Local and official forms of symbolic control: An Australian case study of the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel
Parlo Singh

This is the author’s version of this paper. It was written while she was employed at Griffith University, and was later published as:


Copyright (2000). Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Local and official forms of symbolic control: An Australian case study of the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel
Parlo Singh

Abstract

In this paper an analysis is undertaken of the accounts of pedagogic work provided by para-educational personnel working in two government-funded schools situated in a low socio-economic area of an Australian city. Specifically, the paper examines the accounts of two para-educational personnel who identified as Samoan/Pacific Islander and worked to improve the educational outcomes of students from the local Samoan/Pacific Islander community. It is argued that the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel may play an important role in redistributing discursive (informational) resources transmitted through schooling institutions. However, the positioning of para-educational personnel in the field of the local community and the field of education regulates the form/modality of pedagogic work, that is, what is taught and how it is taught. Moreover, the content and form of pedagogic work has the potential for realising inclusive and/or exclusive relations for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
### Table 1: Para-educational personnel from the Samoan/Pacific Islander community interviewed for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions in Local Community</th>
<th>Positions in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ministers of Religion      | • Assisted with student discipline problems  
|                            | • Participated in Parents and Citizens Committees  
|                            | • Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Assembly of God, and Methodist.  
|                            | • Various levels of English proficiency, educational and theological qualifications  
| Professionals              | • Private training providers  
|                            | • Cultural Education Advisors in education, law and medical bureaucracies  
|                            | • Tertiary qualifications in education, business, engineering, medicine  
|                            | • Residents of higher socio-economic suburbs but attended Samoan church services in the case study area  
|                            | • Volunteer work on school councils, curriculum committees etc.  
| Semi-skilled community workers | • Cultural consultants: liaised between bureaucracies and institutions of the local Samoan community  
|                            | • Teacher-Aides  
|                            | • No tertiary qualifications  
|                            | • Lived in local community, sometimes connected with the church (wife or daughter of a Minister of Religion)  
|                            | • Worked in schools on a fractional/casual basis  
| Unskilled workers          | • Home/Community Liaison Officers  
|                            | • No tertiary qualifications  
|                            | • Lived in local community  
|                            | • Worked in schools on a fractional/casual basis, often additional work undertaken in cleaning/fast food industries.  

Table 1: Para-educational personnel from the Samoan/Pacific Islander community interviewed for the study
Local and official forms of symbolic control: An Australian case study of the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the accounts of pedagogic work provided by para-educational personnel in one low socio-economic area in an Australian city. Pedagogic work refers to communication practices or forms of symbolic control “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” (Bernstein in Solomon, forthcoming). In Australia, teacher-aides, home-liason officers, cultural advisors, and community representatives on school councils constitute the para-educational network established in and around schools in low socio-economic areas. Principally, para-educational personnel are responsible for forging lines of communication between the Indigenous, working class, unemployed and migrant families in the local community and the school. Thus, the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel constitutes a ‘relay’ transmitting the social norms of schooling into the family, and simultaneously channelling the relationships of the family into the school (Hunter, 1994).

The case study of the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel reported in this paper centres on two government-funded secondary schools, Sanunder and Newell. Both schools were located in a community which experienced high levels of youth unemployment (31.4%); and also under-employment given the dominance of casual and part-time employment opportunities. Moreover, with the disappearance of the unskilled jobs that traditionally provided employment in the area, teachers believed that local students needed the problem-solving, communication and team work competencies that would give them the flexibility and adaptability required by the new forms of work that were emerging with the restructuring of the Australian economy. The linguistic diversity of the student population made this task of skill development particularly challenging. A State Electoral Commission profile indicated that residents in the community spoke “the most foreign languages out of any electorate in the State, with 26.7% speaking a language other than English at home.” In addition, the student population in both schools included a substantial cohort of students in the post-compulsory years who had not been able to gain employment, and were no longer eligible for unemployment benefits. Recent Federal Government policy changes meant that 16 and 17 year olds previously on unemployment benefits had to return to study to remain eligible for the Youth Allowance. This effectively raised the school leaving age of many students in low socio-economic areas.

One way that Sanunder and Newell Secondary Schools attempted to meet the needs of this new student clientele was by employing local community members to liaise between the school and the home/community, and thereby inform the development of socially ‘relevant’ curricula, and responsive forms of pedagogy. Thus the positions of home/community liaison officer, teacher-aide, cultural advisor and community representative on curricular committees and school councils, were created to soften the bureaucratic and academic face that the school presented to the working-class, unemployed, Indigenous and migrant communities in the local area (McCallum, 1993). The establishment of a para-educational network in schools such as Sanunder and Newell was guided by two objectives. First, teachers were concerned with improving educational achievements for those students who had not attained outcomes appropriate to their year level, in particular, the third of the student population that did not achieve pass grades in the junior certificate. Attainment levels in literacy and numeracy for this cohort of students were also low. Students who identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Samoan/Pacific Islander were more likely to be part of this low achieving group. At Sanunder, 100 of the 740 students
identified as Samoan/Pacific Islander. Second, teachers were concerned with devising curricula that would ensure that the cultural diversity of the student population was recognised and valued. Thus, the community liaison network created a space around the school in which an exchange could take place between the desires of the family, and the norms of schooling (Hunter, 1994). Moreover, through the community liaison network an exchange could take place between the forms of social regulation or symbolic control in the contexts of the family/local community, and the norms of social regulation or disciplinary regimes in the school.

