Parents, Diversity and Cultures of Home and School

Beatriz Cardona, Megan Watkins and Greg Noble

Beatriz Cardona is a researcher at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney. She has extensive experience in cultural research and has participated in various research projects on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in Sydney, including a study on CALD carers in Western Sydney and a report for Nepean Migrant Access on CALD rural communities in the Nepean area.

Megan Watkins is Senior Lecturer in Literacy and Pedagogy in the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney. She is the co-author of *Genre, Text, Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing Writing* (2005) UNSW Press. She has published widely in the areas of pedagogy, affect and the role of the body in learning.

Greg Noble is Associate Professor in Cultural Studies at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney. Greg has been involved in research in multiculturalism for over twenty years. He has published widely on the relations between youth, ethnicity and inequality: see *Cultures of Schooling* (1990), *Kebabs, Kids, Cops and Crime* (2000) and *Bin Laden in the Suburbs* (2004). He has also produced reports for the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Why a study on parental attitudes to schooling?

This study of the perspectives on schooling and education of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is an extension of the *Cultural Practices and Learning Project* (CPLP) Report for the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training (DET) (Watkins and Noble, 2008). The CPLP Report examined the links between ethnicity and what it referred to as the *scholarly habitus* – dispositions of learning essential for successful participation in the Australian schooling system – focusing on students of Chinese, Pasifika and Anglo backgrounds. While a part of this study involved interviews with parents, its primary focus was their children and the home and school practices that contributed to the formation of different dispositions to learning. In the process of conducting this research, a rich supply of data was obtained which fell outside the original mandate of the CPLP, including surveys and information from groups beyond those included in the project. In order to utilise this information and further examine the links between cultural practices and learning, with a stronger emphasis on parental orientations towards education, the project partners agreed to continue with an examination of this data. This report constitutes this extension and draws on interview data from some of the CPLP parents of Chinese, Pasifika and Anglo backgrounds together with that from a number of other parents of Lebanese, Afghani, Iraqi and Indian backgrounds. The main focus of this study is the ways in which these parents from culturally diverse backgrounds negotiate school settings. In particular, it considers the cultural resources parents bring to the school system in NSW and the possible correlations and dislocations between these resources and school cultures. In doing this, it utilises a notion of *educational capital* – the knowledge, attributes and practices valued in the educational system and associated with academic success – and how this impacts on their relationship with the school system and their children's education.

It is hoped this will shed new light on the ways in which parents from culturally diverse backgrounds approach the school system in NSW, including what they perceive to be their role and the role of the school in their children's education. Together with ethnicity (see glossary), it considers factors such as length of residence in Australia, aspects of their pre-migration life experience and issues of class and gender. Importantly, this study also seeks to examine ways in which schools can address the inequitable distribution of educational capital among parents from culturally diverse backgrounds and so promote a greater degree of congruence between home and school cultures.

Chapter 1 – Educational Capital, Ethnic Diversity and Parent Involvement in Schooling

1.1 Educational Capital – What is it?

A focus of this study is to explore the impact that parents' levels of educational capital may have on their children's academic success. This emphasis on parents' educational capital, rather than students' scholarly habitus, as was the case in the CPLP report, allows us to broaden our inquiry into what factors are responsible for, and what strategies work best to enhance, students' academic achievement in NSW schools. Differences in the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement among different ethnic and socio-economic groups have been explained through various theories including those centred on a notion of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1984; Coleman, 1988). Cultural capital refers to valued ways of operating within particular social fields and the possession of certain competencies, skills and knowledge that provide access to resources and socially desirable ends.

Educational capital is a form of cultural capital specifically connected with educational resources, knowledge, skills and values. Many studies have discussed the role of educational capital in shaping student outcomes (Fay, 2001; Reay, 2004) but few have unpacked the concept in adequate detail. For Bourdieu (1986), educational capital is primarily shaped by social class, reproduced through family socialisation and the schooling system, though he did not directly research home-school relationships. Reay (1998) outlines seven aspects of cultural capital relevant to schooling: material resources, educational qualifications, available time, information about the educational system, social confidence, educational knowledge and the ease with which parents approach teaching staff. Lee and Bowen (2006) also sought to define educational capital and consider it exists in three forms:

- personal dispositions, attitudes, and knowledge gained from experience
- connections to education-related objects, eg, books, computers, academic credentials
- connections to education-related institutions, eg, schools, universities, libraries.

Although educational capital is 'possessed' by an individual or a family, it is also a question of how this synchronises with the values and practices of the educational system which shapes educational participation. Campbell and Verna (2007) argue that a positive academic home climate – which promotes academic curiosity and investment – produces higher levels of achievement when it is in congruence with the school's climate. At stake here is the effort parents invest in their children's education. Lareau (2003), in her research on educational capital among families from different socio-economic backgrounds, argues that middle class parents tend to adopt a strategy she calls 'concerted cultivation' which entails high levels of parental intervention in their children's after-school lives that prepares them for professional futures. Working-class and parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, by contrast, tend to invest much less effort in organising their children's lives and directing them towards educational success. Outcomes, then, are seen more as the 'accomplishment of natural growth'.
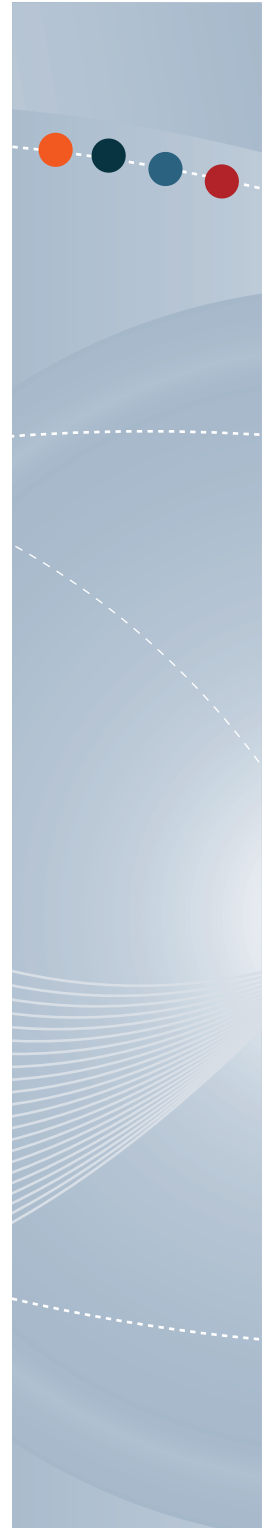
The consequence of this, however, is that working class child rearing is out of synch with the standards of the educational institution (Lareau, 2003, p. 3). The actions of middle-class parents generally engender in their child a practical mastery of the ways of the school; a concerted cultivation that fosters an academically orientated habitus (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 102).

The middle-class strategy of concerted cultivation appears to offer a greater promise of being 'transubstantiated' into social, educational and financial profits than does the working-class strategy (Lareau, 2003). The habitus developed within the middle-class child is more closely aligned with the dominant set of cultural repertoires that comprise the standards and policies of institutions like the school and work. This research suggests a close relationship between the spheres of the home and the school, and the spheres of the parent and the child, which in turn mirrors the expectations of the teacher and school (Livingston, 1999).

For parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds it is not simply social class that shapes these practices, but divergent experiences relating to migration and cultural difference. The CPLP Report examined how different embodied dispositions and capacities such as sustained concentration and application to a task represented divergences in educational capital across the groups examined. This pointed to the role of cultural values and orientations as impacting on levels of educational capital when social class and ethnicity are considered together (Marjoribanks, 2002). By looking at the attitudes towards, and interactions with, the school system by a range of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – Chinese, Pasifika, Anglo, Lebanese, Iraqi, Indian and Afghani – this study extends this examination of the relationship between educational capital, cultural differences and education.

Home and school environments differ considerably and so do parents from different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds differ in their type of involvement in supporting their children's learning. Variations in parent involvement may derive from differences in educational knowledge, cultural practices and financial resources. Parents with low levels of education, for example, may be less involved at school because they feel less confident about communicating with school staff owing to a lack of knowledge of the school system, a lack of familiarity with educational jargon, or their own negative educational experiences. This type of *self-exclusion* is symptomatic of a lack of confidence in specific social settings where parents are not familiar with specific cultural norms (Lamont and Lareau, 1988). Alternatively, parents from different ethnic backgrounds may see their home educational involvement as more important than their involvement at school. While these different patterns of practice may result in some parents having less educational capital, the same parents may still be actively involved at home in one or more ways consistent with the values and practices of the school system (Lee and Bowen, 2006).

1.2 Focusing on Parents as Key Partners in the Education System

Educational capital deriving from family background becomes increasingly significant when we factor in the increasing emphasis placed on parental involvement in school over the last few decades, because not all parents are equally at home in the cultures of schooling. Moreover, the nature and degree of parental involvement varies remarkably across schools. Consequently, there seems to be an increasing sense of confusion among parents with regard to their role in the education of their children, both here and overseas (Mills and Gale, 2004; Herman, 2004; Epstein et al, 2009). Expectations vary from being a co-educator, to a customer, a partner or a supporter (Bridges, 1994). There are also concerns that unequal resources including levels of educational capital inhibit the capacity of parents to perform any of these roles effectively (Reay, 2004). In Australia, the recognition that parental involvement in school and at home can enhance a child's learning partly evolved from an OECD conference in 1973 (Perry-Indermaur, 2004) which endorsed the overall desirability of having meaningful parent participation at the school level because:

> *Without close working relationships with parents and the community institutions they (participants at the conference) could not mobilize the full resources which they needed to enable each individual child to achieve its full potential (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1975, p.133).*

Since this OECD conference in the 1970s there has been a constant call for schools in Australia to improve outcomes for students and society, as evidenced through many school reports in various states of Australia (Marsh, 1988). Issues such as retention rates, low achievement for certain groups in society, increasing unemployment rates, changes in the employment market and skills needed for the labor market all culminated in reviews of education. After considerable effort by different education systems to improve outcomes for students of all backgrounds it was found that outcomes for low socio-economic background and some children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds had not improved to the level that was hoped for and efforts were therefore directed into educating families to assist with the schooling of children (Limerick, 1995; Glen, 1996; Crump, 1996). According to Toomey (1996), studies showed improved outcomes for children who were learning at home under the supervision of a parent or who had parents who were actively involved with their school. Governments, therefore, funded programs encouraging parental involvement such as the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) in the 1980s and the Disadvantaged School Program (DSP) (Perry-Indermaur, 2004, p.104).

Many efforts at extolling the virtues of parental involvement (eg Cairney and Ruge, 1999), however, tend towards simplistic and even romantic conceptualisations of the process, glossing over many of the difficulties involved, not least the absence of the skills needed by parents to negotiate with the school (Mills and Gale, 2004; Reay, 2004). Linking families with schools brings together two major sites of cultural production, and has the advantage

of reinforcing academic cultures providing congruent messages between sites (Perry-Indermaur, 2004; Epstein et al, 2009). Educational practices and values taught at the school can be reproduced in the home setting if there is consensus between parents and schools that these are the desirable traits and behaviours most conducive to academic success. The effect of this practice is shared responsibility for the child's educational outcomes. It can also lead, however, to an over-emphasis on parents' attitudes and practices as being *responsible* for academic success or failure, obscuring other key socio-economic, ethnic, gender and personal factors affecting the nature of these practices (Reay, 2004). Recognising and addressing the existence of different levels of educational capital among parents is an important step in successfully implementing partnership programs between schools and their communities.

Schools encourage parents to become involved in their children's schooling in a number of ways, from participation in fund-raising and grounds activities to Parent and Citizens Associations, to school boards, to inclusion in classroom activities. However, there are many parents who do not get involved at a school level and this is often interpreted by teachers as an indication of parents' lack of interest in their children's education (Soliman, 1991; Crump, 1996). Parents with higher levels of educational capital are more likely to participate in the school system because the capital they possess affords familiarity with concepts such as consultative mechanisms, conflict resolution and advocacy on behalf of their children. Parents with less formal education, or from some CALD backgrounds, often have less confidence participating in the school community (Rigter, 1986). Recent research has also found that most parents in Australia, no matter what their background, are generally only interested in their children's school if problems arise (Perry-Indermaur, 2004). This suggests that attempts to increase parent-school relationships and develop closer partnerships have a long way to go. It also suggests that schools may, unintentionally, contribute to the reproduction of social inequality in that certain groups with higher levels of educational capital simply benefit more in terms of the educational exchange.

Other research suggests that the most effective parental role is the direct 'parental effort' in the learning practices of the home: including discussions around school, reading and advice, etc (Lareau, 2003; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005: Houtenville and Conway, 2008). The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) explicitly recognises the role of parents as the first educators of their children. This is also acknowledged in the recent Family-School Partnerships Framework (DEEWR, 2008) which identifies seven dimensions for planning partnership activities: communicating, connecting learning at home and at school; building community and identity; recognising the role of the family; consultative decision-making; collaborating beyond the school; and participating. This Framework also recognises the variable impact of parents' own backgrounds on their relationships with schools and even provides some useful case studies of family-school partnership programs involving parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Up to this point, however, individual schools and jurisdictions have tended to promote their own parent and community

involvement strategies which operate in various ways and with varying levels of success (ACSSO, 2002). It will be interesting to see whether this Framework, said to be based on existing good practice and an agreed national approach, has an appreciable impact on improving parent-school partnerships especially in schools with parents who possess relatively low levels of educational capital and require considerable support to enable them to operate as effective partners in their children's education. The Framework defines partnerships as being 'a collaborative relationship designed primarily to produce positive educational and social effects on the child while being mutually beneficial to all parties involved' (DEEWR, 2008, p.15). It would seem, however, that there is yet to be *consensus* between schools and communities as to what 'partnership' entails and, together with this, how effective partnerships are achieved, particularly given the changing demographics of student populations in Australian schools.

1.3 Review of Research on Parent Participation in the School System

There is also an increased academic interest in parent participation and parental relationships with school systems (Davies and Johnson, 1996) prompted by a growing body of research supporting the notion that parent involvement is closely linked to student achievement (Davies, Palanki, and Burch, 1993; Henderson and Berla, 1995; Gianzero, 1999; Cuttance and Stokes, 2000; McKeand, 2003; Barnard, 2004; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005; Epstein et al, 2009). This recognition has translated into various strategies to enhance family-school partnerships. Internationally, this has also been given attention through projects such as the Parent Involvement Program in the United States. Under this program schools are provided with specific funds to implement parent involvement policies. Over 80 federally funded Parent Information and Resource Centres (PIRCs) are now in existence to provide advice, training and support to parents (ACSSO, 2002). In the United Kingdom home-school contracts have also been introduced that spell out the responsibilities of individual parents and schools in relation to specific issues such as attendance, behaviour, homework and the delivery of special education services. Such 'contracts', however, have been criticised as not addressing power relationship issues and being more a way to enforce parental compliance with government policies (ACSSO, 2002, p.17).

Research on parents' levels of involvement with schools has also examined the role of ethnicity, culture and language in explaining the dynamics and character of this relationship (Wong and Hughes, 2006; Lee and Bowen, 2006). Findings about the nature and magnitude of the relationship between parent involvement and achievement vary also on the basis of how involvement is measured (eg, Barnard, 2004; McWayne et al., 2004). Studies involving measures of parent involvement at school have generally revealed a relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (Jimerson, Egeland and Teo, 1999; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). However, in studies involving measures of home involvement, less consistent conclusions have been drawn about the effects of parent involvement on academic outcomes. Barnard (2004), for example, found that parents' reports of their involvement at home, including reading,

cooking and discussing issues with children, were not significantly associated with students' academic attainment (Lee and Bowen, 2006, p.2). Other studies, however, showed that parents' reports of educational involvement at home, such as providing assistance and supervision with homework and a supportive home learning environment were positively associated with children's achievement (McWayne et al., 2004). Other researchers have found that parents' attitudes, such as those related to their educational expectations and aspirations for their children, are also associated with successful academic performance (Lee and Bowen, 2006, p.3).

Interestingly for this study, there is also evidence that the quality of links between teachers and families and between communities and schools influences children's academic success (Eccles and Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1995). Dauber and Epstein (1993) in their study of over two thousand American elementary and middle school parents conclude that the best predictor of parental involvement is what the school does to promote it. The study found that single and/or parents from culturally and linguistically backgrounds and those living in poor communities will be more involved if schools implement appropriate practices to engage them (also see Gianzero, 1999). It is clear, therefore, that schools need to implement strategies to engage parents, paying specific attention to individuals and communities who are reluctant or unfamiliar with the cultural expectations of developing ongoing relationships between parents and schools (Epstein et al, 2009).

