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Early education : experiences and perceptions of minority group parents and young children

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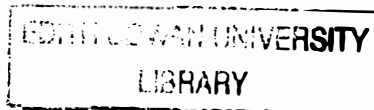
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**EARLY EDUCATION : EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF
MINORITY GROUP PARENTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN**

BY

Judith Candy BEd (Hons)

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

Doctor of Philosophy

At the Faculty of Community Services, Education, and Social Sciences

Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission : 19th March 2004

ABSTRACT

In Australia there has been little research into the experiences and perceptions of education of parents from different minority groups whose young children attend school in this country. This study investigated the experiences that overseas born parents from Non-English speaking backgrounds have of their own and their children's education in countries outside Australia, experiences of their children's early education in Australia, as well as those of their young children between 6 and 9 years of age attending school in this country. Despite marked differences in educational policies and practices operating in the participants' countries of origin, almost all parents in this study had experiences of education in childhood which were unlikely to be conducive to the building of warm and friendly future relationships with teachers and schools. Feelings of fear and hostility due to the extremely formal rote methods, repressive discipline, and harsh corporal punishment administered by authoritarian and often cruel teachers, particularly in early primary years, were consistently described as pervasive elements in the education of most of the parents participating. In contrast, many aspects of education in Australia were regarded as superior, however unsatisfactory communication, lack of awareness and interest demonstrated by schools and teachers meant that many of these parents also had negative experiences of education in this country. Dissatisfaction with their children's progress resulting in feelings of powerlessness due to the perceived lack of information, concerns about insufficient academic rigour, motivation and discipline were a source of anxiety for many participants. Discussions with the young children of participants revealed their preferences for non academic activities outside the classroom, and those involving creativity and/or motor skills. Children's dislikes related mainly to relationships with their peer group, with difficulties in making /retaining friendships, bullying and racism as issues of concern. Relationships with teachers seemed to be both positive and negative, however little help with problems concerning the peer group seemed forthcoming, and minimal evidence of positive affirmation of the cultural and linguistic differences of these children was noted. Recommendations and implications include the need for teachers and schools to develop more cultural awareness in order to understand the differing perspectives of linguistically

and culturally diverse families, and appreciate the role that parents' prior experiences of education play in the formation of attitudes towards their children's education. The importance of improving relationships, building authentic collaborative partnerships between teachers and minority group parents, and providing more information about school goals and programmes with opportunities to discuss these freely, is stressed. The use of overseas born parents' expertise and home experiences both as resources to facilitate optimum outcomes for their children, and a means of increasing respect, understanding and trust between linguistically and culturally diverse families and the "mainstream" school population, is also strongly recommended.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference; is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature :

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Date :

19th March 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I should like to gratefully acknowledge the interest, and patience demonstrated by all the participants involved in this research study, and the help and support given by my supervisors during the lengthy process involved, without whom this undertaking would not have come to fruition.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background To The Study

At the beginning of the twenty first century, changes are occurring in the populations of most countries world wide. The ease of modern travel and desire for a better life have resulted in an increase in numbers of people taking up residence in foreign countries, for such reasons as employment, education, better opportunities or political upheaval (Cahill, 1996; Candy, 1997; Victory, 1995). This has resulted in an increase in minority groups who have little in common with the majority population of the countries in which they settle, and presents a challenge to education systems, policy makers, and teachers who are required to provide for minority group children as well as those who are perceived as “mainstream” (Candy, 1997; Hodgkinson, 2000; Osborne, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull, 2001).

However, education systems in Western countries including Australia, have been increasingly regarded by many authors as “deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations” (McLaren, 1994, p.178) in which the dominant culture structures its hegemonic practices to shape the responses of children and parents in order to enable them to fit in with “mainstream” beliefs thus subordinating any alternate “world views” (McLaren, 1994).

Furthermore, research in education is seen as also imbued with Western views and understandings which are imposed through eurocentric and privileged cultural and social constructs based on Western assumptions and life experiences (Grieshaber, 2001; Soto & Swadener, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001; Viruru, 2001). Moreover, the origins of research are linked to earlier notions and practices derived from Western imperialism and the colonisation of Indigenous peoples and territories, in which power remained in the hands of the European colonisers. These colonisers viewed the local inhabitants and their ways of life as scientific “curiosities” to be studied and/or collected in the same way that botanists

and zoologists of the time regarded their specimens. They demonstrated no understanding of rights or responsibility towards these “others” who were regarded as “inferior” beings (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). These ideas, and views of the innate “superiority” of European knowledge and cultures have led to the imposition of colonial governments and systems including that of education. “Other” cultures were “civilised” and subjugated to European knowledge, languages, standards and Western ways. This resulted in devaluing and making invisible the knowledge and practices of the Indigenous and powerless populations, by means such as brutal discipline, exclusion and marginalisation (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001; Viruru, 2001).

Modern educational research is seen as retaining much of the inequitable tradition of colonial times. Power is still retained by the researchers, the majority of whom are from the dominant “mainstream” culture. Many of these researchers have drawn their inferences using quantitative “scientific” methods which establish “norms” and generalisations based on Western culturally biased concepts from their own mainstream “outsider” perspectives (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). Furthermore, little consideration has been given to the dynamics of power sharing and negotiation, whereby participants are involved in a more democratic form of research design, which is particularly important in research with disadvantaged groups, cultural minorities and children (Grieshaber, 2001; Soto & Swadener, 2002).

Moreover the use of research based on Western “norms” and assumptions of “mainstream” majority group researchers results invariably in a “deficit model” whereby those who do not “fit” the prescribed eurocentric definition are seen as “deficient” and “disadvantaged” and further marginalised within the hegemonic society (Grieshaber, 2001). The need for consideration of “insider” in contrast to the traditional “outsider” perspectives used in earlier educational research, is stressed by authors such as Tuhiwai Smith (2001) and Soto & Swadener (2002). “Insider” research emphasises the importance of recognising there are “multiple ways of knowing” (p.38) beyond the European traditions of early childhood research, and the dangers of “universalist” assumptions in methods, concepts, theoretical underpinnings and designs (Grieshaber, 2001; Soto & Swadener, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001).

This research study is presented from the unique perspective of a researcher who can lay claim to an understanding of the position of being an “outsider” in mainstream society, as one who has been keenly aware of this since early childhood. The child of a “mixed” marriage, with one parent of Eastern European Non-Christian background, I was born and educated in Scotland. The feeling of being an outsider because many of my relatives were different from the majority mainstream population in Scotland, was reinforced upon migration to this country as a child with an accent which was not Australian and cultural ways which differed from the “norm.” In addition, upon arrival in Australia at 12 years of age I was forced to change my hand writing in primary school, and suffered greatly in secondary school, feeling compelled to consciously alter my accent within 12 months to avoid the teasing and derision of my Australian school mates.

Although trained as an early childhood teacher in Australia, my early experiences and the common bond I share as a parent with experiences of my own children’s education in Australia and overseas, has facilitated my understanding and enabled the development of empathetic relationships between myself and the overseas born culturally diverse parents in this study who have entrusted me with the expression of their points of view, experiences and concerns regarding education.

Research presents itself as a mechanism which aims to discover and/or collect hitherto undetected knowledge or view points. Quantitative and qualitative research are two completely differing approaches to this process (Burns, 2000; Hughes, 2001). Quantitative research studies aim to measure and ascertain cause and effect, using strict experimental controls to present an objective picture of the subject which can then be validated on replication by other researchers, and eliminate any subjective distortions due to researcher prejudices or interests. The methods used involve mathematical measurements, statistical analysis and techniques, and manipulation of variables (Burns, 2000; Harrison, 2001; Rolfe & MacNaughton, 2001).

The information produced in such positivist research frameworks are expressed mathematically and are often obtained by the use of questionnaires in which the answers are scored according to a predetermined scale imposed by either the researcher or other external sources, using assumptions based on objectivity, generalisability, reliability, and the ability to be reduced to specific variables (Davis, Nakayama & Martin, 2000; Harrison, 2001). The value of research designs of this quantitative nature lies mainly in their ability to survey large scale samples and make generalisations derived from the findings which can then be applied to the wider community (Harrison, 2001). Quantitative research in education is seen as reinforcing the oppression derived from the hegemonic colonial traditions prevalent in the past (McLaren, 1994; Grieshaber, 2001; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001) limiting our ability to understand the realities of the lived experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse families in Australia and thus develop education systems which are more conducive to their needs (Soto & Swadener, 2002; Viruru, 2001).

In contrast, research studies which use a qualitative approach are not concerned with measurement but aim to discover the meanings and importance of issues to individuals by concentrating on exploring the understandings and perceptions of participants (Burns, 2000; Hughes, 2001). An interpretive approach to research seeks to uncover how individuals interpret the world they live in and the meanings they derive from social interactions and experiences. By so doing, this approach enables the researcher to gain valuable insights into the unique perspectives and world views of the individual, which are formed as a result of their differing lived experiences, contexts, and personal histories (Burns, 2000; Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Davis, Nakayama & Martin, 2000; Denzin, 1992; Soto & Swadener, 2002; Van Manen, 1990).

The forms and conceptual framework that help to give voice to the voiceless... redefine our co-created meanings and knowledge of the other (Davis, Nakayama & Martin, 2000, p.531).

This form of qualitative and interpretive research with its emphasis on understanding the “lived” experiences and perceptions of participants from their own perspective, is seen as the only appropriate way to undertake this investigation into the experiences that parents from culturally diverse backgrounds have of their own and their children's education both

overseas and in Australia, as it facilitates exploration of the participants' perspectives without the imposition of hegemonic colonial frameworks or expectations on their views, understandings and how these are communicated (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993; Van Manen, 1990)

The value of an interpretive/ experiential method is that people engage each other by disclosing cultural experiences that cut to the centre of human existence (Davis, Nakayama & Martin, 2000, p.533).

Research studies in countries such as Canada, USA, Britain, Europe, and Australia, aim to provide insights into the experiences and problems of these minority groups living in "mainstream" society. However much of the attention in the past has concentrated on the academic achievement of children from different minority groups, discrepancies in educational outcomes and the attitudes of different cultural groups, which are regarded as important in determining educational outcomes (August & Hakuta, 1998; Board of Children & Families, 1995; Feng, 1994; Huang, 1993; Ogbu, 1995 a,b,c; Osborne, 2001).

The influence of culture, which is seen as the "complete design for living"(Waldrip & Fisher, 1995, p.1) and "sum total of ways of living" including ways of "knowing" and "viewing" the world (Owen, 1989, cited in Irvine & York,1995, p.489; Trumbull et al., 2001), cannot be overestimated in children's education (Bempechat, 1998; Clark, 1995; Erickson, 2003; King,1995; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Subramanian,1996), due to the "interaction of linguistic, socio-cultural and cognitive knowledge and experiences" (Garcia, 1993, p.380). Furthermore, the important influences of home environments, parental and family involvement in education, are stressed by authors such as Allexaht-Snyder (1995), Cullingford (1995), Kellaghan et al.(1993) and Trumbull et al.(2001), who regard these as vital factors in the facilitation of children's learning, development and educational achievement, in diverse as well as mainstream communities, findings which are also echoed by August & Hakuta (1998), Bermudez (1993), Chavkin (1993), Kalantis, Gurney & Cope (1993), McBeth (1993), Moles (1993) and Osborne (1995, 2001).

The experiences parents have had in the past, including those with teachers and schools, both as a child and a parent, play an important part in influencing the development of their

beliefs and attitudes towards education in general, and that of their children in particular (Cullingford, 1995; Evans & Myers, 1998; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Subramanian, 1996; Valsiner & Litinovic, 1996). However, a conflict between the views and attitudes of many parents and teachers has been noted by authors such as Allexsacht-Snider (1995), Ebbeck & Glover (1998), Finders & Lewis (1994), Kalantis, Gurney & Cope (1992), Tomlinson (1993), Trumbull et al(2001). Furthermore, studies of the processes of parent involvement in the past have found the relationships of schools and teachers with parents and families, to be mainly “tokenistic” and lacking in “genuine” partnerships, especially with non “mainstream” and disadvantaged groups (Crump, 1996; Hinde McLeod, 1994; Howard, 1994; Powell,1991).

Research, both overseas and in Australia, on home-school links seems to indicate that teachers’ views of parents, particularly those from minority groups, are predominantly negative, regarding parents and their involvement as an additional “problem” (Bermudez, 1993; Cullingford, 1996; Giles, 2002; Gougeon, 1993; Treppte, 1994). Such attitudes are cause for concern, indicating a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity towards differences in the cultural backgrounds, languages, beliefs and values of families from minority group backgrounds and their children (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1992; Sims & Omaji, 1999; Treppte, 1994).

Apart from the emphasis on ascertaining reasons for academic success or lack of achievement within different cultural groups (August & Hakuta, 1998; Ogbu, 1995a,b,c; Osborne, 2001; Sui, 1993) and teachers’ concerns about “negative” influences of parents and home environments mainly in older children, little attention has been paid to research on the families of young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Board of Children & Families, 1995; Hutson, 1991) particularly within Australia. There has also been little investigation of perspectives of parents and families from backgrounds which differ from those of the mainstream population, including both their experiences and perceptions of the education of young children. Therefore, a need for more studies in this area is indicated, as part of research into the vital “overlapping spheres of influence” of home and school which is advocated by Epstein (1992, 1997), Hidalgo et al., (1995 p.499).

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions that overseas born parents of young children have of education and/or schooling, including those as a child and as the parent of a young child at school in Australia, and also the experiences and perceptions that their children have of school. By so doing, it is hoped that this study will assist in the development of a greater understanding of the differing perspectives of linguistically and culturally different families from diverse backgrounds and their young children thus facilitating their education and achievement in Australian schools and society.

Significance of the Study

With the increasing diversity of the population occurring in Australia, as elsewhere in the world, many more children from diverse minority groups are entering our schools and education systems. As these institutions are based on “mainstream” Anglo-Celtic Christian cultural heritage, increasing problems and difficulty in achieving satisfactory academic outcomes for all students have resulted, due to the inherent nature of the cultural differences between minority groups and the majority population (August & Hakuta, 1998; Fields, 2000; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Howard, 1999; Krupinski & Burrows, 1986; Moore, 1999; Ogbu, 1995a; Osborne, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001; Victory, 1995).

The assumptions of some educators that all children have common prior knowledge and experiences upon which to base education (Ebbeck & Glover, 1998; Fields, 2000) are seen as no longer valid, due to the vastly differing cultures, knowledge and languages experienced by minority group children in their home and family environment, as a result of the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and values of their parents (Clark, 1995; Ebbeck & Glover, 1998; Fields, 2000; Garcia, 1993; Osborne, 1995, 2001).

Authors such as Ogbu (1995a) and Trueba & Zou (1994) stress the importance of these prior experiences of children in education:

What children bring to school; their communities' cultural models or understandings of 'social realities' and the educational strategies they and their families use or do not use in seeking education, is as important as within school factors (Ogbu, 1995a, p.538).

In addition, the importance of the role of children's social interaction with adults and older peers in the "culturally meaningful" learning of the ways of thought and behaviour of the culture in which they live, is stressed by Vygotsky (1978) in his theory of "socio-cultural development", which emphasises this "natural unity between socio-cultural and cognitive phenomena" (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Trueba & Zou, 1994, p.172).

The important role of culture in education is also stressed by many authors including Bempechat (1998), Bruner (1996), Kupersmidt & Martin (1997), Lubeck (1994), Lynch (1998), Osborne (2001), Owen & Razaq (1996), Pang (1995) and Sui (1993). While Ogbu (1995c, p.293) maintains the way that minority groups interpret their differences from the majority culture, determines therefore whether education is looked on as "additive" (ie. a challenge to be overcome for future wellbeing) or "subtractive" (ie. a threat to the cultural identity), thus affecting attitudes, motivation, achievement and educational outcomes. He suggests this "cultural frame of reference" can result in the possible development of "oppositional" behaviour and values to that of the school - "cultural inversion" and the resulting alienation of the child, which Cullingford (1995) stresses may result in the "undermining [of] the achievement of the pupil and the success of the teacher" (p.105). The important influence of home and family on children's learning and academic success is stressed by Macbeth (1993), Epstein (1992) and Hidalgo et al. (1995):

That substantial proportion of children's learning which happens outside school ... in the home, especially in the early years ... reinforced by consistency of contact and natural bonding has a powerful influence especially on attitudes which are learnt (Macbeth, 1993, p.35-36).

Families are important for children's learning, development and school success students do better have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved (Epstein, 1992, p.1141).

Studies also indicate that parental involvement practices can compensate for a lower level of education or smaller family income to the benefit of children (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995):

Families can compensate for lack of material or economic resources ... draw on their strengths to develop supportive relationships with their children, and monitor and guide their child's education (Hidalgo et al., 1995, p.499).

The increasing interest in the important influence of the family in education and the need for “quality” home-school links has led to calls for more research on the effects of these “overlapping spheres of influence” of home and school on children who are “the main reason for home -school partnerships” (Hidalgo et al., 1995, p.499). This emphasis is seen as all the more important in the light of the negative attitudes of teachers and schools towards parents, especially those from minority groups, noted by authors such as Bermudez (1993) and Giles (2002). Teachers predominantly seem to hold a view that cultural differences are “handicaps”, and those with different beliefs are “associated with deficiency and deviance” (Treppte, 1994, p.12). Therefore many parents are viewed as requiring “teaching” to help their children overcome the “disadvantage” of home (August & Hakuta, 1998; Cullingford, 1996; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1992; McGee Banks, 2003).

Authors such as Cullingford (1995), Finders & Lewis (1994) and McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Subramanian (1996) stress that experiences such as these can have a profound effect on the formation of parents’ attitudes which result from both their own school experiences and relationships with educators over many years, some of which may act as barriers to contact with schools and teachers (Salinas Sosa, 1996). Barriers can result if parents, especially those from minority groups, feel they are judged by their ethnic origins, language and socio-economic status, and thus not valued (Salinas Sosa, 1996).

Furthermore, conflicting views and attitudes of teachers and parents, noted by Allezsacht-Snyder (1995), August & Hakuta (1998), Ebbeck & Glover (1998), Trumbull et al. (2001), which demonstrate considerable divergence between the two groups, indicate a potential source of difficulty in facilitating the education of young children, and emphasise the need for reappraisal of the role of family and home in the development of learning and academic success (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1992; Tomlinson, 1993).

Studies of parent involvement programmes, still mostly seen as a “necessary evil” by teachers and schools both overseas and in Australia, have found many to be far from satisfactory (Bermudez, 1993; Chavkin, 1993; Sanchez, 1995; Scott-Jones, 1993). Within Australia, the need for more research on parent and family involvement from groups which have been “marginalised” is stressed by Osborne (1995) and emphasised further by Singh & Osborne (2001), while authors such as Arthur (1996), Crump (1996), and Howard (1994) maintain that the results of surveys on home-school relationships and parent involvement in general, indicate mainly “pseudo- participation” resulting in the dissatisfaction of parents and their “alienation” from the school system (Arthur, 1996; Crump, 1996; Howard, 1994; Osborne, 1995, 2001; Singh & Osborne, 2001). These findings are cause for concern, as the feelings and attitudes of dissatisfaction with their relationships and experiences of schools and teachers felt by parents in general, may have an even more negative effect in minority group families influencing attitudes towards school and motivation of their children towards education. The result may be the development of “oppositional” attitudes, which Ogbu (1995 b, c) maintains can affect academic achievement in minority groups.

Most of the studies on the education of minority children and their families in Australia have drawn their samples from older primary and secondary school groups (Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1993). One study located, by Ebbeck & Glover (1998) involved investigating the attitudes of minority group parents of young children regarding education, but used an empirical approach. It is important to explore the perspectives of parents and families of young children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds regarding education, as their attitudes, experiences and cultural heritage can influence the wellbeing and educational achievement of their children in Australia. Thus there is an urgent need for more research involving the investigation of minority parents’ experiences, as well as their attitudes, beliefs and philosophies, on the subject of education and schooling, as these are important factors in the “overlapping spheres of influence” of home and school (Hidalgo et al., 1995, p.499), which can lead to the facilitation of mutually supportive environments and the enhancement of learning and development for young children from culturally diverse backgrounds (Epstein, 1992, 1997; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Ogbu, 1995a; Scott-Jones, 1993).

Research Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions that overseas born minority group parents have of education and/or schooling, both in their own childhood and as the parent of a young child at school in Australia, and also the experiences and perceptions that these children have of school.

Research Questions

1. What lived experiences of education and/ or schooling outside Australia, have minority group parents of young children attending school in Australia had, both during their own childhood and as a parent?
2. What are these minority group parents' lived experiences and perceptions of the education/schooling of their young children in Australia?
3. What experiences and perceptions do these young children have of school in Australia?

Definition of Terms

- Early childhood : Children between 0 and 9 years of age.
- Young children : Children between 5 and 9 years of age.
- Minority group parent : Parent born and educated in a non-English speaking country and whose first language is not English.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

Introduction

The function of the literature review in this research study is primarily as that of a baseline and starting point, providing both the “stimulus” and means of ascertaining which aspects of education involving young minority group children and their families have been extensively explored, and which have not (Burns, 1995). As a result therefore, it is quite brief compared with the literature reviews of research studies which use differing conceptual and methodological frameworks. The approach used in this study to explore the lived experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse parents and children, was that of an interpretive and descriptive paradigm which was combined with a phenomenological focus to facilitate the discovery of “deeper insights” into the perspectives of participants (Maggs Rapport, 2000 p4). In this type of approach, a preliminary understanding which is “highly developed” (Maggs Rapport, 2000, p.4) is seen as less necessary than in other types of methodology (Burns, 1995; Maggs Rapport, 2000; Van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, an emphasis is placed on the importance of maintaining creativity and “openness” to permit the exploration of themes that have not always been anticipated, which may emerge from discussions with participants (Van Manen, 1990, p.162). Therefore, the use of additional relevant literature will be ongoing as themes are uncovered during the research process.

A certain openness is required ... that allows for choosing directions and exploring techniques procedures and sources that are not always foreseeable at the onset of a research project (Van Manen, 1990, p.162)

An initial examination of the literature from the United States, Britain, Europe and Australia reveals that concerns regarding the education of minority group children are evident throughout the western world. The main focus of interest noted was on educational outcomes, discrepancies in academic achievement, and problems related to the differences in cultural backgrounds and languages of minority groups in mainstream society.

United States

Research in the United States has focused on the academic achievement of differing minority groups (Olneck, 1995), reasons for educational success or underachievement, (Rivera-Batiz, 1996), aspirations and attitudes of parents and families (Sui, 1993), and the effects of differences of cultural background and languages on learning and development of minority children in American schools (August & Hakuta, 1998; Bempechat, 1998; Ogbu, 1995a; Rumbaut, 1996).

Emphasis is also given to the important influence of parents and family, as the source of minority children's prior knowledge and experiences, which due to their differing cultural backgrounds may not correspond to the expectations of schools and teachers, resulting in lack of acceptance and clashes between cultures (Garcia, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Research has demonstrated the importance of valuing and utilising these understandings and knowledge of children and their families and the influence of parents as "significant educators", as well as the vital role of parent involvement in the facilitation of educational outcomes (Bermudez, 1993; Chavkin, 1993; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Quintero, 1994). As a result, increasing interest in the role of the home and family as powerful influences on the child's development, learning, and subsequent school achievement, has emphasised by authors such as Delgado-Gaitan (1990), Epstein (1992, 1997), Moles (1993), Rich (1993), Stevens, Hough & Nurss (1993).

The positive attitudes of parents, including those from minority groups has been noted, in contrast to the "deficit" view of parents, families, and communities prevalent among teachers and schools (Bermudez, 1993; Giles, 2002). Negative communication and lack of "meaningful" contact between parents and schools has been seen as contributing to misconceptions and resulting "alienation" of families, parent "apathy" and a widening gap between home and school (Bermudez, 1993; Chavkin, 1993; Davies, 1993; Trumbull et al., 2001). As a result the need for more research on home-school links and "overlapping spheres of influence" of home and school is stressed (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995), particularly with minority groups and the young children who make up over half of the

foreign migrants arriving in the United States (Rumbaut, 1996; Salinas Sosa, 1996).

Britain

Studies from Britain stress the concerns of Japanese and Muslim parents in particular regarding the problems experienced by their children in British schools, and their differing educational perspectives. Many of these parents still wish their children to retain the values, language and cultural heritage of their communities, while also availing themselves of the knowledge and skills necessary to function in modern mainstream society (Mizochi & Dolan, 1994; Owen & Razaq, 1996; Woods, Boyle & Hubbard, 1999).

The dominant theme emerging from the literature on parents' ideas about education, reveals that all parents want the best for their children and have high aspirations and expectations of their schooling but know little about what happens in schools (Cullingford, 1996; Tomlinson, 1993; Woods, Boyle & Hubbard, 1999). In addition, much of the literature emphasises the importance of understanding children in a family context, and the role parents and families play in the learning, development and formation of attitudes in young children (Cullingford, 1995, 1996; McBeth 1993). Authors such as Kelly & Cohn (1988, cited in Candy, 1997) and Cullingford (1992, 1994) stress the value of talking to children about their concerns. Cullingford maintains : "Children like to talk about what they think ... their own experiences are burning issues" (Cullingford, 1992, p.9).

Little change has been found in attitudes of schools and teachers towards parents, despite some more positive views in the 1980s, which saw parents as "partners" in education. Teachers and parents are seen to remain in "two separate worlds" (Hughes, 1996, p.107) in which, due to lack of communication, teachers are ignorant of parents' perspectives and their desire for information to help their children and still hold erroneous perceptions of "parent apathy." Parents in turn, are frustrated and alienated by these negative attitudes of family "inadequacies" resulting in difficulties and conflicts with teachers and schools, due to their differing perspectives (Cullingford, 1996; Hughes, 1996; Wolfendale, 1992).

Research demonstrating the important influence of parents on children's academic achievement, has led to the need for rethinking of attitudes towards parents and families, and the development of "mutual interest" and genuine partnerships between parents and teachers, homes and schools, in order to improve educational outcomes and facilitate academic progress, especially in minority group children (Cullingford, 1996; Wolfendale, 1992; Woods, Boyle & Hubbard, 1999).

Europe

The emphasis in Holland is one of concern about the potential development of a "permanent underclass" in society due to declining educational standards and lack of mainstream language skills in immigrant and minority group children (Dreissen, 1995). In Germany, misinterpretations of "cultural minorities as a problem or group of people with problems" are seen as perpetuating inequality in education, due to "cultural arrogance" of professionals out of step with current theory (Treppte, 1994, p.13). Widely differing "lifestyles" of parents and teachers, and the middle class "orientation" of education can isolate teachers from minority group families, thus they need to learn to value diverse attitudes, and lifestyles and avoid questioning the validity of ways different from their own (Treppte, 1994). Javo et al. (2003) draws attention to challenges facing Sami families in Norway due to differing parental values and culture from the "mainstream" population.

Australia

Examination of the literature from Australia reveals a similar focus to other countries in the emphasis on the education of minority group children, including the recognition of the role of differing cultural backgrounds and circumstances on the young child's learning and development; experiences and perceptions of young migrant children in Australian schools; and the important influence of parents and families on educational outcomes (Candy, 1997; Osborne, 1995; SEETRC, 1996).

The aspirations, attitudes, and parent involvement of minority groups have also been a focus, both prior to and during the early 1990s (Cahill, 1996; Kalantis, 1993) while later studies have emphasised the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and practices (Ebbeck & Baohm, 1999; Fields, 2000; Osborne, 1995), home - school links, and parent - teacher relationships (Arthur, 1996; Crump, 1996; Howard, 1994; Hinde McLeod, 1994; Robinson & Timperly, 1999; Wilks, 2000). Research findings indicate continuing problems related to the increasing isolation of schools in general from the families and the communities that they are supposed to serve (Arthur, 1996), negative attitudes of schools and teachers towards parents, particularly from minority groups, as well as concerns of parents about their children's future (Sims & Omaji, 1999) and disappointment with the existing parent-teacher and home-school partnerships (Hinde McLeod, 1994; Howard, 1994).

Parental expectations and priorities regarding preschool education compared with those of their teachers, have been explored by Ebbeck & Glover (1998), in a study involving the parents of young children from differing cultural backgrounds. In this research, differences in attitudes were found between the various cultural groups, as well as between parents and teachers, some groups ranking academic learning as a higher priority than others (Ebbeck & Glover, 1998). However, the methodology used was largely quantitative, with parents and teachers asked to rank a series of prescribed items in order of importance to them. The lived experiences and perceptions of the minority group parents of young children regarding education have not been extensively explored, particularly from a qualitative perspective.

It is of vital importance to discover the issues that are of foremost significance to minority group parents. Too often educators determine, without consultation with parents, the objectives, attitudes, and values that will be pursued at school. This study seeks to address this neglected area in the research literature by investigating the experiences and perceptions of minority group parents of young children, in order to facilitate understanding of their perspectives on the education of their children. By so doing, it is hoped to improve the opportunities for the development of genuine educational "partnerships" and curtail the disturbing trend of continuing "marginalisation" due to "tokenism" and "pseudo - participation" in relationships between parents and families and their children's schools

and teachers (Arthur, 1996; Cahill, 1996; Howard, 1994; Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999; Osborne, 1995).

Main Themes

The main themes emerging from the literature on the education of minority group children include the increasing diversity in cultures and experiences of children in “mainstream” schools and society (August & Hakuta, 1998; Board of Children & Families, 1995; Osborne, 1995, 2001; Singh, 1998), and recognition of these children as “products” of a family and home environment (Burton, 1992). This environment is the source of important learning and development occurring within a cultural and family “framework”, which has developed as a result of the experiences and cultural background of the parents and family members (Clark, 1995; Ogbu, 1995b; Wolfendale, 1992). The influence of parents and family, including those with little formal education and low incomes, is an important factor in both the development of children’s attitudes and motivation, and the facilitation of positive educational outcomes and academic success (Cullingford, 1995, 1996; Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1992; Kellaghan et al., 1993).

The attitudes of parents, who value education and want the best for their children, contrasts with the attitudes of schools and teachers towards parents and families, especially those from minority groups, conflicting views, and difficulties in parent-teacher relationships and home-school links (Cullingford, 1996; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Giles, 2002; McBeth, 1993). These factors and the resulting unsatisfactory experiences of parents and families, may in turn lead to the development of negative attitudes towards teachers and education, which may be transmitted to the child, resulting in the formation of “oppositional” attitudes towards school and alienation, thus undermining academic achievement (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Cullingford, 1995; Harris, 1996; Ogbu, 1995c; Osborne, 2001; Zubia & Doll, 2002). Cullingford (1995) maintains : “When school becomes an alien culture, an alternative culture is set up in the peer group and a different set of values defined” (p.105).

Parental experiences and attitudes can vitally affect the development, learning and attitudes of their children, particularly in the early childhood years. Therefore, an understanding of the perspectives of parents and families is necessary for all those who work with minority group children and their families, both in school and the wider community (Board of Children & Families, 1995; Cullingford, 1995,1996; Lubeck, 1994; Quintero, 1994).

Summary

Research on the education of minority group children has mainly concentrated on the discrepancies in educational outcomes and academic achievement between differing minority groups, the reasons for academic success or under achievement, and the attitudes and concerns about parents and home environments held by schools and teachers. There has been little attention paid to the investigation of young children and families from linguistically and culturally diverse groups, and in particular the lived experiences that non “Anglo” parents have of their own education and their children's schooling as well as the issues that are of vital importance to them, and can influence their attitudes towards the education of their children in Australia.

It is important for educators and all those who work with young children in schools or education systems to become aware of the differing perspectives of families from non-English speaking backgrounds, and recognise the importance of early experiences of education and schooling in the formation of attitudes in both parents and children. Therefore this study aims to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of minority group parents in relation to their own childhood education, and the education of their young children. By so doing it is hoped to facilitate understanding of the experiences and perspectives of minority group parents, thus enabling the development of mutually supportive and co-operative relationships between teachers, schools and minority group families, as an important means of facilitating positive educational outcomes for young minority group children in Australia.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework in this research study uses an interpretative approach influenced by Symbolic Interactionism, which historically originates from the social and sociological aspects of psychology in the USA, and can be defined as the construction of meaning through social interaction (Denzin, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). This approach was first proposed by Blumer (1969) who felt that meaning had long been regarded as unimportant, and therefore “ignored or played down ... taken for granted,” (p.2) despite the emphasis placed on the various other factors thought to be the cause of human behaviour. Symbolic Interactionism was therefore suggested as an approach in which “the meanings that things have for human beings are central in their own right” (p.3) as a means to overcome what Blumer (1969) regarded as the “grievous neglect of the role of meaning in the formation of behaviour” (p.3).

The three main tenets of this approach state firstly, that individuals “act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p.2). Secondly, that meanings result from social interactions, and finally the modification of meanings arises from a process of interpretation “constructed” as individuals interact with each other (Blumer, 1969; Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Denzin, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Le Compte & Preissle, 1993).

In this approach, individuals are viewed as acting on the perceptions that they have of the meanings and interpretations of interactions in the social world. It stresses the understanding of the processes giving rise to differing perspectives, multiple meanings and interpretations which individuals have, due to their own personal life history and experiences as well as cultural meanings (Burns, 1995; Denzin, 1989, 1992). Thus, it emphasises how our own unique perspectives of personal and subjective interpretations influence the perceptions of our environment, social contacts, relationships and experiences of everyday living, resulting in differing perceptions of reality, due to our prior experiences

and understandings (Burns, 1995; Denzin, 1989,1992). One strength of this approach is that it aims to make the lived experiences of individuals “directly accessible to the reader” (Denzin, 1992, p.xv) enabling presentation of the multiplicity of voices, interpretations, identities, lenses, cultural, historical and contextual complexities which exist in individuals daily lives (Bailey & Gayle, 2003; Christians, 2003; Davis, Nakayama & Martin, 2000).

This model is derived from an “interpretive” paradigm, suggested by Walsh, Tobin & Graue (1993), as one in which “the meaning sought in inquiry is understood only through dialogue and negotiation between the researcher and the researched” (p.464) and which is recommended for research in early childhood education as a means of giving “voice and visibility to those ... who historically have been silenced and isolated” (Soto & Swadener, 2002; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993, p.473).

This paradigm has links with the phenomenological approach advocated by Van Manen (1990) which involves the “descriptive interpretive” study of “lived” experiences, aiming to discover what “lived” experiences are like, as well as the interpretation and importance of this experience to the individual. This approach promotes the study of “lived” experiences, and the descriptions and interpretations of the meanings, in order to understand “the way we experience the world” (Van Manen, 1990, p.5) and to counter the inclination of research to “generalise [which] may prevent us from developing understandings that remain focussed in the uniqueness of human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p.22). This way of viewing research asks “What is this lived experience like?” and “What is the meaning and significance of this experience?” (Van Manen, 1990, p.166).

Further reading of literature on phenomenology and education, by authors such as Vandenberg (1997) and Strasser (1997) has brought to light the “problem” of the “difficulty” of “doing” phenomenology. The necessity of reading the “primary sources” cited by these authors, such as Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), seen as vital preparation prior to undertaking any research, was emphasised as a means to develop the necessary “conceptualised descriptions” required in order to “contribute constructively” to the study of phenomenology (Vandenberg, 1997).

However, in order to enrich the interpretative approach used in this research study, a phenomenological focus on “lived” experiences, as a means of understanding the meaning and significance that these experiences have for each individual participant, has been incorporated into the theoretical framework also informed by Symbolic Interactionism, which is used to demonstrate how these “lived” experiences are interpreted in the light of previous experiences and understandings. This approach also enables the establishment of shared meanings of these lived experiences by the participants and the researcher, and facilitates understanding of the differing perspectives which result from each individual’s unique life history and cultural influences.

In keeping with the phenomenological emphasis used in the research study, the initial approach adopted in the analysis of the data is that of Van Manen (1990), who in emphasising the need to discover and “to question the way we experience the world” (p.5), asks “What is this lived experience like? What is the meaning and significance of this experience?” (p.166) for the individual. In highlighting the role of pedagogy in educational research and theory, this author also stresses :

When a child complains that he or she is not understood or properly treated and loved, then no set of good intentions, aims, or curriculum objectives on the part of the parent or teacher will alter this fact. Regardless of the teacher’s intention, the pedagogically important questions are always: ‘What is this situation or action like for the child? What is good and...not good for this child?’ (Van Manen, 1990, p.145).

In this research study, an ecological systems approach has also been incorporated to enable a focus on environmental factors which are influential in the settings of home and school. This aims to facilitate the understanding of how lived experiences, and the interpretation and understanding of these experiences, are influenced not only by factors in the child’s immediate environment but also in other levels of the ecological system.

Since the importance of the environment in the development of the child was first discussed by Bronfenbrenner (1975) and emphasised by authors such as Gabarino (1982), the ecology of the child has been a focus of attention in child development (Meadows, 1992;

Berk, 1994) leading to an increasing emphasis in almost all aspects of early childhood education, including providing for children with special needs (Bailey & Wolery, 1992).

