Personality, Perception, Perseverence and Peers - Managing the Transition From Year 10 General Education to a Residential Agricultural Course in the Upper Secondary Years

Francis W. Donohoe
University of Notre Dame Australia

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PERSONALITY, PERCEPTION, PERSEVERANCE AND PEERS – MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM YEAR 10 GENERAL EDUCATION TO A RESIDENTIAL AGRICULTURAL COURSE IN THE UPPER SECONDARY YEARS

Francis W Donohoe

This thesis is presented as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The University of Notre Dame Australia

May 2007
Chapter 1  Purpose, Focus, and Expected Outcomes  

Purpose of study  
Financial Consequences of Low Retention of Students Year 11 into Year 12  
Effects of Premature Withdrawal on Students and their Families  
Research Foci and Expected Outcomes  

Chapter 2  Background to the Study  

Introduction  
Agricultural Education at the Senior Level in Western Australia  
   The Western Australian College of Agriculture  
   Western Australia Compared with Other States and Territories  
   The Future for Agricultural Education in Western Australia: The Post-Compulsory Review of Education  
The Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon  
   Numbers Making the Transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College  
   Retention from Year 11 to Year 12 for the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College
Challenges that the Bindoon College Course Presents for the Students, their Families and the College

Contribution of the Research to Current Studies of Students in Transition from Year 10

Personal Background and Involvement of the Researcher

Chapter 3  Methodology: A Case Study

Introduction

Relationships with Other Structured Qualitative Methodologies

Ethical Issues

Project Approval

Informed Consent and Access

Consent

Access to Staff

Student Consent and Access

Confidentiality

Potential for Damage to the College’s Reputation

Illegal or Potentially Harmful Practices

Using People

Issues of Validity, Reliability and Bias

Validity

Descriptive Validity and Investigator Triangulation

Interpretative Validity

Theoretical Validity

Construct Validity

Content Validity

Face Validity

Criterion Validity

Concurrent Validity

Predictive Validity

Validity and the Adolescent Coping Scale

Bias
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bracketing and Reflexivity</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bracketing</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Data Gathering Process</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Development and Use of Instruments</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1: Managing the Transition Year 10 - 11</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Construction of Survey 1</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Administration of Survey 1</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Data Entry and Checking</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Content of Interview 1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Access to Students</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Style of Interview</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Previous Experience of Interviewer</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing Teenagers</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) The Interview Procedure</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Transcription of Interviews</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interview 2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interview 3: Students who did not Complete the Course</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Interviews and Assessments of Student Coping</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Staff Interviews: June 2000</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Staff Interviews 2:December 2000</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Validity Matrices</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) A Check on the Content Validity Matrix for Survey 1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Defined</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity of the Adolescent Coping Scale</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Map of the Adolescent Coping Scale</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of the Instrument</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of the Adolescent Coping Scale</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4  Data Analysis 1-Chatacterising the Case

Demographics 72
Participating Students, Residential Status and Location of Home 72
  Age Distribution 73
  Gender 74
    Gender and Numbers in Selected Courses of Study 76
    Gender and Academic Performance 77
    Gender Ratio and the Adult Work Force 77
The Bindoon College’s Low Year 11 to Year 12 Retention 79
  Gender and Year 11 to Year 12 Retention at Bindoon 79
  Reasons for not Continuing with the Course at Bindoon 80
Origins and Year 11 to Year 12 Retention 81
  School Attended Prior to Entering the Course 81
  Place of Residence 82
  Connections with the Land 83
Summary of Demographic Section 85
Personal Dimensions 85
  Family Structure and Circumstances 86
  Perceptions of Boarding School Life 88
    Living Away from Home 88
    Friendship 88
    Student perceptions of the Atmosphere in the Boarding Houses 89
Student Perceptions of the Boarding House Staff 89
Meals and Accommodation 89
Impact of Residential Experience on School Performance

Perceptions of Previous Academic Performance and Preferences

Subjects Studied in Year 10 and Student Performance

Perceptions of Preference and Performance: Interaction Plots

Practical Subjects: Students Liking Most Year 10 and Perceptions of Performance

Year 10 Academic Subjects: Students Liking Most and Perceptions of Performance

Year 10 Practical Subjects: Students Liking Least and Perceptions of Performance

Year 10 Academic Subjects liked least: Perceptions Preference and Performance

Reasons for Joining the Course

Future Career as a Reason for Joining the Course

Idiosyncratic Reasons for Joining the Senior Agricultural Course

Student Plans for their Futures

Awareness of the Senior Agricultural Course and Bindoon College

Awareness of the Bindoon College

Awareness of the Senior Agricultural Course

The Role of Others in the Decision to Join the Course

Choice of School: Reasons for Choosing Bindoon College

Personal Costs to Students Entering the Course

Loss of Friends

Timing: Length of Time for Student to Experience Loss of Friends

Changing Relationships

New Friendships

Quality of Boarding School Friendships

Family Relationships

Sporting Commitments

Loss of Part-time Employment

Free Responses to Question 23 of Survey 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Personal Costs to Students</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Peculiar to a Residential Course in Agriculture</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Type</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perceptions of the Academic Aspects of the Course</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perceptions of Farm Practice</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perceptions of Automotive Workshop</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perceptions of Facilities Development</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributions of Success and Lack of Success in the Course as a Whole</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributions of Academic Success</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Lack of Academic Success</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Success in the Practical Subjects</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributions of Lack of Success in the Practical Subjects</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons with the TEE</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision for the Future</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to the Opposite Gender</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Responsibility</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic and Work Skills</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for Oneself</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons with Peers no Longer at School</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Student Self-evaluation</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Dimensions of the Course</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Arrangements</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere within the Boarding Houses</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Students of Different Cultures</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Boarding on Academic Performance</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Non-residential Students</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Closely with Others</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with the Opposite Gender</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5  Coping  153

Introduction  153
Coping with Other People  153
   Extent of the Problem  154
   Distancing  154
   Seeking Solitude  155
   Confiding in a Friend  155
   Spending Time with Pet  155
   Name-calling and Detraction  155
   Physical Violence  156
   Seeking Professional Help, Prayer and Damaging Property  156
Loneliness and Low Spirits  156
   Prevalence of Loneliness and Low Spirits  156
   Strategies Employed to Overcome Loneliness and Low Spirits  157
   Playing Music  157
   Talking to a Friend in Person  158
   Telephoning a Friend  159
   Phoning Home  159
   Watching TV  159
   Go for a Walk  159
   Pray  160
Free responses                                                                 160
  Spending Time with Horse, Dog, Cat or Other Pet                              160
  The Horse                                                                   161
  Other Animals                                                               163

Difficulties with the Academic Program                                      163
  The March Survey                                                            164
  The October Survey                                                          165
  The Extent of Student Experiences of Difficulties with the Academic Program 165
  The Strategies Employed to Deal with Difficulties in the Academic Program   166
  May and October Compared                                                    166
  The Most Enabling Strategy:                                                 167
  Reasons for the Effectiveness of Strategies Listed in Table 5.7             167

Self Perceptions of Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program          168
Factors Perceived as Enabling Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program 169
Factors Perceived as Inhibiting Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program  170

Difficulties on the Farm and the Workshops                                   170
  Participants’ Coping with Farm Practice, the Automotive Workshop and the Academic Compared 171
  Personal Qualities that Enabled the Students to Cope with Farm Practice    171
  Factors that Inhibited Coping with Farm Practice                            172

Facilities Development                                                       173
  Student Perceptions of their Management of Facilities Development          173
  Factors Helping Students Manage Facilities Development                   174
  Factors Impeding Coping with Facilities Development                        175

Summary of Chapter 5                                                          177
Chapter 6  Coping Profiles

The Computer Generated Relative Profile 180
The Reliability of the Adolescent Coping Scale 181
  Bindoon College Cohort Compared with Group from Suburban Melbourne 181
  Reference to Others 182
  Productive Coping 182
  Non-productive Coping 183
Gender: Girls v Boys 183
Relative Profiles: High Achieving Student v Low Achieving Student 184
  Coping Style of a Student who did not Manage the Transition Successfully 185
Profile of Students who Completed the Course v Students who did not 187
  Use of the Three Coping Styles by Successful and Unsuccessful Students 189
Comparative Group Profiles: Course Completers v non-Completers 190
The Effect of the Control on the Appearance of the Profile 191
Non-Completion of the Course because of Employment 194
Validation of the ACS-based Relative Profile as a Predictive Instrument 195
  In Practice 197
Use of Relative Coping Profile to Document Changes to Students’ Coping 199
Summary of Chapter 6 200

Chapter 7  Conclusions and Recommendations 201

Introduction 201
Carlos: Vignette of the Typical Successful Student 202
Peta: Vignette of the Typical Unsuccessful Student 204
Issues for the Bindoon College Administration 206
Identification and Helping of Students at Risk of not Completing the Course
Use of the ACS Prior to Taking up the Course
Impact of Contact with Animals on Student Coping
The Out-of-Doors, the Practical, the Delivery of Content and Student Coping
Peer Support
Changes in the School Leaving Age
The New Curriculum
Opportunities for Further Research
    A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Coping
The Horse as a Means of Coping
A More Representative Study of Student Coping in Residential Schools and Hostels
Differences in Coping Behaviours of Country and Urban Youth
    Transition from Year 10 to Year 11

Appendix A Informed Consent: Correspondence
Appendix B Survey 1
    Survey 2
    Interview Schedules
Appendix C Content Validity Matrices
Appendix D Comprehensive Coping Profile of Individual Members of the Cohort
Appendix E Graphical Representations of Student Preferences and Perceptions of Performance over the Range of Year 10 Subjects
List of References
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1</th>
<th>Purpose, Focus, and Expected Outcomes</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1</td>
<td>Retention Year 11 into Year 12 of the Bindoon College cohorts 1998 to 2005</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.2</td>
<td>Retention Year 11 into Year 12 of Bindoon College cohorts and associated financial data based on 2005 per capita income</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2</th>
<th>Background to the Study</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1</td>
<td>Percentage Retention in key agricultural subjects 2000-2001</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>Agricultural college retention rates 2000-2001</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3</td>
<td>Retention rates of students completing at least one Curriculum Council subject</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3</th>
<th>Methodology: A Case Study</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Survey 2: Concurrent Validity of Item 4b part c</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>Sample of Content Validity Matrix: Survey 1 and Interview 1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.3</td>
<td>Check on Content Validity Matrix of Survey 1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.4</td>
<td>Key to the Interpretation of Scores on the Coping Profile</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Data Analysis 1 — Characterising the Case</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Participating Students: Pseudonym, Residential Status, and Home Location</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Age Distribution of the Case according to Gender Semester 1, 2000</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3</td>
<td>Comparison of Numbers of Female and Male Students in Year 11, March 2000</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4</td>
<td>Number, Gender and Percentages of Students in Single Gender Catholic High Schools, Western Australia, February 2000</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5</td>
<td>Year 11 2000 Enrolments in the WA College of Agriculture and Bindoon College</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>Age in March 2000, Gender and Course Completion</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>Males and Females in the Australian Workforce 2001-2002</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8 The Agricultural Workforce compared with the Australian Workforce 2001-2002

Table 4.9 Year 11 to Year 12 Retention Patterns 2000-2001 WA College of Agriculture v Bindoon College

Table 4.10 Retention Patterns of Students Completing at least one Curriculum Council Subject

Table 4.11 Female/Male Bindoon Retention Year 11 to Year 12 (N = 26)

Table 4.12 Reasons Students gave for not Continuing the Course (N = 11)

Table 4.13 School Attended in Year 10 and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 (N = 26)

Table 4.14 Year 10 School, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 (N=26)

Table 4.15 ‘Place Called home’, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12

Table 4.16 Students with Parents or Guardians on the Land

Table 4.17 Students with Close Relatives on the Land

Table 4.18 Connectedness with the Land, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12

Table 4.19 Family Structure of Students in the Bindoon College Year 11 2000

Table 4.20 Family Status of Students requiring Break from Home, Ranking of Importance for Decision and Retention

Table 4.21 Distribution of Yr 12 Farm Practice Grades v Curriculum Council’s proposed Grades, 2003

Table 4.22 Students’ Plans Post Year 12

Table 4.23 Post School Occupations of Students

Table 4.24 Students’ Source of Knowledge of the Bindoon College

Table 4.25 Students’ Source of Knowledge of the Agricultural Course

Table 4.26 Parties to the Decision Making Process

Table 4.27 Personal Costs of Joining the Senior Agricultural Course

Table 4.28 Responses to Item 34, Survey 2

Table 4.29 Quality of Residential Friendships

Table 4.30 Loss or Change in Friendships and School Attended in Year 10

Table 4.31 Total Withdrawal from Outside Sport and Completion of Course

Table 4.32 Partial Withdrawal from Outside Sport and Completion of Course

Table 4.33 Loss of Part-time Job and/or Financial Independence
Table 4.34 Perceptions of Academic Aspects of the Course 123
Table 4.35 Perceptions of Farm Practice 124
Table 4.36 Personal Qualities that Enabled Students to Manage Farm Practice 125
Table 4.37 Student Perceptions of the Automotive Workshop Experience 126
Table 4.38 Personal Qualities and Experiences that Enabled Students to Manage Automotive Workshop 126
Table 4.39 Student Perceptions of Facilities Development 127
Table 4.40 Perceptions of Decision to Embark on the Course and its Completion 149
Table 4.41 Perception of Course Management and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 150

Chapter 5 Data Analysis 2 — Coping 152

Table 5.1 Strategies used to Manage Difficulties with Other People and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 154
Table 5.2 Extent to which Loneliness and Low Spirits were Experienced and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 157
Table 5.3 Strategies Employed to Combat Loneliness and Low Spirits 158
Table 5.4 Strategies Employed to Manage Problems with Academic Work 164
Table 5.5 Numbers and Retention of Students Experiencing Difficulties with Academic Work 165
Table 5.6 Strategies Employed when Experiencing Difficulties in Classroom 166
Table 5.7 Effective Strategies in Coping with Classroom Problems 167
Table 5.8 Reason for Strategy’s Effectiveness and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 167
Table 5.9 Self-assessment of Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Course and Associated Retention into Year 12 168
Table 5.10 Coping Strategies that Help Students and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 169
Table 5.11 Reasons for not Coping with the Academic Program 170
Table 5.12 Qualities which Enable Participants to Cope with Farm Practice 172
Table 5.13 Difficulties Experienced in Coping with Farm Practice 173
Table 5.14 Attributions of Success in Facilities Development and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 175
Table 5.15 Factors Hindering Student Coping with Facilities Development and the Associated Retention Year 11 to Year 12

Chapter 6  Coping Profiles

Table 6.1 Graduate and non-Graduate Use of Three Coping Styles
LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1  Purpose, Focus, and Expected Outcomes  1

Figure 1.1  Conceptual Map of Factors Related to Successful Transition from Year 10 to the Residential Course in Agriculture at Bindoon College  8

Chapter 3  Methodology: A Case Study  27

Figure 3.1  Staff and Student Estimates of Coping and Relative Coping Profile  56
Figure 3.2  Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Reference to Others  63
Figure 3.3  Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Productive Coping  64
Figure 3.4  Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Non-Productive Coping  65
Figure 3.5  Example of Manually Generated Student Coping Profile  67
Figure 3.6  Example of Manually Generated Profile that Enables the Coping Profiles of two Groups of Students to be Compared  68
Figure 3.7  Computerised Version of the Relative Profile: Bindoon Students v Control  69
Figure 3.8  Staff and Individual Student Self-estimates of Coping and ACS Coping Profile Relative to Students Completing the Course  70

Chapter 4  Data Analysis 1 — Characterising the Case  72

Figure 4.1  Age Groupings of Bindoon Year 11 Students Compared with all WA Year 11 Students, July 2000  73
Figure 4.2  Percentage of Students State-wide Awarded Grades in Agriculturally Orientated Subjects compared with Numbers in more Popular Subjects  76
Figure 4.3  Percentage of Female and Male Students Awarded an A-grade in Selected Year 12 Subjects for the Year 2001  77
Figure 4.4  Gender Ratio of the Bindoon College Year 11 Cohort compared with Relevant Populations  78
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Subjects Studied in Year 10 and Student Preference</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Year 10 Subjects and Student Perceptions of Performance</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Interaction plots: Perceptions of Liking and Performance in the Practical</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Interaction plots: Preference and Performance in the Academic Subjects</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Interaction Plots: Perceptions of Liking Least and Performance in the Practical</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Interaction Plots: Perceptions of Liking Least and Performance in the Classroom</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Reasons for Joining the Course and Retention according to Preference and Gender</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Connections with the Land as a Reason for Joining the Course and Retention Year 11 into Year 12</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Career Orientated Reasons for Joining the Course and Completion of Year 12</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>Idiosyncratic Reasons for Joining the Course and Completion of Year 12</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Principal Reasons for Choosing Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>Bar Chart Showing Numbers of Students Experiencing Loss of Friends on taking up the Residential Course in Agriculture at Bindoon College</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Bar Chart Showing Numbers of Students Experiencing Change in Relating to Friends upon taking up the Residential Course in Agriculture at Bindoon College</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>Personal Cost to Students Undertaking the Residential Course in Agriculture</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>Personality Type (self-assessed) and Subsequent Retention Year 11 into Year 12</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Student Attribution of Success in Facilities Development and Retention Year 11 to Year 12</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>Factors Viewed as Unhelpful by Students when Coping with Facilities Development</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>Personal Qualities to which Students Attributed Success</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>Student Perceptions of Factors Beyond Control of the Individual and their Perceived Contribution to their Academic Success and Retention Year 11 to Year 12</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>Student Attribution of Lack of Success in Academic Subjects and Retention into Year 12</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.25 Attributions of Success in Tasks Assigned in Practical Subjects

Figure 4.26 Student Attributions of Lack of Success in the Practical Tasks

Chapter 5 Data Analysis 2 — Coping

Figure 5.1 Perceptions of Performance in Farm Practice, Automotive Workshop and the Academic

Figure 5.2 Self-perception of Student Coping with Facilities Development

Chapter 6 Coping Profiles

Figure 6.1 Key to Interpreting Computer Generated Relative Coping Profile

Figure 6.2 Relative Profile: Group of Melbourne Students (N=543) v Control (N=829)

Figure 6.3 Relative Coping Profile: Bindoon Cohort v Melbourne Control

Figure 6.4 Relative Profile of Bindoon Females (N=10) v Bindoon Males (N=13)

Figure 6.5 Relative Profile of Steve, a High Achiever who Completed the Course v Melbourne Control

Figure 6.6 Relative Profile of non-coping and non-completing Ursula v Melbourne Control

Figure 6.7 Relative Profile of Ursula who did not cope well v Steve who coped very well

Figure 6.8 Averaged Relative Coping Profile: Students Completing Course v Melbourne Control

Figure 6.9 Relative Profile of Students not Completing Course v Melbourne Control

Figure 6.10 Use of Three Coping Styles by Completing and non-Completing Students

Figure 6.11 Relative Profile of Bindoon College Year 11 2000 Students not Completing Course v Students Completing the Course

Figure 6.12 Relative Profile of Year 11 2003 Students not Completing Course v Students Completing Course in 2003

Page

133
134
152
171
174
179
180
181
182
183
185
186
186
188
188
190
191
192
Figure 6.13 Relative Profile of non-Completing Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Melbourne Control (N=168) 193
Figure 6.14 Relative profile of non-Completing Year 11 2000 Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Members of Cohort Completing the Course 193
Figure 6.15 Profile of non-Completing Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Students Completing the Course in 2001 and 2004 194
Figure 6.16 Relative Profile of Harry, Apprenticeship 2001 v Course Completers 2001 & 2004 195
Figure 6.17 Predictive Validity of Relative Individual Coping Profiles: Summary of Ten Independent Predictive Assessments 196
Figure 6.18 Proforma for Hand Generated Personal Student Coping Profile 198
Figure 6.19 Ben: Relative Profile to Show Change in Coping February to September 2003 199

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations 201
Figure 7.1 Constructed Relative Coping Profile Characteristic of a Successful Student 204
Figure 7.2 Constructed Relative Coping Profile of a Typical Unsuccessful Student 205
ABSTRACT

This intensive single-site case study has taken the entering cohort of Year 11 students in the year 2000 and has used:

Point-of-entry and post-experience interviews of students admitted to the course,
Parallel entry and on-course surveys,
On-course administration of the well-credentialed Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis, 1993), and
Staff interviews

to identify and describe the environmental, personal and contextual factors that are associated with a student’s completion/non-completion of the two year Course and thereby help the College Administration address the on-going unacceptably high numbers of students not completing the Course.

By making extensive use of the Adolescent Coping Scale to document and analyse the coping behaviours of the sample group, the study has revealed interesting differences between the coping styles of suburban and country youth. More importantly, from the point of view of this research, it has supported Frydenberg and Lewis’ observation that when young people who cope well are compared with their peers who appear not to cope, they make relative little use of non-productive or ineffective coping behaviours. The study has developed a computer program in Microsoft Excel™ that can be used easily and routinely to produce comparative profiles of individuals or groups. The profiles may then be used to predict whether a student is at risk of not continuing into Year 12 and provides a basis for the counselling of such students.

Pen pictures characteristic of a successful student and an unsuccessful student, together with the implications of the research for the College Administration and the opportunities for further research bring the study to a close.
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is the candidate’s own work and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate’s knowledge, the thesis contains no material previous published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Francis W Donohoe
Candidate’s Name

Date
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And finally my supervisor, Professor Tony Ryan: for his initial and subsequent unfailing encouragement to proceed with the study; his sometimes resented but always constructive and valid criticism; his patience; and his unfailing availability.
SYSTEM AND STYLE OF REFERENCING

The Author-Date System of referencing adopted in the writing of this thesis is the AGPS (Australian Government Publishing Service) Style as set out in the Style Manual (AGPS 1994, 5th edition) and in the Little Book of Style (Purchase 1998). This was the style promoted by the College of Education of the University of Notre Dame Australia at time the writing commenced.

The AGPS style is not part of the Endnote™ library of in-built styles and the author wishes to acknowledge the help afforded him by the University of Queensland in making the style available within Endnote™ via their website, (www.library.uq.edu.au).
PURPOSE, FOCUS, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The study reported in what follows was conducted at the Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon, 100 kilometres north of Perth, the state-capital of Western Australia. This rural and coeducational residential school is small in enrolment (130 students spanning Years 8 to 12) but, as would be expected of a working farm, is quite large in area (3,100 hectares). It is the only Catholic school offering the Senior (Years 11 and 12) Course in Agriculture, a course that is itself unique to Western Australia. Since the school became a Senior Agricultural College in 1995, a large proportion of the entering Year 11 cohort each year has not returned to Year 12, the second stage of the two-year course.

Purpose of the Study

The study, which commenced with the entering cohort of Year 11 students in the year 2000, took the form of a two-year longitudinal case study aimed at identifying and exploring the factors associated with the students’ decision making and documenting the students’ experience of the course. On the basis of what was discovered, the study developed and proposed a strategy that can be used by the staff to identify easily and routinely the students at risk of not completing the course.

Starting with the Year 11 entering cohort of 26 fifteen- and sixteen-year-old students at the time they commenced the two-year, residential Senior Agricultural Course at Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon (hereinafter Bindoon College) in January 2000, this intensive single-site case study:

- Follows the progress of the students through their time at Bindoon College and immediately beyond, canvassing and documenting the personal, course and living-related factors that appear to be associated with their decisions to persevere or discontinue their studies;

and, by demonstrating the predictive power of well-credentialed and readily-usable diagnostic profiling system,
• Attempts to support the school in its efforts to reduce the present frustratingly and consistently high non-completion rates.

The Senior Agricultural Course, being a complete and fully integrated program of agricultural studies independent of tertiary entrance, is unique to Western Australia. It is the only course of study offered at the upper secondary level at Bindoon College, but its successful completion does qualify the graduates for the general Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), recognising successful completion of twelve years of schooling.

In the year 2000 (the commencing year of the study) just 1.2% (252 students) of the Western Australian Year 11 cohort (21,476 students) took up the course. Of these, twenty-six (10%) were enrolled at Bindoon College. The remainder (226 students) attended one or other of the five member campuses of the state government’s Western Australian College of Agriculture that are strategically located throughout the South West Agricultural Region of the state, extending from Geraldton in the north to Esperance in the south.

A Year 10 student’s decision to commit to the course often represents a paradigm shift in expectations and locus of control for a young adolescent of that age, especially if it involves moving to a boarding school environment for the first time. Importantly, it necessitates the exercise of an independent choice two years earlier than is required of the majority of their age peers. Most students who proceed to Year 11 are able to do so without having to change schools, or to attend a residential college in a country area, and most are able to make the transition from lower to upper secondary without any need to acquire a substantially new mind set. As will be seen, this is typically not the case for the majority of students who opt for the Senior Agricultural Course either at Bindoon College or one of the five member colleges of the Western Australian College of Agriculture.

Given the personal significance of the decisions taken by students who join the Senior Agricultural Course, and recognising that these usually represent deliberate goal-directed choices, one might reasonably expect the entering cohorts to show a higher than state-wide average retention into Year 12. Eighty nine per cent of the Year 11 population for Western Australia in 2000 was still at school in January one year later. While the corresponding overall retention rate for the five member
schools of the Western Australian College of Agriculture was 83%, it was just 58% for Bindoon College.

Table 1.1 Retention Year 11 into Year 12 of the Bindoon College cohorts 1998 to 2005†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort by Year of Entry</th>
<th>Calendar Year</th>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Percent Yr 11 to Yr 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1998 Year 11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999 Year 11</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>1999 Year 11</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Year 12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000 Year 11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Year 12</td>
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<td>2001 Year 11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002 Year 12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2002 Year 11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003 Year 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2003 Year 11</td>
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<td>74</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2004 Year 12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2004 Year 11</td>
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<td>2005 Year 12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2005 Year 11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006 Year 12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Bindoon College.

As Table 1.1 reveals, low retention rates have been characteristic of the Bindoon College Year 11 cohorts over a number of years. The steady rise in the retention rate from 40% in 1998/99 to around 70% in 2004/5 may reflect the broadening of the course offerings at Bindoon College around that time to include, within the Senior Agricultural Course, Level 2 TAFE Certificate courses in Equine Industries and Hospitality and a Level 1 Certificate in Motor Mechanics.

As part of fulfilling the requirements of the WACE and the Senior Agricultural Course, all Bindoon College Year 11 and Year 12 students undertake the agriculturally based Plant Production and Marketing, Animal Production and Marketing and Small Business Management and Enterprise courses of study. The WACE subjects may have imbedded in them relevant nationally recognised Units of Competence. Thus, regardless of what other optional subjects the students may take, the Bindoon College Year 11 and 12 program retains its fundamentally agricultural and ‘hands-on’ character. Graduating students do so with the WACE and at least one of the Level 2 TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Certificates. In addition, the more able and highly motivated students may gain either a second Level 2 TAFE Certificate or the Level 1 Motor Mechanics TAFE Certificate, or both. Students who
fail to complete the full two years of the program exit without the WACE, but with any of the TAFE Certificates and Certificates of Competence that they may have fulfilled to that point.

### Financial Consequences of Low Retention of Students Year 11 into Year 12

For the upper secondary program at Bindoon College to continue and remain financially viable, the administration is aware that it must find a way to achieve a retention rate that is at least in line with the 80% levels enjoyed by the similarly vocationally orientated Western Australia College of Agriculture. While this is below the secondary sector average, it does recognise that relatively more students in this vocationally orientated course are likely to gain employment during or at the end of Year 11 and thus leave prematurely, than is the case with the less vocationally orientated secondary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.2 Retention Year 11 into Year 12 of Bindoon College cohorts and associated financial data based on 2005 per capita income†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort by Year of Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Data Source: Bindoon College.
* Sample contains 4 day students at $13,372 per capita. For residents the gross per capita amount is $22,372 that is composed of fees and Commonwealth and State per capita grants.
** Sample contains residential students only as it is rare for a non-resident student not to complete the course.
Table 1.2 sets out the cumulative loss of fee and grant income that Bindoon College has sustained over the period from 1998 to 2005 because of the significant numbers of students who leave before completing the two years of the course. From an analysis of the data in the table, and taking into account the recurrent costs of maintaining the current wide choice of vocational offerings and the essential residential facilities, the administration would like to see the rate of retention of students from Year 11 into Year 12 reach around 80% on a regular basis. The College experience has been that so few students leave during Year 12 that loss of these final year students is not an issue.

While finding ways to encourage more of the students to stay to the end of Year 12 is clearly important for securing a viable future for the College in economic terms, it would also help to alleviate some of the frustration, disappointment and insecurity experienced by the staff when students, in whom they have invested considerable time and effort, leave prematurely.

**Effects of Premature Withdrawal on Students and their Families**

Premature withdrawal from the course impacts not only on the school administration and staff, but also on the students who leave and on their families. Students, for instance, who return to their former school may experience a sense of failure and humiliation or be teased by their friends. A student, who wishes to enter the workforce directly without a recognised qualification, may have to manage a substantial period of unemployment or uncongenial work. For the family, it can result in considerable expense, enrolling their boy or girl in a new school or helping them to find employment, and unhelpful or hurtful comment from friends and associates.

**Research Foci and Expected Outcomes**

In formulating the foci and expected outcomes of the research a number of possible reasons for students not completing the course were hypothesised:

- The student was successful in gaining an apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship or other suitable employment.
- Health problems necessitated that the student return home.
• The student was asked to leave or not permitted to return.
• Living away from home/friends became too much for the student.
• An unstable family situation may have been a contributing factor.
• For suburban students, an inability to identify with rural life.
• The relative isolation of Bindoon (missing access to the shops and entertainment that young people in the city enjoy).
• Inability to establish friendships.
• Loneliness.
• Having entered the course for the wrong reasons; looking for an escape from home or inability to find a job.
• Previous academic record so poor that student was unable to manage the work in the classroom at Bindoon College.
• Wanted an even greater hands-on, less academic style of education.
• Wanted a more academic (Tertiary Entrance) type of education.
• Unable to adjust to work on the farm and other manual tasks.
• Personal immaturity (especially with respect to career/occupation planning).
• Limited self-management (social skills, study skills, frustration management).
• Poor personal coping strategies.

The study used point-of-entry and post-experience interviews of students admitted to the course, corresponding entry and on-course questionnaire surveys, and on-course administration of the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993) in order to:

• Identify and describe those factors (personal attributes and motivations, individual histories, environmental/contextual circumstances and characteristic coping strategies) which appear to have enabled some students to successfully manage (i.e., continue into Year 12 and complete the course) the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course;
• Identify and describe those factors (as above) which appear to explain why other students either do not cope with the transition and the demands of the new experience or elect for other reasons not to persevere with the course; and, in the process, to
• Add to the somewhat limited quantity of knowledge regarding the transition from Year 10 to the senior secondary years of schooling;
• Propose a strategy, based on what is learned from the first two of the above, that could be used simply and routinely at the point of entry to identify as early as possible those students who are likely to be at risk of not coping with the transition and/or the demands of the course; and
• Suggest methods or approaches to pastoral care and/or specific training that Bindoon College staff may be able to use in helping these identified ‘at risk’ students to adopt sound coping strategies.
The research was conducted as a two-year, longitudinal case study and included:

- Two questionnaire surveys of the student cohort during the students’ first year in the programme;
- In-depth and repeated on-course interviews of the students and selected members of the academic, vocational and residential staff who had significant contact with the students;
- Subsequent follow-up interviews of the majority of students some months after their completion of the course (or after their withdrawal from it if they left prematurely); and
- The use of the well-credentialed Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg & Lewis 1999a, 1999b, 2000) to delineate and document the coping profiles of individual students and groups of students in the programme.

The present study fits closely Robert Stake’s *intrinsic model* (Stake 1994; Berg 1998) in that the researcher wanted primarily to deepen his understanding of a particular case of special interest and local significance, rather than to test existing theory or develop new theory that might be expected necessarily to have applicability in other contexts (Berg 1998, p.216).

The interview and survey tools that formed an integral part of the case study yielded valuable insights into the decision making processes of a select group of young people. The methodology also permitted the use of the Adolescent Coping Scale to record and to present graphically and comparatively the coping profiles of individuals and groups, thereby providing a relatively simple process that may profitably be used proactively by the school to identify students in future cohorts who are potentially at risk of not completing the two-year course.

Literature relevant to case study methodology in general, and to Stake’s model in particular, is included in and commented upon at appropriate places in the body of the thesis.

Figure 1.1 provides a conceptual map of the factors that the research has uncovered that relate to the successful transition from Year 10 to the senior residential course in Agriculture at Bindoon College.
Figure 1.1 Conceptual Map of Factors Related to Successful Transition from Year 10 to the Residential Course in Agriculture at Bindoon College.

Figure 1.1 also serves to give expression to an underlying assumption that has guided the research, namely: a young person’s decision to embark upon the Senior Agricultural Course is a complex one of which every facet has the potential to impact on the transition from Year 10 to the course and its ultimate completion.

Chapter 2 offers a detailed account of the background to the study.
CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Strong subjective involvement is a powerful motivator for acquiring an objective approach to the study of phenomena. It is doubtful that any significant work is done without great personal involvement. (Kerlinger 1964b, p.viii)

In order to provide an appropriate contextual background to the study, this chapter:

(1) outlines the place and status of agricultural education at the senior secondary school level in Western Australia;

(2) compares the retention into Year 12 of entering Year 11 students at Bindoon College with that of their age peers in the State as a whole, in the State’s Catholic Education sector, and in the Western Australian College of Agriculture; and

(3) hypothesises the challenges that the residential agricultural course presents to the Year 10 students as they attempt to manage the transition into and through the first year of their new course; and

(4) identifies potential implication that a student’s inability to cope with the new environment or program may have for themselves, their families and the College.

The chapter concludes with a detailed statement that outlines the researcher’s long personal involvement in school-level agricultural generally and as a former member of the teaching and administrative staff of the Bindoon College.

Agricultural Education at the Senior Level in Western Australia

The principal providers of education in agriculture at the upper secondary level in Western Australia are the member colleges of the Western Australian College of Agriculture and the Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon.

The Western Australian College of Agriculture

The Western Australian College of Agriculture is the principal provider of education
in agriculture at the upper secondary level in Western Australia. In January 2000, five separate residential coeducational residential government agricultural colleges were amalgamated to form the Western Australian College of Agriculture. The member colleges have maintained their separate identities and are located in the major agricultural regions of what is known as the South West of the State. The Year 11 enrolment for the Western Australian College of Agriculture for the year 2000 was 226 students or approximately 1% of the state-wide Year 11 cohort (Table 2.4).

Since the Review of School Curriculum Development Procedures and Processes in Western Australia (Education Policy and Coordination Bureau 1995), education in Western Australia has been in a state of flux. First, the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) was replaced by the Curriculum Council in August 1997, and its new Curriculum Framework appeared in 1998. Next, Our Youth, Our Future (Curriculum Council, 2002c) detailed the results of the Post-Compulsory Education Review: Discussion Paper (Curriculum Council 1999), and the Post-Compulsory Education Review: Position Paper that followed in November 2000. This far-reaching review did not neglect Agricultural Education, and writing and trialing of the senior courses of study, including Agriculture, commenced soon after.

Of the 430 subjects on offer to Year 11 and Year 12 students in Western Australia, 33 only may be used to qualify a student for university entrance and Agriculture/Agricultural Science is not one of them (Curriculum Council 2002a, p.12). Unlike other States and Territories, the teaching of Agriculture and related subjects at the post-compulsory level in Western Australia has, until recently, been the exclusive province of the member Colleges of the Western Australian College of Agriculture. The schools comprising the College are strategically placed in the agricultural regions of the South West of the State and all possess substantial farms on which to train the students and, as Registered Training Organisations, are qualified to ‘sign off’ students in the National Competencies that make up the Level 2 TAFE Certificates offered by them.

Students study Plant Production and Marketing (PPM), Animal Production and Marketing (APM), Small Business Management and Enterprise or Management and Marketing and Senior English for approximately half of the week. While the
subjects just listed are regarded as ‘theory’ subjects, APM and PPM contain significant practical components that make them difficult for schools other than the agricultural colleges to offer. The other half of the week is spent outside the classroom at Farm Practice, Automotive Workshop, Farm Constructions and/or other Design and Technology (D&T) type subjects. Each of these courses is outcomes based and vocational, and none is designed or expected to satisfy requirements for university entrance.

Successful students qualify for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). The notional time allocation per subject in Year 11 is 120 hours with 110 hours for Year 12. Up to 50% of the course content may be National Competencies. Consequently, virtually all students graduate from the Colleges with one or more Level II Certificates in Agriculture, Equine Industries, Hospitality, or another discipline that is related to agriculture, as well as their WACE. While the Senior Agricultural Course does not qualify the graduating student for normal direct entrance to university, students who gain an A or B grade in Plant Production and Marketing, Animal Production and Marketing, Small Business Management and Enterprise or Management and Marketing and Senior English may be admitted to the first year of the Associate Degree of Agriculture at Curtin University of Technology. Those who gain a C-weighted average or better in the first year of this associate degree course may proceed to the rest of the three-year full degree should they so desire. Graduates from any of the agricultural colleges who enter the Associate Degree are exempt from the year’s farm work that is required of other candidates for the Associate Degree.

Because the upper secondary Agriculture course is not intended to provide a normal pathway to university, very little agriculture is taught at the secondary school level apart from what is covered in the agricultural colleges, as the more academically orientated Senior High Schools and non-Government secondary schools prefer to offer the tertiary entrance subjects: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, and Human Biology. Moreover, the non-farm schools find it very difficult to provide the opportunities for the practical aspects of PPM, APM and Farm Practice. Nonetheless, a small number of outer suburban and country senior high schools do offer PPM and/or APM and selected rural modules of the National Competencies as
part of their WACE program.

**Western Australia Compared with Other States and Territories**

Western Australia is the only State not to include Agriculture or Agricultural Science in the list of upper school subjects which may be used to gain a tertiary entrance score. In the other States, a number of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs are offered that have substantial Agriculture and related components.

Only Queensland, with its four Agricultural Colleges established by a separate act of parliament, has some similarities with Western Australia. The Queensland colleges are located in diverse agricultural or pastoral regions of that State, have extensive properties, and are open to students from Year 10 upwards, although the preferred entry avenue is after completion of Year 12 and secondary graduation. Students who enter after Year 10 or Year 11, cannot (unlike their counterparts in Western Australia) use completion of work in Agriculture to fulfil requirements for secondary graduation. The course is highly intensive and successful students graduate with a Diploma (VET Certificate 5) that articulates into the second year of the University of Queensland degree courses in Agriculture. Students who enter at Year 11 take three years to complete the course and a compulsory six-month work placement in order to achieve the Level 5 certification. Queensland is therefore similar to Western Australia in that students at a relatively young age are able to embark upon a fully vocational residential course in Agriculture.

**The Future for Agricultural Education in Western Australia: The Post-Compulsory Review of Education**

The Post-Compulsory Education Review: Position Paper (Curriculum Council, November 2000) recommended the number of courses of study be reduced from 430 to 50. In the new scheme of things, Agriculture is just a single unit of study which, along with the other 49 courses, will be assessed at the Year 12 level by a combination of school managed and external assessment. It is possible to include VET units in the technology courses of study.

Where VET competencies are concerned, however, they will continue to be
measured in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) requirements (Post-Compulsory Education Review 2002, p.12). Over the two year period students will be expected to complete 20 units of study. Trialling of the new units commenced in 2003 and the new system will be implemented in stages until 2009 when ‘all schools introduce 20 courses of study for Yr 12’ (Post-Compulsory Education Review 2002, p.11). The Scale of Achievement is set from Levels 4 to 8 and corresponds with the same levels on the K-12 Progress Map (Post-Compulsory Education Review 2002, p.5). Levels 4 and 5 have less prescriptive content and allow schools to respond to their students’ needs. Levels 7 and 8 are more complex with the content prescribed in considerable detail. Students wishing to go to University will have to perform at the Levels 7 and 8 at which standard Agriculture, Automotive Engineering Technology, Building Construction, Business Management and Enterprise, Food Science and Technology, Materials Design and Technology become rather theoretical and lose their former ‘hands-on’ character. The Agriculture course is scheduled for implementation in 2008-09.

As will be shown later, the present research has revealed that a key reason students embrace the Senior Agricultural Course is because of their inability, to use their own words, ‘to hack being in the classroom’. The question that naturally arises is therefore: Will the imposition of the new curriculum on the Colleges of Agriculture force higher achieving students into long periods in the classroom, or condemn them to achieving at levels that are below their potential? The alternative for the specialist Agricultural colleges may well be for them not to offer the WACE but to add a Year 13 and to follow the Queensland model by eventually offering the Level 4 Certificate in Agriculture.

The Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon

From 1968 to 1994, what is now the Catholic Agricultural College at Bindoon was known as Keaney College Bindoon, and was owned and run by the Christian Brothers. Keaney College was a boys-only residential Years 8 to 10 junior agricultural high school with an enrolment of 90 boys. It served mainly Catholic farming families from the South West of the State and, at that time, also children of families living in the State’s remote mining towns. The Christian Brothers also
administered another boys-only residential junior agricultural school (Years 8-10) at Tardun, 350 kilometres north of Bindoon. At the same time, the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia was responsible for the aging heritage-listed residential coeducational Years 8-12 New Norcia Catholic College, 40 kilometres to the north of Bindoon.

The Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT), first levied by the Australian Federal Government on employers in 1986, is a tax on non-salary benefits provided to employees. The rate of tax on benefits such as housing was, and continues to be, so high that mining and construction companies now find it more economical to fly their workforce to their remote mine sites for a two week period, and then home for a week, than to house them on site. A consequence of this ‘Fly-in, Fly-out’ of workers has been to reduce the numbers of employees who are required to live in remote areas and thus to enrol their children in boarding schools. By 1991 Keaney College, and the other boarding schools at Tardun and New Norcia, were experiencing the full impact of the FBT on the enrolment of children of such workers, posing in consequence a growing threat to the continuing viabilities of these schools.

Other factors contributing to the fall in boarding numbers at Keaney College and the others were the movement of families from the farm to the nearest town, the increasing size and mechanisation of farms, the rationalisation of the dairy industry, improved education services in some country areas, and the general decline in birth rate for the State as a whole.

The impact of falling enrolments was felt most at New Norcia Catholic College and this, together with the impracticability of restoring its heritage listed buildings, caused the Catholic Education Commission to embark on a formal review of the viability of continuing to support that College. However, because Keaney College and Tardun were also financed through the Catholic Education Commission, and because these schools were experiencing similar enrolment challenges, it was decided that the review should encompass concurrently the operations of all three. At the same time (May 1991), the Christian Brothers’ leadership team established the Keaney College Executive Committee to examine options for the future of Keaney College in particular.
In addition, the Christian Brothers and the Catholic Education Commission engaged an independent marketing consultancy to conduct a survey of the catchments of the three schools. The net result of this was that New Norcia Catholic College was closed in December 1991. However, despite the findings of the marketing survey that none of the schools was viable, the Christian Brothers determined to maintain both Keaney College and Tardun as residential colleges in order to continue providing a Catholic secondary education that focused on agriculture for the children of Catholic farming families. Additionally, it was agreed that Keaney College might be encouraged, over time, to grow beyond its present three-year lower secondary boys’ residential-only structure to include Years 11 and 12, become coeducational, and, if appropriate, admit day students.

In 1992, the first lower secondary day-students, including two girls, enrolled at the Keaney College and the Executive Committee continued to explore future options for the College. As part of this, the question of opening Keaney College to female residential students received considerable attention. In the course of the discussion, it was acknowledged that taking in female boarders would help by boosting enrolments. However, the principal reason for contemplating a coeducational future for Keaney College, especially if it were to extend into upper secondary, was the Committee’s conviction that senior boys and girls living away from home need ideally to work closely with each other to ensure their optimal social and educational development.

An independent consultant engaged by the Christian Brothers reported to the Keaney College Executive in 1993 that it was feasible that the school become a Years 8-12 coeducational residential college of agriculture. The Brothers adopted the report and in 1994 the Executive, its work completed, was disbanded and replaced by a ten-member Board.

In his position of secretary to the Executive Committee and to the Board, the present researcher (see the Personal Statement later in this chapter) successfully negotiated with the Office of Non-Government Education, the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia and the Western Australian Secondary Education Authority for Bindoon College to commence the enrolment of Year 11 students from 1995 onwards and for the students to continue into Year 12 in their subsequent year. In
addition, he was able to secure for the graduates the same privileges of entry into agricultural degree courses at the Muresk (rural) and Bentley (metropolitan) campuses of Curtin University of Technology as were enjoyed by the graduates of the five member schools of the Western Australian College of Agriculture. The new was so different from the old that it was agreed by the Brothers and the Catholic Education Commission that a new name was called for. Accordingly, the name Keaney College was formally retired, to be replaced by Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon. The new College was opened officially by the Catholic Archbishop of Perth on May 7 1995.

In what follows, the name Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon is referred to more concisely as Bindoon College or, where the context allows, simply as the College.

At the upper secondary level, the curriculum of the new College is similar to that of the Western Australian College of Agriculture, but with an added religious dimension and the fact that the program is offered within a Years 8-12 school. The presence of lower secondary students in the same school and on the same campus makes Bindoon College unique among the Western Australian agricultural colleges.

Numbers Making the Transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College

What is it that sets the Year 11 boys and girls at Bindoon College apart from the majority of their age peers? Statistically, just 1.2% (252 of 21,476) of Year 11 students in Western Australia chose the Senior Agricultural Course in 2000. As far as the Catholic system is concerned, 0.55% of Year 11 students in Catholic schools attended Bindoon College at the start of 2000. By its smallness, the group was clearly a very select portion of the Western Australian Year 11 age cohort in 2000.

