Accounting for educational equality: The cultural politics of Samoan paraprofessionals’ representations of pedagogy in state-designated disadvantaged schools and communities in Australia

Parlo Singh and Karen Dooley

Abstract

This paper reports a study of the accounts of pedagogic work provided by Samoan paraprofessionals responsible for forging lines of communication between government secondary schools in an Australian city and state-designated disadvantaged local communities. The paraprofessionals are viewed as representatives of the imagined communities constructed around schools in official state discourses on educational disadvantage and equality. It is shown that the discourses on Samoan pedagogy spoken by the paraprofessionals are appropriated from a highly conflictual field of anthropological and historical knowledge-production. Qualitative analysis of interview data provided by the paraprofessionals, indicates that all interviewees emphasized differences in the form and content of pedagogy between the Australian school and the Samoan home and church; attributing these differences to various relations of power and control. In conclusion, it is proposed that the paraprofessionals’ accounts should not be read as simply true or untrue, but in terms of their specificity as input to institutional pedagogic work-input with the potential to bring cultural difference into being as it is acted on by teachers and other educational agents.

Introduction

We report an interview study documenting and explicating Samoan paraprofessionals’ accounts of pedagogic work in institutions of home, church and school in Queensland,
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The focus is on accounts of pedagogy, both in state-designated disadvantaged schools with substantial cohorts of students categorized as ‘recently arrived Samoans’, and in the homes and churches of these students. The category ‘disadvantaged’ was formulated by the state education department to encourage ‘meaningful comparisons’ across schools on the basis of ‘contextual characteristics’, namely school size, socio-economic status and the proportion of the population that was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

One purpose of this categorizing technology was to encourage a more equitable distribution of resources to Queensland schools designated as disadvantaged.

According to Hunter (1993, 1994), however, the imagining of equality within the state education bureaucracy has been characterized by a profound and striking ambivalence. On the one hand, equality has been conceptualized ‘as a technical objective of government, to achieve a socially optimal distribution of trained capacities and lifestyles’; on the other hand, it has been ‘represented as an absolute moral right to self-realization, claimed on the behalf of our common humanity or universal moral personality’ (Hunter 1994: 95). These modes of conceptualizing equality have produced different substantive conceptions of the scope of education, different expectations of the school system, and different ethical and political demeanours in those attempting to strive for equality.

We document, herein, the accounts of pedagogy provided by Samoan paraprofessionals working in state-designated disadvantaged schools. Our objective is to analyse how the institutional category, ‘Samoan paraprofessional’, produces speaking positions about educational equality in general, and inclusive literacy in particular. Our paper is organized in three sections. In the first section, a description is provided of the positions occupied by the interview participants within the relations of power that constitute the four case-study schools as institutions for the production of inclusive literacy for students categorized as ‘Samoan’ or ‘Pacific Islander’. We theorize the power relations that construct ‘Samoan paraprofessional’ as an institutional category in relation to ‘teachers’ and the ‘local community’. We examine power relations at the level not only of the school, but also of official state discourse on education. Because the paraprofessionals were authorized to speak about pedagogy within the discourses of schooling and the local community, the second section details a theory of pedagogic work. In that section, we also document struggles over the representation of Samoan pedagogy within the field of anthropological research. This is followed by an analysis of the paraprofessionals’ accounts of the forms of pedagogic work in key institutions of the local Samoan community. In that section, we question the positions taken up by the paraprofessionals in struggles over the representation of pedagogic work.
dedicated to the systematic inculcation of Samoan cultural identity in local community institutions. We also examine struggles over the positioning of Samoan students within school pedagogy, particularly challenges to exclusionary practices. In the third and concluding section, we focus on the usefulness of the theorization employed in this paper in relation to the work of the postcolonial theorists who contributed important insights into education in conditions of cultural diversity during the 1990s.

**The paraprofessionals**

A total of 35 Samoan paraprofessionals were interviewed for the study (see table 1). These participants took up positions within the school or other institutions of the state education department as representatives of the *imagined* `Samoan community’. As Anderson (1991: 6) argued, the community is *imagined* because the members . . . will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’. In this study, the ties which connected members, and thus constituted an *imagined* community, were those of Samoan print language (i.e. the community newspaper, the Bible), institutions of the Samoan church, Samoan sporting and cultural organizations, and parents’ groups.

Table 1. Samoan paraprofessional personnel interviewed for the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions in local community</th>
<th>Positions in school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers of Religion*</td>
<td>- Some assisted with student discipline problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Four ministers + three Ministers' wives interviewed)</td>
<td>- Some participated in Parents and Citizens Committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- God, and Methodist.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Various levels of English proficiency, educational and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- theological qualifications.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Tertiary qualifications in education, business,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- engineering, medicine.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Residents of higher socio-economic suburbs, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- attended Samoan church services in the case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals*</td>
<td>- One private training provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Six participants interviewed)</td>
<td>- Five cultural education advisors in state agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Volunteers on school councils, curriculum committees,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled community workers*</td>
<td>No tertiary qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Four participants interviewed)</td>
<td>- Lived in local community, sometimes connected with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- the church (wife or daughter of a minister of religion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>No tertiary qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18 participants interviewed)</td>
<td>- Lived in local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sometimes connected with the church (wife or daughter of a minister of religion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Two home/community liaison officers.*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 16 parents with children attending secondary schools in</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- the case study area.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Worked in schools on a fractional/casual basis.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Often additional work undertaken in cleaning/fast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- food industries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 35

*These 19 participants provided the data analysed in this paper.

In taking up positions as paraprofessionals within state education institutions, members of the Samoan community were authorized to speak as Samoans on behalf of the local Samoan community. The Samoan community thus came to exist within the discourses of state education institutions through the accounts of the delegates, or representatives, of this group. The Samoan community in the case-study schools existed, then, as a result of both its disadvantaged place in the relations of production, and its construction in discourses on educational equality. In the words of Bourdieu (1993: 4):

> the representation which individuals and groups inevitably project through their practices and properties is an integral part of social reality. A class [or community] is defined as much by its *being-perceived* and by its *being*, by its consumption - which need not be conspicuous to be symbolic - as much as by its position in the relations of production.
One aspect of representation examined herein is the depiction of Samoan students in the institutional discourses of schooling and other state education institutions. The other aspect is the practice of delegation, whereby Samoan paraprofessionals are positioned to speak as representatives of their community (Julien and Mercer 1996). In the case of representation as delegation, there are many subject positions that can be taken up: ´one is not just one thing´, but assumes a position within struggles of cultural politics (Spivak 1990: 60). In taking up the position of Samoan paraprofessional, this study’s interviewees were engaged in a cultural politics of ethnic identity.

Struggles . . . over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the origin through the place of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent - are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups. What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of division [sic] which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group (Bourdieu 1991: 221).

The 35 paraprofessionals interviewed for this study were representative of different factions within the field of the local Samoan community. The concept of field, as used herein, refers to “a patterned system of objective forces, . . . a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter in it” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17). Moreover, a field is simultaneously a social space of conflict and competition, an arena ´in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it . . . the power to decree the hierarchy and ´conversion rates´ between all forms of authority in the field of power´ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17). In the course of struggles, the very shape and social divisions of the field becomes a central stake, because alterations to the relative worth and distribution of forms of capital equate to modifications of the structure of the field (i.e. the social division of labour and the social relations within the field).

The concept of capital or resources refers, in general terms, to the accumulated labour in which inheres the individuals’ capacity to produce profits in a particular field (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). That labour may be economic (a potential for profit in the field of production), informational - or ´cultural´ as it was formerly known - (a potential
Acquisition of informational capital entails the accumulation of a labour of self-formation, a labour of inculcation and transformation. This type of capital may exist in an embodied form, that is, in the disposition of individuals to draw on or produce particular kinds of knowledge and to engage in particular kinds of social interactions. Alternatively, informational capital may exist in an institutionalized form, for example, in educational qualifications. Whatever its form, informational capital allows players to wield power or influence, that is, to occupy positions of domination, rather than of subordination within a field. Further, informational capital can be converted into economic and social capital (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Hage 1998).

