

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES, CORE VALUES AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE:
THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
GREEK, LATVIAN AND POLISH GROUPS

J.J. Smolicz and M.J. Secombe

The press for language maintenance among minority groups in Australia can, in part at least, be accounted for in terms of the theory of core values (Smolicz 1981). The term 'core value' refers to those values that are regarded as forming the most fundamental components or heartland of a group's culture, and act as identifying values which are symbolic of the group and its membership. It is through core values that social groups can be identified as distinctive cultural communities. Rejection of core values usually carries with it the threat of exclusion from the group. Indeed, the deviant individual may himself feel unable to continue as an 'authentic' member.

Whenever people feel that there is a direct link between their identity as a group and what they regard as the most crucial and distinguishing element of their culture, the element concerned becomes a core value for the group. Such core values are most clearly discerned when the group concerned is under threat and needs to defend its culture against external pressures. If the identity of a people is threatened with extinction, cultural life grows correspondingly more intense, more important, until culture itself, and especially its core elements, become the fundamental value around which people rally. This can be observed at present in the case of Central and Eastern European nations subjected to pressures foreign to their civilisation, or in the response of the corresponding ethnic groups in societies where the dominant majority is bent on a policy of cultural assimilation, as has been the case in the United States and Australia.

Cultural groups differ in the extent to which they emphasise their native tongues as core values. One may, for example, be an Irish nationalist and be unable to speak Irish Gaelic; indeed, the decline in the everyday use of the national language of Ireland (O'Buachalla 1984) has not extinguished the flame of Irish national consciousness or the desire to remain a distinctive people. There are also people in various countries of the world with a strongly developed sense of Jewish identity who for everyday communication purposes speak neither Hebrew, nor Yiddish, nor, indeed, any other Jewish-developed language or dialect. (It should be noted, however, that in Israel itself today there is hardly any doubt of the core valuation attached to Hebrew).

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There are, however, cultural groups that have continually stressed their language as the principal carrier of their culture and relied upon it as the main defence mechanism against assimilation. In this respect we need only mention Polish, the Baltic languages, Greek, or French in Québec. In each of these cases the groups concerned had to struggle against dominant neighbours to preserve their cultures and considered their languages as chief emblems of their survival. Major nations of the world, such as the English, have not in modern times been in danger of losing their languages, but have shown their attachment to them by propagating them among other ethnic groups (starting with the Celts) that came into their political or economic orbit. Indeed, the English language is a most important core element for the overwhelming majority of the British people and their descendants in former British possessions. Even English minority groups in such countries as Argentina and Chile have preserved their mother tongue after several generations of settlement in a Spanish-dominated environment.

In Australia, differences appear to exist in the degree of commitment that ethnic groups reveal toward their native languages. Evidence of this from the 1976 census data (Clyne 1982) and from figures on ethnic school attendance (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs 1982) has been discussed elsewhere (Smolicz 1984a).

For minority groups that are language-centred, the preservation of their linguistic core is indispensable for the transmission of their cultures to the next generation. Hence the defence of their mother tongue is seen by many cultural minorities as their first priority. In this light, the struggle for language maintenance is not some kind of abstract or 'high culture' phenomenon, but the effort of a group of people to preserve their ethnic identity. For such language-centred ethnic groups, there is hardly any doubt that language and culture are highly significant phenomena since they are concerned with people deciding their own destiny.

INVESTIGATING CORE VALUES IN AUSTRALIA

This paper reports research investigations designed to identify more clearly what constitutes the core values of the various cultures that make up the Australian multicultural reality. The concept of core values forms part of a humanistic sociological framework for the study of culture which has been outlined elsewhere (Smolicz 1974, 1979; Smolicz and Secombe 1981). Any research investigation therefore needs to follow the methodology of humanistic sociology and enable the participants within a given cultural context to define their own reality. This means analysing the activities and finding the beliefs of those involved in the life of a particular ethnic group. Such an investigation of what people think and do directs one towards identifying the core values of their group's culture. Cultural facts in the form of assessments and attitudes of group members may be gathered in a structured way by asking respondents to tick the appropriate box on a questionnaire form. This may prove a useful way of gathering much data in a comparatively short time, but suffers from the disadvantage that the researcher has set up the terms of the question in a standardised form which may ignore important features specific to one particular group.

Furthermore, the researcher has no means of ascertaining how the respondents have interpreted the question. Variations in the meaning given to words by

individuals from the same ethnic background, and even more across ethnic groups, may substantially influence the pattern of responses. Possibly, one of the greatest dangers of the questionnaire approach, when used alone and shorn of any humanistic component, occurs when the researcher from another ethnic (and especially the dominant) group asks questions which are either so simple that they merely scratch the surface of the real concerns of the group being investigated, or impose the values of his or her own group upon the respondents, in the erroneous belief that such values are universal (not to say superior) and hence should manifest themselves in all the responses. In this connection Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) remarked that it was perhaps not an accident that researchers from dominant groups studying minorities generally preferred to approach their subjects from a quantitative-positivistic standpoint, while it rested with investigators who themselves originated from the group studied, and who were familiar with its culture, to undertake in-depth qualitative researches.

A second less structured way of investigating core values involves asking participants to write memoirs or personal statements about their cultural experiences at home and school. According to humanistic sociological principles this method has a number of important advantages. Respondents are free to write in their own way with far less interference from the researcher in expressing their thoughts, feelings, aspirations and assessments. Their explanations and discussions often provide a cultural and linguistic context for the researcher to better understand the meaning which the respondents give to a particular cultural activity or situation. Such comments may provide insights and breadth of understanding of the phenomenon in question which go beyond what can be gained from the ticks and crosses of an 'unaided' questionnaire survey. Such data can be seen as 'dry' and hence fail to show what minority group members 'think and feel, what hurts them, what they need and what is their attitude toward the other (ethnic groups), the nation and the State' (Grabski 1982).

In summary, then, the most important advantage of the memoir approach to the study of current cultural reality in Australia lies in the fact that the attitudes of the writers are examined in the social context of their lives and that such attitudes can be studied as evolving rather than as static entities. This in turn throws light upon the whole process of reconstruction of the values of the Australian society under the impact of the changing attitudes of both the minority and majority group members brought about by the post-war influx of people and their corresponding cultural cores.

The two sources of cultural facts discussed above have been used for the investigations into core values reported in this paper. In addition, however, it is necessary to relate such *attitudinal* data to *concrete* facts about cultural patterns activated by the respondents. It is important to know whether the aspects of culture assessed as 'core' are in fact being used within ethnic groups in Australia, or whether they have been reduced to ideational, symbolic level only, with positive attitudes which are hardly ever activated in practice, as in the case of Gaelic for the great majority of the Irish people.

SURVEY DATA

In this section we report the results of a number of surveys that have been designed to find out more about the extent to which languages are regarded as

the core values of minority ethnic cultures in Australia. In each survey respondents were asked to indicate, by ticking a questionnaire sheet, what cultural features they considered most vital for the survival of their group's culture in Australia. The sheet provided a number of different aspects of culture for them to evaluate and asked respondents to assess them as 'vitaly important', 'important' or 'not important'.