This paper examines how principles of power and control structure the communication channels or relay constituted by para-educational personnel. Power relations refer to the strength of insulation between symbolic categories, such as agents (i.e., teachers, home liaison officers, parents and students), forms of knowledge (transmitted through the school, family and local community contexts), and spatial and temporal contexts (organisation of time and space in family, community and school institutions). Principles of control refer to the communication relations within the school (between teacher, teacher-aide and student) and the home/community (between parents, religious ministers, children), as well as the relations between these institutions (Bernstein, 1996; Singh, 1997). Through the structuring of pedagogic work within and between the institutions of the family, local community and the school, para-educational personnel attempt to address the unequal distribution of discursive resources to students in low socio-economic areas. The term, ‘discursive resources’, refers to the complex symbolic systems of information, that is, instructional discourse (content and skills) as well as the regulative discourse (styles of conduct, manner and demeanour) transmitted through schooling institutions (Bernstein, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996; Hunter, 1994). This paper questions the potential consequences of different forms/modes of pedagogic communication in terms of redressing the distribution of resources through schooling for Samoan/Pacific Islander students in low socio-economic areas.

The analysis of the accounts of pedagogic work provided by Samoan/Pacific Islander para-educational personnel is organised in three sections. In the first section, details are provided of the participants interviewed for the study. An analysis of the forms of social regulation or symbolic control in key institutions of the local Samoan/Pacific Islander community is undertaken in the second section. In addition, the modes of symbolic control in the local Samoan community are compared to the norms of communicative practices in the classroom. Similarities and differences in the forms of symbolic control within family/community, and schooling contexts are detailed. This exploration of similarities and differences in the structuring of power and control relations within local community and schooling institutions makes possible an analysis of the discursive resources needed to assist students with border crossing, that is, moving between the symbolic borders insulating the schooling institution from the family/local community. The third section of the paper details the different forms of local Samoan cultural knowledge incorporated in pedagogic practice to meet the educational needs of Samoan/Pacific Islander students in low socio-economic areas. The paper concludes with a discussion of the pedagogic work undertaken by para-educational personnel in relation to addressing the unequal distribution of discursive resources to migrant students in low socio-economic areas.

CASE STUDY OF PARA-EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL
This paper draws on interview data collected from 35 Samoan/Pacific Islander participants who constituted part of the para-educational network surrounding schools such as Sanunder and Newell. The form of pedagogic work undertaken in and on behalf of schools, was largely determined by the positions held by members of this network in the hierarchical social structures of the local and wider community. Principally, the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel included service in consultative positions on school councils, liaison work between the local and school community, input into curricular renewal initiatives, mediation in teacher-student relations, and responsibility for disciplining Samoan/Pacific Islander students. All the interviews with the participants were audio-taped and guided by a set of
questions which aimed to elicit information about the:
• Job description of cultural and school-community education officers and advisers
• Enactment of the role of cultural and school-community education officer/adviser, and/or parent within the school
• Relation between work undertaken in the school, the local community and home
• Relation to classroom teachers and school administrators
• Socialisation in a professional school role
• Versions of local Samoan culture incorporated in the school
• Relation between professional school role and Samoan cultural identity
• Knowledge of Pacific Islander students’ performance in school curricula, and relations with school staff
• Knowledge of the school work undertaken by Pacific Islander students in the home

In the remainder of this paper, the analysis focuses on interview data collected from Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet. Sapeli Tapu was a young female medical doctor who had received her tertiary training in New Zealand. She worked in a volunteer capacity as a cultural and education advisor to some of the schools reported in this case study. Sapeli Tapu did not live in the local community even though her husband was extensively involved in educational initiatives for long-term unemployed youth. By contrast, Uiese Benet was an older Samoan woman (in her fifties) who worked as a teacher-aide and home-liaison officer at Newell Secondary School, as well as a number of other schools in the case study area. Uiese Benet was educated in Samoa to the equivalent level of a junior certificate pass. At the time of the study, she lived and worked in the local low socio-economic community. With the assistance of colleagues, Uiese Benet had established a community-based Samoan cultural organisation. The aim of this organisation was “to make settlement easier for Samoans by giving them access to the workings of public institutions and by mediating in possibly conflictual relations between Samoans and ’experts’ in mainstream institutions.” Specifically, Uiese Benet organised women's groups within the local Samoan community to deal with “domestic violence and other women's issues, such as health and nutrition.” Funds for community work were obtained from various government departments.

