only family members but also aspects of the physical environment. Outdoor settings, and the activities that went with them, were an integral way of life for the mainly rural adolescents in this study, as was demonstrated in the profiles.

On hindsight, it would have been interesting to see if the cognitions about home had changed at the end of the year. Yet the rate of homesickness in the boarders suggested otherwise, especially in the girls, given that the boys appeared less homesick by the end of each term. This finding may have been due to the different activities that the boys' were able to pursue. For example they had a cattle club, and went on fishing trips at the weekends, activities which the girls missed, and talked about in the group session. The boys also commented on the good sporting facilities and other aspects of the school environment which were not available for many at home. However, as discussed in the group process (see section 8.3.2), the boys showed more concern than the girls about discontent with the external physical environment of the school, and were creative in suggesting improvements.

Therefore, although there was an initial incongruence between the freedom of home life and the boarding environment, it could be argued that most of the boys generally adjusted to the boarding setting once they got back into the routine of each term. Thus homesickness could be seen as an adaptive process, and that rather than being a completely negative experience, served to reaffirm positive relationships with home (Brewin et al., 1989; Downs, 1994). This concurs with the concept of the process of place identity in developing the ability to adapt to many settings in order to become more independent of the places and people of childhood. This was reflected in the use of functional coping strategies and the changed perceptions that most of the students reported about themselves at the end of the year.

Initially it could be seen that there were gender differences in discontent with the school environment, with the boarding girls focussing more than the boys on issues of privacy and spatial autonomy, which are pertinent to place identity. In part, this may have accounted for the female boarders remaining more homesick and

depressed. Given that there were indications that the girls were initially more mature and independent-minded, their perception of lack of privacy and freedom of choice, and so perceived lack of control in the boarding setting (Fisher, 1989; Wolfe & Rivlin, 1987), would have been incongruent with the perceived freedom, privacy, and inclusion in decision-making that many probably enjoyed in their home setting. This may then have been reflected in the girls' greater use of non-functional coping, and their need to vent their feelings in the group session.

It could be argued therefore, that for some students, the high levels of homesickness and depression were partly due to the perceived cognitions of incongruence between the positive home setting and negative school environment which impacted on their psychological well-being. On the other hand, the similarities found between the male boarders and female day students suggested that other factors other than home may also be pertinent to adaptation to the new school setting.

8.5.2 The school setting

Section 8.2.3 discussed the factors which provided insight into the students' initial perceptions of the new school setting, and the following sections then discussed the longitudinal picture of continuity and changes in perceptions about school-life. The findings indicated that most students had positive feelings about the transition, and that people, especially same-sex peers, played a vital role in the experience.

It can be argued that sources of satisfaction and discontent with the school, and the associations between perceptions of school and indicators of adjustment were indicative of the influence of cognitions about past environments. Place

identity is considered to have both stable and flexible characteristics; a personal construction of cognitions which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings such as school. Teachers are usually the first and most influential adults outside of the family setting, and so contribute greatly to the development of the adolescent's identity. Not only is there exposure to the new relationship with teachers, but also cohorts. Consequently, many skills and attitudes are established at school (Proshansky & Fabian, 1987). Thus past positive, neutral, or negative experiences of academic ability, social interaction with teachers, and peers could be assumed to influence students' perceptions of themselves and how they experience the transition to secondary school.

That most students in this study felt good about themselves and the school suggested a normative process of identity formation: positive identification with, and adaptation to the new setting, with emphasis on development of the social self, whilst remaining attached to the home environment. On the other hand the findings on indicators of adjustment, and the similarities between male boarders and female day students, suggested that social factors of feeling accepted and needed by others or not, as well as general adaptation and satisfaction with the environment, were also associated with psychological well-being and adjustment to the transition to secondary and boarding school.

Consequently it is argued that the concept of place identity is relevant to students' perception of their adaptation to secondary school, especially when boarding. Whilst homesickness can be an adaptive developmental process for most adolescents, those who find the school setting highly incongruent from past satisfying environments, and use less productive coping to deal with the discrepancies, are more at risk of poor adjustment.

8.6 Outcomes from objectives of the study: Questions addressed

It has been argued that the transition to secondary school is normative, but significant and potentially stressful, with the risk of negative outcomes for youngsters given the number of developmental changes that occur in young adolescence (e.g., Eccles et al., 1996; Simmons et al., 1987). However researchers do not agree on the extent to which the secondary school transition is perceived as stressful, given the diverse methodology and outcome measures used (e.g., Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Wallis & Barrett, 1998). This study set out to contribute to the debate by focussing on the adolescents' perceptions of their experiences and adaptation, and by addressing the following questions:

1. Is the transition to secondary and boarding school a time of 'turmoil' or a process of normative 'adjustment'?

The main outcome of this study was that, from a longitudinal perspective, the majority of the young adolescents generally perceived the experience of the transition to secondary school positively, with emphasis on social interaction. With no significant differences in gender or student status, at the end of the year they indicated that they had adapted well to secondary school, were happy with themselves and perceived positive changes such as being more mature, confident and responsible. However at the end of the year, as a life event, starting the new school was perceived as still negatively affecting 39 of the original 74 subjects to a certain extent, especially if homesick, and dealing with school work was consistently reported as the hardest aspect of the transition. Yet it was noted that the majority of

the students recognised that functional, productive strategies and practical solutions were best for coping with stressors and adaptation to the new school.

These results are consistent with other recent research which suggests that, although some aspects of the transition to secondary school can be expected to be stressful, the overall experience is perceived as more positive than negative (Berndt & Mekos, 1995), with adjustment generally improving or not changing across the transition period (Wallis & Barrett, 1998). If 'adjustment' is taken as the adolescents' perceptions of their functioning and psychological well-being, measured by their stated happiness and acceptable levels of depression and homesickness, positive self-concept and functional coping, the majority of students in this study adjusted well. This outcome supports the normative theory of adolescence (see Collins, 1991; Offer, 1969; Offer et al., 1981) which maintains that, rather than succumbing to turmoil, most young adolescents cope well with challenges and change, in other words 'adjust'.

However the study identified contributing buffers and risk factors which can help distinguish those having difficulty in adapting to the transition and whose long-term psychological well-being could be jeopardised. In keeping with previous research on adolescence, it was evident that a multiplicity of factors are relevant to adjustment to secondary and boarding school, and that both gender and differences between day and boarding students are pertinent to the transition. For example, in addressing social and environmental factors:

2. Do the adolescents' perceptions of their social contexts of home, school and peers influence their perceptions of themselves and their experience of the transition to the new school setting? Do these perceptions change over time?

This study demonstrated that self-perceptions were influenced by the salience of cognitions about the social contexts in which the adolescents lived and vice versa. Section 8.5 discussed the relevance of place identity to adolescent adjustment by examining the home and school environments. The majority of the students at the beginning of the year, not only reported a good sense of psychological well-being, in terms of indicators of adjustment, but also perceived their home life positively, with a strong attachment to it.

The family context, in which the adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with parents and their reactions to family stressors were explored, provided evidence of buffering or risk factors for depression, self-concept, homesickness and preferred ways of coping. In particular, perception of a positive, supportive family climate was found to act as a buffer, notably for male boarders in dealing with concerns such as homesickness, and generally in students' reactions to life events, including the transition to secondary school. On the other hand negative situations such as the effects of parental separation, family conflict and abuse were demonstrated as potential risk factors for poor adaptation, as measured by their associations with indicators of adjustment.

Perceptions of the school environment and relationships with peers were also shown to be relevant to the adolescents' experiences, and their perceptions of themselves. As with home, the majority of the students had a positive view of the new school and throughout the study it was found that positive peer interaction was a major contributing factor to these perceptions. Conversely, difficulties with peers, a

negative view of the school context, and continuing to miss home over time, (especially in the female boarders), contributed as risk factors for poor adaptation to the school and adjustment.

Initial positive perceptions of school did not appear to change over time, and there was consistency of negative perceptions about the boarding environment, particularly in relation to the lack of privacy and freedom. Yet other changes throughout the year, such as improved academic ability, increased maturity and confidence, contributed to self-concept, and perceived adaptation. The use of group sessions to express and exchange views about the school environment was also valuable in its contribution to perceived positive changes in the adolescents' views of themselves, others, and ability to cope with aspects of adapting to high school.

Therefore another major outcome of this study was an indication of predominantly positive identification with home, school, and self, that contributed to a healthy process of identity formation and psychological well-being in this sample of rural Australian adolescents.

