
INTRODUCTION
This paper analyses interview data produced by Samoan community members who worked in the para-educational networks constituted around four secondary schools designated as ‘disadvantaged’ in the state of Queensland, Australia. The Samoan community members interviewed for the study worked either as teacher-aides, home liaison officers, and/or cultural advisers in disadvantaged secondary schools; or as representatives of the Samoan community on various state department committees (e.g., Education Queensland, Bureau of Ethnic Affairs, Department of Family and Community Services). While the community members provided a range of explanations for the educational disadvantage experienced by Samoan students, this paper attends only to those accounts that referred explicitly to the disadvantaging effects of school and classroom practices. Thus, the paper directs attention to the discursive organisation of school and classroom practices rather than the culture of the local community; home/family practices; or the self-esteem and self-concept of Samoan working class children (see Mirza, 1992; Stone, 1981).

The Samoan students at the centre of the study were members of a community formed during the 1990s, mainly by immigrants from New Zealand – the most established of the diasporic Samoan communities (Franco, 1997). From the literature it is clear that the educational achievement of Samoan children in New Zealand, as in diasporic communities in the U.S., is generally low (Graves, Graves, Vineta, Ah Sam & Ah Sam, 1982; Jones, 1991; Luce, 1985; Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994; Mau, 1995). As similar results began to emerge in the newly established diasporic community in Queensland, the research study reported in this paper was conducted, with the support of school and community personnel, in order to theorise the educational disadvantage experienced by Samoan students in secondary schools. Moreover, the study aimed to design, in collaboration with Samoan community members and classroom teachers, pedagogies that might make a difference in the school literacy performance outcomes of Samoan students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERVIEW ANALYTIC METHOD
The study was strongly influenced by Basil Bernstein’s (1975, 1990, 1996) theories on the arbitrary selection, organisation and distribution of school knowledge, specifically his work on the relation between social class, modes of pedagogic practice and educational attainment. Contrary to the view of the classroom as constituted by two types of curricula, that is, a hidden and an overt curriculum, Bernstein (1996, 1990) theorised classroom practice as constituted by one discourse, namely pedagogic discourse. This discourse is socially constructed by recontextualising agents such as teachers who select and embed two discourses, instructional discourse (ID) and regulative discourse (RD), to produce a single discourse represented thus: ID/RD. The solidus indicates the incorporation or embedding of the instructional discourse in the regulative discourse, such that the latter dominates the former. Instructional discourse is the knowledge that is selected, organised, and defined in evaluative criteria, for the purposes of teaching and learning. Regulative discourse establishes the order within the instructional discourse. It generates principles of selection, organisation, pacing and criteria of skills, concepts and information (i.e., the arbitrary internal ordering or organisation of school knowledge). It also mobilises theories of instruction, and thus contains within itself ‘a model of the learner and of the teacher and of the relation’ between teacher and learner (Bernstein, 1996, p. 49). From this perspective, the specialised mode of communication between teacher and student, for example triadic dialogue (teacher question-student response-teacher evaluation) is constituted by specific regulative discourses. However, the model of the learner, teacher, and teacher-student communication ‘is never wholly utilitarian; it contains ideological elements’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 49). Thus general and specific regulative discourses perform a crucial ideological function because they conceal the relations of power and control generating the arbitrary internal ordering of school knowledge.
The principal objective of the analytic categories developed in this study was to explicate the power and control relations generating the arbitrary order inherent within specific pedagogic discourses. An analysis of the principles of power and control generating pedagogic discourses would in turn illuminate the positioning of Samoan students as pedagogic subjects in relation to these discourses. Power relations (classification) were discerned through an analysis of the strength of the boundaries insulating categories of knowledge, students and institutional spaces. The attributes attached to specific categories of knowledge, students and institutional spaces were also delineated in an analysis of power relations. Thus power relations may be invisible (weak classification of insulation boundaries), or visible (strong classification of insulation boundaries). Control relations (framing) were detected by ascertaining who exercised control over the selection, organisation (i.e., sequencing and pacing), distribution and evaluative criteria of school knowledge. Institutionally, teachers are positioned in a hierarchical relation to students. However, relations of control between teachers and students in terms of the selection, organisation (sequencing and pacing), distribution and evaluative criteria of school knowledge can be visible (explicit teacher control) or invisible (implicit teacher control). Similar analytic categories were used to examine power and control relations generating the flow of pedagogic discourses between the local community and the disadvantaged secondary schools via the Samoan community members.

PARA-EDUCATIONAL NETWORKS

Three strategies were used to select potential participants for the study. First, Fofoa Safotu nominated leaders within the local Samoan community as potential interviewees. Fofoa Safotu was a member of the research team, and also a qualified teacher and representative of the Samoan community on state curricular advisory and anti-racist committees. Second, an article written in Samoan by Fafoa Safotu about the research project was placed in the local Samoan community newspaper. The article invited members of the community to contribute to an interview about the schooling experience of Samoan students. Third, a meeting with parents was organised at one of the schools participating in this study. During this meeting parents were informed about the research project and invited to contribute to an interview at a later date.

Thirty-five Samoan community members nominated to be interviewed at length for this study. These participants included: (1) ministers of the main religious denominations in the local Samoan community (Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of God and Methodist); (2) representatives on state policy and curricula committees; (3) teacher-aides; (4) home-liaison officers; and (5) parents of Samoan adolescents in the case study schools. Thus, 19 Samoan community members who worked as representatives on state education and ethnic affairs committees, cultural consultants/education trainers, religious instructors, and teacher-aides/home-liaison officers were interviewed for the study. In addition, 16 parents who contributed in some capacity to the workings of the case study schools either through assistance in the school canteen, or at sporting and cultural events, and/or through involvement in the School Polynesian Parents’ Evenings were interviewed for the study. During the interviews the participants discussed numerous themes. This paper however, focuses only on those themes that dealt specifically with the arbitrary construction of pedagogic discourses and practices within schooling, and differences between school and home discourses and practices. Three themes emerged from the data specifically relating to these issues, namely, (1) teacher-student relations in schools; (2) discipline and respect in Samoan institutions of the home and church; and (3) gender relations in schools and Samoan institutions.

INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

In what follows, the interview data extracts are organised into three sections. The overarching goal of the analysis is to document the paraprofessionals’ accounts of the disadvantaging effects of the arbitrary organisation of school discourses and practices. In the first section, the analysis focuses on accounts relating to the arbitrary grouping of students along ethnic lines. In section two, the analysis attends to
accounts of the arbitrary organisation of school knowledge for students categorised as ‘Samoan’. Accounts pertaining to differences between the arbitrary organisation and distribution of knowledge (principles of epistemology) within schools and the institutions of the local Samoan community are analysed in the third section. All three components of data analysis aim to elucidate the workings of the school as an agency in the (re)production and/or contestation of bias against a category of student.

**Accounting for the Arbitrary Grouping of Students**

Fofoa Safotu was interviewed for the study on three separate occasions. Over the course of the interviews, she often talked about teachers’ interactions with students categorised as ‘Samoan’ or ‘Polynesian’. She stated that Samoan students might have been disadvantaged by these interactions. In particular, Fofoa Safotu noted the many requests from schools for conflict mediation involving Samoan students. She stated that inconsistent disciplinary approaches used by teachers in government schools led to disruptive behaviour from some Samoan students. Rather than attempting to understand the problems experienced by Samoan students in schools, administrators and teachers often turned to members of the local community for assistance. Thus, Samoan community members were expected to ‘fix the problem’ of Samoan students.

Some of the above concerns raised by Fofoa Safotu are evident in extract one below. In this extract, Fofoa Safotu responded to an interview question about the social relations between paraprofessionals, Samoan students, classroom teachers and administrators. Her response was indicative of those provided by the other 18 paraprofessionals working on state policy and curricular committees.

**Extract One**

_Fofoa Safotu:_ … I know teachers are not so perfect, but there seems to be a lack of understanding about Samoan students. I mean, I saw no differences between Samoan and other students. But the teachers seemed to see only the differences instead of seeing the commonness. That’s what appals me. And some of the ignorance ( ) reading or hearing things about some Samoans, and the teachers would apply that to all Samoans. …You know, it’s easier for teachers to say “In our community we have a wider distribution of peoples and abilities”, but when they look at Samoans, it’s like we’re all down one end of the Bell Curve and we don’t have the abilities that spread right through the Bell Curve like other communities and other people. I see that as prejudiced, and for me it’s unfortunate because these are people that are at the face of the school.

Indeed, all 19 paraprofessionals stated that teachers needed to develop comprehensive understandings of the educational needs of Samoan students. For example, Reverend Salu A’ana attributed some of the difficulties experienced by Samoan students in school to the ‘misunderstanding’ of teachers. He suggested that students were promoted through the school system on the criteria of age rather than scholastic attainment. ‘If you do the algebra when the boy does not know how to multiply 8 to 9...there's trouble’ (Reverend A’ana, Methodist Minister). In extract one, however, Fofoa Safotu suggested that teachers’ ‘lack of understanding about Samoan students’ may have produced strongly insulated boundaries between the category, ‘Samoan student’, and other categories of students. In addition, she stated that discourses on aptitude might have been invoked in the construction of these boundaries, with Samoan students being positioned as ‘below average’. Throughout the four years of the research study, Fofoa Safotu urged for accurate data on the literacy and numeracy attainment levels of the Samoan students enrolled in the state-designated disadvantaged schools. Much of the data on the scholastic attainment levels of Samoan students was anecdotal. That is, individual teachers expressed concern about individual ‘Samoan’ students. In 1998, the Queensland School Curriculum Council published the results of literacy (reading and viewing; writing) and numeracy (number, measurement and space) tests administered in 1997 to 46,762 students in Year 6 across the state of Queensland in Australia. The report produced by the Queensland School Curriculum Council, however, categorised all students who indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home into one category (non-English speaking background students). The data for this
cohort indicated results above the performance of the whole cohort of students in all areas of the test (strands of literacy and numeracy). These data were used to legitimate cuts to state funding of programs for students who spoke a language other than English at home, specifically, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Data pertaining to the cohort of students who indicated that a Pacific Islander language was spoken at home were not published. However, this data was made available to the research team and indicated that the performance of students who stated 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 test (strands of literacy and numeracy). This data also 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 stated that a Pacific Islander language was spoken at home indicated that the home language was Samoan (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998).

In the extract of data that follows, Fofoa Safotu attempted to explain how teachers could have developed ‘misunderstandings’ about Samoan students.

**Extract Two**

Fofoa Safotu: … I’m trying to understand where these teachers are coming from when they make these comments about Samoan students. Now whilst I’m not saying they have the same attitudes that Margaret Mead had, I certainly felt that there was a competition between schools and ESL clusters with regard to who found the solution to these problems first. I saw that as one of the possibilities as to why these teachers were painting a certain perspective. People were trying to find a solution and actually move on to the next rung in the ladder. … And also while they might have the most honourable intentions, they may not have the facts straight. In fact, most of the time they didn’t have their facts straight, they hadn’t even gone through enough literature, actual literature to come up with, with a good groundwork or understanding about Samoan people. They’d read one story, maybe a bit of Margaret Mead, maybe a bit of this, maybe a bit of that, a little bit of a newspaper and form an opinion.

In this account, teachers’ ‘lack of understanding about Samoan students’ was attributed to two factors, namely, the pace at which they were expected to produce knowledge about a recently enrolled group of students at the school, and the type of discourses selected and organised in the production of this knowledge. Teachers in the case study schools were expected to undertake action research, but generally had neither the necessary skills nor the time. As a result, data collected from individual Samoans were generalised to the entire Samoan community (Extract 1). Furthermore, bits and pieces of information from a variety of sources were often cobbled together, yielding a mundane knowledge of Samoan people and practice (Extract 2). This knowledge was considered non-arbitrary, that is, knowledge of the “essential” cultural identity and difference of all Samoan students.