In their accounts of pedagogic work both interview participants concentrated on four points: (1) power structures within the institutions of re/production of the local Samoan culture (fa'aSamoan); (2) differences in principles of communication between family/local community and schooling contexts; (3) transition difficulties experienced by Samoan/Pacific Islander students as they negotiated the symbolic
borders/boundaries between the institutions of the family, community and the school; and (4) the forms of Samoan culture and language incorporated in school practice.

**Power and Control Relations Structuring the Fa’aSamoa**

Both Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet spoke at length about the “changing trends” in Samoan culture, that is, the different ways in which aspects of Samoan culture were taken up by different generations, as well as differences within a generational group. In addition, some participants interviewed for the study spoke of differences in the cultural identity of Australian, New Zealand and Samoan born youth. Moreover, some participants, for example, Vave Slater argued that Samoan youth were “substituting ... black-American culture, homey clothes, rap, all that type of thing” for their own culture. At the same time, however, all participants emphasised the crucial role played by the social institutions of the family (aiga) and Samoan church in the socialisation of Samoan/Pacific Islanders in the case study area. The symbolic structures of these two key institutions, the aiga and Samoan church, are detailed in the following data extracts. While Sapeli Tapu’s account was elicited by a question about what constituted the ‘Samoan Way’, Uiese Benet’s account occurred in the course of a discussion about the significance of language retention to Samoan identity and social relationships.

**Extract 1:**

1. **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 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.
2. **R:** Between the different groups of Samoans you’re saying ( ) different?
3. **Sapeli Tapu:** Well, I mean, as an individual ... so forget about the top layer ( ) every day at school, it’s how you communicate. Some ... 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, 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.
4. **R:** Right, Right.
5. **Sapeli Tapu:** The teacher may take it as also (the student), doesn’t listen.

**Extract 2**

1. **Uiese Benet:** 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.
2. **R:** I understand that’s really complex in Samoa. Are younger people able to keep this knowledge or are they losing it?
3. **Uiese Benet:** ........... 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
Hierarchical Social Structures of Cultural Production and Reproduction

In their accounts of the fa'aSamoa, Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet discussed the forms of language or communicative conventions used by different members within the complex layering or “multi-tiers” of Samoan society. Sapeli Tapu stated: “there’s ordinary way you and I would relate and there’s another layer above that in which the orators relate, and there’s another level on top of that” (Extract 1: turn 1). Similarly, Uiese Benet claimed “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” (Extract 2: turn 1). Both women also spoke of the distinctive respect or fa'aaloalo language used by members of the Samoan community in different communicative interactions, for example, everyday, ordinary and when speaking to titular and talking chiefs (see Freeman, 1996). Uiese Benet argued that recognition of the social positions held by members, namely “uncultured person”, “chief”, and “orator”, via the patterns of language use, signified that a person was “far more knowledgeable about (the) community” (Extract 2: turn 1). Within the highly stratified Samoan society, rank is assessed in terms of political title (chief, orator, and positions within each of these statuses), church title (pastor, deacon, etc.), age, and generation, among other variables. Titled persons have higher rank than untitled persons do, and older generation persons have higher rank than do younger persons.

Historically, the standing of the tulafale or talking chiefs was derived from their skills in oratory and knowledge of oral tradition. The introduction of Christianity to Samoa by the London Missionary Society in the eighteenth century created a new rank position in the fa’aSamoa, that is, the position of religious ministers. Moreover, Christianity was not simply imposed on Samoans; rather it was absorbed, adapted, and given a uniquely Samoan expression by the faife'au or pastor, surrounded by his council of influential lay deacons (Lawson, 1996). Consequently, written literacy through the translation of the Bible into Samoan was incorporated into the oral traditions and spirituality of the fa’aSamoa. Moreover, in immigrant Samoan communities, the fa’aSamoa is often maintained through the hierarchical organisation or rank system of the church which becomes the focal point of social and cultural activities (Tiata, 1998).

Of particular significance to the analysis undertaken in this paper, is the point raised by Sapeli Tapu relating to similarities in the structuring of social systems of cultural reproduction, namely similarities in the unequal distribution of discursive resources in the field or arena of public education and the institutions of the local Samoan community, as well as that of the Indian ’caste system’. In other words, there exist complementary power relations between many fields or arenas of cultural reproduction. The term, ‘field’, is used here to refer to a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination etc) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996: 97).