Retention from Year 11 to Year 12 for the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College

Having established the demands that the residential agricultural course places on those who opt to join, and the small numbers state-wide who take it up, it is appropriate to look briefly at the number who commenced in 2000 at Bindoon College and the number who subsequently continued into Year 12 to complete the
course in 2001, and to compare these with the Year 11 to Year 12 retention patterns for the State’s upper secondary cohorts generally and for the upper secondary agricultural subjects in particular.

Table 2.1 Percentage retention in key agricultural subjects 2000-2001†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WACE Course of Study</th>
<th>Calendar Year and Class</th>
<th>% Retention Yr 11 to Yr 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Practice</td>
<td>2000 Yr 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001 Yr 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Production and Marketing (APM)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Production and Marketing (PPM)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data supplied by the Curriculum Council 2002.

Table 2.1 shows the percentages of the state-wide year 2000 entering cohorts in key agricultural subjects who continued into Year 12 in 2001. These rates are generally lower than those in other subjects, particularly Tertiary Entrance subjects, and can be partly explained by the fact that not all schools run PPM and APM over the two-year program but instead offer them as semesterised units, making it possible for one or both to be completed in Year 11, in which case the units would be treated as non-continuance in the retention calculations. Moreover, within the agricultural colleges there are opportunities for students to diversify into more specialised Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses which include appropriate nationally recognised Units of Competence in Year 12, in which case they ordinarily will have discontinued one or more of the Year 11 agricultural subjects, thereby similarly inflating the apparent drop-out rates for those subjects.

In the Catholic system in February 2000 there were 4,692 students enrolled in Year 11, while in February 2001 there were 4032 on the list, representing a retention rate of 86% from Year 11 to 12 (Catholic Education Office, May 2002). This figure differs slightly from the 88.9% reported by the Curriculum Council (Table 2.3), because the latter statistic refers to students who completed at least one Curriculum Council subject. Nevertheless, taken together, both statistics show that the percentages of Entering Year 11 students who complete Year 12 in the Agricultural Colleges are less than for the State as a whole and, in the case of Bindoon College, very much less. Given the commitment that the young people have made to join an
agricultural college, this may seem surprising and, for those who support this style of education, disappointing.

Because the Senior Agricultural Course is vocational, a number of students obtain work at the end of Year 11 or part way through Year 12 and, consequently, do not graduate. However, as will be shown, while this may well explain the slightly lower retention rates of the Western Australian College of Agriculture schools, it is only a partial explanation of the much lower retention rates for Bindoon College – 40% for 1999-2000, 58% for 2000-2001 and 47% for 2001-2002.

Table 2.2 illustrates the comparatively high non-completion rate among the Bindoon College students.

Table 2.2 Agricultural college retention rates 2000-2001†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number entering Year 11</th>
<th>Number completing Year 12</th>
<th>Retention Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon College</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA College of Ag</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data supplied by Education Department Western Australia and Bindoon College.

Table 2.3 compares, for students taking up the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College, their retention Year 11 into Year 12 with that of the rest of the Catholic school cohort and all students of the state-wide cohort.

Table 2.3 Retention rates of students completing at least one Curriculum Council subject†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yr 11 December 2000</th>
<th>Yr 12 December 2001</th>
<th>Retention Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon College</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Schools</td>
<td>4,316</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>21,476</td>
<td>19,095</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data supplied by the Curriculum Council, May 2002.

Challenges that the Bindoon College Course Presents for the Students, their Families and the College

To enrol in the Senior Agricultural Course, 15 year-old boys and girls at the time of
the study typically have to make and implement the following decisions:

(1) Leave home and enter a residential college which is located in a rural area.

(2) Take up a fully vocational style of schooling.

(3) Move from the familiar content based normatively assessed school subjects to a style of teaching and learning that is totally outcomes based and assessed. (With the Curriculum Framework now in place at all levels of schooling and in all school systems, this is less problematic for the Senior Agricultural Colleges.)

(4) Undertake a learning experience that places great demands on the student’s manual skills and dexterity. (Before joining the course, many will not have done much in the way of hard physical work or handled animals other than domestic pets.)

Unpublished research (Donohoe 1995) has shown that in many instances, the decision to go to boarding school is made by the parents but that the choice of school is left to the student. This study will reveal that for most of the Bindoon College cohort, it was indeed the young people who made the decision and the parents who ratified it. Most young people at this age are not making similarly profound life decisions.

Should a person of this relatively young age make the decision in haste – or with an inadequate understanding of what the course involves and the demands it places on those who opt for it – it may be hypothesised that he or she will be less likely to cope with the course and manage the transition from Year 10. Were this to be the outcome, it may be expected that a number of other undesirable consequences might well follow – for the students concerned, their parents, and, in this instance, for Bindoon College itself.

At a personal level, the students may become depressed and maladjusted and may see themselves as a failure, become unsettled and make matters difficult for their fellow students, become resentful of authority and a discipline problem, perform below their potential, leave (or be asked to leave) the course with little else to turn to, or see out the year and then repeat Year 11 at some other school – an action that
would require a further twelve months of schooling and which might, in some cases, tell against them when it comes to employment or further education.

For the parents, there might be the problems of an unhappy daughter or son, substantial financial cost, or helping their boy or girl to find another school or employment. And for the College there might be the problems of counselling the student, dealing with the effects an unsettled student may have on the other members of the class, meeting its budget, and reviewing its admission criteria.

As outlined above, students who make the choice to change to a residential senior agricultural college at the end of Year 10 are committing themselves to a significant change in circumstance and challenge earlier than is the case for most of their peers who can delay similar life-changing decisions until one or two years later. However, this last statement requires qualification, as students in District High Schools and other schools that do not proceed to Years 11 and 12 must decide similarly whether to finish school, travel daily by bus to the nearest senior high school, reside at a hostel, take up distance education, attend a city boarding school or join the workforce. Moreover, since Bindoon College is a Year 8-12 school, some of the entrants to the Senior Agricultural Course typically do come from the College’s Year 8-10 cohort and will thus not be making a school change at that point. In 2000, for instance, 15 of the Year 11 cohort of 26 students had entered direct from the Bindoon College Year 10 class. Unlike those who entered from non-rural schools, these students had had an opportunity to adjust to life in a relatively isolated residential college and to working on the farm prior to commencing the course.

There is a legitimate expectation that the retention Year 11 into Year 12 for vocational courses will be less than that for Tertiary Entrance courses, as vocational students often move to apprenticeships or other suitable employment during or at the end of Year 11. However, the persistently low retention rate has important consequences for Bindoon College because, in the following year, the school is required to maintain virtually all the infrastructure in terms of staffing, allocation of teaching areas and residential accommodation that it had set in place to meet the needs of the current Year 11. Consequently, the halving of the numbers returning to Year 12 places an unsustainable financial burden on the College.
Clearly, the transition from Year 10 to Year 11 is just one of number of important transitions that young people make. These include the transition from home/preschool to school, from primary to secondary, from Year 10 to senior secondary, and from school to work, TAFE, university or unemployment. However, from the standpoint of the young person’s future, the passage from Year 10 to upper secondary is, perhaps, the most important, yet it appears to be the least researched. The present study is expected to go some way towards redressing this imbalance and to increase understanding of how fifteen-year-olds come to make important decisions that impact on their future.

**Contribution of the Research to Current Studies of Students in Transition from Year 10**

Detailed searching of selected electronic data bases, in particular those made available through EBSCO, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and A+Education, yielded a number of studies, mostly from the year 2000 onwards, that deal with students in transition and the strategies they employ in their management of these transitions. The following brief overview of a number of relevant studies from this body of literature serves to position the present study within the context of other related research and to illustrate its particular contribution to the field.

The transition from the twelfth year of schooling to the first year of university is the focus found most frequently in the literature on educational transition. For example, the United States Department of Education (2000a; 2000b) has investigated the immediate transition from high school to college and the impact of racial and ethnic differences on that transition. Similarly, in a research report entitled *Managing a Life in Transition*, Mennen (2000) records predictions of how students will adapt to tertiary education, while Seow (2005) writes about the changing profile of the international student and the need to appreciate what these students may have experienced in their previous study. Tickell and Smyrnios (2005) compared the academic performance of university accounting students who had entered via traditional secondary school matriculation with that of their course-mates who had entered via completion of a technical/vocational (TAFE) qualification.
Most of the above-mentioned studies differ from the present research not only in their foci but also in the methodology adopted. Most have been essentially quantitative surveys and, unlike the present study, have made little or no attempt to identify and compare the actual strategies the subjects have employed to manage the transitions they have been required to make. Moreover, in studies that have investigated inter-regional transitions, the focus has invariably been on the challenges facing people who move from the country to the city and not, as was the case with the present research, those faced by people moving from urban backgrounds to the country.

However, Calder’s (2004) study of peer interaction in the process of transition to James Cook University was closer to the interests of the present study in that it identified ‘a high level of peer interaction as being the most productive in helping [the students] address transition issues’ and supported the use of qualitative methodology for its data gathering and data interpretation.

In another study, entitled ‘How can you deal with that?’, Bourke (2002) used case study methodology to explore the coping strategies employed by a sample of 30 upper primary school students from a rural town in New South Wales. His study was similar to the present study setting in its use of case study methodology for its data gathering, but there is no evidence of his having used any standardised or other instruments that could have ascertained the range and effectiveness of coping strategies used by those in his sample. Bourke found that while the young people were able to talk about their problems and the strategies they used to deal with them, they did not feel capable of addressing problems with those in authority nor issues about their future.

A South Australian two-part study entitled ‘Optimism, Pessimism, Anger, and Adjustment in Adolescents’ (Boman 2002) did employ the Multidimensional School Anger Inventory (Smith, Furlong, et al., 1997) to measure aspects of school anger in two samples of 102 and 1400 students from four of that state’s Catholic high schools. Bowman’s study resembled the present study in that it also used an established standardised instrument, in Bowman’s case to explore the way students manage feelings of anger and pessimism. Bowman found that there was a strong link between high levels of pessimism, becoming angry and ultimately aggressive.
Downs’ (2002) paper entitled ‘Adapting to Secondary and Boarding School: Self Concept, Place Identity and Homesickness’ reported a longitudinal study of 74 adolescent students at two residential colleges in rural North Queensland. Its design resembled that of the present study in that Downs also included non-residential students, interviewed students on successive occasions, and employed Marsh’s Self Description Questionnaire-II (Marsh 1990), and Fisher’s Dundee Relocation Inventory (Fisher 1989) in an attempt to measure aspects of depression and coping. Downs found that 90% of the boarders in his study had reported feeling homesick during the first term of their school year and that by the end of the year one in five students had become chronically homesick. Downs recommended early intervention to improve the self-concept of affected students.

As far as the present author has been able to ascertain, the current study is the only one to have dealt specifically and in detail with the decisions that students have to make in Year 10 as they plan their move to the senior secondary school. It is also the only study that has looked at the challenges faced by students who must move from the city to the country for the senior years of their schooling. And in terms of its methodology, the present study appears to have broken new ground by combining qualitative interview and questionnaire data with individualised coping profiles constructed from students’ responses to the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993) in an effort to identify and interpret the habitual coping strategies used by the subjects of the research and to explore the relationship between their use of particular strategies and their subsequent success in the course. Moreover, the customised Microsoft Excel™ application that was developed to generate the relative coping profiles used in the study is an original contribution that has potential to facilitate the study of adolescent coping and enhance the usefulness of the Adolescent Coping Scale for student counsellors and career advisers. In particular, the research has demonstrated the potential of the ACS to identify students, early in their transition from Year 10 to the residential course in agriculture, who are at risk of not completing the two year Course.

Personal Background and Involvement of the Researcher

It may seem strange that in a book on research I talk about interest and enthusiasm and passionate commitment ... What I am trying to say is that strong subjective involvement
is a powerful motivator for acquiring an objective approach to the study of phenomena. It is doubtful that any significant work is done without great personal involvement. Kerlinger (1964b, p.vii)

The researcher’s ‘great personal involvement [in Agriculture]’ extends from the mid 1950s when, as part of his training as a Christian Brother, he studied Agriculture at the University of Sydney. Likewise, he developed his interest in and commitment to vocational education in his first (1959-1961) years of teaching Science and Religious Education in Victorian technical schools. Twenty three years of teaching Physics, Chemistry and Biology in Christian Brother boys’ secondary colleges in Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide followed. In 1974, the author transferred to the South Australian steel and ship building town of Whyalla, where the challenge for the school was to provide a style of post compulsory education that enabled boys and girls to cope with high levels of unemployment, while fitting them for positions in steel making and associated heavy industry.

In 1984, the researcher accepted the position of Principal at the Christian Brothers Agricultural School (CBAS) Tardun, 140 km east of Geraldton Western Australia. CBAS was then a single stream Years 8 to 10 boys’ only residential high school. The challenges at Tardun were to integrate agriculture - large scale cereal growing and sheep farming - into the curriculum and to provide for a disproportionately large number of students with learning and/or behavioural problems. During the six year period, the school participated in the Priority Country Areas Program (PCAP) and in reviews of rural and agricultural education.

On the expiry of his six year appointment to Tardun, the author moved to Keaney College Bindoon, a mere 100km north of Perth. In terms of structure and enrolment, the Keaney College of 1990 was similar to Tardun and, while not the principal, the researcher continued his role of developing the curriculum, taking the groups of students for work on the farm and in the residential care of the boys. The closure of New Norcia Catholic College 40 km to the north in 1991 and falling enrolments led to a review of the operations of Keaney College. The net result of the review was that the College seek registration as a Senior Agricultural College, establish a boarding house for female students and change the name to Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon. To better fit himself for the role he was to have in setting up the new school, 1992 saw the author commence the Master of Education (Leadership) at
the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle. For his research project, the author conducted *A Survey of Four Catholic Boarding Schools* in which he surveyed the Year 10 residential students of the four schools in order to:

Complement the *Survey of WA Catholic Boarding Schools* (Dwyer 1992).
Assess the feelings and attitudes of Year 10 boarders towards their boarding experience.
Assist in the formulation of policy for the new Catholic Agricultural College.

Ascertain the differences/similarities between:

- Country and City
- Male and Female
- Overseas and Australian (Donohoe 1995).

From 1995 until retiring from teaching in December 1998, the author taught agricultural subjects in the senior school and Manual Arts in the junior school. He represented the Catholic Education Office on the Small Business Management and Enterprise and Agriculture Syllabus Committees of the Curriculum Council and was extensively involved with the development of the current Outcomes-Based courses of study in these subjects. The author is the current Chair of the Agriculture Syllabus Committee and edits the quarterly newsletter of the Agricultural Educators Association of Western Australia (AEAWA).

It is fair to say, that the author’s ‘strong subjective involvement’ in and ‘passionate commitment’ to the Senior Course in Agriculture, and the students who engage with it, motivated the researcher to devote the first years of his ‘retirement’ to the current research by taking up doctoral studies at the University of Notre Dame Australia in 1999.

The process of uncovering what motivated young people to embark upon the course and how they managed the transition from ‘a normal school’ [to use the students’ words] to the Catholic Agricultural College has opened up for the author a whole new world of qualitative research; a world that is so different from that of his earlier studies in Agriculture where constructs such as validity and reliability are defined quantitatively and modelled upon the work of R A Fisher (1890-1962). Moreover, his previous post graduate forays into educational research reinforced that way of thinking as they too were based upon the quantitative behaviourist model.
In his retirement from teaching, the author continues to reside at Bindoon, thereby maintaining an extensive out-of-school involvement with subsequent groups of students by working with them in the olive grove, assisting them with their preparation for the Perth Royal Show’s Farm Skills Competition and informally by his presence around the school.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: A CASE STUDY

In this chapter, the researcher will argue that his study of 26 students in transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College is essentially a single-site case study. In doing so, he includes his own commentary on some of the extensive literature relating to matters of reliability, validity, generalisability and bias that are germane to studies of this type.

The present study is not so much ‘a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied’ (Stake 1994, p.236), and one which uses a number of data gathering and analytical tools. As Adelman, Kemmis and Jenkins (1980, p.49) say, ‘Case study methodology is [inherently] eclectic.’ Moreover, the study attempts to ‘illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why [those decisions] were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result’, which according to Schramm (in Yin 1984, p.22) is the essence of a case study. Gay (1976, p.137) would agree and adds that ‘the purpose of a case study is to determine why, not just what.’ This is precisely what the study proposed to do, namely to determine why some students were able to cope with the transition from Year 10 to the Year 11 course in agriculture in the particular setting of Bindoon College in one year and continue to Year 12 while others in that same setting were not.

In the same reference, Gay goes on to say that the two inherent problems with case studies are ‘observer bias and lack of generalisability.’ Yin (1994), Denzin & Lincoln (2000), and Stake (2000) disagree on the matter of generalisability and cite several examples of case studies that have contributed to theory in ways that are analogous to a physical scientist who ‘generalizes from experimental results to theory’ (Yin 1994, p.37). Some of these studies are: Lynd & Lynd (1929); Becker (1961); Jacobs (1961); Liebow (1967); Friedman (1970). However, it should be appreciated that with regard specifically to the studies they have cited, it has not been
the authors themselves who have generalised and applied their results to other cases, but other professionals, such as town planners and sociologists interested in extrapolating to their own circumstances, who have done so. The present study is considerably narrower in scope and on a much smaller scale than are the above and has been conceived and undertaken because of a need and the author’s desire to come to a better understanding of the particular case (Berg 1998, p.216).

Additionally, the study conforms to the model of an *intrinsic case study* (Berg 1998; Stake 1994), and as such has an affinity with Aroni’s (1985) doctoral study on the effects of Jewish and non-Jewish day schools on Jewish identity and commitment. As with Aroni and her involvement with Jewish schools, the author acknowledges an intrinsic interest in the case and understands that it is not his place to generalise to other contexts. That, however, should not preclude readers from taking up the results of the research and applying them to their own situations should they recognise comparability on important situational or contextual dimensions.

The chosen case is a complex one that required a number of complementary tools to explore its many dimensions. As Ragin (1994, p.92) says:

> The key features common to all qualitative methods [such as case study methods] can be seen when they are contrasted with quantitative methods. Most quantitative data techniques are data condensers. They condense data in order to see the big picture … Qualitative data, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly.

It is with this end in view, namely to see key aspects of the case more clearly, that the study has incorporated interviews, surveys and the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993), and was conducted both at the point of entry to, and towards the end of, the students’ first academic year in the program.

**Relationships with other Structured Qualitative Methodologies**

In his choice of case study as the approach best suited to the applied purposes of the present study, the author has preferred the flexible and adaptive, mixed qualitative-quantitative methodologies advocated by Stake (1995), and by Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) rather than the more specific, purpose-designed and structured approaches used in studies that follow the principles and more rigorous
methodological specifications of approaches such as grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1997), ethnography (Spradley, 1979), or participant observation (Spradley, 1980).

Although the researcher was interested in what the students had to say about coping and in uncovering the extent to which their preferred or habitual coping strategies correlated with their persistence and success in their course, he was not seeking to develop a theoretical account of how the students have made personal meaning of their experience. Nor was he seeking to investigate how the students’ personal meaning-making influenced whether they would opt to persevere with the course or to withdraw. In that sense, the structured processes of grounded theory development were judged not to be appropriate.

Moreover, while the present study has quite deliberately used a number of the tools that ethnographers commonly employ – including close observation and interviewing of students, specifically the general techniques of ethnographic interviewing developed originally by James Spradley (Spradley, 1979) and of methods of observation appropriate for researchers who are themselves legitimate participants in the normal an ongoing activities of the site under investigation (Spradley, 1979) – it was not the purpose of the study to produce a grounded and naturalistic portrayal of what it means at a personal subjective level to be a student in the programme being investigated. In other words, while some of the general interview and observational techniques of ethnographic data gathering and participant observation were used where appropriate, it was not the intent of the study to produce an ethnography of the life and experience of the students in the programme.

**Ethical Issues**

Ethical principles informed the design and the conduct of the research project from the beginning. The ethical issues that are particularly germane to the present study are:

- Informed consent and access.
- Confidentiality.
- Findings that may damage the College reputation.
- Illegal or potentially harmful practices.
• The questions of ‘using’ the students, and of coercion.
• Approval.

Authors such as Neuman (1994, pp.427-467) would add the following: physical harm; psychological abuse; legal harm; and effects on the larger society or government. However, as they are not applicable to the case at hand, they are not discussed here.

**Project Approval**

The original research proposal for the project, initially titled ‘Person, Perception, Perseverance and Peers’ (Donohoe 1999), was submitted to The University of Notre Dame Australia on December 10, 1999 and was duly approved by the University’s Human Research and Ethics Committee.

**Informed Consent and Access**

Informed consent and access are here treated together because to gain the latter, one must not only obtain the consent of the school authorities, the parents of the students involved, and individual staff members with regard to personal interviews, but must also secure the release of students from their classes where necessary.

**Consent**

The Principal readily consented to the proposal, as he was familiar with earlier research that the author had conducted for Bindoon College on the Landcare Program for Year 10 students (Donohoe 2000). As a matter of courtesy, and to obtain his input, the interview schedules, survey instruments, the letters to parents and to the participants were presented to him for his approval and possible amendment.

Likewise, the Principal raised no objections to staff being interviewed during working time, and for the students to be taken out of class for the same purpose. In addition, the Principal did more than merely agree to the all of the above as he wrote commending the study to the parents of the participating students. (Appendix A)
**Access to Staff**

Access to the staff was simply by informal request and presented no difficulties, given that the researcher (as a recent former colleague with a continuing on-site relationship with Bindoon College) was well known to all staff, and that the interviews were all conducted at convenient times and places. No staff refused or demurred when an interview was requested.

**Student Consent and Access**

An explanatory letter from the researcher requesting permission to involve the target students (Appendix A), together with a reply slip and return-addressed envelope, was mailed to the parents (or faxed if this was the normal means of communication between school and home). All parents responded positively. Letters of thanks were subsequently sent, and a further letter informing them of the progress of the study (Appendix A) was mailed in August 2000.

To meet the requirements of informed consent advocated by DeVaus (1995, p.334) and the participation of the students involved in the study, the following procedures were adopted:

- The class was spoken to as a whole and the project and the demands on their time explained.
- Each student was given a letter which reiterated the content of the talk.
- The letter contained a duplicate consent form.
- Participants were required to complete the forms, retain one copy and give the other to the researcher.
- When it was time to administer the surveys and the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993), the Principal was informed and the time slot was negotiated with the teachers.
- Interview times were arranged with the student and the student’s supervisor.

Securing the students’ participation presented no problems, and all 26 of those invited to be part of the study readily agreed. All students proved all to be most cooperative and many, to use their language, were ‘chuffed’ to be part of the research project. As Stake (1995, p.58) has observed for studies of this kind, ‘many respondents consider it a compliment to be asked.’
Confidentiality

Although the identities of individual respondents to the questionnaires and surveys and the Adolescent Coping Scale were at all times known to the researcher, only first-name pseudonyms were used in the data recording and reporting of the study. The students were not told what their pseudonyms were. As a further protection for the students, the district, suburb of Perth, country town or property from which they hailed have not been used. Instead the generalisations: ‘country town’, ‘station’, ‘farm’, and ‘suburb’ have been substituted. The small sample size and intimate knowledge staff and students had of each other dictated this measure.

Participating staff members were also assigned first-name pseudonyms. Where the role of the person was important in understanding and evaluating what has been said, the role has been coupled in reporting with his or her pseudonym, e.g., Tom, Training Officer (a position title that refers to a number of staff). In the case of the Principal and Deputy-Principal, however, the position titles ‘Deputy’ and ‘Principal’ were employed even though it was clear that these names would render the individuals directly identifiable. This step was taken because it was felt that the special positions these officers occupied vis-à-vis the students and staff required an understanding of their specific role contexts for their words to have meaning. Consequently, the anonymity of the Principal and Deputy is not so closely protected as that of the other participants.

Burgess (1985, p.193) faced a similar problem, which he identified as ‘anonymity’, when, in reporting a study of mathematics teaching in an English primary school, he observed that the teachers ‘had identified most, if not all, of staff beneath the pseudonyms.’ In this study then, it can be expected that the participating students and staff would be able to recognise their own words when quoted directly but they would find it difficult to attribute the words of another to the speaker, except in the case of the Principal and Deputy Principal. Furthermore, the fact that the participating students are unlikely to read the thesis is an additional, albeit fortuitous, safeguard of confidentiality for them.
Potential for Damage to Bindoon College’s Reputation

One potentially important ethical issue for the research is the possible impact of disclosing publicly the relatively high proportion of students who did not return for the final year. However, since the low retention from Year 11 to Year 12 is an historical ‘fact of life’ for this College, and is already common knowledge, any reference to it in the report of the study is unlikely to add negatively to current perceptions. In any event, one hoped-for outcome of the research is that it will explicate the reasons for the low retention and, if the situation can be turned around, may well lead in time to an enhancement of Bindoon College’s reputation.

Illegal or Potentially Harmful Practices

From the beginning of the study, it was recognised that it was possible, during a private interview for example, that the researcher might become privy to information that could link particular students to illegal and/or potentially harmful practices. Illicit drug taking, bullying and petty theft are examples of such practices. However, since neither his role nor his brief imposed any obligation or expectation that he should investigate any such disclosures should they occur, the researcher sought to minimise the potential for inadvertent discovery by:

- Keeping firmly in mind the purpose of the study; namely, to discover something of how the students manage the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course.
- Eschewing survey and interview items that probed this area of College life or implied that such activities were extant within the College.
- Exercising caution and sensitivity when asking students about their experiences of living closely with persons of the opposite gender.
- Resolving that should it become evident that an interviewee was about to reveal privileged information, the researcher would tactfully remind him or her that it was not the interviewer’s role to be privy to or investigate such matters. However, if an interviewee persisted and clearly expected to see something done, the researcher would note the disclosure and advise the interviewee that the matter would be referred (in confidence if requested) to the appropriate authorities.

As it happened, nothing emerged during any of the interviews that could be considered to have related to illegal or potentially harmful activity and the need for referral of sensitive information to the Principal or others never arose.
Using People

In writing about the ethical problems that sometimes surface when special groups of people are invited to participate as research subjects, Neuman (1994, p.436) has noted that there always exists a possibility that some individuals might agree to take part for what are essentially selfish motives. The hope or expectation of achieving higher school grades in a school context is an example of what Neuman is saying. The potential rewards for the students who took part in the present study, however, were so minor and unsophisticated that they could hardly be classified as ‘selfish’ in the above sense. Moreover, anecdotal evidence points to the fact that a number of students viewed the project as one that had the potential to benefit subsequent groups, and (albeit less altruistically) were pleased to have a legitimate excuse to escape class or night study.

Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Bias

Validity

The concept of validity in qualitative research is complex, with individual researchers typically defining it in ways that suit their particular circumstances and purposes. For example, Winter (2000, p.10) in responding to Maxwell’s 1992 (p.279) article in the Harvard Educational Review, defines validity operationally in these terms:

One possible test for validity is to enquire whether the research is measuring what it was intended to measure. Yet this question may be even more illuminating if we adapt it to enquire, is it measuring the kind of ‘truth’ it hoped to measure.

Brinberg and McGrath (1985, p.13) take a slightly different approach when they commence their definition of validity by stating what validity is not:

Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques … Rather, validity is like integrity, character and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances.

Neuman (1994, p.130) claims that the term is over used, and that it is confused with concepts like truth and correctness. He concedes that validity has more to do with measurement than with qualitative research per se and links it to reliability which he defines as an ‘indicator’s dependability’ (p.127). When writing about qualitative
research in the field, Neuman (1994, p.357) defines validity in field research as ‘the confidence placed in a researcher’s analysis and data as accurately representing the social world in the field’ and it is this notion of validity that the present researcher has endeavoured to achieve in the current project.

A number of authors, Kerlinger (1964), Gay (1976), Nunally (1978), Zeller and Carmines (1980), Babbie (1989), Ensminger, Forrest, Riley, Kang, Green, Starfield and Ryan (2000), and Trail and Jeffrey (2001) to name a few, consider validity more from the positivist viewpoint of the large scale survey rather than from the perspective of an instrumental interpretative/qualitative case study. Regarding the present study, Kaplan’s (1964, p.204) warnings of the ‘exaggerated importance attached to precision’ and of the inappropriateness of the ‘quantitative idiom’ for qualitative research (Kaplan 1964, p.212) are pertinent. Kaplan (1964, p.198) also makes the point that the words ‘valid/validity’ have a common root - namely, strength. Kaplan cautions against an overly mathematical understanding of the concept of validity and thereby overstating the importance of precision in qualitative research. In a similar vein, Valerie Janesick (2001) distances the concept of qualitative validity from the quantitative paradigm and stresses the importance of trust (rapport) between the researcher and the researched at the very outset:

By establishing trust and rapport at the beginning of the study, the researcher is better able to capture the nuances and meanings of each participant’s life from the participant’s point of view. This also ensures will be more willing share everything, warts and all, with the researcher. (Janesick 2001, p.384)

Consequently, Janesick sees ‘creditability’ rather than the ‘psychometric paradigm of validity, reliability, and generalisability’ as being more appropriate to case study research (p.392).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) also write about the need for qualitative research to be credible rather than valid, and that, in order to be credible, the processes used in:

Research that is designed to garner lots of evidence; that is vivid, detailed, and transparent; that is careful and well documented; that is coherent and consistent is going to be convincing. These are the standards through which qualitative interviewing studies gain creditability. (Rubin and Rubin 1995, p.91)

Laurel Richardson (2001), in her article Writing: a method of inquiry, is another researcher to have eschewed the use of the term ‘validity’ in favour of the analogy of
a multidimensional crystal, which she contrasts with that of a two-dimensional triangle:

I propose that the central imaginary for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed two dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal which combines symmetry and substance with infinite variety of shapes, substances transmutations, multidimensionalities and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter but are not amorphous … (p.934).

The metaphor of a crystal, particularly its ability to grow given the right conditions, matches the unique personalities of the young people who are the subjects of this study and the wide variety of data gathering techniques used might incline one to adopt the analogy. However, as Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.181) point out, the metaphor is better suited to non-positivist artistic forms of data presentation such as poems and plays. Furthermore, they consider validity to be authenticity and perceive authenticity as ‘fairness where all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims and voices should be apparent’ (p.180). For this researcher, ‘fairness’ has translated to ‘non-judgmental’ especially in the context of interviewing students who were in conflict with the school authorities.

Johnson (1997) evaluates qualitative research design and considers the concept of validity under the headings of descriptive, interpretative and theoretical. The application of these concepts to the present study is discussed briefly below.

**Descriptive Validity and Investigator Triangulation**

The key issue here is the factual accuracy. Maxwell refers to the facts of what is being reported in the following way:

If different observers or methods produce descriptively different data or accounts of the same events or situations, this puts into question the descriptive ‘validity’ (and other types of ‘validity’ as well) of the accounts. (Maxwell 1992, p.287)

The researcher made limited use of investigator triangulation when in June 2001 he conducted focus interviews with 14 staff to obtain their perceptions of how each student was coping. In addition to reassessing staff perceptions of how each of the students coped with the transition and the course in general, this interview attempted to ascertain the adults’ views on why so many were not continuing into Year 12. The researcher’s general background in agricultural education, and his in-depth
knowledge of the College program, helped to ensure the descriptive validity of the research.

_Interpretative Validity_

Interpretative validity involves ‘getting into the minds of the participants’ (Johnson p.286). One way of achieving this, according to Johnson, is to use low ‘inference descriptors’ such as verbatim quotations. In this study, sixteen-year old Anne was a student who was having problems with authority and the following excerpt from her October interview illustrates the point that Maxwell is making.

**R: What's the year been like for you so far?**
Anne: Ummm ... pretty awful really. (a small laugh). Had a lot of problems with boarding and with some of the supervisors and stuff and people higher but and the work load's been pretty hectic, and stuff like that. It's not been that bad.

**R: What are some of the problems that you're having?**
Anne: Um the main one at the moment is my relationship with um one of the guys, that goes to this school. Um they're having problems with me going out and spending time with him on the weekends. Jus' stuff like that.

**R: So what, he's a day student is he?**
Anne: Yeah, Hector.

**R: And how are you managing that? What specific things do you do to cope with this tension?**
Anne: Um, well it's me and Flo that have been banned from going to town. So we've gone and talked to Mr Jones and we've tried to ... um reason with him or compromise as we called it ... to try and see if we could maybe still go in there on weekends and you know and put out some guidelines or somethink, 'cause we haven't actually done anything wrong yet. And um ... he said 'no' so we tried writing him a letter and he didn't respond to it. So I got my mother to ring him and try and get her to talk to him ... and he still said 'No!' (a small laugh) Sooo we've still haven't given up yet. We're still tryin' to... work with him, tryin' to get him to see that ... we'll lose a lot of really good friends. Um one of the reasons why he gave us, why we weren't allowed to go in there was because of um we were ... um it was bad for the school's reputation. Um which we in turn replied we'd never done anything towards the school's reputation and we wouldn't try and tarnish it in any way. Um going out to see friends and that um on the week end wouldn't tarnish the school's reputation. Um we were seen in the Pub on a Friday night um we were getting a meal because everything else closes at like five so there's nothing else to get somewhere to eat. And that's all we were doing in the Pub, but ... he still banned us anyway. (a half sigh). So we've just being tryin' to work, trying to think of ways to try and get him to understand that ... we don't want to lose our friends.

**R: So that's been a battle?**
Anne: Hmm. You could say that. *(Anne, 16 years 5 months)*
Presenting Anne’s report verbatim in this way enables the reader to experience life on the weekend from her perspective and the difficulty she had in resolving the conflicts between her social life and the demands of the residential dimension of the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College. Moreover, Anne’s words exemplify the role friends play in helping one another to adjust to the course.

In similar vein, Maxwell (1992, p.289) agrees when he says that ‘Interpretative accounts are grounded in the language of the people studied and rely as much as possible on their own words and concepts.’ Moreover, it is fair to say that Anne’s account is neither valid nor invalid; rather, what is at stake here are the inferences the researcher draws from them (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p.191).

The interview process in particular has enabled the author to ‘ground his research in the language of the [young] people studied’ (Maxwell 1992), thereby securing interpretative validity and achieving the goal of case study design, namely to ‘optimise the understanding of the case rather than generalising beyond’ (Stake 2000, p.436).

**Theoretical Validity**

As the focus of this study is descriptive and interpretative rather than developing a theory of student coping, the third of Johnson’s (1997) categories of validity, ‘Theoretical Validity’, has no relevance to the research and therefore will not be developed. However, the concept of Construct Validity does, as the following excerpt from a student interview and the attendant analysis demonstrate.

**Construct Validity**

A construct is usually defined as a non-quantifiable trait which explains behaviour and, as Gay (1976, p.89) remarks, ‘you cannot see a construct; you can only observe its effect’. The peer pressure that caused Samantha to choose to do poorly in a couple of subjects is a relevant example of a construct. In the following extracts from her second interview in October 2000 Samantha, a high achieving student who was ‘different’ from the majority of her class, revealed something of the pressure she had been placed under by her peers to conform. A short time after the interview,
when conversing informally with the researcher, Samantha revealed that she had deliberately performed poorly in a couple of assessments in order to regain membership of her peer group.

**R:** A few moments ago, you mentioned that you have experienced some ‘low points’. Can you give us a couple of examples perhaps?

Samantha: Yeah. Um … I'm having difficulties with um say the teachers and like Mr X and that. They really encourage me t' get out there and be a leader and that kind of thing and show the way and I'm having great difficulties going 'Awh OK then' and I jump to it and then … all the students are like “you jus' stupid, you're an idiot, stop getting brownie points, everyone knows you're already too good so just you know be quiet and go back to year box”. So I'm having trouble in, with that and um I get a lot of crap for being a hippie, when I'm not really a hippie (laughs) and um I'm like alternative and I'm, I'm always reading up alternative medicines and tryin' to study out of school things and I've got um … like I do Raeke and things like that.

Samantha went on to say that her transition from Year 10 to Year 11 had changed her:

**R:** In what way do you think you've changed?

Samantha: Um I think I've gone … I don't know how to call it. I don't know how to handle situations … Um … I get stressed more easily and my, I'm shorter and I can only see a few sides of things. Um … my patience has gone right down. But in the other way, I try to understand people more and it's just difficult. (Laughs a little).

**R:** You've managed this change?

Samantha: Yeah, I've, I've managed it but in a way I'm um … It's good that I've changed and things that I've, I've done and that but at the same time I'm gettin' heaps more pressure and … I don't know how to handle it or how to take it and I'm getting a lot of, ah having a lot of problems with other students and the pressure and stuff they give me. Yeah.

**R:** What sort of pressure?

Samantha: They always teasin’ me and they're discouraging me and telling me how I'm … can’t do this and I can’t do that and I'm just a stupid person in general and all that kind of thing.

**R:** Can you suggest why they might be doing that?

Samantha: Well awh there's two ways you can look at it. It could be because I'm achieving more than them and getting better grades and they are like jealous of me or it could be 'cause I've personally changed and I might becoming more up myself or just thinking they could feel I'm too good for 'em, they're not good enough or I mean I could be an outright bitch (laughs) you know. Things like that.

**R:** So how are you managing?

Samantha: Um I'm doing a lot of meditation and um that's the best way I can find I manage things. And I try and look at everything positively, as much as I can. Yeah I'm starting to now. I'm starting to see like the actions that I've done and the reactions of like they're all coming out now. And I'm just trying; I'm having trouble finding ways of … um like yeah handling it I suppose you'd call
it yeah. Like jus' tryin’ to keep positive all the time and yeah. *(Samantha, 16 years 7 months)*

So, the phenomenon of a capable student choosing to do poorly in a small number of assessments may be labelled as an act of conformity to her peers. It also demonstrates the importance of peers in the management of the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course. Samantha’s testimony gives construct validity to this concept and at the same time meets Johnson’s criteria of creditability and defensibility (Johnson 1997, p.282) and Brinberg’s criterion of integrity:

> Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques … Rather validity is like integrity, character and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances. *(Brinberg 1985, p.13)*

**Content Validity**

Content validity is defined by Zeller and Carmines in *Measurement in the Social Sciences* (1980, p.78) in the following way:

> Fundamentally, content validity concerns the extent to which a set of items taps the content of some domain of interest. To the degree that the items reflect the full domain of content, they can be said to be content valid.

Similarly to Zeller and Carmines, DeVaus (1985) defines content validity as ‘the extent to which the indicators measure the different aspects of the concept.’ Were the current research limited to the student management of classroom tasks to the exclusion of the farm, living away from home, relationships with other students and other dimensions of the case, the research would lack content validity. It would be like a Tertiary Entrance English Examination that tested only grammar and syntax and failed to test the students’ comprehension.

**Face Validity**

Another way of looking at content validity that has relevance to the study is that content validity may be thought of as a component of face validity which Neuman (1994) defines as ‘… a judgment by the scientific community that the indicator really measures the construct’ (p.131). Which may be explained in an agricultural context by the following example: no farmer would accept, as valid, a structured assessment of basic tractor driving skills that did not include reversing with an implement in tow.
**Criterion Validity**

DeVaus (1985) and Neuman (1994) refer to criterion validity as ‘some standard or criterion that is known to indicate a construct accurately’ (Neuman p.133). There are two commonly accepted types of criterion validity, to wit: concurrent and predictive.

**Concurrent Validity**

The following reference to Item 4b part c of Survey 2 demonstrates how the concurrent validity of a survey item may be established. The item reads:

> 4b. When I am having difficulty with my school work or find myself becoming frustrated, I
> c. Ask one of my friends for help.

The Table 3.1 establishes the concurrent validity of the Item by comparing the students’ responses to item 4b (c) with their use of the well credentialed Adolescent Coping Scale Strategies 1 and 5, namely, Seeking Social Support and Investing in Close Friends.

**Table 3.1 Survey 2: Concurrent Validity of Item 4b part c†**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Responding to Item 4b c</th>
<th>Scores on ACS Strategy</th>
<th>1. Seek Social Support</th>
<th>5. Invest in Close Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kath</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flo</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gus</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syd</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Av</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Student responses to Item 4b (c) Survey 1 and ACS score sheets.

As the Table 3.1 shows, the nine students who responded to Item 4b (c), on average, made more extensive use of the corresponding ACS strategies, thereby indicating the item’s concurrent validity. A similar claim can be made for other survey items that
require the students to nominate the strategies they employed when faced with a range of difficulties.

*Predictive validity.*

The other sub-type of criterion validity is predictive validity which Neuman (1994) defines operationally as: ‘where an indicator predicts future events that are logically related to a construct’ (p.133) or as Kaplan (1964, p.199) writes:

> The validity of a measurement is a matter of the success with which the measures obtained in particular cases allow us to predict the measures that would be arrived at by other procedures and other contexts.

The surveys and interviews, in this study, are not required to possess predictive validity because they are concerned with understanding present and past events and are not intended to predict future events. However, when considering the place of the Adolescent Coping Scale in the research, the question of its predictive validity is developed in Chapter 6.

**Validity and the Adolescent Coping Scale**

In the first place, the ACS is a widely used instrument that has been employed in a number of studies (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.46) relating to:

- Stress in the school context.
- Coping with the final years of school.
- Stress in the family.
- The development of coping strategies amongst twins.
- Coping styles of unemployed youth.
- The relationship between coping styles and classroom climate.
- Adolescent identity and coping behaviour.
- Coping styles of young people with disabilities.
- The association between coping style and gender, socio-economic status, age and ethnicity.

Furthermore, its validity and reliability have been firmly established and well documented in *The Adolescent Coping Scale: Administrator’s Manual* (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, pp.32-44). So far as the author can ascertain, the ACS not been
used previously as a predictive tool in the manner it has in this study; namely as a means of identifying at the point of entry students at risk of not managing the transition to a course of study. The results of the present research show that it is possible to use the ACS in this way.

**Bias**

When writing about bias, one has to distinguish between what Hammersley and Gomm (1997) call ‘culpable systematic error’ and the legitimate dedicated personal involvement of the researcher in the act of knowing or discovery as championed by Polanyi (1958, p.viii):

> I have shown that into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known and that this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge.

and Kerlinger (1964b, p.vii):

> It may seem strange that in a book on research I talk about interest and enthusiasm and passionate commitment … What I am trying to say is that strong subjective involvement is a powerful motivator for acquiring an objective approach to the study of phenomena. It is doubtful that any significant work is done without great personal involvement.

Polanyi’s and Kerlinger’s support for passion and great personal involvement in research and the acquisition of knowledge reflects the researcher’s position relative to the study. However, it is this very same passion and involvement that leave him susceptible to the charge of bias which Hammersley and Gomm in their 1997 article define as ‘culpable systematic error’ (p.11). Nevertheless, the researcher believes that the ‘before and after’ interviews of the participants, the surveys, the use of the Adolescent Coping Scale, the interviewing and surveying of members of staff and the follow-up telephoning of those who did not return to Year 12 have ensured that the present research is not biased in the above sense.

As the study progressed, a different type of bias surfaced; namely, the bias, either positive or negative, of adults towards some students. The interviewing of virtually all staff members who were in close contact with the students helped to minimise the effects of this form of bias.
Bracketing and Reflexivity

Bracketing

The term bracketing has been traditionally applied to historical-comparative research where historians have to hold back or ‘bracket out’ their knowledge of subsequent events and present day values’ (Neuman 1994), or as Cantor and Schneider put it much earlier when referring to what historians are required to do when working with primary sources:

When we read primary sources, we have to be, at least for the moment, to some degree moral relativists rather than moral absolutists. We have to consider the ideals and actions as they are portrayed for us in the source material relative to the values of society involved, even though in making judgments later, we may decide that we are justified in condemning them. (Cantor & Schneider 1967, p.44)

The researcher became aware of the need to ‘bracket out’ his prior knowledge of student behaviours during the second round of student interviews in late October 2001. The following extract from the interview with Ursula illustrates the point:

R: Are there any other special difficulties or low points in the year?
Ursula: The teachers. Huh.

R: The teachers? What’s low about the teachers?
Ursula: They … can’t teach very well. (Laughs) Most people find that they can’t get along with most of the teachers. Hm. Because they’ve all got double standards. Huh.

R: Double standards? What do you mean by double standards?
Ursula: Like they’ll say one thing to someone and then they’ll go ahead. And some one that's totally different they'll give them another set of … rules.

R: Mightn't that be just treating kids as individuals?
Ursula: No. Not when it's got to the same task that everyone is doing and stuff.

R: So could you expand on that a little bit, or give us an example?
Ursula: Right um, some people don't work in class and stuff don't get extensions and some people that are jus’ really suck up a lot to the teacher get extensions and stuff. (Half laugh). (Ursula, 15 years 11 months)

The researcher, through his contacts with students on the farm and with the staff, was aware that some students were becoming restless and rebellious and were unlikely to return for the final year. Ursula was one of these and, while listening to her in the second interview, he had to set aside (bracket) his prior knowledge of Ursula’s behaviour and refrain from being at all judgmental or in any way critical of the interviewee’s behaviour.
Reflexivity

Other researchers, for example: Gergen and Gergen (2000), Ahern (1999), Neuman (1994) prefer the term reflexivity to bracketing when describing the same phenomenon. For example, Ahern argues that to be reflexive the researcher has to be able to ‘put aside personal feelings and preconceptions’ (Ahern 1999, p.2). Hall and Callery (2001, p.5) following Reay (1996) see reflexivity as ‘critically examining one’s effect as researcher on the research process’, which is precisely what the researcher was compelled to do when confronted with interviewees of the calibre of Ursula. The research process would have been vitiated had the researcher subconsciously adopted one of his former positions of authority: school principal, careers’ advisor, deputy principal or house parent for example; and it is for this very reason that he outlined his background in the research proposal and in Chapter 2. This whole process of recognising those parts of one’s previous experience that impact upon the research and, having acknowledged them, leaving them to one side is appropriately named reflexive bracketing (Ahern 1999, p.2). The writer believes that reflexive bracketing rather than objectivity more accurately describes what he has been required to do in this project to ensure its trustworthiness. In taking this stance, the researcher is adopting the interpretative tradition where:

The interpreter objectifies (i.e., stands over and against) that which is to be interpreted. And in that sense, the interpreter remains unaffected by and external to the interpretative process. (Schwandt 2000, p.194)

Consequently, he agrees with (Ahern 1999, p.2) when she goes on to draw a distinction between reflexivity and objectivity, claiming it is impossible for a person to set aside things of which they are not aware.