**Accounting for the Arbitrary Organisation of School Knowledge**

In this section of the paper, the ways in which the selection and organisation of knowledge may relay bias against students categorised as ‘Samoan’ are discussed. Extracts Three and Four are taken from an interview with Peone Avao and Deso Vailoa who worked as teacher-aides and home-liaison officers in two of the designated ‘disadvantaged’ schools involved in this study. Peone Avao worked in a casual capacity at Sanunder High and supplemented her income with fast-food service counter work. By contrast, Deso Vailoa was employed on a one year contract at Blue Hills High. Both paraprofessionals stated that they had limited training or induction into their specific jobs. They were employed at the schools because they lived in the local community, were knowledgeable about Samoan language and cultural practices, and had experience working with Pacific Islander teenagers.

In Extract Three, Deso Vailoa responded to a question about the selection and organisation of curricular
content. She stated that lessons incorporating topics on sexuality were problematic for Polynesian students.

**Extract Three**

*R*: Is there anything in the novels that the students study at school in English, that would be say offensive to the Samoan students because of their religious background? Is there anything that the students find it difficult to engage with in terms of the English, Social Studies, History or Geography lessons?

**Deso Vailoa**: ... I was in a class when students watched a video of a woman giving birth. ... As I looked at the Polynesian kids, they kind of giggled and covered their eyes and they were ashamed, because we're taught that our body is as sacred as a temple, it's something we ahm, you know, not for everyone to view.

*R*: Do other, did you see if other students were getting embarrassed by it? (Or was it) predominantly the Polynesian students?

**Deso Vailoa**: Well I sort of looked around the class and I noticed the European kids seemed quite comfortable with it.

All 35 participants (19 paraprofessionals and 16 parents) interviewed for the study raised concerns about the incorporation of sexually explicit topics in school curricula. However, none of the participants suggested that Samoan students should be denied access to the topic of sexuality, or specific subjects such as biology and social science. Rather, the concern was with the ‘how’ of pedagogy. All participants believed that the topic of sexuality and human relationships education should be taught in single-sex classes. This request was justified on the basis that sisters command considerable respect from their brothers in Pacific Islander societies.

The respectful 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 (see Freeman 1996, 1999; Mead 1943; Ochs 1988; Schoeffel 1995; Tiatia 1998). Brother-sister respect in Samoan communities is manifested through formalised 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. According to Tiatia (1988, p. 97), the brother-sister relationship is *tapu*, ‘sisters have an unchallengeable sacred significance imputed to them’. This does not however, imply that the pedagogic relations of the *aiga* (extended family) and *feagaiga* (the relationship between brothers and sisters) remain static over time, or that differences do not emerge within the Samoan diasporic community (see Meleisea 1995, Schoeffel 1995).

In summary, Deso Vailoa, in extract three above, raised concerns about how knowledge pertaining to sexuality (explicit reference to the naked body) was transmitted to categories of students (male and female Polynesian students) in specific institutional spaces (mixed gender classrooms). She suggested that this arbitrary organisation of knowledge, agents and institutional space might disadvantage Samoan students. Concerns about the ‘how’ of pedagogy were also raised in the following extract of data which constitutes a response to a question raised earlier in the interview about the effect of home and church literacy practices on students’ acquisition of school knowledge. Both Peone Avao and Deso Vailoa stated that the arbitrary organisation (sequencing and pacing) of school knowledge may disadvantage Samoan students who did not speak English as a home or first language.

**Extract Four**

**Peone Avao**: ... The other thing with the literacy I wanted to add on, they always speak Samoan in the Samoan church so they, the majority of the kids who are very involved in the church, they speak very good Samoan, and ahm, and I would, and those are the kids who have problems sometimes [with their English.]
Singh Speaking About Cultural Difference

R: [That's what I need to know.] Now why do you think they have problems, is it because they are learning two languages [or what?]

Peone Avaо: [It's because] they are having Samoan as their first language, you know, over here is, we all should learn how to speak English but, you know, we should never forget our own language, and that's why I, I always brought up my kids to have English as their first language and Samoan as their second.

R: Right.

Deso Vailoa: But a lot of the kids are born in New Zealand and Australia and yet Samoan is still their first language, so at home they're being spoken to in Samoan

Peone Avaо: ... If they come straight from Samoa then they can go to a special language facility for migrants and they're entitled to (specialist English courses), but not the New Zealand ones. If you ahm, walking around in the playground and you come across the Samoan students, most of them speak broken English ... and I have a feeling, I'm, I'm very positive that's why the kids are not doing very well at school, (with English). Teachers can't get through to them because of English, and that's why, ahm, you know, you go to a class and there's a lot of disturbance and everything. Well, it's fair enough for the white kid because they'll listen, might miss something, but once he, once he listen in five minutes he'll pick it up all right. As for our students, you know, if he miss, he, he can look, he can listen for the whole lesson, he miss one thing, he's lost, it's because, I reckon language is very important to learning.

There are two main issues raised in this extract of data. First, Peone Avaо stated that Samoan or Pacific Islander students migrating to Australia from New Zealand were not entitled to specialist English lessons, namely, instruction in English as a Second Language. It was assumed that these students had acquired competence in the language of school instruction because they migrated from a country where English is the official language. Second, Peone Avaо suggested that the sequencing and pacing rules of school knowledge might have to be modified to suit the needs of Samoan students who spoke 'broken English'. According to Peone Avaо, the arbitrary organisation of school knowledge, students, and institutional spaces did not appear to disadvantage the ‘white kid(s)’. However, Samoan students appeared ‘lost’ by this arbitrary organisation. This point was raised by more than half of the community members interviewed for the study.

