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# **...NOT ONE INDIGENOUS FAMILY WAS NOT AFFECTED BY THE FORCIBLE REMOVALS.**

Which were the reasons behind the removal of Aboriginal children?

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## Abstract

The purpose of this essay was to investigate why the Australian government, up until the early 1970s, decided to remove Aboriginal children from their families and to determine if this practice was more generally accepted by Western society. My main questions were: which were the reasons the Australian government chose to remove Aboriginal children from their families and which were the reasons for removing children from their families in Sweden at this time. With the answers to these questions in mind, I hope to be able to conclude whether or not the actions taken were more generally accepted. To aid in my study, I have read literature about the aborigines and about Swedish welfare and childcare.

I found that one reason why Aboriginal children were removed was to assimilate them, as an outside group, into the established group and the Western society. It was found that since it is easiest to teach children new habits, most actions taken concerned them. Removing children from families was a way of removing children from environments that were not good for their development. I have found that most actions taken seem to have been more generally accepted by Western society.

Key words: Aboriginal, indigenous peoples, Australia, aborigines, foster care

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## **Preface**

While working with this essay I have read a lot of different books and some of the books discuss ideas which are far away from the ideas that exist in society today. I have read and felt horror and been thankful for living now and not fifty years ago. The books are discussing questions far away from my reality; Are the aborigines the lowest race in existence? They are also about how it is very doubtful that 'white' people killed so many aborigines and that it was actually Aboriginal tribes that committed most of the killings of Aboriginal people. But the more recent books no longer try to justify the violence but try to see history from the aborigine's point of view. I have learnt a lot about Australia and about the aborigine's culture and it is not possible to include everything in this essay.

I would like to express my gratitude to my adviser at the university, professor Per Gunnar Edebalk for helping me limit this essay into something that I was able to complete on time and for giving me advice on how to structure it. I would as well like to express my gratitude to my friend Kathryn Lacerte for the work with helping me with the text.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Problem

Native people inhabited Australia a long time before the British people came to the country to settle down there in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The aborigines lived in harmony with nature and believed that the earth is the source of all good things. The arrival of the white man was something that changed the lives of the aborigines in many ways. When the British arrived to the different countries they usually made the aborigines that lived in the country sign a treaty where they gave up the right to their land. This didn't happen in Australia, instead the white man declared the land as "Terra Nullius" – empty land, and therefore no treaty was signed with the aborigines. (Hammarberg, 2000)

When the British started to settle in Australia, mainly along the coast, the aborigines that lived there started to suffer from starvation and also from diseases brought by the settlers. Since the aborigines had always shared their food supplies with one another, they started taking from the settlers what they believed to be rightfully theirs. This led to many of the aborigines being killed and it was not uncommon for the settler to kill entire group of aborigines, not only the thief. (a.a.)

To deal with 'the Aboriginal problem' the British colonial government constituted different laws that limited the rights of the aborigines and made them live on reserves. There the white man would be able to control the group and they would learn the western way of living and here they would receive some food and clothes. As a way of teaching the aborigines how to live in the western society they started removing the children from their families to place them in boarding schools and institutions. (a.a.)

In Australia the children of the aborigine families were taken away from them and were put in foster homes or institutions or adopted to non-indigenous families. In Australia children have been removed from their families since the first days of the

arrival of the British until the 1970's. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

What happened in Australia during the time of colonisation and until the 1970's is something that affects all the people living in Australia, both aborigines and non-indigenous. There are still tensions between the two groups and reconciliation from both sides has to be sought. (Bretherton & Mellor, 2006)

## **1.2 Purpose**

The main purpose of this undergraduate thesis is to see why the Australian government decided to remove Aboriginal children from their families. I will also try to determine if the course of actions taken were more generally accepted in western society, to achieve the goals the Australian government sought. In my attempt to verify this I will describe what the view on foster placements in Sweden was during the same time and how the gypsy children in Sweden were treated.

## **1.3 Questions**

With the abovementioned in mind I set out to answer the following questions:

- ⌘ Which were the reasons that the government in Australia chose to remove the Aboriginal children from their families?
  
- ⌘ As a help for my understanding of what the view on foster care was in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century I would like to find out what the reasons for removing children from their families in Sweden were at this time?
  
- ⌘ With the answers from the above mentioned questions I hope to be able to make a statement on whether the actions taken were more generally accepted or not.