The question was first given to the leading officials of ethnic school organisations, as part of Norst's 1982 survey of ethnic schools in which one of the authors participated. The study was done on behalf of the Australian Schools Commission (1983) which, however, did not make use of these data in its report.

Later, in the summer of 1982-83, the same question formed part of questionnaire study carried out among various ethnic youth, as they were gathered at their respective summer conventions or holiday camps. Replies were received from 75 young Latvian-Australians who were participating in the Latvian Summer High School at Aldinga in South Australia. The questionnaire was administered by one of the camp leaders, Professor Janis Priedkalns of Adelaide University. A second group of respondents consisted of 73 Polish-Australian young people, from all over Australia, who were attending a leadership Training Camp at Healesville near Melbourne. The third set of respondents were 103 Greek-Australian university students gathered in Adelaide for the conference of the National Union of Greek-Australian Students (NUGAS).

Another source of data was the graduate diploma in education course at the University of Adelaide in 1982 and 1984. Students were given the same question on core values at the beginning of their course. The respondents were classified into two groups: 42 were students from a non-English speaking background (i.e. at least one parent was of non-English speaking background) and 74 were students from an English speaking background (i.e. both parents were born either in Australia or in Great Britain). The latter group was included in the full understanding that most of them were monolinguals and as such would have a different vantage point on the study of language and culture to those who were from bi- or multilingual backgrounds. Hence the results from this group are reported not for comparison purposes, but to provide information on an important aspect of Australian society, namely the views on language and culture of at least some members of the majority group in this country.

It must be stressed that in fact none of the groups were intended to be used in the statistical analysis of correlations, cross-correlations, or regression pathways. Hence they were not matched on age, sex, birthplace, family background, length of residence in Australia, parental occupations or education. The purpose of gathering such data was to illuminate current social and linguistic reality and to better understand how the members of the ethnic groups concerned viewed themselves and their cultural heritage in the Australian context. It is useful in this connection to consider what similarities and differences there are in the evaluation of these groups, while accepting that the data are representative only of that particular group of respondents, in that particular time and in that particular situation. However, the three groups of ethnic youth surveyed were comparable in certain important ways. All were voluntarily attending activities designed to promote the language and culture of their group and to encourage social interaction among young people of the same ethnic background.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

For each survey group the aspects of culture were rank ordered on the basis of the percentage support given to the 'vitaly important' category. These results are presented in Table 1 (p.34ff.). The analysis revealed that in all the groups surveyed *speaking the ethnic language* was given the highest priority. Although the actual percentage support for the vitaly important category ranged from 91% among the Latvian group to 54% among diploma in education students of English speaking background, the percentage who claimed that speaking the ethnic language was *not* important was very small in all groups (0-3%). Among our respondents, the support for speaking the language is thus very clear cut, and represents a result not replicated for any other aspect of culture which they were asked to evaluate.

Not surprisingly the strongest support for *reading and writing* the ethnic language came from the ethnic school organisations; in most instances, the achievement of literacy in the home language was one of the primary aims of their existence. However, the degree of support from other groups (except the diploma students from a variety of non-English speaking backgrounds) was considerable. In the case of respondents from Latvian and English speaking backgrounds literacy ranked second in their evaluation of the most vitaly important aspects of culture needed for survival. Amongst the respondents of Polish and Greek background, the second place in rank order went to *close family ties*. This is an aspect of culture which often is very closely linked with the maintenance of oral language skills. This may help to explain why reading and writing the home languages have a slightly lower priority for these respondents. Again, among all the groups surveyed, the proportion who claimed that reading and writing were *not* important, was less than 10%.

In terms of rank ordering, the diploma in education students of English speaking background gave a higher priority to *literature* as vitaly important for their group's survival than any other group of respondents. In part this result may be interpreted as a consequence of the specialised educational background of this particular group of respondents, about a quarter of whom would have been graduates in English. It may also serve to highlight the fact that at the time of the surveys, opportunities for the respondents of Polish, Latvian and Greek background to study their ethnic literature at tertiary level were very few indeed.

Some idea of the relative strength of the respondents' evaluation of language as important for cultural survival, can be gained by comparing the support given to aspects of language, with that given, for example, to aspects of religion. With the interesting exception of the comparatively high priority given to *liturgy and ceremonies* among respondents of Polish background, the rank order given to the various aspects of religion ranged between 16 and 22. The percentage claiming that these aspects of culture were *not* important to their group's cultural survival ranged from 18% in the case of Greek respondents when assessing liturgy and ceremonies, to 90% for the English speaking group's evaluation of religious laws and rules.

It should also be noted, that the evaluation of those respondents of English-speaking background concerning the importance of English was comparable to that of the minority groups for their ethnic language. Perhaps the 'vitaly important' category for speaking was somewhat lower because members of the English speaking group were predominantly monolingual and did not feel that

the maintenance of their 'ethnic' language was under any kind of threat in Australia. However, when the three aspects of language are considered together, respondents of English-speaking background gave a higher priority to *their* ethnic language than any other group of respondents. This emphasises the high valuation of their own language by monolinguals from the dominant group, as well as by the bilingual members of the ethnic minority members studied.

In the case of the respondents of Polish, Latvian and Greek background it is possible to compare their evaluation of the importance of their home language with data on their *actual language usage*. Table 2 (p.37) shows that the majority of the respondents in all three groups claimed to speak only or mainly their ethnic language to parents and to older relatives. However, the proportion who said they used their ethnic language solely or mainly in conversation with brothers and sisters and ethnic peers fell substantially, and in the case of the Greek group amounted to a comparatively small number. This last result is comparable with the generational decline in language usage noted in earlier surveys (Smolicz and Harris 1977; Smolicz 1979). The fact that between a quarter and a half of the respondents of Latvian and Polish origin maintained their ethnic language with their peers represents a higher level of maintenance than that reported earlier for most ethnic groups. Even more important, is the comparatively high level of mastery in the ethnic language reported by respondents from all these groups. Table 3 (p.38) shows that 64% (for the Greeks), 69% (for the Poles) and 83% (for the Latvians) assessed their ability to understand and speak their home language as 'very good' or 'good'. In the case of reading and writing skills, 51% of the Greeks, 60% of the Poles and 75% of the Latvians claimed that their capacity to read and write their home language was 'very good' or 'good'.

The high level of usage and mastery revealed by the respondents of Latvian background reflects the high priority given to the ethnic language in the life of the home, their ethnic community, and in the organisation of the summer school which they were attending when completing the questionnaire. Table 4 (p.38) indicates that as many as 90% of the respondents of Latvian origin had attended Saturday School classes for four or more years — a fact which suggests their efficient organisation and effective language teaching, as well as the parental support they enjoyed. In the case of the Greeks, too, the respondents' ability to read and write their ethnic language was almost certainly the result of classes in Greek held after school hours, which parents insisted on their children attending. Approximately two thirds of the Greek-Australian respondents said they had attended such classes for four or more years.