For example, the field of education and the field of the ‘fa’aSamoa’ are hierarchically organised with distinctive categories of producers and reproducers of knowledge. Second, distributions of power and principles of control generate different modes of pedagogic communication within and between each ‘layer’ of the ‘fa’aSamoa’, and each sub-field of education (i.e., university sector, central policy making and classroom teaching). Through distributive regulations, social class relations unequally distribute discursive resources which in turn make crucial boundaries, that is, the symbolic boundaries of different
layers of the fa’aSamoa and/or different sub-fields of education (i.e., layers of the schooling system) permeable to some and impermeable to others. Third, there is a gap or space insulating different forms of knowledge – the knowledge of the chiefly class and religious ministers; and everyday, common sense knowledge in the fa’aSamoa. Similarly within the field of education, power relations insulate different arenas of knowledge production and reproduction, and insulate the knowledge incorporated in school curricula from everyday, common sense knowledge. Fourth, conflict is endemic within the field of the fa’aSamoa and the field of education in the struggle to dominate pedagogic modalities, and in the relation between local and official pedagogic modalities (Bernstein, 1999, 1996).

These points of complementarity in the structuring of fields of cultural re/production of the fa’aSamoa and education point to the social class distributions of resources and thus the heterogeneity or difference within the category ‘Samoan student’ and ‘Samoan para-educational personnel’. In other words, within the field of the fa’aSamoa, agents are differentially positioned in relation to the acquisition of discursive resources. Those in dominating positions with the field of the fa’aSamoa are more likely to have access to the resources which will enable border crossing between the local community/family and schooling institutions. By contrast, those in dominated positions are less likely to be able to access resources that will make the symbolic borders between institutions permeable. Moreover, within the layers or sub-fields of the fa’aSamoa agents are likely to take up dominant and dominating positions. For example, within the chiefly class there exist categories of titular (dominant position) and talking chiefs (dominated position). Of importance then, is the criteria used by educators to select para-educational personnel from within the sub-fields of the fa’aSamoa to structure pedagogic work within and between the institutions of cultural re/production of the fa’aSamoa and the school. The selection of agents from different positions in the sub-fields of the fa’aSamoa is likely to affect the structure of pedagogic work, that is, the communicative relay between the school and the local community.

This analysis of similarities in the structuring of power relations within the field of the fa’aSamoa and the field of education, however, does not suggest that these fields are regulated by similar principles of communication or symbolic control. Indeed, the field of education is strongly insulated from the field of the fa’aSamoa, not only in the low socio-economic area of the Australian city in which the study reported in this paper was undertaken, but also in Samoa, and immigrant communities in New Zealand. In turn, the strength of the power relations insulating these fields constitutes the distinctive identity of the institutions and agents within these fields. Moreover, modes of symbolic control or social regulation re/produce the distinctive identities within a field. In the next section differences between the modes of symbolic control or communicative practices within the school, and within the institutions of the local Samoan/Pacific Islander community are discussed.

**Communication Differences Between Family/Community and Schooling Contexts**
Both Sapeli Tapu and Uiise Benet described the communication practices of “respect and obedience” within the fa’aSamoa. For example, Uiise Benet said “in Samoan groups all you do is you button up and listen” (Extract 2: turn 3). Similarly, Sapeli Tapu stated “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” (Extract 1: turn 3). The communicative practices of the fa’aSamoa have also been documented in numerous research studies undertaken in Samoa, and in New Zealand immigrant Samoan/Pacific Islander communities (Tiata, 1998). For example, in her study of language development in a traditional Samoan village, Ochs (1988: 71) argued that young children evince their understanding of social rank in the course of their language development. From a young age, Samoan children are encouraged to be sociocentric, to notice others and take their point of view. This disposition is the core of respect (fa’aaloalo) and obedience (usita‘i), 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 persons are expected to assume the perspective of lower-ranking parties in a social situation. In other words, lower-ranking persons stand in a service relation to those of higher status (Ochs, 1988: 137-138). Moreover, from a young age Samoan children learn through communicative interactions that the way to knowledge and power is to serve or attend those in higher-ranking positions.

Both Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet also spoke of the difficulties experienced by Samoan students as they negotiated the communicative contexts of family, church community, and school. Specifically, Sapeli Tapu argued that the patterns of communication or modes of symbolic control in the school system require Samoan children to take up an “individualised” position of “student or pupil” and communicate with the teacher accordingly (Extract 1: turn 3). In other words, while the social relations of communication in the classroom necessitate the “student or pupil [to] be free to express how much they know”, the communication patterns in the rank system of the fa’aSamoa necessitate students to remain “seen but not heard” (Extract 1: turn 3). In the context of the teacher-student communicative relationship, the student learns to “ask the teacher that or challenge the teacher that I don’t agree” (Extract 1: turn 3). Similarly, Uiese Benet suggested that the communicative competence acquired by Samoan students in their primary socialisation “doesn’t necessarily work” in a classroom context which rewards the ability to “emphasise yourself, what you are saying, what you are on about” (Extract 2: turn 3).