1.4 Cultural Differences and Educational Practices

Interest in exploring the role of cultural values and educational practices among CALD communities in Australia has been partly motivated by the view that Chinese-Australian students tend to achieve higher academic success compared to the rest of the population (Cheng, 1998; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Duffy, 2001; Wu and Singh 2004). Indian-Australian students have also been identified as high achievers (Khoo et al., 2002). Together with this, attention has been drawn to the relatively poor academic performance of some groups, including those from Pasifika backgrounds (Valdez, 2007). A significant amount of research (Stevenson and Stigler, 1994; Cheng and Wong, 1996; Cheng, 1998) has come to the conclusion that there is a cultural (as well as class) dimension that strongly affects thinking about, and practice in, education. But this operates in two, distinct ways that are often conflated – in terms of cultural differences within a nation, and differences between national contexts.

The different policies systems implement for the improvement of education are often affected by the cultural traditions of a particular society. Education in many 'Asian' countries, for example, is quite different compared to that in Australia and other Western countries. Cheng (1998), for example, refers to the different role teachers perform in schools in many Asian countries compared to those in the West. In what is perhaps equivalent to pastoral care in the West, teachers in countries such as China and Japan spend a large part of their time in the non-instructional realm. Many teachers in these systems have to act as supervisors

of extracurricular clubs or teams. They pay home visits, help preside over school assemblies, and conduct many other activities that have little to do with direct classroom teaching. This is in marked contrast to Australia or the USA, where regulations and union rules have defined the teacher's role almost exclusively as classroom instruction (Cheng, 1998, p.20). In relation to the Australian educational context, some forms of cultural capital are more valued than others. One example, cited by Saha (2003), relates to cultural practices by parents, such as *ch'onji* or 'tokens of appreciation' given to teachers in Korean schools to secure greater teacher's attention to the child's educational needs. This type of pre-migration cultural capital is not applicable in the Australian context, as parents soon find out. Other differences refer to issues such as time in school, role of tests, discipline policies and teaching methodology. The significance of positioning educational practices as *cultural products* is that it helps us to understand how different parental approaches and orientations towards education have grown out of the values and norms of national cultures (Cheng, 1998).

Some researchers have used these differences between national systems to make greater claims about broader cultural differences which are then read into the experiences of migrants and their children in a host country. Stevenson and Stigler's (1994) study of societal educational practices in East Asia and the United States concluded that Anglo-American parents in the United States attribute their children's success and failure to innate ability while Asian-American parents paid greater attention to the effort of children and to the environment in which they learn. This dichotomy has been explained as rooted in cultural values, and what has been termed 'the individualism-collectivism continuum'. According to Cheng (1998), education is viewed first and foremost as a means of socialisation in the 'collectivist' cultures of East Asia, shaped by a history which produces the uniformity and conformity of East Asian educational systems (Cheng, 1998, p.16). These cultural orientations are embedded in practices such as regular homework and constant review of school work; encouraging particular habits of learning that have crucial implications for children's education.

In contrast, Western societies, it is often claimed, tend to favour values of individualism which seem to view education as a means of empowering the individual and addressing children's particular needs and potentialities (Steinberg, 1996). In an extreme version, Steinberg (1996) indicts contemporary American education for fostering student lifestyles which prize socialising or leisure pursuits over achievement.

Research on parental attitudes, including the CPLP study, does not, however, support sweeping claims about national cultural differences and their translation into migrant communities within nations. Rather, there are complex cultural and social factors at play which affect and are affected by educational practices.

The various research findings on parental effort highlight the uneven distribution of educational capital among and within societies and groups due to socio-economic, cultural and personal life experience factors. What this present
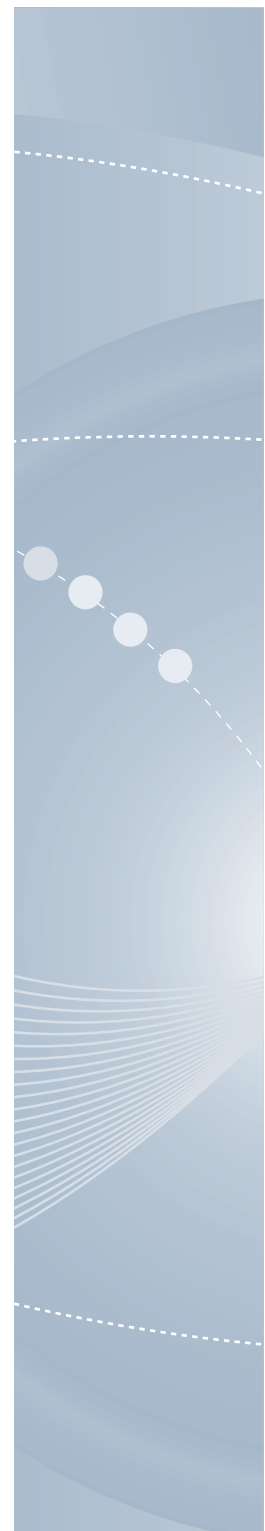
study of parental attitudes and practices seeks to analyse is the manner in which this educational capital is transmitted by parents through areas such as homework routines, extracurricular activities, career expectations and out of school learning opportunities. It also seeks to suggest pathways to address inequalities in educational capital by focusing on ways to strengthen school-home relationships.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1 Data Collection Techniques

Data used to inform this study was derived from a series of interviews which were conducted with 22 parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds whose children attended nine different schools across Sydney, each of which is profiled below. Interviews were also held with the Principals and or Deputies from these schools. As with the CPLP, each of the parents had children in Year 3 which was the focus year for this study. The rationale for a focus on Year 3 lies in the significance of this year in the structure of the educational processes within the NSW system. Up until 2007 students completed their first NSW Basic Skills Test (BST) in Year 3. In the following year, students may also complete tests for admission to selective classes for Years 5 and 6. Responses to questions related to these tests provide some account of parents' educational aspirations for their children and also some insight into the educational capital they possess.

Many of the parents included in this study fell outside the CPLP sample because they did not identify as being of Chinese, Pasifika or Anglo background. All parents of Year 3 students from the initial group of CPLP schools, however, were surveyed about practices within the home that may impact on their children's academic performance and also their attitudes to, and involvement in, their children's schooling. Many parents who could not be used for the further CPLP study expressed an interest to be interviewed. The data obtained from a number of these parents, together with several used in the CPLP, form the basis of this report.

Interview questions were based around similar questions presented in the survey (see appendix) with more specific treatment of habits and practices in the home, aspirations and the NSW Basis Skills Test and International Competitions and Assessments for schools conducted by Educational Assessment Australia, University of NSW (UNSW). Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended providing opportunities for the respondents to elaborate on their general views about education and specific aspects of their child's schooling. The interviews ranged from 30-70 minutes in duration and all were audio recorded.

2.2 Profiles of Schools

Allerton Public School (PS)

Allerton PS is a school of 400 students located in the south-western suburbs of Sydney. Most students' families are of low socio-economic status (SES) and live in public housing accommodation. The school receives Priority Schools Program (PSP) funding. Approximately 60% of students enrolled at Allerton PS are from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). Half of these students are of Pasifika background, mainly Samoan. The student population is also 8% Aboriginal.

Aston PS

Aston PS, with a student population of 500, is located in the outer western suburbs of Sydney. Most families are of a low socio-economic status (SES) and the school receives PSP funding. The largest group within the LBOTE population is Pasifika, mainly Samoan, though there are also Cook Islander, Tongan and Maori students enrolled at the school. In addition to this, 23% of the population is Aboriginal. Given the relatively transient nature of the Pasifika population in the area, there were considerable difficulties in recruiting Pasifika parents for the study.

Austinborough PS

Austinborough PS, with a student population of approximately 430 students, is located in the inner western suburbs of Sydney. It has an 87% LBOTE population with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds though primarily: Indian, Sri Lankan, Iraqi, Iranian, Afghani, Chinese, Vietnamese and Pasifika. Up until the last quadrennium, the school received funding under the Priority Schools Program

Broughton Heights PS

Broughton Heights is a very large school of over 1,000 students. Located in the western suburbs of Sydney, it draws on families from low SES. Students at the school come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with students from Chinese backgrounds representing almost 40% of total enrolments and Pasifika students approximately 9 % (mainly Tongan and Samoan). Other backgrounds represented at the school include Lebanese, Iraqi, Afghani, Sudanese, Vietnamese and Korean.

Briar Plains PS

Briar Plains PS is also located in the western suburbs of Sydney and draws on a similar population to Broughton Heights PS. Approximately 98% of the 550 students enrolled at Briar Plains PS are from language backgrounds other than English with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Of these students, 19% are of Pasifika background, 38% Arabic-speaking and 6% Chinese. There are very few Anglo background students at the school.

Billingswood PS

Billingswood PS is a school of 640 students located in the western suburbs of Sydney. 93% of students are from language backgrounds other than English with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds including Chinese, Vietnamese, Serbian and Tongan and recently arrived Afghani, Iraqi and Sudanese refugees. They speak more than 70 different languages. The school has a PSP classification given the number of low SES students.

Chestervale PS

Chestervale PS is located in a middle-SES suburb in Sydney's north-west with an overall population of 700 students. Chinese background students, from mainly

Hong Kong, China and Malaysia, make up 74% of the student population. The school has an Anglo population of 12%. The remaining major LBOTE groups are Indian and Korean.

Colinville PS

Colinville PS also has a population of 700 students including Opportunity Classes in Years 5 and 6. It is located in an inner-western suburb of Sydney and, while there are a considerable number of students whose parents have professional and managerial employment backgrounds, there are also some from a lower SES. The school is 55% LBOTE with significant numbers from Chinese backgrounds.

Cayley Waters PS

Cayley Waters PS is located in a low to middle SES area of western Sydney. It has a student population of 623, 79% of whom are from a LBOTE. While there are significant numbers of students of Arabic speaking and Greek backgrounds, students from Chinese backgrounds comprise the largest group in the school, representing almost 40% of total enrolments.

2.3 Background of Parent Participants

The parent participants in this study identified themselves as coming from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds as shown in Table 1. As a small-scale study, there was no attempt to provide a statistically representative sample of the major cultural groups in Australia; rather, it was based entirely on the willingness of parents to be involved.

Table 1: Backgrounds of Participants

Backgrounds	Number
Anglo	3
Chinese	3
Lebanese	4
Afghani	3
Iraqi	1
Indian	5
Pasifika	3
TOTAL	22

As table 2 indicates, the parents also differed in terms of length of residence in Australia, employment and educational status.

Table 2: Select Details of Participants

| Parent	Country of birth	Length of residence in Australia	Employment status	Educational level	SES *	School child attends
1. Laila	Afghanistan	2 years	Home duties	Primary school	l	Broughton Heights PS
2. Masood	Afghanistan	2 years	Unskilled worker	Primary school	l	Broughton Heights PS
3. Akmal	Afghanistan	5 years	Unemployed	High school	l	Broughton Heights PS
4. Rida	Iraq	14 years	Unemployed	Trade certificate	l	Billingswood PS
5. Rajah	Lebanon	40 years	Professional	University degree	h/m	Colinville PS
6. Maida	Lebanon	10 years	Professional	University degree	h/m	Broughton Heights PS
7. Ghassan	Lebanon	10 years	Unskilled worker	High school	l	Broughton Heights PS
8. Colleen	Lebanon	22 years	Unemployed	High school	l	Briar Plains PS
9. Rashna	India	10 months	Home duties	Bachelor degree	h/m	Austinborough PS
10. Tulika	India	1 year	Professional	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Austinborough PS
11. Renu	India	15 years	Professional	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Chestervale PS
12. Indira	India	12 years	Home duties	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Cayley Waters PS
13. Janani	India	14 years	Administrative	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Chestervale PS
14. Mary	China	18 years	Home duties	Bachelor degree	l	Broughton Heights PS
15. Iris	China	14 years	Professional	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Chestervale PS
16. Youchan	China	2 years	Technical trade	Bachelor degree	h/m	Colinville PS .
17. Silei	Fiji	10 years	Administrative	Trade certificate	l	Broughton Heights PS
18. Eileen	Samoa	Not provided	Unskilled worker	Trade certificate	l	Briar Plains PS
19. Salesi	Samoa	4 years	Unskilled worker	Trade certificate	l	Allerton PS
20. Laura	Australia	Born in Australia	Home duties	High School	h/m	Chestervale PS
21. Kelly	Australia	Born in Australia	Home duties	High School	l	Aston PS
22. Jocelyn	Australia	Born in Australia	Professional	Postgraduate degree	h/m	Colinville PS

* SES - This delineation as either high/middle (h/m) or low (l) SES is based on survey returns of parents' income and occupation and serves as only a general categorisation in terms of SES.

The level of education that parents had attained was a key discriminator and provides valuable insight into parents' differential educational capital. There were significant differences as well as similarities between individuals in terms of education. A higher level of educational achievement among the parents of Indian background was evident in the sample while Afghani parents indicated lower levels of educational achievement. Lebanese parents had the longest period of residence in Australia whilst the Afghani parents were the most recent arrivals. These differences are significant, given the impact length of residence can have on settlement issues, such as employment and housing stability, and on educational outcomes, particularly in relation to English language proficiency, knowledge of the educational system and school expectations in Australia.

Given that the sample is not statistically representative, it is worthwhile to juxtapose the interviewees with figures for each of these groups found in the 2006 Census (ABS, 2008). In terms of key economic indicators, Afghanis and Iraqis in Australia have substantially higher rates of unemployment (8% and 9% respectively), and those in employment are more likely to be found in manual work (27% and 30%). Chinese (46%) and Indian Australians (48%) are more likely to be found in professional and managerial positions, while the Lebanese are most likely to be self-employed (5%). The Chinese (31%) and Indians (33%) are significantly more likely to have a university degree, while the Iraqis and Afghanis have much lower family incomes (55% and 53% under $52,000, respectively). Those identified as 'Australian' have the lowest rates of unemployment (3.6%), have a more even distribution across employment categories, and yet are only marginally above Afghanis, Iraqis, Polynesians and Lebanese in having a University degree (at 13%) (ABS, 2008).

This broad brushstroke summary of ABS data suggests the small sample of each of the groups within this study are relatively representative of their overall populations within Australia, with the exception of the Lebanese parents (two have university degrees). Despite this, we do not make any claims about the generalisability of our findings.

Despite a large number of the participants having a language background other than English, interpreters were only accessed for two of the Afghani parents. Some of the questions, particularly in relation to coaching colleges and extracurricular activities, were difficult to interpret, not only because of lack of familiarity with these activities but also in terms of the concepts themselves. This alerted us to the impact of recent settlement, as well as unfamiliarity with the Australian educational context, in the choices they made for their children and their educational practices. Through the interviews, explanations of these concepts were provided by the interviewer and appropriate referrals given to those parents wishing to find out more, for example, about after-school academic assistance. This lack of knowledge and resources by newly arrived migrants with limited English proficiency and from countries unfamiliar with Western education models also highlighted current information gaps between
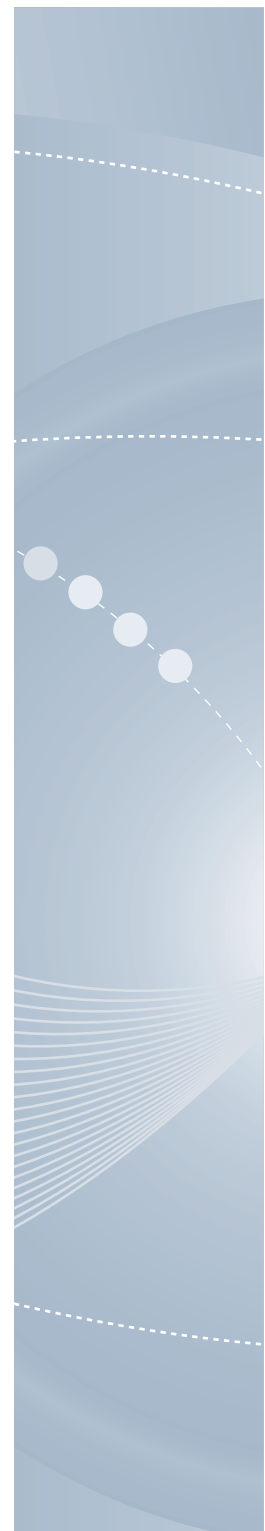
schools and communities. Throughout the findings sections in this study, the lack of appropriate liaising strategies demonstrated by parents with low levels of educational capital from LBOTE migrant backgrounds emerged as a key issue.

The array of home and school involvement this study analyses includes visiting the school, attending parent-teacher meetings and volunteering at the school. It also looks at parental involvement at home, including helping and supervising homework, management of each child's time in school and non-school-related activities. The study also explores parents' views and educational expectations for their children in order to ascertain symmetries and asymmetries between what parents say and what they practise at home.

Interviews with school executive - principals or deputies - from each of the schools were also conducted and the findings are included in Chapter 5. All interviews were recorded and open-ended to facilitate discussion of issues of greatest concern. These interviews sought to determine the impact of school demographics and parental practices on the way schools are managed and policies are implemented. It also sought to ascertain school policies and practices to engage parents in the school community and enhance partnerships between home and school.

Chapter 3 – Parents' Attitudes to Education and Schooling

This chapter explores the parents' attitudes towards education in NSW, including the value each attributed to academic endeavor and achievement. It also looks at specific school-related practices such as homework routines and extracurricular activities.

