

An Investigation of
the Maintenance of Minority Cultures
and Equal Opportunity with Special Reference to
Australian Young People of Slavonic Origin

by

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Abstract

The thesis is an investigation into the maintenance and modification of minority cultures in relation to multicultural values and the principles of equal opportunity adopted by educational institutions, with special reference to Australian young people of Slavonic origin.

This study is focused on two complementary objectives. One is to ascertain the extent to which young Australians from Slavonic Minority groups are able and willing to preserve their ethnic cultures. This part of the study was based on questionnaires gathered from young Australians of Slavonic origins (Croatian, Polish and Ukrainian), with approximately 50 people from each group. The second objective is to explore the role of the government and educational institutions in the process of cultural maintenance as against cultural assimilation, through an investigation of current legislation and policies. The basis of the second part of the thesis was an analysis of the concept of equal opportunity related to multiculturalism in postsecondary education institutions.

This thesis, in accordance with the methodology of humanistic sociology, sought to investigate the cultural needs of ethnic minorities from their point of view. The theoretical framework of Humanistic sociology, as elaborated by Znaniecki, Thomas and MacIver argues that the investigation of social and cultural phenomena is best undertaken from the perspective of the participants as active agents in their context. The framework was extended to cultural and social systems at personal and group level in relation to ethnically plural societies, with special reference to development in Australia and was then used for the analysis of the questionnaire data, federal and state equal opportunity legislation, and policy statements published by the governments and educational institutions.

The result of the research investigation highlighted the issue of preservation of ethnic cultures, especially languages in Australia. The analysis of the concept of equal opportunity and multicultural policy revealed close links between them. However, these links had little, if any, recognition in the policies and practices of the educational institutions.

This thesis also considered the political and educational implications and made recommendations of a practical nature to develop the maintenance of the ethnic languages and cultures for the benefit of the individuals, minority groups and the whole nation as well.

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