In addition to the above, the extensive use of verbatim reporting of conversations followed by a detailed analysis or commentary ensures that the report ‘carries sufficient conviction to enable someone else to have the same experience as the original observer and appreciate the truth of the account.’ (Mays and Pope 1995, p.4)
The Data Gathering Process

The Development and Use of Instruments

In order that the reader may appreciate where the data gathering instruments fit into the overall design and before discussing each one in detail, each is listed below:

- Early March: Conduct Survey 1: Managing the Transition Year 10 — Year 11 to establish the background of the students, their reasons for joining the course and their expectations of the course.
- March: conduct Interview 1 to complement and amplify the data yielded by Survey 1.
- October: Carry out Survey 2: Managing the Transition Year 10 — Year 11 to determine the student perceptions of their management of the transition from Year 10; and whether their expectations have been fulfilled.
- October: conduct, Interview 2 to complement and amplify the data yielded by the second survey.
- October: Administer the Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993) in order to: triangulate the data obtained from Survey 2 about the students’ preferred coping strategies; to illustrate the special character of the cohort by comparing it with larger samples of urban youth; and to explore the use of the ACS as a predictive or diagnostic tool.
- October/November: Interview staff: to ascertain members’ perceptions of the students’ coping with the course; to investigate the reliability of the students’ self-assessment of the way they managed the course and the transition from Year 10.

A description of the construction of each of the above instruments and their place in the research follows.

Survey 1: Managing the Transition Year 10-11

The first of the surveys was developed in February 2000 in for administering in early March when the students had settled, but not so far into the course that the experience was no longer new to them. The instrument (Appendix B) was designed to establish what motivated the students to join the course, their expectations, plus personal and other factors that were likely to affect their management of the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course. These dimensions may be grouped as follows:
• Personal factors: including age, gender, previous schooling, home/family, links with the land.
• Educational: educational achievements and preferences.
• Awareness: awareness of the Senior Agricultural Course and the College.
• Reasons for joining the course and the relative importance of these.
• Plans for the respondents’ further education and career.
• Costs/negatives of joining the course for the individual.
• Coping strategies when problems/difficulties arise, particularly personal problems, e.g., loneliness, work related problems, and problems with other people.
• Expectations of the course.

The Content Validity Matrix Survey 1 (Table 3.1 and Appendix C), lists the factors and the related questionnaire items.

(a) Construction of Survey 1

The researcher followed the standard protocol of providing the college Principal with a draft copy of the survey instrument. The INSTEP (Innovative Skills Training and Education Program) coordinator of a Catholic boys’ school proof-read the instrument and offered constructive criticism. Finally, the Year 12 class piloted the instrument and suggested changes to the wording and layout that made it better suited to the ways teenagers express themselves.

(b) Administration of Survey 1

Permission was readily obtained from the Principal and the class teacher to administer the survey during lesson time. This timing was ideal because the scheduled one-hour lesson times enabled respondents to work at their leisure. The setting aside of ‘school time’ for the questionnaire respected the clear line of demarcation between ‘School Time’ and ‘Our Time’ that is characteristic of student culture at Bindoon College. This use of ‘school time’ kept the students on side. The respondents found the instrument straightforward and there were very few questions.
(c) **Data Entry and Checking**

The researcher scored the completed survey instruments and transcribed the scores onto an Excel™ spreadsheet. He repeated the procedure and employed the split-screen facility to check for errors in transcription. Subsequent reference to the original score sheets eliminated transcription errors. Once in Excel™, a code book was developed and the data were copied into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 10 for further processing and analysis. As the coding for SPSS is standard procedure and well documented in the literature relating to the SPSS software, the codebook is not appended.

The schedule for the first of the student interviews was developed in conjunction with the survey and is designed to complement and augment it. An outline of its construction and the interview process follows.

**Interview 1**

Conducted in March 2000 after the students had completed the survey, the first interview afforded the students the opportunity to expand their responses to the survey and it enabled them to raise matters not contained in the survey and, finally, it served to triangulate the survey data.

**(a) Content of Interview 1**

The first of the semi-structured student interviews dealt with the students’ background, their decision making, their ways of managing or coping, and their expectations. The full text of the schedule for the March interview is provided in Appendix B. The numbering of each question allowed for the development of the Content Validity Matrix (Appendix C) that serviced the survey and the interview. As was the case with the survey, the design of the interview schedule was discussed with the researcher’s supervisor and trialled with the Year 12 class.

**(b) Access to Students**

When interviewing a student, the researcher was careful to follow the procedures
outlined in Chapter 2, thereby helping to establish the high level of trust essential for securing quality data (Weider 1998, p.113).

(c) Style of Interview

Weiss (1994), Rubin and Rubin (1995), Minichiello et al. (1995), Neuman (1997), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Berg (2001) are examples of authors who have written extensively on the different types and styles of the interview. The style of interview used in the present study fits the topical model:

In contrast to the cultural interviews, topical interviews seek out explanations of events and descriptions of processes. The researcher is generally looking for detailed factual information. In topical interviews, the researcher generally plays a more active role in directing the questioning and in keeping the conversation on a specific topic. (Rubin and Rubin 1995, p.29)

During the course of the interviews, the researcher was repeatedly made aware of the differences between interviewing teenagers and adults and he found that he frequently had to play ‘a more active role in directing the questioning’ and keeping the interview on track than he did with the adults, as the following extract from an interview with John reveals:

R: Say for example, when you're faced with a difficulty with your school work what steps do you take to overcome the problem?
John: ... Um (long pause) Try t' reach out an' get someone to help me. That's if I've got any problems. (Very long pause)
R: Now, someone!
John: ... Yeah.
R: Well, can you specify?
John: Someone that knows ... um ... like someone a bit smarter. ... My friends or teachers or whatever. (long pause)
R: Alright, so other students and teachers?
John: Hm, hm ... (another pause)
R: What about the boarding staff?
John: Yeah. They help me a bit like I thought they can do. ...
R: Whom would you rely on most ... of those three groups of people?
John: ... Probably the teachers. ... (long pause)
R: Now supposing it's a difficulty that you can't really overcome ... how do you live with that?
John: ... (long pause) I dunno. (John, 15 years 6 months)

An interview such as the above forces the researcher to ask himself the question: ‘Am I leading the subject or is what I am saying an example of the legitimate probing that is part of any topical interview?’ (Rubin & Rubin 1995, p.208). Given
the age of John, the difficulties he had in expressing himself and the purpose of the
interview, it is arguably fair to consider the questions as probing rather than leading
or prompting. Marks (2002) reported experiencing the same dilemma when he
interviewed Year 10 boys from similar backgrounds to the Bindoon students on their
career choices.

On the other hand, the reverse was sometimes the case:

R: How would you rate your performance or achievements at your
previous schools and in Year 9 and in Year 10 here?

Samantha: Um at my old schools I didn't know how to like apply myself to
my work, an' I didn't, I just didn't want to 'cause I was in school all the time
and I just didn't get along with anybody else so I couldn't really do all my
work and I was afraid to say what I wanted to say and stuff. Then I came
here and I found that being at a farm and agricultural and stuff I could relate
to things more easily and then I could apply myself to my work and I
achieved a lot more ... by doing that. (Samantha, 16 years 7 months)

The standard texts rightly emphasise differences between the survey type interview
with its closed questions and the in-depth qualitative interview that is characterised
by open ended questions (Fontana & Frey 2000, p.645). During the informal chat
session that sometimes followed an interview, a number of the participants
commented on the use of open ended questions and their preference for them.
Apparently, as part of their English and Small Business studies, the students were
accustomed to using an open ended style of questioning when interviewing members
of staff when completing assignments.

(d) Previous Experience of the Interviewer

It is important for the interviewer to have had experience of interviewing teenagers
before embarking on a project of this nature. During his time as principal, he made a
point of conducting interviews all Year 10 students about their future and then, as
work experience co-ordinator, conducted interviews with students on their return
from their work. Then as part of his earlier research on the Perceptions of the
LandCare Program 1999, the author conducted a number of interviews with
participants with questions ranging from their experience if the program and
boarding, what advice they would give to student who was contemplating joining the
program next year and their plans for the future. Interviews with staff also formed
part of the study.
Interviewing Teenagers

While the literature has a great deal to say about the purposes and processes of interviewing adults, it has relatively little to say about the interviewing of teenagers, many of whom do not fit an adult model. For example, Weiss (p.56) suggests ‘up to eight hours’! However, he was talking about in-depth ethnographic interviews and soon goes on to qualify his statement: ‘A reasonable expectation is that and interview will go on for an hour and a half or two hours.’ Several authorities say, or at least imply, that ninety minutes is the norm and there are those who claim that an interview should be only as long as is necessary (Berg p.73). Hakim, when writing about case studies, argues for adapting the interview to suit the person being interviewed: ‘Case studies often involve specialised interviewing of informants … which is quite different from standard research interviewing’ (Hakim 1987, p.73). The researcher’s experience matched that of Hakim, for he found that most of his interviewees finished a few minutes before the end of the first side of a 90-minute tape with the longest interview taking 55 minutes. The focused nature of the interview, the limited attention span of the interviewees and the natural rhythm of the classroom where lesson times were 55 minutes contributed to the comparative shortness of the interview.

(a) The Interview Procedure

The researcher found that accompanying a student from the classroom to the interview room put the interviewee at ease and assisted in the development of that mutual trust that Johnson (1975) and Weider (1998) consider essential for productive interviewing. Other factors contributing to the rapport between the students and the researcher were making sure that the room was in order and the tape recorder was working. Additionally, although the researcher was known to the students, he was not seen by them as being part of the school’s authority structure, given that he had retired from teaching and administration in 1999 and no longer lived at the College.

Once settled and at ease, the student was re-acquainted with the nature of the research and the interview commenced. The Interview Schedule is included in full in Appendix C. Most interviews lasted about 40 minutes. The tapes were identified with the respondent’s pseudonym. At the end of the taping session, most declined
the offer to audit the tape. Embarrassed by the sound of their own voices, the small number who said ‘Yes’ soon requested that the replay stop. A backup copy of each tape was kept in a separate building.

(b) Transcription of the Interviews

The author found that the time invested in personally transcribing the interviews contributed to his understanding of the case, and this finding corroborates Yin’s observation that:

In case studies, there is little room for the traditional research assistant …
During data collection, only a more experienced investigator will be able to take advantage of unexpected opportunities rather than being trapped by them … (Yin 1994, p.55)

Transcripts of the interviews were printed as Microsoft Word™ documents and placed into indexed ring-back files. The transcripts of all interviews, staff and student, were entered into the one NUD*IST™ (Non-Numerical Unstructured Data*Indexing Searching Theorising, Qualitative Solutions and Research 1997) file to facilitate the retrieval and incorporation of interview data into the thesis. Having established the factors that motivated the students to join the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College and their expectations of the course, the follow-up survey and interview were developed and given to the students in October 2000. The instruments were designed to determine how the students had managed the transition and the extent to which their expectations of the course had been met. Copies of the survey instrument and content validity matrix for this phase of the research are to be found in Appendixes C.

Survey 2

Survey 2 was administered in October 2000 with the intention of enabling the researcher to:

- Compare the students’ perceptions of the experience with their expectations.
- Continue the assessment of the students' level of self knowledge and hence maturity.
- Gauge the importance of the residential aspects of the course on the students’ management of it.
• Reach a common understanding with the students of the terms *coping*, *managing* and *success*.

• Encourage the students to evaluate and report on their management of the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course.

• Explore how other people, broadly classified as peers, impact on the management of the transition.

• Discover, independently of the Adolescent Coping Scale, the strategies the students use in their management of the course.

• Study the effect of personality on the management of the transition.

The steps used in the construction and pre-testing of Survey 2 were identical to those of Survey 1. The same is true for the data entry and recording. A copy of Survey 2 may be found together with its Content Validity Matrix in Appendix C.

**Student Interview 2**

The second round of interviewing students was an important part of the data gathering process. Conducted in October 2000 after the students had completed Survey 2 and the Adolescent Coping scale, Interview 2 was designed to:

• Give the students the opportunity to amplify and clarify their responses to Survey 2.

• Enable the researcher to assess the extent to which the interviewees’ expectations of the course matched their experience. It was argued that ‘satisfied customers’ would be more likely to complete the course.

• Permit the researcher and the researched to reach a mutual understanding of the term ‘coping/managing’; or as Halliday says, ‘[ensure the interview] respects the subject’s own meaning’ (2002, p.51).

• Provide information on the impact of the students’ gender on the management of the course - girls may well use different coping strategies from boys.

• Enable the researcher to address the question of a student’s personality traits such as self-esteem, locus of control, sense of responsibility and of self-worth on their management of the course. For example, it is argued that people who are excessively timid may not handle the demands of the course at all well.

• Provide data on the ways other people affect the students’ management of the course.
Appendix C contains the Content Validity Matrix for Interview 2. Each interview was transcribed and entered into the NUD*IST™ file that contained the first interviews.

Student Interview 3: Students who did not Complete the Course

Follow-up interviews with nine of the eleven students who did not complete the course were conducted by telephone in August-September 2001. A tenth, a boy who left the course mid-year in 2000, was interviewed at his home in January 2001. Berg (2001, p.83) discusses telephone interviews and suggests that calls be made during working hours. However, the researcher, as did Taylor (2000), found that, generally, young people are not available then and that early evening was the best time to find them at home. Usually, the young people themselves answered the phone. In all cases, the former student was pleased to receive the call and cooperated willingly. Indeed, a number of the interviewees appeared to be more at ease with the telephone than they were in the face to face interview. Another incidental positive outcome occurred on the few occasions the parents took the call, they commented favourably on the experiences of their son or daughter during their time in the course. Only three of the ten were not living in the family home. The constraints of distance and time made the telephone the instrument of choice.

The interview centred upon the issues relating to the person’s current situation: be it work; new school or TAFE; their feelings about the decision they made in Year 10 to join the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College; what they found most difficult to cope with during their stay; what they found easy; and the strategies they used to manage the above.

The telephone interviews were not recorded on tape. Instead, the researcher took notes which he expanded as soon after the interview as practicable and always before the next interview. The completed texts were entered into the NUD*IST™ file.

Staff Interviews and Assessment of Student Coping

Personal interviews were conducted with members of staff who had extensive contact with and knowledge of the students. The interviews, which took place in
June with a repeat interview in December, embraced staff from all departments. These interviews focused on the interviewee’s perceptions of a student’s management of key aspects of the course.

(a) Staff Interviews: June 2000

Fourteen staff from the farm, administration, academic and residential departments participated in focus interviews in June 2000. For each student, the interviewer put the question:

\[
\text{How is (Name) coping in the areas of College life for which you are responsible and, from your observations, overall?}
\]

The areas canvassed were: farm, academic, and social/emotional. The term ‘coping’ was used colloquially and without any attempt at a definition. The staff was asked to rate each of 23 students on each of three five-point Likert scales that indicated the staff member’s estimate of the student’s coping in the canvassed areas. The ratings ranged from ‘not coping’ (1) to ‘coping well’ (5). The numeric ratings from the 14 staff were averaged separately for each student on each of the three scales. Separate charts (see Appendix D) were prepared for each student to record his or her average ratings given by the 14 staff, together with the student’s own ratings on similar course-related areas.

Figure 3.1 below shows the combined staff ratings for student Gus on the three staff-rated scales, and Gus’s own estimates (obtained in Survey 2) of his coping in five similar course-related areas. Included also in Figure 3.1 is a mean staff-rating for Gus (OVERALL: STAFF) over the three staff-rated areas, and a mean rating by Gus (AVERAGE: Student) on the five student-rated areas. The final scale in Figure 3.1 (OVERALL Q 29) records Gus’s answer to Question 29 of Survey 2 (Overall I believe I have managed the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course). Although direct comparisons between the three staff-rated scales and the five student-rated scales are not meaningful (since the aspects rated are not identical), when the figures for all students (Appendix D) are viewed together, one’s general impression is that there is a degree of consistency between the ratings staff have made of the students’ coping levels and the students’ estimates of their own coping success – particularly among those students who completed the course.
(b) Staff Interview 2: December 2000

The members of staff were interviewed again in December 2000 or January 2001 after the students had left for the summer holiday and the completion of the final assessments and reports. Freed from the pressure of students, the teachers and others were now able to give more time to the interview and to be more objective in their assessments of the students’ coping. Moreover, it was by that stage known which Year 11 students had decided not to return for Year 12 and it was therefore possible to explore meaningfully the staff’s impressions or knowledge of the students’ reasons for not continuing. The researcher was then able to compare an adult’s perception of the events or situations which may have lead to a student’s withdrawing from the course, with the same student’s perceptions of the issue. The matters canvassed in the second round of staff interviews included:

- The question of gender and do girls employ different strategies from boys in their management of the transition.
- The importance of peer pressure and boy/girl relationships.
- The place the care of animals has in the coping process (cf. Belle 1991, p.261).
- The students’ reasons for not completing the course.
- Their overall assessment of how each student managed the demands of the course.
- Any relevant matters of general or particular interest that the staff member wanted to raise.
Each interview was tape recorded, transcribed and entered into the same NUD*IST™ file as the student interviews, thereby allowing access to all sets of interview data and the linking of common themes.

Content Validity Matrices

In order to focus the study and ensure content validity, sets of content validity matrices were constructed for each of the questionnaires and the interviews. As previously mentioned the complementary survey instruments and interview schedules were developed concurrently and have common content validity matrices.

The research question that needs to be addressed is 'How are the students managing the transition from Year 10 the Year 11 residential course in agriculture?'.

Before joining the course, mid-way through Year 10 at the age of fifteen to fifteen and a half, the student has to:

- decide to leave home to board at a relatively isolated country boarding school
- opt for a fully vocational course that is totally outcomes based

Should this decision be made hastily or with an inadequate understanding of what the course involves and the demands it places on the individual choosing it, then that student is less likely to cope with the course and manage the transition from Year 10. If a young person does not succeed in managing the transition successfully a number of undesirable consequences follow.

On the personal side, the student may:

- become depressed and maladjusted and may see themselves as a failure
- become unsettled and make matters difficult for their fellow students
- become resentful of authority and a discipline problem
- perform below their potential
- leave or be asked to leave the course and have little else to turn to
- see out the year and then repeat Year 11 at some other school which sets them back twelve months and may tell against them when it comes to employment or further education

For the parents there are the problems of:

- an unhappy daughter or son
• considerable financial cost
• helping their by or girl to find another school or employment

For the school there are the problems of:
• counseling the student
• dealing with the effects an unsettled student may have on the other members of the class
• meeting its budget
• reviewing its admission criteria

With the above in mind, the surveys: Managing the Transition Year 10 — Year 11 was designed in the first place to access those factors which impact on the decision making process to join the course. In the Content Validity Matrix which follows, these factors or issues are listed in the left hand column and the questions which address the issues are listed in the central column.

From the very beginning, an interview with each of the respondents was planned to complement the Surveys. The interviews were conducted in March and October, immediately after the administration of the survey instruments. The interviews were designed:
• To give the student the opportunity to 'flesh out' responses to the survey.
• To enable the respondent to develop new ideas that the survey did not broach.
• As a means of triangulating the data gathered from the survey.

In order to make sure that the interviews remained on track and addressed specifically the issues of interest to the study, each item in the Interview Schedule was numbered and included in the right hand column of the Content Validity Matrix.

The data from the first Survey has been coded, entered into Microsoft Excel™ and from there into SPSS™ (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. Every interview, on the other hand, has been transcribed for entry into the NUD*IST™ software package, as have the responses of the students to the 'free response' items in the Survey. These software packages will be used to for future analysis and synthesis of the data supplied by the students.
A second survey and round of interviews was conducted in October 2000. This phase of the data gathering process addressed:

1. The participants’ perceptions of the course and their management of the same.
2. The strategies they have used/are using that have enabled them to cope with or manage the transition from Year 10 to Year 11. Alternatively, what has caused them not to cope.
3. The extent to which their expectations of the course and the school have been met. The argument here is that students whose expectations have been met are more likely to be satisfied with their progress and their management of the course. The Content Validity Matrix for the second survey and round of interviews is also located in Appendix C.

Table 3.2 contains a sample of the content validity matrix for the first survey and interview. The complete set of matrices is located in Appendix C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which may impact on the student's decision to join the course</th>
<th>Survey questions that address factor</th>
<th>Interview items that address factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference for country living and outdoors</td>
<td>15ac, 15bc, 15at, 15bt, 22j, 22k</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for 'hands on' style of learning</td>
<td>12, 15ad, 15bd, 15aq, 15bq, 17, 18, 22h, 22j, 22k, 31, 32, 35, 39, 54</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 32, 33, 34, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's previous academic performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Subjects studied in Year 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academic performance</td>
<td>11, 12, 15ac, 15bc, 55</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Academic preferences</td>
<td>13, 14, 15aj, 15bj, 32, 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Academic learning</td>
<td>31, 49, 54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Appendix C for the complete matrix.

(a) A Check on the Content Validity Matrix for Survey 1

The content validity matrix was also checked by looking at the objectives of the study and showing that the instruments deal with. Survey 1 is taken as example (Table 3.3)
Table 3.3 Check on Content Validity of Survey 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective of Study</th>
<th>Items of Survey 1 that address the objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify and describe those factors:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the personal attributes</td>
<td>27, 28, 31, 32, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the personal motivations</td>
<td>15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 29, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual histories</td>
<td>1-6, 10, 11-14, 26, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environmental /contextual circumstances</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 19, 20, 22, 34, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>characteristic coping strategies</td>
<td>24, 25, 26,41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that appear to have enabled some students to successfully complete Year 11 and to move into Year 12 while others fail to do so.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To add to the somewhat limited quantity of knowledge regarding the transition from Year 10 to the senior secondary years of schooling.</td>
<td>10, 11-14, 15-23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS)

Because the study has a comparative element and the case represents just 0.12% of the Year 11 state-wide cohort for the year 2000, it was important to include a standardised assessment of student coping. The Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg & Lewis 1993) was chosen for its capacity to fulfil a dual function, namely:

… [As] both a research instrument and a clinical tool which enables young people to examine their own coping behaviour. It can be administered by psychologists, counsellors, student welfare teachers, and other helping professionals to obtain information on how adolescents cope in different circumstances. (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.6)

Additionally, it provided a means of triangulating the survey and interview data and acted as a check on the validity and reliability of the survey items that addressed the issues of coping. Most importantly, the use of the ACS has enabled the relative coping profile of each student to be generated. These profiles have facilitated a principal purpose of the research; namely, the
development of a process to identify early those students who were likely to be at risk of not coping with the demands of the course and consequently not completing it.

Coping Defined

Folkman and Lazarus, whom Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.12) acknowledge, state that:

Coping consists of cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person’. (Folkman and Lazarus 1991, p.210)

Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964, p.385) add the important rider:

The concept of coping is defined by the behaviors subsumed under it, not by the success of those behaviors

Frydenberg (1997, p.30) respects the above understanding when she defines coping theoretically as:

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

At the operational level, Frydenberg and Lewis (1999, p.84) translate coping as:

Behaviours and actions which arise in response to demands placed on an individual.

The above definition of coping corresponds with what the students said:

Um ... I must say it sort', sorting out the problem. Finding what the problem is, sorting out the best way to actually get around it or cope with it or something like that an’ then moving on. (Hilton, 16 years 9 months)

Coping’ probably ah ... overcoming problems um how you go when things are happening around you, you react to things that are happening around you. (Mark, 16 years 5 months)

Ah ... I say coping is sort ... sort of keeping your head above water. You know not, not letting it drag you down. Holding yourself up when things get a bit tough. (Tom, 16 years 3 months)

Try to deal with things one at a time an' see how it goes. (Ursula, 15 years 11 months)
Um ... ... Well I guess I'm determined enough I'll probably get there. Get to. It's you do hard work generally get good marks an' that sort of should be able to get good enough marks an' that sort of thing. *(William, 17 years 3 months)*

The above sample of operational definitions of coping demonstrates that the students and the constructors of the ACS have a common understanding of the meaning of coping. Moreover, with the exception of William, the student definitions of coping indicate that they have not conflated their understanding of coping with the outcomes of coping, as Kahn et al. (1964) and Folkman and Lazarus (1991) caution against in their writing.

It has been important to establish that the students and the developers of the ACS have a common understanding of coping because, were it not so, the use of the instrument in the final phase of the research to ‘develop a strategy to identify as early as possible those students who may be at risk of not completing the course’, would be of doubtful validity.

*Validity of the Adolescent Coping Scale*

Where the instrument itself is concerned, Frydenberg and Lewis address the questions of item validity and reliability directly in the Manual (1993, pp.32-43) and, indirectly, in reports of research that employed the ACS (Frydenberg & Lewis 1999a, 1999b, 2000). For the purposes of the research, then, one can be confident that the ACS provides a valid and accurate picture of the respondents’ coping behaviours.

*Conceptual Map of the Adolescent Coping Scale*

The ACS is a self-report inventory style of instrument with 79 structured items and one final open-ended question. A five point Likert scale is used to rate the respondent’s use of 79 coping behaviours that are grouped into 18 coping strategies. The Administrator’s Manual (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993) contains an overview of the instrument, the rationale for its development, administration, scoring, statistical properties, interpretation, and usage.
The 79 items that make up the ACS are grouped into 18 coping strategies that, in turn, are allocated to three coping styles, namely:

- **Reference to Others**,  
- **Productive Coping**, and  
- **Non-Productive Coping**.

The following figures (Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) provide conceptual maps of each of the three coping styles. Figure 3.2 maps the coping style **Reference to Others**.

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**Figure 3.2** Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Reference to Others.  
Based on Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.18).

Figure 3.3 follows and provides a conceptual map of the **Productive Coping** style.
Figure 3.3 Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Productive Coping. Based on Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.18).
Figure 3.4 provides a conceptual map of the *Non-Productive* coping style.

![Conceptual Map of Non-Productive Coping Style](image)

**Non-Productive Coping Style**

**Items Comprising each Strategy**

1. Talk to others to see what they would do if they had the problem
2. Worry about my happiness
3. Worry about what is happening
4. Worry about what will happen to me
5. Worry about the future of the world
6. Hope for the best
7. Wish a miracle would happen
8. Hope that the problem will sort itself out
9. Daydream about how things will turn out well
10. Imagine that things will turn out well
11. There is nothing I can do about the problem so I can't do anything
12. Just give up
13. Get sick
14. I have no way of dealing with the situation
15. I suffer headaches or stomach aches
16. Cry or scream
17. Make myself feel better by alcohol, cigarettes, drugs (not medication)
18. Take my frustrations out on others
19. Change the amount I eat, drink, or sleep
20. Find a way to let off steam, e.g., cry, scream, drink, take drugs
21. Ignore the problem
22. Consciously block out the problem
23. Put the problem out of my mind
24. Shut myself off from the problem so I can avoid it
25. Criticise myself
26. Rationalise that I make things difficult for myself
27. Blame myself
28. See myself as being at fault
29. Keep my feelings to myself
30. Avoid being with people
31. Keeping others from knowing what's worrying me
32. Don't let others know how I am feeling

**Figure 3.4 Concept Map of Adolescent Coping Style: Non-Productive Coping.**

Based on data in Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.18)
Forms of the Instrument

There are two forms of the Instrument: a General Form and the Specific Form. The former, as the name suggests, is designed to establish how a person copes with life in general while the latter attempts to assess how the person deals with a particular situation. The only differences between the two forms are in the introductory wording and in their colour.

Administration of the Adolescent Coping Scale

Both forms of the instrument were administered in the classroom during a 55 minute lesson time slot which preceded the morning recess. The instructions were minimal and easily followed. Because the colours of the answer sheets and the two forms of the instrument did not match, the researcher had to check that ‘the blue questions were answered on the red sheet’ and vice-versa. The more academically able completed both forms comfortably within the 55 minute time frame. However, the slower students found it difficult to finish the Specific Form and lost interest as soon as the siren went for recess.

Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.48) state that:

The high correlation between the General and the Specific Forms of the test may indicate that adolescents are ignoring the different instructions provided for each of these forms.

The researcher found this to be the case and therefore has not used the data from the Specific Form of the Adolescent Coping Scale in the study.

Scoring the Adolescent Coping Scale

The respondents enjoyed scoring their answers. Before entering the data into Microsoft Excel™ and constructing the individual profiles, the researcher checked the scoring sheets, assigned a value of ‘3’ to any missing items, as Frydenberg and Lewis suggest (1993, p.28). The designated multipliers (4, 5 or 7) were employed to compensate for the varying numbers of items in each strategy. Possible scores therefore ranged from 21 to 105. For ease of interpretation and qualitative comment, the scores are grouped as indicated in Table 3.3. The qualifiers are also used as headers on the manually constructed profile (Figure 3.10).
Table 3.4 Key to the Interpretation of Scores on the Coping Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-49</th>
<th>50-69</th>
<th>70-89</th>
<th>90-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptor</td>
<td>Not used</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>Used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Based on Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.28).

Manually Constructed Profiles

Figure 3.5 Example of Manually Generated Student Coping Profile. After Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.30).
Frydenberg and Lewis (1993, p.30) employ the adjusted scores to develop Individual Profiles of Coping Strategies (Figure 3.5). The manually constructed profile may also have a comparative element added to it when the scores of an individual in separate attempts are compared in the graph with the scores of another person or the averaged scores of a group (Figure 3.6).

![Figure 3.6 Example of Manually Generated Profile that Enables the Coping Profiles of two groups of Students to be Compared.](image)

The researcher found that manually constructed profiles took a long time to construct and when used to compare coping styles did not reveal differences or similarities.
very clearly. The researcher then employed Microsoft Excel™ to develop a computerised form of profile to present graphically the differences in coping between a ‘subject’ and a ‘control’.

**Computerised Relative Coping Profiles**

Figure 3.7 presents the same data as does the manually constructed Figure 3.6. However, the numerically larger (N=829) group of Melbourne students is the ‘control’ and the smaller Bindoon College cohort (N=23) is the ‘subject’.

**Figure 3.7 Computerised Version of Relative Profile: Bindoon College Students v Control.**

Figure 3.7 is an annotated computerised version of the same data with the averaged scores of the Melbourne cohort serving as the control. The computer generated profile is termed ‘relative’ because, in order to produce it, the subject’s scores on the 18 coping strategies are compared with the scores of a second person or group that acts as the control. Chapter 6 develops the concept of the computer generated relative
profile and proceeds to demonstrate that it has the potential to identify students who may be at risk of not completing the two-year residential course in agriculture.

**Triangulation: Survey 2, Staff Interviews and the ACS**

In the meantime, it may be instructive simply to combine Figure 3.1 with a version of Figure 3.7 constructed specifically with Gus’s Year 11 data (October 2000), this time using as the control the corresponding data (October 2000) averaged over Gus’s Year 11 classmates who subsequently continued into Year 12.

Figure 3.8 Staff and Individual Student Self-estimates of Coping, and ACS Coping Profile Relative to Students Completing the Course.
This control provides an appropriate comparison group for the purposes of comparing Gus’s Year 11 coping strategies with those of his peers who continued beyond Year 11.

As will be shown in Chapter 6, comparing individual students’ profiles with those of a comparison group of successful students can help not only to identify entering students who are potentially at risk but also to provide insights into what might account for their more limited prospects. More importantly for the present discussion, combining the information from Figures 3.1 and 3.7 – especially when this is done for all students (Appendix D) – reveals the extent to which the ACS generated data is reinforced, and is thus validated by, the data obtained from the and staff and student interviews and the student surveys.

**Summary of Chapter 3**

This chapter has argued that the research is best described as an intrinsic case study. In detailing the construction of the surveys, the interview schedules and the content validity matrices, the researcher has reviewed a selection of the extensive literature relating to qualitative research and to case study methodology, and has outlined the Adolescent Coping Scale and its place in the research.

Chapter 4 proceeds to characterise the case by recording and analysing the survey data relating to the students’ backgrounds, their reasons for joining the course, and their experiences of the course and the residential aspects of the program.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS 1—CHARACTERISING THE CASE

Reports of case studies should create the conditions under which the reader can re-create the case in imagination. Rich description of action contexts creates the conditions for imagining what cannot be stated propositionally: it allows the reader to imagine himself in the social world of the case studied. (Kemmis, 1980)

Demographics

The opening section of this chapter aims to familiarise readers with the case by supplying the demographic detail that will enable them to ‘re-create the case in imagination’ (Kemmis, 1980).

Participating Students, Residential Status and Location of Home

Table 4.1 lists the participating students by their pseudonyms and gives their residential status and the place that they call home.

Table 4.1 Participating Students: Pseudonym, Residential Status, and Home Location†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Location of Student’s Home</th>
<th>Student’s Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Location of Student’s Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Farm/Station</td>
<td>Gus</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Farm/Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Farm/Station</td>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syd</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flo</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
<td>Hilton</td>
<td>Weekly R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kath</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Farm/Station</td>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Country T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Perth-Metro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Questions 3, 5, and 6.
Age Distribution

Given the mature nature of the choice that Bindoon College students make when they join the Senior Agricultural Course, one might expect that they may be somewhat older than the majority of their peers. The age distribution of the boys and girls that comprise the case is set out in Table 4.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Combined (M&amp;F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>15y 9m</td>
<td>15y 11m</td>
<td>15y 10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>15y 9m</td>
<td>15y 10m</td>
<td>15y 10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>15y 4m</td>
<td>15y 9m</td>
<td>15y 4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>16y 5m</td>
<td>16y 11m</td>
<td>16y 11m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>15y 0m</td>
<td>15y 4m</td>
<td>15y 0m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Survey 1 March 2000.

To give these figures meaning, it is helpful to compare them with the remainder of the state-wide Year 11 cohort in a way that conforms to the age groupings adopted by the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DETWA); namely, the start of school Semester 2. The comparisons are presented in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1 Age Groupings of Bindoon College Year 11 Students compared with all WA Year 11 Students, July 2000. Data source: D Frankland, Statistics Division DETWA.](image)

As can be seen from Figure 4.1, Bindoon College students were, on average, older than their Year 11 peers elsewhere in the State. The 15-years age bracket comprised 11.5% of the Bindoon students versus 21% for all schools. Sixty two per cent of the Bindoon College cohort was aged 16 years, compared with 53% in the same age bracket for the State as a whole. Moreover, there was a slightly higher percentage of Bindoon College students (8% v 5%) in the 17-years age group. There were no Bindoon College students in the 14 years or the 18 years groupings.
Gender

The second demographic parameter, which sets the case apart from typical Year 11 classes in Western Australia, is the ratio of girls to boys. The following tables compare the numbers of females and males in the Bindoon College Year 11 class with the numbers in a variety of other educational institutions and the work force.

**Table 4.3** Comparison of Numbers of Female and Male Students in Year 11, March 2000†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/System</th>
<th>Female Number</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male Number</th>
<th>Male %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon N = 26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Schools N = 4,692</td>
<td>2,388</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>2,304</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All WA Schools N = 23,481</td>
<td>11,384</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>11,647</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.3 shows the Year 11 numbers in Bindoon, all WA Catholic coeducational high schools and the State as a whole. Table 4.4 provides the numbers in the Catholic single sex schools.

**Table 4.4** Number, Gender and Percentages of Students in Single gender Catholic High Schools, Western Australia, February 2000†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Total Enrolment in WA Catholic Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of whole in Single Gender Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>2,388</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>2,304</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (M+F)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>4,692</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data provided by Catholic Education Office, Western Australia, March 2003.

The gender ratio of girls to boys (38% to 62%) in the Bindoon program situates the case between the single sex schools and the coeducational secondary schools for which the gender ratio is typically one-to-one. The imbalance at Bindoon College put pressure on both the boys and the girls, as was evident from the interviews. For example, because there were fewer girls than boys in both Year 11 and 12, the Year 11 boys believed they had to compete with the Year 12 boys for the same girl friend and because they were ‘only Year 11s’ they tended to lose out, a consequence that apparently caused them considerable angst. For their part, the girls often found it difficult to establish normal relationships with the boys, as Helen explained:
They (some boys) jus’ go you know, “you have no right to learn, you’re only a girl” type thing. *(Helen, 15 years 7 months)*

**Table 4.5** Year 11 2000 Enrolments in the WA College of Agriculture† and Bindoon College††

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Female No</th>
<th>Male No</th>
<th>Total No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunderdin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morawa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrogin</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bindoon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>62</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


The atypical character of the Bindoon College cohort is further demonstrated in Table 4.5 where the numbers of girls in the various campuses of the WA College of Agriculture are compared with those in the Bindoon Year 11 cohort. The interview data indicate the principal reason for the relatively large number of female students enrolled at Bindoon College was the equine studies program. Table 4.6 offers a more detailed picture of the age composition, gender ratio and differential retention of Bindoon College students.

**Table 4.6** Age in March 2000, Gender and Course Completion†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students completing course</th>
<th>Students not completing course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>16 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kath</td>
<td>15 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>15 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>16 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>15 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>15 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 and Bindoon College.

As can be seen, at the point of entry, the boys who completed the course were, on average, six months older than those boys who did not return to Year12. Likewise,
the girls who returned were, on average, four months older than the girls who did not return. It is possible then, that younger students may require additional help to manage the transition. This may be something the school administration could usefully consider.

Gender and Numbers in Selected Courses of Study

The Bindoon College cohort is part of a small group of students state-wide who studied the agriculturally orientated Wholly School Assessed (WSA) subjects. Figure 4.2 allows comparisons to be made between the numbers state-wide who chose these vocational type subjects and the numbers in a variety of more widely selected courses of study.

![Figure 4.2](image_url)

Figure 4.2 Percentage of Students State-wide Awarded Grades in Agriculturally Orientated Subjects compared with Numbers in more Popular Subjects. Data obtained from Curriculum Council of WA: Number and Percentage of Students Awarded Grades for Year 12 Subjects by Sex, 2001.

The special prominence of the Bindoon College female cohort vis-à-vis other schools is further evidenced by the fact that they comprised 10% of all females in Animal Production and Marketing, 25% in Plant Production and Marketing, 18% in Farm Practice and 21% in Automotive Workshop (Curriculum Council 2003b).
Gender and Academic Performance

The phenomenon, evident in Figure 4.3, of females out-performing males academically was also evident at Bindoon in 2001, when the female student who was Dux of the College shared the remaining academic prizes with another female student. Small Business Management and Enterprise and Vocational Mathematics were the only exceptions. On the other hand, three male students topped Farm Practice and the remaining practical subjects. (Bindoon College: Award Winners 2001).

![Figure 4.3 Percentage of Female and Male Students Awarded an A-grade in Selected Year 12 Subjects for the Year 2001. Data adapted from Number and Percentage of Students. Awarded Grades for Year 12 Subjects by Sex, 2001, Curriculum Council WA 2003b.](chart)

Gender Ratio and the Adult Work Force

Given that the proportion of females enrolled in agriculture related courses across the nation as a whole was only 3.6% (Year Book Australia 1997), the 38% of female students within the Bindoon College cohort is remarkable.

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show the absolute numbers of males and females and their relative shares in the national population, in the work force and in the agricultural sector for the 12 month period July 2001-June 2002.
Table 4.7 Males and Females in the Australian Workforce 2001-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons Employed</th>
<th>Total 000s</th>
<th>Males 000s</th>
<th>Females 000s</th>
<th>% female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Population</td>
<td>15,523.7</td>
<td>7,656.5</td>
<td>7,867.2</td>
<td>50.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force</td>
<td>9,888.8</td>
<td>5,541.5</td>
<td>4,347.3</td>
<td>43.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>401.7</td>
<td>269.7</td>
<td>132.0</td>
<td>32.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.8 The Agricultural Workforce compared with the Australian Workforce 2001-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons Employed</th>
<th>Total 000s</th>
<th>% of WF</th>
<th>Males 000s</th>
<th>% of WF</th>
<th>Females 000s</th>
<th>% of WF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Force (WF)</td>
<td>9,888.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5,541.5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4,347.3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>401.7</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>269.7</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>132.0</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Year Book Australia 2003, p. 500.

Figure 4.4 collates the data from Tables 4.7 and 4.8 and, by presenting the

Figure 4.4 Gender Ratio of Bindoon Year 11 Cohort compared with Relevant Populations.
Data Sources: DETWA, March 2003, and Year Book Australia 2003.
information pictorially, indicates the similarity between the gender ratio at Bindoon and that which prevails in the Australian agricultural workforce generally. The approximately one-to-two female to male ratio (38% to 62%) both helps to distinguish the case, and possibly also may advantage those female students who planned to enter the agricultural work force, in that the gender representation of the girls in their training experience aligned well with that pertaining in their intended workplace.

The Bindoon College’s Low Year 11 to Year 12 Retention

Tables 4.9 and 4.10 highlight the disappointingly low Year 11-12 retention (58%) of the Bindoon College students relative to that characterising the agricultural student population as a whole (83%), a feature that is problematic both forBindoon and for its students.

Table 4.9 Year 11 to Year 12 Retention Patterns 2000-2001 WA College of Agriculture v Bindoon College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number Started Year 11</th>
<th>Number Finished Year 12</th>
<th>Retention Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon College</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA College of Ag</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total – all ag schools</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data supplied by Education Department WA, March 2003 and Bindoon College.

Table 4.10 Retention Patterns of Students completing at least one Curriculum Council Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 11 December 2000</th>
<th>Year 12 December 2001</th>
<th>Retention Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon College††</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Schools†</td>
<td>4,316</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students†</td>
<td>21,476</td>
<td>19,095</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data supplied by the Curriculum Council, May 2002. ††Data supplied by Bindoon College.

Gender and Year 11 to Year 12 Retention at Bindoon

As can be ascertained from Table 4.11, five of the girls of the entering Year 11 cohort (50%) and six of the boys (38%) did not return for the second year of the course. At first glance, these percentages might be expected to lead to a gender bias.
in favour of the boys for the second year of the course, an inference seemingly heightened by the fact that all five girls left as a group at the end of the year, while three boys left at different times during the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year &amp; Gender</th>
<th>Number in Yr 11</th>
<th>% of Class</th>
<th>Number in Yr 12</th>
<th>% of Class</th>
<th>Total Students F&amp;M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Data source: Bindoon College.

However, on closer investigation, and given the relatively small numbers involved, the assumption is not justified, as the gender ratio of 33% female to 67% male that pertained in the Year 12 cohort was substantially the same the 38% female to 62% male at the beginning of the course.

*Reasons for not Continuing with the Course at Bindoon*

In August and September 2001, telephone interviews were conducted with the students who had left the course, in each case to ascertain (inter alia) their reasons for not continuing. The reasons the girls gave for leaving were, for the most part, notably different from those given by the boys. Table 4.12 summarises these reasons proffered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for not completing the course</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties with the classroom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial and disruptive behaviour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining a pre-apprenticeship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course did not live up to student’s expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial choice inappropriate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with authority in the boarding house</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents did not allow student to return</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The boys cited difficulties with the academic side of the program and disruptive behaviour in the classroom as the principal causes of their not completing the course.
For the girls, however, unresolved problems relating to residential care were the most commonly proffered reasons for their failure to return for the final year.

Only two students (a girl and a boy) cited ‘inappropriateness of their initial choice’ as the reason they did not complete the course. One other boy reported that the course had not fulfilled his expectations. Most of the other students’ reasons had to do with matters such as poor health, parental unwillingness to support the student for an additional year, negative peer pressure, or (on the positive side) taking up an apprenticeship. The relatively low incidence of course-related issues among the reasons cited is consistent with the general impression gained from the survey and conversations with the students that, for the majority of the students, the decision to discontinue was personal or contextual rather than academic.

**Origins and Year 11 to Year 12 Retention**

The construct *origin* as it is used here encompasses the following: student demographics; school attended prior to entering the course; location of the student’s home or place of residence; and the family’s connectedness with the land. Each of these dimensions of the construct is now considered in turn.

**School Attended Prior to Entering the Course**

To simplify the interpretation of the data and to preserve anonymity for the students concerned, the ten schools that provided students for the Year 11 cohort of Bindoon College have been grouped into four categories (Table 4.13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 School</th>
<th>Bindoon College Coed</th>
<th>Perth Catholic Non-Coed</th>
<th>Perth Government Coed</th>
<th>Perth Alternative Coed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Y 11</td>
<td>Y 12</td>
<td>Y 11</td>
<td>Y 12</td>
<td>Y 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Survey 1 and the Catholic Agricultural College, March 2000.*

Table 4.13 shows that 58% (15) of the 26 who commenced the course in 2000 had come from the Year 10 Bindoon College cohort of the previous year. Of these, ten (67%) subsequently progressed to and graduated from Year 12, while just five (45%
of the eleven who had come from other schools completed the two years. Bindoon College’s Year 10 was, in that year at least, the principal recruiting ground for the senior course and the most successful in terms of completion outcomes. Table 4.14 presents the gender breakdown of the data contained in Table 4.13.

Table 4.14  Year 10 School, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12 (N=26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 School</th>
<th>Bindoon Coed</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Government Coed</th>
<th>Alternative Coed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y 11</td>
<td>Y 12</td>
<td>Y 11</td>
<td>Y 12</td>
<td>Y 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Source: Survey 1 Question 4 and Bindoon College, March 2001.

It can be seen from the Table 4.14 that a higher proportion of boys (10/16; 63%), made the transition from Year 11 to Year 12 and completed the course, while noticeably fewer of the female students (5/10; 50%) did so. Further, only two of the six boys who had entered from suburban high schools succeeded. Three of the four who did not complete the course left part way through Year 11. A fourth took up a pre-apprenticeship at the end of Year 11. If the two girls from the suburban Catholic girls’ schools, and the one from the suburban coeducational high school, are added to the above, it can be seen that seven of the eleven students (64%) who left the course without finishing had come from suburban schools.