PERSONAL COMMENTS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ETHNIC LANGUAGE

The quantitative data generated from surveys, such as those discussed above, provide useful and important information on the extent to which the ethnic language was highly evaluated by the respondents concerned. However, by itself a tick in the column under the heading 'vitaly important' for 'speaking', and 'reading' and 'writing' the home language, does not enable the researcher, and ultimately the readers, to understand what the ethnic language *means* in the experience of a particular respondent. This deeper level of understanding can be achieved through reading memoirs or personal accounts which enable individuals to explain their thoughts and feelings in their own way. A number of the respondents included in the diploma in education surveys later wrote about their

experiences of growing up in 'multicultural Australia'. One of the aspects they often chose to discuss was their ethnic language; how they acquired it; the extent of their mastery of it; and what it meant to them.

(a) Latvian memoirs

One young Australian-born graduate of Latvian descent summarised his experiences as follows:

Throughout my time at both primary and secondary school there was never any outright discouragement of my ethnicity but there was also no encouragement given by the education system to preserve my Latvian language and culture. Most teachers that taught me thought it was of value for me to maintain my cultural heritage and as far as possible to remain a bilingual person. This opinion came only from individual teachers and was not in my way encouraged or provided for by the state system of education, or the school. The general attitude of the education system at the time was perhaps one of non-recognition or indifference towards ethnic languages and traditions ... My schools did not provide any curricular time for the study of any ethnic language, culture or history. Lessons of history or social studies were concerned only with the Australian scene, or general Anglo-Saxon aspects of world history. Other cultures rarely got a mention in these lessons, except where they were in a conflict situation with the Anglo-Saxon culture i.e. when discussing wars in history. So although ethnicity was not considered bad or as a threat to the Australian way of life (although some people did think in this way), it was treated with indifference and to a large extent ignored. The fact that the Latvian culture, or any other ethnic culture, could have any positive value for Australians was not considered.

In my home the orientation was entirely different, as is to be expected. With the Latvian culture, as with many others, language was of central importance. My parents actively encouraged me to speak Latvian at home as a young child and so preserve my native tongue. They sent me to Latvian school each Saturday where I learnt about Latvian history, geography and traditions in general, but mainly so I would be able to speak, read and write in Latvian. Although there was a great deal of emphasis on Latvian culture, the Anglo-Saxon aspects were not ignored or discouraged. My parents never discouraged me from reading Australian books or comics or watching T.V. nor from having my Australian friends around and speaking English with them at home. I feel that this attitude of my parents and ethnic people generally is commendable for its broadmindedness and in most cases the complete reverse of the ways of thinking and general attitudes towards ethnics and their languages by Anglo-Australians...

Although my education in Latvian has not been at formal school level and my linguistic competence is not as developed as it should be to be able to discuss complex, intellectual matters, nevertheless I have at least been able to make use of my ethnic cultural reservoirs and I am a much wealthier person as a result.

A German-born woman of Latvian origin, who at the time of writing her comments was a secondary school teacher, as well as married with her own children, described her experiences with an even greater emphasis on language.

The Latvian culture is greatly dependent on the Latvian language. The preservation of the language caused many a contentious moment in my life. Although we spoke Latvian at home, I was never in the midst of a Latvian community of close friends or neighbours. As 'displaced' persons, we lived with a German family in Germany, not in a 'displaced' persons camp. This meant that, while the family spoke Latvian, everyone else spoke German and so I could speak either language – assuming, so my mother tells me, that everyone not of the family must speak German. On arrival in Australia, everyone around us spoke English. My father chose to live in the Adelaide Hills, again away from the mainstream of the Latvian community and so the use of Latvian, for me, was restricted to family and Saturday school. There were no Latvian children in my primary school and it is at this time that I can remember rejecting the language to the extent of walking on the opposite side of the road from my mother if she dared to speak to me in Latvian. Assimilation pressures at work!...

The Latvian school engendered only feelings of distaste because the customs and artifacts described were totally outside our experience and being reprimanded for not knowing what some obscure Latvian agricultural implement was did not endear the language or its teachers to many students. Also, the majority of students spoke English amongst themselves. Finishing Latvian (Saturday) school, which only went to seventh grade, and starting Australian high school occurred at the same time and for the next five years my contact with other Latvians was minimal. It was at university that my dormant ethnicity was reawakened. I had reached an age where being different was more acceptable and I stopped shying away from Latvians and the Latvian language. Today I consider myself to be conversationally fluent but marginally literate. Whenever technical language needs to be used it is necessary to insert English words. Peer pressure at school – after all, they could use no other language than English – and the assimilationist policies of school as well as the attitudes of surrounding society, benevolent as they were, overcame family pressure. From this it is apparent that even strong family pressure cannot maintain an ethnic language without external support...

Other language-oriented aspects of the Latvian culture such as literature, folklore and songs contribute to another value that could be said to be central, that being historicity. Latvians tend to see themselves as having maintained and transmitted a very old language against massive external pressures by various invading hordes and through much suffering. This suffering and pride at overcoming tremendous odds over the centuries is very evident in the music and traditional songs and listening to these has had a very powerful effect in developing my pride in being Latvian...

The transmission and development of the central features of Latvian culture was thus achieved by family perseverance more than anything else. Intra group interaction with other Latvians was minimal and so was not a prime factor. One could not say that living in an Anglo-Australian society had any positive effects on retention, but on the other hand the effects were not as negative for me as they were on other acquaintances who have been stopped in the street and told to speak English if they are going to live in Australia. Peer pressure and assimilationist schools were probably the fundamental factors in leaving me with only an ethnic linguistic residue. Needless to say, transmission to my own children is virtually non-existent.

Another Australian-born woman who was a science graduate revealed a similar evaluation of the importance of Latvian, but a different experience of the effectiveness of Saturday school:

Academically, I was not hindered as a result of my ethnicity or because I learnt English as a second language. My parents considered education as being very important and they always gave me their full encouragement. My education, however, did not end Friday afternoons. Every Saturday morning for eight years I attended Latvian school. Here I was taught to read and write in Latvian, Latvian folklore, history, geography and most importantly I met other Latvian children...

Reading provided no difficulty, however writing did. I had no errors or only an occasional error in dictation in English. However my Latvian dictations were teeming with errors. As Latvian is a phonetic language, you write what you hear; whereas in English you just had to learn to spell. Somehow, I could manage the second case a lot easier. This is possibly related to learning processes of different kinds.

During the early years I resented having to do extra homework associated with attending school Saturday mornings. As the years passed, I began to look forward to Saturday mornings, not because of the work, but for seeing my friends. Making Latvian friends is the first step towards becoming an active member of Latvian society, especially for the young. Most second generation Latvians, who attend Latvian Saturday School, make friends predominantly with other Latvians...