In the ecological systems approach as first proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1975), the child was viewed as influenced by two layers, of which the central was the child's immediate environmental settings, containing the people with whom the child interacts and engages in activities. This central setting was seen as being "embedded" within a surrounding layer containing the physical environment of the area in which the individuals live, the social systems and institutions which control what happens in the immediate settings, and the customs and government policies, all of which indirectly influence the lives of families and children (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). Bronfenbrenner thus drew attention to the need to consider the effects of systems beyond the immediate context of the child, including the parents' work, relationships between school and community, physical characteristics of the neighbourhood in which the child lives, institutions and policies, as a plea for the need to study development "in context" (Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

This initial concept was extended and refined, leading to a model in which the forces influencing the child within its own immediate settings, known as "environmental press" (Gabarino, 1982) and affected indirectly by society and culture, were represented as a "set of nested structures ... like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22 cited in Gabarino, 1982). This model emphasised that the environment was just not regarded as simply the immediate setting which contains the child, but also involved complex interactions between the individual, his/her settings and people within these settings. These in turn were viewed as being affected by relationships between the settings. The multiple layers of the "nested" external contexts in which these are "embedded" also have a powerful influence on the individual at the centre of the "nested" system of structures (Meadows, 1982; Berk, 1994).

In this approach these structures are seen to consist of a series of rings of which the central contains the "microsystems" in which the child lives and interacts directly, including home, school, play areas, clinics etc, containing the people with whom s/he

comes in contact, such as parents and family, friends, neighbours, and teachers. The relationships and connections between these “microsystems” make up the next ring known as the “mesosystems,” which involves links between settings and the individuals within them, including home and school, parents and teachers, family, peers, with multiple strong links seen as important for children's well being (Berk, 1994).

The third ring is made up of the “exosystems” which are settings in which the child does not participate, but which still affect what happens within the settings in which the child does participate. The “exosystem” includes parents’ work and social networks, community services such as health, housing, planning, and local government decisions. The final ring, the “macrosystems” contains external influences of culture, belief systems, values, laws, customs, ideologies, institutions, and national policies, which reflect the particular culture and lifestyle in society, which in turn influence the other systems and settings within the environment of the child (Gabarino, 1982; Meadows, 1982; Berk, 1994).

Gabarino (1982) in his discussion of the “Children and Families in the Social Environment” maintained that the influence of the environment as a whole comes from “the dynamic balance among all influences over time” (p.18) and emphasised that we cannot hope to reach an understanding of :

the intimate relationships between the child and the parents without understanding how conditions surrounding the family affect interaction between children and parents and define each family’s particular experiences” (Gabarino, 1982, p.18).

This author also stressed the value of the ecological approach in helping us to see “connections that might otherwise go unnoticed, helping us to look beyond the immediate and obvious to see where the most important influences lie” (p.18).

This theoretical model involving the ecological systems approach has been further developed for use in the study of families and schools by Epstein (1992) who maintains that while the representation of concentric circles “embedded” within each other has value for understanding the influences of different settings, cultural and societal influences, it needs extension to provide a model for understanding the relationships between families and schools (Epstein, 1992; Epstein et al., 1997). Thus the “overlapping spheres of

influence” model developed by Epstein, is represented by circles which intersect and are either pulled together or apart as a result of the influences, interactions and relationships within the settings (Epstein, 1992; Epstein et al., 1997). This model takes into account the underlying philosophies, practices, and characteristics of each environment, along with interactions at institutional level, such as school events and communications, as well as personal contacts between teachers and parents, while acknowledging what Epstein (1992) describes as “the interlocking histories of the major institutions that socialise and educate children” (Epstein, 1992, p.1141). An important aspect in the “overlapping spheres of influence” model is the central role of the child as the main reason for home school relationships, and in whom the development of positive attitudes to learning, improved educational outcomes and increasing achievement, confidence and well being, is seen as a “given” by both home and school (Epstein, 1992; Epstein et al., 1997).

Epstein has extended the model to encompass family, school, community and peer group influences on children's development and learning (Epstein, 1987, 1988, cited in Epstein 1992). In so doing, she has built on the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner, and integrated it with the sociological-organisational perspectives of authors such as Leichter (1974), Litwak & Meyer (1974), Seeley (1981) and earlier research on the influences of family and school environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Leichter, 1974; Litwak & Meyer, 1974; Seeley, 1981, cited in Epstein, 1992).

Within the “overlapping spheres of influence” model, are internal and external structures representing in the first instance, the patterns of interactions of participants at individual and institutional levels, and in the latter the philosophies of schools and families as well as their practices, all of which are affected by historical influences on the individuals and contexts (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995). This view acknowledges the importance of :

interlocking histories of institutions that motivate, socialise, and educate children...and the interactions of the individuals in those contexts, as a basis for study of the connections that affect children's learning and development ...allows for different practices and relationships that may be needed...with families of differing educational and cultural backgrounds (Hidalgo et al., 1995 p.499).

As a result, this model is advocated as the preferred approach for teachers to undertake research into “the various cultures, values, and histories of the families of students they may teach” (Hidalgo et al., 1995, p.519) in order to promote understanding of the diversity of the families, as well as their practices and goals for their children, and is therefore considered the most appropriate for use in this research study which is concerned with the lived experiences of minority group families in Australia.

The conceptual framework for this research study on minority group families, depicts the settings of home and school as each “nested” within its own ecological “rings”, and utilises the “overlapping spheres of influence” model of Epstein (1992) as a means of representing the “overlap” of the important influences of home and school on the young minority group child, whose presence in the centre of the overlap is seen as the reason for home-school interaction and relationships. The emphasis on the “internal” and “external” structures in this model are seen as a valuable means of representing the interactions of minority group participants with teachers and schools, as well as the philosophies and practices of home and school, and the differing influences of culture and society, which are the result of historical factors influencing both the settings and individuals within them (Hidalgo et al., 1995).

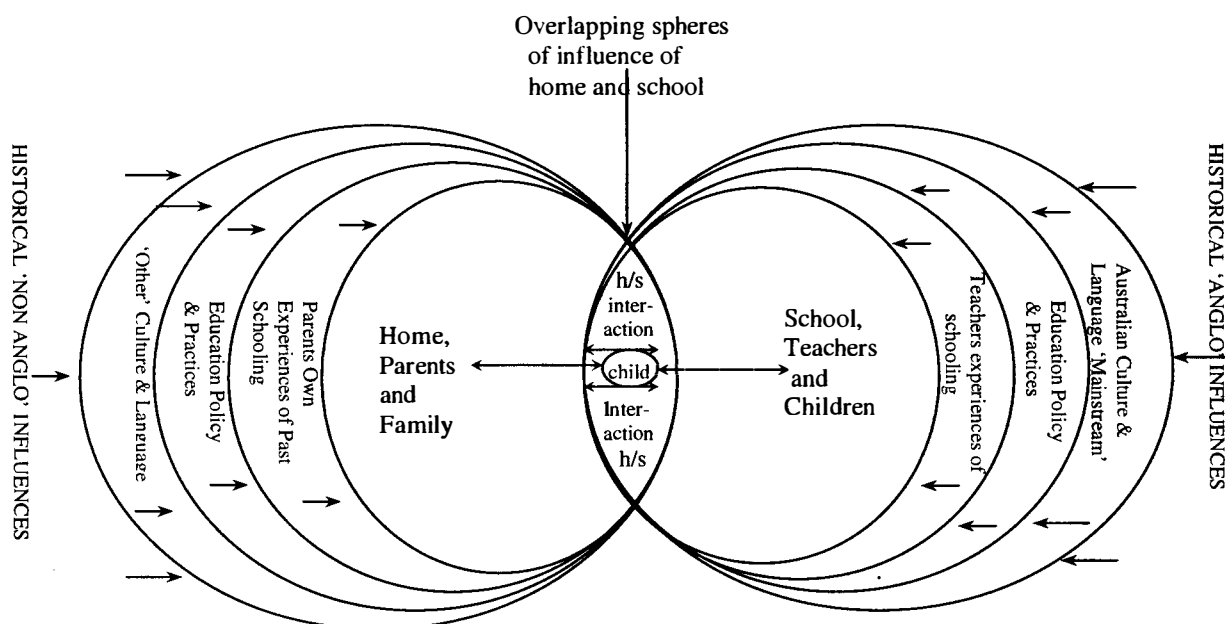


Figure 1. Model of the overlapping influence of home and school (Epstein,1992).

In Figure 1, the settings or “microsystems” of home and school and the individuals contained within them, are each depicted as “nested” within their ecological “rings” and influenced by the external forces contained in the “exosystems” and “macrosystems” in which each setting is “embedded”. As well, these rings are shown as being affected by the historical influences which have moulded the culture and society in which the settings are “nested”, and pulled apart as a result of the differing cultural backgrounds and experiences of the individuals as well as their interactions and relationships within the settings of home and school (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Epstein et al., 1997).

Within the setting of home, minority group parents are seen as products of the ecological system in which they grew up, and in which their understandings, values and beliefs are constructions “imbued with cultural and personal meaning” (Sigel & Kim, 1996, p.87). It is emphasised by McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramanian (1996) that these personal beliefs :

The way we see the world, what we know to be true, are derived from our experiences as a child and as an adult in a community in a particular cultural context, that has its own history, a history that is shared by all the members of the culture and yet is uniquely connected to each child who develops in that culture (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramanian, 1996, p.143-4).

The powerful influence on the child of the home environment, parents, and family is well established by many authors including Kellaghan et al (1993), MacBeth (1993), Cullingford (1995) and Ogbu (1995) who emphasises :

What children bring to school, Their communities’ cultural models or understandings of “social realities” and the education strategies that they use or do not use in seeking education is as important as within-school factors (Ogbu, 1988, cited in Ogbu, 1995a, p.583).

In Figure 1, the setting of school and the individuals contained within it such as teachers and children, are also depicted as products of the ecological systems in which they grew up, the “macrosystems” which influence education policy and practice in Australia, and affected also by historical influences of “Anglo” and English speaking society and culture.

In this research study, school is seen as a “lens” through which society and culture are viewed, which is consistent with ideas expressed by Hulmes (1989) who sees education as “principally an agent of conservation. It strengthens the civilisation it serves and nurtures the dominant culture of which it is a part” (p.18).

This view of the role of school as a means for reproducing culture is also reinforced by Singh (1998) who maintains the development of “students’ capacities for transmitting, interpreting and developing society’s cultural traditions and forming students’ social consciousness” is a process which occurs “simultaneously in the teaching of all key learning areas” (p.50).

In contrast, the “nested” rings in which the setting of the home and minority group family are embedded, are depicted as being subjected to “macrosystems” affected by historical influences of non-“Anglo” and non-English speaking culture and society, due to these influences on the educational institutions, policies and practices experienced by minority group parents as children, and in some cases also as a parent, in other non-English speaking countries.

These experiences are seen as a potential influence on both the present and future relationships of minority group parents with teachers and schools in Australia. Authors such as Stevens, Hough & Nurss (1993); Finders & Lewis (1994); Chavkin & Gonzalez (1995) who stress the importance of parents’ prior experiences of education, emphasise that early negative experiences have been found to create “barriers” to positive interactions between parents and their children’s teachers and schools, thus blocking parental involvement and the development of strong links between home and school.

As well Figure 1 also depicts the important connections between home and school settings, and interactions between the individuals in the settings including minority group parents and teachers, the parents and their children, and also minority group children, their teachers and peers at school. The quality of these interactions are seen as important factors in promoting “mesosystems” with multiple, strong links, emphasised by Bronfenbrenner

(1979, cited in Berk, 1994) as essential for the well being of young children, and seen as particularly important for minority group families.

Thus the model depicted in Figure 1 is seen as a representation of the processes occurring when minority group parents who were born and educated in a non-English speaking country, and who view the world through a “lens” constructed as a result of their own experiences of school, education and culture outside Australia, interact with schools and teachers who view life through a “lens” constructed as a result of the different education policies, system and culture experienced in Australia.

As a result, for parents from minority groups, with their differing cultural backgrounds and past experiences of education, positive interactions and good relationships with teachers and schools in Australia, are seen as vital to the future well being and progress of minority group children in Australian schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study involved the use of an approach which is informed by phenomenology (description and interpretation), in the investigation of the meanings and interpretations contained within the lived experiences that parents and children from minority groups have of education in their countries of origin and at school in Australia (Gordon, 1997; Van Manen, 1990). It is an approach advocated for those who wish to gain an understanding of the everyday lived worlds of others, (Byrne, 2001; Javo et al., 2003; Vandenberg, 1997; Van Manen, 1990) and become more “thoughtfully aware of ... the significant in the taken-for-granted” (Van Manen, 1990, p.8), as we develop insights into these lived experiences (Maggs-Rapport, 2000).

The importance of exploring these personal experiences, particularly of families whose backgrounds are linguistically and culturally different from the “mainstream” population in Australia, lies in the fact that education is seen as an “inter human phenomenon” (Vandenberg, 1997, p.8) in which an individual’s past memories are instrumental in the formation of expectations for the future :

The way in which the lived-world of the child develops depends upon the education influences to which it is exposed and how these help it gain access to things in the world ie. formal and informal learning (or culture) (Vandenberg, 1997, p.10).

Moreover, Gordon (1997) emphasises that to be truly effective teachers must utilise these individual and cultural experiences to gain access to the prior knowledge of students for use as a basis for teaching and learning activities in order to maximise the students’ learning and potential :

Suppression of student lived experience is ... pedagogically inappropriate. It obliterates ones history and culture. Suppression of lived experience is a weak foundation on which to build effective teaching and learning activities (Gordon, 1997, p.150).

Thus the emphasis in this research is qualitative, based on investigation and understanding of the meanings to the individual of his or her life experiences, as revealed in these conversations which are informal and “free flowing,” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) and in which the participant was encouraged to discuss in depth, his or her ideas and interpretations of personal experiences of education and schooling. These experiences are reported in descriptive form as compared with the quantitative approach to research which uses questionnaires and is mainly concerned with measurement (Burns, 1995; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Informal discussions and unstructured interviews were conducted with individual minority group parents about their experiences of education and/or schooling, both as a child and a parent, and their perceptions of these experiences. Informal discussions were conducted with their young children between 5 and 9 years of age, in the home or other setting chosen by the parents, to find out what experiences and/or perceptions the children have of school. Participant observation was used during activities such as drawing, playing with toys, reading books, looking at school books and “work” etc, before initiation of any discussion about school experiences.

The inherent “problems” of interviewing children due to the “gap” between the adult researcher and child participants in physical, cognitive and social domains which affects interactions and relationships, has been well established (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Hatch, 1990; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). It is important to recognise that children can be affected by their perceptions of the status and power of adults and the desire to provide the “right” answers, as well as preconceptions about what they believe they should be doing, and particularly with younger children, an inability to sit for long or sustain lengthy conversations (Hatch, 1990; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996).

Therefore, strategies such as taking time, the use of stories and drawings etc, to build trust and develop relationships, informal conversations and discussions in familiar settings, asking “open” questions based on the child’s own experiences, flexibility and paying close attention to body language which may indicate discomfort or boredom, so that measures

could be taken to alleviate this or conclude the discussion, were employed at all times (Cullingford, 1994; Hatch, 1990; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Sherman, 1997; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993).

Despite the fundamental difficulties in undertaking research with children, there is an increasing recognition of the need to explore the personal experiences and perspectives of children as “actors on an equal basis” (Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996, p.133) in issues that concern them in their lives (Lewis & Lindsay, 2000). Moreover, despite extensive research conducted on schools from the perspectives of adults and older children, there has been little exploration, particularly in Australia, of young children’s perspectives including their thoughts and feelings about the experience of school (Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Sherman, 1997; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). It is particularly important to explore the perspectives of the increasing numbers of children at school in Australia and elsewhere, whose families are from linguistic and cultural backgrounds which differ from those of “mainstream” society, and whose voices have been overlooked in the past (Lewis & Lindsay, 2000; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993).

Participants

The participants involved in this research study consisted of parents who were born and educated in non-English speaking countries, and their children between five and nine years of age. These families were from varying cultural backgrounds which differed from those of the majority of the English speaking population of Anglo-Celtic heritage in Australia. Although no restrictions were placed on the length of time participants had been resident in Australia, one prerequisite was that they have sufficient fluency in the English language to obviate the need for an interpreter, as unfortunately the researcher is monolingual.

The aim of this study was to collect data from a maximum of ten families, ie. twenty parents and ten children. It is acknowledged that a restriction such as this constitutes a limitation of the study, however it was seen as a necessary requirement due to the time constraints imposed on PhD. studies. Only nine families were able to be involved within

the time allocated, which resulted in a total of twelve adults and nine children participating in the interviews. When possible both parents were interviewed, and this was undertaken separately with no other adults present and out of the hearing range of any children, except where parental supervision of younger children was required.

The participants in this research were recruited by means of personal contacts within various ethnic communities and cultural organisations in metropolitan Perth. Contacts of some of the original participants, who professed a wish to participate were included, if they met the desired criteria as described above. This was found necessary when of the two families contacted indicated unwillingness to participate in the research study due to time constraints or family reasons. The cultural groups contacted included Latin American, Scandinavian, African, and Middle Eastern groups. These were chosen because they are cultural groups upon which little or no previous research seemed to have been conducted in Australia. Moreover, several participants stated that they were particularly eager that their differences in culture be recognised.

Procedure

1. Participants were contacted initially by telephone, as a result of positive feedback by the researcher's contacts within their social groups and communities. Some participants rang the researcher direct, while others passed on their contact number indicating a suitable time to call and arrange a meeting, either at their home or other suitable venue. At this first meeting, informal conversations about both the background of the researcher and the research study were conducted to "break the ice" and establish a friendly and relaxed atmosphere before the need for informed consent was discussed. To avoid any feelings of being pressured into participating, a copy of the proposed questions was given to all potential participants along with consent forms for both their own and their child's participation. These forms were also discussed to ensure that all participants had a full understanding of their right to withdraw and to decline to answer any questions at any time.

Participants were reassured that no contact would be made with their children's schools or teachers, and their opinions would remain anonymous to avoid any prejudicial effect upon their children's education. The consent forms and proposed questions were left with the participants to allow time for further consideration before deciding to continue. Arrangements were made to call again at a suitable time to collect the consent forms, answer any questions about the study, and if possible also meet the children who would be involved. This procedure worked well, as two families felt able to decline at this stage, while the others indicated their willingness to continue.

2. Participants were visited a second time to enable further development of rapport, building of trust and friendly relationships with both parents and children; explain the procedure of the tape recorded interviews for adults; answer any questions arising from consent forms and question schedules and ascertain background information about the country of origin and cultural background of the families involved. By spending time on these preliminary aspects and collecting detailed information, it was felt that a more realistic picture would be obtained of the participants' experiences and perceptions, as a result of familiarity with the researcher and the use of informal relaxed friendly conversations, to facilitate authentic in depth communication and connections between the participants and researcher (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).
3. Participants were interviewed in an unstructured manner using the guiding schedule included in Appendix B, to encourage discussion of the participants' own experiences, and enable their leads, concerns and ideas to be followed in depth. These interviews were conducted with parents individually in their homes or other alternative location nominated, and tape recorded with their permission. At all times close attention was paid to the demeanour of the participants, and the interviewer was prepared to terminate the discussion if the participant appeared in the least uncomfortable, or on

request, however this was not found necessary. With the permission of the parents and children, time was spent with the child, in the surroundings of their home, building up rapport by informally looking at books, children's handiwork, and drawings, before broaching the subject of school experiences. As an introduction to the topic and in order to build up trust with the researcher, the children were encouraged to draw pictures, and then the subject of his or her experiences of school was introduced, using an unstructured approach in an informal, flexible and responsible manner, to enable the child to discuss their own experiences and concerns freely. These short informal discussions were conducted at times suitable to the parents, and only with the permission of the children concerned. Due to the young age of the children, notes were taken instead of tape recording and everything was done to ensure that this was an enjoyable experience for the children, with attention paid to the children's body language and demeanour. If any hesitancy was noted discussions would have been concluded, or resumed another time using another approach, however this was not found necessary. "Close observation" as advocated by Van Manen (1990) was used throughout the interviews to enable any important contextual factors to be noted, as well as the reactions, body language and non-verbal cues of both parents and children during discussions, in order to ascertain areas requiring further exploration and add depth and "richness" to the data.

4. Participants' interviews were transcribed and preliminary data analysis by "selective" reading as suggested by Van Manen (1990) and utilising the conceptual framework previously discussed, commenced at this stage, to facilitate the emergence of issues of importance and concern to the participants, and provide opportunities for further elaboration and clarification of their ideas. Data was categorised broadly into parents' experiences of education i) as a child in their home country, ii) their children's education outside Australia, iii) education in Australia, and iv) their children's experiences of education. Several common issues emerged

spontaneously at this stage, including the incidence of harsh corporal punishment in the early years of schooling experienced by many parents, as well as concerns about their children and homework. These themes were able to be explored further when follow up visits were made, and the above procedure repeated. No further contacts with the children in this study were arranged after their interview however, as it was felt that any more questioning would not be in their best interests.

5. Transcripts of the taped interviews were presented to the adult participants to enable verification, clarification and/or elaboration of their ideas to take place. Several of the participants made some minor alterations, to the grammar or dates, in their transcripts and/or took the opportunity to bring up additional issues which had not been explored earlier, and these were tape recorded and transcribed as before. These return visits were most fruitful, possibly because by this time many of the participants were more relaxed and confident, and/or realised that their words would be accurately reported, thus they felt able to discuss issues which they may have been reticent to broach initially. These spontaneous additional interviews were finally concluded when, asked if there were any other aspects that they wished to discuss, participants responded in the negative, and all seemed satisfied with the way the information in their interview was transcribed, stating that what they had said was accurately written down.

Data Analysis

This study is influenced by Symbolic Interactionism which facilitates the exploration of experiences of participants and the meanings that these experiences have for them (Denzin, 1992; Le Compte & Preissle, 1993), and incorporates also into its theoretical approach a phenomenological focus to further enrich the understanding of participants' unique lived experiences of education from their perspective (Van Manen, 1990; Vandenberg, 1997). The interpretive and phenomenological approach to analysis of data

which focuses on gaining an understanding of the experience of a phenomenon (Karlsson, 1993), is seen as the most appropriate for the study of lived experiences of participants from diverse backgrounds. In this approach, a preliminary process of reading the transcripts to gain an initial “grasp,” is undertaken before proceeding further in the exploration of the meaning of the lived experiences described by participants (Karlsson, 1993; Van Manen, 1990). This is consistent with the approach, advocated by Glesne & Peshkin (1992) for qualitative research, in which ongoing analysis from the beginning of the data collection period, enables the researcher to focus, reflect on, and organise the data while searching for the meanings as the collection process proceeds.

The case study approach is regarded as valuable for its focus on an individual’s “life story” (Edwards, 2001, p.126) enabling the researcher to highlight interest in and respect for culturally diverse “perceptions of phenomenon” (Stake, 1998, p.242) while preserving the “holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events” (Burns, 2000, p.313).

Initially this approach was considered useful in this study, and profiles of the participants set up which included details of their backgrounds and family structure. However, as the preliminary discussions and negotiations with participants progressed prior to commencement of the interviews proper, it became apparent that there were overriding concerns being expressed by participants, seven out of the twelve of whom were refugees from their countries of origin. These participants who still felt vulnerable even in this country, emphasised the importance of complete anonymity to avoid any identification of their families, and furthermore a predominant anxiety of all participants was that their children might suffer negative consequences which could affect their education and/or welfare should any criticisms made be able to be traced. As a result further reassurance was given to all participants that strict anonymity would be observed and they could voice any concerns freely without fear of their identities being divulged. This important point was also raised by Stake (1998) who stressed “those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment ...listen well for cries of concern” (p.244) and emphasised that the decision of whether to anonymise or not lies with the researcher.

In light of these factors, and some underlying concerns of my own regarding the use of case studies as leading to the production of generalisations (Stake, 1998), or seen as being “representative” or “atypical” (Burns, 2000) instead of an opportunity for the individual participants to present their unique lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990), it was decided not to continue in this vein but present the data within an ecological framework to facilitate understanding of the influence of culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences upon these families residing in Australia (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995).

A process of data analysis commencing with preliminary categorisation during data collection and proceeding as an ongoing activity, provides an opportunity for participants to bring up issues of importance to them which can then be explored, and is therefore regarded as a valuable means of uncovering the true meanings and concerns of participants and the most appropriate to facilitate in depth exploration of the personal experiences and perceptions (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Burns, 1995).

The ideas of Van Manen (1990), who emphasises the importance of ascertaining the quality of children's lived experiences of education, were felt to be particularly applicable to this research study. These were seen as also linking with the ecological systems approach in which the importance of environmental factors in the development of the child is emphasised (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Gabarino, 1982) and further developed by Epstein (1992) to an “overlapping spheres of influence” model encompassing interactions between family and schools as well as philosophies and historical influences of the differing educational and cultural backgrounds (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995).

The preliminary categorisation of the data in this study by means of “selective” reading (Karlsson, 1993; Van Manen, 1990) revealed positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences as well as several issues of importance to them, which were able to be further explored and clarified in subsequent visits, adding further to the understanding of the participants' perspectives. In the first instance, classification of the data in this study was undertaken, based on Van Manen's (1990) quality of lived experiences, by subdividing the

responses to interview questions into the positive and negative experiences of education and schooling. When the data collection phase was concluded, a “detailed” reading of the transcripts as described by Karlsson (1993) and Van Manen (1990), commenced to enable the identification of any other common themes and subsequent division into further categories. To facilitate the identification of categories and sub-categories and ascertain any connections between them, codes or “units of meaning” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), were developed manually on cards to enable sorting into common patterns and facilitate comparisons. At this stage of the analysis process, an ecological systems focus on participants as individuals contained within settings of home and school “microsystems” as children, and being influenced by external forces within the “exosystems” and “microsystems” due to historical and cultural influences of the society in which they live, was also applied (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Epstein, 1992). This ecological systems focus was applied to the four broad classifications of parents’ experiences of i) education as a child in their home country ii) their children's education outside Australia iii) education in Australia iv) their children's experiences of education, to enable both the influence of home and school and the interactions between these two settings, as well as the external influences of society, history, culture upon these settings to be explored further. The interviews with parents, and discussions with children, were presented in descriptive form as personal perspectives and anecdotes of participants’ lived experiences of education and schooling.

Reliability / Validity

The issue of reliability and validity or “trustworthiness” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in this type of qualitative research is regarded as vital to ensure the ‘believability’ of research findings (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Reliability is the ability of others to replicate the study in question, however, in research which explores phenomena which are unique such as individual experiences or behaviour, both the procedures used and data collected make it difficult to establish this by the conventional means employed in studies of a more quantitative nature (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Problems of external and internal reliability need to be established by addressing issues of the influence of the researcher’s status, the choice of informants, social context in which data collection takes place, clear identification

of methodology and conceptual frameworks used, documentation of data collection processes, and addressing of difficulties encountered when multiple researchers and/or multiple sites are used in the research, to ensure that any meanings ascribed to the phenomenon are congruent (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Questions of validity in research are concerned with the accuracy of meanings ascribed by the researcher to what is being observed, and to what extent the findings are applicable across groups, however difficulties again arise in this regard due to the design of qualitative research and the methods used. Le Compte & Goetz (1982) however, maintain issues of validity are met by the long data collection periods used in qualitative research and ongoing data analysis, which enables comparison of data categories with participants' perspectives obtained in their interviews, as well as observation of participants in naturalistic surroundings which reflect their daily life, and researcher 'self-monitoring' of activities involved in the research study (p.43).

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) emphasise the importance of spending time with participants building strong relationships before and during the interview process as a means of ensuring data that is "trustworthy," verifying the interview transcripts with participants, awareness of researcher's own bias or subjectivity, and triangulation by the use of the multiple methods such as the use of differing sources of data collection, different forms of methodology and theoretical perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), as well as detailing the limitations of the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) also stress the benefits of "prolonged engagement" and observation of participants, as well as the triangulation of methods, in order to ensure reliability of findings in qualitative research studies.

Questions of reliability and validity in this study were addressed by the use of triangulation, multiple and in depth methods of long data collection periods with the nine families involved. These included at least two visits and informal discussions with both parents and children, before undertaking the unstructured free flowing separate interviews with both parents where applicable, observations of body language and reactions of participants during informal discussions, interviews, and repeat discussions with participants for the purpose of verification, clarification and elaboration of the interview transcripts.

Although approaching the data collection phase of this research study from the standpoint of one who has always felt an “outsider,” I was still keenly aware of the cultural differences existing between myself and the participants who came from widely differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which is emphasised by authors such as Grieshaber (2001). Therefore exploration of our common ground (Brooker, 2003, p.121) both as migrants residing in Australia and parents, was used as the initial starting point for informal discussions in which we disclosed, compared and chatted about our respective experiences before finally turning to the topic of education and the lived experiences of the participants. At all times the data collection process was regarded as a process of learning for myself as a researcher, and one in which the development of mutual understanding and respect was paramount.

After each taped interview the transcript was returned to the participant, discussed, the points made verified, and when necessary clarified, to make sure that the interpretations made were accurate and enable re-evaluation and self monitoring by the researcher as emphasised by Grieshaber (2001). The nine families participating were visited for at least an hour at a time between four and six times, a process which took a total of ten months, at times which were chosen by the participants themselves, with additional contacts also made by telephone, as included in Appendix C. The use of long data collection periods as a means of increasing validity are advocated by Burns (1995, 2000), who also suggests that the rephrasing and repeating of questions or discussion of issues is similarly valuable, a technique which was also utilised in the data collection process of this research study. Furthermore, Burns (2000) emphasises the role played by the importance of the topic to participants, stressing that more valid responses occur when individuals are more vitally interested, while the greater the anonymity of participants the more likely the results will have “greater truthfulness” (p.364).

Naturalistic familiar settings of the home or other setting chosen by the participants, were used in this research study, and considerable time was spent developing rapport, building up trust and good relationships with participants, before encouraging them to

discuss in depth the thoughts and feelings they have about their “lived experiences” in a comfortable relaxed manner, with some who shares common experiences and concerns as a parent and is happy to hear their “story.” By so doing it was hoped to enable possible confounding influences of “observer” and “setting” effects, researcher status and social context, which can occur when conducting qualitative research to be overcome, and as a result of the great care taken in all respects in this research study, it is felt that the issues of validity and reliability have been addressed satisfactorily (Brooker, 2003; Burns, 1995; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

Limitations

The limitations encountered when undertaking this research study included insufficient time to collect data until saturation was reached and no new themes or issues emerged, an inability to interview the maximum number of ten families aimed for, in the period of nine months allocated to data collection, due to the time constraints necessary for PhD studies. The time allowed permitted only nine families to participate, as two visits were made to families who decided not to continue, resulting in less time available to seek replacements. Furthermore, some participants arranged visits at times when their children were at school, meaning that extra time had to be allocated to ensure that the child concerned became familiar enough with the researcher to be at ease and chat freely about their school experiences. Moreover, as English was not the first language of the adult participants in this research study, and the level of proficiency varied between participants, increasing the likelihood of some miscommunication, it was necessary to spend more time with some participants than others on the initial interview questions, leaving less time for further elaboration of participants’ ideas, particularly with the last family contacted.

In addition, selection of the participants was limited to those who showed interest in and responded to an invitation to talk about their experiences of education in their home country and Australia. These participants may have had particular reasons for wanting to have their views on education heard, while those who declined to participate may have felt that their views might be unwelcome, particularly if making any criticisms of Australian

education. An inability to find more than one willing participant from the Middle East also placed constraints upon this study, initial contacts were made with some participants from this area but they decided not to continue because of limited time or family reasons. These reasons given may have been perfectly valid, however another perspective upon the situation for people from this part of the world was described by one participant as follows :

They may know you, but they don't know whether your son or husband is in the secret police or not. This is what they are used to in their country and they are afraid to talk to anyone about their experiences of anything to do with the government.

This important limiting factor needs to be understood by researchers seeking to involve participants from areas of the globe which do not have the same political structures and freedom which exists in Australia and much of the "western" world.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues in this research, such as informed consent by both adults and children, permission to participate, confidentiality and anonymity, and the right to decline to answer and/or withdraw at any time, were addressed by visiting the participants to discuss in informal conversations the research study processes involved and the need for informed consent, prior to the return visits for collection of the data. At this time the consent forms and proposed interview questions were left with participants to avoid any feelings of being pressured and enable questions to be studied more carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

This preparation was especially important due to the fact that English was not the first language of the adults participating in this research study, and it was felt that to avoid any misunderstandings some might require more time to translate the interview questions. Return visits were arranged to enable any further questions to be answered before obtaining parents' signatures on the consent forms and the commencement of any interviews. For this reason also all transcripts of taped interviews were returned to the participants to enable verification or further clarification of the meanings. Before beginning the interviews, all participants including children, were again reminded of their right to decline to answer

or withdraw at any time, given a guarantee of complete confidentiality at all times, and assured that all original data would be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Due to the fact that seven of the twelve adult participants in this research study were refugees from their country of origin, strict anonymity had to be observed throughout. Furthermore, all parents, including those five who were not refugees, were anxious that no critical remarks made be able to be traced back to them and used to the detriment of their children's welfare and education. Thus it was felt necessary after discussions with the participants, to abandon any case study approaches initially utilised to avoid jeopardising the confidences of participants and betraying their trust.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the investigation into the lived experiences and perceptions that overseas born minority group parents have of education and/or schooling in countries outside Australia, both in their own childhood and as a parent, as well as their experiences and perceptions as the parent of a young child at school in Australia, and the experiences and perceptions that these children have of early primary school. These results are organised in three separate sections :

- Parents' experiences and perceptions of their own and their children's schooling in countries outside Australia.
- Parents' experiences and perceptions of the education/schooling of their young children in Australia.
- Young minority group children's experiences and perceptions of school in Australia.

Experiences of Education in Countries Outside Australia

This section presents the experiences that parents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds have of their own education from preschool through to post primary, including their family's attitudes and expectations, and also experiences of their own children's schooling in their country of origin and/or in other countries outside Australia. In keeping with the ecological focus used in this study, experiences of the education policies and practices of these countries outside Australia, as well as the cultures and languages experienced are highlighted, as a means to enable further understanding of the differing ecological systems in which these participants' experiences are embedded.

Childhood Experiences of Parents

Preschool Experiences

Of the twelve minority group parents involved in this research study, only three, all from Latin America, had early experiences of education before they started primary school. These experiences commenced with attendance at pre-school at 3 to 4 years of age, which they all seemed to enjoy, describing the teachers and methods mainly in positive terms. Elizabeth was very happy with her first experiences at kindergarten as a three year old, which included activities such as painting and *"manual work such as plasticine,"* singing and dancing, as well as learning to read. She explained further : *"I remember I wanted to read and write very fast ... I used to have a reading book there where we started to see all the alphabet and everything ... when I did Pre-primary I learned very quickly and then they noticed that I could already read, so they put me [after] half of the year into Year 1... that was at the kindergarten place where I used to go."* This enjoyable episode contrasted with many of her other experiences as a young child, as she explained : *"At home Mum was under stress with financial problems and not happy having to ask Dad for money even if she wanted to buy a dress. She wanted to keep me quiet and gave me lots of smacks."*

Sam described how as a four year old he enjoyed the toys and games with other children who were his friends and whom he still remembers : *"I went to kindy at 4, I think it was [for] two years ... I just remember we lived around a kilometre away from the kindy and my auntie used to walk me there and I remember I used to talk with her along the way."* He explained further: *"At 'kinder' one of the things that I remember is that like the [other] kids the most important part for me is that I wanted to come on my own, but I was never allowed ... At that time it was the early 60s, there were not many cars ... so there was a group they went home alone ... I lived at [such] a distance that it was a challenge, and I always asked my mum and my auntie about that and they said 'No, it's too far, it can take you hours and you might get lost."* Sam also recalled several of his kindergarten activities describing them as follows: *"We had a special day, the teacher used to put out all the toys on one day and I loved the toys Some games I remember ... there's a line made by the kids and two other kids they hold their hands up like a bridge and they ask 'What do you want the moon or the sun?' one is the moon, the other is the sun, and whatever they choose they go behind. Games like that I have vivid memories of ... I remember the kids, I remember one kid that was one of my very good friends."* Sam remembered also learning to read and write before

primary school : *"My Mum was a Year 2 teacher, so some students came to do lessons and she had a blackboard with chalk and that so I learned" [reading and writing].*

For Paula, early experiences of preschool, her teachers and their methods, were also positive, and she commented: *"First memories are of my mum sending me to a small kindy like place when I was three, it was fun because I was with my cousin who was two... in the most beautiful Spanish colonial building in the old part of town [where we used to live]. I loved it and there I learnt to read and write."* She explained further that as there were no age restrictions in her country in Latin America, children could commence school as soon as they could do "certain basics." As a result she began Pre-primary at a Catholic school at four and Year 1 at five years of age, and was one of the youngest in the class. Paula enjoyed many of her early experiences of education and she explained : *"I liked having friends, I liked access to toys when I was very little, I liked access to wonderful books when I was older ... I liked learning about new things."*

However the flexible early school entry in Latin America seemed to have been problematic for some participants. Despite the fact that Sam had already learned to read and write, his mother, a Year 2 teacher, would not let him commence Year 1 before six years of age, saying *"If you go one step ahead, later you are going to have problems,"* a situation about which he was unhappy. For Elizabeth, being able to read and write after six months in pre-school and then doing Year 1 work, caused problems on commencement at primary school as her mother insisted that she repeat Year 1 again in case she had *"missed something."* She explained : *"In Year 1 I could read and I was never quiet, always answering questions, the teacher was not happy."*

Preschool teachers

Elizabeth described her first teacher in glowing terms : *"I remember when I went to kindergarten I had a teacher - she was the most sweetest person, [and] because she couldn't have children she loved every student, and I got very attached to her and when I did my first year I loved her... .She was very sweet ...[and] kept me busy, I got into no trouble with her."* The second year at kindergarten did not proceed as smoothly for Elizabeth unfortunately, and she explained: *"When I had to come back the next year and have another teacher, I didn't want to go because I wanted to stay with her [first teacher] and I remember going to the corner of the room and stayed there, and I say 'No, I'm not moving' and I was crying because I wanted to stay with her. I remember the Principal came and said 'Why are you crying?'"*

and I say - 'I want to stay here with her, I don't want to go' and then she [principal] said 'Ok, we'll leave you, but only this year,' so I did two years with her."