Cultural capital or informational resources within the fields of the local Samoan community and state education were the object of struggle, conflict and contestation for the 35 paraprofessionals who participated in this study. The study was focused, therefore, on the provenance of the participants’ perceptions of the labour of transmission and acquisition of informational resources in positions in the field of the Samoan community and state education (Singh 2000).

To ascertain different perceptions of the field of the local Samoan community, one minister from each of the four participants’ religious denominations (Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of God, and Methodist) was interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with tertiary-educated Samoan personnel active in official state-education policy and curricular forums (see table 1). Personnel employed to assist teachers in their day-to-day work, and parents of students who attended the four state-designated disadvantaged schools involved in this study, were also asked to participate. A researcher on the team, who was both a member of the local Samoan community and a qualified teacher, nominated participants for the study in the first instance. In addition, information about the research project was disseminated via the local Samoan community newspaper and a parent discussion group was held at Sanunder State Secondary School, one of the four case-study schools. Irrespective of how they were approached, all potential participants were invited to contribute an interview on inclusive literacy pedagogy for Samoan secondary school students.

The interviews were conducted at venues nominated by the participants. All were audio taped. The Samoan member of the research team was present at most interviews, and although all interviews were conducted in English, Samoan was sometimes used to clarify the meaning of research questions and to elaborate upon responses. The interviews were semi-structured, guided by a set of questions which aimed to elicit information about:
the job description of paraprofessionals;
• enactments of the role of `paraprofessional’ within the school;
• the relation between pedagogic work undertaken in the school and the local community;
• the social relations between paraprofessionals and classroom teachers and school administrators;
• socialization into paraprofessional school roles;
• the representation of Samoan pedagogy (or pedagogies) and identity (or identities) in school forums; and
• the relationship between positions taken up in school and community institutions.

At least one reader of the local community Samoan newspaper overtly declined to participate in the study. In a ‘Letter to the Editor’ (1996), this reader maintained that the English language had been used as an instrument for the colonization/domination of Samoan people, and continued to be used in schools in Samoa and Australia to inculcate colonial belief systems. To challenge racist, colonial relations and inculcate pride in Samoan heritage, this reader advocated that ‘efforts [should] be made to obtain resources to promote literacy in Samoan language’.3 The position of this reader within the discourses on educational equality was in opposition to that of this research study, in that it valorised the moral right to self-realization (as ‘Samoan’) rather than the more equitable distribution of trained literacy capacities and lifestyles.4

The Samoan paraprofessionals who agreed to participate in this study were part of a network consisting of a `hybrid of bureaucratic and parental, professional and voluntary agencies: community liaison officers and parents’ associations, community welfare experts and self-help groups, curriculum experts and curriculum consultation committees’ (Hunter 1994: 130). These networks originated in the 1970s from social movements dedicated to making state-designated disadvantaged schools responsive to the needs of the local community. In the 1990s, under the `social justice strategy’ formulated by the Queensland Labor government, these networks were given increased state recognition and support. The social justice strategy drew together existing projects for a cluster of target group students,5 especially in designated-disadvantaged schools, and made consideration of social justice mandatory in all departmental activities. Among the provisions of this strategy was the policy on cultural and language diversity in education (Queensland Education Department 1995),
which promoted ‘socially just’ curriculum recognizing diversity and thematizing injustice, development of departmental officers’ understandings of racism and cultural inclusion, and the participation of community members of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in school processes and decision-making.

The four state secondary schools in which the 35 Samoan paraprofessionals worked were situated in low socio-economic areas. One school, for example, was in a suburb ranked in the national census data as amongst the lowest 5% of all the local statistical areas of the state with respect to median household income. In addition, the suburb’s youth (15±24 years) and adult (25+ years) unemployment levels of 31.4% and 21.7% were significantly higher than the city averages of 14.1% and 9.9%, respectively. Moreover, the occupational profile of the suburb was skewed strongly towards clerical, sales and service, and trade work, with under-representation in the professional categories (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). In addition, a State Electoral Commission profile indicated that residents spoke ‘the most foreign languages out of any electorate in the State, with 26.7% speaking a language other than English at home’. The Samoan paraprofessionals were appointed to schools in these disadvantaged areas to improve educational achievements for students who had not attained outcomes commensurate with their year-level, in particular, the third of the student population that did not achieve pass grades in the junior certificate. Students categorized as ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Samoan’ were disproportionately represented in this group. Literacy and numeracy levels for these cohorts of students were also low. The principal objective of the Samoan paraprofessionals was to assist teachers with the development of pedagogy responsive to the needs of these low-achieving students.

As the institutional category, ‘Samoan paraprofessional’, was constructed to produce speaking positions in relation to inclusive school pedagogy, it is now necessary to conceptualize pedagogic work to provide analytic categories for the accounts produced in this study. It is also necessary to document struggles over accounts of Samoan pedagogy produced within the field of anthropology, specifically, the well-known ‘Mead-Freeman controversy’ over the production of scientific knowledge/truth on the ‘cultural Other’.10

Conceptualizing pedagogy: relations of power and control

Pedagogic relations between agents (i.e. teachers and students) within pedagogic agencies are structured by rules or principles of pedagogic communication. According to Bernstein and Solomon (1999: 267), pedagogic relations are constituted within principles of communication ‘where there is a purposeful intention to initiate, modify, develop or change knowledge, conduct or practice by someone . . . [who] already possesses, or has access to, the
necessary resources and the means of evaluating acquisition’. Moreover, pedagogic relations are constituted by principles of power and control. Symbolic power relations refer to the strength of the insulation of the boundaries between categories of pedagogic agents (i.e. teachers-students, caregivers-children), informational resources (transmitted and acquired by pedagogic agents in school, family and local community contexts), and contexts of pedagogic communication (e.g. in the institutions of family, community and school). Through relations of power, the categories of persons who interact in pedagogic communication, in addition to the categories of informational resources transmitted in these interactions, and the categories of institutional contexts, are constituted. In other words:

- power relations . . . create boundaries, legitimize boundaries, reproduce boundaries, between different categories of groups, gender, class, race, different categories of discourse, different categories of agents. Thus, power always operates to produce dislocations, to produce punctuations in social space (Bernstein 1996: 19).

In this way, power relations establish legitimate relations of social order.

Relations of symbolic control refer to the legitimate relations of communication appropriate to the different categories of agents (i.e. accounting for educational equity teacher-student, different categories of students), discourses (i.e. different categories of informational resources) and contexts (i.e. categorization of home and schooling institutions, and spaces within the school and home). Principles of control, therefore, carry the boundary relations of power and socialize individuals into these relations. However, the principles of control carry both the power of reproduction and the potential for its change.

Thus, principles of control carry power relations within the school (among teachers, teacher-aides, different groups of students) and in the family and community (between caregivers children, religious ministers-congregational members). Principles of control also carry power relations between institutions, for example, the flow of informational resources between the home/Church and the school via Samoan paraprofessionals.

Any aspect of the pedagogic process that affects the transmission and selective acquisition of informational resources (i.e. school knowledge) can be described as a privileging text. It can include, as Bernstein (1990: 175) has suggested, ‘the dominant curriculum, dominant pedagogic practice . . . any pedagogic representation, spoken, written, visual, postural, sartorial, spatial’. Thus, students can be positioned directly or indirectly, advantageously or otherwise, to the privileging text because of their race, gender or class or any other significant attribute, that is, in their ‘relations to’ the text (p. 176). Students are also
positioned by the inherent structure and features, that is, the ‘relations within’ the privileging
text (p. 176).