In summary, the above account suggests that a normative ‘white English speaking’ subject or model of the learner regulated the selection, organisation and distribution of school knowledge. Students who were othered by this normative model of the learner were disadvantaged via schooling. In other words, the power and control principles generating the internal ordering of pedagogic discourse were biased in favour of students who had acquired competence in the school’s language of instruction. In what follows, differences between the communicative principles of the state-designated disadvantaged schools and institutions organised by and for Samoan people are detailed. The purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the model of the learner, theory of learning and pedagogic relations regulating the home and church institutions in which Samoan adolescents spent a large percentage of their time. In this way, differences in the arbitrary organisation of knowledge, agents and spaces can be delineated. Educators need to collaborate with community members and parents in attending to these ‘differences’ if they are to affect improvements in educational outcomes for Samoan students enrolled in the state-designated disadvantaged secondary schools.

Accounting for ‘Difference’ Between School and Samoan Institutions

All of the thirty-five participants (19 paraprofessionals and 16 parents) spoke about differences in communicative practices between the school, church and home. In what follows, an extract of data taken from an interview with Reverend Josia Lepa (who taught Religious Education in secondary schools), Mrs Ana Lepa, and Moana Tomai (an ex-primary school teacher from Western Samoa) is analyzed. This extract illustrates talk about forms of symbolic control within the institutions of the Samoan home and church, and between these institutions and the secondary schools in which the paraprofessionals worked.
Earlier in the interview, Reverend and Mrs Lepa spoke about the sacred brother-sister relationship within Pacific cultures, and their own sons’ criticisms of gender relations in Queensland government schools. Mrs Lepa stated that her sons were concerned about the child-child relationships in and out of the classroom, the teacher-child relationship, and the freedom given to school children to talk back to teachers. The interviewer asked for elaboration on these points via a series of questions about perceived differences between pedagogic relations in schools in Samoa and Australia.

Extract Five

R: So what is the difference between the Samoan schooling system and the Australian schooling system, about respect for teachers?

Mrs Ana Lepa: Discipline is lacking in Australian schools. If you talk to a kid, a child in Samoa, they’ll never answer back. They’ll do what you tell them to do. They’ll never answer back.

Reverend Josia Lepa: I mean you can imagine me, a Samoan going to teach a class of 50 plus kids (in Australia), you know, and, and that is really very difficult. I mean, they all, sometimes I said to the Principal, “look this, I can’t teach this much, you know, 50 plus”. How can you be able to do that? ... So that’s a problem anyway. But I find it very difficult, the discipline in, in there and I said to myself, “Now, I’m just wondering how a kid, you know, can learn something this way.”

R: Mmm, yes, in that environment?

Reverend Josia Lepa: In that environment, so you’re thinking of a Samoan child going into a school like that. It must be very

Mrs Ana Lepa: Yeah, here the, the freedom, the extreme freedom is not, is given to the Samoan children by the ((Australian)) education system or by society itself. That is not Samoan.

Mrs Ana Lepa: Because then if these children can listen to their elders who come to the school and not to the teachers, ... then you know you can see the freedom that is given by the school to the children to do what they want. But these children are not used to that sort of freedom. And this is, in all respect to the Samoan custom and my own Pacific way of (life of course), that the discipline, that we discipline our children with this, with all good intentions, as I’ve said before, for the wholeness of the child, not just for the intellect.

Reverend and Mrs Lepa were questioned about the boundaries between the categories, ‘Samoan schooling’ and ‘Australian schooling’. In their response to these questions, they described the Samoan students taught by Reverend Lepa in religion lessons. Many of these students had migrated from New Zealand. Their socialization as Samoan learners had occurred in the pedagogic contexts of the Samoan diaspora in New Zealand and Australia where Pacific Islander ‘national communities reconstituted themselves in the context of cosmopolitan urban environments’ (Lindstrom & White 1997, p.4). Weak boundaries were drawn between the pedagogic contexts of these imagined Samoan communities and those of schools in Samoa. By contrast, strong boundaries were drawn between this configuration of ‘Samoan’ contexts of pedagogy and the pedagogic contexts of Australian schools. This distinction was drawn in terms of the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. Invisible or implicit relations of control were attributed to Australian contexts (‘the extreme freedom’). Visible or explicit relations of control were attributed to Samoan contexts with their discourses of respect and discipline (‘these children are not used to that sort of freedom’).

According to Reverend and Mrs Lepa, the differences of pedagogic context produced Australian learners who would ‘answer back’ and Samoan learners who would ‘listen to their elders’. Reverend Lepa stated that the disjuncture of pedagogic identities meant that he, ‘a Samoan’, experienced difficulty teaching in Australian schools. Similarly, he believed that children socialized as Samoan would experience difficulty acquiring knowledge in these same schools. For Reverend and Mrs Lepa, the educational disadvantage of Samoan students stemmed from differences in the form of teacher-student relationships in Australian and Samoan pedagogic contexts. This claim was reiterated later in the interview:
Extract Six

**Reverend Josia Lepa:** 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, 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 so important, you know?

Both Reverend and Mrs Lepa argued that the priority accorded to the individual in the Australian education system constituted teacher-student relations which valued freedom of speech and thus condoned ‘answering back’ behaviour. When the model of the learner and the learning process is based on individualism, relations of control are likely to be invisible or less explicit. In social contexts organised by and for Samoan people, the individual is not accorded such primacy. Thus, relations of control between transmitters and acquirers (*i.e.*, teacher-student, parent-child, and religious minister-congregation member) are likely to be visible or explicit to social group members. Reverend Lepa suggested that it was this aspect of ‘where [Samoan] people come from’ that needed to be understood by teachers in Australian schools.