3.1 The Role of Primary Schools

One important theme emerging from the interviews was the relationship between migration experience, socio-economic status and the manner in which parents positioned themselves and their children in relation to the educational system in NSW. Differences in sense of entitlement and citizenship rights were communicated through parents' comments about the role of primary schools in their children's education. Parents from some countries where their children's education was affected by conflict and poor economic circumstances, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, had limited expectations regarding the school system when compared to other parents. Akmal, from Afghanistan, for example, felt that, 'Primary school is to give the opportunity for the child to learn … here there is everything for the child to learn. But in Afghanistan … nothing for child to learn'. Akmal indicated that primary school could offer his child the opportunities he had missed back in Afghanistan and his expectations were affected by this previous lack of basic services such as education. This view contrasts with the positions adopted by other parents with different life experiences, who perceived primary school more as providing a template for further education and academic development. Rashna of Indian background pointed out that, 'Primary school is basically the foundation of the child. Concepts should be clear so they can be clear of what they want to study later … so strong that they are able to do anything'. Rajah, a long-term resident of Lebanese background had a similar view: 'The main role is to socialise the kids, especially if they haven't been to preschool and to teach them a little bit of independence from home and to obviously prepare them for high school in later years'.

Akmal framed his understanding of the role of primary schools by comparing Australia to Afghanistan, focusing on basic issues of accessibility and resources. Compared to his home country the Australian educational system provides 'everything' his child needs in order to learn. Pre-migration experience is an important factor here shaping Akmal's perceptions and expectations. The issue of accessibility and opportunity to have an education is given greater emphasis than concerns with the actual quality of teaching being provided at his child's school. Rida's and Rajah's expectations of the school system, by contrast, focus more on the specific skills and competences children should learn in primary school in order to be well equipped, both academically and socially, to enter high school. This future-oriented framework represents a form of educational capital that allows these parents to complement and reinforce important educational principles based on agency, endeavour and effort for long-term benefits.

3.2 Meetings with Teachers

The parents' different expectations and attitudes towards school institutions are also reflections of variables such as length of residence in Australia, migration and re-settlement experience. Actively seeking and attending meetings with school teachers or principals to discuss children's academic issues is a role generally expected from parents in NSW public schools. Not all parents, however, are properly informed of such expectations nor do they have the skills to perform such an advocacy role, particularly low SES parents and those from refugee backgrounds. The Afghani parents in this study, for example, were unaware of an expectation that they should have input and pro-active participation in their child's schooling. For most of these parents, as the comment by Laila, highlights, they also get involved if there is some problem: 'I want to know if my son is in trouble'.

Refugee and pre-migration experiences including social and political repression can also translate into a sense of gratitude towards Australia and not wanting to be seen as critical of the system (Cardona et al, 2006). This gratitude was expressed by the Afghani respondents through positive remarks about education and life in general in Australia and a reluctance to provide any criticism, despite some concerns with their children's education. Parents may also feel uneasy about contacting the teacher or school principal for fear of being seen as 'problematic' (Mestan, 2004) or culturally incompetent, particularly in relation to use of appropriate jargon and/or English communication skills. Some respondents were reluctant to criticise their child's school or actively advocate on behalf of their children if they had issues of concern. Silei, of Fijian background, for example, pointed out that, 'The first time I spoke to the teacher I went home and I thought to myself, I won't say anything again, I will just go along with the flow … and you know I didn't want to create any problems in school'. Colleen, of Lebanese background, explained that, 'Sometimes they send letters home for interviews. I don't go there … because I went a few times and it is like I didn't go … nothing changed' and Akmal just felt that, 'I have no problem … I try and stay here if not a problem'.

Some of these comments also reveal a sense of powerlessness to influence outcomes, opting instead for options such as leaving the school, 'going along with the flow', or not attending school meetings. Lack of power to negotiate in difficult or unfamiliar cultural and social settings such as schools leads here to withdrawal and 'self-exclusion' with detrimental effects for the children as issues are left unaddressed or unresolved (Lamount and Lareau, 1988). This cultural disadvantage is manifested here under the form of 'self-exclusion' by the parents rather than forms of direct exclusion from the school. What is at stake here is not experiences of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity but more subtle and pervasive exercises of power and marginalisation through parents' lack of educational capital.

The specific cultural norms and practices needed to successfully negotiate the school setting including appropriate use of jargon, knowledge of procedures such as setting up meetings and contacting the right person in authority, seeking written 'contracts', the arrangements of steps to be followed to address problems and certain leadership skills, are all practices which seem quite natural and culturally neutral but in fact require complex skills and cultural understandings not equally distributed among all groups in society. Parents in this study equipped with this knowledge, constituting a form of educational capital, were in a more advantageous position and able to successfully advocate on behalf of their children. Conversely, parents with limited educational capital such as those from some cultural and linguistic backgrounds and many of a low SES in particular, found this advocacy challenging, as the following comment from Kelly, a low SES Anglo parent reveals:

> I didn't like to come up and confront the school. I used to be one of the ones that would sit on the fence, like cabbages and now I think it is the other way around … Issues came up and I realise I had to speak … I am now on the P&C Committee.

The decision to instigate meetings with the school was prompted by 'issues' that were concerning Kelly rather than as an accepted and familiar practice. This sense of being forced into a situation requiring contact with the school, contrasts again with the response from Indira, a parent of Indian background, who considered these meetings simply 'matter of fact', a right of parents that did not require any particular issue attached to them:

> I felt very comfortable approaching the school … You know if I have gone to pick up my daughter at the end of the day and if she is still in class I just had a word with the teacher … But here in this school is different, they are not accessible and even if you try to have a quick word to them before class, they just leave the room. I feel as if they are trying to avoid you.

As this comment also illustrates, being comfortable about contacting a school to discuss academic issues is not only affected by a parent's level of educational capital; school practices and school cultures also play an important role. Indira indicated that she perceived a degree of animosity from her child's school towards ongoing contact with parents; a perception shared by respondents in this study as symptomatic of greater problems affecting schools, including administrative policies and structures. Kelly, for example, whose child attended another school, commented that:

> The way the school was organised was creating a lot of chaos … there were complaints made to district office concerning the welfare of the children and the discipline and since then it has improved a lot.
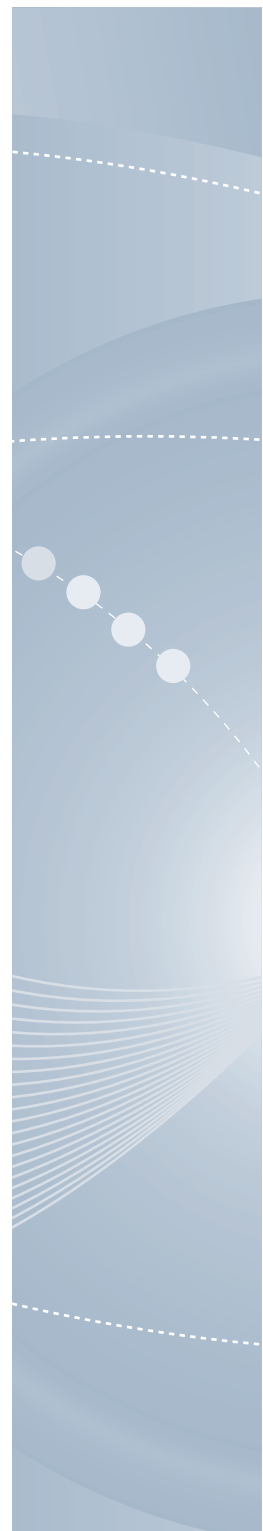
Another significant factor shaping the level of interaction with the school relates to cultural views regarding the role of parents and the role of schools. The Chinese parents felt that Anglo parents more frequently visited schools and discussed matters of concern with teachers than did Chinese parents, a view evident in other studies (Stevenson and Stigler, 1994). The reasons provided by Chinese parents in this study, however, pointed more towards language barriers and lack of familiarity with the school culture, rather than cultural views per se. When asked about participation in school activities such as Parents & Citizens' (P&C) Committees, one Chinese parent, Norman, was unaware such meetings took place:

> Yes sometime I have spoken with the teacher, when there is the interview.
> And the teacher tells us something if the children are good or not good …
> PC meetings? I don't know … what subject is that?

This limited involvement with the school, however, was not identified as an issue of concern for Norman and was not impacting on his child' s academic performance, as he was a high achiever. Providing a supportive learning environment at home including homework supervision, and assistance was seen by the Chinese parents in this study as a key factor for their children's academic success, rather than any ongoing participation in school activities on their part. They also shared the perception that parents only need to approach teachers when there are specific concerns regarding their children's academic development, rather than on an ongoing basis, as the following comment from Mary highlights:

> I will. I will speak to the teacher if I feel there is something. If he is in the
> average OK I won't speak but if I feel he is not very good, he can't catch up
> or something happen, I want to know what happen for him.

Cultural differences also emerged in relation to the nature and purpose of exchanges with teachers. Some parents, from mainly Pasifika backgrounds, were more concerned with knowing whether their children misbehaved in the classroom. Many Pasifika parents felt that the teacher was 'always right', as the following comment by Eileen illustrates:

> Sometime my son came and he say, oh mum, it is too rough, you know,
> this and this. They always shouting and I say look, the teacher is like that
> because … they are not listening. If you listen and you do exactly what
> the teacher is saying, you will never hear the teachers' voice up … I say,
> remember mum go to school before you … I know.

There was a tendency among the Pasifika parents in the study to identify their responsibilities in terms of providing for their children's social and emotional development with academic matters viewed as mainly the responsibility of teachers. Previous research on Samoan communities (Valdez et al., 2007) points to similar findings regarding cultural differences in parents' perceptions

of their responsibilities. The implication of this is that some parents, although interested in their children's academic achievement, took few practical steps to support them in achieving these goals as they felt this was the responsibility of the school.

3.3 Relationships between Home and School

A view of home and school as being quite distinct spheres of influence can vary in relation to both ethnicity and SES. As previously discussed, research has identified a contrast in how the spheres of home and school are viewed by parents of high and low SES (Lareau, 2003). Low SES parents are more inclined to view home and school as separate spheres of influence, while their high SES counterparts saw them as closely intertwined (Lareau, 2003). However, for some parents from cultural and linguistic backgrounds characterised by strong attitudes towards education, such as those from Chinese and Indian backgrounds, socio-economic factors play a secondary role (Watkins and Noble, 2008).

The possession of high SES and educational capital therefore mediates cultural orientations and societal attitudes, including tendencies to view home and school as separate spheres of influence. Regardless of their ethnic background, it was generally the case that parents in this study with high levels of educational capital supported a closer relationship with the school. It was equally noticeable that Afghani, Pasifika, Lebanese and Anglo parents of low SES had limited interactions with the school, and that generally the home environment did not support practices promoting academic engagement. Among the Chinese parents in this study, strong cultural orientations and pre-migration societal practices in favour of academic endeavour and individual effort resulted in a consistency of practices between school and home. A similar orientation was evident among Indian parents. This was also facilitated by the high socio-economic status of this group as well as access to knowledge and resources to provide their children with the opportunities to replicate the school environment outside school hours.

Comments by parents in this study, therefore, tend to echo Lareau's findings in relation to the impact of SES, measured in terms of educational and professional work experience, on educational capital. With most of the Chinese and Indian parents, however, SES did not have as central an impact on their level of educational capital and the high performance levels of their children. For the other groups in this study, SES and educational capital levels combined to play a crucial role in their attitudes and practices towards education. Their levels of educational achievement and work experience in Australia or overseas provided them with educational capital, manifested in terms of specific values, practices and dispositions, which mirror the expectations of the teacher and school. Parents' levels of educational capital in most cases played a more significant role than ethnicity per se in determining family practices. So, for instance, parents in this study with higher education and/or professional experience in Australia or overseas, displayed consistent dispositions, orientations and educational

strategies seeking to re-produce the attitudes, rewards, prestige and mobility educational achievement afforded them. As Rajah of Lebanese background explained:

> *Dad was an accountant, mum became a teacher, so they both had tertiary education there (Lebanon). So that impacted on me … my dad was buried in a book or newspaper all his life so we just followed suit. My grandfather wrote books. My great grandfather wrote, they were both writers and readers. So it is just part of our family.*

Rashna, of Indian background, had a similar experience:

> *Right from day one, the day we were born we were taught that we had to be at the top. Only when we get into good universities, and then we will get a good job, we will be able to survive.*

Conversely, parents with lower levels of educational capital tended to invest limited time and effort in reinforcing school cultures and scholarly success. The following comments illustrate this point with obvious repercussions for important home activities such as homework, test preparation and parental supervision of work. Ghassan, of Lebanese background, remarked that, 'I don't push my kids to learn. If they want to learn they learn, if they don't want to learn that is entirely up to them' and Eileen, a Pasifika parent, had a similar perspective:

> *I'm not expecting a special thing from him from school, what I say to him, all the time when I talk to him because I always talk to him … I am not forcing him to, like other parents because you don't know what is in his mind, you don't know what he likes, you know.*

Such comments by parents, however, should not be interpreted as demonstrating a lack of care or concern for their children's education. Rather, they highlight the uneven distribution of educational capital and different perspectives on education and its role. This unevenness becomes more marked when looking at specific activities such as homework routines, supervision and extracurricular activities which are the focus of the next chapter. Before turning our attention to these specific examples, however, it is important to consider the perspectives on schooling held by many of the Chinese and Indian parents in this study who tended to place considerable emphasis on the academic achievement of their children.

3.4 Attitudes to Education and Assessment Practices

Interviews with Chinese parents in this study highlighted a strong orientation towards what Lareau (2003) terms 'concerted cultivation' (see p.6) which in turn equips their children with the educational capital needed for academic achievement. Such a tendency, evident in the CPLP report and highlighted in other research (Cheng, 1998; Li, 1999), is explained through various theories

including a greater emphasis on effort – as opposed to ability – and seems to vary little in terms of socio-economic background. This notion of cultivation is evident in a remark by Mary, a parent of Chinese background and also cited in the CPLP Report:

When children are small you have to control them like tree, small tree. When they are young we have to hold them up straight. When they are bigger, grow up, they understand what is right and what is wrong, and what they can do and what they can't do.

This comment suggests that children need to be directed in certain ways and this requires effort and discipline. The concern is not so much with what the child feels or thinks but with instilling the 'right' way of thinking and feeling in accordance with parental expectations. Views such as these were mainly echoed by Chinese and Indian parents, particularly in relation to encouraging their children to participate in tests as a way of cultivating scholarly mastery. Iris, for example remarked that,

Well, science he has got a distinction and the maths he got a high distinction … I think he can do even better than that because you know, he finished quickly … I think he can do better, but you know.

In explaining her daughter's performance Indira pointed out,

She got Band 4 in all subjects … but she can do better than that, I know it, all she needs is that push and that concept of timing.

Such views contrast markedly with the perspectives on testing expressed by two Anglo parents. Kelly, of low SES, felt:

If [my daughter] said 'Mum I want to do them' (the tests) then yes, I would let her do them. But unless she really wants to do them I don't think I would put her through it … only because I am not sure what that might do to her self-confidence … if she doesn't want to do it I don't want to force her .

Laura of a much higher SES, however, had a similar view:

I don't agree with testing … if it was their thing I would get them to do it, but it is not their thing, they would rather do sport. So I would rather put them in competitions for sport that I know that is their strength, and therefore they would be able to achieve and be happy about themselves.

These comments reflect Stevenson and Stigler's Western educational orientation in favour of ability (rather than effort), rooted in cultural traditions of individualism (Steinberg, 1996; Cheng, 1998). Through these comments it is possible to infer that a disposition to learn, or what the CPLP Report termed 'scholarly habitus',
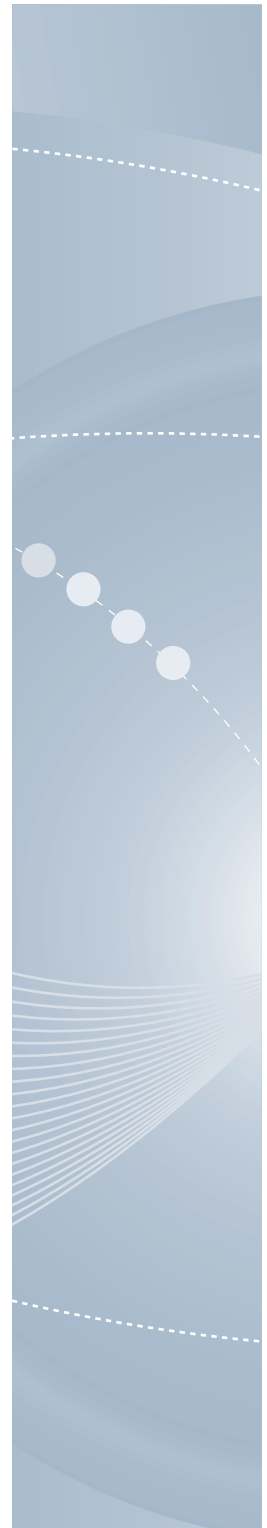
is not being strongly transmitted to the children by these Anglo parents mainly out of concern for their emotional well being. In contrast, Iris and Indira strongly emphasised effort and the belief that children can achieve academically if they are directed towards this goal. This divergence of views and practices in child rearing has been cited by parents in this study as a source of tension and resentment. Some parents perceived those of Chinese background as putting too much pressure on their children and placing them in an advantageous position over the rest of the population. Laura, the Anglo parent cited above for example, felt that:

> They push their kids a hell of a lot more. They are virtually always in after-school, they are doing work after school, they are doing work on the weekends. They yeah, so they don't allow their children to go and play and do social activities as much as we do … They don't understand why we don't have our children doing all this work and yeah, so there is not really a melting of relationships with the Asian mothers and the others.