3. From the indicators of adjustment, what are the factors that can help distinguish those at risk of poor adaptation to secondary school?

Given the exploratory nature of the thesis and the specific and relatively small sample of adolescents it is not feasible to generalise or infer statistically the cause and effect of factors or establish the amount of variance in adjustment predicted by the variables examined; rather the significance of their contribution to adjustment is emphasised. For example it could not be determined if levels of depression were potentially an indicator of poor adjustment, or if negative perception of the school environment was a predictor of depression. It would be logical to

assume that an adolescent who was already depressed would experience more difficulty in adapting to a new setting, unless that setting was perceived more positively than previous ones. Therefore, someone who had negative experiences at home or primary school might start the new school depressed, and have poor self-esteem, but prefer life at secondary boarding school and therefore adjust better than someone who was particularly homesick.

Similarly it could be argued that low self-concept, especially self-esteem, is potentially an indicator of poor adjustment, or vice versa. Again it would be logical to assume that those who already have a poor view of themselves would be less likely to adapt, especially if other factors, such as inability to join peer groups or academic failure, confirmed that view, and particularly if non-productive coping is used to deal with concerns. Therefore another outcome of this study was to concur with the literature that proposes that predisposition to depression, poor self-concept and non-productive coping, can contribute as risk factors that are also potential indicators of poor adjustment to secondary and boarding school, rather than just indicating that poor adjustment has occurred. But what about homesickness?

4. Can homesickness be distinguished as a distinct phenomenon, and to what extent does it impact on perceived adaptation to the new settings of secondary and boarding school?

In section 8.4.2, the summary of findings on homesickness clearly demonstrated that it can be distinguished as a specific phenomenon, and has potential impact on perceived adaptation to secondary and boarding school. However can homesickness be identified as an indicator of adjustment or vice versa? As a specific variable, homesickness was found to be compounded by its interaction

with depression, aspects of self-concept, and coping. Yet, as well as the severely homesick who also had high levels of depression and low self-concept, there were others who experienced homesickness, but used functional coping and perceived that they had adapted well by the end of the year. It is proposed that homesickness is a distinguishing feature that can compound, but also be independent of, other contributing factors of adjustment.

Another outcome of this study was that it was demonstrated that adaptation can be influenced, not only by missing home per se, but also by the salience of the adolescents' cognitions about the social climate and general satisfaction with the school environment. It is suggested that how the adolescent deals with discrepancies can be the key to successful adaptation. The outcome may depend largely on interpersonal competence, coping skills and the subsequent changes in self-concept, including place identity. This has implications for interventions and recommendations to assist young adolescents adapt to the transition to secondary and boarding school.

8.7 Recommendations and implications for early interventions

Whilst current research indicates that targeting adolescent depression, self-esteem and the development of social and coping skills are necessary interventions for improving psycho-social functioning (e.g., Murphy & Schneider, 1994), insufficient attention has been paid to homesickness. Yet it has been argued that homesickness, in its broadest sense, can be readily defined, and that the Dundee Relocation Inventory (Fisher, 1989) provides an useful indicator of those who may be at risk of poor adaptation to the new setting of secondary and boarding school. Screening for, and dealing with, homesickness, especially when viewed from the

perspective of place identity, may well serve as a leverage point for reversing the more pervasive adjustment difficulties caused by other factors such as depression and low self-concept. Although the literature on interventions is sparse (Van Tilburg et al., 1996) there are implications for what parents, students, and staff at secondary and boarding schools can do to ameliorate homesickness.

8.7.1 Parents

What can parents and primary caregivers do to minimise homesickness and maximise adaptation to relocating to secondary and boarding school? For many close-knit rural Australian families, where there is a necessity for adolescents to go to secondary boarding school, this can be a time of upheaval and disruption (Ellis, 1994). Therefore careful preparation at home for the transition is important. In conducting individual interviews in this study, it was apparent that most students were comfortable with the process of moving to boarding school. This may have reflected the tradition of doing so, and the important factor of having an established peer network, which was also applicable to most of the day students.

However, students' perception of having some control of the situation, by being included in decision-making processes, has been highlighted in recent research (e.g., Fisher, 1989; Morgan, 1993), and in this study as being pertinent to commitment and positive identification with the new setting. Having a positive, supportive family, which encourages the young adolescent to be involved in discussions and the decision-making process, can give a sense of perceived control and have an ameliorating effect on homesickness, as shown in this study. Similarly adequate preparation, by visits to the school, obtaining other information that can help expectations to be realistic, as well as careful induction of boarders which

include parents (Ellis, 1994), can raise awareness of any perceived difficulties, as well as contribute to the adolescents' sense of control and ability to adapt to the new surroundings.

8.7.2 Students

Both Fisher's model and the perspective of place identity indicate that commitment to, and involvement in, the new setting are vital components of adaptation. In order for this to be achieved, students' coping strategies of joining in sports and activities, which enable friendships to be established, and distraction from ruminating about home if boarding, have been found to be effective (Fisher, 1989; Thurber & Weisz, 1997) and further confirmed by the students' comments in this study.

Expression of feelings, either by writing (Pennebaker et al., 1990) or talking with parents, friends, and supportive staff, staying positive, and looking for cheerful company, have also been reported by boarding students as useful (Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1989) and demonstrated in this study. Expression helps create acceptance of the existence of homesickness and lessens the reluctance to hide feelings, thus enabling more social support and strategies to be offered (Van Tilburg et al., 1996). This perhaps is particularly important for male boarders, who may be more likely than girls to keep their feelings to themselves, deny that they have a problem, to think it is whimpish to admit to being homesick (Downs, 1994; Fisher, 1990; Frydenberg, 1997). Regular contact with family, either by weekend visits, letter or telephone is also thought to have an ameliorating effect, although it has been argued that for some it increases the longing to return home (Brewin et al., 1989), especially if loneliness or isolation from peers remains problematic. In this respect, good

relationships between the student and parents and their encouragement and positivity may be essential, as are supportive and understanding teachers and boarding staff.

8.7.3 Schools

It is of concern that Morgan's (1993) report indicated that students perceived that some teachers were unaware of what the term homesickness meant. On the other hand, Australian reports (e.g., Ellis, 1994; O'Kelly, 1991) suggest otherwise, and my own observations indicated that staff are aware of homesickness and keen to learn how to assist in helping youngsters adapt to boarding school.

In this study the students' opinions about their boarding experience concurred with other research (e.g., Fisher, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Van Tilburg et al., 1996), and highlighted not only methods of coping with homesickness, but the essential ingredients for adapting to secondary and boarding school. Developing the group sessions as a methodology for this study demonstrated the usefulness not only of an action research process, but also of using group work to help the students think about the transition, by expressing their feelings and views.

Noting and addressing students' voiced concerns, especially by using focus groups could be beneficial to schools. In this study, for example, in asking the students what could be done to help them adapt to high school, more coeducational involvement, a buddy system, greater support from teachers, more varied activities, and the need to understand why or not certain rules should be enforced were raised. It should be noted, that following this study, a number of changes were implemented at the schools. Feelings of being heard and involved in the system can enhance the adolescents' commitment and attachment to the school, and so contribute to their sense of place identity.

The physical environment of the school, especially for boarders, is another important area for consideration. Morgan's (1993) survey of English pupils' views on boarding school and what should be provided emphasised physical space and its impact on individual comfort, independence and privacy; issues also addressed by students in this study. However whilst the indoor settings such as smaller dormitories, private spaces such as quiet rooms and better interior designs can be considered, this study of rural Australian youth also highlighted the need for access to open outdoor spaces for privacy and spatial autonomy. That girls missed and wanted access to activities such as a cattle club (which the boys had), and that both boys and girls mentioned trail bike and horse riding at home, suggested activities where more individualistic styles of physical prowess and independence may well be demonstrated at home, but are missed, and so can contribute to homesickness, if not provided to some extent in the boarding setting.

The English survey highlighted the need for positive support for the homesick. I suggest that boarding and day staff need to be alerted to the symptoms and explore avenues for reducing the incidence. This study indicated that a complexity of factors are involved in adaptation and adjustment, both in day and boarding students. Early and ongoing monitoring of homesickness and adaptation, which could be incorporated in pastoral care, could act as a useful starting point in raising awareness of students' potential difficulties in adjusting. Administration of the Dundee Relocation Inventory can serve as a simple and effective tool both for screening, and also as a talking point for students to explore and share their concerns. Erica Frydenberg (1996, personal communication) advocates that the Adolescent Coping Scale can be used in this way, in that administration can

engender discussion and avenues for positive change for those at risk of not coping in an adaptive way.