In other words, differences in modes of social control between the fa’aSamoa and the schooling institution constitute different demeanours or dispositions. For Samoan students, the acquisition of school knowledge necessitates re-socialisation within modes of social control which differ from the communicative practices of the fa’aSamoa. The communicative principles of the fa’aSamoa with its distinctive respect language and principles of obedience socialises children to take the perspective or point of view of somebody higher in the rank system. In this communicative context, children learn that the path to knowledge is through listening, watching and serving those in higher ranked positions. By contrast, the pedagogy of the secular school encourages the individual accomplishment of tasks through questioning and challenging those in positions of authority, namely the teacher and other transmitters of knowledge. This is a crucial point. Acquisition of knowledge transmitted through the pedagogical relations of schooling necessitates a secondary socialisation into the communicative context of the individualised accomplishment of tasks. Like the disciplinary techniques of the fa’aSamoa, the disciplinary techniques of school pedagogy were designed to form a particular type of person. Hunter (1994: 78) argued that the pedagogy of the modern school system was centred “on the acquisition of conscience in a non-coercive classroom overseen by a sympathetic pastoral teacher.” Through the pastoral pedagogy, the classroom became a space to form the capacities required by individuals to conduct themselves as self-reflective and self-governing persons. Of crucial importance is that the capacities for the reflective person emerge only after individuals have been initiated into the techniques of self-problematisation and self-regulation. In other words, the discursive resources transmitted through the pedagogical relationship constitute a moral or regulative deportment. Thus, the capacity for self-reflection that is formed within the milieu of the school is a “highly specialised (and highly prestigious) comportment of the person” (Hunter, 1994: 82).

According to both women, differences in social relations between these communicative contexts can be realised in conflicting relations between students and teachers, and may produce conflicting internalised modes of ‘being somebody’. Sapeli Tapu talked about “problems with identity” experienced “amongst Samoan students themselves at school” in Samoa (Extract 1: turn 1). In addition, both women spoke of the ways in which teachers interpreted the communicative conventions of Samoan students in the classroom. Uiese Benet said: “the teachers think that the kids have something wrong with their ears, but they are taught to ... shut up and listen” (Extract 2: turn 3). Similarly, Sapeli Tapu stated: “the teacher
may take it as also (the student) doesn’t listen” (Extract 1: turn 5). Later in the interview, Sapeli Tapu elaborated on these points saying the way in which Samoan students “portray” themselves may be interpreted “in the school, teacher-pupil relationship ... as ... ‘I just don’t know if this kid has really got it’”. In the next section, data extracts relating to the ways in which para-educational personnel worked to mediate conflicting relations in the classroom are analysed.

Mediating Conflictual Relations: Easing the Process of Transition
In the following extract of data, Uiese Benet detailed aspects of her job as a teacher-aide and home-liaison officer.

(1) R. What are the main issues in education in a group like this?
(2) Uiese Benet: Well first of all I'm involved with ... the language. I don't teach. Um I assist the teachers in what the needs are and that's where I come in, as a back-up.
(3) R: Does that involve translation or?
(4) Uiese Benet: Translation (activities), um, as a co-person between the school and the home. Ah, some of the artwork, behaviour, and working in the classrooms.

In terms of her role as a "co-person between the school and the home", Uiese Benet talked about working with parents when "children are continuous in misbehaving in the school." She then discussed her pedagogic work in the classroom.

(5) R: What sorts of situations then, ah, cause you to be sort of a conciliator?
(6) Uiese Benet: I think it's out of concern. Um, personally I would like Samoan children to have a good performance in their behaviour at school. Um, I also take into account that they are just kids trying to survive as best they can in the school, um, so I also accept that they can be ill-behaviour, their ill-behaviour is part of their growing up and if a child keeps misbehaving then you have to take another further step, whatever the next step would be.
(7) R: What about the teachers? How are the kids getting on with the teachers in the schools?
(8) Uiese Benet: Most of them are okay, but sometimes they don't understand what is behind what the teacher is on about and then when they're stuck or misunderstanding a teacher's question, they get defiant, like "don't tell me what to do". Ah, they block out that way, so then the teachers will automatically translate that into misbehaving, not knowing that the kid is stuck. And this is what the children are telling me when I talk to them, "I don't like my maths teacher, she is too fast." And this is said to me in their language.

Clearly, Uiese Benet described the “ill-behaviour” of Samoan students in secondary schools as a normal part of “growing up”, and often “just kids trying to survive as best they can in school” (turn 6). She argued that when Samoan students "don't understand what is behind what the teacher is on about", they are likely to "get defiant, like don't tell me what to do." However, teachers often “automatically translated [defiant behaviour] into misbehaviour” (turn 8). At these times, she stepped in to resolve the conflict between teachers and Samoan students. Knowledge of Samoan language and culture assisted her to interpret the behaviour of Samoan students in ways that were not available to classroom teachers. In other words, while classroom teachers may read students "block out" behaviour as “misbehaviour”, Uiese Benet's knowledge of Samoan language and culture enabled her read this behaviour as “misunderstanding” (turn 8).