In any pedagogic relation, the transmitter (i.e. teacher, parent, religious minister) has
to learn to be a transmitter, and the acquirer (i.e. student, child, congregational member) has
to learn to be an acquirer. Acquirer and transmitter must function in accord with the forms of
symbolic control legitimated in the context. As Bernstein (1990: 65-66) suggested:

the process of learning how to be a transmitter entails the acquiring of rules of social
order, character, and manner which become the condition for appropriate conduct in
the pedagogic relation. It is these rules which are a prerequisite of any enduring
pedagogic relation. In any one such relation the rules of conduct may to different
degrees permit a space for negotiation.

The transmitter is always in the dominant position in relations of symbolic control with the
acquirer (Bernstein 1990). Moreover, the form of the hierarchical relationship between
transmitter and acquirer affects the selection and organization of informational resources, as
well as the transfer of criteria which the acquirer is expected to take over, explore and
evaluate in terms of his or her own behaviour and that of relevant others. There are two forms
of criteria made available to students in schooling institutions, namely *instructional criteria*,
i.e. how to solve this problem or that problem, or produce an acceptable piece of writing or
speech, and *regulative criteria*, i.e. conduct, character, manner, posture, dress, etc.

Legitimate forms of classroom communication are, thus, constituted by the rules of
hierarchy (teacher-student relations), selection and organization of knowledge, and criteria.
Moreover, implicit or explicit power and control relations structure the form of the classroom
communicative context. Social control is explicit or visible when exercised through physical
or verbal imperatives or through reference to a set of positional rules concerned with status
(e.g. age, sex, age relation, and ethnicity), a specific context (e.g. the classroom), or culturally
invariant rules (e.g. politeness rules). Alternatively, social control is implicit or invisible when
exercised through reference to interpersonal rules protecting individuals from damage,
disturbance or violation (Bernstein 1990, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). From the student’s
perspective, ‘the point’ of school work is to discover and meet the criteria of ‘competence’ in
the classroom communicative context—to supply the teacher with ‘the right answer’ in the
‘correct manner’. Thus, taking up a position as ‘student’ entails facility with the form of
control operative in the context. Students who do not recognize the principles of power and
control structuring the communicative context of the classroom are likely to experience
difficulty meeting the teacher’s criteria of ‘competence’. Moreover, teachers may misread the
‘competence’ displayed by students if this does not meet the conventions of the classroom communicative context or it is displayed by students categorized as ‘Other’ to the ‘normal’ school child.

The institutional category, ‘Samoan paraprofessional’, was constituted in the four case-study schools to assist classroom teachers in their relations with Samoan students. Samoan paraprofessionals were selected from the local community and assigned designated spaces within the schooling institution (i.e. teacher-aide rooms, cultural forums). They were expected to speak about a particular category of discourse, namely Samoan pedagogy, to a particular category of agents, namely classroom teachers. Struggles over the representation of Samoan pedagogy are now examined, in order to establish the discourses on Samoan pedagogy available to the paraprofessionals in this work of representation.

**Accounts of Samoan pedagogy: struggles over anthropological truths**

Samoan pedagogic practices have been the object of systematic investigation and debate since the inception of the discipline of anthropology in the early part of the 20th century (Mead 1943, Freeman 1983, 1996, 1999). A watershed text in this field is Margaret Mead’s study, first published in 1928, of the pedagogical constitution of the Samoan girl, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*.11 As the title of this work suggests, Mead’s objective was to demonstrate how Samoan pedagogy differed from the pedagogic modes of 20th-century middle-class USA. The focus was on the production of different struggles and conflicts during adolescence (i.e. social relations), as well as different forms of social identity. The gist of Mead’s claims was that the relaxed sexual mores of Samoan society allowed adolescents to enjoy free love without the anger and jealousy that is the norm in Western society. One of the most widely read and cited studies in the Western academy,12 Mead’s research argued the importance of nurture (i.e. pedagogic inculcation) over nature (i.e. heredity) in the constitution of human identity (Boas 1943). The influence of the work was profound, extending well beyond the field of anthropology into the popular imagination during an era of sexual accounting for educational equity liberalization and progressive child-rearing, ultimately becoming ´a model for the ‘flower children’ of the Sixties’ (Caton 1990: 4).

In describing her methodology, Mead (1943: 15) stated that she investigated the adolescent girl in Samoa because, as a ‘woman [she] could hope for greater intimacy in working with girls than with boys’.

I spent more time in the games of children than in the councils of their elders.

Speaking their language, eating their food, sitting barefoot and cross-legged upon the
pebbly floor, I did my best to minimize the differences between us and to learn to
know and understand all the girls of three little villages on the coast of the little island
of Ta, in the Manu’a Archipelago (p. 16).

Five decades after it was published, Mead’s study was criticized sharply by Freeman
(1983, 1996, 1999). One point of Freeman’s critique was Mead’s premise that the Boasian
theory of cultural determinism and cultural relativism could be proven through investigation
of a pedagogic mode different from that of 20th-century middle-class USA. Freeman claimed
that Mead’s data collection, analysis and reportage were biased by her premise that Samoa
was a primitive society which could be readily studied and understood, and her commitment
to the Boasian thesis. Freeman (1983: 1) suggested further that Mead’s `exciting revelations
about sexual behaviour’ in Samoa were unreliable, because these were merely `the
extrapolations of whispered intimacies’ or `the results of a prankish hoax’. In short, Freeman
(1996, 1999) contended that Mead was duped by her native informants and attributed this
methodological problem to Mead’s limited Samoan-language proficiency, the brevity of her
stay in Samoa, and the inaccessibility of chiefly institutions to her as a young woman
(Freeman 1983, 1996, 1999). By contrast with Mead, Freeman represented Samoans as
violent, drawing attention to the incidence of rape and assault in Samoan life, a problem that
became apparent to him after he acquired chiefly status within Samoan society. It has been
suggested that Freeman’s work was as much of its time as Mead’s, except that in his case it
was a time of resurgent sexual conservatism - the 1980s’ backlash against the 1960s - and a
time of Samoan resistance to Mead’s representations (Caton 1990).

Freeman’s refutation of Mead (1943), in turn, prompted a high-profile debate among
anthropologists.13 According to Caton (1990: 1):
the controversy ranged over many topics, and perceptions of the central issues varied.
Some dismissed it as a prestige struggle of no particular theoretical relevance . . . .
[Others] believed that it marked a watershed in the history of anthropology.

From the latter perspective, the Mead-Freeman debate is illustrative of the controversies of
the post-modern and post-colonial moment in anthropology, as in the human sciences more
generally. Built on the assumption that knowledge is a representation contingent on the
interests by which it is constructed, the theories of this moment have raised the problem of
speaking for and about Pacific Islander others, challenged the textual authority of academic
writing about Pacific Islanders, and mandated the inclusion of hitherto silenced Pacific
Islander voices (Linnekin 1990).
A key concern of postcolonial theorists, namely the representation of non-European or pre-European societies as 'timeless', is evident in recent critiques of anthropological truths about Samoa (Meleise 1995, Schoeffel 1995). It has been argued that anthropologists produced a-historical and static accounts of the *aiga* (extended family) and *feagaiga* (the relationship between sister and brother, between children of sister-brother pairs, and between chiefs and orators and heads of families). Researchers have been urged, instead, to document changes to the pedagogic relations of the *aiga* and *feagaiga* over time in Samoa, in different Samoan villages, as well as in immigrant Samoan communities.