Research studies in the area of effective pedagogies for Pacific Islander students, attribute weak educational outcomes to differences in the modes of pedagogy operative in the institutions of school, home and church. For example, in their study of patterns of classroom interaction, Jordan, Au and Joesting (1981, p. 1) noted that Pacific Islander children ‘must not only learn academic content, but a new set of communicative conventions at the same time’. They suggested that the task of the teacher must be to ensure that Pacific Islander children participate in classroom speech events rather than withdrawing into silence. This could be achieved by building on children’s existing communicative strengths by ‘allowing them to teach and learn from peers’. In addition, pedagogies should be ‘designed to elicit from the children increased attention to the direct instruction provided by the adult teacher’ (Jordan *et al.*, 1981, p. 20). Cazden (1988) summarised the main findings of the anthropological work undertaken by Cathie Jordan and Kathryn Hu-pei Au on the KEEP project which was designed to improve the educational outcomes of children of Polynesian descent, Hawaii’s indigenous community. According to Cazden (1988, p. 72), the anthropologists found that the same group of children performed better on several proximal indices with the experienced teacher ‘who held the children to academic topics but gave them more freedom to choose when to speak, even if it meant overlapping another child’s talk’. Moreover, Cazden (1988: 72) stressed the importance of making curricula relevant by ‘finding ways to make connections between children’s worlds, and their meanings and the meanings of the school’.

There were many similarities between the accounts of the ‘Samoan learner’ and teacher-student relations provided by Reverend and Mrs Lepa and the teacher-aides who also worked in the state-designated disadvantaged schools. Substantial similarity was also evident in the participants’ accounts of the principles of communication in Samoan community contexts. The following extracts are drawn from two separate interviews. Extract 7(a) and (b) are taken from an interview with Sapeli Tapu (a medical doctor) and Vave Slater (a private training provider, ex-engineer) by a ‘non-Samoan female’ member of the research team who was assisted by Fofoa Safotu (the Samoan research colleague on the team). Extract 8 is taken from an interview with Uiese Parfara (teacher-aide) and her husband Rick Benet (cultural consultant) by a ‘non-Samoan male’ member of the research team who was assisted by Fofoa Safotu (the Samoan research colleague on the team).

In extract 7 (a) and (b), Sapeli Tapu and Vave Slater described the hierarchical relations characteristic of Samoan institutions. During the interview, Vave Slater returned repeatedly to several themes, one of which was the legitimacy of research by non-Samoans on Samoan/Pacific Islander people; and another, the ‘cleverness’ of Samoan people in taking the best from the colonisers while retaining the *fa’aSamoa*. When asked to explain the *fa’aSamoa*, Vave Slater stated: ‘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.’ Later in the interview, however, he did make an attempt to describe the core values of the ‘Samoan Way’:

Extract Seven (a)

Vave Slater: I think it’s respect for some ( )
R: 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, um (pause) be ahead of other people at the expense of others. Um, to communicate one’s own ideas. They don’t think of what other people want to think. So therefore (the debate of the moment) freedom of speech.

Sapeli Tapu entered the interview after Vave Slater proclaimed that the principles of the fa’aSamoa could not be explained with the statement: ‘Could I just butt in there?’ In her explanation, she drew comparisons and contrasts with the social relations of the Indian sub-continental caste system, which she thought might be familiar to the ‘non-Samoan’ researcher.

Extract Seven (b)

Sapeli Tapu: I mean there’s a (multi-tier). It’s not only everyday (communication). I mean there’s, it’s complex in the sense that one, two, three, there’s ((the)) 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. At school even amongst Samoan students themselves, they also have problems with identity.
R: Right.
Sapeli Tapu: Because it’s not so much, well it doesn’t come out as a class system but he ((Vave Slater)) uses a class, class system ((as an example)), in a way in terms I suppose of Indians. Which part ((do)) you come from, which I’m (not) sure? So not only among, between you and non-Samoans, so this kind of relationship is the way, your mannerisms, every day how you portray yourself
R: Between the different groups of Samoans you’re saying ( ) different?
Sapeli Tapu: Well, I mean, as an individual.
Vave Slater: Individuals.
Sapeli Tapu: Right, as an individual, so forget about the top layer ( ), every day at school, it’s how you communicate. … ‘seen but not heard’, that’s usually one of the commonest learning that we have when we’re brought up, so when you go to school you may know a lot but because, “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 in which also, unless the teacher really comes to know the student or the pupil and then they will be, the pupil will be free to express how much they know.

In extract 8, Uiese Parfara responded to a question concerning the similarities and differences between forms of social control in school and community institutions. Prior to this extract, she detailed the nature of her collaborative work with classroom teachers at Newell High. Specifically, she talked about her efforts to ‘raise the profile of Samoan students’ at the school and to enhance teachers’ understandings of the difficulties faced by this cohort of students. Moreover, she talked about her involvement in women’s support groups in the local community. Issues relating to domestic violence, health and dealing with state bureaucracies were frequently discussed in these community forums. In extract 8 below, Uiese Parfara detailed key features of Samoan culture in Samoa and the Australian Samoan diaspora.

Extract Eight

Uiese Parfara: 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 orator’s 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.

R: I understand that’s really complex in Samoa. Are younger people able to keep this 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, it’s also a big thing in the school that the teachers think that the 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 emphasise yourself, what you are saying, what you are on about.

In describing the Samoan social system, both Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Parfara pointed to strongly bounded hierarchical categories: the orators or tulafale, as well as ‘another layer on top of that’ comprised of the ali’i or titular chiefs. They indicated that a distinctive respect or fa’aaloalo language was used in communicative interactions within this rank system. This language has been documented in the research literature. After an extensive study of language development in a traditional Samoan village, Ochs (1988) argued that the social register of Samoan caregiver speech differed from the simplified caregiver speech characteristic of many middle class American communicative exchanges.