Gradually English became the dominant language although it was learnt as a second language. English is used at schools, at work wherever you go. Soon it becomes easier, especially about more complex subjects, to express yourself in English rather than in Latvian. Latvian is solely preserved for speaking with one's family, although this usually excludes brothers and sisters. The conversations with one's family are about everyday things. For such conversations only a limited vocabulary is required. If one's parents understand English there is no need to try to figure out a word in Latvian but its English equivalent is used instead. This has become a fairly common practice. I became acutely aware of this fact when I spoke to Latvians whose other language was German. I found myself having to offer explanations. Another factor, which limits vocabulary development is lack of suitable reading material. There are numerous Latvian books, however most have no appeal to the young generation.

Only recently [since moving to the Northern Territory] have I become more aware of my ethnic heritage. Living in an area with no Latvian community has made me see the importance of trying to preserve my ethnic heritage. I try to speak as much Latvian as possible with my husband...

I wish to make a further distinction here. When speaking of ethnics, people tend to dump all different cultural groups together as one. I feel that for the Latvian youth there is more at stake. This being that our homeland is not free to guide its own destiny. As a result the survival of the Latvian people and their language has become of prime importance to many young Latvians. This aspect is of little concern to such groups as Greeks and Italians as their homelands are flourishing nations...

Some of my parents' friends believed that the teaching of Latvian would hinder their children in an Anglo-Saxon society, so they attempted to bring up their children as Australians. Most of these children today lack a cultural identity and many cannot associate with either culture. Having no Latvian language limits their mixing in Latvian society and they do not feel that they belong to the Australian society either. This I believe can be explained by the fact that although they were not taught the language, their parents' homes were Latvian in the sense that both parents still spoke Latvian to one another, listened to Latvian music, had Latvian friends and ate Latvian foods. By withholding the teaching of the language they ostracised their children from their way of life. Today, the children are adults and it is too late to learn the language as it requires a lot of patience, hard work and perseverance. I find that some resent the fact that their parents did not teach them their mother tongue.

Today many different languages have become acceptable at the Matriculation level, including Latvian in Adelaide

since 1976. However to do Latvian, you must attend lessons after normal school hours. Is this right or wrong? Firstly, as Latvians are ... scattered through Adelaide's suburbs, the only feasible way of conducting classes is out of school hours, in a central location...

Secondly, I think that preserving the language of a national group does not necessarily lead to the preserving of the culture as a whole. I believe that you have to within yourself, see that you are Latvian. I studied German at school for five years but I did not associate myself with Germans. I did not feel I was a German.

So if Latvian was taught at school (outside its cultural context) you would not develop this affinity for being a Latvian. I believe that centrally located Saturday Morning School has more chance of success because you receive a *total* education in the culture and you make *good friends* with other Latvians.

Another German-born Latvian-Australian, who had specialised at higher degree level in German, wrote:

I could speak, read and write Latvian before I arrived in Australia, and very soon after my arrival I could speak, read and write in English as well. I always spoke Latvian at home, at the Latvian 'Saturday school', and with older Latvian friends, although I tended to speak English with my Latvian peers because it quickly became the language of immediate concerns and current interests. I spoke English at school, with my Australian friends and in public. (On public transport, for example, two Latvians would tend to speak Latvian in lowered voices, because there was an intangible air of resentment if they spoke in a language unknown to the majority)...

I firmly believe that language and culture are inextricably intertwined, and that each language I speak carries with it a different world of meanings. Language draws our attention to the way things are categorised in a particular community, illuminating what that community thinks is important and revealing particular aspects of environment and culture.

Latvian gives me a more affectionate, homely and sentimental view of the world. In Latvian, the use of the diminutive is a frequent stylistic device, expressing not only smallness but more often tenderness and endearment, and can refer to inanimate as well as animate things. Its abundant use in folk songs reflects a culture which has an affectionate regard not only for people and all things in nature, but also for the utensils used in daily life. My ability to see the world in this light does not switch off when I speak in English, just because these sentiments cannot find expression in English. In the same way, it may not be possible to translate into Latvian the complexity

of an English poem, with its delicate associations and linguistically conditioned subtleties, and I can understand that poem, as I can understand the Latvian folk song, and they both enrich my world...

The Latvian people in Australia attach great importance to the retention of the Latvian language. There is a feeling that if the language goes, the whole culture goes. Without the language, how can you adequately transmit all the other cultural values? The folk dancing I practised and the tapestries I still diligently sew would be empty gestures without the language.

(b) Polish memoirs

The comparative success of Latvian immigrants in maintaining their language even at literary level among their Australian-educated children can be seen in the case of three out of the four young people whose comments were recorded above. The personal statements of two Polish-Australian diploma in education students give a very different picture. One social science graduate explained that she was making her comments

in the light of the work *The Australian School through Children's Eyes*. The experiences related in this book were of particular interest to me because I know now my feelings of alienation and discrimination on both cultural and class levels were not, as I imagined, merely feelings of paranoia on my part. Many of my experiences have fallen into perspective and the renewal of old wounds has added to my sense of having lost my cultural heritage and tradition ... [The idea that] amongst the Polish people the core value is language ... was quite a revelation to me and explains why I feel such shame when I am asked by a 'Pole' if I speak Polish, and I have to reply that I do not. The Polish language, I have discovered, is symbolic, as it has allowed the 'Poles' as a group to survive the partition of Poland and subsequent persecution. My mother, although brought up in Germany always spoke Polish at home and considered herself Polish, I think because she was never accepted into German society due to her Polish parentage ... [For my part] I was not accepted in the Polish community in Australia because I could not speak Polish. This was, of course (so the Polish community assumed) due to my father's death (...when I was eight) and my mother's laxity...

Anglo-Australian ideology has made me (without being aware of it) deny my cultural background. I cannot speak Polish, I know nothing of Poland's history, I have given up Polish dancing and rarely mix with Polish people. I am still drawn however, to exhibitions of Polish art and I am determined that I shall learn to speak Polish and surprise Polish friends of the family. I seem to feel a

great sense of pride when the Pope appears on television or is mentioned at church, and I nearly always feel like crying when I hear of the plight of the Polish people, in the media.

The account of another Polish-Australian diploma in education student highlights the efforts he had to personally make to maintain his home language in the face of the overwhelming pressure for speaking English which he experienced. He had arrived in Australia with his family at about six years of age and considered that his

whole schooling experience was totally in the Australian context ... Even though the language of common ethnic origin was used by all the students from the migrant hostel when they started school, within a few weeks, English took over. It quickly became the medium of communication among children of the same ethnic background and even children from the same family group. Generally, they maintained their own language at home or speaking with elders but at peer group level, English expressions became dominant in a matter of weeks...

The latter primary school years and secondary schooling were spent at Catholic Schools where the proportion of Polish students was very low. Polish language and history were maintained in the home and in Saturday morning classes but the schools had nothing. There was no opposition or derision to ethnic culture and values but very little recognition was given to Eastern European origins in the midst of an Anglo-Irish-Australian curriculum.