Paula described her first teacher in a small "kindy like place" which she enjoyed, as a "retired school teacher" who taught her to read and write, adding : *"I remember the teacher commenting to my mum that kids are never too young to learn."* About the teachers in Pre-Primary classes at Catholic school, all of whom were nuns, Paula remarked : *"The old Spanish nuns were very nasty, the younger Latin American nuns were very sweet, humane and approachable. One windy day the wind caught the nun's wimple and we saw her shaved head, that was quite a shock.."*

The remaining minority group parents in this research study had no experience of pre-school education as young children, and commenced Year 1 at ages which ranged from five years of age for Sylvia and Peter from Latin America, and Colin from Africa; six years for Brian from the Middle East; up to seven years of age for Lorna and Philippa from Africa and Michael, Maureen, and Jane from Scandinavia.

Early Primary Experiences

Commencement at primary school was eagerly looked forward to by several of the participants who had seen older siblings or relatives go off daily and wanted to go too. Philippa, an African participant, commented : *"I was longing to go to school because I used to see my cousins all the time going to school and coming back and I thought it was - you know - fun."* Peter, from Latin America, explained : *"I had a special feeling - because it was the first experience of when we went to the school and I remember it was especially important because we were just starting."*

For some participants, the introduction to primary school was enjoyable. Brian felt important as his mother was a teacher and he liked starting school in the Middle East. Beginning school in Scandinavia was described by Jane as : *"A very gentle breaking in, and it was a very homely school, that particular school. I suppose it was a little bit like a kindy is here."* Sam, from Latin America felt he had no problems : *"School was just the same as growing up, I just went to school and I didn't have any problems... I didn't feel stressed,"* and Maureen from Scandinavia

commented : *"The first six years were very happy at school."* Lorna also described her earliest recollections of school in Africa as happy : *"I have really good fond memories of my Year 1, 2 that's Sub-A & B."*

However not all participants found their first experiences of education positive. Michael at seven years of age, found that attending the first day of school in Scandinavia was : *"Very daunting, I think because it was a big school, there was 1300 children at the school"* and he commented also: *"I didn't like a lot in school in the first four years."* Several of the participants found that in contrast with the eager anticipation they felt, the actual experience of their commencement at school was far from an enjoyable one. Philippa explained as follows : *"I was quite enthusiastic about school, but then my hopes were a little bit dashed when I found out that the teachers were not very friendly."* Peter from Latin America also had problems which he described vividly : *"The only thing I remember - when I was young, it was very, very bad ... I remember when I was in Year 1, just when I went next to the school and I smelt - the paint and the stuff in the school, I remember - just from the smell I was afraid to go - God! - Oh, I was scared!"*

The early experiences at school in Africa described by Colin were equally difficult : *"It was very rough especially as a young child, I would be levelled as- what you would call a 'gifted' child according to the school system here, but I think I was only good at attending to teachers, and as a result teachers used me a lot in solving class problems."* Elizabeth's early ability to read and write also resulted in many problems for her when she began Year 1 at primary school in Latin America, as she explained : *"When I went to the other school [in Year 1] I knew everything, I knew how to read and write so the teacher had problems with me because every time she asked a question I could answer it straight away."*

Several of the participants felt that there were factors relating to their home environment and/or development which could have contributed to problems on introduction to school. For the African participants, Lorna, Colin, and Philippa there were experiences of walking long distances to school at between five and seven years of age. Lorna recalled : *"I used to walk there with my cousins and next door neighbours. No one took us to school, we just walked there and we were never given lunch like the kids here ... it started at 7.30 am and went up to 1 o'clock, and then home for the day. Mum wouldn't be home from work till 5.00 - 5.30 and we normally used to come in and*

just help ourselves, or the next door neighbour would help us." Philippa described it in more detail :
"We were walking long distance in the morning and there are no proper roads - just paths covered by grass sometimes when it rains, and dangerous snakes like puff adders and similar."

Peter discussed early problems with his health and development which he saw as an influential factor in his early difficulties at school in Latin America : *"My Mum said that when I was born she had a lot of health problems and I didn't have a normal development, because I started to speak the first word when I was 2 years old, and I started to take the first step when I was 3 years old."* He explained his family situation further : *"I was the last of the boys, there was another - a girl after me - number five. There was a lot of troubles which I think were health problems, but my Mum took me to the hospital and they gave me a lot of treatment, medicine, and after that I was a normal child, but always I think it [my development] was a little bit slow, slow in the beginning."* Peter also felt other contributing factors included lack of a "kindy" in the area, his father working 100 kilometres away and only returning at weekends, as well as his position in the family : *"I couldn't play with my brothers because they were older than me, so I remember I was alone and I play just by myself."* As a result of Peter's difficulties in Year 1, he was unable to read by the end of the year and had to repeat Year 1 again, a situation which his mother accepted but which his father was very angry about : *"My father wasn't at home at this moment because he went to work, about 100 kilometres from the place we lived, and he always came at the weekend. When he arrived and my mum talked to him about it he was very angry, and hit me with a lot of things - 'You are silly, you are lazy, you have the responsibility,' that's the only thing I remember of the first year - when I was young, it was very, very bad."*

Elizabeth, also from Latin America, explained her difficulties thus : *"I did Year 1 before the normal age that I should do it ... [however] I used to be a very active girl and naughty and I was in trouble all the time, because of that I was not understood... my brothers and sisters, they were at that time high achievers with high marks, and because I wasn't I was all the time in trouble. I was all the time put down from everybody around me. My Mum used to smack me a lot with the belt and [teachers] at school with rulers, so no one could believe that I could achieve a high level of education because of that, and they were all the time thinking that my brother and sisters were better than me ... I was not understood by people around me because they couldn't believe I could achieve and no one encouraged me to do it."*

Colin found early school in Africa was "very frustrating" with a pattern of on and off again attendance due to the high cost of school fees which were very expensive for the local people, including his parents, many of whom were subsistence farmers. He explained : *"My father and mother were very poor people, so they could hardly afford school fees, so I stagnated a lot. I remember I did Year 1, stayed home, went back did Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, and stayed home again ... I was a little bit lucky because - I don't know whether it was due to my nature or what, - in Year 1 I had a headmaster who exempted me from paying fees, and then another headmaster was sent to the school so I couldn't go to study because he wanted money paid. Then I got another good headmaster who helped me from Year 2 to Year 5."*

For Philippa, whose father was a teacher, the introduction to the first year of school in Africa was initially smooth, as her family lived in the teachers' quarters. However, upon the death of her uncle when she was only eight years of age, the family decided to return home, leaving Philippa and her sisters in a boarding school : *"He decided to put us in a boarding school which was actually quite tough for us, myself and my sisters. In Africa schooling at a young age is quite daunting because the schools are too far away and I had a little bit of bad experience especially because the boarding school where I was used to be frequently raided by a cattle rustlers tribe, so the school was closed down and we became day scholars once more."*

Many participants in this research study mentioned negative feelings about their early education. Paula from Latin America explained : *"At first I didn't [like it] - I was scared of learning, I remember when I was about 7 and 8 - I was worried about going to the new year - I used to have this horror - 'Oh, My God! - 'I'm not going to know anything' and my mum explained to me 'But look, last year you went to school and you didn't know any thing and look at all the things that you learned during the year, nothing happened to you, you were fine, this is going to be the same thing this year' ... then I loved going to school after that ... I started the year I was 5, but at first I was a bit anxious about starting a new year, and once she said that to me I just loved it, I just loved learning new things."*

Philippa also talked about her experiences of feeling scared at early primary school in Africa and explained : *"Yes, I was so scared there were times when you wake up you don't feel like going to school because school's like - pain ... We were not meant to behave naturally - if you know what I mean. We were not meant to play there, things were structured - as if we were adults ... for once we start primary Year 1,*

you are treated almost like as a high school. As a 7 year old you are treated like an adult. You see, there's these three sticks in the corner of the classroom, if you don't finish enough work you are caned, if you can not get it right you are caned. So you find that most kids by Grade 1 they are dropping out of school, they don't like going to school. So personally to me school was associated with pain."

Sylvia was another participant who described early experiences of punishment during early schooling in Latin America : *"I remember that in my Year 1 and 2 it was a bit of corporal punishment – well I didn't suffer much because I wasn't from the group that was low, [in marks]"* while Michael in explaining his early experiences at school in Scandinavia commented : *"It was very strict and disciplined."* Elizabeth described her negative early experiences at school in Latin America as follows : *"I was very active all the time, I remember the teachers were allowed to hit the kids all the time so I used to get a lot. Oh, I was in trouble all the time, that was the first experience I had, it was not very pleasant ... all the time they couldn't keep me quiet without moving too much ... I never wanted to go but my Mum made me ... I even had to go if sick with headaches or whatever - because no one believed me."*

Despite these negative experiences many participants spoke positively about some facets of their early years at school. For Brian, some of his early schooling in the Middle East was quite a good experience. He liked going to the park with the school, 'singing' both the Koran and maths: *"Teaching you to count, they do it with a song which was enjoyable."* Lorna, recalling her earliest years of education in Africa commented : *"I liked it, in comparison [with later Primary] I really enjoyed it."* Paula also expressed positive feelings about her early schooling in Latin America : *"I loved it, I thought it was very good - because I was learning a lot - yes, I enjoyed it and I enjoyed having other kids around and having friends."* These sentiments were echoed by Maureen : *"I remember the first six years was very happy at school ... what I enjoyed most of the first years was of course the physical outlet at school, any type of ball [game] any play."*

When asked about his early experiences in Latin America, Sam recalled : *"I think I was good at several things ... I was a sort of obedient child so I didn't bother too much - I didn't put myself in too much trouble, but I liked to play ... it was very happy without any problems."* In similar vein, Sylvia explained : *"Well primary school it was excellent. I feel it was very happy, easy."* Many of her comments related to her achievements in the early years of education : *"I remember that I always wanted to be the first in the class ... I learned very quickly to read and write and I had the first place. There is a lot of*

competition in Latin America, they give you prizes if you are the best in the class. I always wanted to be best in the class and I always won the first place."

Despite her many negative experiences, Elizabeth also recalled aspects of early schooling that she enjoyed in Latin America : *" I used to love singing and dancing and going on the stage - and they had a lot of different performances each year and every time they said, 'Who wants to do dancing ?' I always said 'I want to do it!'"* However she did comment further : *"They have a way of punishment with me, because all the time they couldn't keep me quiet and not moving too much, so they used to say 'If you don't behave you won't go to it' - the concert."*

Colin from Africa had little positive to say about his experiences : *" I was six years old and I was happy to help other kids with their work, but didn't like being forced to cane them."* However he commented also : *"I think I was interested in schooling - I enjoyed it because I was interested in learning."* In contrast, Michael who did not like much of his early education in Scandinavia, recalled only that : *"The play times were great because with 1300 kids there [it] was a world on its own."*

Early primary teachers

Participants' experiences with early teachers were an important aspect of their early education which they discussed, some in great detail. Positive comments about early teachers were made by eleven of the twelve participants including Sylvia, who described the teachers she experienced in Latin America : *" My teacher was very good with me, and she said that she prepared me to be in public. I had a lot of stimulation ... most of my teachers were very affectionate ... my teacher was very nice always. When you come to school sometimes you kiss them and hug them, they are very nice people and they are more close than here."*

Paula also had positive memories of most of her early teachers in Latin America. *"We loved most of our teachers, we had great respect for our teachers."* Another participant, Brian, recalled his teacher in early school years in the Middle East as : *"A very old lady and she was very nice,"* while Lorna recalled her earliest teachers in Africa as : *"Really pleasant, I suppose, maybe it's because they didn't have to take outside school responsibility, they were really good."* She explained further : *"This old man was our teacher - in Year 1- Sub- A, we all had to go out and collect tins for him. I don't know why because I was little, that's all we did."* Sam, who attended an American school in

Latin America, felt the teachers at his school were superior to those who taught in the state run schools in his country and commented : *"I know that they were better than public [school] ones."* However, Maureen who was educated in Scandinavia, described becoming aware of differences in teachers at an early age : *"I was quite young when I discovered there were good teachers and poor teachers ... when I became aware that some teachers just didn't have it and some did."*

Jane described her enjoyable first experience of teachers and school in Scandinavia as *"homely,"* explaining : *"It was an oldish two storey family home ... The teacher who was appointed to that job lived at the school and some of the rooms were converted into classrooms – so we had her dog there, and it was very homely we were sort of playing in her back yard."* In contrast, Philippa's most positive experiences of early teachers during her education in Africa, were of the priests and nuns *"rewarding"* children for good work. She explained thus : *"We had Italian priests - missionaries, they used to show films so I used to like religion very much ... and the sisters used to reward us of course by giving us sweets if you did well."*

Peter had an extremely negative first experience of a teacher in Year 1 in Latin America. However, he found repeating the year with a different teacher was a much more positive experience : *"When I repeat Year 1 there was another man but, he wasn't the same, different personality and he used different methods, different kinds of activity... after that it was good... It helped to have a lot of activity."* In contrast, for Michael from Scandinavia, the situation did not improve and he explained : *"We had two main teachers in the first years at school. One for language that was a woman and a man that was teaching us maths... a very rigid sort of education ... very disciplined and strict ... that never agreed with me."* Colin also had nothing positive to say about his early teachers in Africa, commenting only : *"There were those headmasters who were kind to me to allow me to study freely. I have a very high regard for them."*

Negative experiences of teachers in the early years of education were described by many participants in this research study. Colin told of being *"used"* in Year 2 by teachers in Africa to *"solve class problems"* in Years 3 and 4, and having to cane the older students which placed him at great risk of being *"beaten up"* whenever he left the classroom : *"I was*

in Year 2, and I would be asked to go and solve problems either in Year 3 or Year 4, and those poorer students would be caned by me after solving their problems. It would still be good in the classroom, but after getting out of class these students would come to look for me to beat me and so it made my life very difficult." He explained the attitudes of early primary teachers thus: "The teachers were never kind teachers, they used to beat us a lot and it was never ending. It's just as likely they wouldn't like you for reasons that were not clear - so schooling was not easy, it was terrible ... I disliked the teachers and the kids because there was no rule of law ... I really disliked primary school and the teachers that taught there ... On academic grounds I didn't have problems, but definitely they [teachers] just still pick on you just because they didn't like your parents or any other mistakes."

Another African participant, Philippa, described similar experiences with teachers in the early years of primary school, explaining: "I found out that the teachers were not very friendly, [for] everything you were supposed to be punished, so there's no room for error ... so in that sense I was a little bit - discouraged ... get there late you are punished - they cane you for everything, you are punished for even a little thing like that... Sometimes you even think a teacher is picking on you and stuff like that. There were particular teachers who I should say were very rude, they are not kind to kids at all, they are not gentle to kids." She added "Even up to now I fear one particular teacher in Grade 1, I can still see her now, she will never disappear from my mind."

Four of the five Latin American participants also described negative experiences of early teachers. For Peter these involved his Year 1 teacher whom he described as "tough" and pressurising him to learn. "[In] Year 1, the teacher was very tough, you know and he put a lot of, how do you call it? - when they put pressure and they want you to learn something ... When I was in Year 1- Oh I was scared! - because of the teachers I think, because he was strict and he gave a lot of punishment." Elizabeth also had problems with her Year 1 teacher. "The teacher had problems with me because every time she asked a question I could answer it straight away, I could read. She got so upset because she couldn't control me so she called the principal, that was the middle of the year, and said 'I can't understand this girl she is just too much - she is just giving me too much problems.' She didn't know what to do with me. So the principal said to me 'Why, what is the problem?' and gave me a book and said 'Read here' and I could read the whole piece, [she said] 'Oh she shouldn't be in Year 1 she should be in Year 2.' so they put me in Year 2." She commented further: "At that time teachers were allowed to hit the kids with rulers so I used to get a lot of it with rulers."

Paula, who described the older nuns who taught her in early primary school as “nasty,” explained : *“They came straight from the [Spanish] inquisition, those nuns ... They used to shout and hit and to this day caning is done where it's not necessary, sometimes for no reason at all, you used to get it on the knuckles with a ruler. This particular teacher from X, she used to hit with a ruler but not with the flat side of the ruler, but with the edge of the ruler.”* When asked what she did not like about early school, Paula described disliking the “nastiness” of teachers even more than corporal punishment. *“[It was] the nastiness, not so much the punishment – the corporal punishment. They used to insult you, call you names and shout at you for no reason at all. If you had your socks down to your ankles rather than up to your knees, they used to hit you. We used to wear white gloves, if our gloves weren't - like – immaculate, for a young kid that is impossible, you could get hit. If your hat – if the little ribbon was sort of here rather than at the back, you used to get hit. We used to wear a bow tie and you know how difficult it is to have a bow tie straight. If your bow tie was crooked we used to get hit. They used to check the collars to make sure we were clean and the cuffs, and Oh you name it we had it! We used to just have to walk around absolutely clean and we couldn't be kids, we couldn't have anything out of place. I think it was to do with being a Catholic school.”*

Sylvia, on the other hand, only witnessed corporal punishment by teachers in Years 1 and 2 of primary school. However, she recalls being “terrified” by it. *“I remember that my classmates they suffered a lot of corporal punishment with the hand, and they [teachers] used a ruler, a big long ruler and they hit them on the hand. Sometimes they did terrible punishments with the kids. They stood them in the sun for one or two hours, there outside holding the desk if they fail in the lesson, or if they didn't do their homework Oh, thank God I didn't have any of these experiences.”* When asked how she felt about these experiences she replied : *“Oh terrible, terrible, God everybody was scared – I mean terrified, you didn't want to speak out in the class.”*

Michael, one of the Scandinavian participants, also had negative experiences with early teachers whom he recalled as being : *“Very disciplined and strict. Punishment used to be - they [teachers] would clip you over the ears or bang you on the head with a book, or the knuckles, or pull you by the short hairs on your ears - anything to inflict - you know - maximum pain for minimum effort.”*

Later Primary School Experiences

Positive comments about education in the later years of primary school were made by several participants, including Paula, Elizabeth, Peter and Sam, from Latin America; Brian

from the Middle East; Maureen and Jane from Scandinavia; and Lorna and Philippa from Africa. Sam remembered enjoying his later primary schooling at an American style Baptist school in Latin America : *"I didn't have any problems there where I went up to 6th Grade, and [I] was always more or less having good marks... In Year 5 I thought I was going to be best student but I wasn't, but I was the best in Year 6 which was very good. Always I was a good student, I don't say that I was better at studying, but I used to pay attention to what the teacher was saying so I didn't get into trouble."*

In contrast with his traumatic first year in school, Peter described his subsequent experiences in the later years of primary school in Latin America in much more positive terms : *"I always tried to be first in everything, ... Spanish comprehension, that was the moment I remember most and I was waiting for that subject. In the Spanish class, she [teacher] always asks 'Who wants to discuss something?' and I always try to be the first one. I was good I remember, I think that was the most important moment ... I was number one in my group, and that was the first time... and they gave a trip to X. It was the first time I left my Mum and so I think that it was the most important experience I had. In Year 4 I got the same position, I was the best. In Year 5, I wasn't first but I was good."*

For Maureen, the experiences of six years of primary school in Scandinavia were happy : *"We had a lot more practical [education] ... the physical of course I always liked ... I loved school because of the playing, up till Grade 6 I loved school really. I became aware of my responsibility at school from about Grade 4. That's when I became aware that I had a responsibility there to do my homework ... we had a lot of outdoor activities ... and when we were at school there was always a good break to go and do some sewing."*

Jane, also from Scandinavia, described her move in Year 3 from the small and "homely" school to a larger school, in positive terms as follows : *"I think that we felt very important you know, it was like - we were going on to the big school now with the big kids and I don't think it was daunting at all ... you knew that was going to happen, and it was in an area where you know a lot of the kids, probably most of them you would know, and all the teachers lived locally. You would look at all the teachers and you would know where they all lived because they were all in that area. It was all familiar, yes."* Comparing it with her previous school, she explained : *"The homely part of it went away, it was like going to a real school, where the other was like an old house. You had proper classrooms with geography here and biology there."*

Brian's positive memories of later primary school in the Middle East were of "singing" the Koran and some homework : *"Because we don't have time to do art and things there, we used to do drawing at home, pictures and things, and bring to the teacher, because there's no way in the classroom we'll do art and things. She tells us 'Ok, you draw a vase with a flower next to it, or draw a tree.' You know, each one draw something - sometimes I used to enjoy the homework."*

Paula liked aspects of her primary school in Latin America. She described liking the access to "wonderful books" and "learning things," in particular geography. Paula explained : *"I think they gave us such good scope about the world and interest in the world, you can talk to anybody there and they will tell you at least a little bit about each country."* Elizabeth, also from Latin America, recalled being "very active" and enjoying participating in school concerts. She also remembers enjoying the research topics given after Year 3 which she described thus : *"What I liked about school at that time was - we used to have this method of research ... We started doing that from Year 3, that to me was very good and I loved it. I still can remember things that I learned at that age."*

Philippa also commented more positively about her experiences of later primary education rather than the early years at school in Africa : *"I liked it, that's why I think I performed very well. Because after I settled in, and after accomplishing lower primary education, it was not a problem at all ...it got easier."* In contrast, Lorna's only positive recollections of later primary school in an African boarding school were about the subjects she liked, including arithmetic, history, and bible studies *"because it was easy, I suppose."*

Despite his academic abilities as a "straight A student," Colin's only positive experiences of later primary school in Africa were of befriending a "notorious" classmate in Year 7 who was able to protect him from beatings by other students and repression by the teachers, and of the Principals who waived his fees, thus enabling him to continue with his education, for whom he had "very high regard." In a similar vein, the only positive comments Michael made about his primary school education in Scandinavia, concerned play times spent outside the classroom. *"There was a big sort of playground area, [used] in winter too, yes. Each lesson would last 50 minutes there would be a 10 minute break, and then you would have your lunch which would be half an hour."*

In spite of the positive comments made by many of the minority group parents in this research study concerning their experiences as children in later primary school, several participants also described experiences which were unpleasant and off putting, and which they believed were instrumental in preventing enjoyment of their primary school education. For Brian, education in a Middle Eastern government primary school was conducted in old buildings, and characterised by repetition and a lack of variety : *"The same, nothing different, every day we go to school and there's nothing to make you feel you're looking forward to going to school because you get to learn the same things, the same subjects ... when you change the school and go to [another] school you find that's the same."*

Sylvia had some difficulties in Year 4, when she changed over to a Latin American Catholic school run by nuns, and explained : *"I remember it was a bit hard because I didn't have any religious teaching in the government school and I had to learn all that stuff with the nuns. They were very strict even the uniform that you had to wear it had to be very neat and tidy and everything"* Another participant, Paula, commented on her experience of religious education in the Catholic primary school that she attended in Latin America : *"I wasn't keen on the teaching of religion because you were supposed to believe it - not understand it. I can't get into my head - how can you believe something you can't understand? And I learned that very early in the piece, so I was turned off religion after that and I wasn't interested in going to a Catholic high school."*

For Elizabeth, also from Latin America, the later years of primary school were not a happy experience, due to *"clashes with the teachers"* and being *"in trouble all the time"* since Year 1. She commented : *"I was noisy, laughing and talking. I sat at the back of the class and cut the hair of the girl in front, and pinched her cheeks and shook them and hurt her in Year 4, I was not angry, just playful, not destructive, just too active... I used to get into trouble, probably if I sit there for too long, that was probably the worst, that was the problem."* Elizabeth explained further : *"It got to the point when I was in Year 5 I think, that my Mum had to come every Friday to talk to the teachers to see how I was behaving, because if I was not behaving properly my Mum would give me a good whipping. So there was such a lot of controls there ... I was not understood that was the only problem... and I was very happy when I left, yes - Oh, I'm not coming any more to this place - I was so happy!"*

In contrast with the first few years of school which Lorna liked, her later Primary school years in an African boarding school were an unhappy experience : *"When I went to the boarding school I think that was really, really a shock to the system. It was different and there were so many rules, you had to do this, you don't do this. We were waking up at six o' clock, and the minute the bell goes you have to be up otherwise whoever [teacher] is on duty will give you a good hiding. So I really didn't enjoy the first few years of the boarding school, plus the food was not enough, we were hungry all the time yes."*

Jane remembered her later primary school education in Scandinavia as : *"very much according to the book ... you did have to follow the book strictly."* She explained further : *"Punishment was, depending on the teacher, fairly harsh at times. They did have the cane although I don't know if it ever [was used] - it was there, but I think it was just - you know, that we knew it was there. I think it would have to be pretty bad [to be used]. It was usually depending on the temper of the teacher ... usually it would be just a rap over the knuckles with a ruler or something like that ... [or] if you hadn't done the right thing you stayed behind an hour and you wrote 'I won't do this again' about 500 times before you could go home ... I think that was the most common punishment."* Michael, another of the Scandinavian participants, had very similar recollections of education throughout his primary school years and described it thus : *"It was a very rigid sort of education ...you weren't allowed to basically step outside the boundaries which the system had laid down. If you did you know you would get punished and beaten into the track again."*

On and off again attendance at school was again a pattern of the later primary school years at school in Africa for Colin, due to the financial constraints of his parents, and this resulted in him *"stagnating a lot."* After the completion of Year 5, he was unable to attend for a year, returned to do Year 6, then missed another two years, and was made to repeat Year 6 before going into Year 7. He explained : *"It was very hard for me stagnating with education, while seeing friends going ahead of me when I didn't go back to school to continue learning in the next class, it was very frustrating."* As well, Colin described his experiences at primary school thus : *"Due to the treatment at [primary] schools I had a rough time until I joined secondary school... I remember when I was in Year 5 I missed school for a month because of fear that I would be beaten by students or caned by teachers. I couldn't go to school so I would walk from home pretending to be going to school and then go and hide in the bush ... we had a very cruel teacher too. I would do my maths and a bit of English in the bush and go and present it to my Dad, cause he normally checked my books, so I had something. Unfortunately, one day I was discovered by a lady who had gone to look for firewood and reported me to my Dad ... When my Dad took me*

to school he was surprised to hear that for a month I had not reported to school ... he wanted me caned that very morning by one of the teachers, but because there was a test he agreed with the teacher that I had to do the test first and see the results, and if I performed poorly then definitely I would be punished with the cane. ... I got 95 out of 100 ... my Dad was already half tipsy and when I told him the result he was very annoyed, as he couldn't believe it. So he took me on his bike back to school to prove it beyond doubt ... he still wanted to cane me but there were people at our home who wouldn't let him do it, 'How can you cane this child who is so bright?' Though I escaped being caned [then] it was hard for me."

Primary school teachers

Many of the minority group parents in this research study described the teachers that they had experienced as primary school children in their country of origin. Several participants felt that most of their primary school teachers were good, and made positive comments. These included Paula, from Latin America, who commented : *"There was a lot of respect [given] to the teachers by students and parents."* Sylvia, who was also from Latin America stated : *"In my experience they were very, very close, but they tend to have favourite students - that wasn't very nice."*

Sam had positive experiences of teachers in his *"American style"* Primary school in Latin America and described them as *"good,"* explaining further : *"Some of the teachers were American ... the English teachers they were American, the others were just from Latin America, but the principal was an American."* Another Latin American participant, Peter, felt that in contrast with his bad experiences in Year 1, later primary school experiences with teachers, particularly from Year 3 onwards, were very positive. He recalled teachers who were encouraging, and one in particular who used innovative approaches such as the use of the telephone for practising oral language, and other *"real materials."* : *"he used the telephone, I don't know where he found the telephone because at this time about '69 or '70, you know it wasn't very often that the teacher had this kind of material... and I liked it ."*

Maureen, in discussing primary school teachers in Scandinavia, commented : *"I would have been about 9 years old when I became aware that some teachers just didn't have it and some did, yes."* She elaborated further : *"I'd say at that age I can't remember what it was, but when I had become older it definitely was those with discipline were the better ones. Those that had a good voice, a voice that carried."*

That was very important. A voice that carried, that had discipline, strict discipline but had patience, as a result the class would become more interesting and you enjoy that. You certainly excel with teachers like that. Those teachers ...they were strict ...[but] I found that very often they had a good sense of humour."

After her negative experiences of teachers in the early years of schooling in Africa, Philippa found upper primary school more enjoyable and explained : *"Usually the teachers, they punish you when you are not following the work, the rules. When you are naughty, that's when they punish you, but if you follow instructions and all the work given - once you learn to do what they say, you will never be punished, they don't punish you."* However, despite these sentiments, she also experienced some teachers who were "feared" and whom she described thus : *"When I was in Africa we used to have a teacher who was a very cruel teacher, anything was punishment, punishment, and he was a maths teacher to make it worse. Because I was doing very well I was all right, but some students in that class who were not performing very well because of being punished all the time, whenever they saw a teacher they would start quaking, you know, and everything evaporates. Even what they knew, it just vanished and again they're punished because they couldn't. Sometimes he would ask them very simple questions and if you ask in a calm way they will tell you, but because you have kind of scared them everything evaporates and they could not. So it used to have very negative effects too, and kids dropping out of school because of being punished."*

Experiences of harsh and authoritarian teachers in primary school were common to many of the participants in this research study. Elizabeth described disliking many of her teachers at primary school in Latin America : *"Some teachers I didn't like them because they couldn't understand me ... they used to feel that I was a problem child and I was all the time put behind ... the main problem [was] that I wanted to do a lot of things that I couldn't, I was not allowed to do and I was all the time in trouble... Some of them were very angry, yes very strict and they shout at the kids, and most of my years in primary school I remember I didn't want to go to school - because I always have clashes with the teachers - most of them I didn't like, and the problem is also that when you pass from one year to the other, the teacher from the previous year maybe says to the next teacher 'This is a problem kid, this [one] is good.' So they expected me, they knew we were coming ... I can remember they would make comments about me... .Because I was not a high achiever, I didn't have even the support of the teachers because they didn't think that I could do -[it]."*

Punishment by teachers in primary school was also an issue which Paula described in detail : *"If for some reason the teacher had to leave the classroom for 5 minutes, she would put somebody in*

charge, not always the best person. If this other kid didn't like you, when the teacher came back she used to say to the girl or boy 'Ok, who was misbehaving?' Sometimes I was misbehaving but sometimes I wasn't, and they used to say 'Oh, she was naughty because of this or that' and I used to get a caning, no questions asked. Not 'Is that right?' or you know, a chance to defend yourself - no, that's it, you used to get it on the knuckles with a ruler." She explained the situation further : "We used to get smacked or be sent to the principal's office, most of the time I used to spend afternoons outside the classroom by myself just kicking cans, but that wasn't uncommon, sometimes I wasn't the only kid doing that." When asked how often this occurred, Paula replied : "Oh, quite often, actually I was very naughty. Yes, I was quite rebellious. My parents were having a lot of problems at home with their marriage, and I think that showed at school." When asked how this treatment made her feel, Paula responded "It made me feel rebellious. I got smacked a lot at home."

In her discussion of teachers in Scandinavian primary school, Jane described the punishments as "depending on the temper of the teacher, fairly harsh at times." She explained : "I saw one kid who was lifted up by his cheeks - the teacher sort of took hold of his cheeks and just shook him," which she attributed to the fact that "he'd probably driven him [teacher] slowly crazy until he did that.." When asked how she felt witnessing the child being shaken, Jane answered : "I don't think we were frightened, we were probably very cautious of being cheeky in that person's class ... There was a couple [of teachers] that you don't mess up in that class, because he does get you ... There was another one who sort of had a very bad temper, he sort of went off - was very verbal, not abuse but if he told you off he was red in the face and you could almost see his blood pressure going up, but he never touched you."

Lorna, on the other hand, who described her experiences at primary level boarding school in Africa as "a shock to the system," explained : "In primary school the teachers were almost all a little strict ...if you don't do it you will get whacked ... with a stick, girls on the hand, boys on the bottom. There they were beating you if you were late for eating, if you were not at your bed place, everything, it was just a nightmare ... the teachers did the beating - quite a lot of young teachers, I think it was like fun for them too."

Colin also told of the harsh treatment meted out by teachers in upper primary school in Africa. : "It was mostly in primary school where students would be caned left and right without fear - all the time -all teachers can pick on any student ...one could cane you, beat you left and right without any other

*teacher restraining them... I remember the lady who was teaching us maths started by introducing two canes and every day it would increase by two, and there was a student who was caned - he had 14 canes - it was terrible, I mean brutal... The teacher would pick on you - if a student is to be punished the teacher would pick on you to bring a cane. If you delay that would earn you more beatings ... [it was] worse for girls who were biologically mature 'cause the teachers they would like to have them for girl friends and if one refused it would be a problem for that girl - although school rules prohibited male teachers to beat these girls, but they didn't escape the cruelty of the teachers." Colin described the atmosphere in primary school as one of "fear and intimidation" adding : *If I reflect on the way I was treated, I think it is with a lot of pain. Some of the teachers, now I think I would love to meet again, because of the way they treated me in Primary school."**

Michael from Scandinavia, was another participant who had nothing good to say about any of his primary school teachers. He described them as "great believers in repetition" and "very disciplined and strict," explaining : *"It wasn't till much later I actually started to get on with the teachers."* He subsequently gave another example of the kind of behaviour that he had experienced from some teachers : *"We used to have a teacher who stood down at the back picking his nose and flicking 'boogie men' from his nose and putting it on the kids when they weren't looking."*

Primary school methods

Many of the minority group participants in this research study discussed some of the methods used by teachers during primary school education in their home country. Brian described his education in the Middle East as "old fashioned," commenting : *"The teacher stays with you all the time, you listen to her and she writes a lot on the blackboard and you have to copy it. They [teachers] spend some time listening to the children reading but because of the [lack of] time you find that not everybody is learning a lot."* He explained further : *"In X we used to have a lot of home work, but most of the homework we had, the teacher used to write on the blackboard and we used to copy it. Like for maths and grammar we used to copy it, and she would tell us 'Ok, I want you to write it five times or six times and bring it back'."*

Methods in Scandinavia were described in detail by Maureen as "a lot more practical" with all primary schools having a gymnasium, and kitchen, as well as a sewing and wood working area, for use by the children from the start of school at seven years of age. She recalled : *"I didn't like writing I remember that quite clearly. All the teachers did teach us some letters ...I*

remember also clearly when it came to writing they used a lot of designs, you have to write designs for months - borders, that's how we learned to write, different kinds of borders yes - I think it was to get your handwriting going, to learn shapes basically - or if we did a,a,a,a then always we have to make a few borders in the end. The borders was pretty important I know, we had whole books of borders... I can remember the teacher standing up at the blackboard making words, and we had to sit down in the class reading the words and writing them down in our books. I don't think the teaching [methods] in those days were as scientifically playful as they are today - apart from the pattern part ... I think it was a lot more rigid teaching, 'This is a car C-A-R, now everybody spell that and can everybody write that down in their book.' Some how I don't have as big recollection of how I learned to read and write, it just seemed to happen... I can't remember much activity, mostly sitting except for just before Christmas and just before school ending we would make murals. We had a lot of outdoor activities yes, when we got sick of being inside very often a teacher would say 'Oh, let's all go and play ball, let's all go for a walk in the park.' We had a beautiful park next to the school... Up to Grade 4 we had a little bit of homework but not much, but after Year 4 - we had things that we had to memorise. We had history lessons and had to take it home, read half a page, memorise, come back to school and have a test on what we had memorised. From Grade 4 and Grade 5 and Grade 6 we had English homework, we had maths homework, we had history homework all on different days, but we always had one or two different subjects at home almost every day."