The turn to literary genres characteristic of the post-colonial moment is also evident in the study of Pacific Islanders. The novel and short-story forms have been used, sometimes by scholars, to explore colonized subjectivity and to give voice to the silenced (Linnekin 1990). Key themes in Samoan literature of this type have been the distinction between 'Samoan' and *palagi* (European) modes of pedagogic relations (i.e. caregiver-child, minister-congregation member, teacher-student relations), and the importance of family (*aiga*) and group identity to Samoans, as opposed to the emphasis on individual property, and individual rights to *palagi* (Wendt 1977, 1979, Figiel 1998). The 'Mead-Freeman' controversy has also been thematized in this literature. In Figiel’s (1998: 204; emphasis added; ellipses in original) novel about adolescent girls in Samoa, for example, one of the principal characters asked a friend to explain the 'Mead-Freeman controversy' mentioned at school, receiving the following account:

Mead was a *palagi* woman who wrote about a book on Samoan girls doing 'it' a lot . . . they were loving and loved 'it' too. Freeman was a *palagi* man who said that Mead, the *palagi* woman, was wrong about Samoan girls doing 'it' a lot . . . that Samoans are jealous, hateful, murderous people who do not know how to do 'it'.

In taking up positions within the field of culturally inclusive state education in Queensland, the Samoan paraprofessionals appropriated discourses from the much contested field of knowledge about Samoan pedagogy. These positions are now examined through an analysis of the interviews provided by the 35 paraprofessionals for this study.

Data analysis

*Parents (mothers of school students)*

Sixteen parents (mothers) of students who attended schools in the case-study area were interviewed for the study. All the parents were educated in Western Samoa, the highest level of education being fifth form (i.e. Grade 11). Moreover, all were full-time homemakers.
whose husbands were variously factory workers, semi-skilled tradesmen (e.g. spray painters) or unemployed. Most parents stated that their communication with the school was limited. Some parents assisted occasionally in the school canteen, accounting for educational equity, attended cultural and sporting events held by the school, and parent information evenings designed to report on student performance. However, most parents indicated that they were only contacted by the school when behavioural problems arose and their child faced the possibility of school suspension, or when the school needed assistance with fund-raising. All 16 parents expressed concern about rights in the school grounds between students of different ethnic groups, and what they perceived to be the inability of teachers to discipline students effectively. Moreover, they noted differences between the pedagogy of the home and church, and the pedagogy of the school. They maintained that the use of physical punishment in the home was not only acceptable in the Samoan culture, but supported by the church and other social institutions. Indeed, parents who did not effectively inculcate the values of respect and obedience/servitude through overt disciplinary measures were considered to be ‘unloving’ parents (Figiel 1998, Tiatia 1998).

All parents held the view that teachers were responsible for school education, and that their work as parents entailed transmitting the language and culture of ‘the Samoan way’. Moreover, all parents spoke positively about the content of school curricula. However, most parents wanted specific subjects such as biology and human relationships to be taught in single-sex groups. The reason for this request is that sisters’ command considerable respect from their brothers in Pacific societies. The mode of the brother-sister relationship (feagaiga) and the relationship between kin-groups defined as the descendants of sisters (tamafafine) and brothers (tamatane) has been extensively documented in the anthropological literature (Mead 1943, Ochs 1988, Schoeél 1995, Freeman 1996, Tiatia 1998). In Samoan communities, the brother-sister relationship is tapu, ‘sisters have an unchallengeable sacred significance imputed to them’ (Tiatia 1998: 97). Respect is manifested through formalized interactions. Thus, adolescent siblings are supposed to be distanced from each other, avoiding any form of intimate contact. Another characteristic of the brother-sister relationship is a special delicacy and reserve with regard to sexuality.

All parents encouraged their children to do well at school, so that they would have options other than unskilled work as adults. Indeed, many parents reported that one of their principal reasons for migrating to Australia was to provide their children with access to high-quality education. However; they felt powerless when it came to helping with subject choices or assisting children with homework or otherwise making those options a reality.
Moreover, all parents urged greater contact between teachers and parents to ensure that they were informed regularly about their children’s academic progress. Receiving an end-of-year report card indicating that their children had been ‘talkative’ and performing poorly did not provide them with the input they needed to develop strategies for helping their children.

Religious ministers, curriculum advisers, teacher-aides, community liaison officers

In the remainder of this paper, an analysis is provided of data collected from participants categorized as religious ministers, professionals (medical, engineering, business and teaching), teacher-aides, home-liaison officers and cultural consultants, a total of 19 participants (see table 1). These 19 participants were actively involved in pedagogic work in one or more of the four case-study schools. Some of these participants were also active in church and local community pedagogic work. Two main themes emerged from an analysis of the data collected from the 19 participants: first, the form of pedagogic work specific to Samoan communities (the fa’aSamoa or ‘Samoan way’); and secondly, the difficulties of transition experienced by Samoan students as they moved between different social institutions (i.e. institutions of the Samoan community and the school).

The social structure of the fa’aSamoa

In the following data extracts, Sapeli Tapu, Uiese Parfara and Fofoa Safotu described the principles of communication within the institutions of the Samoan community. In their account of the fa’aSamoa, the interviewees described social relations and forms of symbolic control specific to the aiga or extended family, in addition to the different layers or ranks of social stratification in the Samoan community. Sapeli Tapu’s account was elicited by a question about what constituted the ‘Samoan way’; Uiese Parfara’s account occurred in the course of a discussion about the significance of language retention to Samoan identity and social relationships. By contrast, Fofoa Safotu’s account of the principles of the fa’aSamoa within the family in Samoa occurred in the course of an explanation of her efforts to reproduce these within her own family in Australia. Extracts from these three informants are used as exemplars for analysing the social structure of the fa’aSamoa (also discussed by six other participants: Manu Slater, Lini Faletu, Tony Faou, Reverend A’ana, Reverend Olosega, Lita Olosega).

Extract 1: Sapeli Tapu (medical doctor, cultural advisor)

I mean there’s a [multi-tier]. It’s not only everyday [communication], I mean… it’s complex in the sense that one, two, three, there’s ordinary way you and I would relate, and then there’s another layer above that in which the [ ] orators relate, and there’s
another level on top of that [high chief] . . . . Well, it comes out as a class system in a way . . . so this kind of relationship is the way, your mannerisms, every day how you portray yourself.

Extract 2: Uiese Parfara (teacher aide and cultural consultant)

I also look at retention of language as an art . . . Not only to write it, but to speak it. In Samoa there’s about three kinds of language you can talk. There’s a chiefly, there’s the English, there’s the ordinary language, and then there’s the orators’ language maybe, and once an elderly person opens their mouth in meetings, you know who is who and you know which corner they’re coming from, whether they’re a chief, whether they’re an orator, whether they’re just an uncultured person. If you can detect that in community meetings, you’re far more knowledgeable about your community.

Extract 3: Fofoa Safotu (ex-teacher, teacher-aide, cultural advisor)

. . . cause Samoa is a very class-based society. The family still has its own structure, like you have the matai and his wife on the top, and then the high chief on the top, and then your talking chiefs and then the rest of the families with fathers that don’t have titles and so it’s a very structured family type of thing, and a child would need to know how to address all those adults so that he doesn’t upset anybody.

In short, Sapeli Tapu indicated that there were different levels of communication within the fa’aSamoa, namely the everyday, ordinary level and the layers of communication of the chiefly class (orator and high chief). Similarly, Uiese Parfara distinguished between ordinary language, orators’ language, high chief language, and the English spoken in Western Samoa. Fofoa Safotu spoke of the class structures of the fa’aSamoa within the institution of the family and distinguished between the chiefly class (i.e. matai) composed of the titled chiefs, namely high chief and talking chiefs (orators),17 and the untitled persons within the family. She suggested that a child growing up in Samoa would be expected to know the positions of people within the class structure, and communicate with them in language appropriate to their respective positions.