She added:

> Asians feel that academic success is the only way. And I still think my kids are going to get to high school and they are going to be fine and they will learn their own way.

Conversely, some Indian parents felt Anglo parents were not paying enough attention to their children's education and this was impacting on their academic success. As Janani explained,

> It is parent's involvement that should be there as well and I in Australia since 92 and I've been living in different suburbs and I notice that some of the families they don't really cater very much for their children, children's education, I mean they are just – they don't worry too much what they are doing and what they are not doing, and primary classes are very, very important where you learn how to read, how to write, … that's what I have actually – sorry to say – but Australians are not looking into this thing very seriously because, probably it is the ... and probably again it is a cultural thing maybe.

This comment reflects Steinberg's critique of Western social values which value lifestyle and consumption. Some parents, particularly from Indian and Chinese backgrounds, found it difficult to accommodate to what they perceive is a less demanding and rigorous system in Australian schools. Rashna, from India, for example, felt that schools were not providing the right academic foundations needed to prepare children for the demands of high school, as the following comment indicates:

Primary schools in India are more disciplined, more tests and lots of homework and there is a lot more involvement of the parents so the children are ready to face the demands of high school … And that is what is lacking here and that makes me really unhappy, and a couple of my friends here they send their children overseas, back home to get their primary education there, so that they have the right foundations and they come back here after finishing Year 6 … all the grinding work has been done and now the rest of the path is smooth and they can do it.

Not all the Chinese and Indian parents, however, placed such a strong emphasis on discipline and were critical of what they saw as a lacking in NSW schools. Norman of Chinese background explained that,

Before we came to Australia we were a bit … the children had to listen to all the parents said, just like the teacher, but when we came here we changed the attitude. Sometimes we have asked what he feels … and what's his opinion … In China the teacher and parents make the decisions … so no very good at school.

An Afghani parent, Laila, whose child had also attended school in Pakistan, commented on the disadvantages of punitive systems and the positive impact Australian educational practices were having on her child's well being:

One thing about Afghanistan or Pakistan is that when the kids are in class they are hit by teachers which is very bad. They are punished so they lose their interest and they do not go back to school, so that's why I do not like that … here ... because the teachers respect the children, it is not in Afghanistan there, but here the discipline and respect, everything is good.

Maida, a Lebanese parent, also viewed high homework demands, common in Lebanon and other countries, as excessive and detrimental to children. She highlighted differences between the school her child attended and the Islamic school the children of a friend attended:

The homework, we had in Lebanon, for example, or in other countries, the child comes home, we never stop studying. But when I come to the school I understand what is happening. You can't stress the child more, this is what you can do. If he wants to do more, let him do it, not compulsory. And I can see some friends who have some children and Islamic school, private school, they are suffering from the homework.

These comments highlight the manner in which educational expectations and parental practices are significantly shaped by the dynamic and complex interplay of cultural orientations, social practices and the challenges of settlement and adaptation to a new country. Parental expectations, although rooted in diverse

cultural heritages, are situationally motivated and historically transformed in different ways in response to the demands of the Australian socio-cultural context.

Parents' own level of education and occupation also played an important role in their aspirations and orientations towards their children's scholarly success. The higher educational qualifications of Indian parents in this study translated into higher educational aspirations by this group, compared to other respondents. The Chinese parents also placed high value on the educational success of their children. For some parents, however, including those from Afghanistan and Lebanon, their own low educational and professional achievement, translated into high aspirations for her children. These parents did not want their children to experience the same level of destitution and social alienation they had experienced as the following comment by Laila, an Afghani parent, illustrates:

> I want my children to be educated and have a bright future because as myself I have not done anything, so I don't want my children to be like me, I want them to be educated.

Conversely, some parents also projected their own educational experiences and aspirations onto their children, and saw no need for their children to accomplish beyond what they themselves had achieved. Ghassan, a Lebanese parent commented:

> I don't expect my kids to be pilots or doctors or whatever, that's not my expectation. I went to a primary school and I think I've succeeded in life, and I am quite happy with it, so there is no difference between him and me.

The relationship Ghassan draws between his own life experiences and achievements and aspirations he holds for his children was echoed, albeit in a lesser degree, by some Anglo parents through comments such as 'he is going to be OK', or 'they are going to be fine'.

Their own educational and professional experiences have an important impact on parents' attitudes towards education. Despite the shared aspirations by all parents in this study for their children to succeed, there were significant differences as to what this 'success' meant. Parents with higher levels of educational capital, such as many of the Indian and Chinese parents, ascribed greater value to academic accomplishment as an indicator of success. Others, however, in particular many Anglo background parents, had a broader understanding of 'success' to include notions of self-fulfilment. Jocelyn, for example, commented that:

> I want my kids to be really happy and be comfortable in the choices they have made as well and you know, if they were really, really good at school and not very good at being in the world, then I wouldn't think that was completely successful.

3.5 Conclusion

Parental expectations and relationships with the school system were informed by various factors including socio-economic background, migration experience and levels of educational capital. Familiarity with aspects of schooling in NSW and confidence in communicating effectively in English were important factors informing parental relationships with schools. The parents from Afghani and Pasifika backgrounds for example, with poor English language proficiency and knowledge of schooling in NSW had the greatest difficulty in developing relationships with their children's school. They also felt unable to voice their concerns because of unfamiliarity with advocacy roles and fear of being branded as 'troublesome'. Also, a greater emphasis on a notion of 'concerted cultivation' was identified among parents with high levels of educational capital such as the Chinese and Indian parents. Conversely, parents with low levels of educational capital, including some parents from Afghani, Pasifika and Anglo backgrounds, favoured a less interventionist approach to their children's education and more flexible and unregulated practices regarding homework and extracurricular activities. Importantly, these are not just attitudinal differences. These diverse attitudes were translated into practices that in turn may promote the different dispositions to learning among students noted in the CPLP report.

The findings in this chapter raise important questions about 'culturally sensitive' approaches to education and the difficulties encountered by some parents of culturally diverse backgrounds. Their views are not simply the expressions of a cultural background to which we need to be sensitive; rather their values are a complex interplay of socio-economic factors, cultural practices, experiences of migration and the uneven distribution of educational capital. Schools, therefore, need to give greater consideration to parents' differing levels of educational capital, especially when ethnicity is involved, and the ways in which this impacts on their involvement in their children's education, not only within the school context but, so too, within the home.

Chapter 4 – Academic Practices and Parental Levels of Educational Capital

As was evident in the CPLP Report, the values and attitudes towards education elaborated by parents translated, in most cases, into practices which reinforced these expectations. This chapter examines parents' accounts of a range of different practices within the home and the degree to which patterns of practice were evident among the different groups of parents that were interviewed. Among other things parents were questioned about their children's routines around homework and any extracurricular activities in which they participated.

4.1 Homework

A growing body of research suggests that homework helps promote self-discipline, independence and study skills when used appropriately (Laitsch, 2006). The CPLP Report highlighted the strong links between particular embodied capacities, dispositions to learning and different families' educational capital. The capacity to sit and complete homework tasks requires specific ways of managing the body, learned through repetition and dispositions formed in the family setting. Despite the strong consensus among parents in this study that homework is a valuable learning tool, different views emerged as to how long students should spend doing homework, and the levels of parental support and supervision of homework that is required. Interestingly, the five Indian parents in this study had similar views about the importance of homework. They all provided lengthy and elaborated discussion of the importance of homework for their child's academic development, and expressed disappointment with the amount of homework children received. Renu pointed out that,

I would really like to stress that the educational board should really stress more for homework and kind of you know, they should pressure children then they will really become more focused.

Indira, whose child attended a different school, had a similar view:

I think homework is very important because the homework which he is getting here, I am not happy with it. I mean there is hardly any maths in it.

Tulika compared the level of homework given to her child with that provided in India:

Back in India we used to have, our children used to have, a homework of say two pages or three pages in a day, but here back in Australia we have three pages of homework in one week. So that is a lot of difference actually. So I mean they get carried away with so many things around, you know, and that is the reason, the possible reason for people really getting carried away here in Australia, could be that there is no focus for education.

Parents with strong views about homework often provided higher levels of supervision and enforced more regular homework routines compared to parents who had more relaxed opinions about its significance. These differences were

more noticeable in relation to the length of time parents allocated for homework activities and the consistency of these routines. When asked how long a Year 3 student should spend on homework each night, some parents, particularly those with low levels of educational capital, including some Pasifika and low SES Anglo parents, believed 10 minutes was enough, while Indian and Chinese parents considered one and even 2 hours, to be more appropriate. Jocelyn, a high SES Anglo parent, for instance, remarked:

> Oh you know, ten minutes. It is really hard to get their attention after a whole day at school.

Mary, a Chinese parent, organised homework routines in a much more structured and consistent way, as the following comment illustrates:

> Every day I think he spends one and half hour, but not for five days because two days sports so only Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, one and a half, so would be four and a half and then one hour on Wednesday and Friday, so five and half. And then another one and half on the … so eight and half a week.

These different opinions alerts us to the fact that, despite homework being equally regarded as an important learning tool, the ability to translate this belief into practices differed significantly among the parents interviewed in the study. Some, particularly those from Pasifika, Lebanese and Anglo backgrounds, were more inclined towards a greater separation between home and school routines. Chinese and Indian parents, on the other hand, sought greater continuity of structures and academic routines between home and school. Homework plays an important role in maintaining this continuity and promoting a disposition to learning, as explained in the CPLP report.

Parents who reinforced this continuity and discipline often regarded the amount of homework their child currently received from school as insufficient, and complemented it with other resources such as workbooks and reading and writing programs. On the other hand, parents who viewed home and school as very distinct spheres of influence were happy with less structured homework routines. As a result children from different communities were receiving different messages and values regarding the purpose and role of learning and the physical sites where learning takes place. It was noted that some parents limited the amount of homework children completed on advice from teachers, who thought children did not need to do all their week's homework in one day. This meant that some parents encouraged their children to do only 10 minutes a day to ensure that what they received would last till the end of a week. Jocelyn, for example, referred to the advice given by her son's teacher to guide her in limiting the time spent each day on homework activities:

His teacher said that he didn't think there was much point in them doing
the homework in one go. So we try to encourage him to do a little bit sort of
through the week.

Kelly, another Anglo parent, also commented on the need to limit homework to
ten minutes each day in order to leave some for the following day:

It would be about ten minutes. And then I tell her to leave it till the next day,
because otherwise she would sit there and do the whole sheet in one night
and that's the homework for the whole week.

Eileen, a Pasifika parent, also expressed the view that the school does not want
children to spend much time on homework activities and parents need to make
sure this is the case:

The school they do the homework from Monday to Friday because they
don't want to make the kids tired … because my son. When sometimes he
enjoys doing the homework, he does the whole lot in one time … I say to
him I don't want you to rush it – I want you to do it like normal, so he does it.

These comments highlight the impact school policies may have on parental
beliefs and practices regarding homework. Rather than encouraging children to
apply greater effort some parents (and schools) are voicing the view that there
is no need to hasten the pace of learning and a few minutes is enough to review
what was learned during the day. In this regard, some schools are sending
contradictory messages by encouraging, on one hand, greater partnerships
between the home and school but discouraging the continuity of school routines
and academic effort at home.

Also in these households where there was a greater divide between the home
and school, there was more flexibility regarding where homework was done,
often allocating other purposes for school-related equipment such as desks.
Eileen, for example, explained how her son, 'does the homework in the kitchen.
I just let him go there'. Similarly Rajah commented that her son, 'does his
homework on the kitchen table. He has a desk in his room but it has a computer
and 7,000 other things on it'. Kelly's daughter completed her homework, 'on the
dining room table. And usually the television is off'.

To some extent socio-economic factors also impacted on the ability of parents to
provide appropriate resources and space for their children to conduct homework
activities. Some children shared their room and desks with siblings and some
parents did not have the resources to buy equipment and books to assist their
children with academic learning at home. These factors, although impacting on
the availability of learning opportunities at home, were not, however, the most
important obstacles to academic discipline. Many Chinese parents of low SES in
the CPLP, for example, were concerned with maintaining continuity of learning
experiences and routines between home and school and compensated for

lack of resources at home by using public and school libraries and accessing programs such as after-school homework centres. This seems to suggest the greater impact of parental levels of educational capital on children's development of a disposition to learning or, as it is termed in the CPLP Report, a scholarly habitus.

As indicated, language barriers and pre-migration socio-economic status and refugee experiences had a great impact on the levels of educational capital parents possessed and were able to transmit to their children. Some parents were unable to assist their children with their homework, partly because of a lack of familiarity with the cultural expectations of parental involvement with their children's school-related activities. For one Afghani parent, Akmal, the very notion of 'supervision' was alien to him. He could not understand why a father should sit with his son and go through his homework with him. Culturally informed values regarding the role of parents as co-educators in western societies are foreign to many migrants, particularly those with limited exposure to western values and institutions. When asked about supervision, Akmal, understood it more as surveillance, 'Yeah, we always watch him'. This has some value in perhaps keeping his child on task and ensuring homework is completed but he was unable to assist him further than this because, as he pointed out later on the interview, he didn't speak much English. More importantly, however, this was more because of a greater cultural emphasis on discipline and 'watching' over the children, than on co-teaching them. Cultural orientations rather than linguistic barriers seemed to play a greater role in determining the quality of the parental attitudes and practices towards school-related activities such as homework. This not only seemed the case with many of the non-Anglo parents but also with the low SES Anglo parents in this study, although to a lesser degree given greater emphasis is placed on parental involvement with homework in Australia.

One important implication of English language barriers was that in some instances it coincided with levels of educational capital. One possible explanation for this convergence relates to the value of English in the global context and the privileges and opportunities it creates for those who command it. Access to opportunities in non-English speaking countries to learn English is often limited to high SES individuals and groups. Bilingual or English primary and secondary education is often expensive and only available to individuals and families with already high levels of educational capital. Some parents in this study, mainly from Afghanistan and with refugee experiences, had English language barriers and faced socio-economic disadvantages as well. In these instances what they bring to their interactions with the educational system in NSW is not only a lack of English language proficiency but limited levels of educational capital to transmit to their children. Parents may have the aspirations for their children and feel homework and academic endeavour are important, but the absence of actual experiences of academic endeavour and routines may well leave them ill equipped to communicate these aspirations in the form of practices that promote dispositions conducive to learning to their children. Some parents were keenly aware of these shortcomings and it generated a great deal

of anxiety for them. For many of the Pasifika parents, for example, who were shift workers, homework routines were difficult to sustain and Eileen saw them as causing distress and conflicts in parent-child relationships, difficulties which were also noted in the CPLP Report:

> I know I should stay there when he does his homework, helping him for reading, but you know, my family, I'm working and I come home, I am tired you know, and he comes and says, I can't do this, I can't do that, so stress everything. Sometimes I get angry with him, I just sit down and thinking, you know, I feel like crying because I feel guilty for what I do to him.

The fact that 'homework related' stress was reported by some Pasifika, Afghani and Lebanese parents in this study suggests that there is a need for a range of resources and initiatives that can better assist parents' efforts to support their children's engagement in, and success with, homework. It also lends credence to the argument made repeatedly in much of the research on homework that parents, students, teachers and administrators require appropriate tools to better understand the considerable impact of parental levels of educational capital on children's homework routines and dispositions (Baumgartner, Bryan, Donahue, and Nelson, 1993).

These findings also alert us to the need to acknowledge that the reasons why students are disposed to academic engagement may not be solely a matter of language or ethnicity, but also relates to a range of other factors such as SES and aspects of educational and cultural capital. The practice of homework is not only an academic endeavour but an exercise in self-control, discipline, body management, scholarly predispositions that some parents with the requisite cultural and educational capital are more capable of transmitting to their children.