The other two participants from Scandinavia also talked about methods used in their primary school education. Jane remembered methods as being : "Very much according to the book ... you have to follow the book strictly and read from here to here, and you've got your strict page numbers, you have to know that off by heart for the next day or the next week." She recalled writing pages of A's and B's and commented : "I don't remember being able to read anything until we got into about Year 3 ...and I always found that really easy - reading ... I think in Year 5 we start having English and that's a compulsory language, and Year 6 you start with German, so everybody has got one or two languages that they know, and they give you a bit of knowledge of the Scandinavian languages as well... I didn't like the maths and all that much ... it sort of never appealed to me - lots of it never really made sense ... it might have been the way it was presented to us ... we learned the tables by heart yes ... Language was my favourite ... religion that was a compulsory thing too, in the early years that was really exciting for you because you got to read all the stories in the Old Testament, and you had to know off by heart all the psalms, you have to be able to prattle off all the verses, you know... We did have a fair bit of homework ... you learned things off by heart ... often you had to write a piece from a book onto a page - which was the subject called writing - you copied that page in your own handwriting, we generally had that at least half an hour a day. The subject was called

writing and that was just forming your letters and putting it into some sort of neatness - and you would have to read so many pages in a book and be able to tell about that ... you learned it and learned it and two months later I don't think you could remember half of it. Some of it stuck - you had to learn a row of kings - prattle them off in whichever order they came in."

In similar vein, Michael also described his primary schooling in Scandinavia as "rigid" with a lot of emphasis on rote learning and recitation of verses and songs which he found the "boring part of it." He explained : *"We had a lot of homework, repetitive type homework particularly in maths and I suppose even in language too, in writing[we] had to do that, to repeat things, you know. You would get 100 additions to do at home, great believers in repetition were the teachers - maths was particularly like that. Normally I didn't have a problem with it, it was just having to sit down and spend an hour doing a hundred of the same thing, I didn't [like]."*

Primary school teaching methods in Latin America were described by Elizabeth, Paula, Sylvia, Peter and Sam. Peter, who enjoyed his later experiences of primary school education more than the earlier years, emphasised the importance of competition in his schooling : *"There's always a competition of course ... they give a special prize gift after when we finish each year ... they put the marks from 0 to 10, so 9 or 10 it was good, especially when it was like that, it was good."* He described the methods used by teachers thus : *"He [teacher] put a lot of exercises on the blackboard [which] we have to do in the book. When we had finished we put the book on his desk and he changed to another activity, for example doing some designs, [or] some pictures about something you like - animals, country, people or whatever. After he put this activity on, he was checking the results of the other activity at the same time ... I remember it helped to have a lot of activity - it's the same routine."* Peter particularly remembered one teacher who used the telephone for oral language practice : *"For practicing speaking - oral language, for example [when] the suggestion [was] say that he asked students questions about something, he changed the activity and I remember he used the telephone... I don't know where he found that ... he tried to use the resources that he had ... He tried to use - not pictures, you know - more real materials and things like that."* Peter also had recollections of primary school sport which he described : *"We went to the park from Year 1 to Year 6 and played basket ball, soccer, softball or something like that, but there wasn't a special teacher, sports teacher, it was the normal teacher that we have in the classroom. We enjoyed that sport because we played and we weren't pushed."*

Sam remembered his primary school methods as involving a lot of copying and repetition : *"We had a note book and every day we had to write down from 1 to 100, next day we had to write down 101 to 200, and I said 'I know the numbers I don't want to do it.' So I leave it some days and I was maybe 300 numbers behind ... I remember things like that I didn't like."* He explained further : *"We had a very traditional way of learning, memorising the material we had to learn. To help us do that we had to do some homework and study for exams. A report with marks was handed [out] every month so the parents could see the performance of the children. The report was handed to the teacher after it had been signed by the parents."* Despite feeling that his education was lacking in "problems" Sam was critical of aspects of his Primary education at an American style school in Latin America : *"I realise that maybe I could have learned more. Another thing I wasn't guided to specialise in something - like [just] learning bits and pieces of many things but never learning something specific, like something practical. [i.e.] Say I wanted to do music, but such a thing I didn't get to learn early. I had violin lessons and this was a blessing that it [learning violin] was done, but it wasn't done in a way that I could say was thinking of the future."*

Sylvia described the methods used in primary school as "just memory," explaining : *"You have to copy the lesson, you learn the words or sounds for the next day, and you had to memorise it. The next day you had to give it to the teacher, and after they give you a list of words that you also had to memorise. Next day you have to remember every thing because they dictate it - they tell you and you have to write it down. I remember that if you made any mistakes or if you didn't remember, you had to do double because every day you had one sound to learn ... maths was very important to do and in Year 3 the times tables were compulsory you had to repeat them and memorise them by heart. Because in Year 3 it was very important to teach the kids multiplication sums and division, and maths was very important."* In Year 4 Sylvia moved to a Catholic school which she described thus : *"The nuns they didn't touch you but they were very strict, and very strict in your way of writing as well. If you didn't have very nice writing they will tell you or leave you after classes to do lines until you improve your writing ... They were very much stressing that kind of stuff especially with spelling and maths... in primary school the nun who was principal she always chose me to memorise big things to tell to the other nuns. Some important nuns came to visit our school, me and another girl had to memorise a lot of stuff. We stayed in a little room memorising two or three pages. Oh, it was so hard... sometimes I complain and I told my Mum 'I don't want to do it'... it was a lot of pressure as part of your subjects you have to do extra."*

When discussing the methods she experienced in primary school, Paula commented on the strong emphasis placed on geography which she described as follows : *"In geography classes in primary school we used to be taught about every single country in the world, about its borders, about its population about their religion, about what they used to export what they used to import, in some cases if it was relevant about their language, what language they spoke. Once we learnt about all the countries, we used to be given a piece of paper – blank just with the outline of the continents and islands, and we used to have to pinpoint ... let's say Tahiti - Number 1 ... and then London - Number 2. We used to have to do about a hundred of those for a whole week ... not only we discussed every country in general but we used to have to do an assignment on a country. Each child was given a country, I didn't do Australia ... but the one that did Australia told us about the whaling industry in Albany and about the sheep ... kangaroos in Australia that's the point I remember ... we learnt just little things like that."* She explained further : *"There was a lot of emphasis on tables, we always had lots of homework, a list of homework duties was written in a colour coded note pad. The parents had to check everything had been done and sign it."*

Religion was also mentioned as a feature of Paula's primary school education in Latin America : *"They started by preparing us for First Communion by giving us catechism classes, I queried some point about the original sin and I was told that it wasn't meant to be understood, just believed. That was the end of religion for me."* As well, Paula recalled learning by rote and repetition : *"There was a fair bit of learning by repeating, that was done a lot ... learn it by heart ... there was a lot of repetition and a lot of reading aloud - everyone used to take turns to read something in front of the class. I found that tedious."*

Elizabeth described primary school methods of research that she liked after Year 3 : *"They had different units during the year that we had to cover ... the teachers used to give us a complete list of the topics that we had to cover ... we have to take a topic and research the topic and we have to show it in class ... from memory and we also have to show graphs with all our research ... I used to memorise things at that age and it was wonderful, because it gave me the opportunity to go to the library at a very young age, research the topic and present it in front of the class. It helped me develop my oral skills and it was very good, gave me confidence."*

Methods used in African primary schools were discussed by Lorna, Philippa, and Colin, all of whom highlighted the strong emphasis on corporal punishment. Lorna described learning in two languages from seven years of age, and copying work from the blackboard onto slates due to a lack of paper and books: *"They [teachers] wrote on a board, we had to copy and*

say it after them too, we did both. We didn't have paper, we had those small blackboards, and then you just wipe it. We didn't have books." Lorna also described the "shock to the system" which she felt when moved to a government boarding school at approximately ten years of age. "There were so many rules We had to wear uniforms in boarding school, it was compulsory and it was so different ... after lunch we had a study period of one hour, and then you had to come out and do whatever you had to do around the school, after dinner they had another hour of study before you go to bed, so it was very, very highly structured ... you have to sit for exams each year... if you fail you repeat the year... we did a lot of cramming, had to cram even if we didn't understand - history, social science we didn't do a lot of arithmetic and bible studies."

Methods experienced by Philippa during her primary school education were also very authoritarian. She explained : "There's no room for error, when you have not got something right you are punished and this punishment involves things like caning or making you work in the school yard collecting rubbish for long hours, you lose a lot of time ... We were made to sing our multiplication tables and if by lunch time you had not yet mastered everything you were made to stay in the classroom. You were not allowed to go outside and play or even have lunch ... things were structured as if we were adults - you know - you have to do this, you have to finish the work and we didn't have time to play ... if you don't finish enough work you are caned, if you can not get it right you are caned.... Those who were not gifted academically were really suffering because in order for them to understand they have to be punished by caning or by locking them up in the classroom." Despite these experiences however, Philippa also recalled : "I used to like religion so much because we used to do a lot of singing and we had Italian priests - missionaries, they used to show us [the] cinema... .When I went to upper Primary I developed a liking for subjects like history, geography because we were doing world geography so it was quite interesting to know what was happening in the other parts of the world, especially when you learn about economic activities and availability of things which were not in Africa, so we became very interested in that as young kids... we were not exposed to material things, we didn't have much, but knowing that in other countries they have this, like cruising a river in a boat or steamer. We learnt about Rhineland, about North America, we even learnt about Australia and stuff like that. We became very interested in knowing what was happening in other parts of the world as X is a landlocked country and we are not exposed to big water bodies. We had never ever seen a ship, so I was longing to see a big ship."

Philippa was also educated in two languages from an early age and she explained : "As there were several different local languages, English was necessary to enable communication between the different groups. At first in Grade 1 the local language was used and English as a second language. Later from

Grade 3 English was used all the time. At home the mother tongue was used. From Grade 5, debating was encouraged and organised by the students, giving every one a chance to participate on a Friday afternoon."

When asked what she learned about Australia, Philippa replied : "Quite a lot of economic geography and about sheep, wool, primary industries, climate, Aborigines, kangaroos, and Perth held the Commonwealth Games in 1962." When asked about what subjects, if any she disliked in primary school, Philippa answered : "In primary school, history when X X was in power, and we were forced to learn about Muslims in X. Back in the 1890s my great grandfather escaped into the bush from the slavers, many others were sent to X with the Arab slave traders and sold to Europeans to work in cane fields and so on in the U S and other places. There are still many sad songs about this time, people would rather die than be sold into slavery."

When asked about the methods used in primary school, Colin described learning in the local language until English was introduced in Year 4 : "From Year 4 upwards one was expected to be able to read just English by Year 7, if not speak it. By Year 7, one was at least expected to do a bit of composition in English, but read well in English." He explained the methods as : "Mainly by rote because there were very few teaching aids, the government couldn't afford to pay for teaching aids. Most of the teaching aids were borrowed, things like weighing scales used to be borrowed from shopkeepers around the school, and so the learning was pure[ly] by rote, and that was another painful experience ... other students actually left school because of that. We had to sing our times tables ... when one was in Year 5 one had to learn by heart up to 25 x 25. That was really hard for other students and if one couldn't do it then you'd be caned.... Learning for those students in X schools was very difficult using rote memory ... it was a problem especially for those students who were not gifted in remembering. Very few kids would finish primary standard well and go to high school. It would be very difficult to remember and perform certain tasks well ... In primary school I would say it was difficult to learn...for a whole month I couldn't go to school and on occasions I'd be malingering in order to remain at home - in about Year 6 ... I know a lot of students who could have done better but because of these punishments at school unfortunately they left school." When asked about the atmosphere in primary school Colin described it as one of "fear and intimidation."

Post Primary Experiences

Ten of the twelve minority group participants in this research study found that their later years of education were quite enjoyable. Jane described her experiences of secondary

school education in Scandinavia positively, commenting : *"At the end of Year 7 they decide whether you go to the uni line, which meant you had to go to the nearest bigger town, or you could do the next 3 years at that school, doing 'Non TEE' subjects I went the TEE line and I did like it."* For her the experiences of education were mostly happy : *"I was happy to go to school. I went through a spell, at about 13 or 14 years of age where I really wanted to leave... Fortunately my Dad put his foot down ... I think it was probably a mixture of not being sure how to cope with a new school and not knowing really ... what you are going to do for the rest of your life, and that's really early to do that at 13 or 14. When you are in Year 7 you find out if you don't go [down] that line now, you won't be able to go to uni ... you sort of cut yourself [off] from further education."* However, later experiences of education were not quite as agreeable for Jane who explained : *"I did a business course after that ... I didn't like [much] it was more like uni with lecturing and ... everything you do yourself, you didn't know the people ... you didn't move with a class - I think I felt a bit lost sort of ... I didn't want to do it any more but knew that I needed to do that in order to get where I wanted to."*

Michael also described post primary schooling in Scandinavia : *"I think it was Year 8 when you got split up a little bit. The kids that don't want to go to university or that want to leave at the end of the year, could leave at the end of Year 8 - just turning 15 ... and then the next lot would leave about half way - Year 10."* In contrast with his initial experiences of secondary school education, Michael found the latter years much more enjoyable due to an "inspirational" teacher, and explained thus : *"In the last couple of years I started to take a lot of interest in school - [at] fifteen, sixteen, and suddenly I realised what I was good at and what I wasn't good at. That was the first discovery."* When asked how he felt about his later education, Michael responded : *"I felt quite good about that, yes."*

Secondary school education in Scandinavia from Year 7 to Year 10 was not a happy time for Maureen, due to the illness and the subsequent death of her mother. However, despite this, she did recall liking several aspects of her upper school education, which she attributed to good teachers. After completing Year 10, Maureen moved to an open learning co-ed boarding school where she spent two years. In contrast with her earlier high school years, she enjoyed this school, which she described as : *"A boarding school you go to where you live with other boys and girls aged between 16 and 25 and you can choose your own subjects, it's not set or anything."* Another feature of her secondary school education that Maureen discussed, was the emphasis on practical education. Every school had a gymnasium and facilities for

cooking, sewing and wood work, which she described as follows : *"In secondary school we also had a room for ceramics, every school has a big building which is dedicated to practical learning including kitchen ... and specialised art teachers for each school ... one teacher just for sewing and one teacher for woodwork When you come out of Scandinavian schools at the age of 17... you will know 'semi' how to cook, but you definitely will not come out of any of those schools without knowing how to knit, to sew, to darn or to do woodwork or do pottery. They are compulsory for 9 years and it was 4 hours a week when I was there."*

Paula attended a private secondary girls school in Latin America which she liked and described thus : *"[I] went to a private school, proud of its achievement in teaching English and encouragement of free thinking and independent women. Some of the past alumni had become prominent members of society in their careers, beauty, or getting a 'good' husband or all of the above. As I came from the Primary, not having done much at all, I had to do a whole year of English subjects just to catch up with the rest of the students. There were about 30 in our class, we all considered ourselves very lucky to be there ... and there were 500 girls queuing on the day of the enrolment for the entrance exam."*

In contrast with Paula's experiences in primary school, high school was a lot less authoritarian, but still entailed some punishment : *"If there were any arguments with the teachers it was more like - words ... the really naughty ones used to get a smack on the back of the leg, or used to be grabbed by the ears and then taken outside, but the most scary part, was being taken to the principal's office and standing there all morning ... They used to - not shout, but speak to you in very strong terms and that was the most scary part. I never found that beating did any good for me, it didn't have as much effect as having something taken away from me or being given extra work."* When asked if she enjoyed high school, Paula explained : *"Yes, yes I thought my school was very good ... If you wanted to go to that school it was because you were interested in learning all the English side of it ... In my high school it was like you were supposed to come out very fluent - all morning was all Spanish and after lunch everything was in English ... in the first years of high school we had to do everything just in English ... we had maths in English ... we had to learn all the terminology....Oh I loved it, and I think it was better for me, when I compare with a lot of my friends here in Australia that went to these really expensive schools and learned English from the time they were really little. They weren't really interested, it was just another subject to them, but I really wanted to go to that school to learn English and I was that little bit older. I had a full year of learning English compacted and I think that was very good ... our level of English was a lot better than the other girls."*

Peter, who also enjoyed his upper school education at a government school in Latin America, described it as having *"a different feeling"* from primary school, and explained : *"It wasn't harder, I think the only difference in the later school is they would do English from Year 7...it was just the basics, a couple of hours doing the words, the concepts, but it wasn't much - and I didn't like speaking it in high school.... The sport was different because we went to the park from Year 1 to Year 6 and played basketball, soccer, softball or something like that ... from Year 7 it was different, it was more sports, arts, crafts, English classes, I think that was the difference, more subjects ... we did some science in Year 5, 6 but it was more complicated, and we were happy"*

In contrast Sam attended a Catholic boys high school in Latin America, which he found generally a good experience. He explained : *"I wasn't that - popular - more or less quiet, I was more or less standard in development but not generally naughty. I didn't have any problems, I was trying to learn a little bit ... At the Catholic school they were asking a little bit more, like doing more homework, in primary school I felt it was a little bit easier ... I was competitive - I remember I wanted to get good marks."* When asked if he found high school a good experience, Sam replied : *"Yes, it really didn't worry me, I didn't want to study, but when you are there... I didn't have much of a choice because I went and they told me 'You are going to learn logarithms' and Ok!"*

Another Latin American participant, Sylvia, was educated by nuns at both primary and secondary level, however she found the move to high school difficult and described the situation thus : *"When I went to high school that was a little bit shocking, because everything was different. There were no prizes any more, you had to do it yourself, there were no more competitions and it was a little bit hard for me - I wanted to be stimulated with that sort of stuff, and I remember that I cried a lot of times ... Oh I felt very, very bad and very depressed ... because there were a lot of girls, new girls from other schools that came to the college. They were very, very good students and I wanted to be better than them ... and I was really, really depressed. In the first term my scores were not very good, well - middle- but after some counselling, I improved a lot ... at high school I was [just] another girl in the bunch, you know."* When asked what she thought had made her unhappy at first, Sylvia remarked : *"I think the main reason was vanity because I didn't do well."* Later she elaborated further : *"In high school they were so strict, and if you fail maths you have to come to a summer course and ...you have to pass all the units from the whole year so you have to study the nine subjects ... and it's very hard to get a higher mark ...we finish school on the last day of October, so during November and December you have to go and study and in January you have to do it again ... and not the same test that you have already failed."*

Transition to a Latin American government high school in Year 7 was fraught with difficulties for Elizabeth due to changes in the education system in her country of origin. She described the situation thus : *"At that time there was a change in the education system ... it was disaster, a complete disaster - they introduced TV to the schools and they also introduced classes through TV education for schools...and they were showing it to all the students. Oh, that was the most horrendous thing because it was so boring, and because they were starting without - special effects or things that could hold your interest. It was the most horrible thing. It was worse when I went into Year 7 maths - imagine maths! ... So I was always writing things on the board and making drawings and things. I remember, in the middle of a class for example, I started laughing and laughing - I couldn't control myself and then the teacher would say 'Go, get out of the room' and I would have to go out. At the end of the year everyone got certificates except me - and they said 'Oh well we don't want this girl here any more' and they expelled me saying that I was not permitted to come back to school for Year 8. My Mum...had to go to the school and ask them to accept me back again, I was [accepted] on condition [that] the first fault and I was out."*

Fortunately Year 8 and subsequent years were more positive experiences for Elizabeth due to good teachers and changes to the system. She explained as follows : *"Year 8 I changed, I matured and by that time they realised this stupid TV was no good and so they stopped doing that and luckily I had good teachers in Year 8 ...We went into experiments and labs and we also had dancing again and did sports. I was into swimming at that time too, so it changed a lot yes it was a dramatic change. When I went into Year 9 it was different, it was very good. I had an excellent teacher there."*

Brian described education in his country of origin in the Middle East, as based on the French Baccalaureate system, the result of past colonisation. He went to high school at 10 years of age, learning new subjects such as maths and science, as well as the compulsory subjects of politics and religion, which he explained thus: *"When I was in X the subjects were limited, of course in high school there were more ... you learn about the political party in X, ... there's special books about politics which is a subject and recognised. If you get good marks it doesn't help you to go to uni, you have to do it but it doesn't help. The same with the religious subjects, they give 20 marks but it doesn't matter if you get them - it doesn't help you enrol for a uni course."* However Brian recalled not liking his secondary education very much, due to lack of personal freedom for students to choose their subjects which instead were allocated by the school and state according to their marks.

If any subjects were failed the whole year had to be repeated, and a points system for entrance to university meant that students had to wait for years to be admitted, if at all.

For Colin, Philippa, and Lorna who came from Africa, experiences of education in secondary boarding schools were preferable to those in the early years. Philippa described working hard and enjoying her secondary education in an African boarding school: *"I was performing quite well, and because I was not a stubborn student I enjoyed doing my later education very much, because after what they called the Primary Leaving Exams, I performed very well and I was admitted to one of the top secondary schools ... I was 15, 16 when I went to Senior 1 which is equivalent to Year 8 here. I enjoyed it very much because ... I was an excellent student so I did not receive any punishment. They did punish the kids there, very much."* When asked further about punishment in high school Philippa explained: *"The punishment was not as bad as the primary - it's still beating, suspension, still work in the school yard. You would not like to do that work at all because there were no things like lawn mowers to mow the lawns. We had what they called 'slashers,' and the handle was so rough that if you slash maybe 10 metres square you would have blisters in the palm of your hand, and nobody wanted to - it was hard labour. Not only that, we had a school field where we planted corn, sweet potatoes and stuff like that, if you are stubborn, if you are naughty, as a punishment you are made to work in the school fields. It was not easy at all, it was not pleasant and nobody wanted to ... It was not as bad as primary, because these are not young kids any more."*

Philippa did recall disliking physics and remarked that she *"hated"* the teacher as a result. Despite this however, she reiterated how much she had enjoyed secondary school education: *"I enjoyed my later education very much. First because I was performing well, I was obedient, and you enjoy something when you know that the end result will be something that will help you, because I was focussing a little bit far [ahead]."*

Lorna initially attended a private German run high school where she became homesick due to the long distance from her home, and was moved to a closer school. Her education was in Afrikaans, with English as a 3rd language introduced at this level. However, the introduction of English in high school was not a positive experience and she explained: *"I really didn't like English. We used to do it as a subject - it was incomprehensible - I hated it - I think because it was just so hard and the people who were taking us had no knowledge. They didn't understand the language and so they just didn't know how to teach it."*

Lorna described her high school experiences thus : *"I liked the high school I really, really enjoyed my high school ... [in] high school there was no beating it was more your own initiative, there was no pressure from - 'If you don't do it you will get whacked.' The teacher will just go there and teach you and if you don't put in the effort it was entirely up to you - which was very different - took time to adjust to that from primary school ... We do biology and chemistry there [in] Year 8, 9, 10 and [then] they say there are no books so you are not encouraged to go beyond Year 10 - no, you couldn't because there are no books."* When asked whether there were really no books, she explained : *"It's not that they didn't, they didn't have for blacks because that was the policy, it was not available for black kids"* Despite this situation, after finishing high school Lorna was awarded a U N scholarship enabling her to study in Britain and live with an English family while learning English.

Financial constraints were again a problem for Colin during his secondary schooling in Africa, despite his academic ability: *"I was a so called 'straight A' student so there was no problem, I passed the Primary Leaving Exam and went to high school in Western X. When I went to high school it was difficult for my Dad to work alone and the little crop he planted was destroyed by hail stones, so when I returned at the end of the year to stay, my Dad had nothing left to take me back to school."* Fortunately Colin was able to continue with his education when his fees were paid initially by his chemistry teacher, and after "O" levels (4 years of high school) by the local authority, allowing him to continue to "A" levels and enter university.

Colin told of enjoying high school much more than primary school, and explained : *"when I went to high school it was best, because the teachers were very kind and there was very little caning in high schools ... where I went for 'O' level the first principal I had was from England, and he introduced a kind of 'black mark' whereby if one made a mistake they would write it against your name. If you collected about 5, the principal would call you into his office to caution you, and if one got 10 then you were suspended for two weeks. I performed voluntary tasks in the school which gave me plus 5 before I could be awarded a black mark ... so it was good from then, as this man took over paying my fees, and I had friends all over the school."* When asked how he felt about the "black mark" system, Colin explained : *"This was Ok as there was no caning and this was a way of disciplining students with no fear attached to it. No other kids were involved only the teachers, so it was fairer and there was no immediate threat of suspension."*

Colin also recalled enjoying subjects such as science and maths : *"After finishing 'O' levels I taught myself maths because I loved it ... I would read ahead of the teacher, and the topic being taught on that day I would have read and done the previous night, so the teacher would be teaching other children than me, so I enjoyed my education at maths ... In high school things had changed especially sciences, at least they were practical because of the group learning."*

Post primary teachers

For Michael whose early encounters with teachers in Scandinavia were quite negative, the experience of an *"inspirational"* teacher in high school was a revelation, and he explained thus: *"I actually had a teacher - he said something like- 'I don't want to teach you to do anything specific except I want to teach you how to learn,' and kind of clarifying that it was on each individual to learn how to learn by themselves and stay with it. It loses in the translation but basically he said 'I can't give you knowledge but I'll teach you how to gain it.' Well, that was an inspiration and right away suddenly realising that knowledge or education was not something that was given to you, it is something you take and make yourself - I mean it is better like that, and I've lived by that rule ever since."*

Maureen also from Scandinavia, who commented in her interview that there were a *"couple"* of teachers that she did enjoy, went on to describe these teachers as follows : *"From Grade 7 to Grade 9 my class had a very good maths teacher, he was so strict - we weren't allowed barely to breathe, but we all liked him. I never remember anyone saying anything bad about him because you knew where you were. He was extremely strict, you know, there wasn't any- Oh I haven't done the homework!"* She discussed the quality of teachers further, explaining: *"I excelled with good teachers, I did not with poor teachers We had a very good maths teacher but not a good German teacher ... and we certainly hated German, we just did not like that language ... The same happened with maths. We were very good at maths ... and every maths class we were going 'Yippee it's maths' ...that comes back to the personality of the teacher ... [who] had been very strict, had very rigid discipline, [had] a good voice and all those attributes."*

Paula discussed the teachers at her private school in Latin America explaining as follows : *"Some of the teachers were average, a couple of the teachers were appalling and most of the teachers were so good.... Some of the teachers used to get us into heated arguments in subjects like history or philosophy. It's amazing the amount of stuff you learn that way. Debate used to be encouraged, being girls and teenagers some of them used to end up in tears trying to put their point across ... The method in my*

school was to get us to bring up some controversial subject and we would be taking sides ...and we used to have these incredible debates and we got a lot out of that.... There was one of the English teachers, the one that used to teach us grammar and maybe conversation. She used to teach English at the Russian Embassy to the spies because the cold war was still on at the time, and she used to say to us 'This is how an American would say [it] This is how an Englishman would say [it]' Sometimes it would confuse us terribly, sometimes we would talk the way the English talk and sometimes we would talk the way the Americans talk. It was good because she did give us interest in learning, and she was extremely good. She really gave a lot to the ones who were interested in the English language, which most of us were."

Two participants from Latin America, Peter and Sam, made only brief comments about their post primary teachers. Sam described his teachers as "acceptable," while Peter remarked only "I remember I had very good teaching in Year 7, yes it was good." In contrast Elizabeth talked about her negative experiences of Latin American post primary teachers during a change in the education system : "There was a teacher who used to call, turn the TV on and leave, that was the class. Because I was so angry about that, I used to write things on the board. Yes I did, and he used to come and see the things and he didn't know who it was and no one would tell him ... I was very rebell[ious] I was, and it was terrible because I was angry about this teacher doing that. He's supposed to teach, not to leave the class and his lesson is supposed to be a support not to do that." Fortunately in Year 8 the system changed again and Elizabeth's experiences of teachers improved from then on: "In Year 8 I had a very excellent maths teacher who was into yoga and sports and I loved him and he was very active in class and he was really teaching us ... and I was so happy, I loved it and the science teacher was also the same ... when I went into Year 9 it was different, it was different, it was very good." When asked further about the Year 8 teacher that she liked, Elizabeth described him as "very good and playful, and made it fun. He joked, taught with stories, fun and was funny, it was not a boring class."

The three African participants Philippa, Lorna and Colin also mentioned post primary teachers. In contrast with his earlier experiences with teachers Colin found secondary teachers "very kind" and explained : "I built good relationships with the teachers at that school, so although it was very difficult for my Dad, I decided to go back. I'd got a new principal, but fortunately his deputy was the former principal the previous year. I presented my problem, and there was a chemistry teacher who really liked me because I was very good at maths and I was top student in his subject. The deputy principal organised a staff meeting and I put my case forward, this chemistry teacher took over paying my fees to be my benefactor, and that way I had the opportunity to continue my education."

When asked about the teachers in secondary school, Lorna explained : *"They were all black all of them [in primary], for high school we had more variety - a few whites, more whites than black."* While Philippa in her discussion on punishment in secondary school commented : *"Sometimes they [students] target the teachers too during school, especially the boys, sometimes they fight the teachers too. So the teachers were a little bit scared of the boys too, but they were still punished. "*

Family Attitudes and Parental Expectations of Schooling

When the minority group participants in this research study were asked about their own parents' attitudes towards education, many described very high expectations and an emphasis on education as a means to a better standard of living. This was particularly the case for those born in Latin American countries.

Sam described his parents as having a very *"strong sense of education,"* and as a result *all six children in his family attended private school. Sam explained : "My Mum, being a teacher, probably she wanted the things that's best for her kids ... I went to this special school. I suppose that many of the parents put their children there because they wanted something better."*

Sylvia explained : *"For them education was very important. My Mum always wanted me to go to university not only finish high school. In Latin America it is important not to be just a 'graduate' from high school. You have to go to uni and be a professional - for economic reasons I think. You can improve your living [standard] if you are professional and get a very good job, that was the main reason...It is a general thing [in Latin America] everybody wants to go to uni and be a professional because they want to be on a higher economic level."*

This emphasis on university education in Latin America was confirmed by Paula who commented : *"In X ... people expect you to be a lawyer or a doctor or an engineer or an economist ... becoming a professional is very important."* In Paula's family however, there was more emphasis on learning languages, which she explained thus : *"At home we've always had a few different languages going, because my grandmother spoke Japanese ... they migrated from Japan, ... on my father's side, he went to one of the best state schools in X at the time [when] in all schools you had to learn English,*

French, German, and Latin so we used to have this competitions at dinner time ... from the time we were really little ... 'How do you say good morning in English ?' ... in French? ... in German?' and ... in Latin?' My Dad used to love giving us those games at dinner time."

As a result of this interest in languages, Paula who described her parents as making *"many sacrifices to send me to the best [school] they could afford,"* sent her to a private secondary school with an emphasis on the teaching of English to a high level of fluency. She explained further : *"There has always been a lot of emphasis on languages. In X... people like to learn languages, it is not uncommon for most kids to go to a language school of any choice...that was the norm, 9 out of 10 kids would go to a language school."*

Elizabeth explained her family's attitudes towards education thus : *"They taught me that I had to have education because that was the only tool that I would have to defend myself when I grew up, and it was true."* She explained further : *"My Mum didn't have formal education, she did up to Year 3 - she didn't have much education. My Dad was an accountant, so he would sometimes help me with some maths or things like that."* When asked why her parents felt this way, Elizabeth elaborated : *"My Mum had the same problems that I had, she was not understood as well. My Mum and I are very alike and she was - very intelligent. She used to go to a Catholic school, and when she was ... in Year 3, suddenly she didn't want to go, and she told my grandma 'I don't want to go to school any more' and my grandma said 'Ok! then stay here and help me at home.' She used to do a lot of sewing and sold the clothes. [Later] my mother realised that she had wasted her time, and she would be better off studying than not doing it. I was very surprised when my Mum was about 40 she got a job working in a lab doing blood tests, working with chemicals, and things that you have to have a uni degree to do... She was always trying, now I can realise how hard it was for her. She knew that she could do more, she wasn't able to because of her education. How frustrating it was for her!"*

As a result, Elizabeth recalled that she and her siblings were *"pushed"* to go to school even when sick, and commented : *"She was very determined [and said] 'You have to go, you have to go'."* However, despite her parents' positive emphasis on education, Elizabeth remembered also being punished frequently and *"put down"* by everyone. She explained thus : *"My brothers and sisters were ... high achievers with high marks, and I wasn't because I was in trouble all the time. I was always put down by everybody around me ... my Mum used to smack me a lot with the belt and [teachers] at school with rulers. So no one could believe that I could achieve a high level of education because of that, and*

they were all the time thinking that my brothers and sisters were better than me ... I was not understood by people around me because they couldn't believe [that] I could achieve, and no one encouraged me to do it."

In spite of these problems however, Elizabeth was able to continue with her education, obtaining a university degree, which she attributed to her own determination : *"It was more my inner fight that I had, I think that is very important because I was not a high achiever."*

When asked how his family felt about education, Peter explained : *"It was my Mum, because my father came [home] just at the weekends, sometimes after two weeks ... she always was trying to push us ... she said 'Oh come on, you have to go ... you have to finish, because if you don't ... you're not going to get the certificate at the end of the year' ... My Mum said it was the certificate, but I think she was worried because she wanted us to be learning ... she did not want us to have the same experiences as her. I think that was important, because she tried to push - 'You have to go to the school ... you have to be a doctor, lawyer, engineer. You have to work at something like that.' She always was expecting the best for us ... she wanted us to have a different life, a different future from her. That's the thing I remember, it's a special feeling, I think my Mum is the best."* In contrast, Peter recalled his father's punitive attitude when he did not pass at the end of Year 1 : *"He was very angry and hit me with a lot of things, you know 'You are silly, you are lazy, you got the responsibility' ... it was very, very bad."*

The three African participants, Colin, Lorna, and Philippa, described differing parental expectations and attitudes towards education. Due to the fact that both Colin and Philippa had one parent who was a teacher, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of education in their families. Philippa explained : *"My family would do anything for education. They had a very high regard for education. My father being a teacher and my mother coming from a highly educated family, they really wanted us to have a good education, and my father worked very hard. We were many in the family, quite a number of children ... we were nine in the family, but he made sure that he had our fees paid, that was his priority."* When questioned further about the reasons for this strong emphasis on education, Philippa explained further : *"My parents were those who became parents soon after X gained independence and ... they could see the fruits of education, the benefits of education, by then they started achieving a higher standard of living ... parents naturally have to encourage their children to get education because that was the only means, and the children see other people in the villages also having a high standard of living, so they became somewhat self motivated."*

Colin, whose father had been a teacher in the past, described his situation thus : *"My Dad was at one time a teacher, that's why when I returned home from school in evening he wished to check my books and see my work. He was very concerned about getting some among his children educated, but poverty hampered his ambition ... My Dad wanted one to get a good education. Even now he is very proud of at least one son finishing university."* Colin explained also how his mother was disadvantaged by lack of education : *"Because her mum died the day she was born ... she really didn't have the opportunity to go to school, being a female too she was badly disadvantaged. She lived from stepmother to stepmother and she didn't enjoy her childhood, so she didn't bother much about our education ... she was not at peace with my Dad, and then had to leave, so literally she didn't help much."*

In contrast with the experiences of Philippa and Colin, Lorna was not encouraged by her parents. She explained : *"Sadly my parents didn't have much education themselves, except Dad and he really didn't encourage us ... it was more my grandmother who encouraged us than my father who was... too busy - he was hardly home anyway ... Mum was busy ... she was working so she didn't have time. It was my grandmother [who] was at home all the time, I remember her helping us ... I can't remember my Mum helping."* Lorna also described the lack of value she placed on education as a child: *"I really didn't think much of education. I didn't see the importance beyond reading and writing. I didn't know that it would give you a career or anything, partly because the blacks didn't have much of a career [path] they were never encouraged, most of the positions were reserved for whites. So the only thing that was open for blacks was in teaching and nursing, those were the only two professions."*

For Brian, who was educated in the Middle East, and whose mother was also a teacher, the importance of education was strongly emphasised within the family. This was doubly so, due to the political situation in his country at that time, as education was seen as the only alternative to compulsory military service, and this Brian maintained would *"finish one."* As a result Brian's mother encouraged her children's education from a very early age, and sent her sons to study overseas at the end of their secondary schooling.

When asked about their parents' expectations and attitudes towards education, the responses of the three Scandinavian participants all differed. Maureen commented : *"Education is always very important in X ...it was always 'You've got to have an education before you ever think of getting married, travel, or whatever you want.' Education is important."* She explained further :

"Particularly at the time I grew up, because that was the big revolution. Our mothers - most of them were at home, and I think when the time came that the student bank became available, so education was open for everybody - and equal, our mothers said - sort of 'You are lucky, you can actually do it'."