Language of respect and obedience/servitude: pedagogy of the fa’aSamoa

In their accounts of the fa’aSamoa, Sapeli Tapu, Uiese Parfara and Fofoa Safotu discussed the hierarchical or rank structure of the social system, that is, the social layers consisting of titled persons, orators and high chiefs, as well as untitled persons. These
accounts of the *fa’aSamoan* are consistent with that found in the anthropological research literature. According to Lawson (1996) and Freeman (1996), within the highly stratified Samoan society, rank is assessed in terms of political title (e.g. chief, orator, and positions within each of these statuses), church title (e.g. pastor, deacon), age, and generation, among other variables. The titled have higher rank than the untitled and older persons of higher-generation have higher rank than the young. Prior to European contact, the basis of hierarchy was genealogical: 'if one could persuade society that one is descended from the gods, one’s divine origin will justify one’s position as the highest chief of all' (Mara* et al.* 1994: 183). Thus, knowledge of genealogy was central to maintaining political power, and the standing of the *tulafale* or talking chiefs was derived from their oratory skills and knowledge of genealogy. With the introduction of Christianity to Samoa by the London Missionary Society in the 18th century, a new rank position was created in the *fa’aSamoan*, namely that of religious ministers. Christianity was, thus, not simply imposed on Samoans, but absorbed, adapted and given a uniquely Samoan expression by the *faife‘au* or pastor and his council of laydeacons. Moreover, with the translation of the Bible into Samoan, written communication practices were incorporated into the oratory practices of the *fa’aSamoan*. Thus, through the principles of the *feagaiga* (the idealized principles of social order in Samoan society) the pastor came to be respected as the servant and local representative of God, and was shown deference by the congregation he served, irrespective of rank or status in other contexts. The *feagaiga* drew a line between sacred and secular spheres of authority (Garrett 1982, Mara* et al.* 1994, Schoeffel 1995).

In immigrant Samoan communities, the *fa’aSamoan* is maintained through the hierarchical organization of the church as the focal point of social and cultural activities (Tiatia 1998). All interviewees in this case study perceived the Church (*lotu*) to be ‘the foundation of Samoan culture’ (Vave Slater), with the minister, as head of the Church, influential in transmitting the values of the *fa’aSamoan*. Hence, John Fauea claimed ‘the Samoan community is very . . . church-oriented’. Similarly, Lini Faletu stated ‘church plays a large part in their [Samoan] community, in their life as, you know, feeling there’s a sense of belonging. Church plays a huge part’. In addition, Peone Avao (Pentecostal), Deso Vailoa (Presbyterian) and Luisa Suapusi (Mormon), who all worked as teacher-aides and home liaison officers in the case-study schools and undertook work in the local community churches, detailed the extent of church-related activities of Samoans in the case-study area. They noted that Mormon students attended the seminary for religious instruction from 6-7 am each day before school. By contrast, Pentecostal and Presbyterian students participated in
choir practice one or two afternoons a week, and attended Sunday services and activities spanning most of the day. The four ministers of religion, Reverend Salu A’ana (Methodist), Reverend Tui Olosega (Seventh Day Adventist), Reverend Josia Lepa (Uniting Church) and Reverend Aupito Tui (Assemblies of God) emphasized that the responsibility for the proper upbringing of Samoan children was shared between the church and the home. However, the denominational differences produce significant variations in the ways ’Samoan’ religion is lived out, especially in caregiver-child relationships.

In addition, Sapeli Tapu, Uiiese Parfara and Fofoa Safotu all spoke of the distinctive respect or fa’aaloalo language used by members of the Samoan community in different communicative interactions, for example, everyday and ordinary interactions and interactions with titular and talking chiefs and older family members (extracts 1±3). Eighteen participants emphasized the importance of the value of respect (mentioned on average five times in each interview) and the use of respectful language as a sign of membership within the Samoan community. These distinctions in communicative competence within different social contexts of the fa’aSamoa are consistent with those documented by Ochs (1988) in her study of language socialization in Western Samoa. Specifically, Ochs (1988) distinguished between two registers or ways of speaking Samoan, namely tautala lelei (’good speech’) and tautala leaga (’bad speech’). These descriptions refer to contextually-specific registers of Samoan language, rather than invariably good or bad qualities of speech. ’Good speech’ is characteristic of church services, church conferences, pastors’ schools, village public schools, and is the language of the Bible and all literacy materials. ’Bad speech’ is used outside these contexts by almost all members of the community, and is understood by everyone. It is the register of casual accounting for educational equity interactions amongst family members and familiairs, in addition to the register of stylized deliberations amongst titled persons in the meetings of village councils. In other words, ’bad speech’ and ’good speech’ are associated with different social relationships. ’Good speech’ tends to be used in more distant social relationships; whereas ’bad speech’ is used in closer relationships.

In addition to ’good’ and ’bad’ speech, the Samoan language has a respect vocabulary. This specialized lexicon is used in both ’good speech’ and ’bad speech’ in interactions with persons of higher status, especially the titled. Respect language is also used in interactions with untitled persons when the speaker wishes to establish deference and respect (Ochs 1988). All participants interviewed for this study referred to respect language and forms of communication in Samoan communities in Western Samoa, New Zealand and Australia. It is important to note that Samoan children can be socialized into a respect language without
necessarily acquiring full communicative competence in the Samoan language (Tiatia 1998). This means that the communicative forms of respect may influence the interactions of Samoan students in school, even when their proficiency in the Samoan language is limited. For example, all parent interviewees stated that Samoan was the language of church services, and was also the mode of communication in their homes. At times, however, they conversed with their children in English, or switched between Samoan and English. Some parents also indicated that at times they allowed their children to attend English church services.

Although all participants in this study referred to the communicative forms of respect, they did not all provide identical accounts of such forms, nor did they place the same emphasis on similar components of the respect system. For example, Vave Slater suggested that he could not explain the *fa’asamo* because it was something that had to be experienced. However, all interviewees stated that the values of respect and obedience/servitude distinguished the *fa’asamo* (the Samoan way) from the *fa’apalagi* (the European way). Rev Salu A’ana emphasized the importance of Sunday school in transmitting the values of respect to Samoan children, whereas Peone Avao, a home-liaison officer, described the *fa’asamo* as the ‘Bible values of respect’. Moreover, although Rev Salu A’ana stressed the importance of fathers transmitting Samoan values to sons, Peone Avao asserted that a core component of respect was the sacred brother-sister relationship. Similarly, Luisa Suapusi, a teacher-aide, stated that ‘from my background it is *very* taboo that brother and sister be talking about body parts and sexual things. They don’t talk about it *all* in the same family’.

John Fauea, a secondary school English and history teacher, explained that he identified as ‘Samoan’ because his ‘parents were Samoans’ and he followed ‘Samoan customs’, even though he is ‘technically Samoan-Australian’ because he is an Australian citizen. When asked to explain Samoan customs, he responded thus:

*Extract 4: John Fauea*

Part of the Samoan culture is there’s a lot of respect for the parents, a lot of respect for the family . . . . If I understand the Samoan language and that, I also know, I mean, the Samoan customs. Mum and Dad have told me about Samoan customs and I know a lot about that, in terms of respect for other people.

Similarly, in response to a question about the structure and role of the family in maintaining Samoan culture, Fofoa Safotu explained ‘a lot of the political structure of Samoan culture revolves around the family’:
Extract 5: Fofoa Safotu (ex-teacher, part-time teacher-aide, cultural consultant)

Researcher: What aspects of your own language and culture do you want your children to retain? Is it possible to identify really specific things?

Fofoa Safotu: Respect for elders, things like that. Knowing how to approach people when they, when they do have something to say . . . . I mean how children approach their parents with something that they don’t understand, some conflict, rather than it becoming real conflict, outward, verbal situation, there are ways to sort of try to solve it, even, if not directly through me, but through a grandmother or, an aunt or somebody else who is sort of you know, related but - you know - the situation is hard to cope with.