## 1.4 Concept definitions

*Aborigines*: “Strictly, the indigenous inhabitants of a country. The term is usually applied to Native Australians.” (World Encyclopedia)

*The stolen generations*: “the Aboriginal people removed from their families as children...to be brought up by white foster families or in institutions”. (The Concise Oxford English Dictionary)

## 1.5 Method

To be able to give an answer to my questions I will start by giving a general presentation of Australia and of the aborigines. I will then continue by briefly describing the white man’s arrival in Australia and the colonization. After this I will give a description of why the children were systematically being removed from their families with focus on what the government wanted to achieve by doing this.

Then I will briefly present how the child welfare politics in Sweden were at the same time in history and what the opinions on foster care were. Here I will describe the general view as well as the view on how to take care of the gypsies’ children.

In my analysis I will discuss why the government in Australia chose to remove the children from their families and refer to how it was in Sweden during the same time in history, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As help for making my analysis I will in chapter two briefly describe some ideas and approaches on different groups that exist in a society and why children should be placed in foster care in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To find literature about my topic I have searched for books both in the Swedish Library Catalogue System ‘Libris’ and in the University of Lund’s Library Catalogue System ‘Lovisa’. I have also searched for articles in Cambridge Scientific Abstract database and in the Swedish database ‘Xerxes’ where I can find old theses and

undergraduate theses. I have used the keywords, Aborigines, Indigenous peoples, Australia, The stolen generations, Children and their Swedish translations.

The literature that I have found has been edited or written by persons active at different Universities, most of the times in the field of anthropology. I have also used the Australian National Inquiry about the Stolen Generations that was made in 1996. For this report 777 persons were interviewed and another 1000 sent in written testimonies. Many of those that were interviewed were removed from their families as children or were parents of children that were removed.

The purpose of the Australian National Inquiry about the Stolen Generations was to investigate what had happened in the past to facilitate reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-indigenous groups in Australia. By using this report I have access to information that was collected from a large number of aborigines and others that were affected in one way or another by the forcible removals. However, not all aborigines that were removed have been interviewed and therefore some opinions might not be represented in this report.

Not any of the other literature that I have read had the same questions as I have but they have set out to explain the aborigines culture and way of life or to give a historical review of the aborigines and how they lived before and during colonisation. The books want to give a voice to the Aboriginal people, even though aborigines most of the time did not write them. Some of the books I had access to were written when children were still being removed from their families. While reading these books I have been aware that the opinions about this were different than they are now and this many times shows many times in the text.

Since I only use books that have other questions than I do, except the National Inquiry, which had, more questions than I do, I have found little information about my topic in each one of the different books. The different authors have written more or less about the Stolen Generations and have different starting points in their books. I believe that this both limits and widens my reason. By finding information about the stolen generations in different books the various authors writes about it from different

points of view, which gives me many different ways of approaching my questions. But it also limits my research, as there is very little information about it in some books.

The problem in doing a literature review is that I have to rely on previous research. I do not create any information about the aborigines on my own but I study the already existing information. When reading the reports and the books I have to be constantly aware of who wrote it, for whom it is produced and also when it was produced; especially because this is a topic where opinions have changed drastically over the past 30 years. Therefore, even if they deal with something that happened a much longer time ago the opinions existing in society when the report was produced will influence the report. This has been very obvious to me many times but I am also aware that I am influenced by the opinions that exist in society today.

## **1.6 Previous research**

There is a lot of previous research about the aborigines available. It is possible to find information about the different tribes that have existed in Australia, information about the aborigines' culture and how their society was organized. There is also a lot of research about the colonisation and its affects on the aborigines' culture and lives. Many of the books cover everything that happened and some go into some questions more deeply and some describe separate tribes. I have found that the concept terra nullius and the aborigines land rights is still a question that is very much alive in the literature. Other topics that are of interest in today's society are the number of aborigines that died in custody and also the question about the Stolen Generations. The last years all of these questions gather around the topic of how reconciliation between the two ethnic groups can take place.