4.2 Coaching Colleges

The topic of extracurricular activities including attending coaching colleges generated lively discussion among many parents in this study. For some parents coaching became a site where parental beliefs about child rearing were contested. Some parents, particularly those from Chinese and Indian backgrounds, regarded coaching as a necessary investment to maximise academic achievement and secure entrance into selective high schools. They felt their purpose was to give their children an advantage over other children so they could successfully compete for the limited places available in selective schools and this was regarded as good parental practice. Janani, for example, explained,

> It is about priorities. Your choice, your priority, what do you think your children are going to be in the future, what are they going to be doing, like you are giving them a path to follow … you can only do whatever is in your hands.
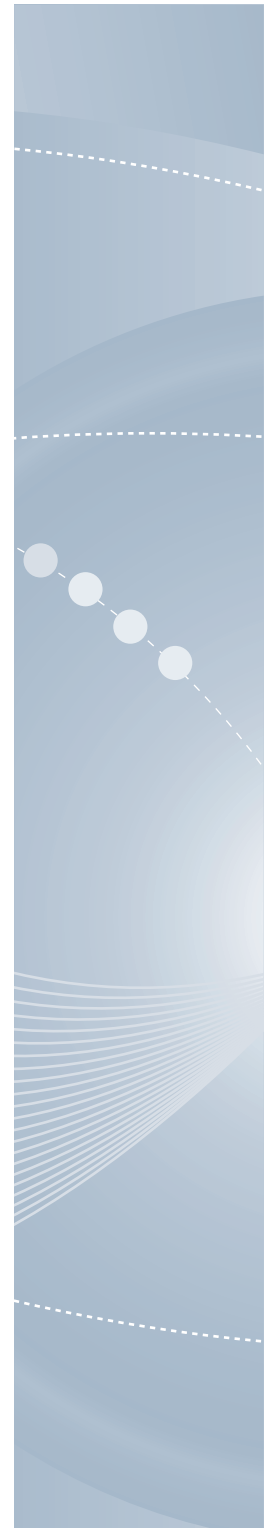
Some parents from mainly Anglo-Australian backgrounds or with many years of residence in Australia, however, viewed coaching as putting too much pressure on children; a pressure to succeed that was seen as negative for their emotional well being. Kelly, an Anglo-Australian parent of low SES said, 'I think too much is too much and it can hurt them'. Rajah, of Lebanese background but resident in Australia for over 40 years, explained that,

> *Who cares as long as your kid is happy and survives and gets through and finds what they like to do in life, whether they want to fix roof tiles or be gardeners or be a vet or scientist … There are parents who want the A to E which is total crap, who wants to know, you know, is my kid the best at school? Are they doing their best? Are they being coached, are the teachers up to scratch. It is just a total - it is just against me.*

These diverse views about coaching often have a cultural bias, but also echo the distinction between the parental intervention of 'concerted cultivation' and the 'natural growth' perspective to child rearing (Lareau, 2003). Interestingly, parents who sent their children to coaching, mainly from Chinese and Indian backgrounds, believed it impacted positively not only on their children's academic performance but their emotional wellbeing. Renu, for example, felt that

> *the kids are doing really well, they feel very confident and they are proud of their achievements. They are really proud of their achievements and sort of they want to maintain their level there.*

These parents perceive an improved performance and confidence, and an increased capacity to learn in their children's engagement with school. Parents who were critical of coaching for their children, however, argued that this type of intervention was 'unnatural' and 'unfair' because it gave some children unequal advantage. This advantage seemed to conflict with popular interpretations of equal opportunity and 'fair go', commonly considered typical 'Australian' values. This view was more strongly articulated by Rajah, mentioned above, who commented that,

> *I don't believe in coaching. It is unnatural. I don't agree with it because it gives kids an unfair advantage. All the coached kids get into the OC and there is no chance for anybody else. Okay they will go and get coached through high school, they will get into medicine and law … or whatever they want to do and their lives are determined by them by their parents saying you've got to do this. I just feel that too many kids are disadvantaged by the kids who are coached. Kids who have natural talents but are not brilliant or whatever.*

Some parents from various backgrounds, however, viewed coaching as a remedial tool, rather than for 'enhancement'. They believed that, unless their children had specific learning difficulties, coaching colleges were unnecessary as was the case with Kelly:

There is a time and place for coaching. I don't think it is primary school. Unless you have got a child that's really, really, really slow at learning, that's like supposed to be in 5th class but is only doing 3rd class, yes give them a hand. But I think if it is like, if they are in the range where kids are supposed to be at learning in primary school then leave them where they are …

Mary, of Chinese background, had a similar view:

If he doesn't understand in the school, the coaching school will give them extra help. Let him try to understand first.

Many parents of Anglo background, however, viewed coaching as an 'ethnic phenomena', closely related to Asian values and educational aspirations. Laura expressed the view that,

children do coaching because their parents are Asian and the Asians have a high, you know, school is very very important to them as a culture … they want their kids to, they feel that that's the way to success, and I don't generally think that that's the only way for success.

Coaching colleges, however, are not only attended by students from Asian backgrounds but, as Mak (2002) points out, they attract students from a diversity of backgrounds and for various purposes including remedial assistance, test preparation, and entrance into selective schools. Globalisation, economic, social and cultural changes have been identified as key factors behind the increasing popularity of coaching schools in Australia (Mak, 2002). Some parents in this study, who sent their children to coaching schools, cited the need to compensate for the perceived failure of their child's school to equip their children with the tools to successfully participate in an increasingly competitive international job market As Indira, an Indian background parent, explained,

I mean I think from only my point of view because I feel that there is not much being done in the schools, in the classrooms, and the way the education, like the employment markets are these days, and with all this competition happening, my daughter she doesn't know what competition means because she has never ever sat for a test in the class, in the school.

Many parents in this study with low levels of educational capital, particularly newly arrived migrants from Afghanistan and parents of low SES and poor English language skills, were unable to comment on coaching colleges due to a lack of knowledge about them. Afghani and some Lebanese parents were also unfamiliar with Opportunity Class Placement tests or any strategy, such as coaching, that they could access to assist their children academically. It was, however, these parents who could benefit the most from after-school academic
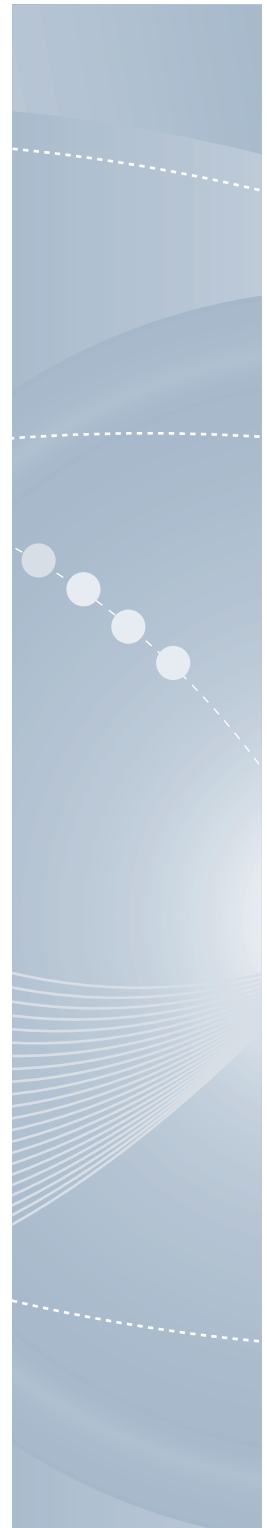
support for their children, as they were unable to assist them in any significant way. The cost associated with coaching colleges was also cited by, a Lebanese parent, as a barrier to using them.

Homework programs provided at some schools were the only assistance available to those parents who could not afford additional academic support through coaching. This option, however, was only available in a few schools and the quality of the programs was in some instances poor and inadequate (Watkins and Noble, 2008).

4.3 Extracurricular Activities

Parents in this study were also asked about their children's after-school routines, with specific emphasis on structured activities such as sport or music. The purpose of these questions was to analyse their level of understanding of the impact these activities have on children's development of particular dispositions to learning. There is a large body of research confirming the positive role structured activities such as sport and music have on academic success (Kluth, Straut and Biklen, 2003; Villa and Thousand, 2005; Trudeau and Shephard, 2008). This relationship has been partly explained in terms of the correlation between the qualities required to perform extracurricular activities and academic dispositions required in the classroom. For instance, learning an instrument or playing a sport requires discipline, responsibility, consistency and effort, similar qualities to those required in the classroom.

Parents who organised after-school activities for their children were mainly from Chinese and Indian backgrounds and, in most instances, were aware of the educational benefits of sport and other recreational activities. Tulika explained how:

> It is an important part of education, absolutely, because I think the thing is that there really is a character that is developed by that actually. I mean she does not really have a fear and I mean she will try to really cope with particular situations and communication gets better and so, yeah, that is the important.

In contrast, parents who were not appreciative of the relationship of structured activities and academic learning downplayed the importance of seeking such activities. The following comment from Ghassan, a parent of Lebanese background, also suggests that it is up to the child to make such judgments:

> Um, not necessarily his education but the fitness part of it, so it is probably not going to make a difference, it is entirely up to him, if he likes it, he likes it, if he doesn't like it, that's the same thing I guess with football or soccer, same story, but I don't think it is going to make an impact on his education bit.

Such comments, however, were not the norm. Most parents valued the role of sports and extracurricular activities not only for academic-related purposes, but as a means to keep them 'busy', and to provide them with exercise and play time. Some parents also highlighted the importance of sport activities for the mental and physical wellbeing of their children. Janani, for example, of Indian background commented that:

> Physical exercise is very, very good because a healthy mind, healthy body has a healthy mind. So to have good health, physical and ... are very important, that's what I think especially sports and music, swimming are very good things that everyone should do that.

Masood, from Iraq, echoed the view that sport was important in developing certain skills and a form of physical mastery, 'Sports, it strengthens your physics and your health, by itself it is a knowledge, a science'.

The capacity of parents to provide their children with learning activities outside school, however, was uneven, with some parents facing financial barriers, while other parents lived in areas with limited infrastructure and sport facilities for their children. Masood, of Afghani background commented that, 'I try to find him a tennis court or tennis place for him to play tennis but I wasn't able to find one'. Laila, also of Afghani background, explained that,

> So he likes sports like football but he doesn't play, but he would like to and ... sport yes ... school asked us if any help for him to go to ... sports, so we said yes, we are interested but we cannot afford for him, so when we contacted school and they said they can organise for one person, individual, so you can go into any park, he can play for free.

Maida, of Lebanese background explained that,

> I don't drive, and I am like my ... student drive and have a car – I have a car I couldn't pass my driving test for a long time. I want only to pass this driving test so I can take him wherever he wants and do sports. The only thing that stopped me, I can't because I can't drive. I would love to. He is a very active boy.

Indian background parents appeared more consistent in their views about the importance of structured after-school activities and consequently the most active in seeking opportunities for their children to engage in these activities. Community groups, local organisations and ethno-specific cultural associations were accessed by these parents to provide their children with these learning experiences. This gives some insight into the role educational capital can play in the form of knowledge about the importance of these activities, equipping parents with the determination to provide their children with these experiences. Conversely, parents with lower levels of educational capital, although aware of
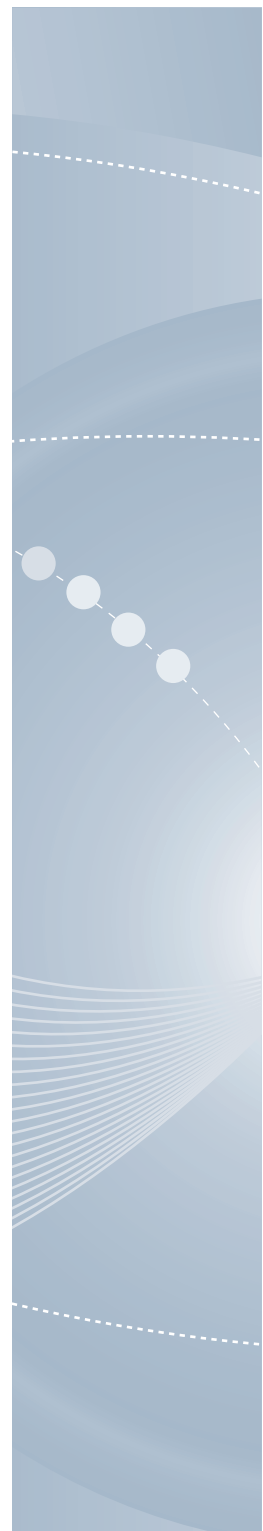
the importance of sports and after-school activities, were less likely to translate these beliefs into practice or were unable to overcome any barriers presented to them.

Once again there were parents who were critical of the number of extracurricular activities many children engaged in, believing some children were being 'pushed' too much and not given enough time to rest. Rajah pointed out that her son,

> did drama for a while too, he was very good at drama, but not too much so that they are exhausted, and you are exhausted driving them around, and they have no energy or time left for anything, it is important for other pursuits in their life. Some parents, like my sister takes her kids to – she's got three kids, she must go to four activities per afternoon, every afternoon of the week, and they get home at 7.30 exhausted, have dinner and then they have to do homework, and then, you know, it is too much. Parents are over compensating for what they missed out in their lives, and we've got to be very careful not to do that.

Children who did not participate in regular after-school activities, however, were more likely to spend their time watching television, an activity which generally offers little academic benefit and, in some circumstances, has been linked to poor academic performance (Cheng, 1998). Most parents were aware that prolonged periods of watching television or playing computer games was not beneficial for their children but in some instances work and other responsibilities prevented parents from supervising their children, leaving this task to older siblings. The following comment from Eileen, a Pasifika parent illustrates this point:

> I come home from work so tired and I can't sit to help him, I don't have the patience and I get angry quickly and then I sit and cry and I feel bad for not helping him … I come home and he is watching television and I ask him if he has done the homework and he says 'yes', but I don't know.

Some parents expressed anxiety and frustration at their inability to supervise their children's after-school activities due to work commitments. Financial barriers also prevented them from enrolling them in extracurricular activities. Lack of financial resources to access after-school programs, and demanding work commitments prevented many parents in this study from providing the appropriate level of support and supervision which would encourage practices that engender a disposition to scholarly engagement.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the parents' accounts of different practices in the home and how these related to educational orientations. There were often strong opinions about issues such as homework and coaching colleges, and quite stark contrasts within these views. Some Indian and Chinese parents displayed

a degree of disillusionment regarding the quality of the educational experience their child had, making coaching schools a needed tool to compensate for this perceived deficiency.

Coaching colleges were seen by some parents as an important educational tool to address a variety of purposes, including learning difficulties, test preparation and admission into selective school. Most of the parents, mainly from Chinese and Indian backgrounds, who sent their children to coaching colleges, did it in order to enhance their academic knowledge and increase their chances of admission into selective schools.

The cost associated with accessing these coaching colleges was seen by some of the Pasifika and Lebanese parents as a barrier impacting on their children's educational success. Parents who were the less equipped to support their children academically at home, due to language and educational barriers, such as the Afghani group, and who could therefore benefit the most from after-school assistance, were in most cases, unaware of this resource but also unable to afford it.

Financial barriers and work commitments prevented some parents, mainly from Pasifika and Lebanese backgrounds from sending their children to such programs. For other parents, including those from Anglo backgrounds, cultural factors, however, mediated in their decisions, including societal beliefs that children ought not be 'pushed' too much, resulting in a tendency to leave it up to the child to make a decision regarding what he/she wanted to do after school. This attitude reinforces Laureau (2003) argument of 'natural growth' approaches to child rearing, which in this case, leaves the child in control of important decisions affecting his educational and learning prospects.

Socio-economic factors and levels of educational capital in the family rather than ethnicity per se were important factors accounting for the decisions and attitudes towards after-school activities. To some extent they also seemed accountable for the more affirmative intervention taken by Indian and Chinese parents, and their commitment to provide their children with structured activities, and strong guidelines regarding television viewing. Within the CPLP however, with a larger sample, SES did not appear to have any major determining influence on Chinese parents.

These attitudes stood in complex relation to questions of ethnicity, socio-economic background and educational capital, as well as to social values and practices that derived from experiences prior to migration.
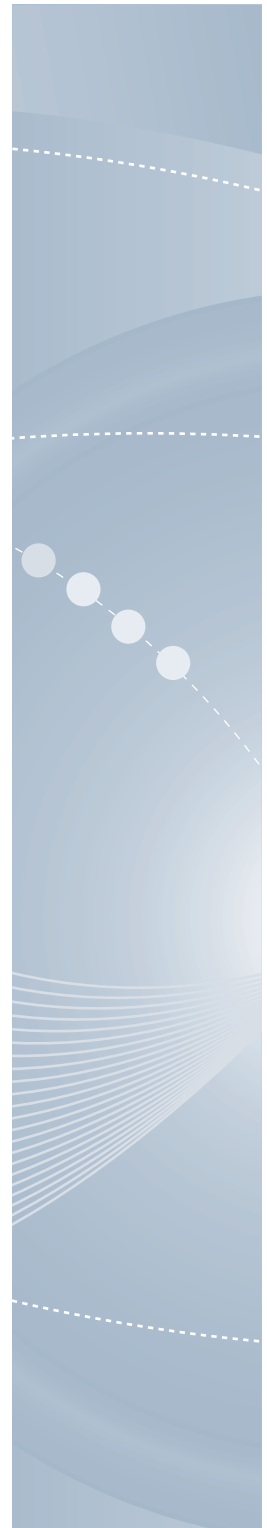
Chapter 5 – School Executives' Perspectives on Parents' Participation in Schooling

Interviews were also conducted with principals and deputy principals in order to gain their perspectives on the impact of school demographics on learning and school management issues, as well as perceptions of cultural differences within each school. Interviews with school executive also sought to ascertain school policies and practices to engage parents in the school community and enhance partnerships between home and school. Such a perspective is crucial because implementing effective programs requires key elements of school planning, partnerships with the school community, safe and supportive learning environments and quality teaching (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 11).