Similarly, Reverend Josia Lepa and Mrs Ana Lepa responded to a question about the content and form of home pedagogy in the following way:

Extract 6:

Mrs Ana Lepa: Respect is very important, obedience is very important, and also the things that, some of the things that make children what they are, so that when they get out of the home to the school, they bear in mind their importance as a human being, and to listen, to obey, to respect and to put those things into practice.

Researcher: Are they central values in Samoan culture? Are they integral to Samoan culture, Samoan identity?

Reverend Josia Lepa: Yeah, very much. Um, respect is perhaps one of the greatest elements of a Samoan life. That has been . . . right from the word go we, with families, that is something that has been given to us or perhaps we were taught to do that and of course that helps with behaviour.

In short, children are socialized within the pedagogy of the fa’aSamo to take up the values of respect and obedience/servitude, that is, the dispositions and demeanours expected of a lower-ranking party to a higher-ranking party (i.e. titled persons, untitled elders). In other words, the symbolic control relations of the fa’aSamo constitute the subjectivity or identity of the Samoan child, who, accordingly, realizes the appropriate dispositions and demeanours in communicative interactions. Through the pedagogic communication of the home, or home pedagogy, children learn how to interact with those higher in the rank system, and negotiate
conflictual relations in ways that constitute what it means to be Samoan, as regulated by the principles of the fa’aSamoa.

These accounts of the values of respect and obedience/servitude inculcated through the home pedagogy of the fa’aSamoa have also been documented in the research literature. After undertaking an extensive study of language development in a Samoan village, Ochs (1988) contended that the social register of Samoan caregiver speech differs from the simplified caregiver speech characteristic of many middle-class US communicative exchanges. According to Ochs (1988), when small children display egocentric speech - speech that displays an inability to meet the informational/social needs of another - Samoan caregivers characteristically do not employ explicit guessing strategies to try to clarify what the child might be trying to communicate. Rather, because they are positioned as the lower-ranking party in the social system of the fa’aSamoa, children are expected to take on more of a burden for clarifying their own utterances and producing a communicatively competent utterance. Of particular relevance here is the cultural attitude that ‘egocentric speech is appropriate only for high-status persons in certain contexts, such as orators delivering a formal speech’ (Ochs 1988: 24). Thus, from a young age, Samoan children participate in multi-party interactions and are encouraged to acquire a socio-centric demeanour, that is, to notice others and take their point of view. This disposition is the core of the respect (fa’aaloalo) and obedience (usiusita’i)/servitude (tautua) that is the expected demeanour of a lower-ranking party. Among the demeanours associated with distinctions in social rank is that of perspective-taking. Lower-ranking persons are expected to assume the perspective of higher-ranking persons more than higher-ranking vis-à-vis lower-ranking parties. Lower-ranking persons stand in a service relation to those of higher status. Moreover, from a young age, Samoan children learn through communicative interactions with caregivers (parents, older siblings) that the way to knowledge and power is to serve or attend those in higher-ranking positions (Mead 1943, Pitt and Macpherson 1974, Jordan et al. 1981, Ochs 1988, Freeman 1996, 1999, Taitia 1998).

Comparable findings emerged in studies undertaken in immigrant Samoan communities in New Zealand. On the basis of her study of the relationship of Samoan youth to the Church, Taitia (1998: 2) states that ‘fa’aSamoa is based on fa’aaloalo which demands that elders be treated with utmost respect’. The gist of these studies is that Samoan children, both in Samoa itself and in immigrant communities, are likely to enter school having been socialized into the respectful communicative practices of the fa’aSamoa. This is not to infer
homogeneity within the group, but rather to signal points of consensus and differentiation, the rituals of social identity formation within specific social institutions.

*Pedagogic work: home and school*

All participants spoke about differences in communicative practices between the school, church and home. Uiese Parfara and Vave Slater spoke specifically about the pedagogic work of institutions in the local community responsible for re/producing the culture of the *fa’asamoa* in response to a question about retention of Samoan knowledge. Specifically, they responded to a question about whether new, hybrid identities were being formed with migration, and the cultural transmissions of schooling and various media agencies. Vave Slater maintained that Samoan people were adept at taking the best from the colonizers, but still retaining core aspects of the *fa’asamoa*. Reverend Lepa and Sapeli Tapu responded to a question about whether school curricula should be changed to incorporate the work of post-colonial writers, so that schooling may be relevant to Samoan students. Both interviewees asserted that the ‘teacher-child’ relationship in the communicative context of schooling produced ‘problems with identity’ for students in the local community, and even in some communities in Samoa. Thus, Reverend Lepa and Sapeli Tapu attributed the educational difficulties of Samoan students to the communicative practices of schooling, specifically the form of the teacher-child relationship, rather than curricular content.

Extract 7: *Uiese Parfara* (teacher-aide, home-liaison officer, cultural consultant)

*Researcher*: Are younger people able to keep this [Samoan] knowledge or are they losing it?

*Uiese Parfara*: . . . We would encourage them to attend meetings . . . . In Samoan groups all you do is button up and listen. That’s where the [difference lies]. It becomes also a big thing in the school because the teachers think that the [Samoan] kids have something wrong with their ears, but they are taught how to, and (this is in Samoa), shut up and listen and you’ll get somewhere, and in here that doesn’t work, that doesn’t necessarily work. You’ve got to emphasize yourself, what you are saying, what you are on about.

Extract 8: *Vave Slater* (ex-engineer, private training provider):

*Researcher*: Can you explain that Samoan way?
Vave Slater: Can you explain the Samoan way? You can’t. It’s a way of acting; it’s a way of behaviour, a set of behaviours that you just can’t write down.

However, later in the interview, Vave Slater described the core values of the ‘Samoan way’:

Vave Slater: I think it’s respect for others.
Researcher: That’s interesting, but respect for what?
Vave Slater: Respect for other people. Because Western culture is based on the individual, the individual is encouraged to speak forward, be ahead of other people at the expense of others, to communicate one’s own ideas . . . so, therefore, we have the debate about political correctness at the moment, freedom of speech.

Extract 9: Reverend Josia Lepa (Uniting Church Minister)
What I’m saying here, it’s not the teaching of the subjects, but it’s the relationship of the children, and the relationship of the children and the teacher, teacher-child relationship. But I think that’s also something that I’m still struggling to come to grips with living in here compared to where I am, accounting for educational equity I came from, and this is what I mean by understanding where people come from. In the sense of in this society the individual is, ah, so important, you know? It doesn’t matter who other people involve long as you know that I’m important, I don’t care what happens to you. Now that attitude of ‘I don’t care what happens to you so long as I’m the important person’, now that comes out very clearly, that comes out very clearly, clearly, in school, you know, the way kids think of themselves, whereas where we come from here, you are important, but your importance is in relation to the importance of other people.

Extract 10: Sapeli Tapu (medical doctor, cultural advisor)
At school, even amongst Samoan students themselves, they also have problems with identity . . . as an individual . . . . Everyday at school, it’s how you communicate . . . . The usual learning, you know, seen but not heard, that’s usually one of the commonest learning that we have when we’re brought up [as Samoan children], so when you go to school, you may know a lot [but not express it] . . . but because [you think] ‘Am I being impolite by, you know, asking the teacher that, or challenging the teacher that I don’t agree?’’, so it’s that, that sensitivity [to hierarchy] in which also, unless the
teacher really comes to know the student or the pupil . . . the pupil will [not] be free to express how much they know.