## 2. IDEOLOGIES AND APPROACHES ON CHILD WELFARE AND ON GROUPS

Johanna Sköld (2003) puts forward four hypotheses to why children were placed in foster care in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These four hypotheses are those that she has found in earlier research on child welfare and foster placements. The four different hypotheses on why children were placed in foster care are:

- ⌘ The parents were sick or had died.
- ⌘ The child was born outside of marriage and this forced the mother to leave the children to foster care because of stigma from the rest of the society.
- ⌘ The family couldn't take care of the children and at the same time work to support themselves so the child was placed in foster care as a way of providing the child with day care.
- ⌘ Society considered the family to be insufficient or inadequate to care for the child.

Montesino writes about Elias & Scotson's and about Tilly's discussion of the established and the outsider. The established are those that arrive at a place first. By arriving first you are the one that can set the conditions for living there and also make use of the resources that are needed for survival. To be able to keep the position as the group that controls the privileges the established group has to have solidarity within. The established and the outsiders exist next to each other and one does not exist without the other. (Montesino, 2002)

Montesino is writing about Geremek's categories 'the righteous poor' and the 'unrighteous poor'. The righteous poor are those who belong to a geographical place but are poor because of inability to work due to age or sickness. The unrighteous poor are those that can work but do not do so and those unable to work but that do not belong to a geographical place. Groups of people that were moving around were ascribed negative characteristics and belonged to the group of unrighteous poor. (a.a.)

Assimilation is characterized by ideas of that various ethnic groups should gather around one common culture and of a reduction of cultural, psychological and social dissimilarities between groups in a society. Assimilation is an adjustment of the immigrants to become more alike the main group, which is usually the natives in a country. (Diaz, 1993)

### **3. AUSTRALIA**

Australia is the smallest continent and has 20,4 million inhabitants. Australia has an area of 7,7 million square kilometres. (USA is 9,52 million square kilometres and Sweden is 449 964 square kilometres). Australia has a tropical and subtropical climate. Long periods without rain are not uncommon. 90 % of the people live in the cities or villages on the east and southwest coast. The inner part of the country, which covers almost 70 % of the land, has no people living in it. Only 2 % of the land is covered with forest. (Nationalencyklopedin)

Australia is divided into states and territories. The six states in Australia have inner self-government and constitute their own laws. The federal government rules over the two territories in Australia even though these are starting to become more self-governed now. Australia is a democratic monarchy. Queen Elisabeth II is represented by a general governor and in each state by a governor. (a.a.)

#### **3.1 The aborigines**

The aborigines arrived on the continent at least 70 000 years ago and maybe even as much as 175 000 years ago. Through different calculations it has been estimated that in the 1770's there were between 500 000 and one million aborigines living in Australia. (Fletcher, 1999)

The aborigines lived as nomadic food-gatherers and were divided into different tribes and groups. The tribes differed in customs, laws and myths and the relationship between them were not friendly in all cases. (Elkin, 1945) Each tribe consisted of 400-600 persons (Tindale, 1974).

The aborigines are a spiritual people and their spirituality is connected with the land and the earth. The earth is the source of the spirituality and of all good. They believe they do not own the earth but the earth in fact owns them and that life is about caring and sharing with each other. It was the men's job to hunt animals and to protect the family against threat from animals or enemies. During the days the women had to

collect herbs, fruits and smaller animals in case the men's hunt was unsuccessful. The women in the group were also responsible for looking after the children. Everyone had to help and contribute to the family's survival, caring and sharing. (Hammarberg, 2000)

As an aborigine you are born into a tribe and each tribe has different holy places and different land to take care of and to respect. This is something you have to do for all of your life and the aborigines believe that after death the soul leaves the body and goes to the spiritual world to meet the holy ancestors. (a.a.)

The aborigines in Australia spoke more than 250 languages and 700 different dialects from the beginning. Now only 20 of these languages are still kept alive. The language is connected with the land where you were born and is independent of which tribe you belong to. (a.a.)