Throughout the interviews with school executive we sought to gain an understanding of the values and practices within their schools and the manner in which they negotiated the challenges and opportunities brought about by varying school demographics, cultural diversity, structural factors such as level of funding, infrastructure, and levels of educational capital among the school population. One of the most significant commonalities emerging from these interviews related to the role of parents' educational capital and its impact on their children's educational outcomes. School executive consistently identified the educational and academic advantages some children had over others and linked these to parental attitudes, orientations and practices. Socio-economic factors were crucial in determining these levels of educational capital but specific cultural orientations were also identified, for example, school communities with high percentages of Chinese background students displayed high levels of academic achievement. Keith, a principal at a school in a relatively high SES area, highlighted such ethno-specific cultural orientations as a key factor behind academic differences between groups:

> I am generalising but our Chinese community tend to put higher expectations on the school and their children. When the kids are functioning right up at the top or just off it, the parents are still unhappy … I think the ESB (English speaking background) parents tend to want the same outcome but I think they give a wider balance to what the kids are doing … sometimes they don't put the same effort into it.

Gary, a principal at another school with high percentages of Chinese background children, had a similar view pointing out that, 'The students from a Chinese background tend to be more focussed on academic pursuits'.

Socio-economic factors and levels of educational capital, however, were seen as playing a more crucial role in explaining academic disparities between groups by Ray, a school principal working in a disadvantaged area:

> First of all we are low performers as far as the state goes. We are significantly below average, significantly. Most of that we believe, stems from the fact that they, that our kids get so little pre-school experience before starting kinder and I don't necessarily mean not going to a preschool, just don't have the home background of reading to your kid

at night, do different – those normal things, life experience … kids at
our school are starting a minimum of two years development behind the
average kids.

These comments highlight the pervasive perception of the differing cultural and socio-economic demographic composition of school communities on academic performance. Schools with high percentages of Chinese and also Indian background students, tended to have higher expectations and place higher demands on the school, with SES also being a major factor in this regard. These demands and expectations, as Keith pointed out, are driving factors affecting the overall direction of schools, as well as their values and practices:

We have very high expectations because there are very high expectations
on us …Whilst we are a good school we are also given a very good
clientele. I mean - you know, we can go a lot faster in a Lexus than you
can in a 12 year old Toyota, and that's you know, we are given that sort of
clientele, mostly managerial.

This interrelationship between schools, communities and culture – understood here in broad terms as encompassing, among other things, ethnicity and socio-economic background – underlines the need to understand school achievement, as well as underachievement, as more than technical matters reflecting policy outcomes, but as the result of complex socio-cultural factors. A school's composition was identified as a crucial factor affecting school culture, sometimes in positive ways, as the comment above indicates, and sometimes in negative ways, including a lowering of standards and expectations. In some schools with high numbers of enrolments of students from low SES and migrant communities, it was noted that tests for highly achieving, academically talented students, such as the Opportunity Class Placement Test, and other external assessments such as International Competitions and Assessments for Schools conducted by Educational Assessment Australia, University of New South Wales, were not being offered to students. As one principal pointed out:

We don't do the tests. Not recently. Apparently they had in previous years,
but it was pretty much a waste of time. The kids weren't good enough, plus
the parents wouldn't pay for them.

This comment reflects a lack of confidence in the ability of the school to overcome economic and cultural barriers in order to lift the academic standards of the school population. It also shows a lack of confidence or recognition of the school's ability to engage parents or to build the capacity of parents to support their children's learning. Previous strategies such as financial assistance through subsidies for children wishing to undertake the tests, as one principal pointed out, proved ineffective. What is at stake, as the following comment highlights, is the more pervasive consequences of low levels of parental educational capital, manifested here as an inability to encourage the academic aspirations and necessary dispositions to learning that children require:

*Kids here can reach benchmarks in reading and spelling but they can't
translate that to basic skills … they don't have the learning experience, the
background, the life experience that they can draw upon … parents have
GameBoys and PlayStations, but they don't have computers …*

This comment also draws attention to the manner in which both cultural and
educational capital manifests itself through the consumer choices parents
make and in turn the type of skills and competences available to their children.
Rather than signalling an obvious financial deprivation, in households where
parents have the means to purchase Play Stations but cannot afford academic
tests these different values and life choices are representative of lower levels of
educational capital. As such, little emphasis may be placed upon encouraging
the practices conducive to academic learning in these households. An effective
strategy to promote values around academic engagement, as another school
principal observed, is to subsidize after-school learning programs and sport
activities for low SES students in order to build up learning experiences outside
the school and so a discipline and commitment to learning overall:

*I think we should give more opportunities for the kids to learn outside the
school. Activities that the parents might take them to, so there is information
and experience that they can draw on to assist them in developing their
own literacy and numeracy … or like the excursions, so when they go to the
city like the Powerhouse Museum, that more kids could go …*

What this strategy seeks to achieve is to compensate for low levels of parents'
educational capital and socio-economic status by undertaking what is commonly
understood to be parents' responsibility. Among individuals and socio-economic
groups where educational experiences and opportunities are a low priority,
schools have the potential to directly intervene to compensate for families'
reduced educational capital and lift the students' learning prospects outside
the school. As one principal indicated, parental expectations and priorities are
inconsistent and schools have to acknowledge and address these differences in
order to function effectively:

*Parents have different expectations of the school. And I believe it is with
their culture and their understanding of what is education, and where is
their priority in education? When you look at where I was previously with
the Asian population, their first priority is education … whereas with other
cultures they see education as a much lower priority. You have your Pacific
Islander children quite often they need almost a personal invitation and a
phone call to say that school has started, usually at the beginning of the
year …*

Principals from schools with high percentages of Pasifika students also
identified specific cultural orientations impacting negatively on their educational
achievement. One important observation related to the perceived lack of
interest from the parents about school matters, evidenced by their poor levels

of participation in school-related activities. As the CPLP Report also indicated, in many Pacific Island countries such as Samoa and Tonga, school is viewed as a totally separate area of influence to the home. Meetings to discuss student progress and academic educational expectations with parents is not a common practice in many of the Pasifika parents' heritage cultures. What appears as a lack of interest, therefore, actually reflects a cultural impasse in which the students are often caught in the middle as they try to negotiate these conflicting cultural messages (APIATT, 2005).

Some principals have attempted to address these cultural barriers to effective parent-school partnerships by seeking to reach parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through their community leaders, and other parents already involved in the school. Levels of educational capital, English language and literacy skills and length of residence among the Pasifika community, for example, were also key factors accounting for the lack of involvement of many parents in the school. Pasifika parents who attended meetings and school activities tended to be better informed about educational issues and Australian societal expectations of parental involvement in school matters. Establishing personal links with the parents by phone calls inviting them to attend meetings and other functions was identified by school principals as a good strategy. As Keith remarked,

> we got a pretty good roll up for the half year interviews, but that was a lot of work by the class teachers with … sending notes out and even making phone contacts … As soon as [our Samoan community representative] rang parents they were all very happy to come up here.

Implementing strategies such as personalised invitations for specific groups requires time and resources, which as one principal pointed out, are not always available. Instead, other less time consuming initiatives such as weekly newsletters, were used to liaise with parents, but this was considered less effective. Direct contact with parents in schools with high percentages of CALD communities, particularly groups from Pasifika backgrounds, newly arrived migrants with limited English language and literacy skills, and vulnerable families of low SES, although significantly expensive, was suggested as the best possible strategy to ensure better parent-school relationships. This contact, as pointed out by one principal of a school drawing on high percentages of Pasifika and other students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, preferably needs to be done by a staff or community member from the target community, familiar with language and communication protocols:

> We have an Aboriginal Education Officer aid, I think a liaison person like that would be really good … We have got nothing for the Islander children.

On the other hand, some schools with high percentages of Chinese and Indian background students expressed no need for such additional resources. Parents tended to be responsive to school expectations and participated in meetings and

regular school activities. This appears further evidence of the manner in which educational capital is directly linked to parental commitment and concern for educational matters.

Principals also commented on the impact of the different participation rates of certain groups in extracurricular activities and the impact of this on students' academic achievement. In terms of attending coaching colleges, a principal of one school with a high proportion of Chinese background students, indicated 90 per cent of these students attended coaching colleges. Children of Anglo background, by contrast, had lower attendance at coaching colleges, and this was interpreted by one Principal as culturally influenced, as the following comment indicates:

> the children from Anglo family backgrounds, they see it as a preparation in terms of becoming a better test taker and getting the experience of being able, just being comfortable with the format of the paper, and utilising their time as effectively as possible within the OC or selective tests. The Chinese students see coaching more as continuous practice.

Some principals also indicated that Chinese background parents encouraged their children to participate in many artistic and sporting activities though some were reluctant to do so if they felt it impacted on time devoted to purely academic pursuits:

> I think that as people from Asian family backgrounds and other family backgrounds see that children can be very successful academically and sporting wise and/or musically and that those extracurricular activities aren't detrimental to their students' academic achievements, then they are more willing to allow their children to be involved. But it is a very gradual process.

Indian background parents were also identified by some principals as needing some time to adjust to Australian educational practices, given their personal experiences and expectations about what should take place in the classroom, as the following comment illustrates:

> Look I think part of the problem is the education that they've had themselves and the preconceived ideas of how teaching is, how we should – the pedagogy I suppose in teaching because it is a little bit different here. I would say possibly the Indian parents are very much, I suppose they take a little bit of time to understand that it is not just about rote learning, sitting and rote learning and no talking, and it is a little bit more open and groups and different activities and discussions and things like that. So it is a little bit of, I suppose adjusting to the way things are done here.
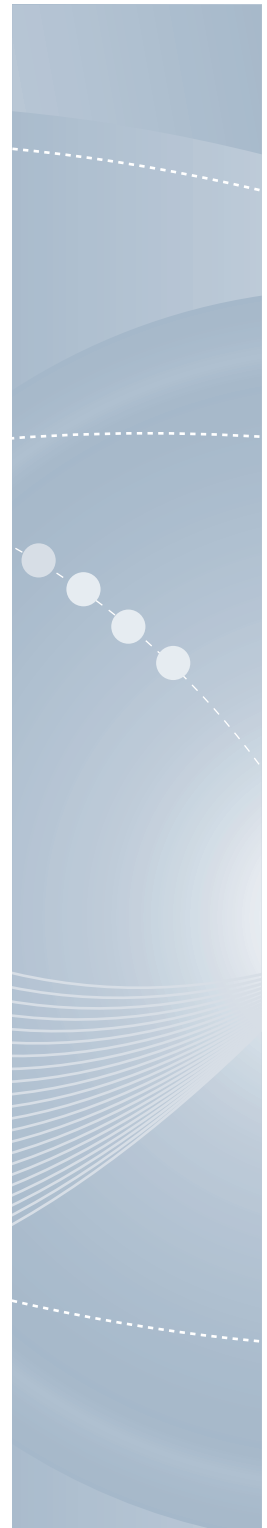
The influence of high percentages of Chinese and Indian background communities in some schools also impacted on the school culture and parental practices, with some Anglo background parents following the example of enrolling their children in coaching colleges. As one principal pointed out, schools that attract high achievers – such as those with OC classes – also model behavior, values and attitudes associated with academic achievement.

There may be some kind of 'acculturation' occurring here that places higher value on academic endeavour. Parents and children familiar with these values and practices, which constitute forms of educational capital, can more easily meet the demands of such school cultures. Conversely, parents with less exposure and familiarity with cultures of learning and academic endeavour may be unable to support their children and equip them to meet the demands of such environments. Some principals from schools with more than 80 per cent of students from language backgrounds other than English, felt parents from countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq and those from Pacific Island nations tend to have low educational levels and are unable to fully appreciate the importance of education, which results in disadvantage being reproduced through family practices. Paul for example commented that,

> *We have certain cultural groups that don't always see a school that is absolutely necessary and if there is something else on or needing some help at home, I am sure they are not always justified absences …some of the Middle Eastern groups, particularly for girls, I think they are at home helping. And also the Pacific Islanders, some of the girls and some of the kids.*

Jack, a principal at another school was also of the view that,

> *Arabic communities may not give as much emphasis to the academics and stuff, like there are a number of kids who struggle with basic literacy and numeracy so that filters through to a whole range of the other KLAs, there is a lot of reading that needs to be done, socialisation skills all those sorts of things, sort of impact on their learning as well.*

These school executive offered some keen insights into the complexities of schools' culturally and linguistically diverse communities. They were aware of the difficulties in managing competing expectations of parents and their children and, perhaps most importantly, how to gain effective parental involvement and enhanced student outcomes.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This study has sought to examine in a small and focused way the impact of educational capital on attitudes and practices related to education of parents from a range of backgrounds: Pasifika, Lebanese, Afghani, Iraqi, Indian, Chinese and Anglo. Principals and deputies were also interviewed in order to gauge the impact of parental levels of educational capital on school policies and structures. Throughout the interviews, significant similarities and differences emerged between the parents in relation to their dispositions and practices related to education providing valuable insights into the ways in which culture influences levels of educational capital and in turn students' performance at school. We don't wish to overstate the significance of such a small sample, but it does suggest a path that further studies need to follow to deepen the scope of such research and offer more authoritative findings.

The internalisation of key educational values and the fostering of a disposition to learning are mediated by parental levels of educational capital. Differences in levels of educational capital become more marked when looking at parents' attitudes towards specific activities such as homework routines, supervision and their children's extracurricular pursuits. In this study, Chinese and Indian background parents appeared to possess high levels of educational capital and the resources to provide their children with activities and routines which reinforced school values and practices. In comparison, due to a range of factors, other participating parents, particularly those of Pasifika, Afghani and Lebanese backgrounds, appeared to have lower levels of educational capital and fewer resources to promote home practices which fostered habits of learning. Addressing these resultant disparities requires an acknowledgment of the effects of socio-economic status, cultural orientations and life experiences on parental attitudes and practices.

In addressing academic underachievement, taking into account educational capital requires a rethinking of the relationship of the educational experience in the wider context of a student's family life. Understanding what takes place outside the classroom can assist educators in the development of specific strategies aimed at making learning an embodied experience beyond the classroom and into the home environment. Treating parents as partners in the education of their children also requires greater awareness of the impact of educational capital on parents' ability to perform this role. As this study highlighted, the self-exclusion by some parents from school-related activities often stemmed from lack of educational capital to manage the complex cultural transactions taking place in the school setting. This finding signals a need to broaden understandings of what creates a productive parent-school partnership and what resources and strategies are needed to enhance parents' capacities to become active partners in the education of their children.

A good starting point is an acknowledgment that all parents want their children to succeed at school, but not all have the awareness and recognition of the pervasive impact their values and practices have on their children's academic performance. Through the views of parents in this study it became evident that despite high aspirations, practices within the home can undermine children's
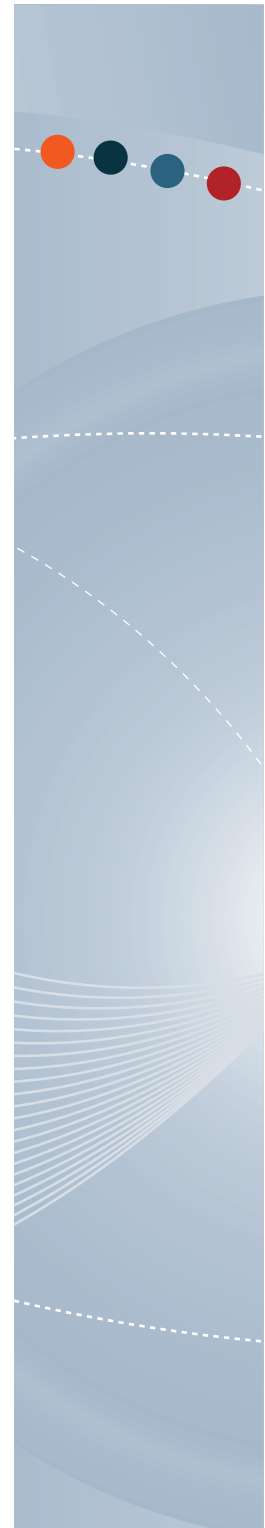
engagement in learning. At the centre of this dichotomy lie the projections of socially valued intentions and aspirations, and the personal dispositions, knowledge and practices to transform social aspirations into concrete realities. One possible strategy to address this contradiction lies in drawing attention to the unconscious and familiar character of everyday activities and the potential disjuncture between these and particular practices required for successful participation in school.