Place of Residence

A young person from suburbia who transfers to a boarding situation at Bindoon must inevitably face a significant personal and emotional adjustment as she or he endeavours to adapt both to ‘life in the country’ and to ‘being alone and away from home’ for, perhaps, the first time. It can be seen from Table 4.15 that a higher proportion of boys (10/16; 63%), made the transition from Year 11 to Year 12 and completed the course, while noticeably fewer of the female students (5/10; 50%) did so. Further, only two of the six boys who had entered Bindoon College from suburban high schools succeeded. Three of the four who left, did so part way through Year 11.
### Table 4.15 ‘Place Called Home’, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home-Place Year &amp; Gender</th>
<th>Country Town</th>
<th>Bindoon locality</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Farm</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Source: Survey 1 and the Catholic Agricultural College, March 2001.

It can be seen from Table 4.15 that a higher proportion of boys (10/16; 63%), made the transition from Year 11 to Year 12 and completed the course, while noticeably fewer of the female students (5/10; 50%) did so. Further, only two of the six boys who had entered from suburban high schools succeeded. Three of the four who left, did so part way through Year 11. Table 4.15 also shows that those in the year of the survey who had come from suburban Perth were the least likely to complete the course, while those who had come from the country, be it farm, station or country town, were the most likely to complete the course.

*Connections with the Land*

For the purposes of this discussion, the students are said to ‘have connections with the land’ if they fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

- Their home is a farm or a station or they have lived on the same.
- Their close relatives, grandparents, older siblings, uncles or aunts live on or work the land.
- They live in the country.
- Their families operate or work in businesses that are connected with the land.
- They spend holidays living and working on the land.

As a check on the validity of the foregoing question, the students were asked in their first interview what they understood by the term. Although most did understand it in the way intended, a few evidently interpreted it in the sense of having a personal attachment to the land and an associated sense of responsibility to care for it. For example, Syd and Peggy:

Connections in [sic] the land to me is ... someone who sorta likes to work with the land and a feels they could be part of it help to repair it … *(Syd, 15 years 5 months)*
Ahh ... The land means something to you because of something that's happened or ... someone that you're associated with is involved in it. (Peggy, 15 years 5 months)

Table 4.16 Students with Parents or Guardians on the Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents/Guardians</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Combined F &amp; M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own, manage or share a property</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run a business connected with the land</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No connection with the land</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data obtained from Survey 1, Item 7.

It is, perhaps, natural to expect that young people who have connections with the land would be more likely to choose a course in agriculture than those who have no experience of what a career in agriculture may involve. Tables 4.17 and 4.18 facilitate the examination of the students’ connectedness with the land.

Table 4.17 Students with Close Relatives on the Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Close Relatives on the land: Grand Parents, Uncle, Aunt</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Combined M &amp; F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own or work on a farm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own or work on a station</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have no connection with the land</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data obtained from Survey 1, Item 8.

By themselves, the data from Tables 4.16 and 4.17 reveal relatively little. However, when they are combined with gender and the retention of students in Table 4.18, a more complete picture of ‘connectedness with the land’, of gender and of the associated retention rates emerges.

Table 4.18 Connectedness with the Land, Gender and Retention Year 11 to Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Connected to the land</th>
<th>Not connected to the land</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 11 2000</td>
<td>F 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 2001</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M&amp;F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data obtained from Survey 1, Items 7 and 8.

Table 4.18 shows that seven girls and 13 boys (77% of the cohort) had connections with the land and that this continued virtually unchanged into the second year of the
course where four girls and seven boys (73% of the cohort) were similarly connected. It would seem, then, that some 'connection with the land' is characteristic of students entering the course and for their continuing with it.

**Summary of Demographic Section**

This section of the chapter has shown how the case may be distinguished from the rest of the Western Australian Year 11 cohort for the year 2000 in terms of:

- The gender ratio of 38% females and 62% males at Bindoon differed markedly from that in most coeducational high schools, the single sex non-Government schools and many vocational courses. However, Bindoon College’s gender profile approximated to the percentage of women in the agricultural work force.
- The Bindoon College girls comprised one-third of all the females state-wide who were enrolled in the Senior Agricultural Course for the year 2000.
- While the overall age distribution of the group was on a par with the Western Australian Year 11 cohort, there were, however, some differences peculiar to the Bindoon College cohort; namely, relatively fewer females in the 15-years age grouping and more boys in the 16 and 17-years age categories.
- Those who completed the course were, on average, six months older than those who did not, and the younger girls were the least likely to continue into Year 12.
- Three-quarters of the students who enrolled in the course at Bindoon College believed they had ‘connections with the land’ in the conventional sense of themselves living on a farm or station or having relatives who did. Some extended the notion to include their personal attachment to the land and their care of it.
- Students from suburban schools were the least likely to complete the course.
- Retention to Year 12 of students who had come from farms and stations was complete (100%).
- Eleven of the fifteen of students (73%) who had attended Year 10 at Bindoon College and then moved into the College’s Senior Agricultural Course successfully completed the two-year program.

Discussion now proceeds to an investigation of those aspects of the case that are of a more personal nature.

**Personal Dimensions**

The personal dimensions of ‘family structure’, ‘family circumstances’ and ‘perceptions of self’ follow.
Family Structure and Circumstances

In the context of this study, the construct ‘family structure’ refers to the student’s nuclear family of mother, father and siblings. The family structure was intact if, apart from necessary absences for work, education or other substantial reason, both parents lived together with the children. The family structure was not intact if the person lived with only one of the parents. The argument in this section is built upon the premise that a young person from a stable intact family would have felt more secure and was therefore in a better position to cope with the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course than was a student who may have been under stress because of family breakdown. Cunningham (2003, p.3) would agree as she lists several reports that:

[H]ave repeatedly demonstrated that supportive family environments that are low in conflict are more likely to facilitate the development and use of effective coping skills that promote healthy and adaptive outcomes.

Table 4.19 groups the responses of the students to Item 9 of the March survey that asked the students about the structure of their family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year and Gender</th>
<th>Both 11 12</th>
<th>Father 11 12</th>
<th>Mother 11 12</th>
<th>Alternates 11 12</th>
<th>Other 11 12</th>
<th>Total 11 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data obtained from Survey1 Item 9, March 2003.

The data contained in Table 4.19 do not support the assumption that ‘students from intact families were more likely to continue with the course’. Of the eleven who did not complete the two years, eight (three girls and five boys) were from intact families. Table 4.19 also indicates that a much larger percentage of the boys came from intact families (69%) than did the girls (40%) and that this relative difference continued into the second year of the course when six out of ten (60%) of the boys came from intact families but only one girl (20%). The five girls and one boy who lived with one parent completed the course and all but one of the girls in this category were residential students, prompting the question: Does the residential element of the course support students by supplying something that is lacking in the
home environment? Anecdotal evidence provided to the author by one of the female students is pertinent and may provide part of the answer to the above question:

When we go up to Catherine House [the female residential quarters] after school or after work or pony club, there is always someone there to greet us and ask us what sort of a day we've had. In the city, some of us are like latch key kids as there is no one home to greet us when we get home after school.

In addition to providing ‘after hours’ support, the residential component of the course may supply a needed escape from undue pressures not of the student’s making, as Hilton explained in the second interview:

Um jus' stay fit, do all my homework, an' now I have to look after my whole family because Dad's not at home. I suppose there's the main reason I'm boardin' at the moment. *(Hilton, 16 years 9 months)*

After things had settled at home, Hilton became a day scholar once more and completed Year 12. Hilton’s need to reside at Bindoon College had not surfaced until mid-year and so he did not respond affirmatively to Item 15ak of Survey 1: *I joined the Senior Agricultural Course because I needed a break from home.*

However, a number of the other students did. Table 4.20 collates their responses, ranks the item’s importance in the decision making process and records whether or not the student continued with the course.

**Table 4.20** Family Status of Students requiring Break from Home, Ranking of Importance for Decision and Retention†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Family intact†</th>
<th>Ranking (1 most important)</th>
<th>Returned to Year 12 (Y/N) ††</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flo</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1, Items 9 and 15 bk.
††Data Source: Bindoon College March 2001.

Six (67%) of the nine students who claimed that one of the reasons they joined the course was their need for a break from home had come from intact families and, with
one exception, from suburban Perth. Seven (78%) of the nine who gave ‘the need to leave home’ as a reason for joining the course did not return for the second year.

In summary, it would appear that the status of Bindoon College students’ family circumstances had no bearing on their eventually completing the course. On the other hand however, the association between students claiming they joined the course because of a perceived need of ‘a break from home’ and their not completing it is indicative that the need of such a break may not be a valid reason for embarking on the residential course in agriculture.

A consideration of the students’ perceptions and experience of boarding school life follows.

Perceptions of Boarding School Life

A series of six-point Likert scales in Survey 2 (Questions 30-46), and part of the second interview, sought to ascertain the students’ perceptions and experiences of the residential aspect of the program. Since one female and three male students were non-residential and three boys had left the school by this time (October 2000), the residual sample for these two instruments consisted of eleven boys and nine girls. Although the available sample was now somewhat smaller, the response rate to each of the Likert items was 100%. The aspects of residential life covered by Survey 2 are grouped as follows: living away from home; friendships; atmosphere; meals and accommodation; and school performance:

Living away from Home. Ninety percent (8/9) of the girls and 91% (10/11) of the boys said they had found living away from home relatively easy; yet this did not mean that they did not miss their families, as 44% of the girls and 64% of the boys admitted to missing their parents. The higher percentage of boys may be explained by the fact that proportionally more boys had come from intact families. Where the missing of siblings was concerned, there was virtually no difference between the genders with 44% of girls and 45% of boys admitting to missing their siblings.

Friendship. This was more of an issue for the female students as seven of the nine girls (78%) in the sample missed their friends and of these, only two returned for the
second year of the course. For the male students this question was not as important as 64% said they did not miss their friends and all but one of this group completed the course. However, for the four boys who were missing their friends only two returned for Year 12. By way of compensation, every one of the girls said that they had made numbers of new friends, as did all but one boy who, nevertheless, did not return for Year 12. Moreover, three quarters of both groups claimed the friendships they had established while boarding were ‘special’ as Tom said:

I think in a school like this, in a boarding school environment your friendships are a lot stronger than if you were jus’ like a day student. ‘Cause you spend a lot more time with people, you know them a lot better than if you just go to school for the five or six hours and then you go home. Maybe see them once or twice on the weekend. ... I think it builds a lot stronger friendships than just showing up at school ... and you don’t have anything to do with them after that. (Tom, 15 years 6 months)

Student Perceptions of the Atmosphere in the Boarding Houses. More boys than girls (82% v 67%) said they liked the atmosphere in the boarding houses. However, whether they liked it or not had little association with the retention rate. That 89% of girls and 64% of boys found their fellow residents ‘helpful’ is an indication of a good spirit in the boarding houses. However, when asked if ‘My fellow boarders are kind’, there was a sharp difference between the girls with 89% of the girls and 36% of the boys believing their fellow boarders were kind to them.

Student Perceptions of the Boarding House Staff. Where the members of staff were concerned, 56% of the girls perceived the staff as kind to them, while the figure for the boys was slightly higher at 64%. However, one female student used the most negative descriptor ‘hurtful’. When ‘not feeling well’, 44% of the girl boarders felt they were treated with kindness and understanding, whereas for the boys, the proportion dropped to 36%. On the matter of discipline, 89% of the girls claimed it was verging on being ‘too strict’ and none rated it as ‘slack’. The boys’ assessment of the boarding house discipline was similar with 73% claiming it was on the strict side but diverged from the girls’ perception because 27% viewed it as slack.

Meals and Accommodation. With regard to the meals, 33% of girls rated them on the good side as did 50% of the boys while in terms of quantity 56% of girls classed it as ample and 18% of the boys did so.
Impact of Residential Experience on School Performance: The effect of being in residence on academic performance was regarded positively by 56% of the girls and 64% of the boys. The remainder of the cohort felt that boarding had a slight negative effect on their academic achievement.

When asked to compare their lot with that of the non-resident students (Survey 2 Question 47), five female students and one boy envied the life of the day students and four of the five girls did not complete the course. Opinion was evenly divided on whether the day students were as much part of Bindoon College as were the residential students. Most (seven girls and seven boys) felt that the day students missed out on a lot socially and three girls and six boys even went so far as to claim that they were glad they were not day students.

From the preceding, therefore, it is fair to say that the residential students had a matter-of-fact approach to life in the boarding houses and that for most it was a positive experience.

Perceptions of Previous Academic Performance and Preferences

A person’s preferences and perceptions of ability and previous performances will typically be key mediating factors in that person’s choice of a course of study and possible career pathway. Consequently, the preferred design of Survey 1 was to ask the students for their preferences (Items 11, 12 - Like most/Like least) and to examine their self-perceptions of their ability in the subjects they had studied in Year 10 (Items 13, 14) before requiring them to give the reasons they enrolled in the course (Item 15).

The above consideration of perceptions naturally brings into question the ability of young people to make realistic assessments of their own and their peers’ academic ability. Several authors have addressed the problem and demonstrated that they can. For example, (Nicholls 1978; King 1979; Blumenfeld, Pintrich, Meece & Wessels 1982; Good 1983; Levine & Wang 1990; Weinstein 1983; Barry & King 1997) have shown that primary school children possess the ability to make sound assessments of their own and their classmates’ ability. In addition, Assor and Connell (1992, p.29) provide empirical evidence for the validity of self-reports in the upper primary and
on into the secondary classrooms. And, more importantly from the point of view of this study, the findings of Gransden (1997) and Mansfield (1997) indicate that Western Australian secondary school students are essentially similar to their American and Israeli counterparts in that they too are able to make valid assessments of their own and their fellow students’ abilities. Moreover, because young people’s perceptions of the self-impact on behaviour in the classroom, they also influence their ability ‘to achieve success and partly determine how students respond in particular situations’ (Mansfield 1997, p.181). Byrne agrees with Mansfield when he states:

> The perceptions that we hold about ourselves are derived from our social environment and are believed to provide the culminating force in directing our behaviour; this behaviour, in turn, influences the ways we perceive ourselves. (Byrne 1984, p.429)

One telling factor in the social environment of young people who are considering the Senior Agricultural Course is the commonly held notion that vocational education in general and agricultural education in particular are for the less academically able. This point of view is often expressed as follows: ‘Joe is not like our other children. He is no good at school and so we have decided to make a farmer out of him.’ The same point of view is shared by a number of Agricultural educators and is instanced by the claim that ‘up to two thirds of the students in the Senior Agricultural Course are “students at risk” [i.e., at risk of not completing Years 11 and 12]’ (Agricultural Educators Association of Western Australia Executive Meeting 29 June 2003).

Accordingly, Items 10-14 of Survey 1 required the students to nominate the subjects they had studied in Year 10. Item 11 then asked them to list the three subjects they liked most, while Item 12 required them to nominate the three subjects they liked least. Items 13 and 14 respectively dealt with the three subjects they did best at and the three they did least well in. Figures 4.5 to 4.10 and Appendix E present the data from Items 10 – 14 subject by subject graphically.

Subjects Studied in Year 10 and Student Preferences

Figure 4.5 illustrates the strong preference the students had for the hands-on subjects and the outdoors. Furthermore, the relatively large numbers who claimed they liked
these subjects contrast with the small numbers who perceived themselves as liking the theoretical courses.

Figure 4.5 Subjects Studied in Year 10 and Student Preference.
Data source: Survey 1 Questions 11, 12 and Appendix E.

Items 13 and 14 were included in the March Survey on the assumption that what is ‘liked’ is usually performed well. Figure 4.6 records the students’ perceptions of their performance in the same subject groupings as Figure 4.5.

The students’ bias towards the practical is once more evident in Figure 4.6 and is attested to by the very small numbers who said they Did least well in this area of the curriculum.
In the ‘theory’ subjects, the numbers who perceived they *Did best at* are not very different from those who rated their performance *Least well*. Science and Social Studies/Society and Environment are exceptions where disproportionately large numbers saw themselves as doing *Least well*. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students who were from Bindoon College’s Year 10 class of the previous year did not relate well to their teachers of Science and Social Studies and therefore it is possible to ascribe, in part, student perceptions of their not doing well in Science and Social Science to ‘teacher effect’.
Perceptions of Preference and Performance: Interaction Plots

The series of interaction plots (Figures 4.7 to 4.10) that follows provides a more detailed analysis of student preference and performance in Year 10. The numbers of females and males who studied the subject in Year 10 and the name of the subject comprise the caption of each plot. The figures on the vertical axis refer to the students who actually evaluated their preference and performance in the subject. The differing sample sizes require the use of percentage figures rather than absolute numbers in the construction of each plot.

While the interaction plots for some subjects indicate an association between Liked most/Did best at and also Liked least/Did least well at, it is not the intention to imply that there is a proven causal correlation between liking and succeeding or disliking and poor performance. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect that, in general, when young people take up the Senior Agricultural Course, their likes/dislikes together with their perceptions of their abilities and previous academic performances will find expression in the reasons they give for embarking upon the course.

Year 10 Practical Subjects: Students Liking Most and Perceptions of Performance

Figure 4.7 consists of four interaction plots that record the students’ perceptions of their liking (Liked most) and their performance (Did best at) in the four Year 10 subject areas that have considerable practical and extra mural components, namely: Practical Agriculture; Outdoor/Physical Education; Design and Technology; Home Economics and Cooking; and Music, Art, Drama.

This set of interaction plots relating to the outdoor and practical elements of the course (Figure 4.7) are included because they corroborate what the students revealed in their answers to Question 15 of the March Survey and in the first set of interviews, namely, that two key reasons for them taking up the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College were: their preference for working with their hands, and the outdoors. In addition to being counter-intuitive, the higher percentage of girls than boys who preferred to work outside and points to what appears to be a distinguishing feature of Bindoon College cohort (and possibly of students in agricultural courses elsewhere) relative to the mainstream Year 11 population.
In spite of this strong preference for the outdoors and the practical, the female and the male students did not rate their performances in these parts of the curriculum among their best and this second counter-intuitive phenomenon may well be another special feature of the cohort.

Where Practical Agriculture is concerned, a possible explanation may lie in the tendency of the farm staff to award very few High or Very High assessments when compared with the academic staff (Appendix D). There may be many reasons for this; among them are the following:

- The ATOs (Agricultural Training Officers) are accustomed to competency based training and assessment where a person is assessed as ‘competent’ or ‘not competent’. On the other hand, the academic staff at the time of the study (the year 2000) were for the most part accustomed to the normative grading system mandated by the Curriculum Council (Curriculum Council, 2004 p. 22) with its standardised scaled scores (Curriculum Council, 2004 pp. 22).
57-65). For example, Table 4.21 compares the percentages of actual grades awarded for Farm Practice in 2003 with what the Curriculum Council had proposed. It illustrates the disparity that can rise between the two types of assessment and the difficulty of attempting to marry the two.

Table 4.21 Distribution of Yr 12 Farm Practice Grades v Curriculum Council’s Proposed Grades, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>U</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual (%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed (%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- The more classroom orientated subjects Plant Production and Marketing and Animal Production and Marketing are generally taught by those who are familiar with normative based assessment; hence, the distribution of grades is usually close to what the Curriculum Council proposes, namely, 15% A grades.
- There is a psychological factor that is linked to the one to one nature of competency based training and assessment. The immediacy of the assessment and the close relationship that the instructor has with the person he/she is assessing means that the assessor is less likely to inflate the performance of a pupil.
- In addition, training officers, who have come directly from industry and are accustomed to working with adults, subconsciously expect (demand!) the same level of performance from a sixteen year old as from a 20 year old with several years’ experience at the task.
- Finally, there is always the possibility that in a relatively small sample, no student merits a Very High grade.

Figure 4.7 also suggests a tendency among the girls not to link performance with preference, a consequence perhaps of the fact that female students typically will have had less exposure to these subjects than have the majority of boys. It may be expected, then, that they might have felt somewhat inadequate when they compared themselves with the boys. Carmel (16 years 2 months), in her October interview remarked: ‘With Farm Practice I know there’s things that I can do but I jus’ pull back an’ say that I can’t do it’. When asked why she ‘pulled back’, Carmel replied: ‘I jus’ find myself afraid of things, like for instance machinery’. She also admitted to being afraid of cattle. Other girls, too, confessed to feeling less than adequate while with the boys on Farm Practice.
An alternative explanation might lie in the tendency of some boys effectively to reinforce the girls’ negative self-images by ‘putting the girls down’ when on farm. Helen, in her October interview, admitted that some of the boys try to ‘involve them in everything’, but others:

‘… jus’ go, you know, “you have no right to learn, you’re only a girl” type of thing’ (*Helen, 15 years 7 months*).

**Year 10 Academic Subjects: Students Liking Most and Perceptions of Performance**

When compared with the students’ perceptions of their preferences and performance in practical ‘hands-on’ Year 10 subjects (Figure 4.7), the interaction plots of Figure 4.8 reveal the relatively small numbers of students who admitted to liking the academic subjects and who perceived themselves as ‘doing their best’ in them.

Relatively more girls than boys expressed a liking for English, Mathematics, Science and Health Education. The gender difference is most pronounced in English where five (50%) of the girls claimed they liked English most and seven (70%) saw themselves as ‘doing best’ in the subject. The corresponding figure for the boys is two (13%). Agriculture is the only subject to have a greater percentage of male students claiming they liked it most.

In contrast to the practical subjects (Figure 4.7), Figure 4.8 also indicates that *liking* and *doing well* generally go together.
Year 10 Subjects that are mainly theory and classroom based

**Key:**
- **(F)**emale
- **(M)**ale

**English:** $F=10$; $M=15$
- Liked most ($F=5$; $M=2$)
- Did best at ($F=7$; $M=2$)

**Mathematics:** $F=10$; $M=15$
- Liked most ($F=3$; $M=3$)
- Did best at ($F=3$; $M=4$)

**Agriculture:** $F=5$; $M=8$
- Liked most ($F=3$; $M=3$)
- Did best at ($F=2$; $M=3$)

**Science:** $F=10$; $M=15$
- Liked most ($F=2$; $M=1$)
- Did best at ($F=1$; $M=5$)

**Religious Education:** $F=9$; $M=9$
- Liked most ($F=1$; $M=1$)
- Did best at ($F=3$; $M=2$)

**Health Education:** $F=9$; $M=11$
- Liked most ($F=1$; $M=0$)
- Did best at ($F=3$; $M=1$)

**Career/Voc Ed:** $F=10$; $M=11$
- Liked most ($F=2$; $M=2$)
- Did best at ($F=1$; $M=0$)

**S Ss, Soc & Env’mnt:** $F=18$; $M=27$
- Liked most ($F=1$; $M=1$)
- Did best at ($F=2$; $M=0$)

**Figure 4.8** Interaction Plots: Preference and Performance in the Academic Subjects.
Data Source: Survey 1 Questions 11, 13 and Appendix E.

**Year 10 Practical Subjects: Students Liking Least and Perceptions of Performance**

The plots that comprise Figure 4.9 indicate that very few of the students disliked the
practical/outdoors subjects or perceived themselves as doing *least well* in them.

**Figure 4.9** Interaction Plots: Perceptions of Liking Least and Performance in the Practical.

Data source: Survey 1 Questions 12, 14 and Appendix E.

The very small numbers who liked the practical subjects least are consistent with the much larger number in Figure 4.7 who claimed a strong preference the same subjects.

**Year 10 Academic Subjects: Students Liking Least and Perceptions of Performance**

For English (Figure 4.10), the relatively large number of boys (60%) who liked the subject least and believed that they did *least well* in it (53%) contrasts with the one girl who liked English least and the two did least well in it. Science, Health and Social Studies/Society and Environment were *liked least* by relatively large proportions of both boys and girls. The larger proportion of boys in the *liking least* categories may help to explain the generally better performance of the girls in these academic subjects.
Figure 4.10 Interaction Plots: Perceptions of Liking Least and Performance in the Classroom.
Data source: Survey 1 Questions 12, 14 and Appendix E.
In the case of Mathematics, where 60% and 40% of the boys the girls liked it least, the situation is reversed. For both genders, liking least and performing poorly in Mathematics appear to have been associated.

Relatively more girls than boys, however, indicated an affinity for the traditional classroom subjects and perceived themselves as doing well in them as is evidenced by the disproportionate number of academic awards made to the female students at the end of the year (*Catholic Agricultural College Winners 2000*).

In summary, this section has shown that the case is characterised by strong preferences for a hands-on and outdoor style of education that was true for both the female and male members of the case.

**Reasons for Joining the Course**

Figures 4.11 – 4.15 display the students’ responses to Question 15 of Survey 1.

![Figure 4.11 Reasons for Joining the Course and Retention according to Preference and Gender. Data Source: Survey 1 Question 15.](image-url)
Question 15 of Survey 1 consisted of two parts. Part 1 provided a list of fifteen possible reasons the students may have had for joining the Senior Agricultural Course. In addition, the free response section of Question 15 elicited eight replies.

The second part to Question 15 required respondents to rank their answers according to the importance they placed on each reason, commencing with ‘1’ for the most important and then moving down the scale. Figures 4.11 – 4.15 enable the reader to explore possible associations between a reason given for joining the course and its completion.

The data in Figure 4.11 reveal that the strong preference for ‘hands on’ and ‘out of doors’ activities recorded in Figures 4.4 and 4.5 above was translated into action by becoming the principal reason for students joining the course. The retention rates, particularly among the boys, of those who gave these reasons were also satisfactory. Love of plants and animals and, for the girls, horses, were substantial reasons students cited for entering the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College. The associated retention rate of these boys and girls was also satisfactory.

The information in Figure 4.12 is derived from the data relating to the origins of the students that is contained in Table 4.16 (p.76). Of the 26 in the sample, only six
were from farms or stations. However, for the six, their origin was an important reason for them having entered the course and was associated with its completion, as all of them did so. The boy and the girl, who claimed that the absence of a Senior School close to where they lived had been an important reason for them taking up the course, also completed Year 12.

Seven (28%) of the class stated that having relatives on the land had been an important reason for embarking upon the course. However, just four of the seven returned to Year 12. The boy and the girl, who claimed that the absence of a senior high school close to where they lived was an important reason for them taking up the course, completed Year 12. Seven (28%) of the class claimed that having relatives on the land was an important reason for embarking upon the course. However, just four of the seven returned to Year 12.

_Future Career as a Reason for Joining the Course_

Figure 4.13 examines the career directed reasons students had given for entering

![Figure 4.13](image)

**Figure 4.13** Career Orientated Reasons for Joining the Course and Completion of Year12.

Data Source: Survey 1 Question 15.
upon the Senior Agricultural Course. Figure 4.13 indicates that the majority of the students had thought seriously about their career pathway in Year 10 and that they perceived that taking up the course had been the first step in their pursuing of a career in agriculture or related industries.

That such large numbers wanted to learn to care for the land may reflect the special Landcare Program that had operated in their Year 10. The other career related categories – Aquaculture, Machinery, Biodynamic/Organic Farming and Learning Agricultural Skills – were provided by the respondents in the free response section of Question 15, Survey 1. These students indicated a considerable understanding of the broader meaning of Agriculture.

**Idiosyncratic Reasons for Joining the Senior Agricultural Course**

In addition to the above mainly altruistic and career related reasons for taking up the course at Bindoon College, some evidently had other purposes in mind.

![Figure 4.14](image_url)  
**Figure 4.14** Idiosyncratic Reasons for Joining the Course and Completion of Year 12.  
Data source: Survey 1 Question 15.
Figure 4.14 encompasses the more idiosyncratic reasons students gave for taking up the course. A comment on each of the above reasons follows:

*Needing a break from home.* The need for a break from home has been discussed already (Table 4.20) and is included in Figure 4.14 for completeness.

*Wanting a change.* ‘Wanting a change’ is similar to ‘Needing a break from home’ and that the student who cited this as a reason for taking up the course did not return for Year 12.

*Problem with friends, etc.* The reasons ‘Problem with friends’, ‘Poor Maths, English, LOTE’, ‘Hated city school’ and ‘Poor at school work’ appeared in the free response reflects the fact that Bindoon College has a reputation for helping young people who are experiencing such problems. Moreover, it is College’s belief that part of its mission is to take students who have educational and or social problems that put them at risk of not completing their schooling. The data presented in Figure 4.14 show that relatively few students fell into these categories but, for those that did, the most returned to year 12 and completed the course.

*Foster care.* Occasionally, Bindoon College is asked to take a State Ward or a young person who is under foster care, hence the item was included in the list of possible reasons a student may have for coming to Bindoon College.

From an adult perspective, some of the reasons the students put forward for entering the residential course in Agriculture may appear to be frivolous or lacking in substance. However, it needs to be kept in mind that from the individual student’s perspective these seemingly trivial reasons were important enough for them to mention. Overall, the students appear to have thought deeply about their decision to take up the course and in so doing have demonstrated a sound knowledge of self.

**Student Plans for their Futures**

The responses of students to Questions 16 and 17 of Survey 1 indicated that, without exception, all were planning to complete Year 12. It is for this reason that there are no tables or figures documenting the students’ responses to Questions 16 and 17 of Survey 1 which asked students if they planned to leave school upon completing Year 11 and, if so, what their plans were.

However, Question 18 of Survey 1 required the students to state what they planned to do upon completing Year 12. The Question elicited a large number of responses which are listed in Table 4.22.
Table 4.22 Students’ Plans Post Year 12†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Yr 12 Plan</th>
<th>Female Number</th>
<th>Male Number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take up TAFE studies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence university studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in farming/agricultural sector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to family station</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to family business</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to family farm</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up apprenticeship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up pre-apprenticeship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a masseur</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join Army or Navy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a contract mustering business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have no idea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take time out to travel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work other than in farming/agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 18.

Given the limited academic ability of the group and, with the benefit of hindsight, the relatively large number of students (seven girls and seven boys) who reported that they intended to undertake further full time studies upon leaving school proved somewhat unrealistic. A follow-up telephone survey in June 2004, though, has indicated that all 21 (81% of the cohort) contacted were at that time working. Table 4.23 lists the occupations of these members of the cohort.

When the post-completion plans expressed by the students at the commencement of the course (Table 4.22) are compared three-and-one-half years later with their eventual outcomes (Table 4.23), there is a good ‘pre’ and ‘post’ match for apprenticeships and farming.

Table 4.23 Post School Occupations of Students†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Category</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm, Station, Equine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trades</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic, Metal Fabrication</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Business</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail, Security, Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Telephone enquiries, June 2004.
The major discrepancy is with university study. To date, the only student known to have completed a tertiary course is Samantha who went on to undertake the one-year intensive equine management course at Marcus Oldham College in Victoria. The almost 100% rate of employment among graduates of the Senior Course in Agriculture (both at Bindoon College and state-wide) is an outcome for which Bindoon and the Western Australian College of Agriculture can be deservedly proud.

**Awareness of the Senior Agricultural Course and Bindoon College**

Awareness of the Bindoon College. Table 4.24 records the answers the respondents gave to Question 19 of Survey 1 that sought the sources of their knowledge of the College.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of knowledge of College</th>
<th>Female Number</th>
<th>Male Number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A student/former student</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers’ staff of former school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements on GWN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads in magazines and newspapers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bindoon visits to previous school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College participation in shows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By myself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was sent to boarding school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 19.

The Bindoon College administration has known for some time that the most effective form of advertising is through the four ‘word of mouth’ avenues listed the table above. The relatively high proportion of students who learned of the school from current and/or former students, careers staff in their previous schools, and relatives (Table 4.24) support this perception of the administration. Advertisements in newspapers and on television, visits to prospective feeder schools by Bindoon College representatives, participation by Bindoon College and its students in field days and agricultural shows, while undoubtedly important in the larger scheme of things, were evidently less important in the students’ eyes when compared with the other four in terms of their direct recruitment value.
Awareness of the Senior Agricultural Course. Given the importance of personal contact for prospective students coming to know of Bindoon College, it is not surprising that the same was true of knowledge of the course (Table 4.25).

**Table 4.25 Students’ Source of Knowledge of the Agricultural Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of knowledge of course</th>
<th>Female Number</th>
<th>Male Number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/student of an Ag College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 10 teachers at Bindoon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers’ staff of former school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Landcare Program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads about Course on GWN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits by Bindoon to former school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads and articles in magazines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s participation in shows</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Survey 1 Question 20.

Finding out about a course of study is one thing; embarking upon it is something different. It is therefore appropriate to examine the role that parents and others may have played in the students’ decision making.

**The Role of Others in the Decision to Join the Course**

The data presented in Table 4.26 reveal that the majority of students (62%) decided to join the course of their own accord.

**Table 4.26 Parties to the Decision Making Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of involvement in the decision</th>
<th>Female Number</th>
<th>Male Number</th>
<th>M&amp;F Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision was entirely student’s</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and student were equal partners</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents'/guardians’ decision</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents were significant</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle/aunt was significant</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at former school guided student</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Survey 1 Question 21.
However, only seven of the 16 (44%) returned for Year 12 and, subsequently, completed the course. This number contrasts sharply with the 75% retention among those who believed the decision had been a joint one. Each of the remaining categories in Table 4.26 (‘It was parents'/guardians’ decision’; ‘Grandparents played a significant role’; ‘Uncle/aunt’; and ‘Teachers of the respondent’s previous school’) attracted just a single response.

**Choice of School: Reasons for Choosing Bindoon College**

Question 22 of Survey 1 required the students to give reasons for their choosing the Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon. Figure 4.15 collates the students’ responses to Question 22. From the point of view of the Bindoon College administration, the most interesting and challenging piece of information arising from Figure 4.15 is that none of the students cited the Catholicity of the school as reason for choosing it.

![Figure 4.15](image-url)  
*Figure 4.15 Principal Reasons for Choosing Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon.  
Data Source: Survey 1 Question 22, March 2000.*
Other things to emerge from the data are:

- The consistent preference for the ‘practical, hands-on’ subjects.
- The emphasis the students placed on agriculture and related activities including Farm Practice and the reputation of Bindoon College as a place in which to practise and learn about agriculture.
- The positive experience of male students in the Years 8 to 10 appears to have encouraged them to enrol for Years 11 and 12 at Bindoon College.
- Working with horses was more important for the girls that for the boys.
- The accessibility of Bindoon College was given as a reason by two boys and two girls.
- The size and quality of the farm were important for one girl and two boys.
- Other categories mentioned but not included in Figure 4.15 because of small numbers were: the relatively high percentage of female enrolments, the quality of the instruction in the theory and wanting to learn about aquaculture.

By their replies to Question 22, the majority of students demonstrated that they chose Bindoon in preference to another agricultural college for substantial reasons and in so doing exercised a degree of maturity.

**Personal Costs to Students Entering the Course**

Questions 23 of Survey 1 and Question 1 of Survey 2 sought to determine the personal costs to students of entering the course. The items of Question 23 were preceded by a header that read:

There is almost always a flip or negative side to any choice we make. This Question looks at the personal costs (if any) of your decision to joint the course. Tick the boxes that apply to you. [Use the space provided to add other sacrifices that you may have to make.] To join the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon I had to:

Table 4.27 consists of the responses the students made to the question and links these collectively and by gender to the subsequent completion of the course. No distinction is made between the three students who did not complete the course because they left mid-year and the eight who left at the end of Year 11. Each of the 15 students who returned for the second year of the course in January 2001 subsequently completed it.
Table 4.27 Personal Costs of Joining the Senior Agricultural Course†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal cost to student who joins the course</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>M&amp;F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e. Lose my circle of friends Respondents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Change the way I relate to my friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Withdraw fully from my sporting commitments Respondents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Withdraw partly from my sporting commitments Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Give up my part time job Respondents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. relate differently to my parents and family Respondents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lose my financial independence Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. *Just coming back to school Respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. *Student gave up nothing Respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. *Student gave up free time Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. *Gave up chance of getting good grades Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. *Being away from home Respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 23. *Free responses.

**Loss of Friends**

The data in Table 4.27 suggest that few of the students felt that they had had to give up much when taking up the course. Those that did report personal sacrifices cited having to leave their friends behind, and needing to change the way they related to their friends. It is noteworthy that only 17% students who cited having had to make personal sacrifices of these kinds continued into the second year of the course.

Tinto (1987, p.21) claims that up to 41 in every 100 American students do not complete a college degree and he goes on to say that the majority of those who leave do so early in the course and only 15% of the departures are for academic reasons. By far the biggest majority do so for social reasons; that is they have been unable to become part of at least one supportive group within the college structure (Tinto 1987, p.53). It would appear, therefore, that where friendships are concerned, the Bindoon College students are similar to American youth, many of whom are just two years...
older when they are required to leave home and to ‘go to College’. For both groups, friends and the way they relate to them are very important parts of their management of a transition from home to a residential course of study.

**Timing: Length of Time for Students to Experience Loss of Friends**

In the present context, ‘timing’ refers to the length of time it took for respondents to actually experience the absence of their friends. In order to form an estimate of this time, the question was put to the students in each survey. The bar chart, Figure 4.16, presents the responses of the students, collectively and by gender, to the question of loss of friends in both the March and October surveys. The chart also supplies the numbers who did not complete the course.

In March, none of the girls who eventually completed the course felt that taking up the course had resulted in their losing their friends. However, by the time of the October survey, three of the five stated that they had lost friends. Likewise, none of the boys who subsequently completed the course had experienced loss of friends at the time of the first survey. However, in the October survey, Lindsay, Hilton and Bennet admitted that joining the course had resulted in them losing friends.

In March, both Helen and Anne, who subsequently did not complete the course, stated that taking up the course had cost them friends. By October, Helen no longer claimed this but Anne and Flo did. Pete, Jay and Tom were the three boys who left mid-year and all three felt they had lost friends because of their residing at Bindoon. Of the three boys who left at the end of the year, Chad was the only one who stated in March and October that joining the course had cost him friends.

The preceding discussion and Figure 4.16 reveal that, as the year progressed, an increasing number of students admitted that joining the course had cost them friends. They also show that this loss of friends had been a problem for the boys more at the beginning rather than later. However, by the time of the second survey, the pattern had reversed and more girls than boys were now feeling the loss of their friends.
While there is little evidence to link students’ loss of friends to not completing the course, it is noteworthy that up to one-third of the students experienced loss of friends in the first year of the course.

*Changing Relationships*

In addition to bringing about the loss of friends, going away to a residential college in the country has the potential to effect a change in the quality or nature of the young person’s relationships. Item 23f of Survey 1 and Item 1f of the October Survey sought to see if this were so in the present case, and what, if any, had been the impact on the retention rate. Figure 4.17 brings together the students’ responses to these two items.
Of the five girls who completed the course, Carmel was the only one who stated that she had needed to change the way she related to her friends upon joining the course. Moreover, this was her response in March and October. The five girls who did not complete the course left at the end of Year 11. Of these, Ursula was the only one to say in March and October that she had changed the way she related to her friends. For Flo, this was a problem in March but not by the time of the second survey in October. For Peggy it was the reverse.

Where the boys who completed the course are concerned, Lindsay, who subsequently completed the course, felt that he had needed to change the way he related to his friends. By October, the number who had reported having had to change the way they related to their friends had grown to four, and Lindsay was not one of them. Of the three boys who left mid-year, Jay was the only one to have admitted that he had been required to change his ways of relating. On the other hand, Chad, who left at
the end of Year 11, believed he had had to change the ways he was relating to his friends from the very beginning of his time at the College.

The numbers, approximately one-third of the cohort, who claimed that joining the course had impacted on the way they related to their friends, are similar to those who claimed that they lost friends when they joined the course. The pattern of Figure 4.17 is similar to that of Figure 4.16 and indicates that the students had become aware of the phenomenon as the year progressed. There is little or no evidence to suggest an association between the changing nature of relationships and the completion of the course.

New Friendships

The ability and opportunity to establish new friendships may counteract possible negative effects of losing or missing friends. With this in mind, Item 34 of the October Survey asked the respondents if they had made new friends since joining the course. The respondents’ replies are recorded in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28 Responses to Item 34, Survey 2†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert scores</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F M T</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Y 12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2, Item 34.

Table 4.28 indicates that the students had been able to make new friends upon joining the course. Moreover, the retention rate for the male students who responded positively to Item 34 was 80%, indicating a positive association between these students’ experiences of having been able to make new friends on the course and their subsequent continuation into Year 12.

Data from the October round of interviews reveal that the loss of five female students (50%) from the second year of the course may be accounted for by the fact that they were part of a very strong friendship group that had isolated itself to some
extent from the main student body. Moreover, the group and was finding it difficult to conform to the boarding house code of conduct.

**Quality of Boarding School Friendships**

There is considerable evidence from classical literature to support the observation that the friendships made at boarding school are frequently stronger, more intense and more enduring than are the normal run of teenage friendships. Classic novels such as *Goodbye Mr Chipps* (Hilton 1934) and *Tom Brown’s School Days* (Hughes 1967) and, more recently, young peoples’ literature such as Maxine Swann’s (2003) *Serious Girls* has also contributed to the popular view that friendships formed at boarding school are unique. On a more substantial level, Nelson in his 2002 review of F P Lock’s *Edmund Burke* claims, that his [Burke’s] attendance at a mid-18th Century Quaker boarding school in Ireland and the friends he made there were a major formative influence on his life and work. Accordingly, Item 35 of the October Survey required the respondents to evaluate their perceptions of the quality of the friendships that had resulted from their residential experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert scores</th>
<th>Extra special friends</th>
<th>Just friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F M T</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 8 15</td>
<td>F M T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 3 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>4 6 10</td>
<td>0 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29 Quality of Residential Friendships†

Twenty students responded to Item 35 and of these 15 (75%) claimed that their boarding school friends were special. There was very little difference between the genders with 78% (7/9) girls claiming their boarding school friends were special and 73% (8/11) boys. This result is consistent with the findings of Paul and Brier (2001) who, in their study of ‘Friendsickness’ in 70 first year college students [modal age 18 years], found that there was little, if any, difference between the genders in this
matter of dissociating from former friends and establishing new friends on their move from school to a residential college.

One piece of anecdotal evidence which points to the enduring nature of the friendships made during the time the students were residing at Bindoon College is the long distances the members of the cohort travelled to celebrate important birthdays and other events of personal significance.

Table 4.30 combines the participants’ responses to Items 3 and Items 23 (e and f) of Survey 1 with the retention rate and shows that the issue of friends had been more problematic for students from suburban schools than for non-residential students from Bindoon and the surrounding areas.

Table 4.30 Loss or Change in Friendships and School Attended in Year 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 23. To join the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College, I had to:</th>
<th>Year 10 School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Bindoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Lose my circle of friends</td>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>4 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed Y12</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Change the way I relate to friends</td>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>5 1 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed Y12</td>
<td>1 1 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 3, Question 23 e, f and Bindoon College March 2001.

That so few of the students who had completed their Year 10 at Bindoon College experienced loss of friends or had needed to change the ways they related to their friends can be accounted for by the fact that their school-friendships were already well established at the commencement of the course. Moreover, the three non-residential students had been in a position to maintain existing friendships outside of school. This was not so for the residential students who were new to the school, and it may help to explain the lower retention rate of the latter.

The relatively high retention (78%) of boys who claimed they had made many new friends (Table 4.30) support Tinto’s (1987, p. 53) earlier noted observation that by far the biggest majority of American college students that fail to complete a degree do so because they have been unable to become part of at least one supportive group. The corresponding retention rate of 44% (4/9) for the girls does not support Tinto’s observation as convincingly as does the 78% figure for the boys.
Family Relationships

Item 23g of Survey 1 stated: *To join the Senior Agricultural Course I had to relate differently to my parents*. Two girls and two boys responded in the affirmative and one of each completed the course. This matter of family relationships was returned to in several places in the October Survey. In answering Item 1h of Survey 2, nine girls and ten boys said they saw less of their families since joining the course, yet seven of the girls and nine of the boys believed that they had coped *well to very well* with this separation. One girl and one boy claimed that they found living away from home difficult. Three girls reported missing their parents very much, as did one boy, yet all completed the course. Two girls and a boy were missing their brothers and sisters. When feeling lonely or in low spirits (Question 2b, survey 2) four girls and three boys reported that they telephoned home, while one girl and one boy telephoned a friend. All but one of these students completed the course.

From the above, it would appear that the majority of the students had found living away from home to be relatively easy and that, with the support of their family and friends, had managed this aspect of the experience well. The finding is consistent with the observation of Darlaston-Jones, Cohen, Haunold, Pike, Young and Drew (2003) that among first year university students: ‘One of the strongest indicators for student success is the level of social support he or she has from family, friends and peers’.

Sporting Commitments

The move to a relatively isolated country residential school required of some that they surrender completely or substantially reduce their sporting commitments. Tables 4.31 and 4.32 provide the numbers who had had to give up their outside sporting commitments completely or at least curtail them.
Thirty-five percent of the students (8/23) had had to withdraw completely from sporting activities outside the school and these students were aware of the loss in the early stages of the course. That five of these eight (55%) did not complete the course indicates that total withdrawal from outside sporting activities may have been more difficult to manage than it had been for five of the seven students who had been able to maintain at least some of their outside sporting commitments (Table 4.32).

**Table 4.32 Partial Withdrawal from Outside Sport and Completion of Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Completing Course</th>
<th>Students not Completing Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Survey 1 Q 23d and Survey 2 Q 1d.

Loss of Part-time Employment

During the design phase of Survey 1, it was expected that some students might have regretted being required to surrender or at least cut back on part time employment in order to take up the course. Questions 23a and 23b of Survey 1 were included to determine the extent to which this had been a factor and, for those for whom it had, to assess its association with eventual course completion. Table 4.33 records the students’ answers to the two questions.
Table 4.33 Loss of Part-time Job and/or Financial Independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Give up my part time job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Y 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lose my financial independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Y 12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Items 23a and 23b.

The smaller than expected number who indicated that they had had to give up their part-time employment to enter the course, may be explained by the fact that 15 of the 26 students were from Bindoon College’s Year 10 class and presumably could have continued any part-time work they may have had prior to entering.