Approximately 2.5 percent of the total Australian population belongs to the Aboriginal group. Compared to the group of non-indigenous Australians they are to a disadvantage in many socio-economic situations. Their unemployment rate is well above the national average and their life expectancy at birth is 20 years less than that of non-indigenous Australians. (Papillon & Cosentino, 2004)

### **3.2 The White mans arrival**

When Cook sailed out in 1768 his instructions were to, with the natives consent, take possession of convenient situations or if the land was found uninhabited to take possession of it as the first discoverers. During that time in history land was considered to be inhabited if the land was not being cultivated or if there were no signs of a functional society. Since the British did not consider the aborigines' society to classify into their definition of one, they claimed the land as terra nullius and took possession of it. (Frost, 1990)

When the settlers arrived the aborigines soon suffered from the shortage of food that came to be. Many of the aborigines that lived by the coast where the first settlers

settled down died of starvation. Many also died from diseases brought by the British people. And still many more were killed by the settlers. In 1835 vicar William Yate justified the massacres with the statement: "...they were no better than dogs... shooting them was no worse than shooting a dog that barks..." (Hammarberg, 2000 page 49). Approximately 2000 settlers and more than 20 000 aborigines were killed in different violent conflicts since the settlers arrival and until the 1920's. (Reynolds, 1999)

In 1787 a fleet with approximately 1000 persons sailed to Australia, two thirds of the people on board were convicts. This was a way for the British State to solve their problem with over-crowded prisons. 160 000 convicts have been estimated to have been shipped to Australia. (Nationalencyklopedin)

Until 1967 the aborigines in Australia were not considered to be Australian citizens and didn't have any of the rights that the non-indigenous population have. In the Constitutional Act of 1900, the aborigines were explicitly considered to be outside the jurisdiction of commonwealth and of Australian citizenship. (Papillon & Cosentino, 2004)

### **3.3 The stolen generations**

Aboriginal children have been removed from their families since the very first day that the settlers arrived in Australia. The government and missionaries wanted the children to learn the European values and habits so that they could work for them later on. In 1814 the first school for Aboriginal children was funded and the aborigines first impression of the school was positive. But after a few years, when they realized that the aim of the school was to distance the children from their families and communities they started regarding the school with hostility. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

In the Elementary Education Act from 1871 there was no difference made between the Aboriginal children and the non-aboriginal children, the responsibility of their education belonged to the government. But in 1897 the responsibility of the

Aboriginal children's education was passed over to the Aborigines Department instead and the children were then sent to different mission stations for their education. (Hunter, 1993)

Education was the way for the settlers to teach the aborigines their way of living. They considered the adults to be too old to learn the new ways but instead they put their hope to the children. They focused on the children of mixed descent and believed that removing the children from their Aboriginal mothers and putting them in boarding schools would make them forget their roots and adapt to the western society easier. (Coates, 2004)

There was much brutality in the contact between aborigines and the settlers and in these contacts the aborigines often lost land and people. Their spears didn't help against the settlers' weapons and many aborigines were killed. (Hammarberg, 2000) The colonial government was unable or unwilling to put an end to this treatment and the news of it reached the British Government. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they appointed a Select Committee to investigate the problem and they came with the suggestion of establishing a protectorate system. This would give the aborigines land areas to live in and there they wouldn't disturb the settlers. Chief Protectors or Protector Boards were responsible for the welfare of the aborigines and in some areas they were also made the legal guardian of all the children in their region. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

The number of aborigines of full descent got smaller but in the late nineteenth century there were a lot of children of mixed descent. Most of these children identified themselves as aborigines and not as white people. The government; however, decided that the children of mixed descent were responsible for helping with the work of developing Australia and the Australian economy. A way of fulfilling this was to send the children of mixed descent away from their families to other parts of the country to work for non-indigenous families. (a.a.)

The protector system was used to legislate the removing of children from their native families. By using the laws concerning the Protector as the legal guardian of the Aboriginal children they never had to prove to a court that the child was being

neglected by its parents. Another method of legislating the removal of children of mixed descent was to force all aborigines to live on reserves but those that were not full-descent aborigines were not allowed to live there. The protectors in some of the areas did this to force all those of mixed descent into the cities. (a.a.)

In records from New South Wales from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the reasons for removing Aboriginal children could be described as 'being Aboriginal' and other common reasons were 'to send to service', 'being 14 years', 'at risk of immorality', 'neglected', 'to get her away from surroundings of Aboriginal station/Removal from idle reserve life' and 'orphan'. It was more girls than boys that were removed from their families. After finishing their education the girls were sent to homes to work as domestics. In cases that girls became pregnant, the children were taken away from them and adopted to white families or were placed in institutions. (a.a.)