The lack of ethnic support in the formal school setting was not only magnified but brought to the level of opposition in the peer group situation. There were many examples of derision and comment which were directed at migrant peculiarities and gave the impression that being different was wrong...

The migrant label could never be eradicated but there was a tendency during school days, to try to minimise its reality. The personal stance during those primary and secondary school days was to try to adopt a position of anglo-conformism whereby any apparent differences were kept quiet and the behaviour was to fit in with the peer group mode.

The home and the church were the only influences that tried to do the opposite. The parental attitude in the home was that English language and culture was all around us and we did not need to encourage it whereas Polish had to be given positive support. This meant that no English was allowed in the home except in the case of contact with people who could not speak the ethnic language. Saturday morning was set aside for studying the language formally in lessons that concentrated on the basics of reading, writing and history.

The church too did a little bit. Faithful allegiance to the Catholic Church has been a hallmark of Polish life throughout the centuries. Even though the parish was a strong Irish-Australian centre with an Irish parish priest at the head, the visit of the Polish chaplain to our country town once every two months allowed the local community to come together and strengthen ethnic ties. Even though the rest of the time there was strong adherence to the Australian parish, the sense of ethnic identity was preserved by this regular bi-monthly ritual in the Polish language...

Weight of study responsibilities as well as distance from centres of Polish culture (i.e. school groups and dancing groups based in Adelaide were too distant for regular involvement) meant that the Saturday study sessions faded. The basic language was maintained but the scope of historical and cultural development began to narrow...

After matriculation, the writer was accepted for a seminary where he began to study for the priesthood. The semi-monastic style of life meant that apart from the name, most other traces of Polishness were eradicated. The first thing to noticeably disappear was language. Enclosed in the seminary for nine months in the year and seeing the family group for a couple of hours a month did nothing for language retention. Even the holidays were mainly spent in part time work which brought the use of Polish down to a minimum. By the end of the second year of seminary study, the loss of fluency in the ethnic language was almost complete. It was hardly possible to construct a sentence without recourse to English words or phrases, let alone carry on a conversation which demanded breadth of vocabulary and grammatical experience.

The one saving feature was the beginning of language appreciation in the seminary. A couple of the seminary professors were keen on promoting a study of languages and had a lot to do with maintaining Italian, Greek and Latin studies for those who wanted to continue with them. They, on hearing about the difficulties of preserving Polish, became active in supporting me in trying to maintain what was already there. There was no possibility of introducing Polish into the curriculum as there was no other Polish student in the place but the family supplied good reading material and a short time was set aside once a week for personal study in the seminary. Through this, the basics of fluency in the language were preserved...

After ordination and reawakened contact with the Polish community, a return to some semblance of conversational Polish allowed for normal communication but still created problems in any type of formal speaking. To be able to offer mass was possible since only reading skills were required but in order to preach, wider cultural and language

capabilities were necessary. These slowly returned although genuine possibilities at literary Polish were limited.

In looking at that era it is difficult to assess the real factors that were at work in this cultural interaction. The writer's personal feelings would be towards bilingualism but the reality of the situation dictated that the ethnic language came almost to the point of extinction. Even after its resurgence, genuine bilingualism appeared absent. English remained the easiest medium for cultural life and contact. To go to a play or to read a book in Polish was never for leisure or pleasure, it was purely as a symbol and a way of maintaining one's ethnic position and stance...

To indicate that school had no part to play in deletion of a culture is an assertion that is difficult to accept. The seminary experience was not against culture and yet the environmental circumstances created by the institution were such that extraordinary means had to be taken to preserve the status quo. The fact that a semblance of language and culture was maintained could pinpoint that internal motivators play a significant part in final outcomes but they cannot be divorced from other influences and decisions which are part of the educational world. It does not mean that culture was consciously suppressed as happens in some totalitarian regimes but unconscious attitudes which on the surface are neutral, may indirectly give a sense of negativeness...

(c) Greek memoirs

We received quite a number of personal statements from diploma in education students of Greek origin. A number of their comments on the Greek language in Australia are given below. Though their accounts are not always as extended as the Polish and Latvian ones considered above, it is possible to isolate common themes and patterns. One girl, born in Greece, wrote:

When I came to Australia at the age of nine I found it very difficult to adjust to the primary school which was one of total Anglo-assimilation. I didn't have a good grounding in the Greek language and I didn't know a word of English. I felt uncomfortable, inferior and handicapped amongst the other children who knew their English so well. The only place I felt comfortable was the migrant English classes since the other children were new migrants as well. The other Greek children I knew went to Greek school on Saturdays. I also felt as if I didn't belong to their group and felt left out. The reason my parents did not want to send me to Greek school was because they wanted me to become familiar with the English language first which in their eyes was much more 'important' at that stage. I will always remember the culture conflict and discrimination I experienced at primary school.

At high school it was different, I had become competent with the English language and my Greek accent had disappeared.

I did not have any problems about not being accepted by the other students. Modern-Greek was introduced as part of the curriculum. Even though I could have chosen another language, I wanted to develop full literacy potential in the Greek language. This is because the Greek language constitutes the first major value for people of Greek origin. I was, however, not given the chance through my education to learn the Greek culture. My parents had taught me what I know but I have always felt that this was not adequate. I stress again the importance of multicultural education in both language and culture at both primary and secondary school...

Today I would most commonly identify myself as a Greek-Australian. I am proud to be Greek first and secondly Australian. The bicultural approach is very important to me since if there is a knowledge of and a feeling of both the Australian and the Greek cultures you don't feel alienated from the Australian community and from the Greek community.

Other respondents of Greek background were not fortunate enough to be able to study Greek as part of their secondary school curriculum. One Australian-born girl, an arts graduate, wrote:

Both my parents migrated to Australia from a coastal town in northeast Greece. Their level of schooling is not very high as neither had the opportunity to complete their primary school education. I was born in Adelaide and throughout my school years I attended state schools. It was only once I started school that I learnt the English language...

During my parents' first few years in Australia, they were sharing a house with other brothers and sisters until they could afford their own. The collectivist tradition and the extended family tradition was exercised very much in the same way as in Greece. I remember growing up in a house occupied by an uncle or an aunt who lived with us until they finished their studies or got married.

As I was the first born, Greek was the only language that I was initially exposed to but as the years progressed it became my second language. The influence of the school and the lack of facilities for the teaching of ethnic languages within the school curriculum resulted in the gradual decay of my use of my first language. My parents had always insisted we speak Greek at home and to our relatives but this became increasingly difficult to enforce. I began to speak English to my peers, my brother and sister and occasionally to my parents.

For six years I attended afternoon school but the fact that my Greek never reached a reasonably literary level is evidence of the standard of teaching provided by these schools. The students always spoke English amongst themselves; Greek being spoken to the 'teacher' only. We were situated in one big room, all the grades from one to

six arranged in rows. The teacher managed to spend approximately ten minutes with each grade, each individual reading a few lines from the text, and then tested on one line which was dictated to us by the teacher. The history and geography of Greece were never taught at these afternoon schools nor was Greek folklore. None of the students had any understanding of their ethnic culture, its values and traditions.