In short, Uiese Parfara, Vave Slater, Reverend Lepa and Sapeli Tapu distinguished between the individualized identity achieved through the communicative practices of schooling and the Samoan identity achieved through acquiring the values of respect and obedience/servitude by taking the perspective of higher-ranked persons in the *fa’aSamoa*. According to all four participants, differences in social relations between these communicative contexts can cause confusion for students. For example, Sapeli Tapu, Uiese Parfara and Vave Slater argued that the patterns of communication in the school system require Samoan children to take up the position of a particular type of student and communicate with the teacher accordingly. This requires children to `be free to express how much they know’ (Sapeli Tapu), to `communicate one’s own ideas’ (Vave Slater), and to `emphasize yourself, what you are saying, what you are on about’ (Uiese Parfara) in a competitive, individualistic environment, and also to ask the teacher questions in order to develop individual repertoires of knowledge and skills. Reverend Lepa also focused on the `individual’ accomplishment of tasks within the `teacher-child relationship’. He went on to assert that, by contrast, the communicative contexts organized by the *fa’aSamoa* placed less emphasis on the importance of individual freedom, and individual accomplishment of tasks. The communicative forms of the *fa’aSamoa*, manifested in the pattern of language and communication between caregiver and child, require children to consider the perspective of those higher in the rank system before expressing their individual opinions.

Similar accounts to those presented by the paraprofessionals have been documented in Jones’s (1991) ethnographic study of pedagogic practice in an inner-city secondary school in New Zealand. Jones’s study revealed different modes of teacher-student relations or pedagogic communication between middle-class Pakeha (European) and working-class Pacific Islander girls. The middle-class Pakeha girls actively responded to their teachers’ questions, sought out individual assistance with their school work, and encouraged their teachers to participate in a two-way interaction. Moreover, classroom teachers perceived that the middle-class Pakeha girls’ responses to their questions were `interesting’ and `made you think’ (Jones 1991: 88). By contrast, the working-class Pacific Islander girls, many of whom felt obliged to succeed for their parents’ sake, resisted individualized interactions with their teachers. Jones concluded that the middle-class Pakeha and working-class Pacific Islander girls were socialized into different ways of learning. Specifically, the middle-class Pakeha
girls had acquired cultural tools through their primarily socialization which enabled them to access school knowledge easily and achieve academic success ‘naturally’.

In the contemporary intellectual milieu, analyses such as the one we have offered of the Samoan paraprofessionals’ accounts of ‘Samoan’ and ‘school’ pedagogy and the inculcation of ‘Samoan’ and ‘student’ identities are likely to induce charges of ‘essentialism’, ‘stereotyping’ or ‘generalization’ (Hage 1998). It is crucial, therefore, to note that although the interviewees pointed to the ongoing importance of the brother-sister relationship, the importance of the Church, and the sacred knowledge of the pastor, their accounts did not construct relations of power and control in the Samoan community as static. Several interviewees spoke of the changing structures within the fa’aSamoa, in addition to the various interpretations of the values of respect, obedience/servitude within the various religious denominations of the Samoan community.

Some interviewees also described the appropriation of Western culture by Samoan youth. For example, Vave Slater expressed concern about the fact that Samoan youth were ‘substituting . . . Black-American culture, homey clothes, rap, all that type of thing’ for their own culture. This concern with the loss of Samoan culture echoes that of the member of the Samoan community who declined to participate in this study on the grounds of commitment to the ethnic self-realization view of educational equality. By contrast, Fofoa Safotu viewed the appropriation of Black-American culture as a way of reconstructing Samoan cultural identity in the face of racism. She stated that Samoan children ‘are trying to, to find some, identity, if I can use the term loosely, in coping with the situation around them . . . some emulate the behaviour of Black Americans [portrayed in the media]’. When asked why some Samoan youth might identify with Black Americans, Fofoa Safotu responded:

I think if you have a problem with racism, that stems from being different and being black, and then you see something that often looks like it has power and credibility, so it’s sort of related that they would then hang on to something like that.

Dress, hair, posture, attitude and other aspects of cultural style have been a focus of post-colonial investigations of racism by educational theorists who have made productive use of such concepts as ‘representation’ and ‘hybridity’ (e.g. Matthews 1998). The value of these investigations inheres in their attention to the cultural politics - the struggles of power - within which regulative criteria are made available to students. These theorists have also focused on the instructional criteria of lessons dealing with topics of race and culture. For example, feminist post-colonial pedagogues have advocated literacy practices that work against the grain of ‘colonial’ texts (Matthews 1998), are sensitive to the complex articulation of colonial
trajectories and histories in cultural products (Crowley 1998), and equip students to identify the ideological work of curriculum (Hickling-Hudson 1998). Our study complements this post-colonial work. We have documented struggles over the representations (depictions) of Samoan pedagogy inherent in the work of paraprofessional agents constructed as representatives (delegates) of an imagined Samoan community around state-designated disadvantaged Australian schools. Specifically, we have drawn attention to the cultural politics inherent in the input provided by paraprofessionals to assist teachers in their work of developing inclusive literacy curricula and pedagogy for Samoan students. This input is crucial to the formulation of the instructional criteria (i.e. how to solve a mathematical problem) and the regulative criteria (i.e. conduct, character and manner in the classroom) made available to these students (Bernstein, 1996).

Conclusion

In this paper we established that the category `Samoan paraprofessional’ was constituted in state-designated disadvantaged schools for the purpose of achieving a more equitable distribution of the trained capacities and lifestyles required for participation in contemporary economic fields. The 35 Samoan paraprofessionals who participated in the study aligned themselves with this conception of educational equality. In speaking from the institutional position thus made available to them, the paraprofessionals pointed repeatedly to the differences between Samoan pedagogy in the institutions of home and Church, and the pedagogy of Australian schools as state educational institutions. In constructing these accounts of differences between `Samoan’ and `Australian’ pedagogy, the paraprofessionals appropriated discourse from the highly contested field of anthropological and historical knowledge about Samoa. Seven participants explicitly mentioned `the Margaret Mead woman’ (as she was described by one interviewee) and aligned themselves with Freeman’s `truths’ about Samoan pedagogy. The other participants spoke of the same themes, addressed by numerous anthropologists in their accounts of Samoa, namely the Samoan rank system, the respect language, the strict and overt forms of discipline used by caregivers, the sacred form of brother-sister and pastor-congregation member relations, as well as the emphasis on group rather than individualized identity.

We acknowledged that some post-modern theorists might depict the analyses undertaken herein as an essentializing grand narrative about the `deficit Samoan Other’. These theorists may also critique our focus on home, school and church pedagogies for eliding the work of other agencies instrumental in the inculcation of identities, for example, popular
culture. We have contended, however, that it is necessary to investigate the political work achieved through the use of categories ‘Samoan’ and ‘palagi’ by agents taking up positions as ‘Samoan paraprofessionals’ on behalf of the ‘Samoan community’. Thus, we have documented the re-imagining, re-making, and re-invention (Chow 1996) of the categories ‘Samoan’ and ‘palagi’, and the constitution of difference within and between these categories. As we noted in our analyses, some paraprofessionals maintained that Samoan people were adept at taking the best from the colonizers, but still retaining core aspects of the fa’aSamoa. By documenting these struggles of power we have emphasized the complexity of the cultural categories made available to teachers in designated disadvantaged secondary schools. The significance of the analysis inheres in the fact that these are the categories through which the teachers in these schools come to know and recognize, to make and unmake groups of students, thus creating the reality of pedagogic order within the classroom. Furthermore, it is through the constitution of this social or moral order that informational resources are differentially distributed to particular categories of students.