In 1940 the different States and territories in Australia started to remove the Aboriginal children by using the same child welfare laws as when removing non-indigenous children from their families. However, they interpreted the term 'neglect' to apply as soon as the family was poor. Since the Aboriginal families did not get any social security benefits when they were in financial need it was quite easy for them to apply this criteria and make it legal to remove the children. The Aboriginal families were often controlled and as soon as their behaviour did not comply with the non-indigenous norm they considered it a reason to remove the children. When they started using the same child welfare laws as for non-indigenous children fewer children were not removed from their families. (a.a.)

In 1950 assimilation was the key term in the treatment of the aborigines. This meant that all Aboriginal, full and half descendents, should be assimilated into living like the white Australians. During the 1950's and 60's more children than ever were being removed. Now they did not only use the term neglect as reason but other reasons were to attend schools or receive medical treatment far away and some children were adopted as infants. (a.a.)

The government tried to eliminate the aborigines as a culturally different group in Australia and therefore placed aborigines in institutions where they would learn the

western way of living. Mission stations, churches or government welfare organisations mainly ran the institutions. (Fletcher, 1999)

When placing children in different institutions or in foster homes in the 1940's and 1950's the colour of their skin usually decided which place they were to be sent to. Children that had lighter skin were sent to non-indigenous foster homes or to institutions for non-indigenous children. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

In 1950 they were also influenced by a UN report that stated the importance of not removing children from their families but instead helping the families with the problems they are experiencing. These theories were mostly applied to the non-indigenous families. (a.a.)

In 1965 it was concluded that the way of assimilation did not work out the way they had planned it. The Aborigines refused to give up their culture and way of living. A problem was also discrimination from non-indigenous peoples towards the aborigines. After the election in 1972 the Aboriginal families could receive funding for challenging the applications for removing their children. This led to a decrease in the number of children being removed than before. In 1976 there was a conference where the focus was on the fact that the majority of indigenous children were placed in non-indigenous families and how they therefore had to grow up in a racist society with no one to identify with. The growing awareness of this led to a stop in the removal of indigenous children and also organisations that worked with family tracing were set up. (a.a.)

It is impossible to know how many children were removed by force since the documentation is not complete and in many cases missing. It is also difficult to estimate how many of the children were removed since this was different depending on which period in time and in which region in Australia. In the period between 1910 and 1970 not one indigenous family was not affected by the forcible removals. Most of the Aboriginal families in Australia have been affected by the removal of one or more children in one or more generations. (a.a.)

#### 4. SWEDISH CHILD WELFARE DURING THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

To recognise and remove children from families that might cause negative development for the children was for a long time considered to be the right thing to do. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this was something well accepted in many countries in Europe. (Vinnerljung, 1996)

In 1930 and 1940 it was mostly of moral concern that children were taken into the care of the State. During the 50's and 60's it was medical diagnoses and in the 70's and 80's it was psychological theories that were the dominant reasons. (a.a.)

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the question of what to do with the gypsies was dealt with in the same way as the question of what to do with the poor. It was believed that the reason for poverty was to be found in the poor's way of life, and therefore how to solve the gypsies' problem was to be found in their way of living. Hoyland suggest that a way to turn gypsies from unuseful to useful was to place the children between 6-14 in schools and afterward they would work as servants in families. This way they would become useful for the society and as well their children would become more useful than their parents were. (Montesino, 2002)

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there started to be different groups of gypsies, those of full descent and those of half descent. Those of full descent were considered to have better qualities than those of half descent. The good qualities were believed to disappear in the mix. (a.a.)

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the gypsies were treated as two different groups; *tattarna*, the travellers, that had been in Sweden for many years and the gypsies that recently moved into Sweden. The gypsies were considered to be illegal in Sweden and when found they were to be deported. *Tattarna* became reason for much intervention from the State and the main focus was on taking care of the children. To take care of the children and put them in institutions was something well accepted. They were considered to live in an environment that was not good for their development and therefore the State should take care of them. This was also a way to eliminate the group *tattarna*. (a.a.) 3 % of the gypsies' children were under the care

of the State in 1944. Even though the number is not very high it is more than among the rest of the population. (Vinnerljung, 1996)

In the 1950 the gypsies were accepted as Swedish citizens and were now supposed to be helped, social welfare laws were applied for this. The gypsies had for a long time been considered to have very strong connection to their children and therefore the children should not be removed from the parents. Intervention should take place instead. By focusing on the children the parents would also be helped. In the schools they would receive special attention to manage their studies since the parents could not help them because of their inabilities. Force was no longer considered to be an acceptable intervention in families. (Montesino, 2002)