Such methods could provide not only starting points for being aware of other indicators of poor adjustment and need for further interventions, but could also act as interventions if incorporated with group discussions. Monitoring of such an approach could also contribute to the body of knowledge on homesickness, and young adolescents' perceptions of adaptation to secondary and boarding school.

8.8 A concluding overview of the thesis, its contributions to knowledge, and implications for future research.

8.8.1 Review of major outcomes

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge on adolescent psychosocial development, by examining the issue of 'turmoil' or adjustment' to the transition to secondary and boarding school. By using an integrative theoretical approach of identity formation, which includes place identity, the factors examined highlighted the complex interactions involved in adapting to the new environment.

The main outcomes of the study are summarised as follows:

1. The majority of adolescents perceived the transition to secondary and boarding school as a positive experience, with no significant differences in gender, or between day and boarding students.
2. Peer relationships and social interactions were perceived as the best aspects of the experience.
3. Academic work was deemed the most difficult aspect of the transition and was the main focus of concern over the year.

4. At the beginning, and throughout the year, the majority of the students presented with a good sense of psychological well-being as measured by normal levels of depressive symptomatology, positive self-concept and functional ways of coping.
5. There was a predominantly positive attitude toward the home and school contexts, although negative aspects were also recognised, in keeping with the concept of place identity.
6. Homesickness was identified as a distinct phenomenon, with a high incidence reported by boarders at the start of the year, and with female boarders remaining more homesick than the boys throughout the year.
7. Associations were found among factors of depression, homesickness, self-concept and coping. These factors were also related to perceptions of the impact of life events such as family situations, perceptions of the new school, and peer relationships.
8. Gender differences were found. Boarding girls remained more depressed and homesick than the boys. Similarities were found between male boarders and female day students in associations between homesickness and self-concept, particularly in peer relationships, and the use of non-productive coping in dealing with concerns.
9. The inclusion of group work contributed as a process and intervention by enabling the students to share views about themselves and the school, and think about problems and solutions.
10. At the end of the school year, most students perceived positive changes in themselves, and that they had adapted to the transition to secondary and boarding school.

11. Significant negative relationships between reported adaptation and the measures of depression and homesickness, and those measures' association with self-concept and coping, demonstrated that the selected indicators of adjustment reflected aspects of the adolescents' psychological well-being which contribute to identity formation.
12. Place identity was shown to be relevant to the students' perceived adaptation to secondary and boarding school. Indications of positive identification with home, school and self contributed to perceived adjustment. Whilst homesickness could be seen to be a normal adaptive process for most, the ability or not to deal with discrepancies was pertinent to successful adaptation, with implications for interventions.

8.8.2 Contributions to adolescence research

This thesis demonstrated the usefulness and need for both longitudinal research and inclusion of data that allows adolescents to express their personal views. Whilst large, cross-sectional studies provide valuable information on adolescence, this research showed how a 'snapshot' approach does not necessarily provide the whole picture. By using longitudinal methodology the study took into account the adolescents' "real life experiences" (Coleman, 1993, p.268) over time, and the active role that they play in shaping who they are and become in the context of their perceptions of the process of the transition to the new school.

In chapter 1 it was noted that there has been a paradigm shift away from a stage-oriented to process-oriented, life-span approach to human development. By using a longitudinal approach to examine the process of identity formation, including place identity, the changes in perceptions of aspects of the young adolescents' views

of themselves, especially the comments on their increasing maturity and confidence, was valuable. This provided further confirmation of the developmental and hierarchical nature of self-concept (Marsh, 1988) and the relevance of Proshansky and Fabian's (1987) concept of place identity. The study also provided further evidence to support Coleman's (1974) focal model of development. That most were not overwhelmed by the transition supported Coleman's notion that they pace themselves by concentrating on one issue at a time: in this sample of young adolescents, focussing on the positive aspects of developing peer relationships and dealing with the difficulties of new academic challenges.

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on stress and coping, the contexts of home, school, and peers, and depression in adolescence. This study provided further insight into the reciprocal influence of the adolescent's self-perceptions and experiences within their social contexts. Identifying changes and consistencies in levels of depression and homesickness illustrated the benefit of monitoring these factors over time. A snapshot of depressive symptomatology or homesickness at the start of the year only would not have been an adequate predictor of poor adjustment, as this study found. Yet consistency of negative affect was shown to reciprocally impact on adolescents' general view of themselves and their world. The results also provided further data on the prevalence of depression in Australian adolescents and its association with other measures of adjustment.

This thesis also contributed to expanding the paucity of literature addressing young adolescents' reactions to relocation to boarding school, as reviewed in chapter 3. Exploration of homesickness provided further identification of its distinctiveness as a construct, the relevance of examining perceptions of the physical environment, and the need to identify homesickness as a factor in adolescent adjustment. Whilst it

is acknowledged that prolonged, severe homesickness could be described as an Adjustment Disorder, the high incidence in the boarding students which concurred with previous Australian research (Downs, 1994; Fisher et al., 1990) provided more evidence for homesickness being a normative and adaptive developmental process of place identity. However by monitoring the fluctuations in levels of reported homesickness, and its association with other indicators of adjustment during the school year, the study provided more salient data for identifying who may be at risk of poor adaptation to secondary and boarding school. Thus targeting homesickness and noting specific recommendations for pro-active interventions to ameliorate difficulties in adapting to the new environment contributes to this under-researched area of transitions in adolescence.

The study also identified the value of including student group work. The process acted as a methodological tool and intervention. It contributed to the body of knowledge on adolescence by providing insight into the practical problem-solving approach that young adolescents perceived for themselves and schools to use in order to reduce the potential stress of the transition to secondary and boarding school. The group work also provided a novel way of re-including students who were reluctant to participate in the study, without violating their rights to abstain, and further contributed to research on why participants declined. This also provided some thoughts on implications for future research.

8.8.3 Implications for future research

Conducting research with adolescents can be a challenge. The merits of using a longitudinal approach which emphasises subjective experiences have been identified. On the other hand, such methodology has its difficulties. Young

adolescents' tolerance for repeated pen and paper measures (even when it means avoiding school work) may not be high. Therefore repetitiveness and the length of 'test batteries' need to be carefully considered. Given that this was predominantly an exploratory study, a number of factors were examined. Was it necessary to include so many? This thesis set out to provide a richness of information that potentially may have been lost in a cross-sectional study or by using a limited number of factors. Although statistical inferences and generalisations could not be made from this small sample, the study had high ecological validity. By including interviews, repeated measures, questionnaires, and importantly in using an action research solution to the attrition rate dilemma, validity of responses was maintained as shown by the consistency of themes identified in the study.

Exploratory studies such as this provide essential groundwork for more specific investigations. For example, future research should consider incorporating more use of focus groups and other novel ways of interacting with young adolescents (such as getting them to imagine and devise their ideal school environment). At a time of development when peer relationships and a sense of social self is a vital component of identity formation, engaging students in brainstorming and creative activities which allow them to share and discuss their view points, can be a method that acts as both a process of research and as a proactive intervention.

This thesis has argued that homesickness may be a leverage point for early intervention. Whereas place identity remains a concept that is not easily measurable, and so requires further research, the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) has been demonstrated to be a useful tool for identifying aspects of homesickness and adaptation. Although the DRI has been criticised for its limitation to specific

populations (Van Tilburg et al., 1996), that specificity is also a strength in its potential for identifying problems in young Australian adolescents starting boarding school as well as secondary school. Whereas this study focussed on the concept of homesickness in its broadest sense, future studies could analyse the four specific facets of the DRI (general adaptation, satisfaction, home, and social factors) to determine how these contribute to adjustment in day students as well as boarders. Administration of the DRI combined with the Adolescent Coping Scale and group work could provide a shorter, but useful way of identifying 'adjustment' or those at risk of 'turmoil' in the transition to secondary and boarding school.

Finally, whilst this study has shown that most of the students in this sample of rural, Australian youth found the experience to be positive, in an increasingly complex world, it is essential that research on adolescence continues to examine and clarify the issues identified in this thesis. The onus is on those involved to add to the body of knowledge that will assist the young adolescent of the twenty first century to embark on the journey of life with “ ...a sense of psychological well-being, a sense of knowing where one is going” (Erikson, 1968, p.165).

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APPENDIX A 1.

Letter to Schools

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND

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The Principal and Parents
School

Date

Re: PhD Research Project: Coping with change: Adolescents' experience of the transition to boarding school.