According to Ochs (1988), when small children employed egocentric speech – speech that displays an inability to meet the informational/social needs of another – Samoan caregivers did not characteristically employ explicit guessing strategies to clarify the child’s meaning. Rather, because they were positioned as the lower ranking party in the social system of the fa’a Samoa, children were expected to clarify their speech and produce communicatively competent utterances. Egocentric speech was considered ‘appropriate only for high-status persons in certain contexts, such as orators delivering a formal speech’ (Ochs, 1988, p. 24). Samoan children were thus socialised into a sociocentric demeanour by which they were expected to notice others and take their point of view. In other words, lower-ranking persons were expected to assume the perspective of higher-ranking persons more than higher-ranking vis-a-vis lower-ranking parties in a social situation. As a result, they stood in a relation of servitude (tautua) to those of higher status (Ochs, 1988). Thus, Samoan children learnt that the way to knowledge and power was to serve or attend those in higher-ranking positions (see also Jordan, Au & Joesting’s (1981) study of Samoan children’s educational experiences in Hawaii). The core principles of respect (fa’aaloalo) and obedience (usiusita’i)/servitude (tautua), the expected demeanour of a lower-ranking party, thus regulated the pedagogic identity of the Samoan child learner.

Research on diasporic communities has indicated that the communicative principles documented by Ochs in Samoa are found amongst Samoans in New Zealand (Graves, Graves, Vineta, Ah Sam & Ah Sam 1982; Pitt & Macpherson 1974; Tiatia 1998). In the present study, the language of respect emerged as a key source for the imagining of the diasporic Samoan community in Australia. Eighteen of the thirty-five participants stressed the importance of respect (mentioned on average 5 times in each interview) to Samoans, stating that the values of respect and obedience/servitude distinguished the fa’a Samoa from the fa’apalagi (the European way). Moreover, the participants sought to socialise their children into these values.

In extracts 7(b) and 8 above, Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Parfara indicated that the rules of communication generally, and modes of displaying respect specifically, were not clear to Samoan students enrolled in the state-designated disadvantaged schools. These students knew that a teacher was of higher status, but they did not know quite how high, and they did not know how to signal deference in an appropriate fashion in the school context. Many of the interviewees made this point, arguing that Samoan students were often confused about the status of teachers, particularly when they were referred to somewhat informally as ‘Miss’ (as is typical in Australian state schools).

In addition, both interviewees argued that Samoan students would experience difficulty accessing school knowledge if the teacher did not understand the Samoan deference system, and could not help
negotiate the modes of communication within Australian classrooms. All three interviewees, Uiese Parfara, Sapeli Tapu, and Vave Slater stated that students in Australian classrooms were expected to engage in competitive individualistic displays of ‘how much they know’. By contrast, the communication patterns of the fa’aSamoa subordinated the expression of individual opinion to consideration of the perspective of those higher in the rank system. As a consequence, teachers might have difficulty assisting Samoan students produce appropriate or legitimate displays of academic competence in Australian classrooms.

Similar findings were reported in an ethnographic study conducted by Alison Jones (1991) in an all girls’ inner city secondary school in New Zealand with a high population of working class Pacific Islander girls. Specifically, Jones (1991, p. 15) was interested in ‘the barriers the school might (inadvertently or otherwise) provide to their (working class Pacific Islander girls’ educational) success.’ She found that the girls had a model of teaching and learning which gave ‘primary importance to the teachers’ words and authority’ (Jones, 1991, p. 95). In addition, Jones (1991) discovered that the Pacific Islander girls in her study avoided being singled out to answer ‘substantive’ questions. They also attempted to manipulate their teachers into their own preferred styles of teaching and learning. Moreover, she argued that the classroom teachers had difficulty relating school curricula to students’ experiences so that they could take the knowledge on board, and in so doing modify their existing knowledge base. Jones (1991) argued that these pedagogical practices contributed to the reproduction of educational inequality for working class Pacific Islander girls in her case study school. Crucially, Jones (1991, p. 103) stated that ‘Bernstein's work [did] have some resonance with the patterns of talk’ in the schools investigated as part of her ethnographic study.

DISCUSSION

This paper attended to the principles of power and control generating pedagogic discourses and subject positions for classroom teacher and Samoan student as articulated in interviews by Samoan community members. These interview participants were active members of the para-educational networks constituted around disadvantaged secondary schools in Queensland, Australia. The empirical data analysis and findings emerging from the study reported in this paper are important in terms of identifying pedagogies that may make a difference in the educational attainment of Samoan students from socio-economic groups. Thus this paper contributes to the numerous empirical research studies utilising Basil Bernstein’s sociology of knowledge. These studies have examined the relation between social class, modes of pedagogic practice, and educational attainment.

Drawing on Bernstein’s (1975) earlier work on visible and invisible pedagogies, Delpit (1997, p. 585) argued that working class African-American students should be taught via visible pedagogic modes so that they acquire the ‘rules of the culture of power operating in schools’. She suggested that parents want ‘to ensure that the school provides their children with the discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society.’ However, Delpit (1997) proposed that the knowledge and skills transmitted through schools were unequally distributed to African-American working class children because they were often excluded from the codes or rules of the culture of power operating in schools. For those students who were not already a participant in the culture of power, Delpit (1997) argued, ‘being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.’

On the matter of visible pedagogic modes and educational attainment, Bernstein (1990, p. 79) wrote the following:

it is certainly possible to create a visible pedagogy which would weaken the relation between social class and educational achievement. This may well require a supportive preschool structure, a relaxation of the framing on pacing and sequencing rules, and a weakening of the framing regulating the flow of communication between the school classroom and the community(ies) the school draws upon.
However, he warned that currently this pedagogic mode ‘is cheap to transmit because it is subsidised by the middle-class family and paid for by the alienation and failure of children of the disadvantaged classes and groups’ (Bernstein, 1990, p. 78). Time is at a premium with strong pacing in visible pedagogy, and this regulates examples, illustrations and narratives that facilitate the acquisition of school knowledge. ‘In this structure children of the disadvantaged class are doubly disadvantaged. There is no second site of acquisition [the family] and their orientation to language, narrative, is not privileged by the pedagogic communication of the school, either in form or in content’ (Bernstein, 1990, p. 78). This was a point raised by a number of the paraprofessionals interviewed for the study, notably Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Parfara, who commented on the differences between the content and form of discourses regulating Samoan and schooling institutions. In addition, Reverend Salu A’ana clearly indicated that the pacing and sequencing rules, specifically in terms of the transmission of mathematical discourses, were not relaxed to cater for the needs of Samoan students. Furthermore, Peone Avao and Deso Vailoa indicated that the arbitrary organisation of school knowledge (sequencing and pacing rules) was not designed to meet the needs of students who did not speak English at home, and spoke a form of ‘broken’ English in the school, namely the Samoan learner.