In 1956 the Child Committee in Sweden came with a proposition for a new law that would make it possible to intervene as early as possible. The law was also supposed to make it possible to prevent a reunion with the birthparents. If the children were removed when they were still very young they would never have to suffer from the bad conditions in the home of the birthparents. This law was not passed because it was considered to underestimate the parent's abilities and overestimate society's abilities. (Vinnerljung, 1996)

Sköld discusses the reasons to why children in Stockholm were placed in foster care in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with starting point in the four hypotheses on foster placements. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one or both the parents of almost 80 percent of the children that were placed in foster care had died. In 1923 only 32 percent of the children that were placed had one or two deceased parents. (Sköld, 2003)

In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the children that were placed in foster care were born inside a marriage but in most of the cases one of the parents had died and the other parent could not raise the child on their own. So the reason was not that the child was born outside a marriage but that the child lived with a single parent. In 1923 the number of placed children born outside a marriage had grown but then the reason was still that the parent, most of the time the mother, was living on her own and was then not able to support herself and the child. (a.a.)

Many families themselves found foster homes for their children when they could not care for them because of work. The grandparents or friends of the parents could act as foster parents and the biological parents themselves paid them for doing that. In times when day care has been available for many of families there have been less foster placements than during times when day care was only available for a very small number of children. Many of the children that were placed in foster homes by the state were placed there because the parents asked for that help when they felt that they could not care for the children themselves anymore. (a.a.)

A very small number of children were placed in foster care because society considered the parents to be unable to care for their children. In those cases the reason was that the mother had drinking problems or other problems that made her unable to care for her children. In all four positions it is the mother that is considered to be the primary care giver and if she does not manage the children ought to be placed in a foster home. The fathers had to support the family financially but were not expected to take part in the care of the children. (a.a.)

## 5. ANALYSIS

The Australian Governments aim was to teach the indigenous children how to live in the western society so that they would be able to become full citizens and so that they would be able to work for them later on. They believed that living with the biological family would cause a negative development for the children and they would not learn to appreciate the Western society as they should. To achieve this they had to remove the children from those surroundings and place them where they would not have any contact with their home community. The key word for the government was for long time assimilation, and the children were the focus of their efforts.

Many of the children that were removed from their families with support of the law were removed because the parents were considered to neglect the children. The term neglect was commonly used and was applied as soon as the family was poor. It was not uncommon that the aborigines were poor but as indigenous people they could not receive any of the social benefits that non-indigenous families could receive.

In Australia it was also of other reasons that they removed the children. When they could not claim it was neglect they could tell the parents that the children had to attend school in a district far away or that the child needed medical treatment. They also put up children for adoption to remove them from their biological parents. Another reason the government removed the half descent Aboriginal children was that they wanted the aborigines as a cultural different group to die out and they believed that the half descent children would adapt to the western society easier. The half descent children were also considered to have better possibilities for learning.

To legislate the removal of the children they had different strategies in different times and in different parts of the country. One method used was to use the protector as the legal guardian for the children, another was to force all aborigines to live on reserves but only those of full descent were allowed to live there. They also applied the same welfare laws as for the non-indigenous children.

In Sweden in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the actions taken in the case of concern for the negative development of a child due to family influences were to remove the child to a placement in which they could learn appropriate values. When doing this it was sufficient to believe that the child might develop in a negative way. In the 1930's and 1940's it was mainly of moral concern that children were placed in foster care. It was accepted in the rest of the society to remove *tattarnas* children because of what was considered to be a bad environment to grow up in. The Swedish government wanted to assimilate the gypsies into the Swedish society, through the children was the way to reach the parents as well.

In the 1950's force was no longer an acceptable way of assimilating the gypsies, now the same social welfare laws as for the rest of the population were to be used. Education was considered to be important in the process. In Sweden a common reason for children to be placed in foster homes was when one of the parents had died or was absent for other reasons.

The Australian Government removed children that belonged to the group of people that were considered to be the outsiders. The outside group is usually the group that arrive when there already is an established group. In Australia the group classified as the outsiders was actually the group that was there first. I believe that the reason they became the group outsiders was that the tribes divided the aborigines into small groups and these groups lived far away from each other and could not unite against the white man's ways. Therefore solidarity within the group was difficult to achieve. In Sweden it was also more common for children who belonged to the outside group to be removed from their families. I believe that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was more accepted to apply force to the outside group than it was to the established group.