_Free Responses to Question 23 of Survey 1_

The free response section of Survey 1 Question 23 attracted small numbers, one boy and one girl saying that joining the course had caused them some loss of free time. Another, a female, stated that joining the course had ‘cost her good grades’. Two boys reported that they had ‘just come back to school’ for no particular reason. Two other boys said that they had given up nothing. One girl and one boy commented that ‘being away from home’ had caused some problems.

_Summary of Personal Cost to Students_

Figure 4.18 presents a two-part summary of the students’ responses to Question 1 of the October survey. An analysis of Figure 4.18 reveals that the average number of claimed sacrifices made by the girls who did not complete the course was 5.0. For boys who did not complete, however, the average was 3.7, making the average for the non-completing boys and girls 4.3. For the students who completed the course, the average number of reported sacrifices was 3.8. Evidently, although those who did not complete the course saw themselves as having had to give up more than those who went on to complete it, this pattern was more pronounced for the girls than the boys. And, as was noted earlier, 50% of the girls in the entering cohort did not complete the course. In other words, the girls were not only more likely than boys to not complete the course, but were also more likely to have seen themselves as having given up more to join it in the first place.
Figure 4.18 Personal Cost to Students Undertaking the Residential Course in Agriculture.
Data source: Survey 2 Question 1.

A comparison of parts A and B of Figure 4.18 indicates that ‘Loss of friends’ is the one sacrifice that affected more (64%) of the students who failed to complete the course than it did those (40%) who successfully completed it. The relationship with family was equally important for both groups of students, three-quarters of all students reportedly feeling the loss of contact with their families. Fifty-three per cent of those who completed the course reported having missed their pets (dog, horse, cat, etc.), while the corresponding figure for the students who did not complete the course was 27%.

Both the completers and the non-completers felt the loss of personal time (free time) equally, thus indicating no association between the experience of loss of time for oneself and the completion or otherwise of the course. Apart from loss of friends, therefore, there is no clear differential pattern of sacrifices made by those students who completed the residential course in agriculture and those who did not.
Issues Peculiar to a Residential Course in Agriculture

By October 2000, the students indicated in their responses to Survey 2 and the second round of interviews that several personal factors were associated with their management of the course. These were the students’ personality type, their attributions of success or failure, and their experiences of the academic, the farm, the workshop, and coeducational boarding.

**Personality Type**

The interviews in March 2000 revealed that some students were beginning to find that the lack of privacy and space that they could call their own had already become difficult to manage. As Tom explained in his first interview:

> Yeah, there's, there's always a couple of things like that because ya with each other, especially in our dorms now you're with people ... as soon as you get up in the morning you see them an' then ...you eat with them at breakfast an' then you go to school with them an' you're with them nearly 24 hours a day. The only time apart you have is when you're sleeping. (Tom, 15 years 6 months)

![Figure 4.19 Personality Type (self-assessed) and Subsequent Retention Year 11 into Year 12. Data source: Survey 2, Item 27.](image)

It was in the light of Tom’s and others’ perceived lack of privacy in the boarding houses that Item 27, which required respondents to assess their personality type, was included in Survey 2. Figure 4.19 presents the students’ assessments of their personality types, and relates this to their retention into Year 12.
The intuitive hypothesis used to frame the question was that 'a more extraverted personality would be more likely to complete the course than one who was introverted.' However, for both boys and girls, it was the more introverted that achieved the higher retention. Likewise, the retention of those who claimed they were neither extraverted nor introverted was very high, with just one of the six in the 'in-between' category failing to return for Year 12.

**Student Perceptions of the Academic Aspects of the Course**

Given the marked preference for the practical, and the limited academic background of a large number of the students, it is appropriate to examine their perceptions of various aspects of the academic program.

**Table 4.34 Perceptions of Academic Aspects of the Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3, Survey 2</th>
<th>Likert Scale Items</th>
<th>Student Ratings</th>
<th>Item Total</th>
<th>Item Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I am finding theory to be</td>
<td>Easy → Difficult</td>
<td>0 2 10 10 0 1</td>
<td>81 3.62</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I am finding the theory</td>
<td>Interesting → Very boring</td>
<td>0 3 9 7 2 2</td>
<td>78 3.39</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Intellectually, I find the theory work</td>
<td>Challenging → No challenge</td>
<td>0 3 6 12 2 0</td>
<td>79 3.43</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The relationship of theory to farm is</td>
<td>Very close → Unrelated</td>
<td>0 4 5 8 6 0</td>
<td>76 3.30</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. For my career, I find the class work</td>
<td>Very helpful → Of no value</td>
<td>0 2 6 8 5 2</td>
<td>70 3.04</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. On the farm, my knowledge of theory is</td>
<td>Very helpful → Unhelpful</td>
<td>0 6 5 7 5 0</td>
<td>81 3.52</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. The number of assignments is</td>
<td>Too few → Too many</td>
<td>0 1 3 9 7 3</td>
<td>100 4.26</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. The quantity of work for a VH grade is</td>
<td>Too much → Too little</td>
<td>0 6 14 2 0 0</td>
<td>82 4.18</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. The standard set for a VH grade is</td>
<td>Too high → Too low</td>
<td>0 5 12 6 0 0</td>
<td>88 4.00</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. My understanding of an educational Outcome is</td>
<td>Very clear → Not clear</td>
<td>1 2 9 6 4 1</td>
<td>79 3.43</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. The change to Outcome based learning has been for me</td>
<td>Very easy → Difficult</td>
<td>1 2 6 3 6 5</td>
<td>95 4.13</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. If I had my way, I would choose a course that was based on</td>
<td>Outcomes → Content</td>
<td>0 3 3 7 5 4</td>
<td>92 4.18</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. I am managing the theory side of the Course</td>
<td>Very well → Poorly</td>
<td>0 0 10 9 2 2</td>
<td>73 3.17</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data source: Survey 2, Question 3.
Nominal rating: High (H ≥4), Medium (M <4 ≥3), Low (L <3).

In the light of Table 4.34, it may be said that the students found it difficult to adjust to the outcomes based style of education and would have preferred a more content-based curriculum. They also believed that the quantity and standard of work required to achieve the highest grades were excessive. Moreover, they saw the
theory side of the course as not particularly relevant to the work they were required to do on the farm nor to the careers they were planning.

The nine responses in the ‘medium’ category suggest a group of young people barely managing or tolerating the academic side of the program, a point of view which is consistent with the preference for the outdoors and the practical which the students have expressed so emphatically in their interviews and in the two Surveys.

Student Perceptions of Farm Practice

The strong preference for the out-of-doors and practical ought to be reflected in the students’ experience of Farm Practice. To test this, the series of six point Likert scales that make up Question 11 was included in the October survey. Table 4.35 sets out the students’ responses to this question.

Table 4.35 Perceptions of Farm Practice†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Response Tally</th>
<th>Likert Scale Items</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. I am finding Farm Practice</td>
<td>Easy ———— Difficult</td>
<td>1 3 6 9 2 0</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. I am finding Farm Practice</td>
<td>Easy ———— Difficult</td>
<td>2 10 9 2 0 0</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. After a day on the farm I am</td>
<td>Not tired ———— Exhausted</td>
<td>1 4 6 8 3 0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. On the farm, I am</td>
<td>Coping well ———— not coping</td>
<td>3 11 6 2 1 0</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. For my career, Farm Free</td>
<td>Much better ———— not so good</td>
<td>1 4 8 4 1 1</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. When driving, I rate myself as</td>
<td>Confident ———— frightened</td>
<td>0 3 10 5 4 1</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. When working machinery, I am</td>
<td>Confident ———— frightened</td>
<td>2 3 8 6 4 0</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. When working machinery, I am</td>
<td>Skilled ———— Unskilled</td>
<td>0 0 10 5 3 0</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. I learn to do difficult tasks</td>
<td>Quickly ———— Never</td>
<td>1 5 5 4 0 0</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j. Over the year, Farm Practice has been</td>
<td>Better than expected ———— not so good as expected</td>
<td>1 6 13 3 0 0</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data source: Survey 2 Question 11.
Nominal rating: High (H ≥4), Medium (M <4 ≥3), Low (L <3).

Table 4.35 exemplifies that, in the main, the students perceived Farm Practice to be interesting and better than expected. Moreover, they believed that they learned new skills quickly. However, when working with machinery and driving, the students were not so confident, the girls being less so than the boys. It would also appear that the level of difficulty of the subject is about right, for the majority of students (17/23) located it in the centre of the scale of difficulty. Likewise, the majority did not find it too demanding physically.
When asked how they thought they were coping with Farm Practice (Question 12, Survey 2), one girl and five boys said ‘extremely well’, with seven girls and seven boys saying ‘quite well’. One girl and one boy rated their coping as ‘satisfactory’. One female student believed she was on the verge of not coping with Farm Practice.

When given the opportunity in Question 13 to reflect upon the personal qualities they possessed that enabled them to cope with Farm Practice, the students supplied the free responses recorded in Table 4.36.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>Number in Yr 11</th>
<th>% Retained into Yr 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likes/enjoys work on the farm because ‘hands-on’</td>
<td>1 F 6 M</td>
<td>100 F 50 M 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is capable, quick to understand</td>
<td>2 F 3 M</td>
<td>50 F 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A willingness to learn, learning new material</td>
<td>1 F 2 M</td>
<td>0 F 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous knowledge</td>
<td>1 F 1 M</td>
<td>100 F 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of outdoors</td>
<td>1 F - M</td>
<td>100 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is an extravert</td>
<td>1 F 1 M</td>
<td>0 F 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm work is relaxing for the student</td>
<td>1 F - M</td>
<td>0 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm helps participant overcome shyness</td>
<td>1 F - M</td>
<td>100 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not afraid to see blood</td>
<td>1 F - M</td>
<td>0 F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.36 Personal Qualities that Enabled Students to Manage Farm Practice

Six girls and 13 boys believed it was the excellent teaching procedures adopted by the staff that was enabling them to manage the farm work and the responses of two boys paid tribute to the ‘helpful’ staff. On the other hand, three girls felt that their lack of farming experience was making it difficult for them to manage the farm work and another girl believed ‘she was not given a second chance’ to achieve a competency or demonstrate a skill.

Student Perceptions of Automotive Workshop

As the year progressed, anecdotal evidence indicated that Automotive Workshop, including the repair and maintenance of farm machinery, was the most popular and keenly anticipated of the week’s work.
The difficulties most students experienced with sections of the automotive course evidently had not deterred them from finding the subject 'better than expected' and 'interesting'. They also believed it was relevant to their careers. Five boys and one girl claimed they were coping 'very well' with the Automotive Workshop experience. Two girls and six boys said 'quite well', and six girls and one boy thought they were performing satisfactorily. One girl saw herself as 'borderline coping/not-coping'.

The personal qualities perceived by the students as enabling them to cope with work in the automotive workshop are listed in Table 4.38. The information was obtained from their responses to the free response Question 17a of Survey 2.

A number of students moved beyond the personal to claim that the training officer enabled them to manage the Automotive Workshop. What they valued most in their training officer was the quality of his instruction, the questions he asked and the
responses he gave to their questions, his encouraging each to achieve his/her potential, and the respect he had for his students.

**Student Perceptions of Facilities Development**

Facilities Development is a broad subject encompassing a range of metal fabrication, building and general maintenance activities including welding, fencing, bricklaying, cement work, water, and building maintenance. In addition to the practical, there is limited coverage of theoretical aspects of the above and related matters such as seeking shire approval for new structures and drainage modifications. Table 4.39 details the students’ perceptions of Facilities Development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.39 Student Perceptions of Facilities Development†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 18, Survey 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likert Scale terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. I am finding Facilities Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I am finding Facilities Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Compared with my expectations in March, Facilities Diament is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. For my career, Facilities Diament is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I am coping with Facilities Diament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data source: Survey 2 Question 18.
Nominal rating: High (H ≥4), Medium (M <4 ≥3), Low (L <3).

The students’ experience of Facilities Development was rather negative and rated poorly, some noting that it was insufficiently resourced in comparison with Automotive Workshop and Farm Practice, both of which they rated more highly. The majority claimed that they found Facilities Development relatively easy and that it had failed to meet their expectations.

As was the case with Farm Practice and Automotive Workshop, the majority of students believed they were coping well with Facilities Development. The base line in Figure 4.20 records eight reasons given by the students for believing this, and shows for each reason, separately for boys and girls, the retention into Year 12 of those who offered that reason.
The boys’ belief in their ability and their love of welding and hard work is what distinguished them from the girls for whom the relational (liking the teacher) was perceived as more helpful in managing the subject. Figure 4.21 records the factors that the students believed were responsible for them not doing well in the subject, and relates them as before to the corresponding retention rates.

Figure 4.20 Student Attribution of Success in Facilities Development and Retention Year 11 to Year 12.
Data source: Survey 2, Question 19.

Figure 4.21 Factors Viewed as Unhelpful by Students when Coping with Facilities Development.
Data source: Survey 2, Question 19.
What is noteworthy about Facilities Development (Figure 4.21) is the fact that 50% (5/10) of the girls were not interested in the subject and claimed the subject was not related to the careers they were planning for themselves. Forty percent (4/10) of the girls disliked the teacher. Moreover, these attributions were associated with generally low retention rates. These same factors were of lesser importance for the boys and associated less with retention into Year 12. A feature of the cohort as a whole was the relatively small numbers of both genders who attributed their not doing well in the subject to personal factors such as lack of effort and interest. Instead, they ascribed more of the responsibility for their lack of success to other people (teachers and classmates), or to the perceived trivial nature of the tasks they were required to perform.

**Attributions of Success and Lack of Success in the Course as a Whole**

Questions 20 to 23 of the October survey examined a range of personal and extra-personal attributes and factors that the students perceived to have affected their success or lack thereof in both the practical and theoretical aspects of the course.

**Attributions of Academic Success**

In October, Question 20 of the second Survey stated: *When I get a grade of V, H, or S (Very High, High or Satisfactory) in a task or assignment in the THEORY or classroom work it is usually because: …* The respondents had to select from a list of ten attributes those that they believed fitted their persona. In analysing the data, a distinction has been made between the attributes over which the respondent had control (Figure 4.22) and those that were beyond the student’s locus of control (Figure 4.23).

Interest in their work, and hard work, are the predominant personal qualities to which students attributed their obtaining of good grades in the theory subjects. However, these two attributes were associated with better retention rates (the hatched bars compared with the corresponding solid bars) for the male students than for the females. The personal attributes – being good at schoolwork, well organised, and the ability to schedule work – were mentioned by only some. For the few who did
mention them, the retention into Year 12 was relatively good for the boys but less so for the girls.

**Figure 4.22** Personal Qualities to which Students Attributed Success.
Data source: Survey 2, Question 20.

However, not all the factors that mediate success in the classroom are under the control of the individual. Figure 4.23 records four factors over which the respondents had no direct control but which, they believed, had contributed to their success in the academic parts of the course.

**Figure 4.23** Student Perceptions of Factors Beyond Control of the Individual and their Perceived Contribution to their Academic Success and Retention Year 11 to Year 12.
Data Source: Survey 2 Question 20.
As Figure 4.23 indicates, six (60%) of the female students attributed their success to ‘good luck’ and five (50%) to the perception that the task was ‘easy’. For the boys, the corresponding numbers were six (46%) and four (31%). Moreover, the retention rates (the hatched bars compared with the corresponding solid bars) for the boys were consistently high for all of the cited attributions, but for the girls were generally less so.

Attributions of Lack of Academic Success

Question 21 of the October survey sought to determine the reasons students gave for their lack of success in the academic component of the course.

Figure 4.24 Student Attribution of Lack of Success in Academic Subjects and Retention into Year 12.
Data source: Survey 2 Question 21.
As well as recording the students’ responses to Question 21, Figure 4.24 allows the reader to compare the girls’ attributions of lack of success with those of the boys and the associations of these attributions with the students’ completion of the course. The respondents’ attributions for not doing well in the academic subjects (Figure 4.24) are characteristic of a group that has limited academic ability and a marked preference for the practical and the out-of-doors. There is also a sense of realism or self-knowledge in that most of the students attributed their lack of success to their own limitations and not to other people. While 70% of the girls and 62% of the boys found the assignments ‘boring’, it was only for the girls, where three of the seven made it into Year 12, that there was evidence of an association between an experience of boredom and not completing the course. Moreover, the same is true for the five girls who perceived themselves as not working, as only one of them returned for Year 12.

Finally, 30% of the girls attributed their poor grades to the ‘mood of the teacher’; the corresponding figure for the boys being 8% (one boy). A similar pattern of female students attributing their lack of success to the mood of their instructor (30%) occurred in the practical subjects (Figure 4.25). The pattern may imply a greater person orientation of the female psyche.

**Attributions of Success in the Practical Subjects**

Questions 22 and 23 of Survey 2 were similar to Questions 20 and 21, except that the former were directed towards the practical aspects of the course. The personal attributes – being good at schoolwork as well as being well organised, and the ability to schedule work – were mentioned by very few, but, for the students who did mention them, their retention into Year 12 was good. As with the theory subjects, interest and hard work were the most frequently nominated reasons for success in the practical aspects of the course. Liking the task was also important, as was the perception that the task was ‘easy’. The girls in particular acknowledged the help they received from their friends. ‘Liking’ the supervisor also helped the boys and girls do well and was more frequently cited than it was for the academic subjects. For half of the female students, the ‘mood’ of the supervisor contributed to their
doing well, while for the boys it was their driving skills that helped them do a good job on the farm.

Figure 4.25 Attributions of Success in Tasks Assigned in Practical Subjects.
Data source: Survey 2, Question 22.

Attributions of Lack of Success in the Practical Subjects

The students’ attributions of lack of success in the practical aspects (Figure 4.26) of the course followed a pattern similar to their attributions of success in the same subjects (Figure 4.25). A number of the factors perceived by the students as contributing to their lack of success were the obverse of those that they saw as contributing to their success, for example, not working versus working hard.

While the girls and the boys attributed their lack of success in Farm Practice and the Workshop to similar factors (Figure 4.26), relatively more girls than boys perceived themselves as not doing well in these practical subjects. A second feature of Figure 4.26 that was characteristic of the cohort was the relatively large number of students
who accepted responsibility for their actions by attributing their lack of success to personal factors such as not working hard, not trying and lack of interest, and the small number of students who blamed others for their poor performance.

Of possible concern for the training officers and the college administration is the large proportion of students (90% of the female cohort and 46% of the boys) that put forward ‘not understanding what the job required’ as the reason for not doing well. The very small number of students attributing their lack of success in the practical subjects to the unruly behaviour or general unhelpfulness of their peers reflects positively on the overall maturity of the cohort. A feasible interpretation of the fact that only one student attributed her poor grades in the practical subjects to her fearing for her safety is that it is indicative of the obverse, namely, that the majority felt

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Figure 4.26 Student Attributions of Lack of Success in the Practical Tasks.  
Data Source: Survey 2 Question 23 and Bindoon College.
secure while working on the farm and in the workshops. Likewise, the fact that the same student felt she had to, in her language, ‘suck up’ to the training officers in order to achieve higher grades may be construed positively as pointing to the overall fairness of the instructors.

**Self-evaluation**

Question 24 of Survey 2 comprised a series of Likert scales that provided an opportunity for the respondents to compare themselves with their peers who were at other schools. The categories were: greater; about the same; less; and no idea. In all, 16 items contributed to Question 24.

*Comparisons with TEE.* Thirty eight percent of the cohort believed that Tertiary Entrance (TEE) students had more study to do while 52% admitted to having no idea of the demands of study on TEE students. In addition, 29% considered the TEE course to be more difficult than the Senior Agricultural Course and an equal number thought the two courses were of comparable difficulty.

*Vision for the Future.* A considerable proportion (38%) also believed it had a clearer vision of its future career path, a view that may well reflect the nature of the steps that the students had to make upon taking up the vocational residential course. Moreover, this figure correlates well with the 64% who viewed themselves as having a greater responsibility for their own life, an outcome perhaps attributable to their having had to live away from home for much of the year. A similar proportion (57%) regarded itself as possessing a broader experience of life. The 43% who considered themselves as being better able to relate to adults is balanced by the 52% who thought their ability to engage with adults was about the same as it would be for their peers in other schools and occupational fields.

*Relating to the Opposite Gender.* In the matter of relating to people of the opposite gender a little less than one-third (29%) saw themselves as being better at this than their peers in other schools. Around three-fifths (61%) of the cohort saw no difference. The relatively small proportion of students who saw themselves as being better relationally than their peers elsewhere is surprising, in that a number of the
girls from the country said in interview that they were treated more as ‘people’ by the boys at the College than they were by the ‘boys at home’.

Trust and Responsibility. Farm work in particular demands a greater degree of trust and responsibility on matters of personal safety and the operation of machinery than is typically the case with most classroom activities. It is not surprising, therefore, that nine boys and three girls (52% of the cohort) believed that a greater degree of trust was placed in them in the farm situation than would be the case for their peers in other schools. However, this degree of trust did not translate into a greater sense of personal responsibility on their part for the welfare of their fellow students, only one-third (32%) considering that they were more responsible in this regard.

Work Ethic and Work Skills. On the question of work ethic, 43% of the cohort perceived themselves as having a better attitude towards work than would be the case for their peers in other schools. Similarly, on work skills, 48% believed they were operating at a higher level than would be true for their peers from other backgrounds.

Time for Oneself. In framing Item 1 of Question 24 – The quantity of time I can call my own – the researcher was aware of how jealously the students regarded ‘their time’, which the students defined in the negative sense of ‘time when we don’t have to be in class, at work, playing organised sport, at meals, at night study or in the dormitory’. It is not surprising, therefore, that 55% of the respondents regarded themselves as having less time that they could ‘call their own’ than would be the case for their peers outside the school. One-seventh (14%) of the students claimed they now had more time that they could call their own than would have been the case had they continued their schooling elsewhere.

Self-confidence. When the question of self-confidence was raised, 39% believed they were more self-confident than were their friends from other schools, and 43% felt they were equally self-confident. Two female students (9% of the cohort) considered themselves as being less confident than their peers elsewhere. The remaining two boys had ‘no idea’.
Comparisons with Peers no Longer at School. To complete and conclude this matter of self-evaluation, Question 25 of the October Survey asked the respondents if they were different from their friends who may have left school. Fourteen (61%) replied that they were, with the balance (39%) seeing themselves as being no different. When asked in Question 25b to explain their answers to the first part of Question 25, nine different responses were received from 65% (15) of the students. Five respondents perceived themselves as being more knowledgeable or better educated than their peers who had left school. One saw herself as more confident, another as less experienced. Two respondents felt that some of their friends who were no longer at school were unhappy. A different two of the Bindoon cohort said that they wished that they could be earning more money like their friends who were in the work force. Another two respondents perceived themselves as less mature than their peers who had left school and were working.

Summary of Student Self-evaluation

The above section of the study has described a group of young people who perceived themselves vis-à-vis their peers as:

- Self-assured.
- Clear about its career pathways.
- Manually skilled.
- Responsible for the conduct of its life.
- Well able to communicate with adults.
- Possessing a broad experience of life.
- Having less time at its disposal.

Residential Dimensions of the Course

The residential component of the Senior Agricultural Course sets it apart from other vocational courses offered at the secondary level in Western Australia and needs to be considered in detail for the reader to ‘fully imagine the social world of the case’ (Kemmis 1980). Factors relating to the residential aspects of the course that have been discussed already are:

- Family structure and circumstances.
- Perceptions of boarding school life.
- Reasons for joining the course.
• Choice of school.
• Friendship.
• Sporting commitments.
• Personal issues peculiar to a residential course in agriculture.

Issues not yet covered involve the cohort’s perceptions of:

• The atmosphere within the boarding houses.
• Discipline and student/staff relationships including discipline.
• Accommodation and food.
• Effect of boarding on academic performance.
• The place of non-residential students.

A series of six-point Likert scales, Questions 40 to 46 of the October Survey, and data from the second set of interviews were used to ascertain the students’ perceptions of their experience of the residential aspects of the course.

Residential Arrangements. The senior girls (Years 11 and 12) shared a boarding house (Catherine House) with the junior girls (Years 8, 9 and 10). Syd and Mark were mentors for the Year 8 male boarders and lived in a self-contained flat adjacent to the junior dormitory. The remainder of the male cohort shared rooms in the senior dormitory and were not in close contact with the younger boys.

Atmosphere within the Boarding Houses. Sixty-seven percent of the girls and 82% of the boys ‘liked the atmosphere’ in their respective boarding houses. Contributing factors to this may have been (a) the large proportion of both genders (89% of the girls and 64% of the boys) who perceived their fellow residents as ‘helpful’ rather than ‘unhelpful,’ and (b) a similar proportion of female residents who experienced their companions as ‘kind.’ For the latter, the figure for the boys was considerably less (36%).

Of equal, some would say greater, importance in determining the atmosphere in a residential facility is the relationship between the staff and the youthful residents. A slight majority (56%) of the female residential students and 64% of the male residential students viewed the staff as ‘kind’ rather than ‘hurtful’ and most, irrespective of gender, believed the discipline in the boarding houses was ‘too strict’. Paradoxically, when ‘feeling unwell’, 56% of the girls and 64% of the boys felt that they were regarded as a ‘nuisance’ rather than being treated with ‘kindness and
understanding’. This perhaps explains why three of the girls (33%) and eight of the boys (73%), when not feeling well, either did not report the matter to the House Parent or resorted to the forbidden practice of using a pain reliever or other medication from home. Half of the residents (50%) cited ‘the ladies in the office’ as a resource that they used when they were feeling indisposed. Relatively few of the resident students (20%) ‘Phoned home’ to seek help in dealing with minor ailments.

**Accommodation and Food:** The boarding facilities are, by modern standards, outmoded, with very few residents at the senior level enjoying a room to themselves. It is perhaps not surprising then that 56% of the girls and 73% of the boys regarded their accommodation as substandard. Food, on the other hand, was not an issue for the majority, with sixteen (84%) of the residents rating the quality of the provided food at the middle of the scale or higher. Four boys (36%) rated the quantity as being adequate or above, while seven of the girls (78%) did so.

**Living with Students of Different Cultures:** The girls shared their residential accommodation with a number of Aboriginal students, one of whom was a member of their Year cohort. None of male members of the cohort was Aboriginal but several younger boys were and there was no international student. The majority of respondents (67% female and 82% male) said they ‘loved living with students from other cultures,’ in this case referring presumably to the Aboriginal students with whom they had regular contact.

**Effect of Boarding on Academic Performance:** The experience of living away from home during term time was not seen by most students as having had any significant impact (either positively or negatively) on their ability to preform academically, the majority of respondents (75%) having selected the central categories of the scale. However, one girl (11%) and four boys (36%) believed that their school performance had improved since taking up residence. None of the residential students believed that boarding had had any appreciably negative impact on their academic performance.

**Status of Non-residential Students:** At the time of the October Survey, one girl and three boys were attending as day students. Of these, three lived within ten kilometres of the College and the fourth had a journey of about 45 minutes from home to school.
Given that, in February 2000, the day students numbered 16 out of a total enrolment of 101 the school timetable and general program fitted more the needs of the residential students, albeit with the danger that the day students may perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as being of lesser account than their residential peers. With this in mind, Questions 48-56 of the October Survey addressed directly how the boarders and day students each saw themselves in terms of their place or standing in the concerns and life of the College generally. A little over one-third of the residential students (35%) believed the day students were not as much part of the College as they were. However, more of them (40%) believed that the day students were fully integrated into the life of the College. Three of the four non-residential students agreed that the day students had been well integrated into the daily operations of the College. These generally positive perceptions among the students may be, in large measure, attributable to the steps the administration had taken both to provide the non-residents with the midday meal and morning and afternoon tea, and to ensuring that the day students were included in all of the College’s excursions, formal dinners, and social functions. Nevertheless, a majority of boarders (75%) did feel that the non-residents were missing out to some extent socially. Interestingly, none of the non-residents reported feeling this way.

Five girls and one boy reported that they envied the ‘lot’ of the day students, but none of the non-residents reported feeling similarly about the life of the boarder. Nine boarders said they were glad they were not day students. The non-residents judged their resident peers to be managing well in their living away from home and saw no difference, maturity-wise, between themselves and the residents. Two female and four male residents felt that the day students were ‘missing out’ on much of the out-of-hours farm work that was naturally a regular experience for the boarders. Anne, Lindsay and Syd, all resident students, reported that they were grateful that they did not have to travel daily to school. Simon, Gus and Mark, similarly, believed that they did not have the same problems of peer acceptance as did their day-school peers. Three other boarders, Kath, Simon and Chad, thought that the day students were less able to form close friendships than were the boarders.

During informal conversation with the researcher (September 2005), for instance, J Marks, a former principal of another boarding school, quoted the instance of a high-
achieving day student of a prestigious boys’ day/residential college who opted to become a boarder for his final year in order to ensure his election as school captain. Three other heads of boarding from Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia who were present at the time corroborated Mark’s observation. However, there was no evidence of any such sense of rivalry and demarcation between boarders and non-boarders at Bindoon College.

**Living Closely with Others**

The semi-structured interview proved to be more suitable than the survey as a vehicle for exploring the intensely personal issue of an individual’s experience of coeducational boarding. Because the respondents had been living together for the better part of the year, the October interview was the instrument of choice. Questions put to each of the interviewed boarders were along the following lines:

- What has it been like for you, living so closely with other people?
- What has it been like for you, living so closely with the boys/girls?
- What has it been like for you, working on the farm?
- How do you express the masculine/feminine side of your nature?
- What would Bindoon College be like if it were all boys or all girls?

Pertinent responses to each of the above questions follow.

The interviewed boarders appreciated the openness of their relationships with each other and the associated lack of pretence, and contrasted this with the atmosphere that had prevailed in the schools they had attended previously, for most as day students. While Chad’s remarks may reveal a lack of sophistication to some, they nevertheless make the point quite emphatically:

> Easy getting along with people here. You know what I mean it's got a bit of atmosphere. … [Chad next defined ‘atmosphere’ operationally as] … Hm, never been tight arses here. … Most laid back, you know? Ah um it'sss ... it's all laid back nobody's like stressing and stuff. *(Chad, 16 years 1 month)*

Lindsay, too, found that he related to the staff and his fellow students more easily than he had done at the all-boys boarding school he attended before Bindoon College:

> In the city they're more uptight and closed off than here. More relaxed [here], easier to get along with. *(Lindsay, 16 years 2 months)*
Perth girl, Ursula (15 years 11 months), echoed comments offered by a number of the female students, when she described those at Bindoon College as ‘pretty open’ and ‘no nasty things’. She added, ‘the girls back in Perth don’t live reality’, and went on to say that she experienced country kids as ‘different, more grown up, and less materialistic’. This degree of openness therefore needs to be kept in mind for the discussion of living with the opposite gender that follows.

*Living with the Opposite Gender*

Most of the students claimed they were able to confide in the opposite gender with absolute certainty that what they shared would remain confidential. This was evidently not the case with students of the same gender. When asked by the researcher if there were any boys with whom she could talk about deep matters, Sara explained:

> Yairup. You can trust them more than the girls … Because the boys will keep it to themselves while the girls would go an’ blabber it out to the whole school. *(Sara, 16 years 11 months)*

Mark was another who enjoyed good friendships with most of the girls. He also claimed he was able to talk to girls about matters he could not raise with other boys:

> basically, what's happening, and what's happening' round the school, my life and all that stuff; at home [too]. *(Mark, 16 years 5 months)*

Mark concluded this part of the conversation by remarking that the girls confided in him as well.

From the male perspective, Lindsay, who usually talked with ‘Betty’ and his group of other female friends after school and on the weekends, appreciated the antithetical/complementary aspect of the female psyche:

> Um, its been, it's been good because some of them are usually the complete opposite to you so you can get … get their views, opinions and different things. *(Lindsay, 16 years 2 months)*

Sara and several other girls reported feeling more secure when talking with boys about personal matters. For Samantha, this facility was of particular importance. She explained it thus:

> My boyfriend, he's more than a boyfriend though; he's like a soul mate definitely. Yeah, been with him here since the start of Year 9 an’ I find that it's, it's just ... you can, I can talk to him about anything. I can. He understands, he
relates back to me just things like that, that's really helped me. An' also the fact that um I dunn', it's really weird that I don't have a fatherly figure but he doesn't tell me what it would be like but he makes things clearer for me. Yeah. So he's probably the only one that's stuck by me and things like that. (Samantha, 16 years 7 months)

The boyfriend, when asked if he felt responsible for other people, indicated, without naming Samantha, what he did for his girlfriend in the following words:

... Awh, dunno you could say it. ... Not going around cheating her at all, not stuff like that. Ah ... looking after her. There's like helping, ask things, helping round. It's a hard one really. Um ... I dunno. (Laughs) Staying' with her is like um, yeah. It's like being' myself round her an' stuff like that. It is a hard question really. (Bennett, 16 years 8 months)

Bennett and Samantha’s evident regard for and mutual support of each other provides a fitting conclusion to living with the opposite gender. However, it contrasts rather sharply with the experience of a number of students when working together on the farm and in the workshop where they spent the better part of two days each week.

Working Together

Seven of the ten girls were not from farms or stations. Consequently, they perceived themselves as inexperienced, inept and disadvantaged when it came to working with the boys on the farm and in the Automotive Workshop and, as is apparent from the girls’ statements below, a number of the boys reinforced the girls’ negative views of themselves.

They [the boys] know you’re not strong enough in the arms and that stuff although you’re strong enough in the brain. (Sara, 16 years 11 months)

And, as Lara said:

It [farm work] is alright unless you get some guy who doesn’t like you an’ won’t let the girls do it because they don’t think the girls can do it good enough. (Lara, 16 years 6 months)

Bennett’s response to the question ‘What do you think it would be like being a girl on Farm Practice or at Auto?’ was:

Probably pretty challenging for ‘em ‘cause like they don’t really know much. They haven’t got the physical strength an’ in some ways mentally, the mentally [sic] strength. They just can’t do it ‘cause they haven’t got the skill that some of us males have. (Bennett, 16 years 8 months)
Bennett had the double advantage of being from a farm and having attended Bindoon College from Year 8. He continued:

In my [farm group] we do pretty good ‘cause like the two [girls] and two [boys] and we treat ’em pretty good. Dunno about everyone else how they treat them. Might treat them like dirt for they can’t do much. But some groups they might treat them equal like they can do as much as we can. *(Bennett, 16 years 8 months)*

Peggy felt that the girls were ‘left out a bit’, and John believed the boys helped the girls while admitting that the boys ‘put them down a bit’. John went on to add that the girls did not appear to be too ‘bothered’ by this. Gus, on the other hand, contradicted John when he observed that the girls became annoyed when, as part of his normal practice, he told them to ‘sit back’. Nevertheless, Gus taught a number of the girls to drive and encouraged them ‘to do stuff when they don’t think they can’. Moreover, the girls corroborated Gus’ account. Other female students, Flo and Carmel for example, thought the ‘guys [are] pretty good to girls’ while on the farm. William shared Carmel’s perspective.

When working on the farm, being told that ‘You are only a girl’ was evidently taken as a big put down by Helen. Furthermore, Hilton supported Helen’s impression when, in his October interview, he observed that this type of put down was not an isolated incident ‘most of the males kinda just reckon that the girls are on a different level, like lower than us [boys]’. Yet, Steve (a technical officer) made the point that some girls ‘show the boys up on farm’. Other staff corroborated Steve’s assertion by observing that the girls were, on the whole, better than the boys when it came to working with animals; particularly when carrying out specialised procedures such as injecting animals and conducting internal examinations of pregnant sows. The girls experienced the training officers as encouraging and affirmative and as doing their best to ensure that the boys did not discriminate against the girls or tease them unduly in the workshop or out in the paddock.

**Expression of the Masculine/Feminine**

*The Female Perspective.* When asked about the opportunities they had to express the masculine (for the boys) and feminine (for the girls) sides of their personalities, many of the students had first to ask the researcher what he meant by the question.
Once they understood, most talked at length on the matter. The girls’ responses follow.

Kath believed that opportunities where she could express and develop her femininity were limited somewhat by the fact that cooking and sewing were not taught at the Bindoon College. (She was not being sexist in this, as she saw the need for boys to learn these skills as well.) Moreover, Kath claimed that she had been able to develop the feminine side of her character by caring for her horse and the bull she was training for the Royal Show, and by having to take considerable responsibility for her younger step-brothers at home on the station. Unlike many of the girls, Helen did not see caring as gender specific: ‘if you’re caring, well you’re caring’. Flo believed that the girls exercised their femininity by ‘looking after each other’. Samantha made her room colourful and comfortable partly for herself but also for other, generally younger, girls when they came to talk. The ‘homely’ atmosphere of Catherine House (the female boarding house) allowed Sara and the other girls to relax and be themselves. Sara also said that she too found the atmosphere conducive to being able to help other girls sort out their problems. (Interestingly, several boys viewed the girls as caring for each other and their animals.) Carmel felt sorry for those girls who were ‘forever getting into arguments and all that’, noting that she had successfully counselled an Aboriginal girl who had tried to walk to Perth. When at home, Carmel had to care for younger relatives.

There were times when the girls appreciated the opportunities afforded them by the relative isolation of Catherine House to be themselves. As Anne explained:

If you wear skirt here, you kinda get ... um looked at weirdly. The guys are always complaining that we're too bush-piggish or too guyish for them but um if we ever do ourselves up, like put on skirt an' a nice top or something or put a bit of makeup on, they'll always tease us so they're just contradicting themselves really. Um up the dorm we can finally relax an' wear whatever we want an' stuff; but when we're round the guys we gotta be conscious of what we wear an' stuff like that, because we don't need as them saying stuff about us. So we jus’ wear what everyone else wears 'cause it's easier. Pair of jeans an' a shirt. (Laughs). (Anne, 16 years 5 months)

The observations of two female staff members are relevant at this juncture. Bridie, a classroom teacher, contrasted the girls’ carefully and neatly presented written work with the general untidiness of the boys’ work and viewed this as an expression of the
girls’ femininity. She also noted that the girls, more than the boys, liked to group together in the classroom and at recess and lunch.

While dress is not necessarily a way of showing one’s femininity, the girls went to great trouble to present themselves as “real ladies” on the night of the College Ball. (Penny, Staff Interview December 2000)

_The Male Perspective_. For the boys, however, exercising their masculinity was seen more as taking responsibility for their own actions, their performance in school, their personal health and well-being, and their money – all of which John summed up simply as ‘their stuff’ – especially in relation to their work on the farm. Several of the boys evidently saw themselves as ‘acting responsibly’ rather than as ‘acting caringly’ when they intervened to stop fights and to protect younger ones from being bullied. Syd and Mark had rooms adjacent to the Year 8 dormitory and played an important role in helping the young boys in adjusting to boarding school. These two lads clearly perceived themselves as being ‘men’ when caring for the youngsters. A number of boys viewed themselves as protective of the girls on Farm Practice and in the workshop. Gus, for instance, expressed his manhood essentially on the farm where he felt it was his responsibility to be ‘kind around the girls and to respect them’.

Both boys and girls adverted to the fact that they had to take personal responsibility in caring for their appearance, their health, their Medicare Card, and their Bankcard. Two claimed that they were totally responsible for managing their finances. Some of the interviewed students (more than in the Survey) believed that they had more autonomy and responsibility for their lives than did their peers in non-residential schools.

**If the Bindoon College were Single Gender**

_The Male View_. Bennett replied to the question ‘What is living so close to the girls like for you?’

Awh it's good, I like it. 'Cause like the only reason I came here was for the coed', the coeducation ... and the farm side of things. 'Cause I wouldn't have gone [to] any boy, ah straight boys' school [or]anything like that because I just couldn't stand it. *(Bennett, 16 years 8 months)*
The reason Bennett appreciated the girls was:

Awh there's good relations, a good relationship with them. Not like just your girlfriend, there's other girls an' stuff like that. There's like you learn stuff about them and things like that about the female side. (*Bennett, 16 years 8 months*)

When asked the same question, Simon replied:

... I, I don't think it's all that healthy for a bunch of young guys to be running around in just an all boys' school. We really do need girls around because we find like ... we'll sit down here some nights when the girls can't come down an' we'll be bored out of our minds. And I mean you ... just having the girls around ... you know talk to 'em an' stuff like that an' mucking around ... um it just I dunno. It just sort, we just sorta need it. (*Simon, 17 years 2 months*)

*The Female View.* The girls’ reaction to the idea of Bindoon College being single-sex was equally emphatically in favour of coeducation. ‘Shocking!’ was Sara’s immediate response, adding that ‘They’d lose too many students if it turned that way.’ Flo believed that the farm work would be more difficult for the girls without the availability of help from the boys. For Kath it would ‘suck’; for Ursula it would be ‘crap’; Helen commented that the general ambience would be ‘less mature’. As Kath explained:

[It would] probably suck. The biggest thing I can say it would suck. Because ... hmm ... you need ... you need guys to do the heavy hard physical stuff, But you can get girls to do it as well but jus' they wouldn't be able to do it to the good, the best capacity that it can be done. But you need ... Hm. I don't really know how, what I can say for that except that yeah that it wouldn't be as good as it is now. I mean there'd be a lot, a hell of a lot more fights. Um ... Phew I dunno ... fights, name calling, all that sort of stuff. It would ... it just wouldn't be good at all.

**Researcher: So you see the two complementing each other?**

Kath: Yeah, the guys help the girls around the like ... The guys help the girls when it comes to time when they need help and the girls do that in return. They help the guys when they need it. Um, like out on the farm if one of the guys is lifting somethink and can’t do that by himself and there's no other guys around he'll get a girl to help him and he'll accept it to a certain extent. And he'll be thankful for it to a cert', certain extent. And then it'll be the same in the opposite way. A girl can’t do it by herself so if there's no other girls around you could ask a guy. (*Kath, 15 years 11 months*)

Without prompting, Kath elaborated on the theme of mutual support:

Um I think a good thing with a lot of these guys at school is that if you get them by themselves they really do talk; and they talk a lot more than what they would if their mates were around. You can get them to talk and they will be nice and that's the best thing about it. An’ probably the same with girls as well. That is
they probably think the same. Just goes in a big circle. *(Kath, 15 years 11 months)*

Samantha, on the other hand was clearly ambivalent. Early in the second interview, when asked what living so closely with the boys was like, she said:

Awh, that's really good 'cause I've lived around and with males like most of my life. It's a funny one 'cause I've never had a fatherly figure in my life and being around lots of them, I can tell them things and I can trust them and it's good. I find it's excellent because if you're growing up at this stage in our lives together an' find that people that [are] at like a one sex school miss out on the communication and relationships that people have. Not necessarily boyfriend/girlfriend but general communication. That's one of the main reasons I came here. Yeah. (most of the preceding was spoken with a smile). *(Samantha, 16 years 7 months)*

Yet, when prompted to develop her answer by the question ‘How do you think the school would be if it were all girls?’ Samantha laughed and continued:

That's a funny one! Um ... It'd be, it'd be really good, we've actually spoke to this privately. It'd be really good in a way because we'd get, it'd be a lot stronger as if a lot of the girls would come of their shells an' be proud of what they do on the farm especially 'cause the guys just squash them completely. [They] just say “Awh you can't do that, that's mechanics, you're crap at it.” Um it'd be really strong an' I reckon it would do really well but at the same time ... I don't think a lot, some girls would be attracted to come here because ... there's no guys. Yeah.

**Researcher:** And what if it was all guys?

(Laughing) If it was all guys ... um it'd be a lot like *** [a school known to Samantha and the researcher] ... I think it would be pretty feral. (laughs) Yeah. I don't know really; really know much on that one. Yeah. I jus' think they'd, they'd run amok. And then when they did see girls and stuff like that they'd just treat them like a piece of meat. *(Samantha, 16 years 7 months)*

Mark’s earlier comment that he was able to ‘talk to the girls about life matters’ captures the feelings of the boys and the girls about coeducational boarding and, despite its sometimes problematic nature, it seems fair to say that the students interviewed in this study would not have it any other way.

**Student Perceptions of their Decision to Take-up the Course:**

In light of the participants’ experience of the course and the reasons they the gave for taking it up (p.32), the report moves now to an exploration of how the Year 11 students surveyed in October (Survey 2) regarded the decision they took a year
previously to embark upon the course. Question 28 was included in the October Survey to encourage the participants to reflect upon their earlier decision and to record their thoughts. Table 40 displays the responses to Question 28 and relates them to the retention of these same students into Year 12.

The majority believed that they had made the right decision, that it was their own and one that they took freely. Somewhat anomalous, however, is the fact that just one of the girls who claimed that it was her choice to take up the course returned to Year 12.

Table 4.40 Perceptions of Decision to Embark on the Course and its Completion†

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. 28</th>
<th>Female (n=10)</th>
<th>Male (n=13)</th>
<th>Total F&amp;M (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Was the right one</td>
<td>6 4 13</td>
<td>10 19 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Was my own choice</td>
<td>8 1 7</td>
<td>14 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Was made freely</td>
<td>8 1 7</td>
<td>6 10 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Will enable me to fulfil career goals</td>
<td>3 1 4 4</td>
<td>7 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Will lead to further study</td>
<td>2 0 4 4</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Is a mature decision for me</td>
<td>3 1 3 2</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Has been well thought out</td>
<td>3 1 1 1</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Was forced on me by my parents</td>
<td>2 2 1 1</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Was made immaturely</td>
<td>2 0 1 0</td>
<td>3 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Will hinder me achieving career goals</td>
<td>2 1 1 1</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Was made hastily</td>
<td>2 0 1 1</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Was the wrong one</td>
<td>2 1 0 0</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Was forced by poor results in Yr 10</td>
<td>0 0 1 0</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Was forced on me by other authorities</td>
<td>0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 and Bindoon College.

Likewise, none of the three girls who believed they had chosen freely continued into Year 12. One boy who did not complete the course admitted that poor results in Year 10 ‘forced’ him to join the vocational course. The two girls and one boy who claimed their parents forced them to take up the course continued into the second year. None had joined because of pressure from Child Welfare or other agency.