Uiese Benet suggested that her work in repairing pedagogic relations assisted Samoan/Pacific Islander students to acquire the discursive resources unequally distributed through schooling institutions. The pedagogical relationship, which Uiese Benet worked to repair, is constituted by a set of rules or principles
which structure the hierarchical organisation of the classroom (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Bernstein (1996) argued that the essence of the pedagogical relationship is to evaluate whether students have achieved the criteria made available either implicitly or explicitly. There are two forms of criteria made available to students in schooling institutions, namely, instructional criteria (how to solve this problem or that problem, or produce an acceptable piece of writing or speech), and regulative criteria (conduct, character and manner). Where students “block out” from acquiring instructional and regulative criteria because of a break-down in the pedagogical relationship, the teacher-aides at Sanunder and Newell work to repair the transmission process. Eventually, the students are expected to take over, explore and evaluate their own behaviour and that of relevant others in relation to the acquisition of skills and content (instructional criteria) and conduct, character and manner (regulative criteria). In other words, the aim is for the external structures of the pedagogical relationship, that is the principles of power and control, to become internalised in the students’ categories of thought, perception and desires, so that students can govern their own behaviour in relation to the acquisition of discursive resources (Bernstein, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996).

In addition to repairing “blocks” in the teacher-student relationship, the pedagogic work of para-educational personnel involved incorporating local community knowledge in school curricula. In the next section, the power and control relations pertaining to the inclusion of local family/community knowledge in official school curricula are discussed.

Privileging and Marginalising Effects: Incorporating Local Knowledge in School Curricula

In the following extracts of data, Sapeli Tapu and Ui ese Benet talked about aspects of Samoan culture incorporated within schooling institutions. Repeatedly through the interview, Ui ese Benet spoke about the ways in which she attempted to “raise the profile of the Samoan students” in the school community. One of the few legitimate avenues available to her in carrying out this work was from the position of “a cultural perspective.”

Extract 1:

(1) **Ui ese Benet:** …. as a Samoan in the school, um, I do storytelling, besides loaning money ((laughing)). I do storytelling in the cultural way, and I gather stories from around the island and with my own experience.

(2) **R:** So how, how is that organised when you go there? What happens?

(3) **Ui ese Benet:** Well it, it started from one school and then word gets around and then um, before long I'd get calls. I always tell stories with, with a moral behind it, if it's not spiritual moral or something behind the stories that I'm telling and that's where I'm also finding out as an adult the richness of the (Samoan stories), because we tend to just look at stories without what's behind it, and now living in a bi-cultural society, I'm finding that there is a richness behind all the stories and I enjoy telling them.

Ui ese Benet spoke about achieving the goal of “raising the profile of Samoan students” by getting students to participate in “story telling”, “cultural performances on important dates like Children’s International Week”, “art work” and “dancing”. However, aspects of Samoan culture that did not meet the approval of teachers were difficult to incorporate in schooling practices because as a contract/casual worker, Ui ese Benet held a dominated position within the social structures of the school. For example, she tried to organise a Samoan/Pacific Islander Parents and Citizens Committee at Newell School[11] on the grounds that parent participation was crucial to improving educational outcomes. Arguing that Samoan parents were alienated by the confrontational style of formalised committees, she tried to organise education meetings that incorporated Samoan communicative practices, but was told that every interest group would make similar demands which would be impossible for the school to meet. In addition, her position within the local Samoan community meant that she could only access and transmit certain forms of local knowledge or discursive resources in the school. Within the local Samoan community, Ui ese
Benet was not positioned within the sub-field or social "layer" of the chiefly class or the church hierarchy (she was not the wife of a Minister of Religion). These were the two groups within the field of the fa'aSamoa dominating power and control relations over the re/production of Samoan discursive resources. Consequently, Uiese Benet was not authorised/legitimated to appropriate and recontextualise aspects of Samoan discursive resources which were the preserve of the chiefly class, and/or class of religious ministers. Nonetheless, her authority or legitimacy in the school as a teacher-aide/home-liaison officer was based on the criteria of her membership within the Samoan community (Singh, 1995). Uiese Benet described her pedagogic work of “storytelling in the Samoan way”, "art work", and "translation" by recourse to her position of being “a Samoan in the school.” However, speaking from the position of "a Samoan in the school" caused some problems for Uiese Benet. For example, at times she questioned why Samoan parents might have been willing to accept some schooling practices of cultural inclusion, when these may have been at odds with practices in the local community.

I haven’t had any, any parent um, anti about the program at all. Although in the religious sense, they should not be dancing, but they’ve allowed their kids to be influenced by the goal of that project, they, they allow the kids to dance. That’s very interesting.

Uiese Benet suggested that some Samoan churches may not permit congregation members to participate in dancing — “in the religious sense, they should not be dancing.” Consequently, the introduction of dancing and other art forms, in the name of “raising the profile of Samoan students”, may have been at odds with the practices of some sectors/factions of the local Samoan community. Thus Uiese Benet’s pedagogic work in the school had the potential to set up marginalising relations for some Samoan students (Singh, 1997).