Maureen, whose father had been a teacher, later described his attitudes and ideas on the importance of physical activities and fitness in education thus : *"My father always said if you are physically fit then it's easier to learn ... you go out and try - running [or] whatever you are good at. You can then go in and do your homework because that way you've got oxygen into your bloodstream and it's easier for you to comprehend and learn."*

In contrast, Jane explained : *"I don't really know how they felt. It wasn't something that was ever talked about and parents were never really very much involved in the school work. I think once a year, nearly every year, there was a parent night, but as far back as I remember my parents never went there. I know the teachers would call on homes if there were any problems and stuff like that. I don't think there was ever any school parent contact, no."* Jane elaborated further : *"You were just sort of expected to get on ... without making a big thing about it ... I would never have help, homework help ... obviously [other] parents might have been more involved in it, - mine never were."* Despite these remarks however, Jane commented later : *"I mean it wasn't that my parents weren't supportive, they definitely were, but there wasn't a huge involvement with parents."* When asked further about earlier comments that her father had dissuaded her from leaving school early, Jane explained : *"I remember him stepping in and saying 'No I want you to do another year and if you still feel like it, then we'll talk about it.' Well, he didn't think I should be one of those people who left school after Year 7... I suppose he could see that you had very limited opportunities in the job market afterwards."*

In response to questions about his parents' attitudes to education, Michael on the other hand, explained ... *"It was never considered much priority actually ... It was more important to go and get a trade or a job, than the education itself. [It] was just a question of learn to read and write. The social skills that you could learn in school weren't considered of any value."* Despite these remarks Michael did comment also : *"One thing my mother always did was answer my questions."*

Experiences as a Parent

Country of Origin Experiences

This section discusses the experiences of three parents whose children had been involved in the education system in their home country prior to the family's migration to Australia. Colin, whose child was 6 years of age when the family came to Australia, explained how he had arranged for tutoring when the family lived in a neighbouring African country, and as a result his child had learned to read, write and speak English before arrival in Australia : *"I used to pay for local teachers to tutor him/her because we were in Y, and the primary education - we felt that the standard was very low, so I had to pay someone to teach X from home ... s/he learned to read, write and speak English, when we were still in Africa."*

When asked about his child's education in Latin America prior to arrival in Australia at 7 years of age, Sam explained : *"With the oldest at that time, we both were not so careful about lack of facilities, [and did] not [have] the way of thinking like [we do now] with our other children."* Sam described his support for J. Suzuki's theories on the early education of young children, from which the Suzuki method of musical education was developed, and which Sam has now put into practice with the family's younger children.

In contrast however, Elizabeth described in great detail her experiences of education in Latin America as a parent, about which she was unhappy : *"I always wanted to give him/her the best education I could afford. At the time that I did my education the public schools were still O K. They had resources and the government was supporting them, but the time my child went to school was a wartime situation, so the government was putting all the funds into the war and to the army and leaving hospitals and education without resources. I had to pay for private school and at that time even getting to private schools was very difficult - it was expensive and not all the kids could get in. I tried to enrol X into one of the good private schools there and they said the only kids that are allowed ... are relatives of the other kids that have been here, and if you are a child of an ex- student ... It was like discrimination - so it was very hard because I knew that school was very good. I wanted to go to the other schools which charged - British school, French, German, but they are very, very expensive. The German one they teach you a very high level of education - in German and in Spanish, both languages, but you have to be - a German descendant and - after they fill up the vacancies they maybe have vacancies for someone that is not German descendant. The same with*

another one from Britain, it is so expensive I couldn't afford it ... it is like the college here, the Anglican one. Another was an American one that was so very expensive, so it was really only rich people could afford to go to those schools, and there is no support from the government or anything like that. When X started at school I wanted to give him/her a good education but I couldn't, I had to get one of the worst. It was a private one, but I wasn't happy, I had to pay a lot of money and it still was not what I wanted."

When asked why she was unhappy, Elizabeth explained further : "What happened most [was] that I used to ask X every day 'What are you doing at school?' ... and s/he was not doing much. I went to talk to the teacher, most of the teachers that they had were young teachers and not experienced, they were learning how to teach. When I asked them why X used to go and write just the date and maybe the title and then nothing else - the teacher told me 'Oh because X talks too much with the other kids, or is laughing all the time or doing this, doing that,' and I thought ... 'Oh the same problem again' and I couldn't do much ... In the final Latin American one [school] I was not happy, but they did have a lot of homework to do ... from Year 1 you start doing a lot of homework, X was not working in class s/he was not doing anything. But at home X had to do a lot - [with] research emphasis on projects and things since Year 1, and a lot of maths exercises."

Third Country Experiences

This section discusses the experiences of two participants whose children had been involved in the education system in a country other than either their country of origin or Australia. One of the Scandinavian parents Maureen, related her experiences of schools and education in Italy when the family was transferred there due to her husband's occupation. She explained : "They were extremely strict, they had very high expectations, probably more so than what I would like. They didn't have any physical sports, children are outside on a sunny day with no cloud in the sky, [and] no wind, they were allowed outside that day only. Any wind, any clouds, and they were not allowed outside the building, so the physical or practical there was nil ... Teachers were very, very old fashioned, they wore their white coats ... generally they abused children a lot in front of the class, verbal abuse there was quite common. An Australian teacher over there, she was doing Italian so she was with the children in the classroom [and] she was shocked, she said the abuse was quite heavy ... in a government school yes, she said it was very heavy verbal abuse - bad words - it wasn't just 'You mustn't be a naughty boy' not at all. [It was] very hard, they do get excellent students but you don't get to help them yourself - it's very strict. In Grade 5 they even go further, and have something called 'interrogation' and that is actually the exam is - an 'interrogation.' One child will go in front of a panel of teachers and they will interrogate the child, on any

subject, anything, it is amazing. X was happy that s/he had a teacher with him/her when it happened ... they put lots of emphasis on the theoretical side of things, a bit of a shock it was."

Maureen also described in detail many of her experiences when her younger child attended an Italian Pre-Primary: *"X was going to pre-primary, and they didn't seem to learn, they didn't learn the alphabet or colours at all. At pre-primary they were very regimented, that was a shock to the system and it was horrible, and the least I can say is that in pre-primary I was a weak person, more than one day I came out crying and just wanted to go home."* She elaborated further on how the Preschool was run as follows : *"It was one room, white walls, teacher in white, teachers up here [on a dais] – students are there and teachers are just sitting there calling out to the students. They would do a fair bit in the beginning, [for] the first half an hour ...they all got a sheet of paper and a few colouring pencils and did some colouring in. The teacher would be sitting up there, they were told to go up show their work and eight out of ten times the teacher will tell them to go back and do a better job. So they will go back and have to do an even better job of their colouring in until that was finished. Next was time for Lego so out comes all the Lego, and every body got a little heap each of Lego and there was half an hour work with Lego, that was how the whole day was structured – very regimented, very little to work with. They didn't believe in using these type of [unstructured] materials to make things. The only playroom they had was one big room with nothing in except some stairs, ... and a slide and that was it, that was all the play area. Or if they were outside, they were allowed to be in this little cubicle the size of half of this kitchen, and there was some big Lego and that was mostly what they had to play with, so of course there was a lot of fighting, infighting with children and a lot of noise."*

Further descriptions by Maureen concerned a teacher who put makeup and nail polish on herself and the children : *"Most times when I came to pick X up, one particular teacher whom X loved because she would put makeup on X, ...would always sit and put make-up on herself, and take her nail polish off and put more nail polish on. Then X would get nail polish put on his/her fingernails and it was more passive for the child - it wasn't nice. X didn't enjoy it at all, no ... X went there because of this friend otherwise s/he hated it ... it was how I can imagine it would have been before World War II - how my mum would have experienced pre-primary – to me it was horrendous, nothing less."* Fortunately for both Maureen and her child, "foreigners" were allowed to leave Pre-primary earlier than the other children who attended from 8.30 - 4.00 pm and 1.00 on Saturdays.

As a consequence of these unfortunate experiences of Italian education, Maureen's older child commenced Distance Education which both she and her child enjoyed greatly : *"That was when we used Distance Education from Australia which I found fun, interesting. Their curriculum I loved and I think X came to love it, it was very practical, a lot of practical work involved and we each learned how to make three dimensional things, like X had a whole solar system on the wall. I have nothing but praise to say about the communication, I was amazed with so much of the effort that they put in, and the quality. We had it at the site and I was very impressed by that, very economically cheap basically."* However with her youngest child Distance Education was not so successful as Maureen explained : *"We tried with Y who turned six in February, and was meant to have been in there s/he just flatly refused to learn anything, because I think Y is a group child, with a little group that was fine, but sitting home with just one teacher or me, and I did things or cut out – no, we couldn't, neither of us could do it."*

For Brian from the Middle East, the experiences of education as a parent before coming to Australia were in the U K, where his children attended a Muslim school. He described these experiences as follows : *"In England there's a lot of activity, sport, music, art and there's not a lot of children in the class room compared with X [Middle East] ...[where] there could be maybe about 50 in the class ... I felt happy in England to see my children going to Arabic school and the education was very good. I was happy for them to learn the language and the religion."* Brian explained further : *"In this Arabic school ... they do English social studies but at the same time have Arabic activities, language and culture ... they used to have a lot of homework and reading and writing ... more subjects to learn there compared to when I was in X [where] the subjects were limited."* Later Brian reiterated : *"In England they used to have a lot of homework ... especially the two oldest, that's why X is very good now in school because it helped, and they started earlier. X read a lot for exams... and is always very good in school ... we left England when ... the youngest was in kindy ...X had a lot of homework, and because of doing the Arabic language used to have a lot to write and copy. I still have the books here translating the Koran from Arabic to English and a couple of other things. I have always admired X's neat handwriting in English and Arabic."*

Educational Policy and Practices Outside Australia

Many of the minority group participants in this research study discussed the education policy and practices existing in their country of origin at the time of their own schooling. Education policy and practices in Scandinavia were described in detail by Maureen,

who highlighted the emphasis on what she felt to be the most important *“physical and practical”* aspects of the education system in her country of origin. She described it as : *“A lot more practical ... every school in Scandinavia had a big hall which is a gymnasium and that comes with showers ... a big kitchen, - for the children ... a big area for woodwork ... a big area with at least about 30 sewing machines in one room, and we started it from Grade 1... not cooking, cooking was later. Sewing, and something else in Grade 1- for girls that was.”* Later Maureen elaborated further : *“One or two big rooms for sewing where we all learned to use different kinds of sewing machines, looms, and any kind of hand sewing... embroidery, knitting, and sewing. They had a big room for doing woodwork, again with all kind of machines needed for that kind of work ... In secondary school we also had a room for ceramics. Every school has - a big building which is dedicated for practical learning, including a kitchen... and specialised art [and craft] teachers for each school ... one teacher just for sewing, one teacher just for woodwork ... I think it's very, very important for future progress – the skills, even the small motor skills. It's not just for what you learn but also for your hand skills, and of course the gymnasium is very important ... We learned how to climb a rope and I think – one day you might be in a situation where you have to know how to climb a rope.”*

As a means of clarification, Maureen was asked if she felt that Scandinavian educators thought that it was important to give children plenty of physical activity to facilitate their growth, strength, and development, as well as intellectual activities. To this she replied : *“It is very highly emphasised, very much emphasised, and as a result I think Scandinavians are physically very fit people, and I do think the Scandinavians have bigger skills in the different physical activities.”* Later she commented further: *“When I was a young girl, I travelled a lot and what I did notice was the students from France and England they didn't know so much. Theoretically they knew [things] very well. They knew lots more about the 30 Yrs War, World War II, World War I, than I knew, but ... the practical side they didn't know much about ... As I have been living, I have become aware that what I learnt on the practical side was very important in my life, and still is - more so than what I learned about World War II.”*

Maureen described how students were supplied with all their requirements by the Scandinavian government, which also set up a student “bank” to facilitate access to university for all students. She explained : *“It was a very strong emphasis on education, I guess they can afford it because you don't pay for your own child's education, not even at the university ... the students got their own bank and everybody borrows money ... you hit 18, that's when you go and borrow money from this bank and pay for your own education. So obviously that's what helps them really push you and they do,*

education is very important in X.... All books were free ...every year we all got text books from the school, in the back of it was a library...We didn't buy any, these are for wholly learning from home."

Memories of education practices and policies in her home country in Scandinavia were still very strong for Maureen, who described these vividly: *"The first teachers did teach us some letters ... I remember this quite clearly - Mum she made us a little pouch with 24 little things [pockets] and each was for a letter, A, B, C ...cut out in cardboard, 4 of each ... and we have three extra letters also, that you don't ... when it came to writing, they used a lot of designs, you have to write designs for months, [and] borders. That's how we learned to write ... we had whole books of borders - that was a part of drawing and a game, but still as I realise now it was part of learning to write. I don't have nice handwriting, and people my age in X don't ... I don't know what they did wrong ... but none of us came out with nice handwriting - or very few our big thing to get relief was to go out and play outside, walk, a version of t- ball games ... what teachers will do - the class [is]tired out, so out they go and play ball... .We didn't have playgrounds ... because we had a big gymnasium and neither of the schools that I went to had a big area round the schools ... very small bitumen area and even smaller green grass, we weren't allowed to go on the grass area, that was the rule aerobics ... we did that indoors ... in X we used to have a lot of teams ... that's what we used to love doing, but we also had to do the aerobics which wasn't as much fun.."*

This participant also discussed in detail the organisational setup of schools in her country of origin: *"In our country, I'm quite sure they still have it, the school hour is 45 minutes, then they have 10 minutes break - every lesson is 45 minutes ... then you play for ten minutes, you come back in and it's a new lesson. Sometimes we had maths [for] 2 hours... . You go [for] three years with the same teacher, but in those three years that teacher doesn't teach you all the subjects, [in] the first three years, yes you have the same teacher almost all the time ... from Grade 4 to 6 you have one main teacher, our main teacher just taught us maths, history, and geography, and [for] the rest we had other specialised teachers [come] in ... later - the main teacher just teaches you a few subjects and you have specialised teachers ... [in] maths ... history ... geology, you get a variety during the day."*

The policy on homework was explained by Maureen thus : *"From Grade 4 it started, up to Grade 4 - we had a little bit of homework but not much, but after Grade 4 - we had things that we had to memorise . We had history lessons and we had to take it home, read half a page, memorise, come back to school have a test in what we had memorised. From Grade 4, and Grade 5, and Grade 6, we had language*

homework, maths homework, history homework, all on different days, but we always had one or two different subjects at home almost every day."

The system of post primary education in operation in Scandinavia at that time, was also described by this participant as follows : *"From Grade 7 up to 10, I went to what we call Youth school ... Grade 10 in X it is not compulsory it is free – you can choose it or not ... High school in X which is three years which we call Gymnasium, after Youth school you can go for three years. ... [another] type of school which you've got in Scandinavia, it's Open Learning. It comes from Denmark - a couple of hundred years ago, it's a boarding school you go where you live with other boys and girls aged between 16 and 25 and you can choose your own subjects – it's not set in anything."*

Another of the participants in this research study, Jane, discussed the education policy and practices in her Scandinavian country of origin. Mention was made of the system of free education in which all requirements for school were supplied by the government: *"We were provided with a lot of school books because of the tax system in X, everything is provided by the school ... we really got everything down to the pencils."* Jane explained further : *"There was no kindly ... you didn't start Year 1 until you had turned 7 ... the first two years we were there we only had to stay for three hours a day ... the teacher ...lived at the school and some of the rooms were converted into classrooms about 20 to 22 was the maximum number in classes."* After the first two years spent in the small and "homely" school, children progressed to the next level, which Jane described thus : *"From Year 3 we went on to a bigger school where you went until you had finished Year 7 ... from the little school that only had two classes with about ... 40 kids altogether, and the next school... a couple of hundred kids ... that was like going to a real school, where the other was in an old home. You had the proper classrooms with geography here and biology there."* School hours also increased at this level, she explained : *"Typically 8 to 2 o'clock, it's a 6 hour day ... a canteen wasn't known, no one had it, you had to bring your own lunch. We had a 10 minute break every hour - and then probably 20 minutes for lunch about 12 o'clock."*

Despite the severe climatic conditions in that part of the world, Jane described considerable time spent in outdoor activities during her schooling: *"We were always outside - we'd be out playing whether it was raining or snowing, but you would be dressed suitably, hats, gloves and boots, and had all the racks outside the classrooms where all the coats and stuff were hanging when you took*

it off, usually with a heater underneath so on wet days it would dry off. Of course all the schools were centrally heated."

Second language learning was an important feature of her country's education system and Jane elaborated thus : *"We start fairly early...having English, that's a compulsory language and in Year 6 you start German, so everybody has got one or two languages that they do know, and they give you a bit of knowledge of the Scandinavian languages as well, you've got to read a little bit of that.."*

When asked what she could remember about education practices and policies, Jane recalled that rote learning and memorisation were very much a part of the system at this time in Scandinavian countries, both in the classroom and for homework. She described learning the alphabet as : *"Writing one page of A s and one page of B s - I don't remember being able really to read anything till we got into about Year 3 ... It wasn't like learning by play or things like that. You did have to follow the book strictly and ... know off by heart ...and be able to tell about thatThey used the blackboard a lot. If it was your turn to do this piece of mathematics or whatnot - the student was at the blackboard doing it, showing the rest, or standing in front of the class reading."* The memorisation of psalms and verses from the bible, were also an important characteristic of education in Scandinavia which this participant explained thus : *"Religion was a compulsory thing ... you had to know all the psalms off by heart and you have to be able to prattle off all the verses ... They're not overly religious but it was just part of the culture that you did that ... It was Lutheran ... we just had the morning assembly where you would sing something simple from the bible, like psalms that we learned and the headmaster would do a prayer and that was it ...you do have your confirmation at 14 years of age when you finish in Year 7, other than that it's quite relaxed. They do give you some - so you can then make an informed decision on where you are heading after they have given you that information ... Back in the 50s and 60s, in X 99.5% of the population would be members of the Lutheran church and the other .5 % might have been Catholics, that would have been the extent of it - everybody went to the same church."*

Punishment was an issue that Jane also commented on. She described the degree of "harshness" involved as being influenced directly by the "temper" of individual teachers, but maintained that the cane itself was used only for the most serious of misdemeanours : *"It would have to be pretty bad ... usually it would just be a rap over the knuckles with a ruler or ... you stayed behind an hour and wrote 'I won't do this again' about 500 times."*

Continuity in education was another feature of Scandinavian education that this participant remarked upon : *"A teacher got appointed to a school and they stayed there. I had a new teacher who was in his first year out when I was in Year 5, ... there was a reunion of my class The teacher was still there, he was now the principal and had never moved out of that school ... Right from Year 1, unless you moved out of the area you wouldn't be shifted out of your class, and would be with those kids right through till you were 14. At the end of Year 7 they decide whether you go to the uni line, which meant you had to go to the nearest bigger town, or you could do the next 3 years at that school but do 'Non -TEE' subjects, and you wouldn't split from those people until you were 17."*

Parental participation was not a feature of the education system in Scandinavia at the time that Jane was attending school : *"Parents were never really very much involved ... there was a parent night ... my parents never went ... teachers would call on homes if there were problems There wasn't a huge involvement with parents and there was no P & C ... parent help in the classrooms and all that sort of stuff, didn't exist – but they had smaller classes then too, teachers there had different work load then."*

Michael's comments were mainly about the "rigidity" of education in his Scandinavian country of origin, in which the emphasis was also on rote learning, repetition, and strict discipline. He explained thus : *"Apart from language and maths that was about all ... you also had to learn to recite songs, verses ... we learned folk songs that way.... It was very disciplined and strict ... you weren't allowed to basically step outside the boundaries."* Michael described the system further : *"It was a big school, it was 1300 children ... about 25, 26 kids in the class – that's Primary. We start at 7 and process through to Year 8, but you stay at the same school, there's only one system there basically in X. In Year 8 the education got split up a little bit, and the kids that don't want to go to university, or ... who want to leave at the end of the year, ... would leave at the end of Year 8 – just turning 15 ... then the next lot would leave [in] Year 10We had two main teachers – the first years in school, one for language – that was a woman, and a man that was teaching us maths. Then we had the singing lessons and reciting verses ... We had a lot of homework, repetitive type homework particularly in maths and - even in the language too – in writing. We had to repeat things, you would get 100 additions to do at home."* Michael also commented on school hours in his Scandinavian country of origin : *"Each lesson would last 50 minutes and there would be a 10 minute break and then you would have your lunch which would be 1/2 hour, and we would start school at 8.00 and finish at 3.00 I think it was, and 6 days a week, Saturdays too, till 1 o'clock."*

Education policy and practices in his Middle Eastern country of origin were described by Brian. He explained that due to the history of colonisation by France within the region, the system was based on the French Baccalaureate: *"We have the French system for education - Baccalaureate - like 'O' level, and you have to reach certain [number of] points to go to the University and if you fail you have to repeat the whole year, not [just] the subject ... sometimes very hard Education in X is completely different it's old fashioned ... but the French system is a very good system."* Brian commented also on the organisation, facilities and activities in his country of origin thus : *"The buildings they are not like in Australia or England, with activities, gym, gardens and space. There it is just classrooms, there's no activitiesSwimming they don't have because they don't have the facilities at all ... in X the activities are limited, there is something - like music lessons ... we don't have dancing there ... they are very strict about swimming and sport. They do sport, but not compared to British or Australian schools... . We don't have a lot of holidays like here, except the summer holidays are long. They don't have public holidays and things In the private schools in X, they have activities where they provide sport, music, art, all kinds of activities for the children ... private schools were run by nuns ... the same schools [have] been there since 1900 ... the Catholic schools, they have the same system and culture, but only rich people with this particular background go to these schools. The rest of the education, it is government, so everybody follows the government schools because they provide free uniforms, free books, of course there are no meals like here. You start at 8 o'clock in the morning to 12 o'clock, and from 12 to 3 it's a different school. You have two schools in one building ... there could be maybe about 50 [children] in the class. In general all third world countries are similar in their education because the government supplies a lot of things, the buildings are all old, but they try to spend more on education."* Brian explained further : *"X, it's a small country and it's a third world country, not rich like the other Middle Eastern states, and the education system gets support and help from other countries like Germany, Russia, America. They provide scholarships ... the X [government] they give [scholarships] if somebody wants to learn about the history of X, religion, Islam ... the area is full of history ... in X they teach you in schools about it all the time."*

Brian also talked about the importance of politics and religion in education : *"When I was in X, the subjects were limited. Of course in high school ... you learn about the political party in X ... religious subjects, [but] it doesn't help you to enrol for a university course."* This participant also mentioned the emphasis on homework : *"When I was in X we used to have a lot of homework ... the teacher used to write on the blackboard and we used to copy it ... she used to tell us [copy] p10 or p5 ... we used to repeat this*

[over again] ... we used to do drawing at home - and bring it to the teacher, because there's no way in the classroom we'll do art and things. She tells us ... each one draw something [at home]."

Three participants, Colin, Philippa, and Lorna, discussed the education policy and practices in their African countries of origin. Lorna described how many children in her country started day school at the age of 7, progressing then to boarding school at approximately 10 years of age : *"Day school ...[was] up to the age - of about 10 ... then after that we went to a boarding school for our area ... most of the kids start school at the age of 7. Some - in those days they were starting school at 10, it was not unusual for kids at all back then - even 12. Not in the city, in the city it was mostly 7."* She also explained that in the early years of schooling children attended in the morning only : *"We were never given lunch like kids here. We used to stay at school till 1 o'clock ... [It] Started at 7.30 and went up to 1 o'clock and then [we] go home for the day."*

Lorna described learning the alphabet in both her local language and Afrikaans in the early years of school: *"We learn the alphabet yes, a, e, i, o, oo, and a, b, c. Not much writing, we didn't write very much ... in our own language and Afrikaans... In Sub-A and then when you go to Sub-B ... you learn how to read and write your own language and Afrikaans until what they call Standard 1. From Standard 1 all the subjects are in Afrikaans - that's [at]10."* When questioned further about learning Afrikaans, Lorna explained : *"It was being used, not at home, but in the city it was commonly. All the tribes don't speak the same language, so they just use Afrikaans."* She commented also : *"I didn't connect it with the history until I was in the last year of high school, then I could understand how it came about after that. In my early schooling I didn't connect it to the colonising power."*

Due to a lack of paper and books in the schools, children copied work from the blackboard onto slates : *"We had those small blackboards, and then you just wipe it. We didn't have books ... we have to memorise a lot from what he [teacher] says, and then you stand there and say it, and you have to repeat after him over and over and over. Then I couldn't write much [very] well, and because we didn't have books, we had to share - like three books for the whole class."* Lorna also recalled collecting tins for the old man who was her first teacher : *"In Year 1- Sub-A - we had to go and collect tins for him. I don't know why cause I was little, that's all we did."*

Transition to the more authoritarian regime of boarding school at 10 years of age was a complete contrast for Lorna who described it as a *"shock to the system,"* explaining further : *"There were so many rules ... uniforms in boarding school it was compulsory ... after lunch we had a study period of 1 hour ... after dinner they had another 1 hour of study before you come out to go to bed, so it was very, very highly structured ... [with] exams each year which were in June before the holidays, and another one in December before the long holidays, and if you fail you repeat the year."* Subjects taken at this level in government schools included history, arithmetic, and bible studies, but little in the area of social studies.

At approximately 14 years of age children commenced high school, which for Lorna was a welcome relief after the years at boarding school. She explained the different system thus : *"[in] High school there was no beating, it was more your own initiative, there was no pressure ... the teacher will just go there, teach you, and if you don't put in the effort it was entirely up to you so - which was very different ... from primary school."* When asked about the differences between primary and secondary schools, Lorna emphasised that in primary school most teachers were *"a little strict,"* explaining that corporal punishment was administered regularly with a stick to both boys and girls, the only difference being the site chosen : *"Girls on the hand, and boys on the bottom ... if you were late for eating, if you are not at your bed place, everything."* She described her school teachers thus : *"They were all black [teachers] all of them [in primary] only for high school we had more variety ... More whites than blacks [in high school]."*

Lorna also described her country's policy on education after Year 10 thus : *"We do biology and chemistry there [in] Year 8, 9, 10 and they [teachers] say there are no books, so you are not encouraged to go beyond Year 10 ... no, you couldn't because there are no books."* When questioned further about this issue Lorna explained : *"It's not that they didn't - they didn't for blacks because that was the policy ... it was not available for black kids, that's right."* As a result of this policy Lorna felt that opportunities for black students in her country were very limited at the time when she attended school, and she explained as follows : *"Because the blacks didn't have much of a career, they were never encouraged. Most of the positions were reserved for whites, so the only thing that was open for blacks were in teaching and nursing. Those were the only two professions."*

In outlining the policy and practices of education in her country, Philippa emphasised that most of the schools were run by the government. However despite this, education was not free, with parents having to pay fees, as well as providing uniforms and all other school requirements : *"Nearly all the schools in X are government, private you find [are] maybe 5% ... education is not free ... after your primary, yes if you were very, very bright then you get a bursary ... but that is for only 2 or 3 people in the district the rest have got to pay fees. If you fail to pay fees, even if you pass very highly ... you [must] drop out ... A lot of children were lamenting because they could not proceed with their education due to lack of school fees ... two weeks after the commencement of the term ... they just have an assembly and they read out names of those who have not yet finished their fees. 'Pack up and go home, never come back until your fees are finished.' A lot of bright kids dropped out because of that, because of the lack of fees."*

As a result of this policy there were large numbers of children in the earliest classes of primary schools : *"One class it had 80, yes! [of] different ages. Primary 1, you would find from 6 years old to maybe a 10 or 11 year old, it depends if your parents can afford the school fees. At the age of 6 some of their parents are still unable to pay the school fees. Maybe they have to save for 4 or 5 years before they can go to Grade 1. So we - were just mixed up, we were never grouped according to age ... and there's no class limit. You find maybe by Grade 2 there's only 30, it's usually Grade 1 has the highest number of students, because they all start but along the way they drop out due to lack of school fees or maybe lack of uniforms. A family can not afford to buy a uniform for the child, and the school will not allow the child [to attend]."* Later in the interview Philippa commented further on this issue thus : *"In Africa if you are lucky you have maybe one uniform, and one other dress. That's all you have and this one uniform should last throughout the year, and maybe you wash the uniform twice or three times a week ... the schools don't supply [things] it is the parents who buy it ... we guarded our personal belongings very carefully, because one pencil you sharpen until you cannot hold it, and the same with exercise books, no wastage - every page is used up."*

Financial constraints in the government education system of Philippa's country of origin meant also that there were no cleaners or maintenance personnel to clean the school. This was done instead by the children, particularly in the early years. Philippa explained as follows : *"In Africa it is the 6 year olds, yes. In the morning the kids have to go there and work very, very hard before they go to class. They have to clean the classroom, they have to clean the school yard, they have to do all sorts of things before they go to class."*

For the first two years of school children attended in the mornings only : *"Grades 1 and 2 went to school until 1 pm and Grades 3 to 7 until 4 pm. So many younger children had to wait around and play till 4 pm, if it was too far for them to walk several miles home alone... 8 o'clock we have to be at school ... you can hear the bell you know, some kilometres away, and you have to go running and if you get there late you are punished. They cane you for everything ... for even a little thing like that."* This policy of strict discipline and punishment in primary school was an accepted practice in African schools as Philippa commented : *"The education system in Africa worked though [we were] being over punished, but when it's done moderately you find still the kids are very, very disciplined. Discipline is number one."* She explained the system thus : *"[For] everything you were supposed to be punished, so when you have not got something right you are punished, when you are late you are punished. The punishment involves things like - caning or making you work in the school yard - collecting rubbish for long hours... We were not meant to behave naturally, were not meant to play there. Things were structured as if we were adults ... you have to finish the work, we didn't have time to play. Being children there should have been a lot more time to play and do other exciting activities ... once we start Year 1, you are treated almost like [in] high school ... as a 7 year old you are treated like an adult. There's these three sticks in the corner of the class room ...if you don't finish enough work you are caned, if you cannot get it right you are caned, so you find that most kids by Grade 1 they are dropping out of school."*

Philippa described extremely high academic expectations for young children : *"8 years old ... if by lunch hour you have not mastered everything you were made to stay in the classroom ... things were structured as if we were adults... we didn't have time to play... if you cannot get it right you are caned ... they punish you when you are not following the work, the rules."* She commented also : *"Those who were not gifted academically were really suffering."* When asked if it got easier later in school, Philippa replied : *"Once you learn to do what they say ... they don't punish you ... In secondary ... the punishment was not as bad as primary - it's still beating, suspension, still doing work in the school yard... We had what they called slashers, the handle was so rough that if you slash 10 square metres, you would have blisters in the palm of your hand ... it was very hard labour... we had a school field where we planted corn, sweet potatoes and stuff like that ... as a punishment you are made to work in the school fields."*

Education in Philippa's African country of origin was conducted in the local language and English as a second language for the first two years, then only in English. She explained thus : *"As there were several different local languages English was necessary to enable*

communication between the different groups. At first in Grade 1 the local language was used and English as a second language. Later on from Grade 3 English was used all the time. At home the local mother tongue was used. From Grade 5 debating was encouraged and organised by the students giving everyone the chance to participate. This was held on a Friday afternoon."

Subjects taken at school in Philippa's country included maths, English, and religion in lower primary, as well as history and geography in the later years of primary school. She described religion as "enjoyable" due to the singing and rewards for "good work" from the priests and nuns : *"We used to do a lot of singing and we had Italian priests - missionaries. They used to show us the cinema ...at class there were priests and sisters who used to reward us, by giving us sweets.... When I went to upper Primary ...we were actually doing a kind of world geography, so it was quite interesting to know what was happening in other parts of the world, especially when you learn about economic activities and availability of things which were not in Africa ... we learnt about Rhineland and we learnt about North America, we even learnt about Australia and stuff like that. We became very interested in knowing what was happening in other parts of the world."* When questioned further, Philippa explained : *"Films of European countries were shown at school by the priests and everyone wanted to go there."* She also described learning about Australia : *"quite a lot of economic geography, about sheep, wool, primary industries, climate, Aborigines, kangaroos. Perth held the Commonwealth Games in 1962."* Learning history in primary school was a negative experience however: *"In primary school, X was in power, we were forced to learn about Muslims in X. In the 1890s my great grandfather escaped from the slavers. Many others were sent with Arab slave traders and sold to Europeans to work in cane fields in the US and other places, there are still many sad songs about this time, people would rather die than be sold into slavery."*

This participant described the upper school system in her country, in which after doing well in the Primary Leaving Exam, students go on to Year 8 at secondary boarding school, at approximately 15 years of age: *"There were 45 students in one class and by the end of the year, 5 students would be eliminated ... at the end of Year 9 you would only have 35 students left, they keep eliminating 5, 5, 5, per class per year. You know that if you don't work hard you would be eliminated, would not proceed to the next class... In secondary there were students ...who had got in - 'through the back door' ... students of the big chaps [teachers] in education that took us ... quite stubborn students who were not academically bright. At the end of the year there was no fear or favour, they were kicked out of school too."*

Another of the African participants, Colin, discussed in detail the education policy, and practices of his country of origin. He described the financial situation, emphasising also the hardships for parents trying to raise the money to enable their children to obtain even a government school education : *"In all schools and students had to pay school fees, which according to western standards quite a small amount, but according to the economic status of most parents it was a lot of money. From Primary 1 to Primary 4 they would pay an equivalent of 5 pounds - that's about 100 X shillings that day, and that was really a huge lot amount. Then from Primary 5 to Primary 7 it would be equivalent to about 10 pounds - about 200 shillings, but this could only be afforded by people that were out working, employed or hard working farmers."*

As a result of financial difficulties, many children like Colin had a pattern of 'on again off again' education, which he explained thus : *"My father and mother were very poor people, so they could hardly afford school fees ... so I did Year 1- stayed home, went back did Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, and stayed home again. Then Year 6 - stayed home for 2 years, went back to school and repeated Year 6, then went to Year 7."* In Colin's case however, he was fortunate that several primary school principals waived the fees, enabling him to continue. He explained : *"In Year 1 I had a headmaster who exempted me from paying fees, and then another headmaster was sent to the school so I couldn't go to study because he wanted the money paid. Then I got another good headmaster - who helped me from Year 2 to Year 4 to Year 5 ... When I reached Year 6 I had to pay schools fees, but my family got some little money so I managed to finish Year 6, but after that I couldn't continue ... so I had to go to work for my maternal uncle for a year, he had actually promised to help pay my fees."*

This situation may have resulted because of Colin's academic ability, as he subsequently remarked : *"I was a bright student, a so called 'straight A' student, so there was no problem doing my school work I would be at the level of what you would call a 'gifted' child according to the school system here, but I think I was only good at attending to teachers."* A similar situation arose in high school, but after Colin explained his family's financial problems, one of his teachers became his sponsor and paid his school fees. He explained thus : *"There was a chemistry teacher who really liked me because I was very good at maths and I was top student in his subject ... I put my case forward and this chemistry teacher took over paying my school fees and became my benefactor and that way ... I had the opportunity to continue my education."*

Colin also described the organisation of schooling in his country of origin thus :

"Especially in northern X - primary schools were all day schools, so every body would leave their home and go to school and then return, depending on whether it's near or not. If the school is far away then kids normally leave home in the morning and return in the evening, but those people whose homes are within a kilometre or so will return at lunch time and then return to school in the afternoon. There are also 2 categories of morning and afternoon classes, Year 1 and Year 2 which will not return in the afternoon, while from Year 3 to Year 7 you are expected to return in the afternoon."

After passing the Primary Leaving Exam, students then progressed to high school most of which were boarding schools: *"In X most high schools were boarding schools then - which meant every body who did well in Year 7 would be admitted to high school and stay in boarding school. Also the parents were expected to pay school fees which, depending on which school one went to, was the minimum of at least 30 pounds a year and that was quite heavy... .Students would spend six years in lower primary, two years in junior primary and then four years in high school in 'O' level, just two years in 'A' level before sitting for university entrance exams."*

Education in Colin's country was conducted in the local language initially, with English as a second language introduced in Year 4. Colin explained thus : *"English was introduced in Year 4. From Year 4 upwards one was expected to be able to read just English by Year 7, if not speak it. By Year 7 one was expected to be able to at least do a bit of composition in English, and read well."* Other languages such as French, German, and Italian were taught in secondary schools depending on which school the students attended.