Some practices outside school, such as the use of coaching colleges, highlighted different perspectives regarding the purpose and value of certain extracurricular activities. Coaching colleges were generally accessed by parents with high levels of educational capital such as those of Indian and Chinese backgrounds. They accessed this resource mainly as a tool to provide their children with an educational advantage and as a remedial tool to compensate for what most of them believed was the insufficient emphasis given to homework and the overall rigour of the curriculum and approach to teaching within the school their children attended. The increasing popularity of coaching colleges among some Chinese and Indian background parents signals changes in the way education is approached in Australia with some commentators remarking that the greater use of this educational resource is transforming Australian education in significant ways, primarily in terms of challenging academic standards in primary schools (Mak, 2002).

Coaching colleges were generally being accessed by some parents as a resource to increase academic advantage and secure entrance into selective high schools. For some parents who wanted to access coaching colleges to enhance their children's learning outcomes, the cost associated with them was a key barrier. This finding raises important questions about the distribution of opportunities for students to achieve academically and the accessibility of these options among different groups within the community. It also suggests that more is needed in terms of after-school support for students whose parents, in spite of awareness of the importance of providing learning opportunities and academic support at home, were unsure about the appropriate action to take. Homework programs, if delivered in a professional manner and in partnership with a child's school, could be a viable strategy to address inequalities in access to after-school academic resources and support.

Parents from Chinese backgrounds, for instance, displayed consistent orientations and practices conducive to academic achievement. This is partly explained by a cultural emphasis on 'effort' and 'cultivation' predominant among Asian cultures (Cheng, 1998), although it is important not to engage in ethnic stereotypes. Such values are also shaped by SES prior to migration, as well as the dynamics of migration itself. Educational capital is a central factor here, in the form of dispositions and ways of operating in a social field, the possession of competences, skills and knowledge that provide access to resources and socially desirable ends. Parents of Indian background in the study also displayed high levels of educational capital, congruent with their higher SES and educational levels. These parents were from professional fields, with high

incomes, and able to transmit certain educational advantages to their children. This was evident in their consistent routines conducive to self-discipline and self-endeavour and guidance towards the pursuit of academic excellence and success together with greater access to after-school learning opportunities. Conversely, this study found that socio-economic disadvantage and low levels of educational capital impact negatively on parental dispositions and practices related to their children's education. This was particularly the case with the parents from Afghani and Pasifika backgrounds. Cultural factors also played an important role with the Pasifika community, mainly in relation to a tendency to view school and home as separate spheres of influence. This led to a greater asymmetry between school and home routines, making it more difficult to maintain a continuity of learning experiences within the home.

Although we have stressed at the outset that this small sample is not generalisable to the wider population, we might speculate that if there is evidence of patterns of correlation between academic under-performance and cultural and linguistic background, then implementing strategies to address this needs greater awareness of the wide-ranging impact parental levels of educational capital have on children's academic orientations and overall performance at school. Some strategies to counteract academic disadvantage between groups and individuals are identified through this report and need further consideration, research and evaluation. These include:

- greater emphasis by and support for schools to establish strong and sustainable links and partnerships with parents through a strengthened focus on home-school relationships. This may involve the inclusion of formal arrangements into such relationships, including regular meetings and parent information sessions about schooling in Australia and ways of assisting children's learning at home, including effective approaches to developing habits of learning;
- greater emphasis on effective communication with parents which is regular, provides opportunities for parents to communicate with schools and stresses the value of using interpreting services and translations where appropriate;
- more formal and consistent approaches to after-school homework support, including via homework centres, particularly for students unable to access assistance and resources at home, and more consistent approaches to homework requirements and practices;
- greater emphasis by schools on the value of employing and seeking assistance of community members, especially bilingual and bicultural parents and community members, to assist in strengthening links between parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and schools;
- greater use of schools as centres of community activity, where schools foster parents' access to relevant programs and services, eg, English language classes, parenting courses, first aid courses and use of computer rooms. This approach could also promote parents as teachers and coaches in areas such as dance, sport, photography, languages and music.
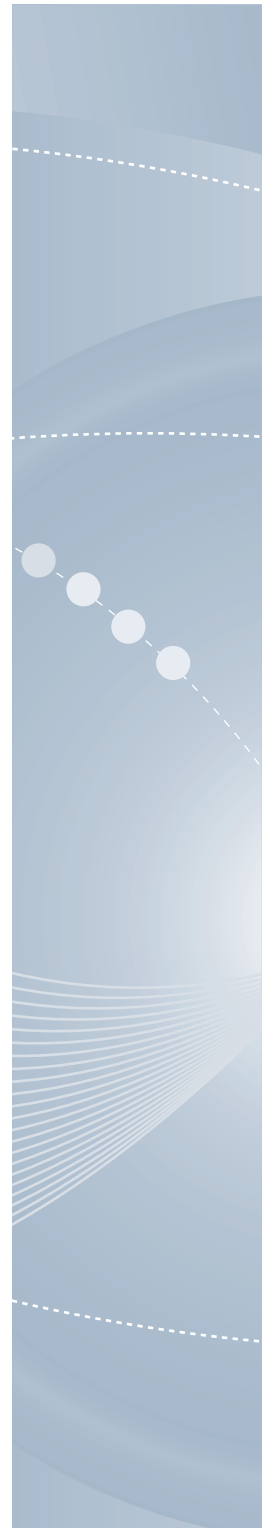
Glossary

Anglo

Anglo is a term of identification that groups together long-time Australians of English-speaking backgrounds. We have used it to categorise one of the three target groups examined within the report because some parents chose this term as their label of ethnic identification and it has some currency in everyday discourse. Despite its vernacular origins, it is preferable to the common but problematic use of 'Australian' or 'English'.

Asian

Asia is the land mass that stretches from Turkey to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Indian Ocean to the Arctic Ocean. Given this, it is primarily a cultural idea rather than a coherent entity, and it derives from the geo-political order arising from European colonisation. Despite this, 'Asian', is often used as though it has a coherence (either ethnic or racial), particularly within western nations like Australia.

CALD

CALD, standing for culturally and linguistically diverse, is often used adjectivally (as in CALD background) in place of other phrases that are seen to be problematic in some way: non-English speaking, migrant, ethnic, and so on.

Chinese

Chinese is a term used within the report to refer to one of the three target groups in the CPLP study. Those students referred to as Chinese, or of Chinese background, were identified as such by their parents who chose this term as their own label of ethnic identification. We have often dropped the word background for ease of expression.

CLO

A Community Liaison Officer is an officer employed by the NSW DET to enhance links between schools, parents and community members from CALD backgrounds.

Culture

Culture refers to the ways humans make sense of their existence and their actions. These tend to be organised into systems of meaning. In common use people often turn it into a noun – *a* culture – where we end up with the problem of seeing culture as a fixed *thing*, not a multi-dimensional *process*. We need to recognise, however, that culture is complex, dynamic and entails practices of meaning-making. Many things are therefore cultural, not just what we otherwise call ethnicity. Culture also operates at different levels of social organisation (western culture, Lebanese culture, urban v rural culture, subcultures, and so on).

Discipline

Discipline, in the sense used in this report, is drawn from the work of the French theorist Michel Foucault. It refers not to the coercion one person might use
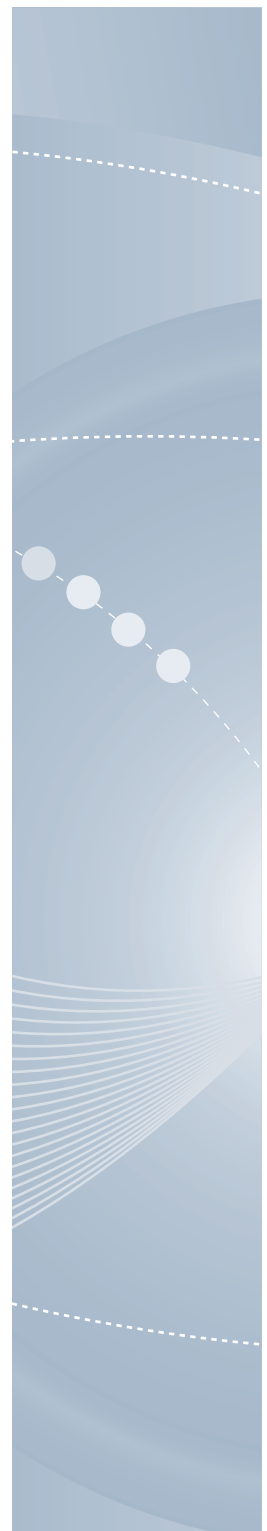
against another, but to the power generated by both animate and inanimate bodies that individuals embody and which then affects how they act. Discipline is formative in the production of dispositions within the habitus with the potential to either subject or empower.

Disposition

Disposition is used in this report to refer to an embodied inclination to behave in a certain way, eg, a disposition for stillness, quiet, concentration, etc.

Educational capital

Educational capital is a specific form of what Bourdieu calls cultural capital. He uses cultural capital to describe the way our cultural knowledges circulate in a system of exchange like money capital, and are used to gain status in groups where they are valued. Knowledge of the 'great works' of art and literature is valuable cultural capital amongst middle-class people, a taste which gets validated by schooling. Educational capital more specifically refers to the forms of knowledge that are specifically useful within the education environment, including not just academic knowledge, but skills and competencies (like literacy), knowledge of the educational system, qualifications, and so on.

Embodiment

Embodiment is the process whereby social traits and capacities, including discipline, are inscribed within bodies.

ESB

English speaking background

ESL

English as a second language

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a socially constructed category based on the perception of shared qualities and on practices of group-bonding. This is in contrast to the common assumption that ethnicity is an unproblematic category based on clear and timeless boundaries around 'cultures' or 'races'. Ethnicity, however, is a sense of commonality based on several characteristics – language, physical similarities, national origin, customs, religion and so on – borne of the interaction between self-identification and identification by others. It can sometimes be an absurd construction, because in the context of migration people often turn categories of national citizenship into categories of ethnicity. The idea of a 'Chinese' ethnicity, for example, is problematic because it includes a range of diverse social groups, languages, classes, faiths and regional backgrounds that originally derive from a particular nation-state. Ethnicity is, moreover, linked to various socio-cultural factors such as family socialisation, socio-economic status, gender, generational experiences of migration and language maintenance. Because of the derogatory use of the term 'ethnic' in Australia, many people prefer to refer to cultural and/or linguistic background, but these are no less problematic.

LBOTE

Language background other than English – is used in this report and replaces the older term NESB (Non-English speaking background).

MCEETYA

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

Pasifika

Pasifika is a term used within the report to refer collectively to students whose parents identified as Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islander, Maori, Fijian or Tokelauan.

Pathologise

This is linked to the reductive and totalising nature of essentialism, because it means that we tend to see some ethnicities as being biologically or psychologically prone to certain practices or beliefs – as innate properties of groups of people: for example, seeing people from the Middle East as being prone to violence, or Chinese as inscrutable, and so on. Social traits are turned into cultural pathologies.

Scholarly habitus

Scholarly habitus is a term drawn from the work of Bourdieu and used within this report to refer to the embodied dispositions that engender scholarly behaviour, eg, sustained concentration and quiet, engagement in academic endeavour.

SES

Socio-economic status, drawn from various measures including income, occupation and qualifications. This term is often used instead of the more theoretically and politically orientated notion of class.
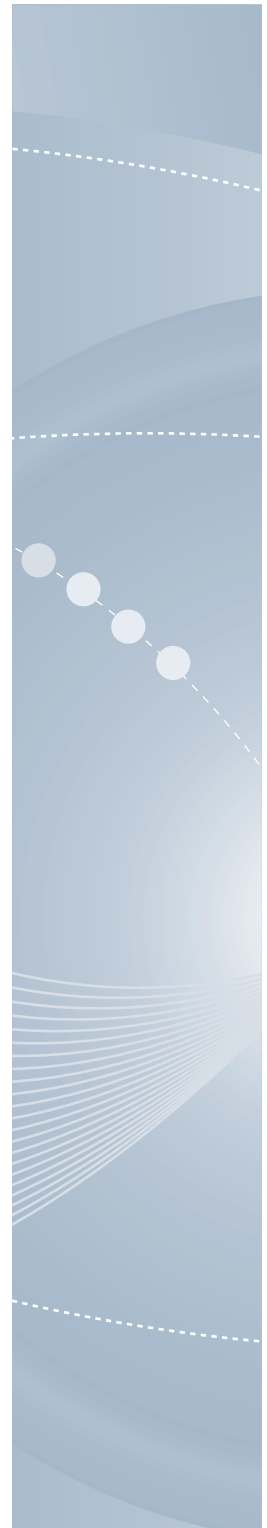
Appendices

Appendix A – Survey

Cultural Practices and Learning Project
University of Western Sydney
Survey of Year 3 Parents

Please complete the following survey by either ticking a box or writing a short answer response where indicated. This information will be used to assist in improving teaching and learning practices.

1. What is your gender? Please tick   Male ☐   Female ☐

2. What language do you **mostly** speak at home? _____

3. Do you speak a language other than English at home?   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. What language is it?   _____

5. How would you describe your cultural identify eg, Afghani, Anglo/Celtic, Australian, Chinese, Japanese, Lebanese, Samoan, Tongan? **You may write more than one category**. _____
   _____

6. In what country were you born?   _____

7. If you were **not** born in Australian, how long have you lived here? _____

8. How long has your Year 3 child attended school in Australia?   _____

9. Is your Year 3 child male or female?   Male ☐   Female ☐

10. What is your current occupation, eg, teacher, home duties, factory worker, unemployed?   _____

11. What is your highest educational qualification, eg, primary school, high school, TAFE certificate, undergraduate university degree, postgraduate university degree, other?   _____
    _____

12. What is your annual income? **(optional question)**

    Less than $20, 000   ☐

    Between $20, 000 and $40,000   ☐

    Between $40,000 and $60, 000   ☐

    Between $60, 000 and $80, 000   ☐

    More than $80, 000   ☐

13. How many years has your Year 3 child attended this school?

    1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐

14. Approximately how long does your child spend doing homework each week day?

0 mins ☐   15 mins ☐   30 mins ☐   60 mins ☐   More than 60 mins ☐

15. Do you supervise your child's homework?

always ☐   mostly ☐   sometimes ☐   never ☐

16. Do you check completed homework tasks?

always ☐   mostly ☐   sometimes ☐   never ☐

17. Do you ever set your child extra homework tasks?

always ☐   mostly ☐   sometimes ☐   never ☐

18. Do you think your Year 3 child enjoys homework?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Unsure ☐

19. Does your Year 3 child attend a coaching college? Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes how often?

1 day a week ☐   2 days a week ☐   3 days a week ☐   more often ☐

20. Where does your Year 3 child generally complete their homework eg bedroom, kitchen, lounge room? _____
_____

21. Does your Year 3 child complete work while watching TV?

always ☐   mostly ☐   sometimes ☐   never ☐

22. Does your Year 3 child have an established homework routine?
Yes ☐   No ☐

23. What extracurricular activities does your Year 3 child attend **AND** how often?

Eg: Music lessons ☐   _____

Sports Training ☐   _____

Church Group ☐   _____

Singing lessons ☐   _____

Dance group ☐   _____

Other – please specify   _____   _____

24. Do these activities require extra practice or training at home?
Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes, how often? _____

25. Do you read with your Year 3 child at home?   Yes ☐   No ☐
    If yes, how often during the week ? _____

26. Do you attend any of the following school meetings?

    P and C   Yes ☐   No ☐
    School Council   Yes ☐   No ☐
    Parent Information Sessions   Yes ☐   No ☐
    Parent/Teacher Interviews   Yes ☐   No ☐
    Community Meetings   Yes ☐   No ☐
    Fundraising Meetings   Yes ☐   No ☐
    Other _____   Yes ☐   No ☐

27. Do you want your Year 3 child to complete the exam in Year 4 for entrance
    to the local Opportunity Class?
    Yes ☐   No ☐   Unsure ☐

28. If 'yes', do you expect them to be successful?
    Yes ☐   No ☐   Unsure ☐

29. How would you describe your Year 3 child's level of academic achievement?
    very good ☐   good ☐   satisfactory ☐   unsatisfactory ☐

30. Are you satisfied with the level of discipline at your Year 3 child's school?
    Yes ☐   No ☐

Expression of Interest

Would you be prepared to discuss these issues in more detail? It would involve
a 45 minute interview with you and a 20 minute interview with your child at a
time of convenience to you. All information discussed in these interviews is
confidential.

Yes ☐   No ☐

(If 'yes' please supply name and contact number)

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Please indicate if an interpreter is required.

Yes ☐   No ☐   Language required _____

Thank you for your assistance in completing the survey.

Appendix B – Parent Interview Schedule

Introduction and procedure, relate to survey

1. Does your child like school?
2. Does your child do well at school? Which subjects are they best at?
3. Is your child's experience at school what you expected it to be? Explain.
4. What aspects of your child's education are you happy with? Please specify.
5. What aspects of your child's education are you not happy with? Please specify.
6. What do you think is the main role of a primary school? Why?
7. What do you think are the most important values that a school should be teaching? Why?