When the aborigines still lived as nomadic food-gatherers they lived like people that were unrighteous poor. By belonging to the group of unrighteous poor they were not entitled to social benefits. The right to social benefits is connected with living at one place and trying to support oneself. The only way for the aborigines to receive help from the society was to live on the reserves. By living on reserves they were considered to belong to the group of righteous poor and were entitled to help. In

Australia the indigenous people were not allowed social benefits but by living on the reserves they were able to receive some food and clothes. In Sweden most of the gypsies were considered to belong to the group of unrighteous poor since they moved around and therefore were not able to work and make their living as the rest of the population. I believe that in many countries you had to belong to the group of righteous poor to have access to help from the rest of the society.

In Australia most of the children that were removed from their families were half descent aborigines. The half descent were considered to have better qualities and would adapt to western society easier than the full descendents. What I find as an interesting difference is that in Sweden it was the full descent gypsies that were believed to have the better qualities.

Assimilation was a key term in the treatment of the aborigines. The government's aim was to eliminate the culturally different group and to assimilate the aborigines into the rest of the society. The ones that were most likely to be able to adapt to new society were the children and most effort was put into taking care of them. The 'Aboriginal problem' was not a problem of poverty but a problem of lifestyle. Assimilation was also thought of in the politics concerning the gypsies in Sweden, but here the solution was considered to be the same as when helping other poor people. To me assimilation seems to have been something more commonly thought of and applied in the western society in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than it is today.

Of the four hypotheses on why children were placed in foster care I have found that the most common reason in Australia when looking at the reasons for placing the Aboriginal children was that the family was considered to be inadequate to care for the child. Even though the children usually were born outside a marriage the mother was not the only one to care for the child since the aborigines lived in smaller groups where you helped one another.

## 6. DISCUSSION

I have found it very interesting to work with this topic. My first instinct when I chose this topic was quite naturally: what a terrible thing to do. But after reading books and also looking at the child welfare politics in Sweden at the same time I have come to understand that removing children from their families was not regarded in the same way as it is today. At that time removing children from bad environments was something well accepted in the rest of the society, both in Australia and in Sweden. Looking at this question is to look at something that happened many years ago when society had another view on childcare.

However, in Australia it was much more common that indigenous children were separated from the parents than non-indigenous. But also here, I think that I have to accept that the time when it happened affects a lot. There was little understanding of the aborigine's culture and from what the rest of the society could see and understand this was not a good place for children to grow up in. In Sweden in the 1950's there was a proposition for a law that would make it easier to remove the gypsy's children from their families. Fortunately I have to say, the law was not passed. But still, the proposition shows that there was a fear of unknown cultures and always a wish to save the children from environments that are thought not to be good for children to grow up in. I believe that the fear of other cultures is still something that affects people in the actions we take towards people from other cultures than our own.

The stolen generations is a topic that it is possible to write much more about and to do much more research on. Research on the stolen generations is still a relatively new topic in the scientific world. Now I know what the governments intentions with them were and I can see that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century the idea to remove children from biological families that might cause a negative development was not that unfamiliar. But what are the consequences from the removals in today's society? Are there any differences in work-possibilities, health, socio-economic status etc. between those who were removed and those who were not?

And which are the reasons for children to be placed in foster care today? Recent research in the UK was done by Ian Sinclair, Kate Wilson and Ian Gibbs asked social workers why foster placements were made and found that 40 percent of the children now in foster care were placed there because of abuse, 23 percent because of neglect and 21 percent because of a breakdown in the relationship to the parents. Only 3 percent of the children were placed because of their own behaviour. (Sinclair, 2005)

Removing children from their families is something that happened in other countries than Australia. In almost all countries that were colonized indigenous children were removed from their families. Was anything different in other countries? Did the Spanish settlers do the same thing in South America? Is this still happening in some countries? And how does society's fear for culturally different groups now appear? Because racism exists in our society and I believe it exists all over the world. The groups have changed and the actions have changed. The children are no longer being removed because they belong to a culturally different group, but are we helping the parents to enter the new society so that they can support the family financially? There are many questions to answer and many different points of view from which to consider this analysis.

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