Bernstein (1975, 1990, 1996) did not discount the potential of creating an invisible pedagogy that could ‘weaken the relation between social class and educational achievement’. On this topic, he wrote

… the stronger classification and frames, the greater the emphasis on early reading and writing. The middle-class child is prepared for this emphasis, but this is not so in the case of the working-class child. The weakening of classification and frames reduces the significance of the textbook and transforms the impersonal past into a personalized present. It would appear that the invisible pedagogy carries a beneficial potential for working class children. (Bernstein, 1975, p. 138)

However, Bernstein (cited in Martin, 1999, p. 123) warned that:

… we must make very certain that the new pedagogy [progressive education] does not lock the child into the present – in his or her present tense. … we [must] seek to understand systematically how to create a concept which can authenticate the child’s experience and give him or her those powerful representations of thought he or she is going to need in order to change the world outside.

Thus, Bernstein (1995, pp. 419-420) suggested that invisible pedagogic modes might work for children who were not oriented to this pedagogic code by family socialisation. This pedagogic mode could only work if a number of conditions were met, including: ‘(1) careful selection of teachers; (2) adequate preparation time for teachers; (3) time to construct lessons that allow students to recognize themselves; and (4) regular parent-school meetings’ (Sadnovik & Semel, 2000, p. 197). It was evident from the interview accounts provided by the Samoan community members that none of these conditions were met in the case study secondary schools. For example, Fofoa Safotu spoke about the ‘misunderstandings’ teachers developed about Samoan students as a result of inadequate research training, rushed endeavours to garner information about a new clientele of students, and lack of preparation time to construct lessons in which students could recognise themselves (see also the work of Mirza, 1992; Stone, 1981). Moreover, the 16 parents interviewed for the study stated that they rarely attended parent-teacher meetings relating to their child’s academic progress. Contact with the school was often limited to non-academic activities, such as working in the school canteen, and assisting with sporting and cultural events.

This is not to suggest that pedagogic practices have not been designed which effect educational improvements for students who have traditionally been disadvantaged by schooling institutions.
Empirical work conducted by researchers in the US (Cazden, 1995; Semel, 1995; Sadnovik & Semel, 2000), Portugal (Morais & Antunes, 1994; Pedro, 1981), and Australia (Christie, 1995; Martin, 1999) attest to the independent effect on achievement (after controlling for student background variables) of specific modes of pedagogic practice. For example, Martin (1999, p. 124) advocated a visible and interventionist pedagogical approach ‘with a relatively strong focus on the transmission of discourse competencies’ in the Writing Project conducted in the Disadvantaged Schools Programme (New South Wales, Australia). All stages of this pedagogical approach (genre approach) made use of explicit knowledge about different types of text used in different social contexts. In addition, ‘waves of weak and strong classification and framing as appropriate to different stages of the pedagogic cycle’ (Martin, 1999, p. 143) were introduced in the Writing Project (see also Christie, 1999). The objective was to take students from their ‘actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky cited in Martin, 1999, p. 125). This is not to suggest that the genre approach to pedagogy as outlined by Martin has not been the subject of debate and contestation (see Macken-Horarik, 1998).

In the United States, a number of researchers (Cazden, 1995; Semel, 1995; and Sadnovik & Semel, 2000) have reported on the innovative pedagogic work undertaken in Central Park East Elementary (CPEE) and Secondary Schools (CPESS), inner-city public secondary schools directed by Deborah Meier. The specific pedagogic discourses and practices in these schools have made a significant difference to the educational attainment of African-American and Latino students from low-income communities. According to Sadnovik and Semel (2000), these schools are part of the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) in New York City, a progressive organization consisting of a number of schools committed to its particular educational philosophy. Within these schools, curriculum is somewhat weakly classified, with for example, Central Park East Secondary School’s day divided into two, three hour blocks, the first for humanities and social sciences and the second for mathematics and sciences. Framing is also somewhat weakly classified, with teacher as coach and facilitator an explicit part of the CCE philosophy. Classes are child-centered and democratic with CPESS having an advisory group, where a small number of students meet with a faculty advisor daily to discuss both personal and academic issues (Sadnovik & Semel, 2000, p. 203).

In summary, the analytic tools used in this paper focused on explicating the power and control relations generating pedagogic discourses for Samoan students enrolled in designated disadvantaged secondary schools in Queensland, Australia. Specifically, the regulative discourses (i.e., theories of the learner, the teacher, and the teacher-learner relations) constituting the arbitrary organisation of students, knowledge and institutional spaces were detailed. In addition, differences between the regulative discourses of home, school and church were analysed. Three factors contributing to the educational disadvantage experienced by Samoan students enrolled in state designated disadvantaged schools were delineated within the interview accounts produced by Samoan paraprofessionals. These factors included: (1) the arbitrary grouping of students in schooling; (2) the arbitrary selection, organization and distribution of school knowledge, and (3) differences between the pedagogic discourses and practices of school and Samoan community contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The study reported in this paper, is part of a larger research project funded by the Australian Research Council. Basil Bernstein’s assistance and support in terms of data analysis is gratefully acknowledged.

Notes:

1 During the early 1990s, substantial cohorts of New Zealand-born immigrants settled in the outer suburbs of Brisbane, the Queensland state capital (Stimson, R., Mullins, P., Baum, S., Jenkins, O., Gum, K., & Davis, R.
Singh Speaking About Cultural Difference


2 Ian Hunter (1994) uses the term para-educational networks to refer to parental, professional and voluntary agencies, community liaison officers and parents’ associations, community welfare experts and self-help groups, curriculum experts and curriculum consultation committees, that form a hybrid network to situate schools in their communities.