Greek was not offered as a subject at the school I was attending and consequently I did not have the opportunity to improve my Greek, which led to my gradual alienation from the Greek community. I have never joined a Greek club or organisation, nor has my brother or sister...

In my personal experience, my attitude towards learning my ethnic language was positive but because Greek was not offered at school, my parents sent me to an afternoon school in the hope that I would improve my Greek. Due to the inadequate standard of teaching available at the Greek afternoon school, the development of my ethnic language was very limited...

A basic value of the culture of the Greek people is that of language which is viewed as a central part of their self identity. A member of the Greek ethnic group is expected to speak Greek. Greeks therefore stress to their children the importance of learning their ethnic language and insist on it being used in the home. They also support efforts to teach the language outside the home, as is evident by the large number of Greek afternoon schools.

Nonetheless, despite these efforts by the Greek community, many second generation Greeks are unable to speak the language fluently. The reason for this is the ideology of the school system is representative only of the dominant cultural group. I was taught in the Anglo-Australian way and I knew the language at the expense of the Greek language which was left to gradually decay. Hence, communication with my parents was often problematic because of my difficulties with the ethnic language and the constant clashing of two cultural ideologies...

A big turning point in my life came when I deferred from my tertiary studies and travelled overseas. I stopped over in Greece and stayed for four months. It was there that I realised the sad state of my ethnic language and the lack of understanding I had of Greek culture. On my return to Australia I was adamant to develop my ethnic identity and enrolled in a college that was offering modern Greek. This is my second year at college. I am also a qualified Level 2 interpreter.

It is evident after tracing through some of my past experiences, that great changes have taken place in my attitudes vis-à-vis my ethnic identity. The fact that I lived in Greece and was exposed to a 'pure' Greek way of life helped me to realise the extent of cultural assimilation prevalent in Australian society.

In the opinion of another Australian-born girl of Greek-Cypriot background,

It would be impossible for Greek culture to maintain itself without the values of language, the family as a dependent unit and the religion of the Greek Orthodox Church. A culture cannot be maintained on the basis of folk dancing, national costumes and national food... As a university graduate I have accepted English as the universal language of Australia, ... yet throughout my school career there was no transitional course to help adjust to English as a new language, and bilingualism was not considered valuable. If anything, trying to maintain and develop your native tongue and learn English at the same time was thought far too difficult and a hindrance to Anglo-Australian conformism...

Many ethnic children have, like myself, been brought up to feel a conflict between being successful at Anglo-Australian school and retaining our ethnicity through our native tongue. The fear of losing my Greek culture heritage has been intensified by my parents, particularly now with the trend of mixed marriages. Their constant fear is that family relationships and ties of responsibility will break down with the loss of language. There is a fear and sorrow of not being able to communicate with a non-Greek daughter-in-law or son-in-law and subsequent grandchildren. With the loss of the Greek language so will other values such as the following of the Greek Orthodox religion be lost. The Greek language represents more than just a means of communication, it represents ties with the homeland which in turn provides a sense of really belonging.

The above explains the constant attempt by most Greek parents to make their children attend Greek school. In the past this has not been successful in retaining the Greek language within the individual. This was due to insufficient and inefficient teachers who were usually friends of the family and not trained to teach children. The method of teaching and learning was based on two activities which were remote from real understanding. Firstly, rewriting slabs of the text book (which incidentally was the only teaching material available) into an exercise book perfecting your style of writing, and secondly, reading out aloud to the teacher. These lessons were conducted after school hours and viewed by children like myself as an extra burden. Especially when time could be spent catching up on English homework, learning a musical instrument, or playing a sport like the Anglo-Australian children.

It is only recently that other languages apart from the traditional 'academic' French and German have been introduced into schools up to matriculation level. This has enabled the status of ethnic languages to be lifted and considered by many students as subjects worthy of serious study.

A fourth respondent gave a rather different assessment of her primary schooling, and the usefulness of Greek ethnic school classes.

Language, as a central value of our Greek culture, was transmitted to me from a very young age. Firstly, and most importantly, Greek was spoken with my parents in my home, with relatives and with family friends. However, this did not mean that English was banned in the home. As my parents owned a shop and we lived in a house behind the shop, I learnt English mainly through listening to customers and chatting away to them. Secondly the neighbourhood in the city in the late 1950s and early sixties, was predominantly Greek; those families who were not Greek, were Italian. There was therefore a network of Greek families with whom I spent much of my time; playing in their homes, playing in the street, walking to and from school. Greek, as the dominant language, was therefore reinforced in most aspects of my day.

After the age of five, the importance of the Greek language was instilled and developed in me by my compulsory attendance at Greek school on two afternoons per week. The fact that my parents took the trouble to take me to and from Greek school and that I had to attend, implied that it was important and natural to learn my native language. Many people have criticised ethnic schools because of uneven and poor teaching; there are also claims that the curriculum is geared to religious or other sectarian interests within the ethnic community; that there is a high drop out rate and that in the end little appears to be learnt. Some people also feel that ethnic schools are harmful competitors for the child's time and attention. Some of these points may be true in varying degrees in different schools, but what the critics must realise is that it is an advantage and not a disadvantage for a child to be bilingual. In my own personal experience, in the absence of Greek language and culture lessons at primary school, the Greek school was my only formal contact with the Greek language.

At the end of each year and on Greek national days such as the 25th March and the 28th October, school concerts were held. These were truly memorable events — standing on stage before a sea of beaming, proud parents we recited Greek poetry, sang songs, acted in short plays and danced in our colourful, national costumes. We were able to do these things, and do them well, because we were in the process of learning the language — through language we were able to become acquainted with Greek literature, traditions and our heritage.

The Greek school had another important value, indirectly linked with language; through speaking, reading and writing the same language as our parents we forged a common bond and prevented the possible disintegration of family life. My feelings now are that since the community and my parents

undertook the responsibility for the transmission and development of the Greek language as part of my education, it is now my responsibility to retain my language as a core value to the best of my ability and to transmit and develop this concept in my own family...

At primary school, where 80% of the children were Greek, we were not discouraged from using Greek in the school yard. We were fortunate in that we had teachers and a headmaster who did not make us feel ashamed of using our language and living our culture. In fact, our Grade Seven teacher, who later became and still is headmaster of the school, asked us to teach him Greek. He practised his Greek with mothers who were only too willing and proud to help him; he also visited his pupils and made every effort to speak Greek in their homes. By learning our language he upheld its worth and instilled in us a pride in our language and culture. I even remember him sitting in the Greek school, which took place in one of the school's classrooms, helping the Greek teacher maintain order and discipline; woe betide any pupil who did not turn up for Greek school! However, at the same time, it was stressed to us how important it was to learn to speak, read and write English correctly and English lessons were a very important part of the curriculum. By giving the English and Greek language equal status and worth, by accepting his students and their backgrounds for what they were, this teacher helped eliminate any insecurities his students may have had. I can honestly say that in primary school I experienced no culture conflict, no prejudices, no racial injustices. Judging by other people's personal experiences and literature, this seems to be indeed a rare situation.