Small numbers of both genders saw the course as enabling them to fulfil career goals and articulating into further study. On the negative side, however, three felt that they had made the decision rather somewhat hastily and that it would hinder rather than assist them in achieving their career goals. Neither of the two girls who made this claim returned to Year 12.
The three girls and three boys for whom the choice was a ‘mature’ one were, to some extent, balanced by the three who experienced the opposite. Two female respondents believed they had made the wrong decision. However, the consensus (six girls and all 13 boys) was that the decision had been the right one.

The final section of the chapter examines the participants’ self-assessment of their overall management of the transition.

**Student Perceptions of their Management of the Transition Overall**

The five-item Likert scale Question 29 of the October Survey sought to establish the participants’ perceptions of how they had managed the transition overall. Table 4.41 provides a gender breakdown of the responses to Question 29. The retention of students making each response into Year 12 and their subsequent completion of the also forms part of the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 29: Overall, I believe that I have managed the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural course:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Poorly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Survey 2 and Bindoon College.*

Apparent in Table 4.41 is the fact that none of the girls considered themselves to have managed the course ‘Very well’. This may be partly attributable to the negative self-image many of them had with regard to their performance on the farm and in the workshop. Furthermore, it contrasts with the 100% retention into Year 12 of the four boys who thought of themselves as having managed the transition ‘very well’. It is also worth noting that none of respondents believed they had managed the transition ‘Poorly’ or ‘Not at all’.

The final item in Survey 2, Question 57: *Comment on how you feel you have managed the change from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course*, provided the
participants the opportunity to elaborate their answers to Question 29. Joseph and Bennett were the only two who stated that they had managed the transition well. The majority of respondents, however, interpreted the question differently and described their feelings about or reactions to specific elements of the transition. For Flo, Mark, William, Anne and Syd, all of whom had spent Year 10 at Bindoon, ‘it was just another year’; while Kath, Helen, Samantha and Gus initially found it hard. Ursula, who had spent part of Year 10 at Bindoon, thought the course had changed greatly as the year progressed. Lindsay believed his ‘habits and ways of thinking’ had developed because of his involvement in the course. Flo also was of the opinion that she ‘had advanced’ because of her participation in the course. Harry ‘enjoyed’ the course. Chad was his ‘colloquial self’ when he wrote ‘farm work rocks’. Moreover, Chad was the only student to claim that his position as a Year 11 student gave him influence and standing in the school and that his ‘social life’ had improved. Sara was the one student to say that the ‘year had made her more negative’. Finally, while acknowledging the help she was receiving from her mother and her horse, Samantha was rather cautious and needed to ‘wait and see’ before commenting on her management of the transition.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has attempted to familiarise the reader with the case by providing. Basic demographic data, including a list of the participating students by pseudonym, place of origin, residential status and age. It has shown that the ratio of one third girls to two thirds boys approximates to that pertaining in the agricultural work force and is in between that of most coeducational high schools and the single sex non-government colleges. It has also shown that the female students, in common with their counterparts elsewhere, out-performed the male students academically. It has demonstrated that the lower than average retention rate Year 11 into Year 12 is problematic for the Bindoon College.

The fact that all students joined the course because of its out-doors hands-on practical nature and the majority had planned a career in agriculture or a related industry is also worthy of note. That those least likely to complete the course were
from suburban Perth and had joined the course because they felt they were in need of a break from home is also worthy of note.

Most residential students had adjusted well to boarding school but that did not prevent them from missing family and friends. Friendships were important and the friends they made at boarding school were extra special.

Students who did not complete the course perceived themselves as making more personal sacrifices than those who successfully completed the two year course. Counter intuitively, the introverted and those who saw themselves as neither introverted nor extraverted were more likely to complete the course than those who perceived themselves as extraverted. A relationship with an animal, particularly the horse, helped a number of female students to cope with the transition from Year 10 and to successfully complete the course.

The students believed that they had ample opportunity to develop the masculine/feminine aspects of their nature and while most saw some advantages were the Bindoon College a single gender college, they were, nevertheless, strongly in favour of it remaining coeducational., and finally, independently of whether they completed the course or not, all believed that the decision to join the course was the right one for them.

Chapter 5 proceeds to examine in detail the strategies that the students used to deal with the problems of:

- Difficulties with other people.
- Loneliness and low spirits.
- Difficulties with the academic program.
- Difficulties on the farm and in the workshops.
Introduction

Chapter 4 described the case in terms of the students’ ages, gender, places of origin and personal connectedness with the land and how these compared with the State’s Year 11 population at the time. It also examined a range of personal characteristics of the students and how these appear to have influenced retention. Of interest were family structures, the students’ perceptions of boarding school life, feelings about their previous school performance, their reasons for joining the course, their management of it, and the residential experience.

While Chapter 4 identified the issues and challenges the students had faced since embarking on the course and the new way of life away from home, the present chapter examines the strategies the students have used in their efforts to manage the problems associated with their transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon College. Of most concern in this regard were the challenges arising from:

- Difficulties with other people.
- Loneliness and low spirits.
- Difficulties with the academic program.
- Difficulties on the farm and in the workshops.

Coping with Other People

For some students, the relative isolation, the small numbers and the mainly residential character of Bindoon College provide a haven that the large comprehensive city boarding college is unable to. On the other hand, these same characteristics have the potential to make it difficult for different personality types to
avoid clashing. Tom, who was unable to complete the course on account of illness, exemplifies the problem. When interviewed at home six months after he had left Bindoon, he explained the major difficulty he experienced as a residential student:

Not being able to have my own space - that was a pretty big thing I didn't like being around people all the time. Sometimes I just wanted be by myself. That was pretty hard there. 'Cause um if you wanted to go off for a walk somewhere you couldn't go by yourself so. The only time I could have by myself was sort of in my room. And even then you're not by yourself all the time. So that was probably the hardest thing. (Tom 16 years 3 months)

Extent of the Problem

Question 26 therefore sought to determine the extent of the problem and listed a number of coping strategies that the participants might use when ‘having difficulties with other people’. Table 5.1 lists the strategies and the numbers who responded. Furthermore, in an attempt to determine if there were any association between the employment of a particular strategy and completion of the course, the retention Year 11/Year 12 data are included in Table 5.1. Each of the strategies listed in Table 5.1 will be considered in turn.

Table 5.1 Strategies used to Manage Difficulties with Other People and Retention Year 11 to Year 12†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. 26. When I have difficulties with other people, I:</th>
<th>Female (N=10)</th>
<th>Male (N=13)</th>
<th>Total F&amp;M (N=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. Distance myself from them and approach later</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Go off by myself until I have calmed down</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Confide in a friend and ask what I should do</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Tell my friends how bad the other person is</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Call the other names and abuse them verbally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Spend the time with my horse, cat or dog</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Get physical with the other person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Ask a teacher or other adult for help</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Pray about the matter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Steal, wreck or graffiti the other person’s gear</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 26 and Bindoon College.

Distancing

Distancing one’s self from the person, only to approach them later, was the most commonly used strategy and it would appear, for the male cohort in particular, a most ‘productive strategy’ (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.18).
Seek Solitude

The second most popular strategy was to go off alone until calm. Frydenberg and Lewis would regard this as unproductive if the person simply left the matter there. However, for some like Anne and Tom, time alone was very important for their well-being and these students were appreciative of their friends’ sensitivity to their need for solitude, as Anne said, ‘Most of us can tell if someone wants to be alone’. Ursula offered a similar view, ‘If you really want, the other kids will let you alone, if you really want to be.’ And Gus, when confronted by the not-so-perspicacious, rather bluntly told them to: ‘Leave me alone’.

Confiding in a Friend

Confiding in a friend and asking that person for advice is another of Frydenberg and Lewis’ (1993) productive strategies that was used by seven girls and four boys. Again, while fewer boys than girls admitted to employing the strategy, its use was more strongly associated with retention Year 11 into Year 12 for the boys and is consistent with Tinto’s 1987 findings on the role of friendship in enabling students to adjust to life in a residential setting.

Spending Time with Pet

The association between retention into Year 12 and spending time with one’s pet illustrates the effectiveness of this strategy for those students who need this outlet.

Name-calling and Detraction

Eighteen students used the two unproductive strategies, name-calling and detraction. For the girls, it was more gossipy detraction than name calling and their response substantiated the girls’ earlier admission that they confided more in the boys than among themselves. And to a lesser extent this was true of the boys. Half of the boys (7/13 or 54%) who admitted to resorting to the unproductive strategy of name calling (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.18) and four of these seven (58%) did not continue to Year 12.
**Physical Violence**

Not one of the girls reported ‘getting physical’ with the other person and this contrasts with the interview data, where a small number of girls said that, as a last resort, they ‘thumped’ any boys who persisted in teasing them. On the other hand, of the four boys who claimed to have resorted to violence to settle differences, just one returned to Year 12.

**Seeking Professional Help, Prayer and Damaging Property**

These behaviours are grouped together because so few students claimed to have used them to manage their difficulties with other people that it is impossible to claim any association with retention into Year 12. However, the one boy who sought help from a teacher did return and completed Year 12. According to staff, stealing or damaging another’s property is more likely to be prevalent among students considerably younger than the current group and was, as one might have expected, not a behaviour reported by the these students.

**Loneliness and Low Spirits**

When young people are required to live away from home, one might assume that many will experience periods of acute loneliness and low spirits. Indeed, a number of students did broach the matter during the second interview. Tom, for instance, put the problem poignantly:

> Sometimes if I was getting a bit depressed, you know, or something because I was away, I'd just try and do something to take my mind off it. Anything! Didn't really matter what it was. Just something that would try and put it in the back of my mind. Sometimes I'd play my guitar because I had that there. Or just mess around with mates, that kind of thing. Just try and keep busy. (*Tom, 16 years 3 months*)

**Prevalence of Loneliness**

Question 2a of the October Survey sought to establish the number of students who reported having experienced times of loneliness or homesickness since joining the course. Table 5.2 summarises their responses. Clearly, most students claimed that they had been lonely and in low spirits for part of the time. Among these, it was only
for the girls that non-continuance appeared to have any association with the experiencing of loneliness and low spirits, as four of the eight girls who claimed they were ‘frequently’ or even ‘occasionally’ lonely in Year 11 did not continue with the course, whereas four of the five boys who made a similar claim completed the course.

Table 5.2 Extent to which Loneliness and Low Spirits were Experienced and Retention Year 11 to Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female N=10</td>
<td>Male N=13</td>
<td>Total N=23</td>
<td>Female N=10</td>
<td>Male N=13</td>
<td>Total N=23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. 2a. When I am at school, I experience feelings of loneliness and low spirits:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Occasionally</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Frequently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Survey 2 Question 2a and Bindoon College.

Strategies Employed to Overcome Loneliness and Low Spirits

Question 24 of the March Survey and Question 2b of the October Survey listed a number of strategies, which it might be assumed students would employ to overcome periods of loneliness and low spirits. A second assumption was that the respondents were likely to employ different or additional strategies as the year progressed. There was space in both surveys for them to offer additional comments. Table 5.3 compares the data from both surveys. A discussion of the coping strategies listed in Table 5.3 follows.

Playing Music

For most, ‘playing my music’ meant listening to tapes and CDs. However, Tom and a couple of other boys had guitars and found strumming them to be helpful. None of the girls played an instrument, yet as the year progressed, an additional two girls ‘listened to their music’ but four fewer boys did so. There appears to have been an
association between playing music and completing the course for the boys, as 80% (4/5) of those who played their music returned to Year 12, while for the girls it seems not to have been the case as their retention was 40% (2/5).

**Table 5.3 Strategies Employed to Combat Loneliness and Low Spirits†**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy employed to combat loneliness and low spirits</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=10</td>
<td>N=13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play my music</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a friend and talk to him/her</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone a friend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go for a walk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time with my horse, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do art, draw, read, write poetry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write stories and letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go and find something to do</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time alone</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive car</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to bull</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage property</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 24, Survey 2 Question 2b.
††Three male students who left mid-year not included.

**Talking to a Friend in Person**

The importance of friendships in combating loneliness is illustrated by the fact that 46% of the population (12 students) sought out a friend when feeling lonely or dispirited, although by October this had fallen to 35%. The table also reveals that relatively more girls than boys used the strategy. However, the retention rate based on the October figures for those who adopted the strategy was 88% (7/8). Again, based on the October figures, relatively more girls (40%) than boys (31%) talked out their problems with a friend, an observation supported by the interview data.
**Telephoning a Friend**

The strategy was more important for students in the early stages of the transition when 40% of the girls and 46% of the boys admitted to phoning a friend when ‘out of sorts’. A possible explanation of the fall in numbers, from ten in March to four in October, claiming to use the strategy may be that the students had succeeded in establishing friendships from within the group and that their continued use of the phone was not to combat loneliness.

**Telephoning Home**

The extent to which this strategy was used was not assessed by the March Survey. At the time of the second survey in October, 40% of the girls and 23% of the boys had made use of it. The associated retention rate was 100%.

**Watching TV**

Watching TV is part of Frydenberg’s and Lewis’ (1993, p.21) productive strategy, *Seeking relaxing diversions*, although for some it may reflect a conscious effort to block out the problem, in which case it becomes unproductive and would be classed by Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) as *Ignoring the problem*. Six students admitted in March to watching TV and five of them did not complete the course. As the year progressed, the use of TV to combat loneliness and low spirits had fallen to the point that by the time of the October Survey only one student (a girl) reported still using this strategy.

**Go for a Walk**

Going for a walk is a strategy that may come under two of Frydenberg and Lewis’ conceptual groupings of coping behaviours (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.18). On the one hand, walking may provide the opportunity for the person to focus on the issue and keep physically fit, thereby enabling the person to cope with the problem. On the other hand, walking might be construed as avoiding dealing with the problem. The low frequency use of this strategy can be accounted for in part by the fact that, for reasons of safety, students were generally not permitted to go on solitary walks.
The number is too small (3/23) for any meaningful association with retention into Year 12 to be inferred.

Pray

From the point of view of the clearly proclaimed religious and spiritual character of the College, it is noteworthy that none of the respondents admitted to resorting to prayer when feeling lonely or dispirited. However, this response appears to be consistent with the fact that no-one gave ‘the Catholic nature of the school’ as a reason for joining the College (Survey 1 Question 22g) and the individual student coping profiles are characterised by a very low use of the strategy Seek spiritual support. As part of further research into the use of the Adolescent Coping Scale as a predictive tool and associated changes in an individual’s profile during adolescence, the author administered in February and September 2003 the general form of the Scale to the Year 11 and Year 12 classes. The resulting individual and class profiles indicated that the Year 12 students of 2003 sought Spiritual support to a much greater extent than had the class of 2000. However, the usage of Spiritual support among the Year 11 2003 cohort was similar to that of the Year 11 2000 cohort. In the matter of resorting to prayer in times of difficulty, the study cohort (Year 11, 2000) appeared to be similar to the Year 11 cohort of 2003, but was different from the Year 12 class of the same year.

Free Responses

Other strategies reported by small numbers of individuals were: do art, draw, read, or write poetry (2 students), write stories and letters (3), go and find something to do (2), spend time alone (3), drive (2), talk to bull (2), and damage property (2). Although the numbers adopting particular strategies were small, they were sufficiently important for the individuals concerned to have mentioned them. However, unlike the more frequently used strategies, playing music for example, there was little association with retention into Year 12.

Spending Time with Horse, Dog, Cat or Other Pet

Apart from their horses, the students are not permitted to bring a pet of their own to
the College. Since the boarding houses do not have dogs, cats or birds the only animals that residents can relate to while at school are the horses or cattle that they groom and train to lead for shows and field days.

*The Horse*

The existence of the Pony Club of Bindoon College set it apart from the member schools of the WA College of Agriculture. Students were able to bring their horses to the school, or use one belonging to the school, to take part in recreational riding as well as formal instruction. A Cattle Club operated along similar lines except that all the stock belonged to Bindoon College. Item h Question 2b of the October survey required the respondents to indicate if ‘spending time with my horse, dog, cat or other pet’ was a strategy they employed to overcome periods of loneliness and low spirits. Four students (all girls) said they spent time with their horse and three of the four completed Year 12. The relationship that often develops between a young girl and her horse can be extraordinary. It is perhaps best left to Kath, Helen and Samantha to explain. When asked about the highpoints of the year, Kath who had serious family problems, replied:

> Getting my horse here. That's been ... probably the biggest bit ... that's been the best! Getting my grades higher in Equine studies which is good and I really want, wanted that to be better. And to get better because I was a bit down in the beginning of the year. (*Kath, 15 years 11 months*)

Helen, while talking about her plans after leaving school and her determination to succeed, noted that she hoped to go on to further formal study in agricultural journalism:

> [I intend to go to] Muresk. Then live on my property. Well I'm getting a property up there soon, live on there for a while with my horses. And get a job, journalism after Muresk. Travel around Australia doing journalism and then when I've got enough money settle down with my horse property ... [which] me Dad's going to buy. It's like an investment thing. And I'm just going to live on there with horses. ... (Almost laughing) I'm pretty determined and I dunno, just find different ways of doing it. (*Helen, 15 years 7 months*)

Samantha, an outstanding student, who was struggling to come to terms with the demands the staff placed on her to achieve and, simultaneously, with the attempts of her peers to reduce her to their level, had this to say:

> Yeah, and keeping me horse here. (Laughs) Having me horse here. He's a big challenge; specially 'cause he's only really young. But at the same time he
listens to me and he talks to me and he's a really good company (Laughs)
Yeah! He tells me when I'm doing the wrong thing to him or around him.
(smiling) But his facial expressions and his body language. He's always
willing and always wants to help me out and if I've got a problem I don't know
[about] he laughs at me an' makes me laugh and he's just silly. (Laughing) He's
good. Yeah! (Samantha, 16 years 11 months)

What is it then about the horse that elicits such devotion and empathy on the part of
the young people involved? Samantha would have us believe that it is her horse’s
unique ability to relate to her by reflecting her mood. In a personal communication
with the author, veterinary surgeon Dr Donald Tynan supports Samantha’s and the
other girls’ remarks. He expands them thus:

1. The horse is a powerful large animal that can be controlled by a smaller
person, of modest physical strength, to wit, a female adolescent or younger.
This degree of control is rare elsewhere at these ages.
2. There is entry into the cult of equitation, pony clubs, dressage, hacking, stock
work, with the prospect of: success, awards, results, external achievements,
affirmations.
3. A progression is available if natural and acquired training and gift is pursued,
but generally the interest declines at life stages, boys, mobility increases.
4. Granted that, the horse cult is mobile, travels, shares transport, cooperates, all
girlish joys and welcome.
5. The horse itself has character, affection, safety, nonsexual, sensuality, and
responsiveness.
6. To own an animal is to experience natural process, functions, grooming,
nutrition and physiology, all of interest.
7. A certain preference for equitation distinguishes [girls] from boys who
generally are more utilitarian in attitude to horses. Their strength and speed
appeal, over fine control.
8. Many feelings are expressed by girls based on their love of their particular
horse, and this is good.
9. Male folklore has it that girls enjoy riding their horse in some vague sexual
fashion, about which I do not know.
10. The costs of owning a horse and budgeting thereto are a learning experience
of value to an owner.
11. I have seen much grief expressed over horses, diseases, injuries, often
extravagant to adult, but a great introduction to loss and grief; boys
characteristically stoic, whatever is repressed.
12. Acquiring animal husbandry/veterinary knowledge is value.
13. Summing up, for a girl the experience of a horse is affirming, educational, a
socialising factor, and confidence builder. Parents are willing to pay for this
unique experience. Owning a dog comes a poor second. (Tynan 2001)

In their end of year interviews, three female and two male staff independently added
to what Tynan and the students have said about their relationship with their horses.
Stanley, a member of the farm, staff who has an interest in the horse program, volunteered the following observation about the boys:

Samson and David often sit down in the yards an' talk to their horses. ... By themselves when they think no one is looking because it's not a macho thing to do. ... But you'd be surprised how many of them on the quiet get away. They don't like to be perceived as doing it but a lot of them do. (Stanley, Staff Interview December 2000)

Moreover, Stanley agreed with Tynan’s assertion that the horse is responsive to the owner’s moods. He went on to make the point that the horse is the only animal that can ‘actually take you to work; unlike a dog which you have to take to the job.’ Vera (Residential House Mother, Interview, January 2001) claimed that so special is the relationship that some girls develop with their horses that ‘the girls are prepared to go hungry themselves rather than have their horse miss out.’

Other Animals

Occasionally, female students will develop a relationship with an orphan lamb which they bottle feed and they become distressed when it is returned to the mob. However, feeding the orphan lambs is a group activity and the relationship experienced by individual students with a lamb is usually not as intense as it typically is with a horse. Membership of the Cattle Club does afford the opportunity for a student to develop a close relationship with a large and powerful animal. There is a body of anecdotal evidence, from Bindoon College and Royal Agricultural Society staff, of female student trainers becoming highly upset when the steer they have trained and paraded at the Show is taken away to be slaughtered and judged ‘on the hook’.

Difficulties with the Academic Program

The initial purpose of this section of the study is to establish the extent of the experience and, secondly, to examine the strategies which the students employed to overcome the difficulties they were encountering in the academic side of the program. Furthermore, because the way the matter was put to the students in the March Survey differed from that of the October Survey, each set of data is treated separately.
The March Survey

Question 25 of Survey 1 addressed the matter as follows:

This Question asks what you do when you have difficulties with your school work. Tick three (3) boxes that best describe what you do in this case.

Table 5.4 Strategies Employed to Manage Problems with Academic Work†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 1 Q. 25 When having difficulties with my school work, I:</th>
<th>Female N=10</th>
<th>Male N=16</th>
<th>Total N=26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Bottle it up and tell no one</td>
<td>2 1 5 5 7 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ask a teacher for help</td>
<td>7 3 11 5 18 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ask a friend for help</td>
<td>5 4 14 8 19 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Get angry and verbally abuse</td>
<td>2 0 4 4 6 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Get angry and physically abuse</td>
<td>0 – 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Get angry an trash or graffiti property</td>
<td>0 – 0 – 0 –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Work harder; try to solve problem by myself</td>
<td>6 3 10 5 16 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Do nothing and hope it goes away</td>
<td>2 1 1 1 3 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Pray about the matter</td>
<td>0 – 0 – 0 –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Go for a horse ride</td>
<td>0 – 1 0 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 1 Question 25 and Bindoon College.

Table 5.4 records the students’ responses to Question 25 and their retention into Year 12. The large numbers who utilised the productive strategies of asking for help and working harder and the relatively small numbers who made use of non-productive productive coping behaviours are features of the Table. Moreover, the tendency of boys and girls to work harder and try to solve difficulties by themselves may be consistent with the higher retention rate of the more introverted personality types (Figure 4.19).

Another feature of Table 5.4 is the small number of students who resorted to the unproductive or counterproductive strategies of anger, doing nothing, resorting to physical or verbal abuse and damaging property.
The October Survey

The rapid emotional, intellectual, social and physical development of fifteen-year-old students over the course of a year had to be allowed for in the design of the research. In this regard, one purpose of the second survey was to document the development that occurred. In order to assess the development of and/or possible changes in the coping behaviours adopted by the students during the year, the October Survey adopted a more detailed approach to identifying and quantifying the difficulties they may have encountered during the year.

The Extent of Student Experiences of Difficulties with the Academic Program

Table 5.5 records the numbers of students who admitted to having experienced difficulties with the academic part of the program, and the corresponding numbers that continued from Year 11 into Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. 4a Tick the box that applies to you:</th>
<th>Female N=10</th>
<th>Male N=13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never or rarely experience difficulty with theory. Go to Question 5</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>7 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have times of difficulty or frustration with theory. Go to Question 4b</td>
<td>9 5</td>
<td>6 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 5 and Bindoon College.

The data indicate that more of the girls were experiencing academic difficulties by the time of the October survey than had been the case at the time of the March survey. As it happened, four of the girls who were experiencing academic difficulties did not continue into Year 12.
Table 5.6 Strategies Employed when Experiencing Difficulties in Classroom†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order your three (3) most common behaviour patterns, using 1 for the most frequent.</th>
<th>Female N=9</th>
<th>Male N=6</th>
<th>Total N=15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=12</td>
<td>N=12</td>
<td>N=12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Bottle it up and tell no one</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>6 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ask a teacher for help</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>4 3</td>
<td>7 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ask one of my friends for help</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td>9 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ask a study supervisor for help</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Get angry and verbally abuse other people</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>6 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Get angry and physically abuse others</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Try to work out the problem for myself</td>
<td>5 2</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td>8 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Phone my parents</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Pray about the matter</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>0 −</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Do nothing and hope the problem goes away</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>1 −</td>
<td>1 −</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Gives other people cheek</td>
<td>0 −</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>1 −</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 4b and Bindoon College.

Table 5.6 lists the coping behaviours of the 15 students who admitted to having experienced difficulties with the academic part of the program. Where respondents identified more than three behaviour patterns, only the first three were recorded. Moreover, since a number of respondents did not order their answers as the question requested, the table does not reveal the relative importance the respondents may have attached to the different strategies.

May and October Compared

When the responses to Question 25 of Survey 1 (Table 5.4) are compared with those to Question 4b of Survey 2 (Table 5.6), there is little difference. In both instances, considerable use was made of the productive strategies of asking for help and working harder in an attempt to solve a problem. On the negative or unproductive side, the numbers who kept the problem to themselves were virtually unchanged, although there was an increase in the number who resorted to verbal abuse. Another positive to emerge from the data is the low frequency of anti-social behaviours.
The Most Enabling Strategy

Question 4c required the respondents to identify the strategy that enabled them ‘to cope best’ with difficulties they encountered in their school work. Table 5.7 contains their responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.7 Effective Strategies in Coping with Classroom Problems†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work out problem for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a friend for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Teacher for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone parents or friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing hoping problem recedes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give cheek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 4c.

From the students’ point of view, the most effective coping behaviours were ‘trying to work out the problem for oneself’ and ‘asking for help from a friend or teacher’. The first four strategies listed in Table 5.7 fit Frydenberg and Lewis’ (1993) model of effective coping behaviours and were associated with 70% retention into Year 12. On the other hand, ‘Doing nothing’ and ‘Giving cheek’ are categorised by Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) as ‘unproductive’. Neither of the two students who engaged in these behaviours returned to Year 12.

Reasons for Effectiveness of Strategies Listed in Table 5.7

The explanations the twelve students gave for the strategy they nominated as having enabled them to ‘cope best’ are summarised in Table 5.8.

<p>| Table 5.8 Reason for Strategy’s Effectiveness, and the Associated Retention Year 11 to Year 12† |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for strategy’s effectiveness</th>
<th><strong>N=12</strong></th>
<th><strong>Completed Year 12</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends help to understand each other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps the person to stress less</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking enables a solution to be found</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The phone call to a friend clarifies the issue</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 4d, and Bindoon College.
The first of the responses listed in Table 5.8 indicate an association between friendship and retention. This is suggestive of the importance of friends in helping these students in their adjustment to the demands of the course.

*Self-Perceptions of Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program*

Table 5.9 records the students’ self-assessments of their coping with the work in the classroom.

**Table 5.9** Self-assessment of Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Course and Associated Retention into Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 5. At the present time, I believe that I am coping with the classroom work:</th>
<th>Female Year 11 (N=10)</th>
<th>Male Year 11 (N=13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Extremely well</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Quite well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Satisfactorily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Borderline coping/not coping</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Not coping</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Survey 2 Question 5, and Bindoon College.*

The students’ self-assessment of their coping with the academic aspects of the course was undertaken in October as part of the second survey in order to give the students time to settle into the program. That none of the students saw themselves as coping *extremely well* with the academic parts of the program was, given the strong preference the students had for the hands-on and out-doors, was to an extent expected. The one female student who believed she was doing *quite well* was Samantha who went on to become Dux of the College in 2001 as well as taking out the majority of the individual; subject awards. The fact that relatively fewer girls than boys viewed themselves as coping quite well with the academic aspects of the program may be another example of the girls’ propensity to put themselves down vis-à-vis the boys.
Factors Perceived as Enabling Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program

Question 6 of Survey 2 was a free-response item which required the participants to ‘write down what it is you believe that enables you to cope with the class work’. Table 5.10 summarises the students’ replies.

Table 5.10 Coping Strategies that Help Students and Retention Yr 11 to Yr 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 2 Question 6. Reflect upon your answer to Question 5 ... Write down what it is that you believe enables you to cope with the class work.</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Student's background knowledge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Parents and school friends help student cope</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Having my horse here helps me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Doing things one at a time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The ability to relax and then return to task</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Obtaining average marks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Following a plan enables student to cope</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Trying to see the other's point of view</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Possessing a will to learn</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Being resigned to school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Survey 2 Question 6 and Bindoon College.

Analysis of Table 5.10 reveals that seven of the 18 Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993) strategies, including five of the 11 productive strategies (denoted P below), were used by the group. These were:

- (P) Social Support (student response b above).
- (P) Investing in Close Friends (response b).
- (P) Seeking a Relaxing Diversion (responses c and e).
- (P) Work Hard and Achieve (responses a, d, h and i).
- (P) Focus on Solving the Problem (response g).
- Ignoring the Problem (response j).
- Not Coping (response j).
Factors Perceived as Inhibiting Coping with the Academic Aspects of the Program

The reasons the three students gave (Table 5.10) for ‘borderline coping/not coping’ or simply ‘not coping’ in answer to Question 7 are shown in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Reasons for not Coping with the Academic Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 2 Question 7. You have answered (d)</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>or (e) to Question 5. Reflect on your answer …</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Data Source: Survey 2 Question 7, and Bindoon College.</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>N=2</td>
<td>N=5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The person is too occupied with the personal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The volume of work is too much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Lack of free time adds to the pressure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Poor quality teaching adds to my problems</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I do not want to do class work. I made the wrong choice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Person finds theory boring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individualistic nature of the responses to Question 7 makes it difficult to generalise from the data in Table 5.11. However, the administration may be pleased to learn of the small number who attributed their lack of coping to factors over which the College may be in a position to exercise some control, namely: poor teaching; work overload; and ‘boring’ lessons. From the students’ perspective, only one attributed his not coping to having made the wrong choice. This supports their claim that their decision to join the course had been a mature one and right for them.

Difficulties on the Farm and in the Workshops

This section establishes first the frequency of students’ experience of difficulties on the farm and in the automotive workshop and then records the behaviours employed to manage the reported difficulties. The effectiveness or otherwise of these behaviours in enabling the student to manage a problem are also considered. In addition, comparisons are made between the students’ coping in these practical subjects with their management of problems in the classroom.
Participants’ Coping with Farm Practice, Automotive Workshop, and the Academic

Figure 5.1 compares the Year 11 students’ perceptions of their coping in Farm Practice, Automotive Workshop and their academic subjects (the Classroom).

Compared with the academic, the distribution of the students’ ratings of their performance in Farm Practice and Automotive Workshop (Figure 5.1) was consistent with their clearly expressed preferences for the out-of-doors and the practical. However, the previously noted tendency for the girls to underrate their performance is apparent.

**Personal Qualities that Enabled Students to Cope with Farm Practice**

Question 13 of the October survey invited those who had claimed in Question 12 that they were coping ‘Satisfactorily’ to ‘Very well’ with Farm Practice to reflect on the personal qualities they believed had enabled them to cope with the subject. Table 5.12 records their responses.

The broad interpretation which the respondents placed on the word ‘personal’ as including persons other than the self had not been envisaged at the time the item was formulated. However, the fact that 86% of the students attributed their ability to cope with farm work to the quality of the instruction they received, and two boys attributed it to the ‘helpful staff’, is something the administration and staff may be
pleased to hear. The importance of the ‘hands on’ in having enabled the students to cope is evident from Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Qualities which Enable Participants to Cope with Farm Practice†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 2 Q. 13. Personal qualities which enable students to cope with Farm Practice. Write your answer in the space below</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Excellent instruction helps person cope</td>
<td>6 13</td>
<td>4 10</td>
<td>19 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Enjoyment of subject because hands on</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>7 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Quick to understand and capable</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. From station and employs previous knowledge</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Helpful staff enable person to cope</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Being an extravert enables person to cope</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Willingness to learn enables person to cope</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Farm Practice has helped girl overcome shyness</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Love of outdoors</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Learning new skills helped person to cope</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. FP has helped boy to relax and then to cope</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Not being afraid of the sight of blood</td>
<td>0 –</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 13 and Bindoon College.

Prior knowledge and previous farm experience, quick understanding and willingness to learn are personal attributes, rather than specific strategies, which small numbers of students perceived as having helped them to cope with Farm Practice. For two students, it was the therapeutic nature of farm work itself that enabled them to relax or overcome shyness, thereby allowing them to cope.

Factors that Inhibited Coping with Farm Practice

Table 5.13 collates the reasons the students gave for the difficulties they were experiencing in Farm Practice.
Table 5.13 Difficulties Experienced in Coping with Farm Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number N=4</td>
<td>Number N=0</td>
<td>Number N=4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Lack of farming experience</td>
<td>3 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The person is not given a second chance</td>
<td>1 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 14 and Bindoon College.

None of the boys reported having had any difficulties with Farm Practice. The three girls who did reported difficulties with Farm Practice were from suburban Perth. Moreover, the girl who claimed she was denied a second chance to demonstrate her competency in specific farm skills was also from the city. None of these girls continued on into Year 12.

**Facilities Development**

Facilities Development (a subject discontinued in 2002) had a large practical component. It consisted of a number of workshop activities, including, inter alia: welding, basic wood working, bricklaying, concrete work, fencing, and building maintenance. There was, however, a considerable classroom component to this subject.

**Student Perceptions of their Management of Facilities Development**

A six point Likert scale (Question 18e, Survey 2) was used to assess the students’ perceptions of their coping with Facilities Development. Figure 5.2 presents the students’ ratings of their performance. The distribution of coping assessments for Facilities Development is similar to that shown previously for Farm Practice and Automotive Workshop, although fewer students placed themselves in the highest category for Facilities Development.
The classroom component of Facilities Development was more extensive than it was for Farm Practice and Automotive Workshop, which may account for the larger numbers shown for this subject in the ‘Borderline coping/not coping’ and ‘Not coping categories’.

As noted previously, the majority of students found Facilities Development easy, relative to Farm Practice and Automotive Workshop, and that this poorly resourced subject had failed to meet their expectations. Nevertheless, as Figure 5.2 indicates, the majority of students saw themselves as coping well with the subject.

*Factors Helping Students Manage Facilities Development*

Table 5.14 records the positive responses to Question 19 of Survey 2 which required the students to select from a list the factors they believed helped them to cope with Facilities Development.

From the boys’ points of view, the principal factors contributing to their effective management of Facilities Development were: their ability with their hands (69%), their hard work (38%), their love of welding (38%), and their liking of the subject (31%). Three boys (23%) acknowledged a connection between Facilities
Development and farming and claimed that this helped them to manage the subject.

**Table 5.14** Attributions of Success in Facilities Development and Retention Year 11 to Year 12†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 2 Q. 19. Tick the boxes that apply to you. The reasons I am coping with Facilities development are:</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I like Facilities Development</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td>7 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I like the teachers</td>
<td>4 1</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I see its importance for my career</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I have been lucky to get tasks that I can do</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I am good with my hands</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>9 6</td>
<td>12 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. I work hard</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>6 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. The subject is an important part of farming</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td>4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. The students are cooperative</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r. I love welding</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>6 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Survey 2 Question 19 and Bindoon College.

By and large, the factors listed in Table 5.14 were positively associated for the boys with completion of the course.

For the girls, the personal factor of liking the teacher (40%) was the one most frequently acknowledged as having enabled them to cope with Facilities Development. However, it was not associated with retention into Year 12. Fewer girls (30%) than boys (69%) claimed that their ability with their hands had enabled them to cope with the subject. One girl expressed a liking for welding. The association between the factors perceived by the girls as having helped them to cope with Facilities Development and completion of the course was as pronounced as it was for the boys.

*Factors Impeding Coping with Facilities Development*

Table 5.15 records the negative response to Question 19 of Survey 2 that required students to select from a list the factors they believed were making it difficult for them to cope with Facilities Development.
Table 5.15 Factors Hindering Students’ Coping with Facilities Development, and the Associated Retention Year 11 to Year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey 2 Q. 19. Tick the boxes that apply to you. The reasons I am not coping with Facilities development are:</th>
<th>Female N=9</th>
<th>Male N=13</th>
<th>Total N=22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. I don't like the teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. It has nothing to do with my career</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. I am no good with my hands</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Too much other work that is more important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Too much emphasis on safety procedures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. The kids muck around</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. I do not work hard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. The teachers are useless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q. I am afraid of some machines</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. There are insufficient tools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t. The tasks are trivial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u. I don't want to do it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Facilities Development is not part of farming</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x. I am not interested in Facilities Development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Data Source: Survey 2 Question 19 and Bindoon College.

The personal is evident in the girls’ responses, 40% having attributed their difficulties with Facilities Development to not liking the teachers, whereas for the boys, this was not an issue. Lack of interest in the subject by five of the girls (50%) was shared with four of the boys (31%). However, dislike of teachers was not associated for the girls with failure to return for Year 12 and complete the course as four of the five girls returned to Year 12. For the boys, two of the four did not return for Year 12 and, thereby, complete the course.

Three girls cited poor behaviour of other students as the reason for their own inability to cope. This was an issue for only one boy. Half (5/10) of the girls saw the subject as unrelated to their career, and two of the five returned for Year 12 and, subsequently, completed the course. For the boys, 31% (4/13) blamed the lack of tools for their difficulties in coping, but all four completed the course. The low retention (40%) of those who viewed the tasks they were given as ‘trivial’, and the
fear of machines admitted to by three of the girls, are two matters that the
administration may wish to consider.

Summary of Chapter 5

In making the transition from Year 10 to the senior residential course in agriculture
at Bindoon College, the students have been challenged in ways that differ, if not in
kind, then at least in extent, from the challenges faced by the majority of their high
school peers who do not have to change schools to begin their post-compulsory
education. Survey and interview data have been used in the present chapter to:

- Identify four key areas that were problematic for most of the students.
- Determine the extent of the problems experienced.
- Examine the strategies that the students employed to deal with the
  problems.
- Examine the personal qualities which the students claimed had helped
  them to cope.
- Attempt to assess the effectiveness of the above strategies/personal
  qualities for these students.
- Identify associations between the use or non-use of a strategy or quality
  and the cohort’s completion of the course.

Problematic areas. For most students, there were just three areas that were
problematic, namely: their relations with other people, loneliness and low spirits and
the academic parts of the course. Difficulties with the farm work and in the work
shop were problematic for some students, but they were not as great as were the
problems in the other areas.

Extent of the problems. The research has shown that virtually all the students
experienced periods of loneliness and low spirits. There were also times when they
found other people difficult to get along with and found difficulty with the academic
aspects of the program. Relatively few had problems with the practical side of the
program.

The strategies used by the students to cope with the above problems. When forced
to deal with loneliness and low spirits, the strategies used most were: talking over the
problem with a friend; telephoning home; and playing music, either records or an
instrument. Where the difficulties were with other people, the most frequently used strategies were the above plus distancing oneself from the person until they had calmed down. The use of destructive self defeating behaviours was very limited.

The most effective strategies. As one would expect, these varied according to the problem being addressed. For problems associated with others, the most frequently used and the most effective in terms of retention were: distancing oneself from the person/persons causing the problem; going off by oneself; and confiding in a friend. When feeling lonely or in low spirits the solutions were: Playing music: finding a friend; telephoning family or friends; and spending time with one’s pet. For difficulties with the academic and the practical aspects of the program it was a variety of things that helped people cope. Things such as: liking the teachers; liking the subject; excellent instructors; being well organised; and following a plan.

The next chapter reports on the use of the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) to examine in detail the coping strategies employed by the Year 11 2000 Bindoon College students. Specifically, it discusses:

- The development of a computerised relative coping profile for each student.
- The identification of an appropriate control for comparative purposes.
- The construction of representative ‘type’ relative profiles that characterise and differentiate the students who continued into Year 12 and those who did not.
- The potential for the ACS and the relative profiles generated from it to identify, early in the first year of the two-year course, students at risk of not continuing into Year 12.
CHAPTER 6

COPING PROFILES

The first phase of the research described the case in terms of the students’ ages, gender, places of origin and personal connectedness with the land and compared these with the wider Year 11 population at the time and also with the nation’s agricultural workforce. It further examined family structures, perceptions of boarding school life, perceptions of previous academic performance, reasons for joining the course, the management of it and the residential experience.

In reporting on the second phase of the research, Chapter 5 examined the strategies that students employed to meet the challenges arising from: difficulties with other people, loneliness and low spirits, difficulties with the academic program, and problems on the farm and in the workshops. The present chapter deals with the final phase of the research which employed the Adolescent Coping Scale (ACS) and Microsoft Excel™ to generate relative coping profiles for each student.

In construction of these relative profiles, the 18 ACS strategy scores of the individual are compared within Excel either with the corresponding scores of a suitable control student or with the corresponding pooled scores of a suitable control group. For predictive purposes, the relevant control would be either a student who had successfully managed the transition to Year 12 or the pooled scores of the entire group that had returned for the second year of the course.

These relative profiles are then used to demonstrate the diagnostic potential of the ACS to identify early those who are at risk of not returning for the second year of the course.
The Computer Generated Relative Profile

The content, the credentials and the place of the ACS in the research were detailed in Chapter 3. That chapter also provided an example of a manually generated student profile (Figure 3.6). In addition, Figure 3.7 foreshadowed the use of Microsoft Excel™ to construct a relative profile in which a subject’s scores on the ACS are compared with the scores of a control group or individual. In the present chapter, Figure 6.1 develops and explains the key features of the computer generated relative profile.

### Figure 6.1 Key to Interpreting Computer Generated Relative Coping Profile.

Some information on the reliability of the ACS is included below. This is followed by a series of actual student and group profiles based on the template of Figure 6.1. These profiles use the ACS scores of the students in the Year 11 2000 cohort and information obtained subsequently about their continuation or non-continuation into Year 12. These profiles demonstrate the usefulness of an individual student’s relative profile for both diagnostic and predictive purposes.
The Reliability of the Adolescent Coping Scale

To indicate the stability over time (a parallel-group test-retest reliability) of the ACS, Figure 6.2 is a relative profile that compares the aggregated scores of 643 students from suburban Melbourne (Frydenberg and Lewis 1993, p.39) with the aggregated scores of 829 students of similar age and background six years later (Frydenberg and Lewis 1999b). The 1999 group is the nominated control in this instance.

Figure 6.2 indicates that there was very little difference between the coping behaviours of the two groups compared, supporting Frydenberg and Lewis’ (1993) claims of the reliability and stability on the instrument over different groups and on different occasions.

Bindoon College Cohort Compared with Group from Suburban Melbourne

Figure 6.3 compares Bindoon College students’ use of the 18 ACS coping strategies with that of the Melbourne control. The following discussion looks at each of the ACS coping styles, namely, Reference to Others, Productive Coping, and Non-Productive Coping.
Reference to Others

Figure 6.3 indicates that, when compared with the Melbourne control, the Bindoon College students were less likely to ‘seek social support’ in order to help them deal with problems. The Bindoon students sought a balance, with a more extensive undertaking of ‘social action’. Both the Melbourne control and the Bindoon students sought ‘professional help’ to a similar degree.

That the cohort made less use of ‘seeking spiritual support’ than did the control may reflect the fact that no student who was enrolled in the course gave as a reason the fact that Bindoon was a Catholic school (Figure 4.15) and, moreover, none admitted to praying in times of difficulty. However, further unreported research by the author (Donohoe 2004) has shown that both the 2003 and 2004 Bindoon College Year 11 classes employed that strategy to a greater extent than did the Melbourne control. It appears, therefore, that in the matter of prayer the present cohort differs from other Bindoon College cohorts.

![Figure 6.3 Relative Coping Profile: Bindoon Cohort v Melbourne Control (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000).](image)

**Productive Coping**

Compared with the Melbourne control, the Bindoon College cohort used the
‘productive coping’ strategies consistently less. Moreover, this behaviour pattern does appear to be characteristic of the Year 11 cohort in 2000, as both the 2003 and 2004 Year 11 classes used the productive strategies to the same or slightly greater extent than did the Melbourne control (Donohoe 2004).

**Non-productive Coping**

When it comes to coping effectively with life’s problems, the consistently lesser employment of the ‘Non-Productive’ coping strategies by the Bindoon College cohort distinguishes it from the control group and, in the context of coping overall, most likely balances its lesser use of the productive strategies.

**Gender: Girls v Boys**

Figure 6.4 compares the Bindoon College female cohort and the male cohort, with the male cohort serving as the control.

![Figure 6.4](image)

**Figure 6.4** Relative Profile of Bindoon Females (N=10) v Bindoon Males (N=13).

The greater use of the coping style ‘Reference to Others’ by the girls appears to be consistent with the coping behaviour reported for teenage girls in general. For example, Edwards and Poston-Anderson in a study of the ‘Information Needs and
Life Concerns of Australian Adolescent Girls’ report that over 75% of the girls (N=28) in their interview sample from suburban Melbourne admitted to talking with another person when they were worried about something (Edwards and Poston-Anderson 1993).

While Figure 6.4 indicates a tendency on the part of the boys to work harder, to relax and to seek to belong, this is offset by the girls’ willingness to seek social support, to work hard at solving a specific problem, to relax a little more than the boys, and to focus on the positive. The net result of this is that there was little overall difference between the genders in their use of the productive coping style.

For the non-productive coping style, however, the gender difference was quite marked, suggesting that the boys were less likely to engage in wishful thinking, to worry, or to simply ‘not cope’. Surprisingly, given the popular stereotype of the 16-year-old boy, the Bindoon male cohort reported having resorted less than did the girls to the use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, changing their eating and sleeping habits, and taking their frustrations out on others as a means of coping. The boys also tended to blame themselves less readily than did the girls, and were less likely to have kept the problem to themselves. Noteworthy is that just 50% (5/10) of the girls completed the course, whereas 77% (10/13) of the boys in the cohort did. Figure 6.4 is suggestive of an association between over-reliance on the non-productive coping strategies and not completing the course within this cohort.