3 The term ‘disadvantaged’ was used by the state department of education to develop meaningful comparisons across Queensland schools in relation to the allocation of resources and establishment of operational performance targets. The following criteria were used to categorise schools as ‘disadvantaged’: school size, socio-economic status and the proportion of the population that was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. The category ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student’ was included in the measure of ‘disadvantage’ as this group has been the most oppressed in Australia in terms of lack of access to quality education, health, housing, employment, legal and other state services.

4 The four state secondary schools in which Samoan teacher-aides, home-liaison officers and cultural advisers worked were situated in low socio-economic areas. One of the schools, 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 of Queensland 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 described as 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 the school was in the electorate with the highest percentage of overseas-born residents in Queensland (33.67% compared to a state average of 17.41%) and the highest percentage of residents speaking languages other than English at home (26.77% compared to a state average of 7.16%) (Electoral Commission Queensland, 1998).

5 Two senses of representation are invoked here: representation as ‘speaking for’ a group or class faction in political forums and ‘re-presentation’, as in subject-predication (Spivak, 1988, p. 275).

6 This study was designed in response to requests from secondary school teachers for assistance in designing pedagogies to meet the needs of recently enrolled Samoan students. These teachers provided anecdotal accounts attributing low educational participation and achievement levels to this new category of students.

7 For purposes of confidentiality, all names of people and places are pseudonyms. Fofoa Safotu continues to read, comment on, and translate papers produced from the study for members of the local Samoan community. She chose not to work on publications emanating from the study for two reasons. Firstly, she needed to maintain some autonomy from the project so that the research was not perceived as representing the interests of a faction of the local Samoan community. Secondly, she chose to spend her time and energy in social and marketing research, drawing in part on the skills and knowledge acquired through this research project.

8 The interviews were semi-structured, guided by a set of questions with the aim of eliciting information about:
- Appointment criteria for work within the para-educational networks
- The work undertaken within these networks
- The socialization of paraprofessionals into their work duties
- The social relations between paraprofessionals, Samoan students, school teachers and administrators
- Similarities and differences between forms of social control in schooling and local community institutions
- Representation(s) of Samoan identity and culture in school forums
- Pedagogic practices that improved educational outcomes for Samoan students
- Tensions between taking up the role of paraprofessional and being a member of the local Samoan community

9 INSERT TABLE 1 HERE
In the first stage of analysis, a description of each interview was prepared recording: (1) who participated in the construction of the account; (2) the location of the interview; and (3) the interaction that preceded and followed the taped interview. The entire interview corpus was then segmented into topical episodes. An episode was defined as beginning with the introduction of a topic into the interview dialogue and ending with the final comment on that topic. Successive questions probing the topic were thus counted as part of the one episode; moreover, episodes were not necessarily continuous as the one topic was sometimes revisited in the course of an interview. An empirical description of each episode was then prepared to clarify the question asked of the interviewee and the response given. This stage of data analysis concluded with the organization of the episodes according to the set of themes that emerged from the empirical descriptions:

- discipline and respect in the home and church,
- violence in the home, school and on the streets,
- aspirations for socio-economic advancement through education,
- the role of Samoan churches in the transmission of Samoan values (fa’aSamoa),
- loss of Samoan culture and language by youth,
- teacher-student relations in schools and Samoan contexts,
- gender relations in schools and Samoan institutions,
- racialized relations between authority figures (e.g., police, teachers, welfare officers) and Samoan children.

Following Lawrence (1964, p. 5) epistemology is defined as ‘the theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge’. The term is used to cover the general questions: ‘From what sources do the people … believe knowledge to be derived? And what kinds of knowledge do they hold to be available to themselves?’

Transcript Conventions

1) turn of talk
R researcher
… deleted words
[ overlapping talk or interruption
(( )) text inserted for clarification purposes
( ) words not clear from tape
bold spoken louder or emphasised

These indices are the ‘amount of academically engaged time, number of reading-related and correct responses, and number of idea units and logical inferences’ (Cazden, 1988, p. 72).

Sapeli Tapu re-positioned the interviewer from the category ‘non-Samoan’ to the category ‘Indian sub-continent’ to render an account of the ‘fa’aSamoa’ which might be intelligible. However, as soon as she evoked the category ‘Indian sub-continent’ with its attributes of a caste system, she stated that she was not certain which part of India the researcher came from and therefore understood.

Orators or tulafale refers to the talking chiefs, who are ranked under the titular chiefs. Samoa historically did not have a rigid class structure (Freeman, 1996, 1999; Owe, 1984). Consequently, it has been possible for people of ability to move through the rank system and achieve positions of status such as the position tulafale, talking chiefs, or ali‘i, titular chiefs (Owe, 1984). Moreover, the standing of the tulafale or talking chiefs was derived from their skills in oratory and knowledge of oral tradition. Those who controlled the knowledge and interpretation of the past could influence the present (Freeman, 1996, 1999; Owe, 1984).

The highest ranked chiefs in the Samoan system. Often high rank is marked by silence and passive behaviour because lower ranked persons are expected to do the bidding of higher ranked persons.

The principles of this educational philosophy include:

i. Schools that are small and personalized in size;
ii. A unified course of study for all students;
iii. A focus on helping young people use their minds well;
iv. An in-depth, intradisciplinary curriculum respectful of the diverse heritages that encompass our society;
v. Active learning with student-as-worker/student-as-citizen and teacher-as-coach;
vi. Student evaluation by performance based assessment methods;
vii. A school tone of unanxious expectation, trust, and decency;
viii. Family involvement, trust, and respect;
ix. Collaborative decision making and governance;
x. Choice;
xi. Racial, ethnic, economic, and intellectual diversity; and
References