The transmission and development of the Greek language was not evident at high school. Although I attended a high school where the main emphasis was on the arts and especially languages, Greek was not introduced into the curriculum until year 11. The mere fact that French and German were in the curriculum and Greek was not, denigrated the language's worth. Even when the language was introduced in year 11, it did not have the same status as French and German and we were not particularly encouraged to take it up. The school therefore devalued, through neglect and then indifference, the language values that I had brought to the school with me.

The comments of a girl of Greek background who represented the *third* generation of Greek-Australians are also very pertinent in regard to language maintenance.

My primary, secondary and tertiary years have been spent in 'Anglo-conformist' schools. I never found great difficulty in 'fitting in' with these educational institutions and indeed with the Australian way of life in general, probably because I am a third generation Australian-born Greek... and used to regard my Greek background in a secondary light in comparison with my largely Australian

background. Consequently, although I now consider myself as a bicultural individual, I am linguistically and culturally impoverished with respect to my Greek background which I feel is largely due to the Australian school system...

It is today that I wish the Australian school system had not been so blind to the long-term benefits of multi-cultural education. I do not feel that ethnic schools, operating outside normal school hours can be totally successful in attracting pupils and hence producing secure bilingual and bicultural individuals, precisely because of their physical set-up. During my primary school years my mother urged me to attend Greek school, which was held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on two nights a week after school. However, being stubborn, (a very Greek trait!) I refused to attend because these sessions were held outside normal school hours, which not only made the subject matter seem somehow inferior to the subjects studied in normal school hours, but also because this would lengthen the school day and decrease leisure time; namely it would be tedious!...

One of the reasons why I am today an 'insecure bilingual' is that my parents did not consistently speak Greek to me and my younger brother. The only real opportunity my brother and I had to practise our Greek was with our two grandmothers (both of whom migrated to Australia in the 1920s) and who only spoke Greek anyway. However, the Greek my brother and I spoke to them was purely conversational and although our comprehension of the language was and still is reasonably good, our spoken Greek is still basically conversational. Hence, my brother and I are living proof that the home environment is not enough for the perpetuation of ethnic languages...

The important point which arises here in my opinion, is, that if Greek linguistic and cultural education, had been part of the normal school curriculum, (i.e. afforded formal subject status along with mathematics, English, etc. at both primary and secondary school levels), I would have gladly studied this subject and would not have considered my ethnic language and culture inferior.

CONCLUSIONS

These memoirs or personal statements illustrate the way the maintenance of these particular cultures (Latvian, Polish and Greek) are seen by members of the generation which has now reached young adulthood to be essentially linked to the survival and development of their ethnic languages in Australia. Although, when taken on their own, these represent the views of only a handful of individuals, the figures from the larger scale surveys suggest that the general opinions and assessments expressed by the memoir writers (those recorded in this paper and in our previous works (cf. Smolicz and Secombe 1981), as well as those still unpublished and held in our files) are shared by a considerable number of their ethnic peers who responded to the questionnaires.

Evaluations contained in such memoirs form an effective basis for describing the structure of the social milieu of their authors, and when taken in conjunction with data obtained from other sources cannot be discounted as the eccentric obsessions of a few ethnocentric individuals. Objective facts derived from the continued and accelerating press for an expansion of the teaching of community languages in schools are also in line with the attitudes revealed in the memoirs. Moreover, all of the memoir writers, and all the participants in the Greek-Australian survey, as well as many among the Latvian- and Polish-Australian respondents, were tertiary students within the mainstream society dominated by Anglo-Australian derived values.

One interesting difference that seems to emerge is that there is a greater level of satisfaction with the working of the ethnic school system and its effectiveness in teaching the ethnic language and culture among most of the Latvian-Australian respondents, than among those for the other two ethnic backgrounds. Most Polish- and Greek-Australian writers commented on the school's failure to recognise and teach them their home languages and cultures, and evaluated rather negatively the effectiveness of ethnic schools. Many expressed regret and disappointment that they did not have the opportunity to pursue studies in their home language and culture as part of the regular school curriculum. Without this sort of *formal* and 'mainstreamed' educational support for their home linguistic experience, they had been unable to achieve the level of literacy they desired in their ethnic language.

The enormous expansion of the teaching of English as a second language to people from other linguistic backgrounds, both at school and adult levels, as witnessed by the funding of both the Commonwealth Schools Commission, and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs of its Adult Migrant Education Project (1983-84) shows that English in Australia is already accepted as a shared language and an overarching value (Smolicz 1984b). Marjoribanks' 1980 empirical studies also show the support of minority parents for this development. What has not yet perhaps been grasped by the dominant group is that this must be understood in relation to the coexistence of such a shared language with other community languages of ethnic minorities. Such coexistence is essential since, if these other languages were to atrophy, the cultures concerned would also crumble, leaving behind a residue which would not lead to cohesion but to resentment at the implied state of inferiority of minority group members. This feeling of resentment at the past neglect and devaluation is one of the most striking characteristics expressed by many of our memoir writers.

In his recent book on the growth and decay of languages, Stevenson (1983:127) comments on the bilingual (and often trilingual) abilities of the speakers of Scandinavian languages, which are small in size and scattered over a large area yet 'show no signs of withering'. In this connection he states an important principle that,

Languages tend to come under threat when the destinies of their speakers are taken over by others, as happened to the once widespread Celtic tongues.

With the precarious fates of Scottish and Irish Gaelic in mind (as well as the extinction of the Celtic tongues of Cornwall, and the Isle of Man), non-English language communities in Australia must be on their guard to see that their linguistic rights are protected and that their 'destinies ... are not taken over by others'. In contrast to the fate suffered by the Celts, the history of the Scandinavian peoples has been 'of their own making'.

In a multicultural society the various ethnic communities must take account of one another's cultural values and social aspirations. It is only the denial of diversity that breeds separatism and undermines cohesion. In particular it should be accepted that bilingualism (or even multilingualism) of individuals and linguistic pluralism in the state are perfectly compatible with the development of a stable Australian society. The application of this principle to educational policy is to be found in the report of the South Australian Ministerial Task Force on Multiculturalism and Education (1984) and, in particular, its recommendation that two languages (English, plus one other, foreign or community) 'should be part of the education of all students from reception to year 12'.