In 1992 I conducted research at your school, exploring the experience of homesickness in boarding students. From this study it became evident that it would be worthwhile to investigate specific factors affecting how adolescents feel about themselves and how well or not they adapt to a new school.

For my doctorate I am extending this area of research, as very little work has been done in Australia on how the transition to high school affects young adolescents. The project will monitor all Grade 8 students at your school during the course of the coming year. This will be done by the students completing several questionnaires that look at how they feel about themselves and how they cope with problems. Individual interviews will also be conducted to determine the impact of specific school and individual factors on coping.

From this it is hoped to gain understanding of how adolescents experience the transition to a new school, in order that improved facilities and services can be provided. Participation in the study is voluntary and students may withdraw from it at any time. All information received by me will be treated as strictly confidential. As the study will continue throughout the school year, students' progress and adaptation will be followed. Consequently appropriate help will be offered by the school for any emerging academic problems, and if any significant personal problem is evident, parents or guardians will be advised and appropriate referrals suggested. As a psychologist, I am bound by the ethics of my profession, therefore in the event that such action is required, normal professional standards will be met in conducting the referral.

I am most willing to answer any questions or give you further information on the purpose and nature of the study. Please feel free to call me at:

James Cook University 077 81 4303
Home

Thank you for your co-operation.

Jacqueline Downs
Researcher

Dr. Jenny Promnitz
Supervisor

APPENDIX A2.Consent Form

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

Department of Psychology and Sociology

Research Project: Coping with change: Adolescents' experience of the transition to secondary school.

I have been informed of the nature of the above study and agree to take part in it.

I understand that all information I give will be treated as completely confidential and that I may withdraw my participation at any time.

Signed:

Code No:

APPENDIX B 1.

Dundee Relocation Inventory (see Fisher, 1989)

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CODE NO.

Read each of the following statements carefully and circle ONE answer opposite each, depending upon which one best fits how you have felt recently:

Never Sometimes Often

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. | I forget people's names. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. | When I do a job I do it well. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. | I feel able to cope here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. | I miss home. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5. | I feel optimistic about life here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 6. | I miss having someone close to talk to. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 7. | I feel happy here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 8. | I miss my family. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 9. | I feel fulfilled here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 10. | I feel unloved here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 11. | I feel unsettled here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 12. | When I have problems, I contact my family. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 13. | I feel excited about work here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 14. | I feel needed here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 15. | I feel uneasy here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 16. | I would like to go home more often than I do. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 17. | I regret having moved here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 18. | There are people here in whom I can confide. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 19. | I feel secure here. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 20. | I cannot stop thinking of home. | 0 | 1 | 2 |

TURN OVER PAGE -

(2)

Read each of the following statements carefully and circle ONE answer opposite each, depending upon which one best fits how you have felt recently:

	Never	Sometimes	Often
21. I feel very satisfied here.	0	1	2
22. I have many friends here.	0	1	2
23. I feel threatened here.	0	1	2
24. I wake up wishing I were at home.	0	1	2
25. I made a mistake moving here.	0	1	2
26. I feel lonely here.	0	1	2

APPENDIX B2

Life Events Scale (Adams & Adams, 1991)

LIFE EVENTS SCALE

DIRECTIONS: Below is a list of events. For each that has ever happened to you, please indicate how much it negatively affects you by circling the best answer for you. If an event has never happened to you, circle "NA" under the "Not applicable" column.

Name: _____ Sex: M F Age: _____

<u>Life Event</u>	<u>The life event negatively affects you:</u>					<u>Not applicable</u>
	<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Moderately</u>		<u>A great deal</u>	
Divorce/separation of parents	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Alcoholism/drug abuse in family	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Illness/injury to family member	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Death of family member or friend	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Fighting/arguments within family	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Abuse by family member	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Unemployment of family member	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Move to new neighborhood	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Starting at a new school	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Breaking up with boy/girlfriend	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Failing a test or course	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Getting into trouble with the law	0	1	2	3	4	NA
Personal illness/injury	0	1	2	3	4	NA

SA/ADAMS/ADAMS/1991-94

N.B. Photocopied with permission from J. Adams (1994).

SCHOOL

1. Previous boarding experience?
2. Brothers/sisters at this school?
3. How do you feel about being here?
4. Did you have any say in the decision?
5. What do you like about being at this school?
6. Has it met your expectations?
7. What do you dislike?

rules, authority, environment, people

8. Boarders – Do you feel at home here?

privacy, space, sharing, activities, people, environment

anything better about school than home and vice versa?

INDIVIDUAL

1. What problems/worries do you have or think you may have difficulty coping with here, which may affect how happy you feel here?
 2. What concerns etc. do you have at home which may affect how happy you feel here?
 3. How do you usually cope with things that worry you?
Anything you'd prefer to do if you could?
- F Have you ever had a menstrual period or monthly bleeding or haven't you started yet?
When did you start?
How do you feel about this?
- M Have you grown a lot recently or noticed any physical changes?
Since when?
How do you feel about this?

OBSERVATIONS

Anything else you'd like to tell me which you think might help?

APPENDIX B4.

Term Two Questionnaire

TERM 2 CODE NO:

1. What was the best thing about being at a new school last term?

2. What was the hardest thing or change that you had to cope with last term?

3. What are you particularly looking forward to this term?

4. What do you think will be hard to deal with this term?

BOARDERS ONLY

Circle one answer to each of the following questions

	Never	Sometimes	Often
1. I have enough free time at boarding school	0	1	2
2. I think the daily routine at boarding school restricts my freedom	0	1	2
3. I am able to pursue my own interests and hobbies at boarding school	0	1	2
4. I get bored after school and at weekends	0	1	2
5. There are enough activities for after school and at weekends	0	1	2
6. I have enough privacy at boarding school	0	1	2

APPENDIX B5.

Term Four Questionnaire

TERM 4 CODE NO:

1. What has been the best thing about being at a new school this year?
2. What has been the hardest thing or change that you have had to cope with this year?
3. What are you particularly looking forward to this term?
4. What do you think will be hard to deal with this term?

BOARDERS ONLY

Circle one answer to each of the following questions

	Never	Sometimes	Often
1. I have enough free time at boarding school	0	1	2
2. I think the daily routine at boarding school restricts my freedom	0	1	2
3. I am able to pursue my own interests and hobbies at boarding school	0	1	2
4. I get bored after school and at weekends	0	1	2
5. There are enough activities for after school and at weekends	0	1	2
6. I have enough privacy at boarding school	0	1	2

APPENDIX B6

Term Four Final Questionnaire

Q'AIRE TERM 4

CODE NO:

1. What, for you, was the most important issue that came out of the group session we held last term?
2. How do you think particular problems raised could best be solved? (Choose TWO that you think are important)
- | <u>Problem</u> | <u>Solution</u> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. What are your favourite hobbies or activities? | |
| 4. What new interests or activities have you been able to take up through school this year? | |
| 5. What hobbies or activities would you like to be offered if there were the facilities at the school? | |

6. In what ways do you think you have changed as a person during this year?

7. How well do you think you have adapted to being at this school?(On a scale of 1 to 4)

Not at all Very well
0 1 2 3

8. How happy are you at this school?

Not at all Very happy
0 1 2 3

9. How much are you looking forward to Grade 9?

Not at all Very much
0 1 2 3

10. Are you continuing at this school next year?
Yes No

I would like to thank everyone individually for their help this year, so:

Would you be willing to have a chat with me on your own? (Probably this week or next week)

Yes No

Any other comments you would like to make?

Thanks.

APPENDIX C 1.