**Relative Profiles: High Achieving Student v Low Achieving Student**

Figure 6.5 uses the suburban Melbourne control to generate a relative profile of Steve, a well-adjusted Bindoon College student who was coping very well with most aspects of the program and who ultimately completed the course.
Steve’s profile suggests that coping well need not involve high-frequency use of the accepted productive coping strategies; rather, it would appear that it is a relative avoidance of non-productive coping behaviours that was important for his successful coping.

Coping Style of a Student who did not manage the Transition Successfully

Ursula, a generally talented student, was finding it difficult to relate to staff and meet the demands of the residential side of the program. Ursula’s relative profile is shown in Figure 6.6. It employs the Melbourne control. Ursula’s employment of the productive strategies was somewhat inconsistent, in that she did not seek social support to the same extent as did the control, yet she did turn to friends and sought more to belong than did the control. Her extensive use of social action may have been related to problems she was having with the administration (interview data) and the residential element of the program. It may also reflect the strength of her friendship group (interview data). However, it was her extensive use of the non-productive coping behaviours that set her apart from the control, and from Steve, who was coping well.
Figure 6.6 Relative Profile of non-coping and non-completing Ursula v Melbourne Control (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000).

The differences between a student who was coping well and one who was not are highlighted in Figure 6.7, where Ursula’s and Steve’s coping tendencies are compared – in this case with Steve serving as the profiling control for Ursula.

Figure 6.7 Relative Profile of Ursula who did not cope well v Steve who coped very well.
Again, it is in Ursula’s excessive use of the non-productive coping behaviours that appears to provide the most likely explanation for her inability to cope. A pattern such as this is what Frydenberg and Lewis (2000, p.6) have referred to as the ‘overpowering effect’ of the non-productive style on the ‘success of coping’.

Finally, Figure 6.7 illustrates the effect that one’s choice of the control or profiling reference can exercise on the appearance of the relative profile, as Ursula’s seemingly excessive use of the non-productive strategies is far more evident in Figure 6.7 (Steve as control) than it is in Figure 6.6 (Melbourne cohort as control). This suggests that it would be important in any future use of the relative profiles in the Bindoon College context to establish as soon as possible a database of ACS scores for students who have completed the course, and to use this information to provide a locally relevant control.

It will come as no surprise to the reader that Steve completed the course and that Ursula did not. Accordingly, Figure 6.7 might thus equally be entitled ‘Completion of the course v non-completion’.

The following section is devoted to the ‘overpowering effect of the Non-productive style’ (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000, p.6).

Profile of Students who Completed the Course v Students who did not

Figure 6.8 compares the averaged profile of those Bindoon College students who completed the course with that of the Melbourne control. Similarly, Figure 6.9 compares the averaged profile of those who did not complete the course with that of the Melbourne control.

The tendency among students who completed the course (Figure 6.8) to have eschewed the use of non-productive strategies lends support to Frydenberg and Lewis’ (2000) observation that the principal determinant of success (or perseverance) is a consistent avoidance of any significant use of unproductive strategies.
Figure 6.8 Averaged Relative Coping Profile: Students Completing Course v Melbourne Control (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000).

Because three of the 11 students who did not complete the course had left mid-year, the aggregated relative profile for the non-completers shown here in Figure 6.9 is based on eight students only.

Figure 6.9 Relative Profile of Students not Completing Course v Melbourne Control (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000).
The lesser use overall of the ‘reference to others’ and ‘productive’ styles of coping characterises the five girls and three boys who did not complete the course. However, unlike those who successfully completed the course, their use or otherwise of the seven non-productive strategies shows a pattern approaching that of the Melbourne control.

Use of the Three Coping Styles by Successful and Unsuccessful Students

In order to enhance the construct validity of comparing directly the profiles of those who did not complete the course (non-graduates) with those who did (graduates), it is helpful to examine in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.10 the extent to which graduates and non-graduates adopted each of the three coping styles. For the 2000 cohort, graduates and non-graduates ‘referred to others’ and employed productive coping strategies to a similar extent. However, the students who completed the course resorted to the non-productive coping strategies to a lesser extent and it is this difference that is revealed when the coping profile of a non-graduate student or group is compared with the profile of a successful student or group.

The group of graduating students from the 2003 cohort made considerably more use of reference to others and the productive strategies than did those not completing the course. More importantly, from the point of view of this study, they too made measurably less use of the non-productive strategies than did those who failed to complete the course. While the difference was not as large as it was for the 2000 cohort, it was still sufficiently large to be detectable in the group and in individual

### Table 6.1 Graduate and non-Graduate Use of Three Coping Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Coping Style</th>
<th>Graduates Mean group total score for each of 3 coping styles</th>
<th>Non-Graduates Mean group total score for each of 3 coping styles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 11 2000</td>
<td>Reference to Others</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productive Coping</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Productive Style</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11 2003</td>
<td>Reference to Others</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productive Coping</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Productive Style</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Data Source: Bindoon College.
Figure 6.10 presents for each of the three coping styles the distributions of individual scores of students who made up the Year 11 cohort in 2000.

![Figure 6.10](image)

**Figure 6.10** Use of Three Coping Styles by Completing and non-Completing Students.

It is clear that for ‘Reference to Others’ and the ‘Productive’ style there is very little difference between those who completed the course and those who did not. However, in the case of the ‘Non-Productive’ style, there is a discernable difference between the successful and the unsuccessful. This confirms the feasibility of using the group profile of those who completed the course as a control when the focus is primarily on the students’ tendency to be over-reliant on the non-productive strategies.

**Comparative Group Profiles: Course-Completers v non-Completers**

As can be seen from Figure 6.11, when the strategy use typical of those who did not complete the course is compared directly with the characteristic usage pattern of...
those who did complete the course, the excessive use of the non-productive strategies becomes apparent.

![Figure 6.11 Relative Profile of Bindoon Year 11 2000 Students not Completing Course v Students Completing the Course.](image)

Figure 6.11 compares the students in the Year 11 cohort of 2003 who completed the course with the students of that cohort who did not complete it. While the over-reliance on the non-productive style by the ten non-completing students is not as pronounced as it was for the non-completers of the 2000 cohort, their over-reliance on the non-productive strategies is still evident.

The Effect of the Control on the Appearance of the Profile

To illustrate further the effect of the control on the graphical representation of a relative coping profile, Figures 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15 employ three different controls in constructing a profile for Helen, a capable student who did not complete the course. Helen was a ‘city girl’ whose overall coping style, when compared with her Melbourne peers, gives only a slight indication that she was experiencing difficulty in managing the transition from Year 10 and was therefore unlikely to complete the course. However, when Helen’s coping style is plotted against the aggregated scores...
of her peers who subsequently completed the Bindoon College course at the end of the next year, the resulting picture (Figure 6.14) is rather different.

![Figure 6.12 Relative Profile of Year 11 2003 Students not Completing Course v Students Completing the Course in 2003.](image)

The advantage in using as control the group of Helen’s Bindoon College peers who had been ‘successful’ in the course is clearly evident in Figure 6.14. Here Helen’s dependence on the unproductive coping style shows through more obviously than in Figure 6.13, where the control group offered a less intuitively meaningful comparison.
Figure 6.13 Relative Profile of non-Completing Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Melbourne Control (N=168).

Figure 6.14 Relative Profile of non-Completing Year 11 2000 Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Members of Cohort Completing the Course.

The control used in Figure 6.14 is relatively small. Figure 6.15 uses a larger control created by adding to the students of Figure 6.14 the 19 successful students in the Year 11 cohort of 2003.
In Helen’s case, enlarging the control in this way preserved the overall contour of the profile in that her over-reliance on non-productive wishful thinking, tension reduction and self-blame are retained and are more evident than when the Melbourne group is used as the control (Figure 6.13).

![Figure 6.15 Relative Profile of non-Completing Student Helen v Aggregated Scores of Students Completing the Course in 2001 and 2004.](image)

It would appear that if Bindoon College were to administer routinely the ACS at the students’ point of entry into Year 11, it would be advisable to build a ‘rolling’ database over successive years containing the scores of all graduates who had completed the course. The requirement that it be a ‘rolling’ data base for which, after three or four years, the oldest set of figures each year were to be deleted, would ensure that the control group remains as close to the test sample as practicable, whilst simultaneously guaranteeing a comparison base of sufficient size and relevance.

**Non-Completion of Course because of Employment**

Not all students who withdrew from the course after the first year did so because of an inability to cope. Harry, for instance, succeeded in gaining an apprenticeship and, understandably, did not return to Year 12. Had the apprenticeship not been available
it is almost certain from his strong performance in the course to that point that he would have continued successfully into Year 12. Harry’s relative profile is shown in Figure 6.16.

![Relative Profile of Harry, Apprenticeship 2001 v Course Completers 2001 and 2004.](image)

Harry’s extensive use of the productive strategies sets him apart from the other students who did not complete the course and who left for reasons other than work or other study. Although Harry evidently did engage in wishful thinking, tension reduction and blaming himself, he presumably counterbalanced this by his extensive use of the productive strategies.

**Validation of the ACS-Based Relative Profile as a Predictive Instrument**

To confirm the feasibility of using the computer-generated relative profile to identify students whose coping styles put them at risk of not completing the course, the 23 ACS-based computer-generated relative profiles for the Year 11 cohort in 2000 were identified by a four-figure number. The control in each instance was the aggregated and averaged profile of the 15 students who completed the course. Ten adults (teachers and educational administrators from inside and outside the College), who did not know the students, were briefed separately on the ACS, on the key structural
features of the computer-generated relative coping profiles, and on what they should look for in assessing the implications of what an individual relative profile reveals. Next, they received printed copies of the 23 profiles and were invited to sort them into three categories:

- Those indicative of a sound coping style and the prospect that the students concerned would likely complete the course.
- Those that gave no convincing basis either way for assessing the students’ likelihood of completing and thus for whom completion would be doubtful.
- Those that indicated sufficient over-use of the non-productive strategies, suggesting that the students concerned were unlikely to complete the course.

Figure 6.17 contains the results of the assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Completed Course</th>
<th>Doubtful</th>
<th>Did Not Complete Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6.17 Predictive Validity of Relative Individual Coping Profiles: Summary of Ten Independent Predictive Assessments.**

The 87% predictive success rate and small number of false positives in the ‘Completed Course’ category of Figure 6.17 indicates that, in most instances, the assessors found little trouble in interpreting correctly the profiles of the students who completed the course and placing them in the correct category. By comparison, the relatively large number of false negatives in the category ‘Did Not Complete Course’ may be accounted for by the fact that five students who actually completed it made such extensive use of the non-productive strategies that their profiles were very similar to the profiles of non-completing students. Consequently, the resulting
predictive success rate for this category was 51%. Overall, then, the data in Figure 6.17 confirm the predictive validity of the relative comparative profile as used in this research. Part A of Appendix D contains the profiles of all students of the 2000 cohort who completed the course. The profiles of those who did not complete the course comprise Part B.

In Practice

The researcher’s proposal for Bindoon College is that it should consider administering the ACS to the incoming Year 11 students as part of the annual orientation camp held during the second week of Term 1. If implemented, the proposal would take the following format:

- A group session where the students are given the opportunity in small groups to reflect upon and to share their perceptions of the challenges they have faced in coming to Bindoon College, of what it means ‘to cope’, and the ‘things’ (strategies) that enable them to cope. The session would conclude with an outline of the ACS similar to that contained in Figures 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4.

- Towards the end of the two-day orientation or upon their return to school, the students would: complete the ACS instrument; be given time to score their ACS answer sheets; and construct personal ACS non-comparative profiles using a prepared template (see Figure 6.18). The students would be encouraged to retain their completed profiles as personal records for later reference.

- The guidance officer or counsellor would collect the original score sheets and construct for each student a personal computer generated relative profile, the control in each case (for this first year of profiling) being the averaged usage scores of those who had completed the course in 2001 (the existing records available for the 2000 cohort) and those who had completed it in 2004 (the existing records available for the 2003 cohort).

- The individual relative profiles would be examined and those students whose profiles suggested an over reliance on the non-productive strategies would be counselled and helped to adopt a more productive coping style, along the lines suggested by Seligman (1992). (It would be important at this point to interview all students in order to: (a) avoid singling out or implying any slur on those whose profiles indicated they might have trouble completing the course; and (b) provide at the same time an opportunity to reassure those whose profiles suggested that their coping style was basically sound.

- Around the middle of the year, on the students’ return to school after the mid-year break, the ACS would be administered a second time to give all students an opportunity to reassess their coping behaviours and outcomes in the light of their mid-year report.
• The students would again be encouraged to prepare a personal non-comparative profile on the original template (or a fresh one if preferred) and to look for evidence of any changes that may have occurred over the intervening months.

• Subsequently, during individual interview sessions, the school’s guidance officers would review the students’ coping styles with them as well as the students’ awareness and appreciation of their particular styles.

Figure 6.18 Proforma for Hand Generated Personal Student Coping Profile.†  
†After Frydenberg and Lewis (1993).
It is important to recognise that the data from this limited study have not provided evidence that could confirm or imply a clear causal relationship between students’ relative profiles and their eventual completion or non-completion of the course. Nevertheless, if used in conjunction with careful monitoring of student behaviour, performance and attitude, it is clear that the relative coping behaviour profiles described here do have potential in the Bindoon context for identifying students at risk of not completing the course.

**Use of Relative Profile to Document Changes to Students’ Coping**

The computer generated relative profiles described in this chapter may be used also to highlight and document changes in individual student’s characteristic coping strategies over time. For instance, if an individual’s scores from his or her first attempt are used as the reference (or ‘control’), the student’s scores from a second completion of the ACS could be displayed as a relative profile showing changes in the student’s strategy usage that have occurred over the interval. Figure 6.19, for example, illustrates the changes that occurred in Ben’s coping over the eight months from his course commencement in 2003 to September of that year.

![Figure 6.19 Ben: Relative Profile to Show Change in Coping February to September 2003.](image)

199
When the data are presented as they are in Figure 6.19, it a simple matter for the profiled student, in conjunction with the counsellor, to examine, reflect upon and interpret any changes in the pattern of coping strategies over time.

**Summary of Chapter 6**

This chapter has helped to further characterise the case by revealing that, when compared with a group of students from Melbourne, the Bindoon students who successfully completed the course had apparently compensated for their less frequent use of the productive coping strategies by refraining, for the most part, from resorting to non-productive coping behaviours (Figure 6.3).

Most importantly, Chapter 6 has illustrated, with actual data from the Bindoon case, a procedure for developing relative coping profiles for individual students that appear to have considerable potential as diagnostic tools for identifying students at risk of not completing the transition from Year 11 to Year 12. Chapter 6 has also demonstrated how comparing an individual’s or group’s use of the strategies with that of an appropriate control highlights directly the extent to which the individual or group is over-using or under-using a particular strategy relative to its frequency of use by the chosen control. (The Microsoft Excel™-based software used in generating the relative profiles is available to the College for future use. The worksheets used for the purpose are ‘protected’ against inadvertent overwriting by the user and the profile construction process is fully automated by pre-entered formulas. The user, after first determining in each case which set of scores is to serve as the control, simply enters the pairs of scores on the columns provided. The graphs are generated in real time from the embedded formulas.)

The following chapter provides a consolidated review of the findings from the case study as a whole and offers, for possible consideration by the School Board and the school’s leadership team, a number of recommendations for making effective use of the Adolescent Coping Scale and this study’s relative profiling methods as a diagnostic tool and a basis for early-intervention for students who may appear to be at risk of failure or premature withdrawal.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

A major problem faced by the Bindoon College administration in the first decade of its life (1995-2005) has been the overly large proportion of students who do not return for the second year of the Senior Agricultural Course. In addition to continuing its efforts to stabilise the Year 11 enrolments, two further challenges facing Bindoon College at the commencement of its second decade are: (1) the raising of the school leaving age to 16 years, and (2) the adjustments the staff and students will have to make to the new curriculum originating from the Post Compulsory Review of Education and mandated by the Government of Western Australia and, for Catholic schools, by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia.

From an agricultural college perspective, the most challenging element of the reform is the proposed telescoping of four previously separate subjects (Plant Production and Marketing, Animal Production and Marketing, Small Business Management and Enterprise, and Farm Practice) into the single, externally examined subject Agricultural Science.

Of all the Western Australian senior secondary schools and colleges, the vocationally orientated agricultural colleges are, arguably, the best placed to meet the needs of those sixteen-year-olds – especially those with out-of-doors or rural inclinations - who previously might have elected to leave school after Year 10 and who, under the new arrangements, now would be facing an additional, unwanted year of schooling. With the correct marketing strategies and the appropriate pastoral care programs in place, the potential is there for the agricultural colleges to increase significantly their enrolments from this group of students.
In light of the above challenges, it is appropriate to draw the report of this study to a close by considering two hypothetical coping vignettes - one that characterises the typically successful student and a second profile that is representative of students who did not complete the course. In addition to illustrating the disparate coping styles of successful and unsuccessful students, these vignettes collate the principal findings of the study. The final sections of the chapter outline the special nature of the research and its contribution to the field of knowledge of students in transition from junior secondary to senior secondary schooling, and the use the Bindoon College administration may wish to make of the instrumentation and findings and of the study.

Carlos: Vignette of the Typical Successful Student

Carlos came from a farm in the central wheat belt of Western Australia and entered the Senior Agricultural Course from the Bindoon College Year 10 class of the previous year. His grandparents on his mother’s side were retired station people.

He was aged 15 years and 10 months when he took up the course at Bindoon which made him some six months older than average of the Western Australian Year 11 cohort as well as six months older than his fellow classmates who did not complete the course. Carlos’s chances of completing the course at Bindoon were enhanced slightly by virtue of the fact that he was a male. Somewhat counter intuitively, Carlos, his fellow introverts, and those who regarded themselves as neither introverted nor extraverted, were more likely to complete the course than those who perceived themselves as extraverts.

Carlos’s love of wide open spaces and preference for the practical made it very difficult for him to spend all day in the classroom. At the time of his taking up the course at Bindoon College, he was planning a future in agriculture or a related industry or, perhaps, an apprenticeship in diesel mechanics, although he had not ruled out further studies in Agriculture at TAFE. Carlos came to Bindoon College because he perceived the course to be ‘hands on and practical’. He learned of the College from two friends, recent Bindoon graduates, who were from farms close to where he lives. Carlos attended Bindoon College Open Day in the year prior to his entering and it was the quantity and quality of the work on the farm, coupled with the
opportunity to bring his horse and undertake the Equine Industries program that tipped the scales in favour of Bindoon College. That Bindoon was a Catholic school had no bearing on his choice of school. He was also adamant that he did not take up residence out of any feeling that he needed to have a break from home.

Ensconced in Bindoon, Carlos found himself making new friends and relating well to the opposite gender. He was able to share confidences with the girls and was sure that they would not break that confidence. Likewise, his female friends said the same about him and the other boys. He also believed he exercised his masculinity when he helped the girls on the farm and in the workshop and when he cared for the Year 8 boys. He was comfortable with the discipline in the boarding house, the standard of meals and the shared accommodation, although there were times when he felt the need for greater privacy.

Carlos attributed his success in academic and the practical subjects to interest, hard work, to the quality of the instructors and the quality learning experiences. Moreover, he believed he was able to manage the separation from friends and family that the residential aspect of the course demanded. Likewise, Carlos adjusted to the loss of his part time job and to the restrictions on his participation in local sporting and social activities that residing at Bindoon College normally entails.

When feeling lonely and in low spirits, Carlos sought solace in music and friends and generally employed productive coping strategies in dealing with the problem. He was convinced that his decision to undertake the Senior Agricultural Course at Bindoon was indeed the right one for him.

Figure 7.1 is a constructed profile that highlights the relative abstinence from the non-productive coping behaviours that was characteristic of students, such as Carlos, who successfully completed the course and set them apart from the majority of those who were unsuccessful or who had great difficulty in completing the course.
Peta: Vignette of the Typical Unsuccessful Student

In contrast with the girls and boys who completed the two years of the course and graduated with the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and at least one Level 2 TAFE Certificate, Peta, the archetypal unsuccessful student, left the course at the end of Year 11 for reasons other than gaining an apprenticeship or suitable employment. Naturally, Peta also left without the WA Certificate of Education and without a TAFE Certificate.

Peta came directly into Year 11 from a metropolitan high school rather than from the Bindoon College Year 10 or from a rural situation. Importantly, she was four months younger than Carlos and other successful students of either gender. Peta had fewer connections with the land than the majority of her peers who subsequently completed the course and she experienced difficulties in acquiring new friends. Peta was one of a group of students who took up residence at Bindoon College because it provided them with a legitimate reason to take a break from home. However, joining the course for this reason is associated with not completing it and Peta was no exception in this regard.
Although she classed herself as an extravert, Peta found it difficult to make new friends. She also admitted in the surveys and interviews that she was missing her friends in Perth ‘heaps’. Unlike a number of the girls who successfully completed the course, Peta had no interest in horses nor was she a member of the Cattle Club. She was worried that she had not adjusted as well as some of her classmates to the loss of her weekend job at the local bread shop.

In common with Carlos and all other members of her cohort, Peta was attracted to Bindoon College and the Senior Agricultural Course because of a strong preference for the hands on and the out-of-doors. She claimed that the Year 10 Home Economics class at her ‘old school’ had not given her all the time that she required away from the traditional classroom-based courses of study. The mix of classroom and practical at Bindoon College therefore suited her. Unlike her male counterparts but in common with most of her female classmates, Peta attributed her success in the practical subjects to the way she related to her instructors and to good luck rather than to her ability.

![Figure 7.2 Constructed Relative Coping Profile of a Typical Unsuccessful Student.](image)

As the year progressed, Peta became part of a group of girls that was in conflict with the boarding house staff and the school Principal. She was finding it increasingly
difficult to fit in with the requirements of the residential program and was missing her friends in the city increasingly as the year progressed. It was these problems that ultimately decided her not to return to Year 12. Instead, she took up a position at the local supermarket.

Figure 7.2 is a constructed profile typical of a number of students, such as Peta, who did not progress to Year 12 and complete the course. When it came to the use of reference to others and the productive coping behaviours, there was little to distinguish Peta’s coping style and profile from that of Carlos and many successful students. However, it was Peta’s tendency to worry excessively and to wish things were better as well as blaming herself when things went wrong, not to tell anybody about the difficulties she was experiencing, trying to make herself feel better by crying and sneaking in the odd smoke or two, coupled with simply ‘giving up’ that aligned her coping style with that of a number of her friends, male and female, who failed to complete the course. In other words, it was her excessive use of these non-productive coping behaviours that set her and a number of other non-successful students apart from Carlos and the majority of successful students who made markedly lesser use of these non-productive coping strategies.

**Issues for the Bindoon College Administration**

*Identification and Helping of Students at Risk of not Completing the Course*

An ongoing problem for the College Administration has been the relatively large numbers of students who do not complete the two year Course. The present study has shown that, with the use of an appropriate control, the students’ scores on the Adolescent Coping Scale may be used reliably to identify those entering students who are at risk of not finishing the course for reasons other than gaining an apprenticeship or other suitable employment.

As noted previously, in order to make best use of the ACS, and the profiling software developed for the study, it is suggested that the school administer each year the general form of the ACS to each new cohort of Year 11 students as early as possible in Term 1. After the students have hand-scored themselves on the ACS, Bindoon College would produce for each student a computer-generated comparative profile,
using an appropriate control group’s average ACS scores as the reference. In the first year, the relevant control would be the aggregated and averaged commencing ACS scores of the successful students from the Year 11 intakes of 2000 and 2003. This information is readily available from the retained records of this study. In subsequent years, it would be advantageous to add, year by year, the commencing ACS records of each new cohort of successful completers, thereby building progressively a larger and increasingly more reliable reference comparison.

Once the students have received their comparative profiles, they would be assisted to interpret them in one-on-one consultation with an appropriate adult such as a careers adviser or school counsellor. Students whose comparative profiles indicate minimal use of the non-productive coping strategies would be encouraged to continue or develop further their use of the productive strategies. Students whose coping profiles indicate that they have a dysfunctional style of coping may be helped as part of the pastoral care program to adopt a more productive style.

That it is possible to improve a young person’s coping strategies and skills has been amply demonstrated in the literature. Martin Seligman, for instance, in his *Learned Optimism* (Seligman 1992) and *The Optimistic Child* (Seligman 1995), has shown how improved coping behaviour can be taught and learned, and a number of Australian researchers have applied Seligman’s work in developing programs to enhance adolescents’ coping skills. Among these are: *Enhancing Coping Resources in Early Adolescence through a School-Based Program Teaching Optimistic Thinking Skills* (Cunningham, Brandon & Frydenberg 2002); *Teaching Coping Skills: Implications for Practice* (Huxley, Freeman & Frydenberg 2004); and *A Curriculum Based Approach to Teaching Resilience*, (Noble 2005). While especially valuable for students whose coping behaviours are dysfunctional, it is anticipated that all entering students would benefit from participation in such programs if they were to be implemented with the Year 11 entering cohorts each year. Making the experience available to all might also help to counter any negative perceptions or pejorative labelling that might otherwise emerge were only the demonstrably ‘at risk’ students to be targeted.

For the program to be maximally effective, regular follow-up work involving the student, the counselling staff and periodic updating of the students’ comparative
profiles would be highly advisable. For example, re-administering the ACS at the start of the second semester, generating fresh comparative profiles, and scheduling follow-up counselling sessions would ordinarily be helpful, particularly if the discussions with the students were to focus on comparing their new profiles with their earlier ones, looking especially for evidence of change and positive development.

Use of the ACS Prior to Taking up the Course

The question has been asked, ‘Why not have the students sit the ACS prior to entry?’ The author advises against this on the following grounds.

- A number of potentially successful students may be discouraged by having to sit such a test and possibly see no difference between the ACS and instruments intended for other purposes, particularly those designed to test a person’s academic ability.
- To administer the ACS as part of the entry ritual or protocol would be out of context and may well yield a profile that differs markedly from that which is obtained once the student has committed to and is engaged in the course.
- Thirdly, the present research makes no claim that there is a direct ‘cause and effect’ relationship between a person possessing a particular profile and that person completing or not completing the course. To use the student profiles in this way would therefore be both invalid and unfair.
- And finally, to use the instrument to exclude students would be contrary to the Bindoon College Mission Statement which, inter alia, commits it ‘to the education of disadvantaged students who would benefit from the College program’.

Impact of Contact with Animals on Student Coping

In assisting students to cope, it is important not to overlook the value of the Equine Program and the beneficial relationship that frequently develops between students and their horses and, albeit to a lesser extent, the similar bond that may occur between members of the Cattle Club and the animals they train.

The Out-of-Doors, the Practical, the Delivery of Content and Student Coping

The interview and survey data have shown that, to a person, the students joined the course largely because of their preference for the out-of-doors and the practical and their self-perceived inability to spend all day in the classroom. Furthermore,
anecdotal evidence suggests that subsequent cohorts have similar preferences. The above should therefore encourage the Administration to continue its moves to make the senior school program and time table as far removed from the typical school time table as possible. It may even be worth its while to consider adopting a lecture/assignment style of content delivery and assist the students with their assignments in small tutorial groups.

**Peer Support**

The survey and interview data have also indicated that the ability of students to establish friendships and good relations with their peers is associated with their completing the course. Consequently, students may find it helpful if this fact were brought to their attention during the pre-enrolment interview, as part of the orientation process, and in subsequent counselling sessions.

**Changes to the School Leaving Age**

There is a legitimate expectation on the part of Bindoon College, that the raising of the school leaving age to the end of the year in which a young person turns 16 may provide the College with additional enrolments for Year 11, as the curriculum with its mix of the academic and the practical should appeal to a number of these students who would have in former times left school. However, such enrollees may leave at the end of Year 11 and Bindoon College might want to look at a terminal Year 11 program for such students. The increase in Vocational Education offerings at virtually all senior high schools and colleges may result in the market for these students becoming so highly competitive that relatively small numbers will be attracted to the agricultural colleges. The situation is further complicated by the proposed lifting of the school leaving age to 17. In the event of this occurring, the Bindoon College retention of students Year 11 to Year 12 may improve and the Administration be faced with increasing numbers of young people who would prefer not to be at school. A possible way for Bindoon College to be proactive in meeting the above challenge, should it eventuate, would be for it to consider adding a School-Based Apprenticeship Program to its list of Senior School options.
The New Curriculum

In planning for and implementing the new courses of study when Agriculture becomes a single course with an external examination if students are to achieve at the highest level, Bindoon College will have to work assiduously and creatively to ensure that the program maintains its present balance of half practical/outdoors and half classroom based if it is to continue to serve the needs of the majority of its students. In the longer term, it may need to consider adding Year 13 and adopting the model of the Australian College of Agriculture Queensland to offer Level 3 Certificates in Agriculture and related subjects rather than the Western Australian Certificate of Education.

Opportunities for Further Research

A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Coping

So far as the present author can ascertain, there appears to have been few longitudinal studies that have employed the ACS to chart the changes that may occur in individual adolescents’ coping behaviours as they progress from Years 8 through 12. The relative isolation of Bindoon College and the small Year 8 intake of 30 students would simplify the implementation of the study which may be conducted along the lines of Frydenberg’s (1997) work on coping in the family. It may also be a pilot for a larger study.

The Horse as a Means of Coping

While the study has touched upon the unique relationship that may develop between adolescents, girls in particular, and their horses and the theme popular in novels and art, there appears to be room for a review of academic writing on the subject; and possible further research on the special relationship that develops between the horse and its youthful owner that is so enabling for the latter.

A More Representative Study of Student Coping in Residential Schools and Hostels

The current study was based upon a small sample of residential students in an
atypical school and, consequently, cannot be taken as representative of the total spectrum of residential facilities that cater for senior students of high school age. A larger study using the ACS to document the coping strategies employed by students from the large single sex city boarding schools to the smaller country high school hostels attached to regional high schools may provide a picture of student coping that boarding house supervisors may find helpful.

\textit{Differences in Coping Behaviours of Country and Urban Youth}

The phenomenon of country students not doing as well in the Tertiary Entrance Examinations as their peers from the city is well documented and popularly attributed to a lack of appropriate school facilities together with a preponderance of inexperienced teachers. A study, employing ACS to document and compare the coping strategies employed by both groups of students may help to add a further dimension to our understanding of the problem.

\textit{Transition from Year 10 to Year 11}

In many ways, the career orientated decisions students have to take regarding choice of subjects and future career paths are among the more important life decisions Year 10 students have to take. And yet, while schools, the web and even universities provide vast quantities of information and advice to young people and their parents about choice of subjects and the career paths that a particular subject choice opens up to them, there is very little available about how Year 10 students actually arrive at their final choice and how they live with the consequences of their choosing. The researcher believes there would be value in an extensive in-depth qualitative study on the way young people manage the transition from Year 10 to Year 11.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT - CORRESPONDENCE

12 February 2000: To P Bothe Principal CAC Bindoon
   
16 February 2000: To P Bothe
   
17 February 2000: From P Bothe
   
14 February 2000: From Researcher to Parents
   
   Parental Consent Form
   
7 March 2000: From Researcher to students
   
16 March 2000 Follow-up letter to parents
   
16 October 2000 Researcher to students
12 February 2000

Mr P Bothe
Principal
Catholic Agricultural College
BINDOON WA 6502

Fax: 9576 1146

Dear Peter

I am faxing you draft copies of the letters I propose to give to the students and their parents and the relevant consent forms.

I would be most grateful if you could read them carefully and critically. Should you find anything that is inappropriate or that you would like to see expressed differently please refax the amended document to me. If they are OK, then a fax or phone call to that effect will be fine. Just as soon as you give your approval, I will meet with Professor Tony Ryan for a final check. I hope to put the letter to the parents in Wednesday's mail.

I will have the questionnaire ready by the end of this week and I would like to come to Bindoon on Tuesday 22 with Bernard and stay for a week to administer the instrument and conduct the first round of interviews. There should also be some time to do a bit of work on the olives preliminary to picking for pickling which is done late March/early April.

This first stage of the research needs to be done early so that I can more validly assess the students' expectations of the course rather than their experiences. I plan to gauge these latter in September.

The first of the Ag Syllabus Committee meetings is scheduled for 10.00am Wednesday 16 February. If there is anything you or the teachers would like me to raise re Plant and Animal Production and Marketing, Animal Production and Marketing or Farm Practice please let's know.

Warmest regards
16 February 2000

Mr P Bothe
Principal
Catholic Agricultural College
BINDOON WA 6502

Fax: 9576 1146

Thank you for returning the draft letters and application forms so promptly. I went over them with Tony Ryan earlier today and he made the following suggestions:

1. That the letter to parents goes out on University letterhead and is signed by myself and Tony - ample provided

2. That the return envelope be addressed to:

   Br F Donohoe
   Director Transition Project
   Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon

   because people may feel more comfortable with this address rather than the Fremantle address

3. That the letter to students is placed on a special letterhead as per sample

4. That you write brief covering letter on the school letterhead to parents which will go out with the letter and consent form that I am sending them

   The letter need not be very long. All that is required is an endorsement of myself and the value of the study

   Perhaps the best way to handle this would be for you to write a general letter, i.e., do not mail merge but simply head it Dear Parents, make 27 copies and then mail them to me at PO Box 1345 FREMANTLE WA 6959 for me to include with the other material

5. In order to give the parents time to respond, I had better delay my coming to Bindoon until Monday 28 February.

That's about all. I trust the days at Tuppin House went well. I will phone you Thursday morning after assembly.

Regards and many thanks.
Thursday, 17 February 2000

Dear Parents,

This letter is to introduce Br. Francis Donohoe and his Doctoral projects to you.

Br. Donohoe has been a long-standing member of the staff at Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon. He is now in ‘retirement’, but still serves agricultural education in the state and particularly looks after the interests of our school through his involvement in many groups associated with agricultural education.

Br. Donohoe is completing research for his Doctorate, in which he is aiming to study the transition from Year 10 into post compulsory education and the Senior Agricultural Courses at Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon.

The findings of this study will be very useful to the College and also to Agricultural educators everywhere. The process will be interesting and thought provoking for the student and will help each one clarify their aims for further education.

I highly recommend this study to you.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Peter Bothe
Principal
14 February 2000

Mr and Mrs ………
PO BOX
COUNTRY TOWN  WA ….

Dear Mr and Mrs ………

Allow me to introduce myself! My name is Francis Donohoe and, until my retirement from teaching at the end of 1998, I was a senior member of staff at the Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon for nine years. During that time, I was very impressed with the course in Agriculture that is offered by Bindoon college and the other senior agricultural colleges and became convinced that it should be more widely known and valued. Therefore I decided to join the doctoral program of the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle to make a detailed study of one aspect of agricultural education at the secondary level.

My research, which has the support of the Principal, Mr Peter Bothe, will involve a detailed study of the present group of Year 11 students. The focus of the study will be on the way the boys and girls manage the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course which David is studying at Bindoon.

To do this, I must gather information on how the students feel about the course, what they are hoping to gain from it, how they came to choose it and so on. I would like to be able to include xxxx in my sample, but naturally need your permission first. If you are happy to have xxxx as part of the study, I will be asking him to complete one or two questionnaires and to meet with me privately for a couple of interviews.

The materials that xxxx provides me with will then be coded and analysed. In writing up and discussing my findings with other people, I will ensure that what xxxx says will not be able to be traced to him directly. None of the teachers or other staff will ever see what he has written. However, I will need to give xxxx an identity number so that I can gather all the information that he gives me under that number. While his personal identity will be secure, the name of the school will be known to all who read and discuss the research when it is published.

The plan is to have the study completed by November/December 2001. The results will enable the school, parents and others with an interest in such matters to understand better the ways the students manage the move from Year 10 to the agricultural course in Year 11. In turn, this deeper understanding on the part of the responsible adults will assist them in their work of educating and caring for their students.

In addition to Mr Bothe’s consent to include the staff and students in the research, I also need your permission to involve xxxx in the study. I would be most grateful if you could indicate you consent or otherwise by completing the attached form and returning it to me in the envelope provided

Yours sincerely

Br Francis Donohoe
Project Director

Professor Tony Ryan
University Supervisor
CONSENT FORM

PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE YEAR 11 TRANSITION STUDY TO BE UNDERTAKEN AT CATHOLIC AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE BINDOON IN 2000

Please complete by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

[ ] give

I, [full name of parent or guardian],

[ ] do not give

for [xxx] to take part in the transition study to be conducted in 2000 by Br Francis Donohoe as outlined to me in the letter dated 14 February 2000.

Signed:

Date:

Please return the form in the stamped envelope provided.

Alternatively you may fax it to: Br F Donohoe Catholic Agricultural College BINDOON WA 6502

Fax: 08 9576 1146
CATHOLIC AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE BINDOON

YEAR 11 AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION PROJECT

Project Director: Br Francis Donohoe

Student

7 March 2000

Dear Student

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the research project into the way young people manage the transition from Year 10 to the senior agricultural course.

As I said in my introductory talk, you belong to a very select group of young people who have chosen a course that unique. It is fully vocational and yet it will provide you with many career opportunities, quite a few of which are not directly related to agriculture or animal care. Moreover, you have made your choice two years ahead of the majority of your peers who will be remaining in the mainstream high school system until the end of Year 12.

By taking part in this study of the ways you manage the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course, you will adding to the pool of knowledge about the ways in which 15 year olds make decisions which concern their future and how they cope with the transition from Year 10 to Year11.

During the course of the year I will be asking you to fill out two or three short questionnaires and to let me interview you privately and confidentially on a couple of occasions. The information that you provide to me will be coded and analysed. In writing up and discussing my findings with other people, I will ensure that nothing you say or write will ever be able to be traced to you personally. None of the teachers or other staff will see your replies to the questionnaires or any notes I may make at the interviews. However, I will need to give you an identity number so that I can gather under that number all the information that you give me. Your personal identity will be confidential to me at all times. However, the name of the school will be known to all who read and discuss the research when it is published.

Very strict rules govern this kind of research. One of them is that I need to obtain formal consent from you to be part of this project. Therefore I would appreciate your signing the attached consent form and returning it to me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Br Francis Donohoe
I, Student X freely agree to be part of the study involving Year 11 students at Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon during the year 2000.

I have read the letter of March 7 and accept the commitment of my time that participating in the study will entail.

I understand that the College name will appear in writings and other publications about the study but that my name will not.

Signed: ………………………………………

Date: …………………………………………. 
16 March 2000

Ms Y YYY
PO Box …
COUNTRY TOWN WA ….

Dear Ms YYY

I am writing to you about my request (mailed February 17) to involve AAAA in the study I am undertaking of just how the boys and girls manage the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course in Year 11.

For a study of this kind to be fully reliable and valid, it is important that as many members of the Class as possible be included.

So far, I have not received an answer to my request that AAAA be part of the research study. In case you have been unable to find the original consent form, I am enclosing a copy and a self-addressed envelope. I would be very grateful, then, if you could complete it and return it to the College at your earliest convenience. Alternatively, you may fax your reply to the College on 08 9576 1146.

Should you wish to know more about the study, you may phone me on 08 9335 7992. During the year I shall keep you posted as to the progress of the research.

Yours sincerely

Br Francis Donohoe
Project Director
16 October 2000

Dear Student

You will remember that at the beginning of the year you participated in the first phase of the Year 11 Agricultural Education Transition Project. Then I was asking you to tell me something about:

• what you thought the year would be like for you
• your reasons for joining the course
• how you expected to manage or cope with the course
• the impact of the residential side of the course on you and your family
• what you hoped to get from the various parts of the course
• the ways in which your participation in the course might affect your development as a person

In this second questionnaire and round of interviews I am hoping you will be able to:
• tell me what the course has been like for you so far
• compare your actual experience with what you were expecting early in the year
• say what has enabled you to cope with (manage) the course
• talk about the impact of the residential side of the course on your development as a person

Thank you once more for consenting to be an integral part of the project. I promise that I will keep you informed its progress during the course of the year.

Yours sincerely

Br Francis Donohoe
Project Director
APPENDIX B

SURVEY 1

SURVEY 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2
SURVEY:

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

YEAR 10 — YEAR 11
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

SURVEY OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

YEAR 10 TO YEAR 11

AT CATHOLIC AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE BINDOON

February 2000

PART A

1. My date of birth is: .../.../...
   Day  Month  Year

To answer Question 2, tick the box that applies to you.

2. My gender is:
   [ ] Female
   [ ] Male

Write your answer to Question 3 in the space provided.

3. The name of the school I attended last year is:
   ........................................

Answer Questions 4 and 5 by ticking the boxes that apply to you.

4. Last year, 1999, I was in:
   [ ] Year 10
   [ ] Year 11

   5. This year at Bindoon I am a:
      [ ] residential student
      [ ] weekly boarder
      [ ] day student

In the space provided, name the town or suburb that you call home.

6. My home is located in ..................................
For Questions 7, 8 and 9, tick only the box that describes you

7. My parents/guardians:
   a. □ own or work on a farm, orchard, market garden, hobby farm etc
   b. □ own or work on a station
   c. □ part own, share farm or work on both farms and stations
   d. □ own or work in business that is connected with agriculture
   e. □ have no connection with the land

8. My close relatives (uncle, aunt, grand parents):
   a. □ own or work on a farm
   b. □ own or work on a station
   c. □ own, share farm, work on both farms and stations
   d. □ have no connection with the land

9. When I am not at school I live with:
   a. □ Both my parents
   b. □ My father
   c. □ My mother
   d. □ Alternate between father and mother
   e. □ Another relative
   f. □ My guardian
   g. □ Myself
   h. □ Other
Question 10 lists subjects that most schools offer in Year 10. Tick the ones that you studied last year.

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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Outdoor Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Career/Voc Ed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>Farm Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>Society &amp; Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>Design and Technology subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>Home Eco/Cooking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Language other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Questions 11 to 14, use the letters that represent each of the subjects to supply the information that is required of you.

11. The three Year 10 subjects that I liked most were:

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

12. The three Year 10 subjects that I liked least were:

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

13. The three Year 10 subjects that I did best at are:

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

14. The three Year 10 subjects that I did least well in are:

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
Question 15 asks why you joined the Senior Agricultural Course and also asks you to rank these reasons in order of importance to you.

15. I joined the Senior Agricultural Course because:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>MY REASONS</th>
<th>POSSIBLE REASONS</th>
<th>IMPORTANCE TO MY DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick all that apply to you.

Use 1 for most important, 2 for the next most important and so on.
In Question 16, tick the box that applies to you.

16. At the end of this year I plan to:
- Continue into Year 12 [ ]
- Leave school [ ]

Go to Q 18

Go to Q 17

Answer Question 17 only if you plan to leave school at the end of Year 11.
Tick the box that best describes your plans for next year.

17. After I leave school at the end of Year 11, I plan to:
- [ ] Return to the family farm
- [ ] Return to the family station
- [ ] Return to the family business
- [ ] Take up TAFE studies
- [ ] Take up an apprenticeship
- [ ] Take up a pre-apprenticeship
- [ ] Work in the farming/agricultural sector
- [ ] Work in areas other than farming/agriculture
- [ ] Take time off just to travel
- [ ] Other (Please specify)

Now go straight to Q 19
Answer Question 18 only if you plan to continue to Year 12 next year.

18. After Year 12, I plan to:
   a. [ ] Return to the family farm
   b. [ ] Return to the family station
   c. [ ] Return to the family business
   d. [ ] Take up TAFE studies
   e. [ ] Commence University Studies
   f. [ ] Take up an apprenticeship
   g. [ ] Take up a pre-apprenticeship
   h. [ ] Work in the farming/agricultural sector
   i. [ ] Work in areas other than farming/agriculture
   j. [ ] Take time off just to travel
   k. [ ] I have no idea what I am going to do on leaving Year 12
   l. [ ] Other (Please specify)

Questions 19 and 20 ask how you became aware of the College and the Course.
Tick the appropriate box or boxes.

19. I learned of the College from:
   a. [ ] The ads on GWN
   b. [ ] The College's participation in field days and shows
   c. [ ] Ads and articles on the College in newspapers and magazines
   d. [ ] Visits to my previous school by Bendigo College staff
   e. [ ] The careers staff of my old school
   f. [ ] My parents
   g. [ ] A friend who is a student or former student of the College
   h. [ ] None of the above (Please specify)

   [ ] Other (Please specify)
20. I learned of the Senior Agricultural Course from:
   a. The ads on GWN
   b. The my participation in field days and shows
   c. Ads and articles about the Course in newspapers and magazines
   d. Visits to my previous school by Bindoon College staff
   e. The careers staff of my old school
   f. My parents
   g. A friend who is a student or former student of an Agricultural College
   h. None of the above (Please specify)

21. This Question asks what factors influenced your decision to take up the Senior Agricultural Course. Tick all that apply.

   The best description(s) of the decision to take up the Course is (are):
   a. The decision was entirely my own
   b. My parents and I were equal partners in the decision
   c. It was my parents' guardians' decision
   d. My grandparents had a significant part to play in the decision
   e. An uncle or aunt had a significant part to play in the decision
   f. Child Welfare or other agency directed me
   g. The teachers at my old school guided me in making the choice
   h. I came to my decision to join the Course in a way that was different from any of the above (Please specify)
22. This Question asks why you or your parents chose this particular school. Tick all that apply.

You may tick more than 1 box

- The College is close to home and I do not need to board
- The College is easier for me to get to than the other colleges
- The College has a reputation for excellence in agriculture
- The high percentage of girls enrolled attracted me
- The size and quality of the farm
- The opportunity to keep my horse and to do a lot with horses
- The Catholic nature of the school
- The range of agricultural activities
- My experiences in Years 8 to 10
- The quality of the Farm Practice
- The large amount of time spent the “practical” subjects
- The quality of the instruction in the theory subjects
- My experience of the Landcare Program in Year 10
- Other (Please specify)

---------------------------------------------------------------

23. There is almost always a flip or negative side to any choice we make. This Question looks at the personal costs (if any) of your decision to join the Course. Tick the boxes that apply to you.