Where Uiese Benet discussed the conflicting and marginalising relations produced as a result of speaking from a culturally categorised position, “as a Samoan in the school”, Sapeli Tapu questioned the versions of Samoan-ness which constituted culturally categorised speaking positions. Rather than taking up the position of speaking as "a Samoan in the school”, Sapeli Tapu asked, "what is Samoan?" Through this process of questioning, Sapeli Tapu analysed the power and control relations structuring dominant and dominating speaking positions for Samoans within the field of education.

**Extract 2(a):**

Sapeli Tapu: … it’s hard to sort of conceptualise something that, "OK, ( ) Samoa, I’ve read all the stories, but what is Samoan?" Is it what I see every day, Dad sitting with a smoke and a beer and all the Samoan people coming on Saturday having a sit around and every night for poker? Is that Samoan? Is that my Samoan exposure, or is it what I hear at school about Margaret Mead or is it what I hear at school about, you know, the true, is it the culture? You know, it just depends on the version that you, that you relate to.

Imagining herself as a Samoan parent living in a low socio-economic area, Sapeli Tapu talked about how she would assist her child to access school knowledge. More precisely, Sapeli Tapu described the discursive and material resources that might enable Samoan students living in poverty to cross the symbolic boundaries between the family/local community and schooling institutions. Of significance, is the emphasis placed on social class relations, “I’m poor”, “I can’t speak English”, which unequally distribute the resources necessary to facilitate border crossing. Specifically, Sapeli Tapu detailed aspects of Samoan language and cultural practices which complemented the knowledge incorporated in school curricula. The acquisition of these resources in the primary contexts of socialisation would improve chances of acquiring the discursive resources distributed unequally through schooling institutions.

**Extract 2 (b):**

Sapeli Tapu: ... I say for myself ... I’m the parent and I’ve got this kid, I’m poor, I can’t take my kid to Samoa and I want my child to be fluent in my culture and also good in English.
With the little I know, um, I believe in literacy. I can’t speak English, so I teach my child to read Samoan right from the time when they know how to read or hold a book or write because I believe in that. And the Samoan, that is not so much of what you speak, but show your mind, you know, comprehend and assimilates all that. The change in the language and what you speak may take a hurdle, but your understanding and your comprehension, your process in understanding something is the same. You know, that’s why I go back to, you, your thinking process is the same, your aah familiarity at home (teaches you to reason) and how you relate them.

In these data extracts, Sapeli Tapu spoke about differences in the form and content of knowledge within Samoan cultural contexts, that is, differences between mundane knowledge acquired in everyday, local contexts ("what I see everyday"), and the esoteric or abstract thinking skills acquired in the formal institutions of schooling, religion and other contexts ("how to read or hold a book or write", "comprehend", "your process in understanding something", "your thinking process", "to reason"). The distinction between everyday and school knowledge is of the distinction between narrative and analytic discourses. Narrative discourses include everyday or common sense accounts of experiences of culture, identity and community. Uiese Benet incorporated the narrative discourses of "story telling in the cultural way" in her pedagogic work. Her objective in telling these stories was to transmit "morals", specifically to assist students with "how you grow up and with others." By contrast, Sapeli Tapu emphasised the importance of teaching Samoan students analytic skills. When asked about the intervention strategies that she might use to improve educational outcomes for Samoan students living in poverty, Sapeli Tapu argued that she would teach her child analytic skills which would ease the transition across the symbolic boundaries of home and school contexts. In other words, according to Sapeli Tapu the unequal distribution of the discursive resources of analytical skills made the symbolic borders of the family/community and the schooling institution impermeable for Samoan students living in poverty. Her strategy, if she were a Samoan parent living in poverty, would be to teach literacy skills in Samoan so that when her child entered school s/he would be in a position to acquire English literacy skills.