General Coping: Group Mean Scores and Standard Deviations with Comparisons by Gender and Student Status

SCALE	N = 74		Male n = 29		Female n = 45		Day n=35		Boarders n=39	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
SocSup	56.59	(16.01)	55.03	(15.41)	57.60	(16.48)	55.31	(14.04)	57.74	(17.69)
SolvProb	64.27	(16.29)	64.14	(18.56)	64.36	(14.87)	63.20	(13.71)	65.23	(18.43)
Work	74.16	(12.07)	71.17	(13.99)	76.09	(10.36)	76.00	(10.27)	72.51	(13.40)
Worry	55.24	(16.51)	50.48	(16.61)	58.31	(15.87)*	56.11	(15.99)	54.46	(17.13)
Friends	59.82	(16.45)	62.07	(18.81)	58.38	(14.78)	59.89	(17.77)	59.77	(15.41)
Belong	62.92	(13.49)	61.10	(14.02)	64.09	(13.37)	64.91	(13.23)	61.13	(13.64)
WThink	63.73	(16.81)	58.35	(17.49)	67.20	(15.58)*	67.89	(16.28)	60.00	(16.59)*
NotCope	47.08	(12.59)	43.03	(13.39)	49.69	(11.49)*	49.60	(11.24)	44.82	(13.43)
TensRed	37.78	(11.81)	34.21	(11.39)	40.09	(11.62)*	38.29	(11.97)	37.33	(11.80)
SocAc	37.37	(15.33)	39.83	(14.73)	35.78	(15.66)	38.00	(18.24)	36.79	(12.38)
Ignore	51.62	(17.52)	52.93	(17.95)	50.78	(17.39)	54.29	(16.98)	49.23	(17.86)
SelfBlame	47.77	(17.50)	43.62	(17.62)	50.44	(17.08)	49.00	(15.85)	46.67	(19.00)
KeepSelf	55.54	(15.45)	55.35	(15.52)	53.67	(15.58)	56.71	(16.63)	54.49	(11.46)
Spirit	49.59	(19.74)	50.52	(18.49)	49.00	(20.69)	51.29	(22.07)	48.08	(17.53)
FocPos	67.23	(16.20)	67.41	(16.83)	67.11	(15.97)	69.86	(15.69)	64.87	(16.48)
ProfHelp	39.26	(18.30)	40.52	(16.11)	38.44	(19.91)	36.57	(19.96)	41.67	(16.56)
Relax	81.35	(14.03)	82.55	(15.24)	80.58	(13.32)	85.20	(12.30)	77.90	(14.73)*
PhysRec	71.51	(16.69)	70.72	(16.66)	72.02	(15.19)	72.80	(16.74)	70.36	(14.80)

* p < .05

APPENDIX C2.

Correlations Between Depression (RADS) and General Coping in Term One.

ACS Scale	Total N = 74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=25	Boards n=39
Soc Sup	-.20	-.27	-.20	-.21	-.21
Solv Prob	-.25*	-.42*	-.11	-.14	-.35*
Work	-.30**	-.30	-.42**	-.34	-.29
Worry	-.36**	.42*	.26	.28	.46**
Friends	-.06	-.16	.08	-.10	-.25
Belong	-.05	-.14	-.03	.01	-.11
W Think	.17	.14	.10	.25	.11
Not Cope	.52***	.40*	.58***	.56***	.54***
Tens Red	.56***	.63***	.47**	.47**	.66***
Soc Act	-.07	-.13	.01	.02	-.21
Ignore	.22	.17	.30	.29	.17
Self Blame	.63***	.65***	.58***	.72***	.57***
Keep Self	.47***	.28	.61***	.58***	.33
Spirit	-.04	-.15	.04	-.10	.05
Foc Pos	-.28*	-.54**	-.10	-.18	-.29*
Prof Help	.09	.06	.13	.29	-.16
Relax	-.29*	-.41*	-.18	-.18	-.41*
Phys Rec	-.10	-.23	-.03	-.01	-.22

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C3.

Correlations between SDQ-II and ACS-General in Term One

Coping Scale	SDQ-II Scales											
	Math	Phys App	GenSelf	Hon Trust	PhysAb	Verbal	EmStab	ParRel	Gen School	SSex Rel	OpSex Rel	TotSelf Concept
SocSup	.17	.11	.11	.19	.03	-.07	.09	.27*	.05	-.03	.08	.15
SolvProb	.20	.16	.15	.28*	.03	.13	.13	.11	.13	.09	.28*	.25*
Work	.36**	.35**	.31*	.33**	.29*	.23	.21	.25*	.42***	.19	.24*	.47***
Worry	-.11	-.26*	-.33**	-.23	-.05	-.29*	-.48***	.00	-.17	.02	-.11	-.33**
Friends	.12	.17	.05	.09	.19	.07	.08	-.09	.02	-.02	.39***	.17
Belong	.07	-.04	-.01	.11	.09	.04	.01	.01	-.00	-.04	.16	.07
WThink	-.09	-.21	-.09	-.21	-.02	-.21	-.19	-.09	-.18	-.10	-.23	-.25*
NotCope	-.45***	-.45***	-.46***	-.33**	-.22	-.26*	-.40***	-.30*	-.53***	-.25*	-.19	-.58***
TensRed	-.26*	-.21	-.47***	-.28*	.02	-.18	-.53***	-.29*	-.30*	-.20	.14	-.40***
SocAc	-.04	.06	-.02	.22	.03	.04	-.04	.07	.03	-.17	-.08	.02
Ignore	-.07	-.16	-.13	-.34**	-.13	-.10	-.04	-.31**	-.12	-.01	-.28*	-.22
SelfBlame	-.34**	-.45***	-.60***	-.35**	-.10	-.16	-.52***	-.24*	-.40***	-.16	-.05	-.50***
KeepSelf	-.14	-.25*	-.38**	-.23*	-.10	-.19	-.22	-.37**	-.33**	-.20	-.03	-.35**
Spirit	-.16	.06	-.00	-.02	.13	.06	.03	-.08	-.06	-.13	.02	-.02
FocPos	.29**	.31**	.15	.07	.21	.09	.29*	-.01	.14	.06	.31	.29*
ProfHelp	-.10	.01	-.01	.14	.18	-.01	-.12	-.10	-.09	-.39***	-.11	-.09
Relax	.22	.19	.31*	.05	.11	.10	.27*	.06	.26*	.28*	.10	.30**
PhysRec	.07	.19	.10	.11	.54***	-.02	.14	-.08	.13	.11	.20	.20

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

APPENDIX C4.

Correlations Between SDO-II General Self and General Coping in Term One

ACS Scale	Total N=74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=25	Boaders n=39
Soc Sup	.11	.17	.09	.15	.09
Solv Prob	.15	.16	.15	-.04	.28
Work	.31**	.22	.40**	.37*	.26
Worry	.33**	-.43*	.28	-.10	-.51**
Friends	.05	.06	.04	.19	-.08
Belong	-.01	-.12	.05	-.07	.02
W Think	-.09	-.12	.07	-.22	-.02
Not Cope	-.46***	-.45*	-.49**	-.29	-.60***
Tens Red	-.47***	-.69***	-.37	-.38	-.54***
Soc Act	-.02	-.05	-.01	-.06	.02
Ignore	-.13	-.06	-.17	-.11	-.16
Self Blame	-.59***	-.57**	-.61***	-.69***	-.53***
Keep Self	-.38**	-.30	-.42**	-.38*	-.39*
Spirit	-.01	.09	-.05	.07	-.09
Foc Pos	.15	.29	.08	.10	.18
Prof Help	-.01	.03	-.03	-.18	.17
Relax	.31**	.33	.30	.37*	.26
Phys Rec	.10	.08	.12	.27	-.06

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C5.

Correlations Between SDQ-II Emotional Stability and General Coping

ACS Scale	Total N=74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=25	Boarders n=39
Soc Sup	.09	.18	.08	-.07	.20
Solv Prob	.13	.30	.03	-.03	.24
Work	.21	.38*	.20	.26	.20
Worry	-.48***	-.44	-.46**	-.49**	-.47**
Friends	.08	.28	-.11	-.06	.21
W Think	-.19	-.22	-.10	-.31	-.08
Not Cope	-.40***	-.29	-.42**	-.59***	-.26
Tens Red	-.53***	-.52**	-.49**	-.47**	-.57***
Soc Act	-.04	-.04	-.09	-.14	.09
Ignore	-.04	.06	-.13	.21	.11
Self Blame	-.52***	-.78***	-.33	-.48**	-.54***
Keep Self	-.22	-.10	-.30	-.36	-.07
Spirit	.03	-.09	.08	.09	-.03
Foc Pos	.29*	.48*	.19	.13	.44**
Prof Help	-.12	-.17*	-.12	-.27	.02
Relax	.27*	.47*	.12	.07	.46**
Phys Rec	.14	.20	.12	.12	.17

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C6.