Table 1: Respondents' assessment of their culture's core values
(All percentages rounded to nearest whole number)

Aspect of culture	Assessment of importance	RESPONDENTS											
		Polish-Australian (N = 73)		Latvian-Australian (N = 75)		Greek-Australian (N = 102)		Dip.Ed. students (non-English speaking background) (N = 42)		Dip.Ed. students (English-speaking background) (N = 74)		Ethnic school organisations (N = 223)	
		Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%
<i>Language: Speaking</i>	Vitally important	1	69	1	91	1	81	1	62	1	54	1	86
	Important		30		9		18		36		43		14
	Not important		1		0		1		2		3		0
Reading and writing	Vitally important	3	45	2	71	5	46	11	35	2	52	2	79
	Important		46		29		52		58		41		20
	Not important		9		0		3		7		7		1
Literature	Vitally important	11	28	13	34	15	27	16	23	8	37	10	43
	Important		42		58		54		62		58		47
	Not important		30		8		20		5		5		10
<i>Knowledge/ appreciation of: History of ethnic group</i>	Vitally important	9	34	9	51	11	39	7	43	7	38	12	42
	Important		65		45		56		40		54		50
	Not important		1		4		5		17		8		8
Geography of home country	Vitally important	16	22	14	33	17	24	9	38	13	29	16	32
	Important		73		59		65		50		54		54
	Not important		6		8		11		12		17		14
Love of homeland	Vitally important	4	43	6	61	10	40	17	22	10	34	14	36
	Important		47		31		45		56		45		53
	Not important		10		8		15		22		21		12
Contribution of ethnic culture	Vitally important	8	37	14	32	13	34	4	47	14	25	8	48
	Important		51		60		63		42		59		40
	Not important		13		8		3		11		16		12
Customs, celebrations	Vitally important	7	40	7	59	3	48	14	24	15	21	13	38
	Important		56		37		50		73		56		55
	Not important		4		4		3		2		23		7

Table 1 (continued)

Aspect of culture	Assessment of importance	RESPONDENTS											
		Polish-Australian (N = 73)		Latvian-Australian (N = 75)		Greek-Australian (N = 102)		Dip.Ed. students (non-English speaking background) (N = 42)		Dip.Ed. students (English-speaking background) (N = 74)		Ethnic school organisations (N = 223)	
		Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%
<i>Religion: Doctrine</i>	Vitaly important	18	19	20	23	19	19	18	18	16	6	17	31*
	Important		45		41		58		39		31		55
	Not important		36		37		22		43		63		14
Liturgy and ceremonies	Vitaly important	11	28	18	10	18	23	20	14	16	6	—	n/a
	Important		60		56		59		50		20		
	Not important		12		34		18		36		74		
Laws and rules	Vitaly important	22	12	21	11	22	9	22	6	19	3	—	n/a
	Important		43		24		38		23		7		
	Not important		46		65		53		71		90		
<i>Folklore: Songs and music</i>	Vitaly important	10	30	3	66	5	46	13	31	11	34	10	43
	Important		70		32		52		59		52		52
	Not important		0		1		2		10		14		5
National dances	Vitaly important	14	26	4	65	7	44	14	24	17	18	14	36
	Important		70		35		53		52		49		53
	Not important		4		0		3		24		32		11
Traditional arts and crafts	Vitaly important	15	23	8	56	14	33	10	36	17	18	18	28
	Important		68		40		55		51		49		52
	Not important		9		4		12		13		32		20
<i>Social relations: Respect for the aged</i>	Vitaly important	19	17	19	26	12	37	8	41	12	33	6	56
	Important		67		60		55		49		54		40
	Not important		16		14		8		10		13		4
Close family ties	Vitaly important	2	46	12	44	2	51	2	51	6	40	3	65
	Important		51		51		43		44		40		31
	Not important		3		6		6		5		20		5

* For this group of respondents, Religion was presented as a general category and not broken down further into the three components listed here.

Table 1 (continued)

Aspect of culture	Assessment of importance	RESPONDENTS											
		Polish-Australian (N = 73)		Latvian-Australian (N = 75)		Greek-Australian (N = 102)		Dip.Ed. students (non-English speaking background) (N = 42)		Dip.Ed. students (English-speaking background) (N = 74)		Ethnic group organisations (N = 223)	
		Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%
Friends from own ethnic group	Vitally important	5	41	4	65	16	24	19	15	16	20	9	46
	Important		50		33		62		45		33		48
	Not important		9		1		14		40		47		6
Marrying within own ethnic group	Vitally important	21	14	11	47	21	15	20	14	18	5	19	24
	Important		41		37		49		8		10		32
	Not important		46		16		36		78		85		44
Communication with family and ethnic community	Vitally important	5	41	10	49	4	47	6	45	9	36	3	65
	Important		54		51		53		50		52		30
	Not important		4		0		1		5		12		5
<i>Living in multicultural Australia:</i> Helping fellow ethnics settle	Vitally important	17	20	17	30	9	43	3	48	4	42	5	57
	Important		68		60		51		48		40		36
	Not important		12		10		6		4		18		8
Teaching other ethnics your language	Vitally important	20	16	21	11	20	18	12	34	3	43	20	18
	Important		39		41		44		34		38		45
	Not important		45		49		38		32		19		37
Contributing to multi-cultural Australia	Vitally important	11	28	16	31	7	44	5	46	4	42	7	49
	Important		51		53		49		41		42		47
	Not important		21		16		7		13		16		4

Language used to	Language used	RESPONDENTS		
		Polish-Australian (N = 73)	Latvian-Australian (N = 75)	Greek-Australian (N = 102)
Grandparents	only ethnic	51	84	54
	mainly ethnic	15	8	7
	mainly English	0	1	4
	only English	4	0	2
	n/a	30	7	33
Mother	only ethnic	47	52	36
	mainly ethnic	26	40	42
	mainly English	12	8	12
	only English	9	0	9
	n/a	6	0	1
Father	only ethnic	45	60	31
	mainly ethnic	27	33	35
	mainly English	6	4	17
	only English	13	0	10
	n/a	9	3	7
Older relatives	only ethnic	45	39	12
	mainly ethnic	41	55	51
	mainly English	11	7	30
	only English	3	0	7
	n/a	0	0	0
Siblings	only ethnic	24	12	1
	mainly ethnic	6	49	7
	mainly English	36	33	69
	only English	25	4	23
	n/a	9	1	0
Friends	only ethnic	40	3	1
	mainly ethnic	14	24	8
	mainly English	36	64	72
	only English	11	7	19
	n/a	0	3	0

Table 3: Self-assessment of ability in home language (All figures expressed as percentages rounded to nearest whole number)				
Language skills	Assessment of ability	Ethnic group		
		Polish-Australian (N = 73)	Latvian-Australian (N = 75)	Greek-Australian (N = 102)
Understanding and speaking	very good	48	51	33
	good	21	32	31
	fairly good	22	16	24
	a little	10	1	9
	none at all	0	0	3
Reading and writing	very good	44	32	20
	good	16	43	31
	fairly good	18	23	23
	a little	18	3	19
	none at all	4	0	8

Table 4: Attendance at ethnic school (All figures expressed as percentages rounded to nearest whole number)			
Ethnic school attendance	RESPONDENTS		
	Polish-Australian (N = 73)	Latvian-Australian (N = 75)	Greek-Australian (N = 102)
never	42	5	11
< 1 year	0	0	7
1-2 years	6	1	12
2-3 years	10	3	5
4+ years	42	91	66