For Sapeli Tapu, teaching her child Samoan language was not solely for the purposes of retaining Samoan language and culture, but also, and crucially, to develop the abstract “thinking processes” of “understanding”, “comprehension” and learning “to reason” – acquisition of analytic discourses. Of importance here, was Sapeli Tapu’s analysis of the similarities in thinking processes across different language or knowledge formations. For example, she argued that the “change in the language” from Samoan in the home context to English in the school context “may take a hurdle” but the “process in understanding something is the same”. Thus, from her dominant position within the hierarchical structures of the local community (a qualified medical doctor), and the school (a cultural advisor in school curriculum committees and Education Department policy committees), Sapeli Tapu recognised the potential complementarity between local community and official school knowledge. She suggested that parents living in poverty could use the discursive (Samoan literacy), and material (books written in Samoan), resources at hand to contest the unequal distribution of resources generated by social class relations. The discursive resources acquired through these pedagogic relations in the family, may in turn, enable Samoan students living in poverty to access and acquire the resources unequally distributed through schooling.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of interview data in this paper revealed the potential colonising, complementary, conflicting, privileging and/or marginalising effects of pedagogic work undertaken by para-educational personnel. Five major findings emerged and are reported in the following discussion. First, Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet analysed similarities in the structuring of systems of cultural re/production in the fields of the fa’aSamoan and the field of education. The hierarchical structure of the rank system of the fa’aSamoan was delineated, and differences between three forms of discourse
articulated: common language, everyday language and the language of the chiefly class. Second, Sapeli Tapu and Uiese Benet distinguished between the respect and obedience language used in home and local community contexts, and the language practices in schooling institutions in Samoa and Australia. They argued that the schooling system promotes the individual accomplishment of tasks. By contrast, communicative practices in the Samoan home and community prioritise sociocentric forms of communication. Third, Uiese Benet detailed the ways in which she mediated conflictual relations in the classroom and thereby repaired pedagogical relations to ensure the successful transmission and acquisition of school knowledge. Fourth, Uiese Benet and Sapeli Tapu described aspects of local Samoan culture incorporated in schools in order to improve educational outcomes for Samoan students. Positioned as a teacher-aide/home liaison officer within the social division of labour of the schooling institution, Uiese Benet spoke of the story telling strategies, and art and dance forms that she recontextualised to “raise the profile of Samoan students”. The incorporation of narrative discourses from the Samoan community may celebrate traditional and/or exotic aspects of culture and identity. Moreover, these practices may inadvertently preclude Samoan students from accessing the analytical discourses transmitted by the school. By contrast, Sapeli Tapu spoke of similarities in the analytical discourses relayed through Samoan and English reading, writing, thinking and reasoning processes. She suggested that the educational outcomes of Samoan students could be improved if students acquired analytical skills through Samoan language and literacy practices in the home. The skills acquired in the formal pedagogic space of the home would assist students to acquire the discursive resources unequally distributed through schooling.

The findings reported in this paper are limited to the small number of para-educational personnel interviewed, and schools such as those described in the case study of Sanunder and Newell. However, the theories of pedagogic work employed in the study were developed to account for similarities in the structuring of social systems of cultural re/production. Transitions between home/community contexts of socialisation and school contexts have been a substantive focus of this sociological tradition (Bernstein, 1999; Muller & Taylor, 1995). Hence it is suggested that the social constructions which the detailed analysis revealed are unlikely to be local. Rather, they raise important questions for educators and para-educational personnel working in low socio-economic areas to meet the diverse needs of their student clientele.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Funding for this study was provided by the Australian Research Council (1996-1998). (File Number A79601654)

REFERENCE LIST:


All of the names given to places, schools, and people in the following analysis are pseudonyms. All of the information reported in this section is taken from field notes collected on site in 1996, 1997 and 1998. All four schools involved in this research project are government-funded educational institutions situated in an outer suburban low socio-economic area of an Australian city. According to school administrators, many of the families in the area experience difficulty meeting the costs associated with public education such as the purchase of school uniforms, textbooks, school excursion fees, and other school contribution schemes. Data were collected using participant observation, interviews (administrators, teachers, teacher-aides, students, parents and community members), and audio-recordings of classroom lessons.

Bureau of Statistics (1996 Census) Unemployment Figures for 15-24 year olds. The general figure for unemployment in the region is 21.7%.

This quotation is taken from a local community newspaper. Conventional academic referencing procedures have not been followed here in order to preserve the anonymity of the case study school.

In the Australian state in which this study was conducted students obtain a junior certificate after completion of the compulsory years of schooling (Years 1-10). The absentee rates of some of the students at 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 of the subjects.

Studies by T. Graves et al. (1982) and A. Jones (1991) reported similar low educational achievement rates for Samoan/Pacific Islander students in New Zealand secondary schools.

The following transcription conventions are used in the data extracts.

[overlap or interruption
thaː at extended vowel or consonant
bold emphasis
? interrogative or upward intonation
(talk) uncertain transcription
( ) untranscribable
….. beginning or continuation of talk omitted
2 interview turn number.
R Interviewer
[teachers] clarification

In the highly stratified Samoan community orators or talking chiefs, the tulafale, are ranked under the ali’ipa’ia, sacred chiefs, and the ali’I, the titular chiefs.

Talking chiefs refers to the orators who are ranked under the titular chiefs.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was a non-denominational Protestant organisation whose main objective was to spread Christianity among unenlightened nations. The Congregational Church provided most of the financial support for the LMS.

The interviewer was of Indian ethnicity, hence, the reference to the Indian caste system.

By contrast, Sanunder School had set up a Polynesian Parents and Citizens group and had given one religious group use of the school hall for weekend religious services. In addition, a Polynesian education committee comprising a “couple from Fiji, and three elders from the Tongan community and two ministers from the Samoan community and one father” (Peone Avao) had been established. The purpose of this group was to assist the home liaison officer to deal with discipline problems. “The ministers come and walk around the school” on those occasions when the home liaison officer needed assistance with managing student conflicts.
(Peone Avao).