In the survey we asked about homework and want to follow up with some further questions.

8. Do you think homework is important? Explain.
9. Do you supervise your child's homework? If yes, what do you do? If no, why not?
10. Does your child do homework every night? If not, how often?
11. How long do you think a Year 3 student should spend on homework each night?
12. Could you describe your child's homework routine, ie when and where they do it, etc.
13. In the survey you indicated that your child does/does not attend coaching. What's your view about coaching? Why do you feel your child does/does not need it?
14. Do you know about the different tests that school students can do in Years 3-6? [eg Basic Skills, opportunity class, University of NSW tests, etc]
15. How do you feel about testing in primary schools?
16. You indicated in the survey that you (do/don't) want your child to sit the opportunity class test. Why/not?
17. Have you thought about the high school they might attend?

In the survey we asked about the activities your child was involved in outside school and wanted to ask you further questions about this.

18. Do you think extracurricular activities are an important part of your child's education? If yes, in what way? If no, why not? [prompt: do they help or get in the way of school work?]
19. Are you happy with the level of discipline at your child's class? Please explain.
20. Do you like the style of teaching used in your child's school? Why?

21. Overall, do you think a particular style of teaching is used at your child's school? How would you describe it? Eg is there more whole class teaching, group work or independent learning?

22. Do you think people from different cultural/linguistic backgrounds have different attitudes to education? If yes, what are they? [prompt them about their own community]

23. Do you think people from different cultural/linguistic backgrounds learn differently? If yes, how would you describe these different styles? [prompt about their own community]

24. Do you feel comfortable approaching the school and your child's teacher to discuss his/her schoolwork or any concerns you may have? Why/not?

25. Do you attend P and C or any other school meetings? If no, is there a particular reason why? If yes, why?

26. Do you think your child's school does enough to assist parents who have a language background other than English?

27. How important to you is your child keeping strong ties to people of your cultural background? Why/not?

28. What do you want your child to do when they grow up? Why?

Any questions you'd like to ask us?
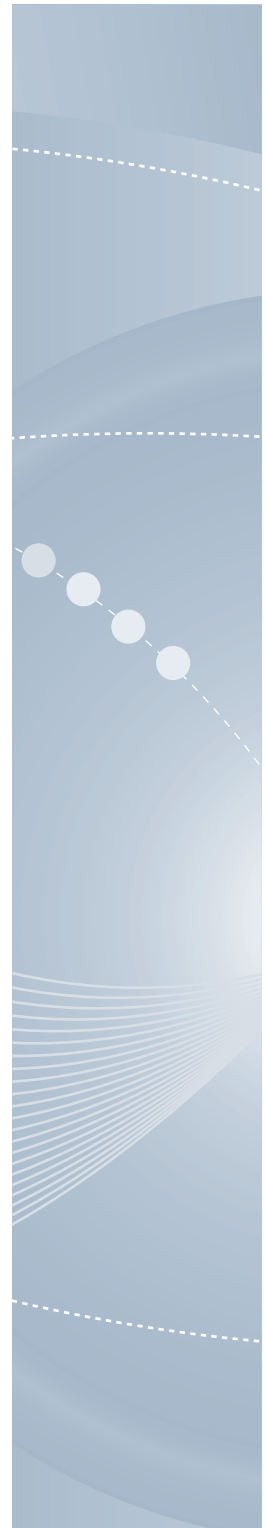
Appendix C – Principal Interview Schedule

1. How long have you been principal at this school?

2. Have you been principal in other schools with high percentages of LBOTE students?

3. What is the total school population and what are the major cultural/linguistic backgrounds of students at this school?

4. What is the socio-economic background of most of the students at the school?

5. How would you describe the overall ethos/culture of the school?

6. Are there noticeable differences in the academic achievement of students from different cultural/linguistic backgrounds? If yes, what are they? Why do you think this is the case?

7. Are there noticeable differences in the behaviour of students from different cultural/linguistic backgrounds. If yes, please describe them? Why do you think this is?

8. Are these differences ever addressed in staff meetings and/or professional development meetings?

9. What programs exist in the school to cater for these differences?

10. Do you think there are noticeable differences in the extra curricular activities of students from the different cultural/linguistic backgrounds? If yes, what are they? Why do you think this is the case?

11. Are there many students at the school who attend coaching in particular subjects outside school? If yes, are they of particular cultural/linguistic backgrounds? Why do you think this is the case?

12. Is there a difference in terms of parental involvement in the school by the different cultural/linguistic groups represented at the school eg attendance at P and C meetings, reading groups, fundraising, canteen, etc?

13. Do you think parents of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds have different expectations of the school? If yes, what are they?

14. Do you think parents of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds have different expectations of their children? If yes, what are they? Why do you think this is the case?

15. Do you think parents of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds have different perspectives on homework? If yes, what are they?

16. Do you think parents of different cultural/linguistic backgrounds have different perspectives on discipline? If yes, what are they?

17. Do many students in Year 3 sit for the UNSW competition tests and/or tests for Opportunity Classes in Year 4? Is there a greater representation of students from particular cultural/linguistic backgrounds who sit for these exams? If yes, why do you think this is the case?

18. What methods of communication are used to inform and contact parents at the school?

19. Is there a CLO or other community liaison representative at the school? How would you describe their role?

20. Would you describe your school as successful? Why/why not? What are the main issues currently confronting the school?

21. What would you consider to be the average age and experience of staff at the school?

22. What would you say was the overall educational philosophy governing the school?

23. Do you think there is a stronger emphasis on whole class instruction or group-based learning at the school or is it variable?

24. Do you think children form particular cultural/linguistic backgrounds respond better to particular styles of teaching? If yes, in what way?

25. As a group would you position your staff as more traditional or progressivist in teaching orientation?

26. What are your priorities for the professional development of staff this year?
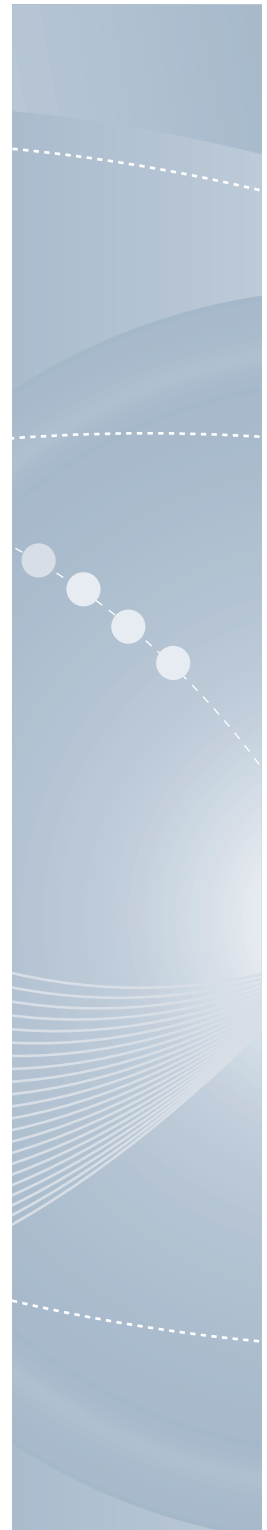
References

APIATT (2005) A Strategic Action Plan for the Education of Asian/Pacific Islander American Students in Washington State.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2008) *2006 Census: Report on Selected Groups – Employment, Education and Income by Ethnicity.* Canberra: ABS.

Baez, B. and Talburt, S. (2008) 'Governing for responsibility and with love: Parents and children between home and school', *Education Theory* Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 25-43.

Barnard, W. M. (2004) 'Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment', *Children and Youth Services Review* Vol. 26, pp. 39-62.

Baumgartner, D., Bryan, T., Donahue, M. and Nelson, C. (1993) 'Thanks for Asking: Parent comments about homework, tests, and grades', *Exceptionality* Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.177-185.

Board of Studies NSW (2008) *Useful Information for parents*, http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/parents/

Bourdieu, P. (1980) *The Logic of Practice.* Trans. by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste.* London: Routledge.

Bridges, D. (1994) 'Parents: Customers or Partners?', in Bridges, D. and McLaughlin, T. (eds), *Education and the market place.* London: Routledge, pp.65-79.

Cardona, B., Noble, G. and Di Biase, B. (2008) *Community Languages Matter! Challenges and opportunities facing the Community Languages Program in NSW.* Sydney: University of Western Sydney.

Cairney, T. H. and Ruge, J. (1999) 'Developing partnerships: The home, school and community interface', *Queensland Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 15, No.1, pp.17-24.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1975) *School and Community.* Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Cheng, K. M. and Wong, K. C. (1996) 'School effectiveness in East Asia: Concepts, origins and implications', *Journal of Educational Administration* Vol. 34, No. 5, pp. 2-49.

Cheng, K.M. (1998) 'Can education values be borrowed? Looking into cultural differences', *Peabody Journal of Education* Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 11-30.

Coleman, J. S. (1988) 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 94 (Suppl.), pp. 95-120.

Crump, S. (1996) 'Schools and their community: Tensions and tradeoffs,' *Politics of Education Association Yearbook* pp. 37-44.

Cuttance, P. and Stokes, S. (2000), *Reporting on Student and School Achievement.* Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Dauber, S. and Epstein, J. (1993) 'Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools', in Chavkin, N.F. (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Davies, D., Palanki, A. and Burch, P. (1993) 'Getting started: Action research in family-school-community partnerships' (Center Rep. No. 17), *Baltimore: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008) *Family-School Partnerships Framework: A guide for schools and families*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Duffy, M. (2001). Improved by Asian work ethic. *Courier Mail* 29 September: p.28.

Eccles, J. and Harold, R. (1996) 'Family involvement in children's and adolescents' schooling', in Booth, A. and Dunn, J. (Editors), *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Elliot, J., Hufton, N., Hildreth, A. and Illushin, L. (1999) 'Factors influencing educational motivation: A study of attitudes, expectations and behaviour of children in Sunderland, Kentucky and St Petersburg', *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 75-94.

Epstein, J. L, Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Clark Salinas, K., Rodriquez Jansorn, N., Van Voorhis, F. L., Martin, C. S., Thomas, B. G., Greenfield, M. D., Hutchins, D. J., Williams, K. J. (2009) *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Epstein, Joyce L. (1995) School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan.* Vol. 76, No 9, pp. 701-713.

Gianzero, G. (1999) 'Promoting parental involvement, improving student outcomes: working paper', San Diego Dialogue, http://www.sandiegodialogue.org/pdfs/Parental%20Involvement%20doc.pdf

Giddens, A. (1984) *The constitution of society: Outline of a theory of structuration.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Glenn, C. L. (1996) 'Letting parents choose: Does it make schools different?' *Forum of Education, A Journal of Theory, Research, Policy and Practice* Vol. 51, No. 1, pp.3-12.

Henderson, A. and Berla, N. (Eds) (1995) *'A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (A report from the National Committee for Citizens in Education). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Herman, C. (2004) 'Globalisation, managerialism and communities', University of Pretoria etd. http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-08302004-150558/unrestricted/02chapter2.pdf

Houtenville, A. and Conway, K. (2008) 'Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement', *Journal of Human Resources*, 43, 2, pp.437-453.

Jimerson, S., Egeland, B. and Teo, A. (1999) 'A longitudinal study of achievement trajectories: Factors associated with change', *Journal of Educational Psychology* Mar Vol. 91, No. 1, pp.116-126.

Jung-Sook, L. and Bowen, N. (2006) 'Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children', *American Educational Research Journal* Summer Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 193-218.

Khoo, S-E., McDonald, P., Giorgas, D. and Birrrell, B. (2002) *Second Generation Australians.* Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Canberra.

Kltuh, P., Straut, D. and Biklen, D. (2003) *Access to academics for all students: critical approaches to inclusive curriculum, instruction and policy.* London: Syracuse University, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Laitsch, D. (2006) 'Self-discipline and student academic achievement', *Research Brief* Vol. 4, No 6. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org

Lamont, M. and Lareau, A. (1988) 'Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments', *Sociological Theory* Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 153-168.

Lareau, A. (2001) 'Linking Bourdieu's concept of capital to the broader field: The case of family-school relationships'. In B. J. Biddle (Ed.), *Social class, poverty, and education: Policy and practice.* New York: Routlege/Falmer, pp. 77–100.

Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lasch, C. (1977) *Haven in a heartless world: The family besieged.* New York and London, W.W. Norton.

Lee, J. and Bowen, N. (2006) 'Parent involvement, Cultural Capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children', *American Educational Research Journal* Vol. 43, No. 2, pp.193-218.

Li, G. (1999) 'What do parents think? Middle-class Chinese immigrant parents' perspectives on literacy learning, homework, and school-home communication', *The School Community Journal* Vol. 16, No. 2.

Limerick, B. (1995) 'Busybodies, antibodies, nobodies - or somebodies?' in B. Limerick and H. Nielsen (Eds.) *School and Community Relations: Participation, Policy and Practice.* Sydney: Harcourt Brace, pp. 35-52.

Livingston, C. (1999) 'The privilege of pedagogical capital: A framework for understanding scholastic success in mathematics', The University of Alabama.

Marjoribanks, K. (2002) *Family and School Capital.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Marjoribanks, K. (2003) 'The family and school in Asian and Pacific countries, in Keeves, J. and Watanabe, R. (editors) *The International handbook of Educational Research* Springer, pp. 43-52.

Mak, A. (2002) 'Filling the void - the role of coaching centres in the 21st century', http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/mak02629.htm

Marsh, C. (1988) *Spotlight on School Improvement.* Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

McConchie, R. (2004) *Family-School Partnerships Issues Paper.* Canberra: Australian Council of School Organisations.

McKeand, R. (2003) *Literature Review of Parent-School Partnerships. ACER* (unpublished).

McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L. and Sekino, Y. (2004) 'A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children', *Psychology in the Schools* Vol. 41, pp. 363-377.

Mestan, K. (2004) 'Poverty amongst privilege: social exclusion of children', *Brotherhood of St Laurence.* Victoria, Australia.

Mills, C. and Gale, T. (2004) 'Parent participation in disadvantaged schools: moving beyond attributions of blame', *Australian Journal of Education* Vol. 48, No. 3, pp.268-281.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) (2003) *The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools.* Canberra: MCEETYA .

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008) *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.* Canberra: MCEETYA.

Nohl, A., Schittenhelm, K., Schmidtke, O. and Weiss, A. (2006) 'Cultural capital during migration – A multi-level approach to the empirical analysis of labor market integration amongst highly skilled migrants', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 14-28.

Perry-Indermaur, Astrid (2004) *Regimes of truth: Gender, Achievement and Parent Participation in New South Wales Public Schools.* University of Western Sydney, Australian Digital Thesis Program.

Reay, D. (1998) 'Cultural Reproduction', in M.Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory.* Bristol: Falmer Press, pp.55-71.

Reay, D. (2004) 'Education and Cultural Capital', *Cultural Trends* Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.73-86.

Rigter, G. T. (1986) *Parent Participation in School Decision-Making.* Adelaide: Masters Thesis.

Saha, L. (2003) 'Cultural and social capital in Asian and Pacific countries', in Keeves, J. and Watanabe, R. (Eds.) *The International handbook of Educational Research* Springer, pp.59-72.

Sheldon, S. B. and Epstein, J. L. (2005) 'Involvement Counts: Family and Community Partnerships and Mathematic Achievement', *The Journal of Educational Research* Vol 98, No. 4, pp. 196-207.

Soliman, I. K. (1991) 'State control and parent participation: Analysis of recent reports', *Australian Educational Researcher* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.51-73.

Steinberg, L. (1996) *Beyond the Classroom: why school reform has failed and what parents need to do.* New York: Touchstone Books.

Stevenson, H. W. and Stigler, J. W. (1994) *The learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sue, S. & Okazaki, S. (1990). Asian-American Educational Achievement. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45, No.8, pp.913-920.

Toomey, D. (1996) 'The dark side of parent involvement in schools', *Forum of Education, A Journal of Theory, Research, Policy and Practice* Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 60-72.

Trudeau, F. and Shephard, R. (2008) 'Physical education, school physical activity, school sports and academic performance', *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 10-19.

Valdez, M., Dowrick, P. and Maynard, A. (2007) 'Cultural misperceptions and goals for Samoan children's education in Hawaii: Voices from school, home, and community', *The Urban Review* Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 67-92

Villa, R. and Thousand, J. (Eds) (2005) *Creating An Inclusive School.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Developemnt.

Watkins, M. and Noble, G. (2008) *Cultural Practices and Learning: Diversity, Discipline and Dispositions in Schooling.* Sydney: Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.

Wong, S. and Hughes, J. (2006) 'Ethnicity and language contributions to dimensions of parent involvement', *School Psych Rev.* Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 645–662.

Wu, J. & Singh, M. (2004). "Wishing for Dragon Children": Ironies and Contradictions in China's Educational Reforms and the Chinese Diaspora's Disappointments with Australian Education. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 31, No.2, pp.29-44.