We conclude by suggesting that the findings reported herein raise a crucial question. How are the representations of Samoan and Australian pedagogy made by the paraprofessionals enacted in the instructional practice of teachers and other educational agents? It is in the process of enactment that such accounts have the potential to bring cultural difference into being in classroom practice.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. During the early 1990s, a substantial cohort of Samoan and other Pacific Islander students enrolled in low socio-economic outer-suburban state schools in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Most of these students were born in New Zealand, although some had arrived directly from Western Samoa. Better educational opportunities and welfare support than those available in Western Samoa and New Zealand were cited as key reasons for migration by this study’s participants. These considerations were paramount, because Samoans are over-represented in the periphery of casual, poorly paid jobs in the new global labour market. The schools these students entered were
among the most culturally diverse in Queensland. At the time of the study, indigenous, White Australian, Vietnamese, Bosnian and many other cultures were represented in these schools, making the composition of the student population vastly different from that of the early 1970s when immigration into Australia was restricted under the so-called ‘White Australia’ policy. Working within official state policies of multiculturalism, and the subsequent cultural equity policies (Dooley et al. 2000), teachers at the schools generally had considerable experience in teaching in culturally diverse contexts. The arrival of the Samoan/Pacific Islander students, however, raised new educational accounting for educational equity issues associated with the complex interplay of poverty and cultural difference. The study reported herein was, in part, a response to those issues. All names of places, schools and people in this study are pseudonyms. The data reported herein were collected in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

2. This information was drawn from unpublished documents made available for the study by the Performance Measurement and Review Unit of Education, Queensland. The category ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student’ was included in the measure of ‘disadvantage’, as this group is the most oppressed in Queensland in terms of access to quality education, health, housing, employment, legal, and other state services.


Dear Sir,

I refer to the . . . article printed in your issue of 7 August 1996. Though I generally agree with the gist of the . . . concept, I somehow found her [Samoan research team member’s] suggested method alarming!

Empirical evidence supports the belief that development of the first language is not only an essential element to second language development, but a fundamental principle to individual or personal growth in human development.

A colonized societal structure years ago pressured the Education Department in Western Samoa to rule that all education materials resources be printed and conducted in the English language. College students were not allowed to speak the native tongue in school
grounds. Those who did not comply were put on detention. The theme was educated people speak English.

Rules dictate results, come what may. One result of this unfortunate experiment is a generation that regards their language/culture and heritage as inferior. Of all the injuries inflicted by racism on people of colour, the most corrosive is the wound within, the internalized racism that leads some victims at unspeakable costs to their own sense of self to embrace the values of their oppressors.

[Five paragraphs omitted]

Rumour has it there is a literacy problem with our children. As a Samoan parent, I am determined that my children know who they are, ethnically, culturally and otherwise. This can only be accomplished by literacy proficiency in their natural language. They may not become scientists, high-flying lawyers or CEOs, or brain surgeons, however, I hope they will not impose their values on others, and appreciate the struggle we went through to pass on a sense of dignity and pride in their ethnicity.

I believe instead of `forgoing' [sic] children to use English, efforts be made to obtain resources to promote literacy in the Samoan language. And that our children are encouraged to be confident and proud of their heritage. I have nothing against the English language and culture, but it evokes a sad and unfortunate experience that will involve a lifetime to unlearn. Note: The invitation to participate referred to in the research discussion was written in Samoan and this letter to the editor was in English. The position taken up by the writer of this letter in the field of the 'Samoan community', may well have been supported by other members who accordingly declined to participate in the research discussions.

4. Five participants explicitly referred to the letter during the course of interviews or informal conversations. Moreover, most participants talked about the importance of teaching the English language in schools in Samoa, and in local community institutions. Two home-liason officers stated that their elder children attended English rather than Samoan religious services, and were encouraged to speak English at home, in order to improve their school performance.

5. These groups are as follows: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups; lower socio-economic groups; girls; disability groups; geographically-isolated groups; non-English-speaking-background groups; students with learning difficulties; and ability groups (gifted and talented).
6. This quotation is taken from a local community newspaper. Conventional academic referencing procedures have not been followed here to preserve the anonymity of the case-study school.

7. In Queensland, Australia, students obtain a junior certificate after completion of the compulsory years of schooling (Years 1-10). The absentee rates of some students in one of the case-study schools, Sanunder, and their failure to complete assessment items meant that they did not obtain this basic educational qualification. Other students obtained a junior certificate but received fail grades on many subjects.

8. Studies by Graves et al. (1983), Jones (1991) and Mara et al. (1994) reported similar low educational achievement rates for Samoan students in New Zealand secondary schools situated in areas categorized as 'low socio-economic'.

9. A report by the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) (1998) and field notes collected in the case-study schools provide statistical support for this claim. Data pertaining to the results of a literacy (reading and viewing; writing) and numeracy (number, measurement, and space) test administered in 1997 to 46,762 students in Year 6 across the state of Queensland were provided to the research team. The data from the QSCC is significant, as teachers interviewed for the study indicated the educational problems experienced by the Year 6 students were similar to the older cohort. The QSCC test results were collated in the form of a score, on a scale of 15-55, for strands of literacy and numeracy. Data for the group of students who stated that a Pacific Islander language (Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Cook Islander, Papua-New Guinean) was spoken at home were also provided to the research team. These data revealed that 40% of students who indicated that they spoke a Pacific Islander language at home had spent less than two years in Australia. Moreover, 69% of the students who indicated that a Pacific Islander language was spoken at home indicated that the home language was Samoan. The test results revealed (see table 2) that the performance of students who indicated that a Pacific Islander language was spoken at home was extremely below the performance of the whole cohort of students in all areas of the QSCC test (strands of literacy and numeracy).

Table 2. Mean literacy performance scores: Year 6 students in Queensland schools (Bracketed figure represents students who indicated that Samoan language was spoken at home).

This is the original title of the 1928 edition published in New York by Morrow. It should be noted that the sub-title of some later editions was changed.

Mead’s book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, was first published in 1928, and then published by Penguin Books in 1943 and reprinted nine times.

Caton (1990: 3) argued: ‘It is rare that a scholarly book captures public attention in the way that *Margaret Mead and Samoa* did. Edwin McDowell’s front page article in the *New York Times* touched off a ‘seismic event’ that was world news and remained national news in the US for several months. The news was that Margaret Mead’s most famous work, read by many millions around the world, had been wrong about Samoa’.

Completion of 10 years of formal schooling, with students exiting at 15 years of age.

Mara et al. (1994: 193) have documented the struggles of Pacific Islanders for ‘more and higher levels of schooling . . . that would enable them to participate more fully in the administrative structures of their countries, and teacher education which would upgrade the standard of locally trained teachers’.

For the sake of clarity, data extracts have been edited. False starts, interruptions, aspirant sounds and other detail irrelevant to the level of analysis conducted in this study have been deleted. Transcription conventions: ( ) = audiotape indistinct; (multi-tier) = uncertain transcription.

‘Talking chiefs’ refers to the orators who are ranked under the ‘high’ or ‘titular’ chiefs. The actions and speech of persons higher in the Samoan rank system are characterized by low activity. Thus, the high chiefs remain relatively silent, bidding the orators or talking chiefs to undertake the communicative work in council meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole cohort</th>
<th>Pacific Islander language spoken at home</th>
<th>Male, Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Female, Pacific Islander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and viewing</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>24.6 (24.0)</td>
<td>23.5 (22.4)</td>
<td>25.5 (25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>34.9 (35.0)</td>
<td>32.1 (31.7)</td>
<td>37.5 (37.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>30.7 (30.2)</td>
<td>30.7 (29.7)</td>
<td>30.7 (30.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>29.9 (29.1)</td>
<td>30.2 (28.8)</td>
<td>29.6 (29.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>31.3 (30.7)</td>
<td>31.4 (31.0)</td>
<td>31.3 (30.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. The London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, was a non-denominational Protestant organization (mainly Congregationalist) dedicated to spreading Christianity beyond Europe.

19. Numerous writers and researchers focus on the changes to Samoan practices brought about by the missionaries through written literacy (Wendt 1977, Ochs 1988, Mara et al. 1994).
References


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LETTER TO THE EDITOR (1996) Samoan Times [Brisbane, Australia], 10 August.