Correlations Between SDQ-II General School and General Coping

ACS Scale	Total N=74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=25	Boaders n=39
Soc Sup	.05	.01	.08	.11	.02
Solv Prob	.13	.10	.16	.09	.18
Work	.42 ^{***}	.27	.65 ^{***}	.55 ^{***}	.31
Worry	-.17	-.43 [*]	.00	-.07	-.27
Friends	.07	-.09	.07	.15	-.13
Belong	-.01	-.12	.08	.17	-.19
W Think	-.18	-.13	-.18	-.29	-.05
Not Cope	-.53 ^{***}	-.46 [*]	-.57 ^{***}	-.42 [*]	-.69 ^{***}
Tens Red	-.30 [*]	-.65 ^{***}	-.09	-.23	-.37 [*]
Soc Act	.03	.04	.01	-.01	.06
Ignore	-.12	.08	-.25	-.17	-.12
Self Blame	-.40	-.43 [*]	-.37 [*]	-.49 ^{**}	-.36 [*]
Keep Self	-.33 ^{**}	-.23	-.39 [*]	-.33	-.35 [*]
Spirit	-.06	.09	-.13	-.11	-.01
Foc Pos	.14	.16	.12	.12	.12
Prof Help	-.09	-.00	-.13	-.16	.03
Relax	.26 [*]	.24	.26	.28	.20
Phys Rec	.13	.05	.19	.32	-.09

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C7.

Correlations Between Parent Relations and General Coping

ACS Scale	Total N=74	Male n=29	Female n=45	Day n=25	Boorders n=39
Soc Sup	.27*	.36	.23	.14	.39*
Solv Prob	.11	.02	.19	-.15	.31
Work	.25*	-.04	.50***	.19	-.26
Worry	.01	.17	.12	.18	-.16
Friends	-.09	-.24	.02	-.04	-.14
Belong	.01	-.03	.03	-.23	.17
W Think	-.09	.02	-.15	-.26	.01
Not Cope	-.30*	-.18	-.39**	-.42*	-.28
Tens Red	-.28*	-.20	-.35*	-.48**	-.13
Soc Act	.07	.09	.06	.02	.14
Ignore	-.31**	-.47	-.22	-.09	-.55***
Self Blame	-.24*	-.03	-.37*	-.54**	-.04
Keep Self	-.37**	-.47*	-.31*	-.36*	.41*
Spirit	-.08	.31	-.30	-.26	.09
Foc Pos	-.01	.09	-.08	-.22	.12
Prof Help	-.10	.11	-.21	-.22	.06
Relax	.06	-.21	.26	.18	-.09
Phys Rec	-.08	-.09	-.08	-.25	.06

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C8.

Correlations between Depression (RADS) and Specific Coping and for School and Other Concerns in Term Two

ACS Scale	Total N=57	Male n=27	Female n=30	Day n=26	Boarder n=31	School n=30	Other n=27
Soc Sup	-.14	-.16	-.22	-.17	-.12	-.25	-.01
Solv Prob	-.16	-.13	-.18	-.26	-.11	-.19	-.07
Work	-.20	-.04	-.45*	-.29	-.14	-.20	-.15
Worry	.12	.35	-.14	-.07	.34	-.06	.39*
Friends	-.38**	-.35	-.46*	-.61**	-.25	-.42	-.35
Belong	-.21	-.14	-.29	-.29	-.06	-.31	-.01
W Think	.23	.42*	.01	-.06	.45*	.04	.57**
Not Cope	.41**	.36	.47*	.53*	.30	.47*	.38*
Tens Red	.38**	.36	.39*	.18	.43*	.36	.38*
Soc Act	.03	.13	-.05	-.07	.12	-.14	.19
Ignore	.11	-.05	.41*	.18	.08	.25	.08
Self Blame	.42**	.30	.56**	.34	.53**	.33	.61***
Keep Self	.55***	.57**	.64***	.60**	.44*	.59**	.51*
Spirit	-.06	.20	-.25	-.44*	.17	-.51***	.34
Foc Pos	-.34*	-.32	-.47*	-.46*	-.12	-.45*	-.18
Prof Help	.21	.19	.29	.15	.18	.12	.35
Relax	-.41**	-.29	-.51**	-.58**	-.20	.26	-.48*
Phys Rec	-.35**	-.31	-.40**	-.37	-.33	-.20	-.49*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C9.

Correlations Between Homesickness (DRI) and Specific Coping in Term Two

ACS Scale	Total N=57	Male n=27	Female n=30	Day n=26	Boarders n=31
Soc Sup	-.14	-.24	.00	-.08	-.22
Solv Prob	-.37*	-.57**	-.16	-.34	-.50**
Work	-.35*	-.41*	-.32	-.48*	-.42*
Worry	-.01	.14	-.07	-.12	.27
Friends	-.16	-.27	-.05	-.27	-.14
Belong	-.28*	-.51**	-.13	-.22	-.22
W Think	.07	.11	.09	-.17	.31
Not Cope	.31*	.28	.36	.45*	.26
Tens Red	.44**	.44*	.50**	.21	.53**
Soc Act	.03	-.20	.07	.12	-.13
Ignore	.06	-.14	.15	.13	.07
Self Blame	.17	.13	.21	.22	.32
Keep Self	.40**	.27	.50**	.35	.16
Spirit	.10	-.11	.19	-.01	.04
Foc Pos	-.42**	-.50**	-.34	-.46*	-.14
Prof Help	.24	.12	.32	.41	.09
Relax	-.41**	-.29*	-.48*	.21	-.52**
Phys Rec	-.21	-.46*	-.06	-.27	-.19
RADS	.55*	.63***	.59**	.43*	.58**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

APPENDIX C10.

Specific Coping Means and Standard Deviations for Non-Homesick and Homesick Groups in Term Two

ACS Scale	Non-homesick (n=30)		Homesick (n=27)	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Soc Sup	55.60	(17.37)	53.04	(16.21)
Solv Prob	66.53	(12.43)	57.78	(17.68)
Work	77.47	(10.32)	72.59	(15.68)
Worry	55.47	(14.81)	55.11	(14.69)
Friends	63.33	(17.58)	60.89	(19.92)
Belong	64.00	(14.05)	58.52	(11.54)
Wish Think	58.13	(17.32)	62.07	(15.10)
Not Cope	39.33	(12.95)	47.85	(14.49)
Tens Red	33.87	(9.02)	41.19	(11.63)
Soc Act	40.83	(19.21)	38.15	(19.22)
Ignore	46.17	(15.79)	45.56	(14.10)
Self Blame	43.83	(13.81)	48.15	(15.33)
Keep Self	47.13	(16.56)	56.11	(15.02)
Spirit	45.00	(15.20)	45.74	(14.72)
Foc Pos	68.33	(18.02)	60.37	(12.08)
Prof Help	32.93	(12.41)	37.04	(16.94)
Relax	80.50	(16.42)	70.52	(13.98)
Phys Rec	75.83	(17.35)	69.48	(17.03)

APPENDIX C11.

Frequencies and Percentages of Reported Main Coping Strategy Compared with ACS General, Term One

Strategy (ACS Scales) N=74	Self-Report		ACS General	
	f	%	f	%
Soc Support	27	36.49	3	4.05
Solve Problem	17	22.97	3	4.05
Work	0	0	12	16.22
Worry	1	1.35	3	4.05
Friends	1	1.35	0	0.00
Belong	0	0	1	1.35
WishThink	1	1.35	4	5.41
Not Cope	0	0.00	0	0.00
Tension Reduction	3	4.05	0	0.00
Soc. Act	0	0.00	0	0.00
Ignore	5	6.76	2	2.70
Self Blame	0	0.00	2	2.70
Keep Self	4	5.41	0	0.00
Spiritual	4	5.41	0	0.00
Focus Positive	0	0.00	1	1.35
Professional Help	1	1.35	1	1.35
Relax	9	12.16	27	36.49
Physical Recreation	2	2.70	8	10.81

APPENDIX C12.

Frequency and Percentages of Responses to the Life Events Scale - Term One

Life Events in Family	n	Event negatively affected				
		Not at all 0 f (%)	1 f (%)	Moderately 2 f (%)	3 f (%)	Great Deal 4 f (%)
Divorce/Sep	17	6 (35.29)	3 (17.56)	5 (29.41)	0 (0.00)	3 (17.65)
Alcohol/Drugs	12	5 (4.67)	3 (25.00)	2 (16.67)	0 (0.00)	2 (16.67)
Illness/Injury	49	11 (22.45)	5 (10.20)	14 (28.57)	7 (14.29)	12 (24.49)
Death	57	5 (8.77)	6 (10.53)	9 (15.79)	9 (15.79)	28 (49.12)
Fights/Argues	47	6 (12.77)	13 (27.66)	13 (27.66)	6 (12.77)	9 (19.15)
Abuse	13	5 (38.46)	2 (15.39)	0 (0.00)	2 (15.39)	4 (30.77)
Unemployment	22	8 (36.36)	4 (18.18)	7 (31.82)	0 (0.00)	3 (13.64)
Move	42	17 (40.48)	7 (16.67)	10 (23.81)	4 (9.52)	4 (9.52)
New School	74	20 (27.03)	15 (20.27)	18 (24.32)	10 (13.51)	11 (14.87)
Breakup	37	13 (35.14)	10 (27.03)	8 (21.62)	3 (8.11)	3 (8.11)
Fail Test	45	6 (13.33)	8 (17.78)	13 (28.89)	7 (15.56)	11 (24.44)
Law	12	5 (41.67)	1 (8.33)	2 (16.67)	0 (0.00)	4 (33.33)
Personal illness	47	16 (34.04)	7 (14.89)	9 (19.15)	3 (6.38)	12 (25.53)

APPENDIX C13.