Due to the lack of teaching aids, the emphasis was on rote learning which Colin described as follows : *"The government couldn't afford to pay for teaching aids. Most ... things like weighing scales used to be borrowed from the shopkeepers around the school, and so the learning was pure[ly] by rote, and that was another painful experience. Though I didn't suffer from this, but other students really suffered ... if one couldn't do it then you'd be caned... .it was a problem especially to those students who were not gifted in remembering. Very few kids would finish primary standard well and succeed to go to high school. It would be very difficult to remember and perform in high school things had changed, especially sciences ... they were practical because of the group learning. So in primary school I would say it was difficult to learn."*

Strict authoritarianism and punishment was very much a feature of education in Colin's country, particularly in primary school, and he commented : *"They [teachers] used to beat us a lot ... they wouldn't like you for reasons that's not clear, so schooling was not easy ... in primary schools where students would be caned left and right without mercy - all the time ... one [teacher] could cane you, beat you without any other teacher restraining them."* Colin explained also how he was "used" by teachers to help children in higher grades : *"In Year 2 I would be asked to go and solve problems either in Year 3 or Year 4, and those poorer students would be caned by me after solving their problems."*

These policies and practices resulted in an atmosphere of "fear and intimidation," due to reprisals from the other students and "cruelty" of teachers in primary schools : *"If a student is to be punished then the teacher would pick you to go and get a cane if you delayed then that would earn you some beatings."* When asked if girls also suffered from punishment, Colin remarked that it was worse especially for those who were "biologically mature" elaborating as follows : *"the teachers would like to have them for girlfriends, and if one refused it would be a problem for that girl ... school rules prohibited male teachers to beat these girls, but they didn't escape the cruelty of the teachers."* When questioned further about teachers in primary schools, Colin explained : *"There were no white teachers, white teachers were only found at high school, except in Catholic schools where white teachers were found in primary. They were Catholic priests and sisters who had dual duties, preaching and teaching ... there were no white teachers in Anglican primary schools."*

In secondary schools Colin explained, the situation improved due to less frequent use of corporal punishment : *"When I went to secondary school ... there was less caning ... the first principal ... introduced a kind of 'black mark' ... against your name ... about 5 [and] the principal would call you to his office to caution you and if one got 10 then one was suspended for two weeks ... no caning, and this was a way of disciplining students with no fear attached to it. No other kids were involved, only the teachers, so it was fairer."* This participant also made the following additional comments about these issues : *"The government should have done more to help those kids learn in this difficult atmosphere, because I know a lot of students could have done better, but because of these punishments at school unfortunately they left In primary school ... there were those headmasters who were kind to me to allow me to study free, and I have very high regard for them,"*

Five participants in this research study talked about the education policy and practices in their Latin American countries of origin. Sylvia described the education system and policy in her country as placing great emphasis on the obtaining of a university education, and she commented thus : *"In Latin America it is very important not just to be just a 'graduate' or something from high school, you have to go to uni and be a professional."* Possibly as a result of this policy, competition was very important in schools particularly in the early years, and Sylvia explained : *"There is a lot of competition there, you know in Latin America. They give you prizes if you are the best in the class ... the nuns in the Catholic school, they also give you prizes ... when I went to high school ... everything was different you know, there were no prizes any more ... no more competitions."*

Sylvia commenced her education at 5 years of age, attending a government school for the first three years before changing to a Catholic school in Year 4. She explained thus : *"My Years 1, 2 and 3, I did in a national school – government school....The rest of my primary schooling was in a Catholic school studying with nuns, and after that we were transferred to another college with nuns until Year 10, that's the secondary school ... after I finished high school I went to university, National University. All my study was with nuns, and with Catholic, you know – [education]."* She also commented on the differences between the government and Catholic schools : *"I didn't have any religious teaching in that government school, and I had to learn all that stuff with nuns and they were very strict, even the uniform that you had to wear it had to be very neat and tidy and everything."*

Education in Sylvia's country of origin was conducted in Spanish, and she made no mention of learning any other languages even in high school. Rote learning was an important feature of education particularly in the early years : *"Reading and writing were just memory in the beginning ... you learn the words or the sounds for the day and you had to memorise it ... they give you a list of words that you also have to memorise, and next day you have to remember everything ... and you have to write it down ... if you make any mistakes or you didn't remember anything, you had to do double ... the times tables were compulsory, so you had to repeat and memorise them by heart ... multiplication sums and division and maths was very, very important They were stressing very much that kind of stuff especially with spelling and maths."* Sylvia explained that rote learning was also an important characteristic of religious education in Latin American schools : *"In primary ... some important nuns came to visit our school – me and another girl – had to memorise a lot a lot of stuff. We stayed in a little*

room memorising two or three pages, Oh it was so hard! ... the nun said 'I chose her because she is very good' ... it was a lot of pressure."

Exams were an important feature of education in Sylvia's country which she commented upon : *"In high school ...if you fail maths you have to come to a summer course and you have to pass another exam ... all the units from the whole year ... the nine subjects that you are taking in high school, and you have to remember everything from the first unit to the last ... you have to do the whole thing again during the summer... you have to go and study and in January you have to do it again ... one of my classmates failed and she didn't want to do it again, so she didn't receive any certificate so she doesn't have any degree now."*

The use of punishment was a common policy in schools in Latin America, which this participant described witnessing : *"[In]Year 1 and 2 it was a bit of corporal punishment ... a lot of corporal punishment with the hand, and ... a big long ruler and hit them on the hand. Sometimes they did terrible punishments with the kids. They stood them in the sun for one or two hours there outside, holding the desk, if they fail in the lesson or if they didn't do their homework ... that was in the government schools. The nuns they didn't touch you, but they were very strict ... they will tell you or leave you after classes to do lines."*

Sylvia, who had been a teacher in Latin America, also discussed her country's education policies and practices based on these experiences : *"Kids from Year 3 in X are more advanced ... very good in social studies, science and maths in Year 3 ... we've got a programme and I know that you have to learn this week so much ... every day you learn the four [basic] subjects ... we work very hard with the kids in Latin America ... it is more complicated, more effective the education system there ... I know the programme and know how we work with the kids ... in Year 3 kids have to be more active ... in our schools [children] have to do homework every day and work very hard, do assignments even in Year 3 or 4."*

The early commencement age of children in preschool education was a feature of the education policy and practices in the country of another participant, Elizabeth, also from Latin America. Education for Elizabeth began at the age of three years in kindergarten, where children participated in activities such as painting, singing, dancing and "manual" work with "plasticine." She explained the system as follows: *"I started at kindergarten when I was 3 years old ... then went into 4 years old kindy, then Pre-Primary ... Primary school is from Year 1 to Year*

6, then it starts [the] third level of education which goes from Year 7 to Year 9, and then what is called here High school, we have Year 10, 11, and 12, separate ... We had to go in the morning, go home to have lunch and then come back in the afternoon for the afternoon session. So we used to be at school from 8 o'clock or 8.30 to 12.00, go home, come back at 2.00 and leave at 4.30 in the afternoon." Later Elizabeth remarked further about the system in her country : "At the time I did my education the public schools were still Ok, they had resources and the government was supporting them."

Possibly as a result of this policy of early commencement in preschool education, children were given reading books in the preschool years, and Elizabeth in particular had already learned to read before starting in Year 1. She explained the situation thus : "I used to have a reading book there ... they noticed that I could already read so ... I did Year 1 [work] before the normal age that I should do it ... at the kindergarten place where I used to go. The next year when I went to Year 1 ... I knew everything, I knew how to read and write."

Despite these policies of early preschool entry and the facilitation of reading before Year 1 however, some difficulties occurred on commencement at primary school, which Elizabeth described as follows : "The teacher had problems with me because every time she asked a question I could answer it straight away, I could read ... she didn't know what to do with me." After the intervention of the principal who detected Elizabeth's early ability to read, she was put into Year 2 and the situation improved. She explained thus : "They said to me 'Why, what is the problem?' and they gave me a book and said 'Read here', and I could read the whole piece, - 'Oh, she shouldn't be in Year 1, she should be in Year 2' so they put me in Year 2."

Elizabeth described the policy and practices of her primary school education in a girls only government school as follows : "We used to have this method of research and when I passed Year 3, I remember very well they had different units during the year that we had to cover, and used to change every 3 months ... for example science - we have to take a topic and have to research the topic and we have to show in class ... from memory and have to also show graphs with all our research and we started doing that from Year 3 ... I still can remember things that I've learned We used to get topics for research ... I used to work for several days on that topic until I had finished and then talk about it in front of the class... In X they have to do a lot of homework it's very heavy, heavy study since you were little in primary."

Strict authoritarianism and the use of corporal punishment were also features of the policy and practices of education in Elizabeth's country of origin, particularly in the early years. She explained as follows : *"At that time the teachers they were allowed to hit the kids with rulers so I used to get a lot.... They had a lot of different performances each year ... and they have a way of punishments with me because all the time they couldn't keep me quiet or without moving too much, so they used to say 'If you don't behave you won't go to it'."* Elizabeth explained further that many teachers were "very strict and shout," commenting also : *"When you pass from one year to the other, the teacher from the previous year maybe says to the next teacher 'This is a problem kid, this is good, this -' so they expected me."*

Another feature of Elizabeth's discussion of her country's education policy was the implementation of changes in the system which she described thus : *"When I went into the third level of education, [Years] 7, 8 and 9, there was a change in the education system and the whole country changed because of new policies and every thing was a disaster, it was a complete disaster. What they did was introduce television to the schools and introduced also the classes through T V ... They developed lessons - on a T V set, and were showing it all to the students. Oh, that was the most horrendous thing because it was so boring ... a teacher used to call, turn the T V on and leave, that was the class. I was so angry about that I used to write things on the board ... I couldn't control myself ... I would have to go out, at the end of the year everyone got certificates except me."* As a result of this behaviour, Elizabeth was initially expelled and reinstated only when her mother interceded on her behalf. She explained : *"They said 'Oh well, we don't want this girl here any more' and they expelled me saying that I was not permitted to come back to school for Year 8. Mum ... she had to go to school and ask for permission before they accepted me again ... by that time they realised stupid television was no good and so stopped it."*

Another participant from Latin America, Paula, described the policy of flexible school entry age in her country which enabled her to commence Pre-primary at 4 years, and Year 1 at 5 years of age : *"In X there's no restriction about when you could start your child ... there are no restrictions there."* When asked if children could start earlier, Paula replied : *"If you knew certain basics, yes,"* explaining that reading and writing was commonly taught in preschool due to the belief of teachers that : *"kids are never too young to learn."*

During Paula's time at primary school the school system changed. In primary the hours had been from 8.00 am to 12.00, with a lunch break - siesta - until 2.00 pm, after which children would return to school until 4.30 pm. This was altered to 8.00 to 3.00 pm for primary school, and 3.30 pm for high school students, for reasons which she explained thus: *"I was halfway through my primary school. We used to start at 8.00 finish at 12.00, go home for lunch come back at 2.00 and finish at 4.30, shops used to close at lunch time and people used to have a siesta ... traffic congestion at lunch time was madness, people used to spend their lunch hours just trying to get home and back to work. So the government said 'No, this is ridiculous, we have to go with the times,' and we started going to school from 8.00 till 3.00 for primary kids and 3.30 for high school ... same for offices and shops ... open straight through."* Asked what arrangement was made for the children's lunches, Paula explained: *"You could either take money and buy lunch there, or you could take it from home."*

Paula compared the policies and practices of the Catholic primary school which she attended, with those of her cousin's state school. In Catholic primary schools the emphasis was very much on cleanliness, which Paula explained thus: *"We used to just have to walk around absolutely clean and we couldn't be kids, we couldn't have anything out of place, and I think was to do with being a Catholic school."* In contrast, she described students at the government school that her cousin attended as *"not as tidy,"* elaborating further: *"The school was crowded, the students looked poor and smelled, their uniforms looked awful. My cousin hated going to school and it showed, she never finished school."* In Catholic schools the emphasis on religious education commenced early: *"In the equivalent of Year 2 they started preparing us for First Communion it was just like, you know, read this part of the bible - blah, blah, blah, blah - Ok you've got that, Ok, just go onto something else, if you know about it you believe it, you know it's the whole truth and that's it."* However, religious education was also a feature of government school policy in Paula's country, and she explained: *"Religion is taught in all schools, they did have a bit of religion in a non- Catholic school as well."*

Another feature of the education system in Paula's Latin American country of origin was learning by rote, about which she remarked: *"There was a fair bit of learning by repeating, that was done a lot ... repetition and a lot of aloud reading, anyone used to take turns to read something in front of the class ... in high school the later years, they used to still continue to work like that."* Paula also described the importance of homework in primary school: *"There was a lot of emphasis on tables, we always*

had lots of homework. A list of homework duties were written in a colour coded numbered note pad. The parents had to check everything and sign it, this was done in primary only."

Geography was also emphasised in primary school, and Paula explained as follows :
"In primary school we used to be taught about every single country in the world So generally you find that people know exactly where it is and a little about it ... we discussed every country in general but we used to have to do an assignment on a country ... they've given us - such a good scope about the world and interest in the world."

The use of corporal and other punishments was also a common policy in the early years in Paula's country of origin. She described this policy and the practices as follows : *"They used to shout and hit ... we used to get smacked or be sent to the Principal's office, or... spend the afternoons outside the classroom."* When asked about punishments in high school, Paula commented : *"It was more like - words... really naughty ones used to get a smack on the back of the leg, or used to be grabbed by the ears and taken outside... to the principal's office... [they] speak to you in very strong terms."*

The emphasis on languages in her country was also discussed by Paula : *"There has always been a lot of emphasis on languages in X. You have state schools which always try to teach you a bit of English. People like to learn languages ... not only English which you always learn a little bit of at school, but you also go on to learn other languages outside.... in all schools you always learn a little bit of English at least - but very, very little ... in my high school, it was like you were supposed to come out very fluent, yes ... they would have maths in Spanish and they would have maths in English, ... all the subjects that you learn in Spanish had to do it in English as well... we were 12 years old by then You were expected to be fluent in that language ... and master it because in the last couple of years in high school if you could afford it, you were expected to go and spend your summer holidays in the United States. They used to have to try to have an exchange student stay at your place and do the same. It was mainly with the States. because I think they have a lot of emphasis on learning Spanish there as well. It wasn't something that you just had to just get by, you were expected to be fluent."*

This participant described the policy and practices of her high school further : *"[For] High school, [I] went to a private school proud of it's achievement in teaching English and encouragement of free thinking and independent women ... I came from the primary not having done much English at all I had to do a whole year of English subjects just to catch up ... the teachers used to get us into heated arguments*

in subjects like history or philosophy. it's amazing the amount of stuff you learn that way.... bring up some controversial subject ... and we used to have these incredible debates and we got a lot out of that."

Paula explained how students had to sit an entrance exam to qualify for admission to the high school that she attended : *"You had an entrance exam and there were 500 girls queuing on the day of the enrolment for the entrance exam"* and elaborated further on the system thus : *"In X there are no electives. No junior and senior. All subjects are compulsory. Depending on the course you'd take a test once a week or every fortnight, sit for exams every month, plus a final exam at the end of the year. All of these marks were added up and averaged out including marks on work in class, presentation and participation. There wasn't the pressure of T. E. E. if you were a bit slack one month you could work harder the following. All marks were added up for the five years of high school. The first and second in each school got automatic entry to the uni of their choice and the career of their choice. The other students had to sit a special entry exam. There are very few spots so very few get in, becoming a professional is very important so some people tried year after year. Government university is free of charge. Private universities are very expensive."* Later she reiterated : *"In X each subject is tested, revised with every test, and end of year general revision, all marks are added to give the year mark. High school years are averaged, not just tests, also presentation, work in class, attention, discipline. First and second got automatic entry to uni and course of choice. Others sit for test and need good marks to gain entry."*

Other comments by this participant included : *"In X all schools are surrounded by high walls and there is always somebody at the door asking what your business is if you want to get in, it's safer for everybody ... We used to go to school sometimes to paint desks or clean up, plant roses, anything to make them more beautiful... . If they were still teaching the same methods and the same things right now you'd be very old fashioned ... The present government is trying to build a school in every suburb. Trying to put an emphasis on - healthy body, healthy mind, that's the motto, and making sure there's a sports arena in every school, which before only the really big schools used to have – the state schools ... of course a lot of kids that go to state schools are very, very poor, so they have implemented this programme where kids have breakfast when they get there. Because they say if you have an empty tummy you are not going to learn very much."*

Comments made by Sam on the education policy and practices in his Latin American country of origin related mainly to personal experiences. Sam began his education at a preschool one kilometre away from his home at the age of four, commencing Year 1 at the age of six, he explained : *"I went to kindy at four, I think it was two years there, and then I went into the*

primary school at six." Despite his family being Catholic, Sam attended a private fee paying Baptist school in primary school, which he described as *"American style,"* explaining further : *"I went to a Baptist school - American. It was American style, some teachers were from America, so we had baseball, softball ... the English teachers were American, there were others that were from X. The principal was an American and the structure and everything - the way of doing things was more American."*

In spite of the fact that the school was American, children were taught only in Spanish, with English as a second language at basic level : *"We had English lessons but it was very elementary at that time, there was not the way of thinking like today, you must learn English."*

Sam described his country's education system as very *"traditional"* and explained thus : *"We had a very traditional way of learning, memorising the material ... we had to do some homework and study for exams ... report with marks was handed [out] every month so the parents could see the performance of the children ... and returned to the teacher after it had been signed at school we had marks for everything - like an evaluation In primary for reading they were teaching a letter a day ... we were learning first printing and later on we were learning - the letters joined together."*

Although not personally affected, Sam explained the changes which took place in his country's education system, particularly in government schools : *"There was a sort of a revolution of education and the education system. The lessons were given by means of television at public schools ... the country was small, less than 300 km long ... and in the rural areas - in the 70s they decided there were not enough teachers, and then they founded the educational television [system]. There were Asian people who were helping at first, and instead of the teacher they had the T V in front ... they had half T V and half teachers then."*

During his interview, Peter discussed in detail the government policy and philosophies of education in his Latin American country of origin. He described his country's system of compulsory education up to Year 7, as follows : *"The economic system is very important in the education ... The government ... designs the plan ... they want that the students know the basics - the basic knowledge ... they have to know. From Year 1 to Year 6 they have to be in the school, and after that it depends on the student, it depends on the family, it depends on the resources if we can put a student [through]... We don't have, for example, unemployment payment over there ... my mum ... said 'You have to go to the school [now] because I don't know if tomorrow I can send you to the school, it depends on the resources, the money that I have.' That was the idea the government tried to put in every family - the*

schooling, the education starts in the family... Maybe because of that they try to push the students more over there, and give them the most that they can in school. It's the same with the family who try to give the most they can when they have the opportunity to ... In my country...they push more in the government schools, than private schools."

Highlighted also by Peter were the individual differences in education facilities between country and city areas in his country. Due to the lack of available preschool education in the country district where he lived, children went straight into Year 1. Peter described commencing Year 1 at the local government school at 5 years of age, explaining : *"I didn't go to the kindy, because there wasn't kindy in my school, just the Year 1."* In this rural area there were also no facilities for secondary education and children had to go to school in the city from Year 7. As a result Peter's family moved to the city to allow his older brother to attend high school. Peter explained the situation thus : *"I was in the country just from Year 1 to Year 3. After [that] my mum moved to the city because my older brother he need to go to the secondary [school] - Year 7 and there wasn't Year 7 ... so I started Year 4 in a different school."* When asked his opinion on this new school in the city, Peter commented : *"It was better, in the city, yes everything - the students, the teachers - everything was different ... in the city it was different because the - material, - the environment - the desks were different. "*

This participant described class sizes in schools in all years as *"about 50 students"* and explained some of the education practices as follows : *"Before we were going into the classroom [there] always was a meeting [of] the whole school, and always [there] was special information from the principal, or sometimes they have a special time in the school calendar, some celebration. After that we went to the classroom go and sit down at the desk, - typical desks - they fit three people ... You always start with Spanish class reading, comprehension, something like that, and afterwards maths... a lot of exercises on the blackboard, [which] we have to do in the book, and when we had finished we put the book on his desk."*

Peter also emphasised the role of competition in education in his country, commenting : *"There was always a competition of course ...a special prize gift after when we finish each year, and they give a trip to X."* He stressed as well the importance placed on end of year school certificates in the school system : *"If we don't pass that year they don't give to us the certificate so you can go the next step the next year ... we*

don't get the certificate if we don't pass that year, you know, so it was important to get that certificate ... if you don't get the certificate you can't go next year."

Peter's education was conducted in Spanish only, with English as a second language introduced in secondary school, and he described it as follows : *"From Year 7 they would do English. We start to learn in a basic English class....When I went to high school we learn English but not much, you know it was just the basics."* He commented also on differences between Primary and secondary schooling thus : *"Sport was different because we went to the park from Year 1 to Year 6 and played basketball, soccer, softball or something like that –but there wasn't a special sport teacher, it was the normal teacher that we have in the classroom ... and we weren't pushed ... from Year 7 it was different ... more sports, arts and craft, English classes ... more subjects ... we did some science in Year 6 and Year 5 but it [high school] was more complicated."*

Further comments about education policy and practice made by this participant related to his experiences as a teacher in Latin America : *"When I was a teacher ... some topic we have to teach in Year 1... we - revise this in the first two months in Year 2. After that we try to develop the programmes and do more and more and more, and we push the students a little bit more ...in maths with Year 2, we try to give to the students division, multiplication, adding, takeaway - more complicated, and give the students homework in that, because it was a basic over there ... We push the 4 subjects and we gave the students homework in the 4 subjects every day, and we check every day the homework and we revise the homework. We provide 15 minutes to revise the homework from the last day and we do the new topic for the next day ... the children they are not mature but if we encourage, if we put [it] that the students want education, maybe it's hard, but if we put in this way and push and push - encourage, it's working maybe because it's the education system....We pushed the students to give to us the same information in Year 4 over there as here in Year 8 ... if you properly explain the things, they can give to you – more information"*

Three participants, Elizabeth from Latin America, Maureen from Scandinavia and Brian from the Middle East, also discussed their children's education in countries other than Australia, and made some comparisons between the education policy and practices of the different systems that they had experienced.

Elizabeth, whose oldest child had attended school in Latin America, described changes which had occurred in the system by the time the child commenced school as follows :

"At the time that I did my education, the public schools were still Ok. They had resources ... but at the time my child went to school it was in a wartime situation ...leaving hospitals and education without resources ... getting into private schools was very difficult, it was expensive and not all the kids could get in ... the only children that are allowed to enrol are relatives of the others that have been there ... other schools which charged, like - the British school, French, German one, they are very, very expensive ... a very high level of education ... They teach you both languages, German and Spanish, but you have to be - a German descendant ... after they fill up the vacancies they maybe have vacancies for someone that is not ... So it was really only rich people could afford to go to those schools, and there is no support from the government."

This participant also mentioned the emphasis on homework when her child attended school in Latin America : *"They still did have a lot of homework to do ... s/he had to do a lot of homework ... At home s/he had to do ... projects and things since Year 1, and a lot of maths exercises."*

Maureen, whose children had attended government preschool and primary school in Italy, commented on the policy and practices that she experienced there : *"[At pre-primary] they were very regimented ... and they didn't seem to learn, they didn't learn the alphabet or colours at all ... [it] was in the same building as school, it was one room, white walls, teacher in white ... The first half an hour they would do colouring in, that means they all got a sheet of paper and a few colouring pencils ... They were told to go up [and] show their work and the teacher will eight out of ten times tell them to go back and do a better job ... and then there was half an hour work with Lego, the whole day was structured - very regimented, very little to work with ... they had one big room with nothing in except some stairs ... and a slide and that was it, that was all the play area, ... outside they were allowed to be in this little cubicle, the size of half of this kitchen, and there was some big Lego and that was mostly what they had to play with In the pre-primary they go from 8.30 to 4 o'clock in the afternoon, but because we were foreigners I was allowed to take X [home] earlier, so I really liked that, and that was 5 days a week Saturday to one o'clock."*

She explained the system in Italy further : *"They were extremely strict, they had very high expectations, probably more so than what I would like, they didn't have any physical sports, children are outside on a sunny day ... Any wind any clouds and they were not allowed outside the building, so the physical or practical there was nil... [It was] very hard but they do get excellent students but you don't get to help them yourself, it's very strict. In Grade 5 ... they have something called 'interrogation' - the exam is an interrogation One child will go in front of a panel of teachers and they will interrogate the child, on any subject and anything*

... they put a lot of emphasis on the theoretical side of things." As a result of her experiences with Italian education Maureen turned to the use of Australian Distance Education, which in contrast she praised highly as : *"fun, interesting ...very practical... I was very impressed."*

Brian whose children had attended an Arabic school in Britain explained the education policy and practices thus : *"They do English social studies but at the same time they have Arabic activities, language, and culture ... they used to have a lot of homework and reading and writing ... there's more subjects to learn there compared to when I was in X [Middle East] X used to have homework all the time ... and because of doing the Arabic language used to have a lot to write and copy... translating the Koran from Arabic to English."* Brian remarked also : *"In England there's a lot of activity, sport, music, art and there's not a lot of children in the classroom compared with X [Middle East]."*

Culture and Language Outside Australia

This section discusses aspects of education related to the language and culture that participants in this research study from countries in Africa, Latin America, Middle East, and Scandinavia, had experienced in their country of origin. Two participants, Maureen and Brian, also mentioned their experiences when their children attended school in a third country outside Australia.

The five Latin America participants all referred to learning in their native language Spanish, which Elizabeth felt was less "complicated" than English. She elaborated : *"In Spanish you can learn very fast, quickly because it's not as complicated as English, so the children in Year 1 they learn to read and write very fast very quick."* Sam explained further as follows : *"In Spanish it is different from English, in the sense [that] it is phonetic ... we have 28 letters and every letter has just one sound like here. The vowels they have different sounds - and even our names are pronounced completely different. So even when a kid does not know the meaning of the word they can read it because it is just phonetic."*

Sylvia commented : *"We've got a different spelling in Spanish, the stress on one word, or if there is 'm' or 'n' or 'b' or 'v'."* She added : *"I learned very quickly to read and write."* In contrast Peter described how despite speaking Spanish he could not read Spanish properly at the end of Year 1 : *"I*

couldn't learn to read Spanish. [In] the last test in the year, and we had to pass that one, I couldn't read properly...he [teacher] said 'Alright you are going to repeat the first year'."

Paula, on the other hand talked about the strong emphasis on the learning of other languages as well as the "mainstream" Spanish, which existed both in her family and country of origin. She explained : *"There has always been a lot of emphasis on languages in X...people like to learn languages, it's not uncommon for most kids to go to a language school of any choice...that was the norm, 9 out of 10 kids in a school would go on to a language school."* English was one of the languages taught in high school in Paula's Latin American country, about which she commented : *"In all schools you always learn a little bit of English at least - but very, very little ... on my father's side, he went to one of the best state schools in X and at that time in all schools you had to learn English, French, German, and Latin."* Paula elaborated further : *"Some people are naturally talented with languages, we got that from my Dad who was very good with languages ... and he enjoyed reading a foreign language and trying to speak and understand as many words as possible."* As well, Paula described the contribution that her family's cultural background made, as follows : *"We've always had a few different languages going, my grandmother spoke Japanese and my grandfather ... on my mum's side they migrated from Japan."* She elaborated further on the attitudes towards language learning : *"By learning another language you become aware and interested in the rest of the world and their people You were expected to be fluent in that language ...it wasn't something that you just sort of had to get by - you were expected to be fluent, yes."*

For the three African participants Colin, Philippa, and Lorna, education was conducted in two languages from an early age. Colin and Philippa were educated in their local language and English, while Lorna's schooling was conducted in her local language and Afrikaans. Philippa explained the situation in her country thus : *"As there were several different local languages English was necessary to enable communication between the different groups. At first in Grade 1 the local language was used and English as a second language, later on from Grade 3 English was used all the time. At home the local mother tongue was used."* Colin described learning in this local language until Year 4 : *"[In] our local language called X, English was introduced in Year 4, from Year 4 upwards, and one was expected to be able to read English by Year 7 if not speak it ...[and] expected to be able to at least do a bit of composition in English and read well in English."*

In Lorna's country however, education was conducted in both Afrikaans and the local language from her commencement at primary school. She explained thus : *"You learn how to read and write your own language and Afrikaans until what they call Standard 1. From Standard 1 all the subjects are in Afrikaans."* When asked if Afrikaans was spoken at home at all, Lorna remarked : *"Not really no ... it was used, not at home, but in the city like X it was commonly used. All the tribes they don't speak the same language so they just use Afrikaans."* Lorna also described her introduction to English as a third language in high school thus : *"It was incomprehensible ... and the people who were taking it ... they didn't understand the language."* As a result when awarded a U. N. scholarship, Lorna was unable to speak English, and she explained : *"I couldn't say a word in English, I could only speak Afrikaans and I stayed for a year with an English family and I found it was really helpful. Well it was so hard for me to learn the language and then go and do further studies, after one year of language studies ... I could just write a little bit by the end of the year ... but I was still not very good with my grammar nor my spelling ... half the time I couldn't understand the things ... there's a difference between academic language and the normal day to day living language, and that took me longer to get than normal English."*

In contrast the three Scandinavian participants in this research study made general brief references to language in their interviews. Maureen commented only : *"We have three extra letters in X also."* Jane described learning several languages including French and German, from Year 5 at primary school in her country : *"Everybody has got one or two languages that they do know and they also give you a bit of knowledge of the Scandinavian languages as well, you've got to read a little bit of that."* Later she remarked also : *"When I had been learning a language for four years, you could read a book and you could write a letter in that language."*

Michael described his experiences of learning a new language, English, in adulthood : *"I picked up English as a second language in my twenties. [I] Had a clear understanding of the world, and to suddenly see things and hear things in the new language that seem so very bizarre, [and] that the locals don't notice at all because they're so used to it. They do certain things and behave in certain ways because of the way they interact with language. As an outsider you see it from a different angle, and that makes you definitely a lot more aware of what happens."*

The remaining participant, Brian from the Middle East, explained how he learned to read and write in Arabic including learning the Koran, at primary school in his country. When his children attended school in Britain, they were able to attend a Muslim school where Arabic was taught. Brian described his children's education in Britain as follows : *"The education was very good ... they do English social studies but at the same time they have Arabic activities, language and culture X was doing Arabic language, X used to have a lot to write and copy ... translating the Koran from Arabic to English ...X used to read the Koran with no problems and know a lot of things in Arabic."*

Aspects of culture referred to by the participants in this research study included religion, history, as well as particular societal attitudes and values. Religion was mentioned by seven of the participants, including Sam, Sylvia, and Paula from Latin America, Lorna and Philippa from Africa, Jane from Scandinavia, and Brian from the Middle East.

Paula described the system in her Latin American country and her experiences in a Catholic school as follows : *"Religion is taught in all schools ... in non Catholic schools as well.... In the equivalent of Year 2 they started preparing us for First Communion by giving us catechism classes. I queried some point about the original sin and I was told it wasn't meant to be understood just believed."* Later she reiterated : *"I wasn't keen on the teaching of religion because you were supposed to believe it not understand it and I just can't get that into my head-how can you believe something you can't understand To tell you the truth I didn't know very much about the bible, my husband who is an atheist knows more about the bible than I do ... It was like you know, read this part of the bible-blah, blah, blah, blah, blah ...no one could get very interested. I just thought it was just an utter waste of time."*

Sylvia also talked about religious aspects of her education in Latin America, explaining : *"I didn't have any religious teaching in the government school and I had to learn all that stuff with the nuns and they were very strict Some important nuns came to visit our school - me and another girl - have to memorise a lot of stuff. We stayed in a little room memorising two or three pages, Oh it was so hard!"* Sam, on the other hand, mentioned only attending a Baptist primary school despite the fact that he was a Catholic, before moving to a Latin American Catholic secondary school.

Two of the three African participants described liking religion; Philippa explained how much she liked religious education : *"I used to like religion so much because we used to do a lot of singing and we had Italian teachers - priests, missionaries. They used to show us cinema [films] so I used to like religion very much ... and the sisters used to reward us, of course, by giving us sweets, lollies. Yes, if you did well you were given lollies."* Lorna commented only that she liked bible studies : *"because it was easy - I suppose."*

Of the three Scandinavian participants, only Jane talked about the religion of her country of origin, which she described in considerable detail : *"Religion, that was a compulsory thing too ... you got to read all the stories in the Old Testament ... all the psalms of by heart and you have to be able to prattle off all the verses - They're not overly religious but it was just part of the culture that you did that ... It was Lutheran ... the morning assembly where you would sing something from the bible ... and the headmaster would do a prayer and that was it ... We never went to church ... you had your christening which - you know - everybody does it, - but then you are not likely to go to church unless it's Xmas or - you do have your confirmation at 14 years of age - when you finish in Year 7, other than that it's quite relaxed.... In the 50s and 60s in X, 99.5% of the population would be a member of the Lutheran church and the other .5% might have been Catholics and that would have been the extent of it - everybody went to the same church."*

The importance of religion in his Middle Eastern country was emphasised by Brian, who described how he enjoyed learning to *"sing"* the Koran in primary school years. He explained also that despite religious subjects being compulsory in school, the marks gained *"don't help you to enrol for a university course."* The attendance of his children at an Arabic school in U K, where they learned about his religion, was a positive experience for Brian who explained : *"I was very happy for them to learn the language and the religion."* Other comments about religion made by Brian concerned the historical aspects of the Middle Eastern region : *"The three religions come from this area you know... the Jewish religion starts from Egypt and Moses he went to Jerusalem, the same with Jesus [who was] born in Nazareth and the same with Mohammed [who was] born in Mecca, they're all in the same area."*

Historical aspects of culture were referred to by four participants in this research study. Jane from Scandinavia mentioned only briefly learning lists of Scandinavian kings by heart: *"You had to learn the row of kings - prattle them off, you know, in the order they came in."* In contrast

however, Lorna commented on the historical influences of colonisation in her African country of origin, which resulted in the use of Afrikaans as the main language of communication : *"I didn't connect it with the history until I was in my last years of high school, then I could understand how it came about.. In early schooling I didn't connect it to the colonising power or anything."*

Philippa, also from Africa, described disliking history in primary school explaining her reasons thus : *"When X was in power we were forced to learn about Muslims in X. Back in the 1890s my grandfather escaped into the bush from the slavers. Many others were sent to X with the Arab slave traders and sold to Europeans to work in cane fields and so on, in the U. S. and other places. There are still sad songs about this time, people would rather die than be sold into slavery."*

Brian, from the Middle East, told of the historical influence of colonisation by the French in his country : *"We have the French system for education - Baccalaureate - like 'O' level. You have to reach certain points to get to get to university and if you fail you have to repeat the whole year."* As well Brian described his country of origin and the Middle East in general, as *"full of history,"* explaining : *"We had the Phoenicians, the Moguls, had Alexander the Great, the Greeks - the area is full of history and even when you drive around in X there's lots of things.... It was never recorded in books, the people they talk about it together, you know, about the stories. The Virgin Mary was running away from the Romans and she was on her donkey and she felt tired so she went to - like a dead end, and the mountain opened - the size of the donkey, and she went inside there. She was thirsty and this water came out, and they built a shrine there ... On the way to north X there's graves - written in old Roman and X ...they are - like Joseph and Paul ... There were a lot of them around after crucifying Jesus, there are twelve of them, I don't know what they call them, there were twelve of them [disciples]. There's two of them buried in X ... the history, it's the same if you go to Palestine, Israel, and Egypt, it's the same."*

Many of the participants in this research study made comments which were indicative of societal values and attitudes. Four of the five Latin American participants mentioned the importance of a *"professional"* career. Paula explained : *"People expect you to be like ... a lawyer or doctor or an engineer or an economist.... Becoming a professional is very important so some people tried year after year."* This attitude was echoed by Sylvia who stated : *"In Latin America it is very important not just to be something from high school. You have to go to uni to be a professional."* Sam explained thus : *"A lot of people of lower socioeconomic status ... wanted to prepare to go to university because they realised they*

didn't have any other chance - they had to be better than the other people that had more facilities ... you have to show that you can do better than everyone else." This attitude was also echoed by Peter describing how his mother emphasised : *"You have to be a doctor, lawyer, engineer because you have to work at something like that."*

Possibly as a result of this emphasis, two of these participants stressed that in Latin America the tendency was to *"push more"* in children's education. Sylvia explained : *"There is a lot of competition there in Latin America, they give you prizes if you are the best in the class.....We work very hard with the kids in Latin America."* These sentiments were echoed by Peter who commented : *"There's always a competition of course ... they give a special prize gift when we finish each yearWe push the students a little bit more ... In my country they push more, but they push more in the government schools than private schools."*

Three of the Latin American participants Elizabeth, Sylvia, and Sam alluded to a philosophy of early learning. Elizabeth explained : *"Kids learn - the younger they are the more things they will learn. It's easier for them to learn when they are younger than when they are older, so the more information you give them when they are little it is better ... and there's no problems of learning at that young age ... in Year 11 it's too late, the brain is all formed and everything is not the same."* In similar vein, Sam referred to his interest in the ideas of J. Suzuki, which he explained as *"the younger the person the better to learn,"* elaborating further : *"He realised that little children can learn complex things like language and music better than adults. So he started teaching music with this system he developed."* Sylvia on the other hand commented only briefly : *"I remember the teacher commenting to my Mum that kids are never too young to learn."*

Another Latin America participant Peter, described the emphasis placed by the government in his country on the family's responsibility for their children's education. He explained thus: *"From Year 1 to Year 6 they have to be in school and after that it depends on the student, it depends on the family, it depends on the resources if we can put a student [through] the idea the government tried to put in every family... [was] education starts in the family... Maybe because of that, they try to push the students more over there ... and it's the same with the family who try to give the most they can."* These sentiments were echoed by Sam, who commented also: *"[It's] more of my responsibility than*

the school's. We have to guide them and provide the service and certain values that definitely have to come from the family."