You may tick more than 1 box

To join the Senior Agricultural Course at Birdoona, I had to:

- Give up my part time job
- Lose my financial independence
- Withdraw fully from my sporting commitments
- Withdraw partially from my sporting commitments
- Lose my circle of friends
- Change the way I relate to my friends
- Relate differently to my parents and family
- Other (Please explain)

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24. This Question asks what you do when you feel lonely. Tick all that apply.

When I feel lonely, I:

- [ ] Play my music
- [ ] Find a friend and talk to her/him
- [ ] Phone a friend
- [ ] Watch TV
- [ ] Go for a walk
- [ ] Spend time with my dog, cat, or horse
- [ ] Other (Please explain)

25. This Question asks what you do when you have difficulties with your school work. Tick three (3) boxes that best describe what you do in this case.

When I having difficulties with my school work, I:

- [ ] Bottle it up inside me and tell no one
- [ ] Ask a teacher for help
- [ ] Ask one of my friends for help
- [ ] Become angry and verbally abuse other people
- [ ] Become angry and get physical with other people
- [ ] Become angry and trash or graffiti other people's gear
- [ ] Try harder to work out the problem myself
- [ ] Do nothing and hope the problem will go away
- [ ] Pray about it
- [ ] Other (Please explain)
26. This Question asks you what you do when you have difficulties with other people. Tick three (3) of the boxes that apply to you.

When I have difficulties with other people, I:

a. Call the other person names and abuse them verbally
b. Get physical with the other person
c. Tell my friends how bad the other person is
d. Go off by myself until I have calmed down
e. Spend time with my horse or my cat or dog
f. Confide in a friend and ask what I should do
g. Ask a teacher or other adult to help me fix the matter
h. Pray about the matter
i. Distance myself from them for a while and then calmly approach them to try to settle the difference
j. Steal, wreck or graffiti their gear

PART B

This part of the survey asks what you expect the Senior Agricultural Course to be like and what you hope to gain from it. Mark with a cross (X) where you think you fit on each of the scales.

27. After a day of work on the farm, I expect that I will be

Pleasantly | | | | | | | | | | Exhausted
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6

28. I expect to make new friends

Easily | | | | | | | | | | With difficulty
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6

29. At this stage of the year, I believe that my idea of what the Course will be like is

Well informed | | | | | | | | | | Not well informed
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6

30. The decision to board was for me

Easy | | | | | | | | | | Difficult
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6

31. I would describe myself as

Naturally | | | | | | | | | | Dishonest
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6 study

32. The number of hours per week I expect to be working with animals is

0 hours | | | | | | | | | | 30 hours
   | | | | | | | | | |
   1 2 3 4 5 6
PART B (continued)

33. I would describe myself as [ ] Quiet and [ ] Outgoing. 

34. For me, working with plants (gardening, vegetable growing) is [ ] Enjoyable and [ ] A total 1 2 3 4 5 6 gain. 

35. By the time I finish Year 12, I expect that my skills in operating and maintaining machinery will be [ ] Very good and [ ] Poor. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

36. I expect to find the theory (the work in the classroom) to be [ ] Easy and [ ] Difficult. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

37. I expect to find the practical aspects of the Course [ ] To my liking and [ ] Not to my liking. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

38. I expect that I will fit into the residential side of things [ ] Very easily and [ ] With great difficulty. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

39. The number of hours per week I expect to be working with crops and plants is: [ ] 0 hours and [ ] 30 hours. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

40. The chances that I will finish Year 12 are [ ] Very high and [ ] Quite low. 1 2 3 4 5 6 

PART C

The remainder of this page provides you with the space to comment on the how you came to commence the Senior Agricultural Course and your expectations of it.

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This is the end of the Questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.
SURVEY 2

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

YEAR 10 to YEAR 11

OCTOBER 2000
PART A - SACRIFICES

Question 1 looks at the personal costs (if any) of your decision to join the Senior Agricultural course. You are asked to tick the boxes that apply to you and to indicate how well you feel you are coping with the sacrifice you have made.

1. Tick only the boxes that apply to you and mark with a (X) where you think you fit on the six point scale that is alongside the item(s) you have ticked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To join the Senior Agricultural course at Bindoon, I had to:</th>
<th>I believe I am managing this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a □ Give up my part time job</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b □ Lose my financial independence</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c □ Withdraw from my sporting commitments</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d □ Reduce my sporting commitments</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e □ Lose most of my friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f □ Change the way I relate to my friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g □ Leave home to board</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h □ See less of my parents and family</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i □ Come back to school instead of working</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j □ See less of my pets</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k □ Give up much of my free time</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART B - FEELINGS

Question 2 deals with loneliness and low spirits.

2a. Answer this question by placing a tick in the box that best describes you.

When I am at school, I experience feelings of loneliness or low spirits:

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Occasionally
- d. Frequently
- e. Always

Go to Question 3 on Page 3

Go to Question 2b below

2b. Tick the boxes that apply to you when you attempt to overcome periods of loneliness or low spirits:

a. Play my music
b. Find a friend and talk to him/her
c. Phone home
d. Phone a friend
e. Watch TV
f. Go for a walk
g. Pray
h. Spend time with my horse, dog, cat or other pet

Tick the strategies that best fit what you do

Other (Please specify)

In the space provided write down which of the above strategies is the most effective or helpful for you in controlling periods of loneliness or depression.

2c. The strategy that best enables me to overcome times of loneliness and depression is

2d. In the space provided give a reason for the strategy you named in 2c being able to help you.

237
**PART C - THE CLASSROOM**

Question 3 deals with the theory or your work in the classroom. Please answer Question 3 by marking with a cross (X) where you think you fit on the scales that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th>In general, I find the theory work to be</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Very difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I am finding the theory work interesting</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Intellectually, I am finding the theory side of the course Challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No challenge at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>The relationship of the theory to the farm work is</td>
<td>Very close</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Totally unrelated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>So far as my career is concerned I find the class work</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Of no value at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>When working on the farm I find my knowledge of theory has been helpful</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Decisively unhelpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>In the theory, the number of assignments is Too few</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Far too many</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>The quantity of work required to achieve a VH grade in a task is Far too much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Far too little</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>The standard set for a VH grade in a task or an assessment is Far too high</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Far too low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>My understanding of the educational term <em>Outcome</em> is Clear</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not at all clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>I have found the change to a fully <em>Outcome</em> based style of learning easy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Most difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>If I had my way I would choose a course that was completely <em>Outcome</em> based Content based</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Outcome</em> based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>At present I would say that I am managing the theory side of the course Rather well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rather poorly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 4a looks at those times when you may find the THEORY or classroom side of your work difficult or frustrating.

4a. Tick the box which applies to you.

☐ I rarely or never experience difficulty or frustration with my theory work.

☐ There are times when I have difficulty or become frustrated with my theory work.

Go to Question 5 on page 5

Go to Question 4b below

Question 4b asks you to identify the three most common strategies or patterns of behavior that you use whenever you experience difficulties or frustration with your theory work. Use 1 for the most frequently used behavior pattern down to 3 for your least used strategy.

4b. When I am having difficulties with my school work or find myself becoming frustrated, I

Order your three (3) most common behavior patterns. Use 1 for the most frequent, 2 for the next and so on

☐ Bottle it up inside me and tell no one
☐ Ask a teacher for help
☐ Ask one of my friends for help
☐ Ask a study supervisor for help
☐ Become angry and shout at others
☐ Become angry and get physical with others
☐ Try to work out the problem by myself
☐ Phone my parents or a friend
☐ Pray about it
☐ Do nothing and hope the problem goes away
☐ Other (Please explain)

To answer Question 4c, choose your MOST SUCCESSFUL strategy from the list in Question 4b above and enter its corresponding letter in the box provided.

4c. ☐ is the strategy that enables me to cope best with any difficulties I have with my work in class.

4d. Use the space below to explain why you ticked Question 4c above.

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
Answer Question 5 by ticking only the box that applies to you.

5. At the present time, I believe that I am coping with the classroom work

   a. Extremely well    d. Borderline coping/not coping
   b. Quite well    e. Not coping
   c. Satisfactorily

   Go to Question 6

6. You answered a, b, or c to Question 5. Reflect on your answer ... ... write down what it is that you believe enables you to cope with the class work.

   Write your answer in the space below.

   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................

   Go to Question 7 below

7. You have answered (d) or (e) to Question 5. Reflect on your answer ... ...

   Now, if possible say why you are not coping.

   Please write your answer in the space below.

   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
PART D - FARM PRACTICE

8. Tick only the box that best describes you.

I come from
- a. Suburban Perth
- b. A country town
- c. A small property close to Perth or other city
- d. A farm
- e. A cattle or sheep station
- f. A mining retirement

Answer Question 9 by marking with a cross where you think you fit on each of the scales.

9a. Before coming to Catholic Ag College my exposure to agriculture/farming was

Extensive [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Non-existent

1 2 3 4 5 6

9b. Before coming to Catholic Ag College my exposure to things mechanical was

Extensive [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Non-existent

1 2 3 4 5 6

9c. My educational achievements in Year 10 were

Well above average [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Well below average

1 2 3 4 5 6

9d. With regard to my work in the classroom at Year 10, I would say that I

Coped [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] Did not cope

very well 1 2 3 4 5 6

Question 10 groups the main subjects that you are studying into two groups. Group A is composed of those subjects that are based mainly in the classroom, while Group B is made up of the more hands-on outdoor subjects.

10a. Rank from 1 to 6 your liking of the following Year 11 subjects.
Use 1 for your first preference down to 6 for the subject you like least of all.

a. English  d. Animal Production and Marketing
b. Voc Maths e. Plant Production and Marketing
c. Small Business f. Computing

Group A Subjects

10b. Rank from 1 to 5 your liking of the following Year 11 subjects.
Use 1 for your first preference down to 5 for the one you like least of all.

a. Facilities Development  c. Automotive Workshop
b. Farm Practice

Group B Subjects

10c. Tick the box that best describes your overall preference for the two groups of subjects.

a. Very strongly Group A
b. Strongly Group A
c. Equal Group A and B
d. Strongly Group B
e. Very strongly Group B
Please answer Question 11 by marking with a cross (X) where you think you fit on the scales.

11a. I am finding Farm Practice easy | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11b. I am finding Farm Practice interesting | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11c. After a day on the farm I am not at all | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11d. So far as farm work is concerned I am coping | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11e. So far as my career is concerned I am finding that Farm Practice is very well | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11f. When it comes to driving tractors and other machinery, I rate myself as very confident | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11g. When working with machinery in general, I would say I am very skilled | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11h. When working with machinery in general, I would say I am very skilled | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11i. When given a difficult task like calibrating a drench gun or spray unit, I would learn to do it quickly | 1 2 3 4 5 6

11j. When I look back to the beginning of the year, Farm Practice is much better than I was expecting | 1 2 3 4 5 6

Answer Question 12 by ticking only the box that applies to you.

12. At the present time, I believe that I am coping with Farm Practice

a. Extremely well
b. Quite well
c. Satisfactorily
d. Borderline coping/not coping
e. Not coping

If you ticked (a), (b) or (c) go to Question 13 on page 8
If you ticked (d) or (e) go to Question 14 also on page 8
13. If you ticked (a), (b) or (c) to Question 12, reflect upon your answer ... ...
Now write in the space provided what personal qualities you believe you have that enable you to cope with Farm Practice.
Write your answer in the space below.

14. If you ticked (d) or (e) to Question 12, reflect upon your answer ... ...
Now write in the space provided what it is that is making it difficult for you to cope with Farm Practice.
Write your answer in the space below.
PART E - AUTOMOTIVE WORKSHOP

Answer Question 15 by marking with a (X) where you think you fit on the scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15a. I am finding Automotive Workshop interesting</td>
<td>Very interesting 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15b. I am finding Automotive Workshop difficult</td>
<td>Much too difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15c. Where Automotive Workshop is concerned, I am coping</td>
<td>Coping very well 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15d. So far as my career is concerned Automotive Workshop is relevant</td>
<td>Very relevant 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15e. When I compare now with the beginning of the year, Automotive Workshop is much better than I was expecting</td>
<td>Much better than 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer Question 16 by ticking only the box that applies to you.

16. At the present time, I believe that I am coping with Automotive Workshop

- a. Extremely well
- b. Quite well
- c. Satisfactorily
- d. Borderline coping/not coping
- e. Not coping

Go to Question 17a

OR

17a. If you ticked a, b or c in Question 16 above, comment on the qualities you have that enable you to cope with Automotive Workshop

Write your answer to Question 17 in the space below

17b. If you answered d or e in Question 16 above set down what you believe makes it hard for you manage Automotive workshop.

Go to Question 18 on page 10
18. Answer Question 18 by marking with a (X) where you think you fit on the scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18a. I am finding Facilities Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Most interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18b. I am finding Facilities Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Much too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18c. When I compare now with the beginning of the year, Facilities Development is</td>
<td></td>
<td>Much better than I was expecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18d. So far as my career is concerned Facilities Development is</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18e. Where Facilities Development is concerned, I am</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 19 asks you to look more deeply into your answer to Question 18e above. Tick the boxes that apply to you.

19. The reasons I am coping/not coping with Facilities Development are:

- a. I like Facilities Development
- b. I like the teacher(s)
- c. I see its importance for my career
- d. I don't like the teacher(s)
- e. I have been lucky to get tasks that I can do
- f. I am good with my hands
- g. It has nothing to do with my career
- h. I work hard
- i. I am no good with my hands
- j. There is too much other work which is more important for me
- k. Facilities development is an important part of Designing
- l. Too much emphasis on correct safety procedures
- m. The kids mess around
- n. The kids are cooperative
- o. I do not work hard
- p. The teachers are useless
- q. I am afraid of some machines
- r. I love welding
- s. There are insufficient tools
- t. The tasks are trivial
- u. I don't want to do it
- v. Facilities Development is not part of real designing
- w. Insufficient emphasis on correct safety procedures
- x. I am not interested in Facilities Development

19y. Is there anything else to add about the way you are coping/not coping with Facilities Development? Write your answer in the spaces below.

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### PART 6 - SELF-EVALUATION

Answer Questions 20 - 23 by ticking the boxes that apply to you.

20. When I get a grade of V, H or S in a task or assignment in the THEORY or classroom work it is usually because:

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>I am good at school work</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>The teacher was in a good mood</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>The assignment was easy</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>I planned the work carefully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>I worked hard to achieve the V, H or S grade</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>I was lucky to find the right books</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>I am well organized</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>It was an interesting assignment</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>I 'suck' up to the teacher</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>The class cooperated with the teacher</td>
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</table>

21. When I get a grade of ND or U in a task or assignment in the THEORY subjects it is usually because:

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>It wasn't my day</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>I am not well organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>I am not much of a reader</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>I am an outdoor person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>I couldn't find the right references</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>I am not good at school work</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>The teacher was in a bad mood</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>I didn't do any work</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>I didn't 'suck' up to the teacher</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>The assignment was too hard</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>The other kids worked around so I couldn't work</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>I didn't work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>I didn't understand the assignment</td>
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</table>

22. When I get a grade of V, H, or S on the FARM or in the WORKSHOP it is usually because:

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>I like the job</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>I work hard at the job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>I work hard at the job</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>It is an easy job</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>I am a good farm worker</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>I like the supervisor</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>I am a skilled driver</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>My work mates help me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>I 'suck' up to the supervisor</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>It is an interesting job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>I am lucky to get a job that I can do</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>The job is physically tough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>The supervisor is in a good mood</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>The supervisor is in a good mood</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

23. When I get a grade of ND or U on the FARM or in the WORKSHOP it is usually because:

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>I don't try</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>I don't work hard enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>I don't work hard enough</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>I don't have the physical strength</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>I don't have the physical strength</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>I am an inexperienced farmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>I am an inexperienced farmer</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>I don't 'suck' up to the supervisor</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>I don't 'suck' up to the supervisor</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>I don't have the driving skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>I don't have the driving skills</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>The other kids fool around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>The other kids fool around</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>I don't understand what has to be done</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>I don't understand what has to be done</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>There is no challenge in the job</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>There is no challenge in the job</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>I fear for my safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>I fear for my safety</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>The other kids don't help me</td>
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<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>The other kids don't help me</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>The job is too hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>The job is too hard</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>I don't understand what has to be done</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>I don't understand what has to be done</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>The other kids fool around</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>The other kids fool around</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>I don't understand what has to be done</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

246
Question 24 asks you to compare yourself with your peers who are still at school on a number of matters. Answer this Question 24 by ticking only the boxes that apply to you.

24. Tick the boxes that apply to you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greater</th>
<th>About the same</th>
<th>Lesser</th>
<th>No idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
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<td>f.</td>
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<td>g.</td>
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<tr>
<td>h.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i.</td>
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<td>j.</td>
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<td>k.</td>
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<td>o.</td>
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<tr>
<td>p.</td>
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</table>

It is most likely that you have friends who are no longer at school. Question 25 asks you to compare yourself with your peers who are no longer at school.

25a. I am different from my friends who have left school

Tick the box that applies to you.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

25b. Use the space below to explain your answer to Question 25a.

................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
PART H - MANAGEMENT

Questions 26 to 29 look at some personality factors that may affect the way you manage the Senior Agricultural course.

26. When I have some free time, the thing that I like doing best is

Tick your TWO most frequent behavior patterns.

a. Playing my music  
   b. Reading  
   c. Going for a walk by myself  
   d. Playing or training for sport  
   e. To be with my horse  
   f. Getting with a group of friends and just talking and mucking around  
   g. Working in the garden  
   h. Making things  
   i. Cooking  
   j. Playing a musical instrument  
   k. Working on the farm  
   l. Just being by myself

27. I would describe myself as: (Tick one box only.)

a. totally extraverted  
   b. partially extraverted  
   c. neither introverted nor extraverted  
   d. partially introverted  
   e. totally introverted

Answer Question 28 by ticking the boxes that apply to you.

28. As I look back over the year, I believe that the decision I made to join the Senior Agricultural course

a. is the right one  
   b. was forced on me by poor results in Years 8 to 10  
   c. has been well thought out  
   d. will enable me to fulfil career goals  
   e. was made freely  
   f. was forced on me by my parents  
   g. was forced on me by other authorities  
   h. was made immaturity  
   i. will not lead to further study  
   j. will hinder me from achieving career goals  
   k. will lead to further study  
   l. was my own choice  
   m. was made hastily  
   n. is the wrong one  
   o. is a mature decision for a person of my age

Answer Question 29 by ticking only the box that applies to you.

29. Overall, I believe that I have managed the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural course

a. very well  
   b. well  
   c. managed  
   d. poorly  
   e. not at all
### PART I - RESIDENTIAL

Questions 30 to 46 deal with the residential side of the Senior Agricultural Course. This set of questions looks at what living away from home is like for you. Please use a cross (x) to indicate where you think you fit on each of the scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. I am finding living away from home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I miss my parents</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I miss my brothers and sisters</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I miss my friends</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I have made new friends</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>many</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. My boarding friends are</td>
<td>Extra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Just</td>
<td>special</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I like the atmosphere in the boarding house</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very</td>
<td>much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My fellow boarders are</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unhelpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. My fellow boarders are</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hurtful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. The accommodation is</td>
<td>First class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. The quality of food is</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. The quantity of food is</td>
<td>More than</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. The staff are</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hurtful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. The discipline in my boarding house is</td>
<td>Slack</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too strict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I... Living with students of different cultures/backgrounds</td>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Boarding has affected my performance in school</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very negatively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. When I am not feeling well the staff treat me</td>
<td>With kindness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As a nuisance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 47 is to be answered by RESIDENTIAL students.
Tick only the boxes that apply.

47. From my experiences in Year 11, I
   a. Believe that the day students are as much part of the College as I am
   b. Feel that the day students are not fully part of the College
   c. Enjoy the day student's life
   d. Am glad I am not a day student
   e. Believe the day students miss out on a lot socially
   f. Believe the day students miss out on a lot of farm work
   g. Believe that the Senior Ag course is designed for residential students rather than day students
   h. Believe that the Senior Ag course is designed for both day and residential students
   i. Believe that the day students are less mature than residential students
   j. Believe that the day students are just as mature as residential students
   k. Believe that the day students are more mature than residential students

Question 48 is to be answered by RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS only.
This question deals with your perceptions of the day students and the unique challenges they face simply because they do not live with the majority of students who reside at the College.

48a. Complete the following sentence: A challenge which the Year 11 day students have to meet and I do not is: .........................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................

48b. Complete the following sentence: In my view, the Year 11 day student meets this challenge in the following way(s): ............................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
49. This question asks you what you do when you are not feeling well. Tick the boxes that apply to you in such circumstances.

49. When I am not feeling well, I *(residential students only)*

a. Advise the house parent
b. Advise the house parent and ask to see a doctor
c. Tell Christine or Vanessa in the office
d. Do nothing and hope I get better
e. Just tell my friends and hope I get better
f. Use some Panadol or other medication I have from home
g. Phone home
h. Other *(Please explain)*

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PART J - NON-RESIDENTIAL

Question 50 is to be answered by the NON-RESIDENTIAL students. Tick only the boxes that apply.

50. From my experiences in Year 11, I
   a. Believe I am just as much part of the College as the boarders are
   b. Feel I am not fully part of the College
   c. Envy the boarders’ life
   d. Am glad I am not a boarder
   e. Believe the boarders’ manage living away from home well
   f. Believe the boarders do not manage living away from home at all well
   g. Believe that the Senior Ag course is designed for residential students rather than day students
   h. Believe that the Senior Ag course is designed for both day and residential students
   i. Believe that the day students are less mature than the boarders
   j. Believe there is no difference in the maturity of day students and boarders
   k. Believe that the day students are more mature than the boarders

Questions 51 and 52 are to be answered by NON-RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS only. These questions deal with your perceptions of the residential students and the unique challenges they face simply because they are living away from home.

51. Complete the following sentence: A challenge which the Year 11 boarders have to meet, but which I do not have to meet is:

   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................

52. Complete the following sentence: In my view, the Year 11 boarder meets this challenge in the following way(s):

   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
Questions 53 to 56 are to be answered by NON-RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS only. These questions deal with your perceptions of the residential students and the unique challenges they face simply because they are living away from home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Complete the following sentence: A challenge which the Year 11 boarders have to meet and I do not is: .................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Complete the following sentence: In my view, the Year 11 boarder meets this challenge in the following way(s): .................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Complete the following sentence: A second challenge which the Year 11 boarders have to meet and I do not is: .................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Complete the following sentence: In my view, the Year 11 boarder meets this challenge in the following way(s): .................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART K - YOUR STORY

57. This page provides you with the space to comment on how you feel you have managed the change from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural course.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1

Student Expectations of the Senior Agricultural Course

March 2000

Introductory Remarks

The purpose of these is:

- to set the interviewee at ease
- to test the equipment and
- to explain the nature of the project.

Researcher: ….N… I have the name right, haven't I?

How have you been keeping?

How did you find the Questionnaire you filled out for me on Wednesday?

I trust it wasn't as hard for you to answer as it was for me to put together?

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your expectations of the Course and how you came to join it. I am hoping you can tell me more about subject than the Questionnaire allowed you to do.

I am taping the interview because it allows me to concentrate on what you say. Then when I get back home, I will transcribe it and use the written record to analyse what we have spoken about and compare this with what the other boys and girls say and with what they have written in the Questionnaire you completed on Wednesday.

If during any part of the conversation, you do not want to be recorded just say so and I will turn off the machine.

Neither the staff, other students nor your parents will see the transcripts or listen to the tape. Moreover, your name will not appear in anything that I write or speak about to other people. However, the content of what you say and sometimes your actual words will feature in my writing and speaking to others.

O.K. Let's test the machine and get going.

Note: the following schedule has been reformatted. The numbering was not part of the original and was added to help develop the content validity matrix.
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1

1. Background

1. Please tell me about yourself

2. Where is home?

3. Tell me about your mother and father

4. Your brothers and sisters

5. Are your grandparents significant people in your life?

6. Please explain to me your understanding of the term, *To have connections with the land*.

7. Do you have any connections with the land?

8. How do you feel about your schooling so far?

9. Would you say that you liked school?

10. How do you rate your performance/achievements at your previous schools?

11. Could you go over for me in more detail how you came to learn of the course

12. Likewise, please tell me about how you came to hear of the College?

13. Would you describe yourself as inward-looking or outgoing?

14. Would you say that you are the sort of person who sees what is to be done and sets about doing it or as one who requires a "push" from another to get started on a course of action?

2. Decision making process and results

15. Take me back to the time you made the decision to take up the Senior Agricultural Course

   Was it last term?
   Was it mid-way through Last Year?
   Way back?

16. What attracted you to the course?

17. Who were the people that helped you with your decision

18. Of those you have just mentioned, who were the most influential?
19. Looking back as we have just done, would you say that the decision was yours or did someone else make it for you?

20. Please tell me about the person or persons whom you consider to have made the decision for you.

21. Do you know what "feeling" words are? Give me some examples.

22. Now, tell me how you feel about the decision to join the Senior Ag Course.

23. What are your plans for your career, your career pathway?

24. How is the decision to join the course linked with your plans for your career?

25. What assistance have you had on the way to joining the Senior Ag Course?

26. What has been easy for you in your following the decision to take up the Senior Ag Course?

27. What sacrifices have you made in order to join the course? Or what difficulties did you face?

3. Managing the course

29. When you are faced with a difficulty with your school work, what steps do you take to overcome the problem?

30. If you are unable to overcome the difficulty how do you manage to live with it?

31. Do you believe that these qualities will help you manage the change from Year 10 to the Senior Ag Course?

32. Have you done much hard manual work before joining the course? Tell me about it.

33. How do you plan to manage the farm work side of the course?

34. Have you done much in the way of woodwork and metalwork and motor mechanics before joining the course?

35. How do you think you will go in this part of the work?

36. Do you have any special plans for managing all the types manual of work that you are expected to do in Farm Practice and the other practical subjects?

37. Now let's turn to the residential side of the course.

38. How hard was it for you to leave home and board?
39. In the brief time you have been here, how has boarding away from home been for you?

40. When you are feeling lonely or missing home or you have a row with someone what so you do to overcome these feelings of loneliness, homesickness or anger even?

41. What is special about you that enabled you to choose the Senior Ag Course when others whom you know perhaps should have chosen it but did not do so?

4. **Expectations**

42. What do you think the year will be like for you?  
What will be your biggest challenges?  
What will be the easy bits?

43. What are you expecting from the theory subjects:
   44. Plant Production and Marketing
   45. Animal Production and Marketing
   46. Small Business
   47. Religious Education
   48. English?

49. What are you expecting from the practical subjects:
   50. Farm Practice
   51. Mechanics
   52. Farm Facilities?

53. What do you expect on the personal relationship side of things:

54. Do you think you will make new friends easily

55. Will you continue to miss you former friends

56. Do you think your relationship with your parents will change as a result of the residential nature of the course

57. What about your relationship with your brothers and sisters; do you think that will change because you are away from them for so long?

58. Do expect there will be changes in the way you relate to adults: Teachers, Farm Staff, Boarding Staff and so on?

59. Success! Tell me about what you think success is?

60. How do you know that you successful?  How do you measure success personally?  Or putting it another way: What is your measure of success?
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2
October 2000

The High, the Ordinary and the Low

1. What has the year been like for you? Take a few moments to reflect on the highs and lows and the ordinary and then tell me something about them. You may like to begin with some of the high spots. … …

2. Yes, A was certainly a high. How did you feel about it then?

3. How do you feel about it now?

4. What was it that enabled you to do so well?

5. Thanks for that. Now what about the not-so-good things? Anything to say on X?

6. Yes, that must have been pretty trying for you. Would you please tell me how you managed to handle that.

7. I have used the words COPING or MANAGING. Could you please tell me what you understand these words to mean?

Gender

8. What has it been like for you living so closely with the boys/girls?

9. What sort of a relationship do you have with the boys/girls?

10. How do you manage your relationships with the boys/girls?

11. How do you express the feminine side of your nature?
   How do you express the manly side of your nature?

12. What is like being a girl on Farm Practice?
    What is it like being a boy on Farm Practice?

13. What would College life be like were it all girls/boys?
Responsibilities

14. Tell me about your responsibilities?
   For yourself - including financial
   For others

15. How do you manage these?

16. When you compare yourself with your friends: How responsible are you?

Fears

17. Are you afraid of anything?

18. How do you manage these fears or doubts?

The Future

19. What are your thoughts on your future?

20. What qualities, strengths of character, mental and physical abilities do you have that will enable you to fulfil your dreams?

21. When you compare yourself with other young people how would you rate your preparedness for when you leave school?

Friends, teachers, parents - peers

22. Tell me about the people - young and old - that impact upon your life.
   Do they:
   • Support
   • Encourage
   • Help
   • Hinder
   • Lead you astray

Summary

23. How are you feeling now about the decision you took just twelve months ago in Year 10 student to join the Senior Agricultural Course?

24. Have your expectations been met

25. Have your expectations been unfulfilled
APPENDIX C

CONTENT VALIDITY MATRIXES

SURVEY 1 and INTERVIEW 1

SURVEY 2 and INTERVIEW 2
**Introduction**

The rationale for the content validity matrices formed part of Chapter 3 p. 41 and are here presented without further introduction.

---

**Survey 1: Managing the Transition Year 10 — Year 11**

**March 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which may impact on the student’s decision to join the course</th>
<th>Survey questions which address factor</th>
<th>Interview items which address factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: Student seen as too young to board</td>
<td>1 age</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Course seen as more suitable for males</td>
<td>2 gender</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of maturity as revealed by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plans for future, end of schooling and career</td>
<td>15ao, 15bo</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22, 21, 49, 50</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26, 27</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people/events that influenced the decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The reasons the student gives for wanting to join the course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The personal costs of entering the program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How the student handles difficulties with school work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• How student handles loneliness and periods of depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How student deals with personality clashes - difficulties with other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level of knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of Ag trades</td>
<td>41 15aw, 15bw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General knowledge</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of career possibilities</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How student came to learn of school and program</td>
<td>19, 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors which may impact on the student's decision to join the course</td>
<td>Survey questions which address factor</td>
<td>Interview items which address factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Background - students from rural backgrounds may be more disposed to enter the program  
- Location of home  
- Parents' occupation  
- Relatives' connection with land  
- Participant in Landcare Program  
- Prior knowledge of agriculture | 6, 51  
7, 15aa, 15ab, 15ba, 15bb  
8  
22m, 22n, 57  
15aa, 15ba, 15ab, 15bb, 22e, 22h, 22j, 22o | 1, 2, 3, 7, 4, 6  
11, 12, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 |
| Preference for 'hands on' style of learning | 12, 15ad, 15bd, 15aq, 15bq, 17, 18, 22h, 22j, 22k, 31, 32, 35, 39, 54 | 8, 9, 10, 32, 33, 34, 35 |
| Student's previous academic performance  
- Subjects studied in Year 10  
- Academic performance  
- Academic preferences  
- Academic predisposition | 10  
11, 12, 15ac, 15bc, 55  
13, 14, 15aj, 15bj, 32, 39  
31, 49, 54 | 8, 9, 10, 32 |
<p>| Ethnicity | 6, 7, 8 | 1 |
| Love of animals | 15af, 15bf, 15ag, 15bg, 24f, 25j, 26e, 46 | 1 |
| Love of plants and growing things | 15ah, 15bh, 15ao, 15bo, 15au, 15bu, 15aw, 15bw, 22h, 22j, 34, 39 | 1 |
| Care of the land | 15an, 15bn, 22o, 39 | 1, 16, 44, 45, 46 |
| Interest in aquaculture/biodynamics | 15as, 15bs, 15au, 15bu, 22h, 22o | 1, 16 |
| Adaptability | 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 38 | 1, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 |
| Self knowledge | 15ac, 15bc, 25i, 26h, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 40, 42, 55 | 13, 14, 29, 30, 31, 41 |
| Standing of the school | 22c, 22j, 22k, 22l | 12 |
| Catholic nature of the school | 22g | 12 |
| Need to avoid negative peer influence | 15al, 15bl, 21f, 23e, 23f | 1, 15 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which may impact on the student's decision to join the course</th>
<th>Survey questions which address factor</th>
<th>Interview items which address factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality - introvert/extravert</td>
<td>23e, 23f, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31, 33</td>
<td>13, 40, 53, 54, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's expectations of the course</td>
<td>15aq, 15bq, 15ar, 15br, 27, 28, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 49, 50, 52, 56</td>
<td>16, 24, 42, 43 - 53, 59, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of maturity as indicated by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reasons for joining course</td>
<td>15a, 15b</td>
<td>1, 8, 9, 145, 16, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plans for end of Year 11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plans for end of Year 12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How student decided to join course</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sacrifices student made to enter course</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategies used to combat loneliness or depression</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategies used to deal with difficulties with academic work</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategies employed to deal with other people</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age: person who is significantly older or younger than majority may find trouble in adjusting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender: agriculture is seen by many as a male orientated occupation</td>
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<td>1, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36</td>
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<td>Level of maturity as indicated by:</td>
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<td>• Reasons for joining course</td>
<td>15a, 15b</td>
<td>1, 8, 9, 145, 16, 23, 24</td>
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<td>• Plans for end of Year 11</td>
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<td>• Plans for end of Year 12</td>
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<td>• How student decided to join course</td>
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<td>• Strategies used to combat loneliness or depression</td>
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<td>• Strategies used to deal with difficulties with academic work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strategies employed to deal with other people</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Background:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student from farm, station, country town</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9, 15aa, 15ab, 15ba, 15bb, 3, 20i, 22n</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
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<td>• Previous school/schooling</td>
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<td>8, 9, 10</td>
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<td>• Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Factors which may impact on the student's decision to join the course</td>
<td>Survey questions which address factor</td>
<td>Interview items which address factor</td>
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<td>Previous academic record</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15aj, 15bj, 22i, 55</td>
<td>8, 9, 10</td>
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<td>Prior experience of living away from home and need to board</td>
<td>3, 9, 15ai, 15bi, 15am, 15bm, 15ak, 15bk, 21f, 21m, 30, 47</td>
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<td>Prior knowledge of country living/preference for country lifestyle</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 15aa, 15ba, 15ab, 15bb, 20b, 21m, 22n, 53</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
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<td>Manual skills, preference for 'hands on' style of education</td>
<td>11, 12, 15ad, 15db, 15aq, 15bq, 22k, 35, 54</td>
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<td>Physical fitness</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1, 27, 36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career aspirations: if student sees course as fitting their career aspirations they are more likely to manage it</td>
<td>15ao, 15bo, 15aq, 15bq, 15au, 15bu, 17, 18, 22o, 40, 42</td>
<td>23, 24, 42 - 49</td>
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<td>Tenacity, ability to adapt to a new environment</td>
<td>25g, 31, 40, 38, 28</td>
<td>1, 14, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 38, 39, 41</td>
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<td>Management of finances/coping with loss of income</td>
<td>23a, 23b</td>
<td>1, 38, 25, 26, 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations: if the students expectations are met then student may be in a better position to manage the course. Matching of experience to expectations is a key part of Survey 2, October 2000.</td>
<td>15an, 15bn, 15au, 15bu, 15aw, 15bw, 22f, 22g, 22h, 22k, 22l, 41, 45, 46, 49, 50, 52, 56, 57</td>
<td>1, 42, 43 - 52, 53, 54, 55</td>
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<td>Expectations of the residential program</td>
<td>27, 30, 38, 43, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60</td>
<td>53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60</td>
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<td>Love of animals may help student to manage the course</td>
<td>15af, 15bf, 15ag, 15bg, 22f, 24f, 25j, 26e, 46</td>
<td>1, 45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love of plants and the care of the land may help student manage</td>
<td>15ah, 15bh, 34</td>
<td>1, 44</td>
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<tr>
<td>General coping strategies: • Loneliness and depression • Problems with school work • Residential • Other people • Self image</td>
<td>24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 40</td>
<td>59, 60, 22, 29, 30, 40, 40, 1, 31, 41</td>
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CONTENT VALIDITY MATRIX
MANAGING THE TRANSITION YEAR 10 TO YEAR 11
SURVEY 2 AND INTERVIEW 2 OCTOBER 2000

Introduction

Person/personality, peers, perception and perseverance compose the principal dimensions of the problem that is being investigated - namely, how students manage the transition from Year 10 to the Year 11 residential course in agriculture offered by the Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon.

Two surveys and interviews were conducted with the Year 11 class at Bindoon college during the course of the year 2000. The first of these was held in March and focused on the decision to join the course and the students' expectations of the year ahead.

The second survey and interview were conducted in October 2000 with the following ends in view:

1. To assess the students' level of self knowledge and hence maturity
2. To have the students reflect upon their experiences of the course with an emphasis on the residential aspects and to compare the perceptions of the actual experience with the expectations they held in March.
3. To elicit the meaning the students attach to the terms 'success' and 'coping' or 'managing'
4. To encourage the boys and girls to reflect upon and rate their performance in the key areas of the course: classroom, farm together with the other practical subjects and the residential side of the program
5. To explore how other people, broadly classified as peers, impact on the management of the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course.
6. To study the effect of personality on the management of the transition

The Content Validity Matrix for Survey 2 and Interview 2, October 2000 is set out in three columns:

1. The factors which may impact on the way a student manages or copes with the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course
2. Column 2 is devoted to the Survey and lists the questions which address each factor
3. In a similar mode, Column 3 is dedicated to the Interview Schedule 2 October 2000.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which impact on the way the student manages the transition</th>
<th>Survey questions that address problem</th>
<th>Interview items that address problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Level of maturity as indicated by sacrifices which students make to attend the course.</td>
<td>1A, 1B</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Give up part time work. Return to school instead of working</td>
<td>1Aa, 1Ba, 1Ai, 1Bi</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Lose financial independence</td>
<td>1Ab, 1Bb</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Withdraw from sporting teams</td>
<td>1Ac, 1Ad, 1Bc, 1Bd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Loss of friends, different ways of relating to friends</td>
<td>1Ae, 1Af, 1Be, 1Bf</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Leaving home</td>
<td>1Ag, 1Ah, 1Bg, 1Bh</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. See less of pets</td>
<td>1Aj, 1Bj</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Surrender free time</td>
<td>1Ak, 1Bk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of maturity and self-knowledge indicated by comparison of self with peers</td>
<td>24, 25a</td>
<td>1, 14, 15, 16</td>
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<td>a. Quantity of study and degree of difficulty of ag course</td>
<td>24a, b</td>
<td>14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Areas of responsibility/trust</td>
<td>24d, i, k</td>
<td>8-12, 22</td>
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<td>c. Life experiences</td>
<td>24e, 25bb, bc, bd, be, bf</td>
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<td>d. Relationships</td>
<td>24f, h, 57j</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>e. Financial management</td>
<td>24g, 25bc</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>f. Work ethic</td>
<td>24j, l</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Work/manual skills</td>
<td>24n, o</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Satisfaction with schooling</td>
<td>24p, 25bh</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Level of self confidence</td>
<td>24m, 25ba, 57f</td>
<td>19, 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Sense of direction - career problems</td>
<td>24c, 25bh</td>
<td>14-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Management of family problems</td>
<td>57g</td>
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<td>Level of maturity as revealed by student review of decision to join the agriculture course</td>
<td>28, 57a, 57n</td>
<td>1, 19, 20, 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of maturity as indicated by student's care of own health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of maturity as indicated by gender issues</td>
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<td>8-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of maturity as indicated by handling of fears and doubts</td>
<td></td>
<td>17, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors which impact on the way the student manages the transition</td>
<td>Survey questions that address problem</td>
<td>Interview items that address problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Management of periods of loneliness, low-spirits, depression</td>
<td>2a, 2b, 2c, 2c, 57j, 2d</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Most successful strategy</td>
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<td>b. Reasons for strategy's success</td>
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<td>3. Experience of classroom</td>
<td>3, 4, 3a, b, c, 3d, f, 3e, 3g, h, i, 3j, k, l, 3m</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. General</td>
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<td>b. Relevance to farm work</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Relevance to career</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Work demand on student</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Perception of outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Perception of management</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Self perception of management of the classroom</td>
<td>4a, 4ba-4bk, 4c, 4da-4df, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Management strategies used</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Most successful strategy</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Overall perception of coping</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Personal attributes that enable person to cope or not cope</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Self perception of management of Farm Practice</td>
<td>8, 9a-b, 13c, 13l, 9c-d, 10a, 10b, 10c, 11, 11a, 11b, 11c, 11e, 11g-i, 11j</td>
<td>14, 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Student background will impact on perception of Farm Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Academic performance and Farm Practice performance</td>
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<td>c. Experience of Farm Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of difficulty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of interest</td>
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<td>Physically</td>
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<td>Relevance to career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill/confidence with machinery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of meeting expectation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors which make it difficult to cope with Farm Practice</td>
<td>14a, 14b</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Lack of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Lack of opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors which impact on the way the student manages the transition</td>
<td>Survey questions that address problem</td>
<td>Interview items that address problem</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td><strong>6. Self-perceptions of student’s management of Automotive Workshop</strong></td>
<td>15a, b, d, e 15c, 16 17aa-ag, aj, an, ao, ap 17al, am</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Experience/expectations</td>
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</table>
| b. Self-assessment of coping  
Student attribution of successful coping strategies  
Student attribution of failing to cope | | |
| **7. Student perception of management of Facilities Development** | 18a, b, c, d 18e, 19a, b, c, d, f, g, h, i, k, o, q, r, t, x, 19ya, 19e, j, l, m, n, s, u, v, w, 19yb, yc | |
| a. Experience  
Student attribution of successful coping strategies  
Student attribution of failing to cope | | |
| b. Self-assessment of internal reasons for coping/non coping  
Student attribution of successful coping strategies  
Student attribution of failing to cope | | |
| c. Self-assessment of external reasons for coping/not coping | | |
| **8. Perception of management overall including student definition of management or coping** | 29, 57a, 57b, 57e, 57g | 7, 14, 15, 16 |
| **9. Gender** | | 8, 9, 10 12 11 |
| a. Management of boy/girl relationships | | |
| b. Gender and farm practice | | |
| c. Expression of femaleness/maleness | | |
| **10. Attribution of success** | 20 22 | 7, 15, 16, 20, 24, 25 |
| a. In the classroom | | |
| b. In farm and automotive | | |
| **Attribution of failure** | 21 23 | |
| a. In the classroom | | |
| b. In farm or automotive | | |
| **11. Personality type and management of the transition** | 27 28 | 17, 18 |
| a. Introvert/extravert  
Personality type and management of the transition | | |
<p>| b. Behaviour patterns that reveal personality type | | |
| <strong>12. Perception of residential factors of the course will impact on residential student's ability to manage the transition</strong> | 30-46 | 8, 9, 10 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors which impact on the way the student manages the transition</th>
<th>Survey questions that address problem</th>
<th>Interview items that address problem</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 13. Student perceptions of day student's place in the school will impact on day students' management of the transition from Year 10 to the Senior Agricultural Course  
a. Residential student perceptions of day students  
b. Day students' perceptions of their place in the school | 47, 48, 50-56  
47, 48a, 48b  
50 | 22 |
| 14. Non-residential students perceptions of residential students  
a. Challenges which residential students have to meet  
b. Ways residential students are seen to meet the challenges | 51, 53, 55  
52, 54, 56 | 22 |
APPENDIX D

COMPREHENSIVE COPING PROFILES

STUDENTS COMPLETING THE COURSE WITH RELATIVE EASE

Page 268  Steve
269  Mark
270  Gus
271  William
272  Joseph
273  Syd
274  Bennett
275  Lara
276  Samantha
277  Carmel

STUDENTS COMPLETING THE COURSE WITH SOME DIFFICULTY

Page 278  Hilton
279  Kath
280  Sara
281  Simon
282  Lindsay

STUDENT WITHDRAWING AT END OF YEAR 11 TO TAKE UP AN APPRENTICESHIP

Page 283  Harry

STUDENTS WITHDRAWING FROM COURSE AT END OF YEAR 11 FOR REASONS OTHER THAN APPRENTICESHIP

Page 284  Ursula
285  Flo
286  Anne
287  Helen
288  Peggy
289  Chad
290  John
Steve completed the course with relative ease.
Mark completed the course with relative ease.
Gus completed the course with relative ease.
William completed the course with relative ease.
Joseph completed the course with relative ease.
Syd completed the course with relative ease.
Bennett completed the course with few apparent problems.
Lara was a strong-willed non-residential student who completed the course with relative ease.
Samantha generally coped well but, at times, struggled with adverse peer pressure.
Carmel completed the course with some difficulty as she lacked confidence on the farm and in the workshops.
Hilton found that boarding for two terms helped him deal with family difficulties that disturbed him greatly.
Kath completed the course despite admitting that she found it very difficult to return to school after every holiday.
Sara completed the course with some difficulty.
Simon was required to manage his own financial affairs and was very independent.
Lindsay was not very sure of himself or his future as a recent family break up resulted in his moving from Perth to a farm.
Harry left the course to take up an apprenticeship.
Ursula was one of the group that had problems with the discipline required of residential students.
Flo was one of the group that had problems with the discipline required of residential students.
Anne was one of the group that had problems with the discipline required of residential students.
Helen was one of the group that had problems with the discipline required of residential students.
Peggy’s parents did not allow her to return to Year 12.
Chad’s inability to improve his attitude towards the academic staff and his classroom behaviour resulted in his not being admitted to Year 12.
In spite of repeated counselling, John was unable or unwilling to take the academic side of the program seriously and, as a consequence, was not admitted to Year 12.
APPENDIX E

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENT PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE OVER THE RANGE OF YEAR 10 SUBJECTS
### Data Source: Survey 1 Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

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<th>Data Source</th>
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<th>Liked least</th>
<th>Did least well at</th>
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### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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<th>Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
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### DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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**Data Source:** Survey 1 Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.
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