Frequency and Percentages of Responses to the Life Events Scale - Term Four

Life Events in Family	n	Event negatively affected				
		Not at all 0 f (%)	1 f (%)	Moderately 2 f (%)	3 f (%)	Great Deal 4 f (%)
Divorce/Sep	11	5 (45.45)	5 (45.45)	1 (9.09)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Alcohol/Drugs	3	1 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	0 (0.00)
Illness/Injury	31	1 (3.23)	10 (32.36)	9 (29.03)	6 (19.35)	5 (16.13)
Death	35	3 (8.57)	9 (25.71)	9 (25.71)	2 (5.71)	12 (34.29)
Fights/Argues	29	1 (3.45)	13 (44.83)	6 (20.69)	4 (13.79)	5 (17.24)
Abuse	3	0 (0.00)	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	0 (0.00)
Unemployment	11	1 (9.09)	4 (36.36)	4 (36.36)	2 (18.18)	0 (0.00)
Move	15	0 (0.00)	5 (33.33)	5 (33.33)	3 (20.00)	2 (13.33)
New School	42	3 (7.17)	12 (28.57)	15 (35.71)	3 (7.14)	9 (21.43)
Breakup	36	5 (13.89)	6 (16.67)	12 (33.33)	5 (13.89)	8 (22.22)
Fail Test	32	3 (9.38)	10 (31.25)	5 (15.62)	10 (31.25)	4 (12.50)
Law	9	3 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (33.33)	3 (33.33)
Personal illness	25	2 (8.00)	9 (36.00)	4 (16.00)	3 (12.00)	7 (28.00)

APPENDIX D.

Group Process Results

PMI STARTING HIGH SCHOOL

BOYS (n=32)

Plus Points:

Don't wash dishes
 Better privileges
 More sport
 Learn to live without parents/ more independent
 New friends
 Advantages which will lead to jobs
 More subjects
 Big step in life
 Learn more about Australia
 New setting
 Better knowledge of self, decisions

Minus Points

Leaving family
 Getting busted for porn
 Bigger responsibility/ representing school
 Adapting to new system
 Peer pressure
 Living with teachers
 Bottom of ladder
 No freedom
 Getting locked out
 Meeting new enemies/bullies
 Missing home activities
 Losing old friends
 Running out of money/expenses
 Getting fed up with teachers
 Harder punishments
 Exposed to drugs, smoking
 Food
 Stealing
 Workload
 Going to bed early
 No girls
 No-one to talk to(personal issues)
 Chores
 Not much fun
 Commitments
 Harder teachers
 Asking permission to go out
 Strict rules

Interesting Points

Not allowed to walk on grass
 New ideas (gambling, torture)
 Getting better at school
 Playing jokes on people
 Almost finished school
 If teachers gave money to students

Interesting Points Continued (Boys)

Why can't all subjects be good?
 Taking sport more seriously
 Boarding masters being nasty
 People feeling same way about school
 Have new subjects
 Different foods
 You decide what to do when finish school
 Finding job/career
 Learning new swear words

GIRLS (n=48)**Plus points:**

Meet new people
 Wide range of subjects
 New school
 Making new friends
 Friday afternoon activities
 Get away from little kids
 Different and more teachers
 Learn more responsibilities about life
 Better education
 New environment
 Ms Downs
 Dances and socials
 Most of the boys are more mature
 New subjects
 More sport
 Food
 Lead new life
 Feel grown up

Minus Points:

Teachers more strict
 More homework
 No boys
 Boarders have to leave home
 Leaving old friends
 Babies of school again
 Exams
 Don't lead proper life - only mix with boys and other people on Friday pm
 Poor phone facilities
 Not enough freedom - only out 3/term, can't go out o/n with friends
 Lot of self-centred people
 Not enough space or privacy - only privacy is shower/toilet
 Not as much time to do own things eg sport
 Too many names to remember
 Have to do study until 8pm - can't talk, can't go to toilet
 Almost all time is scheduled
 Phones not available until 10am on Sat
 Not allowed Dolly, Cosmo etc
 Don't have enough excursions and they are boring
 Don't always know what next day holds
 Learn about new things
 Getting older
 Food
 Have to do religion even if don't believe
 Make you do things you don't want to do

THE BEST THINGS FOR STUDENTS TO DO AND BE IN ORDER TO GET USED TO BEING AT HIGH SCHOOL ARE:

BOYS (INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES)

To try to fit in

To join in

To help, be nice, be patient with others

Find someone who can help you

Join the Cattle Club

Get involved in sport and clubs - choir, eisteddfod, basketball, leather work

Be good at sport

To enjoy yourself

Get popular friends

Learn to study and get assignments in on time

Be good at getting friends and make as many friends as possible

It would be good if you were used to studying

Good at things and go with the flow

Get to know everyone

Join sporting teams

Give everything a go

Be kind, no teasing

Be popular and funny

Learn to study

Make friends

Be good at sports

Be humorous

Don't talk too much

Getting to know everyone

No comment. Some things can't be said. This section is about what I could do to fit in better at high school, and if I told you, you'd think I was insane. The thing I enjoy most is writing stories and drawing about the fantasial world, that is a hint to what I'd do

Make friends and be popular

Make friends with teachers and students

GIRLS

Be yourself. Don't be someone you're not.

Friendly, talk to people. Be nice, get involved

Ask questions in class so people know who you are

Being friendly

Be into sport

Be yourself

Ask questions in class

Be friendly

Participate in everything

Try to get a good reputation

Be yourself

Outgoing, involved, open-minded, not embarrassed

Nice, friendly, easy to talk to

Active

A good sense of humour

Be happy

Sports

Joining activities

Make friends

Be a really nice person

Get into a lot of sport

Don't think about home much

Ask older girls to help you

Pastoral care

Try to make friends

Keep busy

Play sport

Work hard

Do your best at everything

Always do your homework

Don't judge people by their looks

Don't suck up to teachers

Be involved in everything

Hang around nice people

Friendly, be friendly with older people

Sports

Be good in class

Try to make friends

Participate in activities

Choir

Sport

Activities

Make friends

Try to be friendly

Don't be shy

Do the best you can in both school and sports

Be involved in most activities you can

Try to get to know everyone in your class

Friends

Don't show off

Be involved in activities

If you are outgoing

Having a sister here

Knowing people before you come

Getting in the sports team or SRC or boyfriend

Having a haircut

Be nice, caring
 Get into sport
 Act impressed by stuff people say
 Being me

Being friendly

Try to make new friends quickly
 Try out for sport
 Ask questions in class
 Be yourself
 Talk lots
 Be cool

Play sport
 Know people here before come
 Get in and have a go
 Making friends

Play sport to get to know people really well
 Make sure you fit in

Work hard and always do your homework
 Try hard at everything
 Try not to fight with people
 Don't judge people by their looks

Friendly
 Helpful

Introduce yourselves to the teachers
 Make friends with other people quickly
 Share things and be friendly

Be yourself
 Be nice
 Don't try too hard

To be good at school
 Get into a sports team

Organise my time
 Make friends
 Don't get into trouble
 Do your homework, do your work all the time
 Try not to fight with people
 Don't judge people by their looks

Active
 Not too picky about your friends
 Try to be involved in all things you can
 Get used to boarders, how upset some are to leave home
 Have friends you know before you come here
 Be funny and outgoing
 Be kind and nice

Be smart
 Be friendly
 Get involved in school activities

Be kind, friendly
Sporty
Get on with other people
Good at subjects
Join teams, groups

Be responsible
Be smart
Look after yourself, be yourself

Do netball, SRC, Boyfriends, Haircut

Meet teachers
Keep busy
Work hard
Get older grades help you do things
Do your homework
Talk to people
Try out for sports
Don't make fights by their looks

THE BEST THINGS FOR THE SCHOOL TO BE OR DO IN ORDER FOR STUDENTS TO GET USED TO HIGH SCHOOL ARE:

BOYS

Encourage people to join in
Have more activities

Better food.
Have a big stud

More sports
Teachers be kinder

Air condition the classrooms
Make school a bit shorter
Let us use the ovals at lunchtime
Build basketball & handball courts
Rebuild the cattleclub yards
More water fonts

Make them feel at home
To socialise with girls more
To go onto ovals at playtime

To have coeducation
To be easier on workload
To let us settle in more

To organise more activities
More freedom

Not so much work
More activities

Teachers should be more considerate and understanding when it comes to problems

Have more activities
Have coed education
More freedom

Put study in the afternoon when it's hot
More privacy - two per room

Get new teachers and boarding staff
Could be better community
Agricultural studies only

Get better books in the library
Allow people to have more spare time, to give them more privacy, allowing them to sort out their problems and think about life and its problems (emotionally). 99% of time in school and after has to be spent with other people.