Two participants from Latin America, Sylvia and Paula, mentioned also the attitudes towards teachers in their country. Paula described teachers in her community as "special" and commented : *"There was a lot of respect [given] to teachers by students and parents."* Sylvia spoke of teachers in similar terms, adding : *"Sometimes you kiss and hug them, they are very, very nice people and they are more close."*

In their interviews, all three African participants in this research study made comments relating to the financial hardships of daily living in their communities. Colin explained : *"In all schools students had to pay school fees which according to western standards is quite a small amount but according to the economic status of most parents it was a lot of money."* Philippa described the situation in detail thus : *"We didn't have much In Africa if you are lucky, you have maybe one uniform and one other dress. That's all you have, and this one uniform should last through out the year. You wash the uniform two or three times a week, because it's just the one you have Nearly all the schools in X are government ... you still had to pay fees, education is not free ... if you fail to pay fees even if you pass very highly ... you [must] drop out Along the way they [children] drop out due to a lack of school fees or maybe lack of uniforms. You find that a family cannot afford to buy a uniform for the child and the school will not allow the child [to attend] Two weeks after commencing of the term you have to finish paying your fees, if by then you have not...they read out the names ... [saying]'Pack up and go home until your fees are finished'.... It's very expensive, the schools don't supply [anything] it is the parents who buy [books, pencils, etc] ... we guarded our personal belongings very carefully, one pencil alone you sharpen until you cannot hold it, and the same with exercise books, no wastage - every page is used up."*

These financial constraints resulted in school entry occurring at varying ages for African children, which Philippa explained thus : *"[In] Primary 1 you would find from 6 years old to maybe 10 or 11 years old. It depends if your parents can afford the school fees ... maybe they have to save up for four or five years before they can go to Grade 1. So we were never grouped according to age."* This was echoed by Lorna who commented also : *"Some in those days were starting school at 10, it was not unusual for kids at all back then, even 12."*

Attitudes towards young children in the early years of school in Africa may possibly have been influenced by these mixed age classes about which Philippa remarked : *"Things were structured as if we were adults ... once we start Primary 1, Year 1, you are treated almost like a high school."* The treatment of children like adults, extended to cleaning and maintaining the school, which she described as follows : *"In the morning the kids have to go there and work very, very, hard before they go to class. They have to clean the classroom, they have to clean the school yard."*

Despite the difficulties in day to day living, there was strong motivation for education within Philippa's community, which she explained thus : *"The children too see other people in the villages having a high standard of living, so they become somewhat self motivatedBy Grades 4,5,6 we get motivated by others who had succeeded in the village and who said 'Work hard and you will make it too'."* For Lorna, however, there was no such encouragement in her country : *"I didn't see the importance of reading and writing I didn't know it would give you a career or anything, partly because the blacks didn't have much of a career, they were never encouraged. Most of the positions were reserved for whites, so the only thing for blacks were in teaching and nursing. Those were the only two professions."* Lorna explained how text books were not available after Year 10 for black students, commenting : *"They say there are no books and so you are not encouraged to go beyond Year 10They didn't have for blacks because that was the policy - it was not available for black kidsOne girl who was two years ahead of us ... she wanted to be a lawyer ... she got a scholarship and left the country and did her training. If she'd stayed no! ... if you were a white kid yes! They had all the privileges."*

The attitudes towards discipline in her country was another topic mentioned by Philippa : *"You find the kids are very, very, disciplined, discipline is number 1... Punishment should always be there, I believe if you give the cane to a kid, if you cane a child once s/he will always remember and will refrain from doing the same thing."* However she also added : *"If it is done too much it inflicts a kind of fear."*

Two of the Scandinavian participants in this research study, Jane and Maureen, made comments relating to cultural and societal values and attitudes in their country. Both Jane and Maureen mentioned the free education in their countries and Maureen described in detail the attitude towards education in her country : *"It was a very strong emphasis on education, I guess they can afford it because you don't pay for your own children's education not even at the university ... students have got their own bank and ... as long as you hit 18 that's when you go and borrow*

money from this bank and pay for your own education Our mothers - most of them were home and ... when the student bank became available education was open for everybody and equal for women and our mothers [said] 'You are lucky, you can actually do it.' She explained further : "All the books were free ... every year we got text books from the school, in the back of it was a library...we didn't buy any." In similar vein Jane remarked : "We were provided with a lot of school books, because of the tax system in Scandinavia everything is provided by the school...everything down to the pencils."

Another feature discussed by Maureen in considerable detail was the strong emphasis in her country on physical and practical aspects of education : "You get a child to be physically well - you have to build up their physique and I think from 5 years to 13 years build up their physique because they are only little a few years My father always said if you are physically fit then it's easier for you to learn ... you go out and try running - whatever you are good at - you can then go in and do your homework, because that way you've got oxygen in your blood stream and it's easier for you to comprehend and learn It's very, very important for future progress - the skills even the small motor skills, not just for what you learn but also for your hand skills ... as a result I think Scandinavians are physically very fit people - and they have a bigger outdoor life ...in a colder climate ... Scandinavians have bigger skills in the different activities ... and the physical part follows you right through life."

Different cultural expectations, values, and attitudes from those of her country of origin in Scandinavia, were experienced by Maureen when her children attended school in Italy. She commented about these experiences as follows : "They were extremely strict, they had very high expectations ... they didn't have any physical sports. Children are outside only on a sunny day ... so the physical or practical there was nil [they] put a lot of emphasis on the theoretical side of things." She explained further : "Pre-Primary ... [was] in the same building as the school. It was one room, white walls, teacher in white [coats] ...the whole day was structured - very regimented, very little to work with. They didn't believe in using these type of [raw] materials to make things."

The remaining participant, Brian from the Middle East, talked mainly about the French "Baccalaureate" system of education in his country, the cultural impact and legacy of past colonisation of the area. He explained further as follows : "They call it 'Baccalaureate'... the French system is a very good system. X [was] backward compared to North Africa, Algeria, or Morocco where the French were for hundreds of years. They speak French fluently and you find a lot of Algerians they don't

... speak Arabic - even though they are Arabs. Everything [was] in French because they are forbidden to learn Arabic or religion or anything ... like in Egypt they are English and when they speak with you in Arabic probably you notice a couple of words in English coming. The same with Lebanese and French, they speak Arabic but they always say something in French Private schools were run by the nuns ... the Catholic schools they have the same system and culture, but only rich people with this particular background go to these schools. The rest of the education it is government, so everybody goes to the government schools because they provide free uniforms, free books There's no activities swimming or running ... but in the private schools in X they have activities where they provide sport, music, art, all kinds of activities for the children ... we don't have dancing there ... they are very strict about swimming and sport."

Brian emphasised also the importance of compulsory political and religious subjects in his country, particularly in secondary school : *"You learn about the political party in X, they teach you about it. There's special books, subjects about politics ... you have to do it ... the same with the religious subjects."* Other subjects taught included geography and history of Arabic Middle Eastern countries and the Koran in primary school, with no maths or science being taught until high school. Education was valued and looked on as the only alternative to going into the army which according to Brian would *"finish one."* Additional comments made by Brian relating to cultural values and attitudes, concerned his children's education in Britain where they attended an Arabic school, learning about Arabic language, religion, and culture. He expressed great pleasure with this system, as he wishes his children to know his language and cultural ways and not *"lose"* them. To maintain these cultural links, time was spent with the children's grandmother and aunts on holiday both in the Middle East and U.K. He explained his feelings thus : *"I felt very happy in England to see my children going to Arabic school and the education was very good. I was very happy for them to learn the language and learn the religion ... it's English social studies but at the same time they have Arabic activities."*

Experiencing Education in Australia

Parents' Perspectives

This section describes the experiences that parents from backgrounds which are culturally and linguistically different from the "mainstream" population, have of their children's education in this country, as well as those of several participants who attended university in Australia after their arrival, their perception of these experiences, expectations of Australian education and attitudes expressed.

Experiences and Interactions with Schools

Preschool Experiences

Nine of the twelve participants in this research study made comments related to preschool education, however in some cases this was referred to only very briefly. Two of the participants, Maureen from Scandinavia, and Peter from Latin America, found the experience of preschool education a very happy one, about which they both made positive comments. Maureen explained thus : *"X had been to pre-primary and loved that, and had a lot of play, a lot of different activities. I think X pre-primary would be one of the best I have ever seen of pre-primaries or kindys here. Just excellent in combining physical skills and mental skills."*

Peter described vividly the experience of his child's earliest attendance at preschool : *"I remember the first moment we took X to the open day, and I compared this moment [to] when I was a little boy, the school, the resources and everything, it was different ...and I was happy when I saw X."* Later Peter elaborated further *"It was a special moment, a special, feeling - a special piece of my life, you know, because before s/he was born I was different you know ... then to be a father, and after another step when X went to school - I was happy, ... X was good from the beginning, the pre-primary, we were happy because X was learning more and more ... in the pre-primary s/he always had about three or four- Merit certificates."*

Two of the Latin American participants in this research study, Sylvia and Elizabeth, discussed in detail experiences with their children in the preschool years. Sylvia's main

concerns were about her child's lack of the English language, as the family spoke only Spanish at home, and she explained : *"I wanted to help X - well s/he didn't speak any English in the beginning, only Spanish and I was working very hard in the first three years of his/her life, giving early stimulation, teaching how to read and write for little kids. It was hard because I was always afraid X wasn't alright at school because s/he didn't speak English much. The first time at pre-primary I was really worried, that's why I wanted to go on the roster and stay there and watch how X was going, but s/he was alright. It was me that was the problem, X was fine and the early stimulation that s/he had from me, it was good for X, yes."*

In contrast, Jane from Scandinavia talked only briefly about her children's preschool experiences in Australia explaining how much she liked the short preschool hours and would prefer to see this setup continue for young children in the early years of school.

Philippa from Africa, discussed in detail the punishments which she had come across during her children's education in Australia, including a form of "detention" which was used in the pre-primary. *"Sometimes kids are given detention when they are even still in pre-primary ... Because some of the kids are very stubborn - very, very naughty. Last year they used to call it 'time out,' they don't call it detention ... they are not sent out at all, they are put in a corner some where and they are supposed to sit there and not move ... X used to tell me all the time 'Oh so and so had a time out today'."* When asked how her child felt Philippa replied *"Very frightened of it, X didn't like it at all."*

Negative experiences of preschool education were described by two participants in this research study, Paula from Latin America, and Michael from Scandinavia. Paula explained her situation thus : *"I needed to have more communication with the teachers, I'm not one to stay back and chat to the mothers and gossip about this and that and everything else, so I think I missed out on what was going on, like if I was meant to bring a cake - or this or that. So I got sad looks from X a couple of times until I learned to chase and query it, and make sure and put it in my diary. Yes I made a few mistakes like that, I learnt the hard way ... because I didn't know how the school system works here so...it's assumed that all the parents have come to school in Australia therefore they know how it all works, and I wasn't the only one, all the Scottish mothers were just as lost as I was."*

An extremely unfortunate experience when his child was in preschool was a source of grievance for Michael, who felt that the child's later education was affected by this incident. He explained as follows : *"I got phoned up by a parent at preschool and s/he said the school had decided to call in the school psychologist because X at five had asked one of the other children to pull their pants*

down, and the child was only five years old, and he repeated that the child was only five years old on a couple of occasions. I stressed that X was also only five years old and not a twenty five year old paedophile, but he was actually talking as if an adult had asked the child to pull their pants down, on top of that, the child was actually unable to do it because s/he was wearing overalls that day, so nothing had happened. The whole thing got taken out of preschool and went to the school psychologist."

Early Primary Experiences

For several of the minority group parents in this research study, the early primary education of their children was a mainly positive experience. Lorna from Africa stated that she was quite happy with the education here so far, however she did have some anxieties about her youngest child which she described thus : *"With the little one, s/he started school last year. S/he does not sit still long and they [teachers] found out that if they give him/her more to do in the class s/he will finish quickly. For a while I was so frustrated because Y would come back whingeing that the teachers have been mean to him/her, and I felt a bit powerless until I went and talked to the teacher, then we came up with another arrangement where Y was given extra work and that has helped ... Y has been much better, s/he has been happier and s/he has been given two books instead of one to read at home, so that has helped ... Y loves school yes, s/he is very, very good at maths that's what they tell me, and they are giving him/her extra things to do ... I like the way they do it."* Later Lorna elaborated further : *"I prefer doing writing, spelling and so forth, with him/her, last year I was doing it with him/her."* When asked if the teacher sent the work home, Lorna replied: *"No, I have to set it, I look through the book that they give to read, and after Y reads it I say 'Can you see whether you can spell the words?' It worked in the beginning, Y felt very good when s/he tried that.."* However, in spite of the apparently satisfactory solution reached with the teacher, Lorna still expressed concerns about her child, whom she felt compared unfavourably with the child of a neighbour.

Jane from Scandinavia described her experiences of her children's early primary school education as *"Very positive, I liked the fact that parents are involved around the class, around the school, especially when to me they start at a very young age, and I think they feel happy that they can sort of see you move around and know that you are there somewhere. They might not be able to see you, but know that Mum's coming to help ... and I think that is a very good thing I did enjoy going over there and know my kids got a big buzz out of it you know - the days that they knew I was coming, and coming into the class they really liked that so I think that's good."* Despite her positive remarks, Jane also had some concerns

about the hours of schooling for young children and second language learning, which she described as follows : *"There's one thing I would really like changed though and that is the hours they go there [school] in the first couple of years, I would like it to be shorter ... that they start at the normal time, but get home let's say at 1.30, 2.30 pm, because you know at 6 years of age, 7 years of age, those kiddies want time to play and when they get home at 3.30 in the afternoon, they organise their things and unpack their bags and the day's gone and there isn't any playtime."* Later she reiterated *"I think the days are too long for the first two years ... I would just like to see their whole day not taken up by school, they are still very young."*

The experience of her children's second language learning in early primary school was also the source of some dissatisfaction for Jane who explained thus : *"My youngest one is totally put off, if you say another language X shuts up because s/he thinks Japanese and that's in the too hard basket. I mean they've learned a lot about Japan as another culture but they don't know much, about four or five sentences perhaps, and that's not very much for a few years, I don't agree with it ... I just think it puts them off it's too hard ... and I don't really want my kids turned off another language that early in life, but there was no choice, I think [a] Japanese teacher was what they could get - what was available when it came into place that they had to have a second language."*

One of the African participants, Philippa, found the early schooling of her children a complete contrast to her own experiences as a young child. She explained thus : *"I didn't want X to experience that type of life I had when I went to school, and my fear was that if s/he started school in Africa s/he would have undergone the same treatment, but thank God for Australia, the system is quite different, children are treated very gently ... I think they are absolutely brilliant because the kids are made to feel at home, they are made to enjoy school, because for example in the morning you drop the kids and the classroom has been cleaned already, the school yard is properly looked after, there is always a contract cleaner doing that job not the children [like in Africa] ... the atmosphere is very conducive to learning, it is very welcoming the kids are treated very gently, they are encouraged to like school ... they are not punished at all by caning and stuff like that no."*

In spite of these comments Philippa discussed the punishments she had come across in Australian schools including the early years of primary, in some detail. *"Another form of punishment which they didn't like at all and X didn't like at all ... on the blackboard they just write 'happy side' and 'sad side' ... and they have these drawings of a very, very sad person - horrible looking - and this happy person smiling - so if you are really naughty your name is put on there - 'sad side' - and you have to go and*

write it yourself, and the children don't like it, you know ... and their name stays on the 'sad side' the whole day. Up to now they still do it in Grade 1, and Y comes home 'Oh Mum my name was on the happy side.' Here when X is not being nice and Y doesn't like what X is doing, Y writes on a board on the fridge, drawing 'happy and sad side' - and X gets so angry, s/he doesn't like it."

For Colin, another of the participants from Africa, the first experiences of his oldest child's early education in Australia was a source of great pleasure which he described as follows : *"When my first child went to school it was a great joy, and when X showed sign of being interested in school as a parent I really felt great ... X was 6 when we came here ... his/her standard was actually higher than the standard for Year 1 ... when we came from Africa, X could read and write and s/he could speak English."* As well, Colin explained how happy he was with his youngest child's early primary schooling, *"Y is one of those students ... who likes going to school, gets home, does the homework, and is quite good, so that gives me happiness."* However in contrast with his positive comments about early primary education, Colin also mentioned problems in Year 1 when his oldest child attended a government school. *"X went to state school in Year 1 and I discovered that the school was not offering him/her a conducive learning environment and that's why I removed him/her from the state school to the Catholic school."* This incident is described in detail in the section on teachers which follows.

Initial experiences of early primary school education were also positive for Peter, one of the participants from Latin America, who explained : *"Year 1 was good as well, we liked the teacher and the methods. The teacher was a lady, she was good and it was good, and X was becoming better and better."* This happy situation did not continue however, and Peter described his dissatisfaction with Year 2 as follows : *"When X went into Year 2 it was like s/he stopped and s/he didn't have the same progress, and I feel X was stuck that year, I think that s/he was starting to be a little bit lazy ... my wife was having to push X to do the homework and the report it wasn't bad but it wasn't brilliant, you know, like Year 1 ... X always had about three or four Merit certificates and Year 2 s/he didn't get any. My wife was worried about that report, because that report is a reflection of how X worked in that year ... I wasn't worried about the report, I was worried because I saw X was a little bit lazy and s/he didn't learn much you know ... I didn't go to the school and see how the teacher was doing teaching in the classroom, [I] just saw the report and the homework book for X for myself. I didn't see any other evidence if X was improving or not."*

Another of the participants from Latin America, Paula, whose oldest child was in Year 3, spoke at length about her problems of lack of familiarity with the Australia education system, which she described as follows : *"When X started school and s/he was supposed to get dressed in green or as a little German child ... or when s/he was supposed to have swimming classes or swimming carnival, and s/he didn't bring his/her swimming costume, and I was just the worst mother in the world. I had to really learn to digest the news letters and write everything down and remember, and if I didn't understand anything down to the tiniest little bit, ask the teachers and make sure. Oh, I learned the hard way, so I started asking all the mothers and stopping them and ringing them up. That was hard and I'm sure that I will be much better by the time Y goes."* Later she commented *"I feel parents need just as much training."*

Paula explained in detail the relationships between the mothers at this school, which were also a source of some concern to her: *"We, the foreign mums seem to hang around together ... I can't explain why, I know it's not the same with other schools, but in this particular school we all hang around together and we exchange all that valuable information and just rely on each other."* When asked if she had much to do with the other mothers who were not "foreign," Paula replied : *"Only the ones that have parents not born in this country ... the ones that have - like an Italian Mum ... because they can understand how I feel, that I need a bit of training. The ones that think everyone was born in Australia they don't sympathise, they don't even say 'Good morning' or anything like that and you try a few times, I mean personally I don't know who was born here or who wasn't."* When asked what she thought the reason was for this, Paula answered : *"Ignorance - lack of education, I don't blame myself any more ... I've tried, and I will always be polite to everybody and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I'm sure if they got to know me that it wouldn't be a problem - it's like they're not interested. I always notice that the ones [mothers] that look a bit lost are interested in talking to everybody and are either European or migrants from other countries. I always find the Scottish and Irish [mothers] are very open and... the system is unfamiliar to them just as much as it is to me."* In contrast Paula described the Australian born mothers as : *"Quite happy to chat to the other Aussie mothers about - what's the latest in - who's playing tennis where or - what's the best shopping - or social life. True, there's nothing wrong with that, but ... you can really see it, it stands out, you see all the migrant parents standing either by themselves, or once we get to support each other, we all sort of hang around together, and the non migrant mothers are making their group."*

Despite the fact that the child of one of Paula's neighbours also attended the same school, Paula still had difficulties in making contacts with the "Aussie" mothers, and she

explained further as follows : *"I know her, and I will stand next to her sometimes to crack a laugh and just catch up with her, sometimes its easier to catch up at school than it is looking over the fence. She will talk to me because she knows me, and I will try to start conversations with the other mums that she is talking to, and I get blank looks. I don't think that it has dawned on her, like - she doesn't try to make me - you know - feel welcome and try to make [help] me participate in the rest of her group, and it doesn't dawn on her ... I will talk to her about anything else than that, but I can easily talk to the other migrant mothers about it and they know exactly ...how I feel. I know it doesn't happen in other schools, I've spoken to the parents of kids who send their kids to A for example, and A is very cosmopolitan yes. The parents go out of their way to make the migrant parents and their kids welcome at B and C and even D, but here at X it is not like that."* When asked how this experiences with other mothers made her feel, Paula answered : *"Sad, and sad for them and migrant mothers."*

A further source of misgiving for Paula concerned the use of the Spanish language in which she spoke to her child. *"If I have to speak to X at school I will talk to him/her in English, because I don't want to make him/her feel awkward about it, because some of the kids look at us when we talk in Spanish. Then I came to the conclusion that X will reply to me in Spanish because that is just the way s/he talks to mummy. X always talks to me in Spanish and s/he doesn't care about what anybody thinks, and I think !!!!![expletive] these kids had better learn now that there's other languages than English in this world, and so let's expose them to that as early as possible and they get used to it after a while."*

In spite of these problems, Paula also commented on the things that she was happy with in the early years of Australian education. *"I like having the choice of state or private [school] and state is good enough to send your child to; that they provide swimming or learning to play musical instruments; and that there is no religious indoctrination."* Other things that Paula liked included well resourced libraries, sports activities, comprehensive school reports, news letters, and "specials" in the canteen.

In contrast four other participants Sam, Sylvia, and Elizabeth, from Latin America, and Michael from Scandinavia, made comments about their experiences of early primary schooling which were mainly negative. Sam described his problems with the English language when his oldest child commenced early schooling in Australia thus :

"We had this problem with X because ... we didn't know much English ... I remember X said 'Do you know what this means?' and there were some sayings like 'To face the music, and to pull the leg' and things like that and I didn't have a clue and I had to ask some other people, and many things that I couldn't understand and so it's hard ... with X I feel that s/he was on his/her own and we couldn't help much, we didn't have enough English [or] the knowledge to help ... I feel it was a bad year that year."

Another of the Latin American participants, Elizabeth also described her problems with the language when her child commenced early primary school in Australia. She explained : *"When X came here s/he couldn't speak English and had to learn ... it was terrible because X was in a private school, again I was thinking that s/he was going to have a better education, but the problem was I couldn't speak English too, so I couldn't say 'Why are you not teaching this to my kid?' I couldn't talk to her[teacher] because I had to absorb everything about the culture too, and then I had another baby and it was too hard, it was a lot of work."* Elizabeth had concerns also about the differences in education here, and she commented : *"The kids they go to primary school just to play and they don't learn anything, and they don't bring homework they don't do anything, whereas in Latin America they have to do a lot of homework ... to me it's not enough work ... now my kids go to the other school the public one and it's still the same - it's still not enough work ... don't have any homework ... or they have maybe three lines to do and that's all their homework whereas we used to do a lot things."* As a result of this perceived lack of sufficient work in the early years of Australian schooling Elizabeth feels her children are bored and explained further : *"X has started to complain as well s/he says 'Mum I am bored at school, the things that are there for children are not what I want to do - I know everything, I understand everything' ... I have to see what I can do because it's very, very bad ... they go once a week to the library but to me it is a waste of time because they don't do nothing ... and they have books there that are sometimes not scientific enough and they take the easiest reading that they can see ... and just have a look at the pictures. It's not good."*

Many concerns about early education were expressed by Sylvia, who commented thus : *"I think I expect too much from the school ... because I am a teacher and I know how hard we work with the kids in Latin America. I think here in Australia they've got the resources, they've got the money, and they've got everything to give the kids a very good education, and ... it's just a little bit - 10% of the response that I expect. Last year for example, it was so easy for the kids and X didn't learn much, it wasn't only my concern, it was the whole class."* Sylvia was particularly concerned about the well being of her child in Year 2, about whom she remarked : *"X said that there are kids that are always teasing him/her because s/he is not fast in running or doing things like that, or because s/he is a friend of another Italian child ... X came*

from school crying sometimes because ... there is one child that is always fighting with him/her. I say 'X, you have to be friendly, you have to share with him/her, and you have to be more close' and X says 'But s/he doesn't want to, I don't know why, maybe because I'm slower in running or sports.' ... and s/he feels so unhappy with it ... that part of school is not happy I try to talk to X, I read about self esteem to him/her ... I read the books to him/her ... X says 'I am not so sad as they say in the book, I am alright. Only when these things happen I feel sad'." Later Sylvia elaborated further : *"I don't know if health has to do [with it] X is always coughing ... [or] maybe s/he is not good at sports and s/he has to know his/her limits."*

When asked what special abilities and interests her child did have, Sylvia explained : *"X likes drama and is very good at drama, s/he can read very well and is very good at writing as well. In the intellectual things X is very good, but not this other stuff."* She commented further that the school did not provide opportunities for her child to participate in these activities, remarking: *"Not at school, I have to do it myself, I have to find extra classes to stimulate X, you know."*

Another source of dissatisfaction for Sylvia was the different emphasis in the education system, which she explained thus : *"X doesn't know many things, it's not his/her fault, it's the method ... they don't cover as many units as we do and I always complain about homework. They don't have homework every day and I don't know how they are working ... I don't know if s/he knows about plants, insects or anything... I don't know if at school they cover that unit ... here they are more interested in learning about music or sport or other things rather than subjects that I am concerned about ... X works in a work sheet at school but s/he never brings it home. S/he's got a homework book and they have to write down twenty words and repeat them every week. They have to do 5 sums every day and that's all, nothing else. In the other class they are working with the Antarctic ... but not in X's class, it is different. For me it's a bit of a mess there and the reports they don't really show you if s/he got a very good mark in science or in the mid average. I don't know how to help him/her in social studies because I don't know what they are doing. I could go and ask them but I can't bother them every week, I can't ask them 'What are you doing this week?' ... that's the thing, I don't know what they are teaching ... I don't know if it is right to tell the principal that I feel that in school I feel the methods are very easy, very slow."* When asked if she gave her child extra work at home, Sylvia responded: *"Oh yes - sometimes I push him/her to do it, but s/he always complains ... X says 'I don't want to study, I want to go and play.' I think they play too much and everything is a game. They are telling us that kids have to learn playing, I know that method - Montessori, kids learn playing but it is just in the beginning. I think that s/he has got the potential to be a very, very good student, s/he can learn a lot but they always block that."*

Further anxieties about her child were related to racism, about which Sylvia remarked *"It's a very scary thing, [I'm] very afraid of that, because you want to protect them from everything, and I'm always thinking - I hope X doesn't suffer any racism or anything because of colour -X is not dark anyway but is - ? - olive, and you know there are kids who always judge by the skin colour, I am always concerned about this and I always ask X 'How do you feel?' and s/he says 'Well fine.' One day X said 'Mummy am I black?' I told him/her 'No you're not, why?' It's because there is a Chinese child adopted by an Australian family and the child is sometimes crying because the others tease about his/her background'... s/he is X's best friend. X is always telling me things that happen to this child and I am scared X can suffer the same thing."*

Michael's experiences of his child's early schooling in Australia were also mainly negative and this was most evident in his remarks: *"What surprised me is that after 30 years plus I think that the attitude hasn't changed a lot. It really is the same underlying attitude to how you educate a kid. Certainly the main thing is that has changed is that you are not allowed to punish them now in the same way, so they resort to virtually mental torture instead of a quick rap over the knuckles and let's get on with it, and that's a shame. There's no positive reinforcement especially with young kids and in the state school system they don't allow for all the individual kids and the different times they come on ready to learn, wanting to learn."*

Concerns relating to the P&C and other parents, were also highlighted in Michael's interview, which he explained thus : *"With the P & C, I went to couple of meetings and realised that hadn't changed from when I went to school ... there was more time spent discussing and complaining about the smell in the toilets, than literally about real questions of education for the kids, and how it could provide that better ... the other subject they spent hours talking about was computers, they all wanted their Year 1's and 2's to be computer literate, and felt that the school should provide the top of the range computers, or the P & C should get the top of the range computers with Windows, with everything... and wanted to spend all the money that the P & C collected, to buy computers which would be totally outdated soon and a waste of money."* Michael elaborated further on parents' involvement in early primary : *"You are dealing with parents who are there for selfish reasons. There would be some of them who are not, but there's a lot of them that were, I had a feeling that was the case. They were not really concerned about the school or it's well being or what, as much as their own position within the school ...or their own children"*

When asked specifically about his experiences of early primary school with his child, Michael talked about the *"Punishment syndrome where X would have to be punished the following day for getting into trouble, and the punishment would be sitting outside the headmaster's office during the*

playtime and basically all that was missing was the old stockade ... There's a great emphasis on no bullying, no physical contact, no fighting among the children. Any physical threats or fighting and that is clamped down on very hard and fast now, even with children who are far too young to understand the reasons why. There seems to be the thought or the schooling that if it's physical it's not on, but they don't give the kids any other skills to work with, or tools to work with. They deal with it by punishing them by slow torture ... 7 year olds don't understand that ... it's like they want 7 year olds to behave like 15 year olds."

Primary School Experiences

Seven of the twelve minority group participants in this research study discussed experiences of their older children's primary schooling in Australia. Lorna, one of the participants from Africa, felt that due to her own studies it was easier for her as a parent than for her mother, who had less education, and commented : *"I think I am more helpful, sometimes I do it myself - their homework - and I attend almost all the activities at school."* She elaborated further on her involvement with her children's schooling : *"That [doing their homework] was when X was in Year 4, because in this Catholic school that X goes to, they get a lot of homework and do really have to go and research something more advanced for their age. It's good to do that, and now X is good and I don't help, then I used to literally go and help and end up doing it myself - X didn't know how to go about it."* The situation improved as Lorna's child matured, and she explained as follows : *"Now I don't [do it] I just take X and drop him/her for 3 hours at the library - X is 11 ... and I let him/her go and do it. I say 'If you can't get anything you can ask the librarian, that's what they are there for.' When we come back 3 hours later X says 'Oh I've got all the information - 'cause I asked the librarian' so s/he was getting better."*

Lorna's experiences of her children's primary schooling were generally positive, however there were aspects with which she was dissatisfied. She elaborated thus : *"They [children] get very lazy. I remember one day X had to do something on a sports person for class ... the whole weekend I was busy doing my [own] assignment, I said 'Have you finished?' 'Yes, yes.' On Sunday afternoon I said 'Can I proof read your work?' and there was nothing, X didn't answer the questions ...we didn't go to bed until 1 o'clock ... X wanted to go to bed but I said 'You can't sleep because I don't have handwriting like yours, so you will have to sit up and write it yourself' ...We haven't had that for a long time, so X must have learnt."*

In similar vein, Philippa also from Africa, made both positive and negative remarks about her children's primary school education, explaining as follows : *"I think the system here is*

good, at the same time it is not so good, because the children don't see why they should work hard, because 'Everything is there, so why should I work hard?'- you know. You can understand when a child is in Year 1 or 2, but after Grade 3, 4, 5, they should now start to understand why they should work hard, but here my experiences with children, you have to constantly tell them to work hard. 'Please it's your future you are playing with, work hard, if you work hard you will achieve this and that - where we formerly came from things were not good there and it was through education that we are here you know.' So you are forever advising the kids and advertising the importance of education, they are not self motivated, they are not motivated. The school does not help you in that sense - no, it's up to the parents to emphasise to the kids, and the kids take the parents for granted anyway ...life is so rosy, life is so sweet, that's how it's supposed to be. How we the parents acquired these things they don't know, it's through hard work, they don't know [that] - so 'Why should I work hard? Life is so sweet and nice'- you know. the kids here, I am talking with respect to my children, they seem not to care about their personal belongings ... 'If I lose a pen it's no big deal, I'll get another one, if I lose my jumper it's no big deal,' they are just very lax, they don't seem to care about their personal belongings, 'My Mum will always buy, my Dad will always buy'...here the children - it's as if they don't care."

Despite a lack of previous problems, there had been some difficulties in middle primary school with one of Philippa's children, which she described thus : *"It was quite unfortunate last year ... [it was] detention, detention ...X is not having it now, this year it's not like that."* Philippa explained further : *"X didn't have any problems at all [in the past] ...where there's sports X is not bored at all, when it's something related to sports s/he will do very, very well There isn't anything X doesn't like, the school is very sports orientated, and so in between lessons s/he is always playing some sport so X is very happy."* When asked if the child was upset by these experiences of detention Philippa remarked : *"Really, I think X didn't seem to care ... X did say s/he does not like getting into trouble, but ... after detention X was like -'Let's start again.'... I know X was very much aware that I was not pleased at all. That's why X would say - 'Oh, I don't want to get into trouble, I'll get into trouble with Mum afterwards', but not -'Oh I don't want to get in trouble for my own good,' Oh no! ... I keep reminding X ... it's not that the teacher picked on you, but you were this or that, so you have to learn from that'."*

Another African participant, Colin, remarked how pleased he was with the Catholic primary school system which all his children had attended: *"We're happy about it because in Catholic schools they are still advising children on the importance of family relationships - you know - the students helping the parents when at home ... I mean we all contribute to the family's welfare. As a father*

I feel that the education system here, especially in private schools is quite good, it teaches children to be responsible." Colin also explained that despite his interest in his children's education, due to pressure of work, his wife was the main person dealing with any problems involved with their schooling, however he supplied the children with resources to help in their school work. "The books are all in the house - there are all of the Britannica sets for both primary and high school, World Books is there, Childcraft is there, the computer is there, I mean they have everything, so there's no excuse for them to laze around you see."

In spite of his positive view of his children's education, Colin also expressed some concerns about one of his children in primary school as follows : *"X, I think this year has tried to control him/her self, but hasn't taken homework seriously so we are working on that ... Actually X is occupied with doing more homework this time than last year and accepts it all. I always tell X 'If I relax on you I would be making the greatest mistake in your life ... even if I die today I will die a happy man, because I have worked for what I am getting ... and I know how to. I have not been given anything by any body including my Dad ... if I relax on you then it will be very unfortunate for you'."*

Elizabeth, one of the participants from Latin America, expressed her dissatisfaction with several aspects of primary school education in Australia, and explained the difficulties she was having with her children thus : *"The main problem I am having ... Y has started to complain that s/he is not being challenged, and - I know Y is very intelligent...so all the activities in class are not deep enough for Y to take them seriously and to motivate him/her to learn, because everything is so simple that s/he doesn't enjoy it. I'm having trouble with Y, and I have to talk to the teachers because s/he doesn't want to go to school now.Y finishes everything quickly ... and I know s/he is so curious, but if they are giving Y things that are not interesting s/he doesn't care ... every time I ask what s/he is learning, everything is so basic. I know Y has a lot of understanding of things - like how things work, and it's - too simple.They don't do any research at all, it's sad, they go to the library but I don't know what they do in the library, they just go and look for books, read books, and stay for a while in the library and go back to class, but there is nothing really like a research method."*

One participant from Scandinavia, Maureen, also expressed concerns about the low expectations, and a lack of physical and practical education in Australian primary schools compared with that in her country of origin. She elaborated further : *"I feel there's not enough*

expectation of them, I feel in some [other] countries there seems to be a lot more high expectations of children in what they should do ... if you have a lot of very highly successful children, and you have that one who won't achieve in tests, that child will feel even worse as a result so ... I would have liked to see a lot more practical learning ... any one can help change a tyre on a car, things like that we all have to learn ... and I would love to see more physical education in schools."