I would like more games, physical and board games to be introduced
Improve food

New PA system
Lights on outer
Account or allowance of money at tuckshop per week
More computers

GIRLS

More freedom
Make them feel comfy

Welcoming lunch
Social in the first week

Give us a couple of days to get to know students, teachers, school
Socialise with guys fir first week

Introduce kids from the older grades

Don't stare
Help to feel welcome

Pets
Be nicer
Better activities
Have more pastoral care

Make the students feel more welcome
Explain things more clearly
Let us talk more to the older grades to help get used to things
Don't be as strict for the first bit of the year. Still be fair though

Give more time to sleep
Less study

Be kind and show us where everything is
Help us when we are in a struggle
Tell us about the school
Have more pastoral care

It helps if the teachers are nice

Listen to students
Help with problems
Be friendly
Suggest fun activities

Be friendly
Be helpful
Make us welcome
Be fair

Not up you if you are a bit upset in class
To control the temper

Have a cattle or horse club. That way the bush and town ppeople would be more at home
Have bigger grounds

It would be good if I had my horse here and the school had a stable or something and I could ride her
on week-ends

Make you feel more welcome

Don't be so strict
Have more fun and games. Have a joke

Have people to help you
Have some fish in the classes

Welcoming lunch
Socialising more
Nicer food
Help
Involvement
Explaining
Controlling temper
Teachers are nicer

Make a friendly environment
Be nice and comforting to students

Help us settle into a place (teachers)

Make it the way students want it

Make them feel welcome
Set up a brother and sister system
Explain things clearly

WHAT WERE THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT THIS MORNING'S SESSION?

BOYS

What everyone else thinks
Reasons why and why not some things to do with school

Talked amongst a group

I've got out of this morning's session is that I've learnt not only does it matter what I'm like. I can still have friends

I got out of school
I learnt a few things

The good things about this lesson is to think better and to think quicker
Learn a lot

The stuff I didn't know I could do

Got out of school
Learnt a bit
Got a good lunch

Getting out of school
Learning more about what people want
Little lunch

Got our brains thinking

Out of school

Talked about what we wanted to happen
Cream buns
I could let my feelings out

Helped learn about other people's ideas about the school

I could talk as a group and understand each other
It's given us a little time to think about what's important

We were able to tell someone about our problems with school
Cream buns
Think about what's going on

GIRLS

Expressing our feelings to someone who cares

Our own opinion to say what we want

Being able to experience freedom of speech
Saying stuff and knowing I won't get revved

Getting problems spoken that we can't usually talk about

I think that some things we have suggested will get fixed

More idea about what and how people think
Being able to express ourselves thoroughly

I got to express my feelings
 How we can talk without being told to close our mouths on a certain subject

Free food
 A chance to talk; speak my feelings

The good and bad things about school

We have been able to express our feelings that we haven't been able to do before

Talk about our problems, my problems-some of them anyway

Our own opinion and voice our opinion on any subject

It would have to be able to say things that wouldn't leave the room

You can tell people what your feelings and opinions are
 We might get something done about our problems

I enjoyed everything

We got rid of a lot of anger we have against the school

We were able to express ourselves, talk openly about things

Being able to talk about things that you can't talk about to teachers

Feel better because I've got it all out in the open. I was upset this morning because of a teacher and now I feel not so upset

Being able to share our feelings

Getting everything out so it might get recognised

Talk openly, have fun, see different issues

A chance to tell and have a talk to someone about problems at school

My feelings

Letting your feelings of this school be shared

How to communicate with each other

Expressed our feelings

Expressed our feelings

Expressing myself in a productive way

To discuss the problems of the school

Getting to express yourself

You know how everyone feels
 Get to tell your opinion

Knowing that all things are not bad

Getting things off my chest and knowing everyone else's feelings with the things

I got everything off my chest about the school
How people feel and think
Being able to express what we feel about our school life

To let our feelings out about school
The feelings
Telling someone how we want the school, like the talking about the boys and that, because we can't
talk about those things with teachers

To get it all out, and have fun

Knowing that something might be done about it

WHAT WAS NOT GOOD ABOUT THIS MORNING'S SESSION?**BOYS**

Sometimes boring
 Same things repeated
 Things I know said a lot

Everyone not being quiet
 Not getting a cream bun

Everybody kept talking
 We had to write a lot

That the kids wouldn't keep quiet otherwise it would be good

There was no cooperation

Was the cooperation between the students

Not enough prize lollies
 We were a bit loud

Nothing

Too much talking

Writing things down

Everybody was too restless

Weak cordial
 Writing

Too much talking

It was too short
 We missed out on a period of art

It took too much writing and too long
 The noise

GIRLS

All that stuff with the yellow cars etc

Talking about what we can't have

I think we could have gone in separate groups, maybe our PC groups or class groups

I don't think anyone will do anything about what we have spoken about

Doing the thinking and writing it down

People yelling and saying shut up - the noise level
 The time

Nothing will probably be done about what we said

Writing
 Writing in this book
 Everyone being noisy

Nothing. I found everything good

It's not long enough. It should have been all day

Everything we said isn't going to make any difference

That we had to stop telling our opinions about the negative bits of school

Doing the thinking activities

Nothing really

Not all our problems will be fixed

Some interruptions

Not being able to tell the Principal our expressions to her face

Nothing really. It was all good

People yelling and others saying shut up

Some of this is a bit boring

Could have grouped with people you like

Some people being hard to get along with

Nothing

Nothing

It was boring, no fun

Nothing

Nothing

Nothing

People that interrupted continuously

It went for a long time

Nothing

All people didn't get to tell their opinion or feelings

All group work mainly in front of others

Well I was bored as I found some things boring

The fight

People being disruptive during the time we were here

Listening to everyone yelling(Headache!)

Not being able to express the rest of our feelings

The yellow car thing and the way the groups were

Missed dance and aerobics

Couldn't get private time to tell you my family problems that are really annoying me

WHAT ELSE DO YOU THINK WE COULD HAVE DONE?**BOYS**

Talked more about who we could talk to

Nothing

More food. Nothing

Talked about sport and stuff

Nothing

Did some activities

More activities

Do some sporting activities

Could have individually asked each others opinion

Talked instead of writing

Look more at home life

How do we feel as an individual about this school

How boarding school(for boarders) actually changes and affects us personally, not in group

Talk about privacy

Talked about our problems

GIRLS

Maybe got the Principal in and told her how we feel

We said more about the Dolly magazine

Talked more and as I said smaller groups

Got the Principal in and listen to the complaints

Discussed out aloud more

More discussions, music

A session with the boys

Nothing. We explained our feelings a lot

Been quiet, more food, watched a video

Sex education

We covered most of my worries

Talk a bit more about our problems

Should have been all day

Talk more about our feelings of the school and something going to happen

Asked us what we should do about the problems we have

Don't make it so long

Nothing

Listened a bit better to others

Talked about what you are going to do about what we are saying

Just had more time to discuss would have been good

We could have a session with the boys and share feelings from both schools

Talk about different things instead of boys

Said more about the issues

Had a longer time

Talk to the Principal about this

Discussed more

Fix things and make it a school to remember

A debate

Talk to teachers

Talk to teachers about everything

Sex education

Some activities with the boys

Talked about the problems more

Showed our sheets to everyone

We could take it further eg to the Principal

Let us talk to you alone

Listen to some music to relax a bit

Talk more about the things everyone wanted to talk about

Nothing

Discuss more about what boarders can read (Dolly)

Pick our own groups

Talked about our outside lives

More food

We could ask the Principal can we have the things we'd like, like more freedom, socials, etc

Ate more, watchwd videos, play games

Talk to you alone