When asked how she felt about her children's education in Australia, Maureen related the criticisms that she had heard from other parents in primary school as follows : *"I hear a lot of criticism all the time ... from other parents and they say 'Oh, in Australia it is not a very good system' ... parents who were born here will say 'The system has gone down the drain.' Parents who were born overseas will say 'Oh well, we had a much better system where we grew up.' I think it is just human nature to criticise ... but compared to Italy it's very slack here In general – probably the educational effect – could probably be a little bit stricter ... There will always be a certain amount of students who always excel, and they still do it despite [everything] ... I think the parents should be responsible for those children who could do better, I think that's the parent's job to say 'Come on'... [and] monitor [their work] ... but how much can parents do?"* Despite her criticisms however, Maureen did make some positive comments about aspects of Australia primary education that she liked : *"Library here seems to be very good, that seems to be better than when I grew up, the first six years at school we did not have library ... the library skills here they grow up with, it's very good ... but again it's [emphasis on] the mental, not the physical or the practical."*

When asked about his experiences of education in Australia, another of the participants from Scandinavia, Michael, had mostly negative things to say about the general situation in primary school, which he described thus : *"I don't really think that kids learn a lot in the first few years in school ... A lot of parents believe that their children should learn a lot, and look for somebody to blame when their child doesn't turn out to be the prodigal genius they had hoped, and had told everybody the child was. Then they are quick to turn around and point fingers at either kids in the class for disrupting, or the teachers for not being able to provide and educate their children, instead of taking the responsibility themselves... They haven't got time for that, but they've got time to take out restraining orders, or spend the time complaining to the school ... believing that their children were - [and] should be geniuses, and should be able to read and write and be able to do this and that, at the age of 8, by which [time] some of them are, some of them aren't."* When questioned further about the "restraining orders" he had mentioned,

Michael explained : *"One of the parents was threatening with that ... It was just because X had a scruff in the school yard, and one of the parents wanted to have a restraining order - or rather went to the head and talked about it ... it didn't go any further than that."*

Michael elaborated further about this situation as follows : *"That was one of the main problems. There were a couple of parents complaining about X's behaviour, and the school felt obliged to bow to their wishes. They were complaining for exactly that reason, that they felt that their child was not reaching full potential because of disruptions in the class ... and not the fact that their child was just an average little kid and was probably, you know, just running a cent short of a dollar, and wasn't quite ready to catch up yet. Other children didn't have that problem ... If you had a good headmaster he would explain that to the complaining parents, but he felt it was easier to talk to me about it and he kind of knew - but didn't want to cause waves or anything, because actually one of the complaining parents got themselves elected to the P&C."*

Relationships between parents and the primary school were also discussed by Michael who commented as follows : *"Teachers don't want parents to get involved in the education, and to some extent they shouldn't either because they don't know a lot about it, and a lot of parents believe the school is responsible to educate children, instead of being responsible for their own children. They are not taking responsibility for their kids ... I think schools think they[parents] are not capable, and in most instances they probably don't want to any way, and it's not encouraged to try to work together on that, because that's really all that is required, you know. If you encourage it, then you bring out the people who can help."*

Many of the difficulties with his child at primary school, seemed to Michael, to have stemmed from the unfortunate incident in pre-primary, mentioned earlier. He described the situation as follows : *"Later on it became if s/he would get into a little bit of a fight, X wouldn't complain if s/he got hurt but some other kid would complain, and X maybe being a little bit stronger than most, would get dared to have a fight with some older kids and get into trouble not being quick enough to step back X would not tease the younger, the weaker children, but would only tease the bigger children. What happened [was] I think, in the first year X fell in love with a Year 5 or Year 6, or something, and the older kids set X up and asked him/her to go and ask provocative questions, and of course X got into a heap of trouble, and yet I think now the school didn't care about it - who was doing the setting up, that was of no consequence to them ... there's a point there I think- starting maybe around 9 to about 12 or 13, where kids become responsible for their own actions, but up to that point they are not aware of the consequences of that, particularly a lot of verbal things. That's definitely something that I think is up to the school system."*

After several years of unsatisfactory experiences in one primary school, Michael had just changed his child to another, and he commented : *"We moved X finally to another school and I hope that will be very good, because definitely there was an attitude there that's not particularly [good] ... it's early days yet but there's definitely a different attitude."* Asked also if there were any good things that he could say about primary school experiences in Australia, Michael sighed, replying : *"No, not with the school X has been in, no, I can't – I don't know, it could be a fantastic school because it's small and all that, but – generally they are running too many kids to a class, and the teachers are not really interested in doing anything but the minimum that can be done for the maximum output."* When this participant was asked his opinion on his child's education in Australia, he remarked : *"Well – I don't think there's a lot of difference in Australia to anywhere else in the world, except - in the public school system there's probably still an attitude there that hasn't changed in 30 or 40 years which needs to change. Some of the schools have got different attitudes, I hope this new school has, they appear to have, they're not going to give up on a kid just because there's a personality clash with the teacher and the child or something like that."*

In contrast, Jane also from Scandinavia, had mainly positive things to say about the primary schooling of her children in Australia as follows : *"I think schools here I've had contact with, they're great schools ... I think we've pretty much got everything we could wish for really. The primary school that my kids are at is fully air conditioned, which we are still paying for, it's some amount per kid per year, it might be \$40 - ... I also think that every school should be air conditioned, but I also know that the money's got to come from somewhere, so it's not as easy as saying it should be ... I think they are very well catered for, they've got areas they can go when it's wet, shady areas and plenty of ground, they're looked after traffic wise you know, with crossing attendants in the school areas ...and I also think the way they learn there is good I like it, they're happy my kids, very happy."*

Despite Jane's positive remarks however, maths seemed to be a source of some concern about which she commented : *"I see how my kids do their maths today, and I sort of say 'Oh yes'- well I don't know how they do it-"* When asked if it worried her that she did not know how to help, Jane responded thus : *"From a personal point of view sometimes it does, but it's a guilt thing, that perhaps I should go off and find out how they do it today so that I can help them, but it seems to come easy to them."* She explained further : *"We try to sort it out, my husband is commonly better at doing that ... it's not just*

something I can sit down and do... in many ways it probably is a better easier way they learn, than the way we did." When asked if she had ever felt like showing them the way she learned to do maths, Jane commented : *"No, I wouldn't like to try that, because I think that might confuse them it's a different set up, I've never done that."*

Another concern mentioned by Jane and discussed further in a later section, involved second language learning in primary school. She explained as follows : *"That was one thing I have a gripe with ...the primary school learning Japanese ...I just think that - as a second language for primary school kids you couldn't pick a harder one to try and teach them ...that's what I haven't been very happy about ...they have learned a lot about Japan as a country and that does no harm, but its got nothing to do with L.O.T.E. I don't think."* In spite of these criticisms made by Jane however, her overall opinion of primary schooling in Australia was extremely positive, and she emphasised : *"Yes, Oh, yes I am very happy with it, yes, overall very happy with the education - you know, apart from the things we've talked about."*

Language was also a concern for one of the Latin American participants, Sam, who explained the importance he placed on his children's use of the family's first language Spanish, at home. He described the situation thus : *"At home all the environment is Spanish around the house. In some ways it has stopped the children a little bit from learning more English, but I thought it was good because it ...gives them a little bit of self respect just knowing another language, I believe that is an important thing."* Problems in primary school with one of his children were source of anxiety for this participant, and he described the situation thus : *"X says that school is boring there's nothing that s/he wants to do there but still does all the homework ... but last Sunday they went to Government House, and they asked the students to write down what they have seen. X did really well because s/he was interested and the teachers said X was really brilliant, but a lot of the time s/he doesn't pay attention."* Asked how he felt Sam replied *"I am concerned because the child doesn't pay attention and wastes time."*

Despite his concerns and the problems with his child, Sam made comments about primary school education in Australia which were quite positive, however he did also emphasise the important role that the family played in the education process, as follows : *"With the schooling in Australia I don't think I have a complaint, I don't think it's less than in any other country. In general I think the average level is good - no complaints in comparison. I think it's more the fact that the*

children's guidance its more of my responsibility than the schools. We have to guide them and provide the service and certain values that definitely have to come from the family."

For Brian, the participant from the Middle East, language and culture was an important issue in primary education. Brian's children had attended a Muslim school in Britain, however he had not continued this practice here, because he felt the schools were too strict and he didn't want that emphasis for his children. He explained thus : *"I felt happy in England to see my children going to Arabic school and the education was very good. I was very happy for them to learn the language and the religion, but it is very hard because there is only two [Arabic] schools here and the schools are very strict. I don't want really to [send them] I don't feel it's right for them, they get frightened and the method of teaching they don't like. They're not allowed to do music or dance, because they say that's against Islam, but I disagree with thatthe education system is similar between England and Australia ... I was very happy for the children in England to go to Arabic school, but I have found out it is very hard for us here."*

As a result of this situation, the children attend the government primary school in their suburb, however Brian also wants his children to know the Arabic language, culture and religion, while learning other languages such as Italian, and his aim is for them all to have a good education and attend University. The children did attend a small Arabic school which was in operation on Saturdays, however it has since closed, and so Brian has to rely on TV programmes in Arabic for them, and spend time teaching them himself, as he wants his children to be multilingual. As a result the children spend time with their grandmother and aunts when on holiday both here and in the Middle East, and this maintains their fluency in the Arabic language. Brian described the situation as follows : *"At the beginning when we came here I was teaching X ... but when you come from work and you just want to relax and just be yourselfI really would like to have two days a week just to spend with the two of them. With X it's no problem, but a lot of time like I say to Z to turn the light off or close the door, in Arabic and s/he says 'What do you mean, what do you mean?' before s/he used to know that and used to read the Koran with no problems ... The same with Y, s/he'll be alright if somebody is with him/her for a couple of hours, my mum or my sister, they will refresh Y's memory and s/he will pick it up again."*

In his interview Brian commented positively on his experiences of Australian primary schools, explaining that he was happy as there were more contacts with parents and parent nights here than in Britain, good equipment, and a good standard of work brought home, and seen at school whenever the parents visited. Despite these positive remarks however, Brian expressed some concerns that children here have less homework than in primary schools in the U K, commenting as follows : *"They bring reading books, they have to read and we sign when they read their books. I enjoy it when I listen to them you know ... They used to have a lot of homework and reading and writing [in U.K.] but here I've never seen them have it - ... I don't know if it's because of their age maybe, but I notice that the children they don't have homework here....My children in England they used to have a lot of homework, compared to here."*

When asked if there was anything he would like to see any thing changed, Brian answered : *"Really to find a way of teaching the children, for example you have in the area of X, 20 Muslim children, and [if] they could make a class for them, like - on Saturday morning or Friday afternoon, for one hour every week for religion or Arabic language, that would help ... like the education department in each area saying 'In this school there is Japanese, or Indian or Chinese children' and once a week have like - a club formed for one hour or two hours for the children. We don't mind taking the children, I was taking them to this [Saturday] school in Y, but they had no support or anything with schools, so it's closed."*

Post Primary Experiences

In this research study, several of the minority group participants discussed experiences of their older children's post primary school education in Australia, and some mentioned their own experiences either as a student at university, or in the course of their occupation. Brian, whose country of origin was in the Middle East, felt that his oldest child's good performance in secondary school was due to the education received at Muslim school in Britain. He explained as follows : *"In England there was a lot of homework ... that's why X is very good now in school here ... they did a lot for exams, every night at least ... and X also was doing Arabic language, s/he used to have a lot to write and copy. I still have the books here translating the Koran from Arabic to English ... X will start losing because s/he doesn't really practice, but what can you do just the same?"*

Maureen from Scandinavia, described only positive experiences with her older child at high school in Australia thus : *"We have an older child who went to high school. I was pleased with X*

[school] they had good communication, I think communication is very important." However in contrast, one of the participants from Africa, Philippa, discussed her experiences and concerns about one of her older children in secondary school as follows : *"This morning I went to a class meeting ... because X got a lot of 3s, meaning satisfactory, and I had a meeting with the teacher who told me ... 'Not to worry this child is quite good s/he is very, very good.' The only problem is, why has X got 3s if s/he's good? X has not been finishing his/her work ... [in Africa] we are made to know how to deal with time, from the time we are in Grade 1 actually. Because every year you have to sit [tests] and they will give you 30 minutes or one hour and you have to finish these [in the time] you know. So I don't understand, it's fairly bad here."* When questioned further on this issue Philippa explained thus : *"X didn't worry at first, but when s/he saw I was unhappy X felt not so good. I have given him/her some help by setting some work with a time limit - 'You have 30 minutes to do this.' This practice seems to have helped."*

Elizabeth from Latin America, also described the experiences and concerns she had during her oldest child's high school education in Australia, as follows : *"X really started to feel the pressure in Year 11, which is bad because kids are not used to studying and sitting for long hours, and a lot of kids missed a lot of things. It's too late for them to start studying [Year 11] ... it's too late to start at that age from nothing, to me it's sad kids are not used to study."* Elizabeth also mentioned her own experiences of post primary education at university in Australia explaining : *"When I came to Australia I had to learn everything from the beginning and I even had to do another degree, so I did management."*

Concerns about the education of his high school aged children, were also expressed by Colin, another of the African participants, who explained thus : *"X started well but - is not exploiting his/her potential properly, Y has remained just a lukewarm student - gets good marks here and there, which worries - a father like me who was 'straight on' academically, a lot. I feel that if the kids cannot do well, ... they may not perform well at a higher level ... Y is mediocre technically but is getting there. It's hard going, you know, Y has set up a goal, but setting a goal and being able to achieve it is another thing, but at least Y is someone who has a goal set and working for it."*

Colin also expressed his concerns about what he called the "moral" aspect of education in Australia, which he described as follows : *"The problem with the education system in Australia, I mean - it is very scary here, that - students now have access to drugs, morality is very low in public schools*

where the students find condom vendors now in their toilets. Then the violence also - there's a tracing in the educational system - in state schools like in America - that worries me a lot you see ... just one pushy student on your kid that's enough - to introduce your kid to drugs or this and that, which is very worrying. I don't know what the government can do apart from educating the kids themselves to realise the dangers of getting involved with drugs ... there's that constant concern - you know - about the moral upbringing of kids - having the knowledge is one thing, but the moral part of it is another, and it is lagging behind a lot. I think - that's why the government's trying to inject a lot of funds into private schools which are also helping kids to develop morally, which is very unfortunate, because the government is admitting failure in it's own system."

As well as discussing concerns about his children's secondary schooling in Australia, this participant also described in detail his own experiences of education in Australia when converting his teaching qualification, explaining the situation thus : *"I did my teaching qualification here at X and Y University ...in most state schools where I've taught when I was doing the teachers course I would say that it [education system] encouraged the students to be irresponsible for they are brought up to expect too much for doing nothing or very little."* In his interview Colin elaborated at length on teachers and teaching in Australia and this will be reported in a following section of this research study.

Lorna was another African participant with experiences of continuing her university education in Australia, about which she commented only briefly in her interview however: *"I went into the university and I did a year and a half and then I came to Australia and finished it here ... seems I have been studying all my life, once I have finished this - that's it."*

Peter, one of the Latin America participants, was not so lucky, and described his experiences of attempting to continue his university education in Australia in negative terms thus : *"We had a meeting with the people from the Australian embassy over there [in Latin America] and I asked them what chance we have to study here ... and they said 'Yes, you have a chance if coming over there.' But when I came here I could only get recognised for about three or five subjects from thirty five subjects that I had done over there, it was very frustrating, yes. We went to the education department and put [forward] our degrees in teaching, and they say that they don't recognise that ... I said to the lady that who checked the certificate 'How can I work in education?' and she said that you can teach at TAFE or something like that, so ... I think I am never going to work here as a teacher, because I have a responsibility with my*

family [here] and ... with my family in my country ... it is much too much pressure, to give me time to dedicate to - improve my English, for example. I studied just two courses - English courses at TAFE, and they weren't good courses just the basics, just the same easy ones I did over there."

These negative experiences of conversion to Australia university education were echoed by Sylvia, also from Latin America, who described her experiences thus : *"When you do an English course they don't teach you, you just go and speak. I think they have to correct you, but they say 'No, you got the English to survive that's fine' and I think that's not very good for us. You have to be corrected, you have to be pushed...I did many courses in Y [university] in English, general English courses... two very good courses with very good teachers, but the others they ... do nothing - I mean nothing - just nothing, yes it was very disappointing. In X University there was more pressure, more serious stuff, and if you are not prepared properly - its very frustrating, very sad."*

Experiences and Interactions with Teachers

Preschool Teachers

Only two of the participants in this research study, Paula from Latin America and Michael from Scandinavia, made any direct reference to their experiences with preschool teachers in Australia. Paula, in describing her difficulties due to unfamiliarity with the education system in this country commented : *"It never dawned on the pre-primary teacher that I was having these problems, and one of the assistants sort of caught on and was reading it all out to me and making sure."*

Michael's experience of preschool teachers was far from positive, as evidenced by the following statement concerning the previously described incident: *"The school psychologist came in, and after listening to what the teacher had to say he spoke with the other parent, all he could say was he thought he had probably done the same at that age ... that was normal and healthy behaviour. The female teacher got really upset about that, she couldn't see the fun[ny side] in that at all, and I thought 'At five years old now we've got a sexual deviant!' ... the deviant is the teacher because she can't see that this is just simply kids learning, and that was what started it. That was the first time the school psychologist came and saw X ... [and] that stemmed from that first incident where some young twenty two, twenty three year old pre-primary school teacher just did not understand children, and X got into trouble because s/he was pretty forward about it whereas other kids wouldn't be quite as forward ... at five it is hardly of any consequence - to a kid of that*

age it's a fleeting interest that lasts only six or seven minutes and nothing happens - it's of no interest any more - they've gone on to something else."

Early Primary Teachers

Nine of the twelve minority group participants in this research study discussed their experiences with early primary teachers, some of which were problematic. Jane from Scandinavia described her concerns about teachers' work loads even with parent help: *"How good they [parent helpers] are from the teachers' point of view I don't know, because it's got to be a fairly unreliable source, you know - they never know who turns up and who doesn't ... so sometimes it might be they are a bit stressed and not being able to cope because we've got such big classes ... I mean, one person can't get around to 34 or 32 kids when they all put their hand up and want you to look at or listen to something."* Jane explained further: *"A teacher's got to be really careful of what they do, but I do think that you have got elements that can - you know - disrupt the whole class totally... when X was in Year 1 there was an autistic child that they tried to fit into the class. S/he had a full time helper but it caused a lot of disruption and there were incidents where s/he was biting another child, or suddenly went off and was being violent to other kids ... and if you have kids like that ... it can wreck a whole class. I was happy that my child wasn't in that class."*

When asked if she could elaborate on her statement that teachers might sometimes be a *"bit stressed,"* Jane described her experiences thus: *"We have had a teacher who seemed to be quite stressed and quite short with the kids that she took for a period of time ... and she hasn't been on sick leave or anything like that ... I can see that it is a huge work load to put on one person, to look after that many little kids - 33 - that was Year 2, and they seem to be ... always in the teacher's face all the time and it must be really, really stressful, I mean I wouldn't do it - never! One person is not enough I think, the classes are far too big."*

Another of the Scandinavian participants, Maureen remarked on the differences in the early years of school between Australia and Scandinavia: *"Differences between Scandinavia and here is that [there] you go for three years with the same teacher, but in those three years that teacher doesn't teach you all the subjects ...[however] you have the same teacher almost all the time."* When asked about her experiences with her children's early teachers, Maureen commented *"Because we were living in Italy ... X started [school] at the beginning of September and s/he didn't know how to read or write, the teacher didn't want him/her to continue to Year 2 but in the three months X did very well so they let him/her go on to Year 2 ... After five or six weeks we had our first parent teacher meeting. When I talked to the*

[Year 2] teacher she did not know that X had been without education for nine months the previous year, she had reacted to X being so slow and behind, and was upset that no one had told her. She had asked the previous two teachers 'Come on and talk to me about every student' and nobody would. She had never been responded to ... and I know she was quite bitter about that ... The teacher came from A and said 'I have been very happy at A, they have very good communication between teachers there,' and she mentioned that very often she didn't find it here ... The headmaster might have something to do with it, I don't think there's any good school or bad school, it all depends on what teachers are there that year."

Maureen also described other experiences with early teachers which were negative: *"Another thing I do not like with teachers is frequently in the younger days I would go to one of these teachers and they would say 'Oh, X is such a lovely child'...I'm this child's parent and I know that X is a lovely child and that wasn't what I came down there to be told."* When asked what she thought was the reason the teachers said this, Maureen replied: *"Just to fob me off ... maybe because X had this little bit of a problem and s/he was a quiet child and just got stuck in the back of the room and not made a fuss of, because X was not noisy, not naughty and s/he wasn't going to get better either, maybe that's what it was."* In contrast Maureen described positive experiences of a teacher in Year 3 as follows: *"In Grade 3 X had a very strict teacher and excelled, but [had] homework every day. Every day X had to write lists, either word lists or had to read a book every day, and s/he did excel that year and with very short [amount of] school homework. X enjoyed it, I enjoyed it because of the routine, s/he came home from school and then we did it ... X did very well that year ... I think you can put a fair bit of responsibility on them and ... I feel that is not done enough."*

Positive dealings with early teachers were a feature of one of the African participants' experiences of her children's early education in Australia. This participant, Lorna remarked: *"The teachers were talking to me - X finishes work very quickly and starts talking and every time she asks another kid a question X just gives the answer ... she said 'How do you feel if X gets more work?' I said 'Well, we will try and see how it goes' and she did. It was alright after that, X slowed down and wasn't on detention any more. I think s/he was kept busy enough but even then X never got homework for the whole year and when I asked [about it] s/he'd done it in the class."*

In contrast another African participant Colin, discussed in detail his negative experiences of his child's Year 1 teacher as follows: *"The teacher was encouraging X to rebel against we the parents ... X was only 6 years old you know, and the teacher was telling him/her that s/he could*

refuse our directions meant to teach him/her to do this and that and perform home duties. It's very unfortunate. I went to the school to talk to this lady teacher and of course proudly she told me that Australia is a free country therefore every kid is free to do what ever s/he liked ... I think she was in her late 20s or early 30s, and I didn't get much assistance from the Principal when I spoke to him." When asked why this had occurred, Colin explained : *"The child wrote in his/her story that ... s/he didn't like the holidays, because Mum was instructing him/her how to wash dishes and plates, and then the teacher told my child 'Oh, if that's the case, you have the right to refuse to do this in the future.' I mean, we are just trying to train our kids to be responsible for themselves - not for us, we are already capable of doing what we can do. If one's taught how to help ones' self, if they grow up to become adults they will be able to help themselves rather than not, you know. I didn't like it, and I can't like it."* Colin commented further about the Principal's role in this incident thus : *"There was very little [support], he simply brushed it off ... he was more supportive to the teacher than to the parent alongside, so my reaction was straight away the following year I simply took X away to the Catholic school."*

Four of the five Latin America participants in this research study discussed the experiences they had with early primary teachers. Peter explained : *"It was last year, Year 2, we were unhappy because of the teacher ... I think sometimes the teacher had - some preference for some other children ... I always say to X 'Ask the teacher if you didn't understand,' and I ask every day 'Did you ask?' and s/he said 'Yes, I did', 'Did the teacher do something about that?' and X said 'No.' After that I was feeling that X was becoming more and more lazy, s/he didn't put in enough attention or proper time. I know it was because of the teacher."* Peter explained the situation further : *"I asked X 'Do you like the teacher?' and s/he says 'Yes he is good' but I don't know ... I was worried because X says to me he [teacher] preferred other students, and I asked X how s/he feels and s/he said 'I feel very bad and cry' and I said 'What is the teacher doing?' X said [that] if there was some activity in the classroom and the teacher didn't push him/her to finish that activity, or s/he didn't do some homework properly, he didn't pay attention to that."*

Peter described his frustration as a result of these circumstances as follows : *"I can't go and say to the teacher 'Listen I don't like how you teach, I don't like what you do with this boy or that girl, this subject or that,' - I can do nothing about that - you can't ... I can't go and discuss with the Minister of Education - no I can't do anything."* When asked about the school principal, Peter replied : *"I don't know but I think he can do nothing as well ... 70% of the parents went to the Principal and talked to him about the teacher and he said 'I'm sorry we can't' and he couldn't do anything because teachers have a contract for one year."*

The only thing the Principal did was to ... observe the teacher ... but didn't do any thing about the parents, it wasn't just X, it was a lot of [other] students and a lot of parents with the same feeling, yes."

Paula, another of the Latin America participants, discussed her problems with teachers resulting from lack of familiarity with the Australian education system. She explained how the early primary teachers were unaware of her problems : *"It sort of dawned on the teacher of Year 1 later in the school year ... they [teachers] knew I wasn't born here but they thought I had gone to school here ...if my accent had been stronger I think they might have, or they might not have. There was a lady from Sri-Lanka and she had a few problems too."*

In contrast, Paula also commented that teachers were mostly *"accessible and helpful,"* explaining : *"The teachers either have training or it comes naturally to them, that's why they are teachers I suppose, you know they are empathetic."* Later Paula elaborated further: *"One wasn't so much, a couple, the ones that had travelled overseas were better The teachers they try their best, I think they are given too many other things to do. They should concentrate more on the teaching side of it and maybe have more assistance."* Paula also commented : *"What I don't like is the lack of respect towards teachers from the kids as much as parents."*

Elizabeth also from Latin America expressed her concerns about early teachers as follows : *"It is not enough that they [teachers] ask the kids to do homework or things like that ... X was doing nothing, nothing at home and nothing at school...My concern that the kids can learn a lot of things at a young age but they [teachers] don't teach them enough material and I know they can learn more than they are taught, a lot."*

In similar vein, another of the Latin American participants, Sylvia, felt that more could be done by teachers in early primary years, explaining thus : *"I think that they [teachers] have to work with the kids with personal problems, self esteem problems. I don't know if they ignore the problems of the kids, but I think they have to work with every kid, because X is having trouble with bullies. Not only X other kids as well, and they have to be more aware of these things... kids can respond more if the teachers work harder with these kids."* Sylvia was concerned also that when she approached the teacher about her child's problems with sports, the teacher stated that it was *"not really important."* She commented further : *"Sometimes I go to talk to the teacher and he says 'It's all right, it's not really*

important,' but it is important!! ... I think they [teachers] are too busy doing stuff that is not really important and not giving much attention to these things ... teachers have to be more aware of individuals' problems I think ... teachers here are more cold I think, we [in Latin America] are more affectionate." Sylvia elaborated on her contacts with the teacher thus : *"I went to talk to him last term when you go for the interview, I told him what was going on and what X was feeling and he said 'Well, I'm going to be more aware of this.' X has improved in a lot of things but still has difficulties. He is very happy with him/her - he says it's all right if X doesn't want to run, if s/he doesn't want to be in that competition, it's all right."*

Another source of dissatisfaction for Sylvia, was initiated by comparisons with other parents, who were concerned about the lack of common methods and consistency between teachers. She explained : *"We were comparing X's and A's [teachers] ... they are in the same grade Year 3 and the teachers are using different methods ... X is learning more hard division than A and we can't understand why. X is almost finished that hard division and is learning division with fractions, but they didn't study it in the other class, they didn't even start it and it is in the same school, same year, different teacher. They [parents] were very upset. One of the conflicts is because we learn maths in a different method [in Latin America]. We do it in the opposite way, and the teacher didn't explain how to do it, so X was crying because I showed him/her how to do it in my way and s/he says 'No, it is wrong'... we complained, we went to the teacher and told him ... so he explained to us how to do it, but the simple things [only]."*

The last of the minority group participants to discuss early teachers was Michael from Scandinavia, who expressed concerns with the way teachers dealt with children as young as 7 years of age. He explained thus : *"X would throw something at a kid, and the fact was it didn't hit them and X never intended to hit them, but still - the perception by the teacher was that it was a terrible thing to do and you could have hit them. It was never really understood by the teachers that ... If X wanted to hit them, his/her aim was perfectly good and it would have hit somebody but X just never did, s/he'd thrown either right in front of or right behind, but never straight at them ... because they were annoying or teasing or X had been dared to do it by other kids or set up. They [teachers] don't take that into account and their excuse is that they haven't got time for it, because they are dealing with 30 plus children in the classroom, so if the child can't submit or 'butt out' then they really haven't got time to argue about it ...instead of moving forward in a positive manner and take the positive things that the kids are good at and let them do that, and lead them by what they like doing into the mainstream ... they [teachers] think they are clever by avoiding physical punishment, and mental torture is a brilliant strategy. Physical punishment doesn't have to be terrible if it's done with restraint ...there and then and not two hours later, and not getting six teachers involved and a meeting on what to do -*

Oh it was a joke! ... The young teachers were probably the worst, the least understanding, where the older teachers could command a bit more verbal respect, the young teachers just couldn't and didn't know how to cope with that, and they hadn't discovered the verbal tricks to get where they wanted with a bunch of kids."

Primary School Teachers

Experiences with teachers in later primary school years were discussed by nine of the minority group participants in their interviews. One of the African participants, Lorna, described her concerns with her child's lack of knowledge of how to go about homework projects in Year 4. She explained : *"It seemed as if she [teacher] maybe expected the librarian to teach them how to get information, but I think the kids had an attitude towards the librarian, so it seems they were not approaching her - you know how kids are."* This situation resulted in Lorna having to do most of the homework as her child did not know how to proceed. Some dissatisfaction with responses to queries about her child's progress was also expressed by Lorna. She explained thus : *"If they are not tested, how do you know how well they are doing? When they say 'Oh, the teachers can pick it up through homework patterns or classroom activities!' I don't think that's enough, personally."*

Another participant, also from Africa, Colin, described his experiences of primary school teachers in Catholic schools as very positive, explaining : *"At least the teachers show concern about anything about your child. They are willing to talk to your kids, they are willing to talk to you about your kids."* Colin commented also that he felt the government had taken away a lot of power from teachers, leaving many teachers frustrated as a result. He elaborated as follows : *"Teachers in WA now feel that they don't have the power to influence the kids, therefore they don't try any more to help them ... Teachers are only there because the Education Department sends them there to earn their money with the minimum of work."*

Jane, also from Scandinavia, expressed concerns about the workload of primary school teachers particularly in the light of the inclusive policy in schools, and commented thus : *"Often I think that there needs to be more discipline, but I wouldn't like to sort of - say how that should be done, because I don't know what would work. What works for some doesn't work for others ... the same thing with A.D.D kids, it must be really hard for primary school teachers with a class load of 32 kids that they've got to look after, and you have got some that - I don't know whether discipline would work on them either... I think there could be a bit more of it [discipline] ... but I wouldn't like to say how that bit more could be achieved."*

Comparisons between primary school teachers here and those experienced in Africa, were made by Philippa, who explained thus : *"In my earlier school days the teachers were too rough ... yes, it was too much, and here to be honest there's no discipline, because you are not allowed to do this and that to a kid, so usually the teachers lose control of the school, because they are not sure when the action they have taken against the child will be turned against them. So the kids are quite undisciplined - and the teachers complain a lot because they don't know what to do."* Philippa also commented on her experiences of a Year 4 teacher with whom one of her children had problems, explaining as follows : *"The teacher who used to detain X all the time stayed in Grade 4, so X has a different teacher ... That one was male, yes. Oh quite young ... the Grade 5 teacher is also male, but he's a little bit - more experienced, I think yes, more tolerant."*

Elizabeth, a participant from Latin America expressed dissatisfaction with her experiences of primary school teachers in Australia and their reactions to her concerns about her children. She explained as follows : *"X is having too many problems with the teachers, the teachers say that s/he is laughing too much in the class, and she [teacher] complains that X is not quiet, but I know what the problem is. The problem is that probably she [teacher] only gives things that X understands very easily - and finishes quickly ... I have to go to the school and talk to the teachers about that. I know that the answer will be that they don't have enough time to give special privileges to X because they don't think that it is worth it. ... because they take the kids as a group, but they don't have the time to concentrate on one or two kids that are different to the others ... that won't be the answer to me straight away, but that will be the answer in her [teacher's] brain so I will try to see if I can talk ... not the immediate teacher that X has ... but maybe the deputy principal to see how we can put X into something more advanced."*

Maureen from Scandinavia, described her experiences of primary school teachers in Australia as follows : *"My oldest child has gone through 7 or 8 teachers at primary school at X, I find that you have a couple of excellent teachers, you have got a few teachers who are good, and a couple of teachers who haven't done much at all. The ratio is 33% ... you will always have someone who excels, and the ones who have excelled have also done my child good I believe, and yes they have been strict and a good voice."* Later in her interview Maureen elaborated : *"I think as a parent you will have both, you will meet teachers you disagree with, and teachers you do agree with, and that can go both ways - you might be wrong they might be right, or vice-versa. There will always be teachers you feel comfortable with and you feel are*

better, there will always be those that you are more connected with. I think it is very difficult for many teachers who have split classes which they have in X but that is only part of it."

As reported in an earlier section of this research study, Maureen had expressed her dissatisfaction with many teachers in the early years of primary school whose only comments were that her child was "A lovely child," however this situation improved in later primary school. She explained : *"It wasn't until in Grade 4, when X had two teachers ... who did not say that, but instead went straight into where X was academically and how s/he was going, and what we as parents could do to and what she as a teacher could do, and it became a more scientific thing instead of 'X is a lovely child'... there was one teacher who was very well aware of the problem [with X] she just said to me her son had been the same, and she said to me 'Just don't worry, because X is going to end up being exactly like every body else in the end – whatever you do."*

Maureen's experiences of teachers in later primary school were not all positive however, and she described one of the incidents as follows : *"I have had a couple of fall outs with teachers here, over school homework. I would like to see my children have homework, I don't want a lot, - just 10 to 15 minutes a day. I have had fall-outs particularly in Grade 4, I had a big fall out, that teacher was quite rude to me, when I suggested homework and she came back very strongly and rude towards me and there was no homework. It was quite unpleasant that time because – it was early in the year on the first meeting we had when she went through the curriculum. What I reacted towards was that she put a lot of emphasis on how children were dressed. They weren't allowed to have one sock up and one sock down, and neither were they allowed to have a shirt hanging out. Later when I asked her about homework she said 'We don't want them to have that responsibility, we don't think they can cope with that responsibility.' I didn't say anything, but I thought - well, having one sock up and one sock down, that's a responsibility, and my children wouldn't know the difference about this, but they do know homework ... She never gave homework that year at all, and yes she was rather rude when I suggested it so I never came back to that. There was another teacher too who later on I went to, and we did get homework from her. Well, I did privately on the side, because I find my children do better when they do have it, but not much."* When asked if she ever thought about giving the children homework herself, Maureen replied : *"Yes I do that now, I get my girlfriend's homework from the other school, her child's homework, and I bring it to my own child ... my child feels quite happy, they are the same age, and it's a fun way of doing homework. It's quite a good little paper he gives, her teacher once a week, and it's not hard."*

Further comments about primary school teachers made by Maureen were also negative, and she explained as follows : *"There was a year when I had a teacher I didn't approve of with X ... and we looked into very seriously what to do ... and found that the whole picture was better for X to stay where s/he was, X needed that security because s/he'd only been at the school for a while. We decided to let X go with this teacher and rather keep a close contact with the teacher, so I am down there every month to remind the teacher that - my child is in your class ...it helps me to know that - yes the teacher is aware that I'm here."* When asked how she felt about the contacts with this particular teacher, Maureen commented : *"I think she is just nice to me just because she wants me out of the room, and she doesn't really want to do what I 'm asking her to ... X is second on the back and is emotionally maturing quite slowly ... and has learning problems, and is a problem in that respect. Now this teacher has 30 students, and some of them are extremely bright so I can understand that she won't put the effort towards the other children ... She is obviously very polite to me, very nice - sometimes a little bit too much, I wish she would just tell me, you know - this has been going on and this has not. What upsets me was that X came home and said 'I don't have any homework' so I go down - seems that they had homework ...and for three months and I [had] thought - well X doesn't have any homework. I told that to the teacher [and said] 'Why didn't you react?'..., couldn't she just have written me a letter? ... so I find that difficult, and ever since I have been down there make sure that I get the homework and I know what is going on ... I don't think she is a particularly good teacher, but I think she is a nice person, I just think she has a lot of work. She's got 30 students to care for and I think that is very much an impossibility ... she would be in mid 40s so she is not young. I have always preferred disciplinarian people with a strong voice, and she is neither. When she is in class, and I go past the class it's always quiet, so obviously she - has control, yes, and I do think it is quite a nice class X is in, a nice group of students."*

This participant was also critical of the low expectations and lack of communication between primary teachers and parents in Australia schools, which she described as follows : *"About 10 years old the children should have the responsibility of certain jobs they have to do within the school, and the teacher should be aware [saying] 'If you haven't done it I will write to your parents.' There doesn't seem to be a lot of response between teachers and parents here. One year in X's class ... the teacher was sick a lot that year and wasn't much at school. Well, come May he was back at school ... I was there at the end of June, and he told me how well X was going, how much he enjoyed him/her and how s/he had progressed. X got the school report and s/he had started to fail every single subject. We were leaving [for Italy] and he then told me how much he was going to miss X and I thought - No, you don't even know who the child is when you talk [to me]. Like - how could he miss a child he has barely known for a few months, and how badly X has done after having previously told me how well s/he was doing? I know if my other child gets him I*

will seriously consider ... talking to the headmaster, maybe just change to another class or move him/her ... Yes if s/he was in that danger - well so far s/he seems to be quite a bright student - I think any bright student will manage - despite poor teachers. They will always be good, they will always end up in the top, they will always go well, but with a student that can ... excel if they have a good teacher, but can also fail if they do not have a good teacher, that's the student that will fall. We are aware of that, and I was that [kind of] student, I excelled with good teachers I did not with poor teachers, yes. So I think I will just wait and see until Grade 5 and see where s/he is at."

As a result of these experiences, Maureen emphasised the need for parents to monitor their children's progress, explaining : *"You will always have those teachers who will not be a good teacher and those children will always fall behind in there ... but how much can the parents do? ... I think communication is very important, if you have good education but you don't have communication between teacher and parents!. It doesn't matter how good the education is, if there is no communication, if your child falls behind and no-one tells you ... they keep saying 'Oh we teach the children on their level, we don't want them to be compared to other children' and so on. That sounds very good, but how do you know how your child fares if you don't compare with another child, on the average. In general I think for the children there should be certain tests ... It is a little bit too easy to say 'Oh well they have to grow in their own time'."*

Another of the participants from Scandinavia also expressed dissatisfaction with his experiences of primary school teachers in Australia. Michael seemed to feel that many of his child's difficulties in primary school stemmed from the teachers' reactions to the incident in pre-primary described in an earlier section of this research study, and explained: *"Over the years I saw him [school psychologist] quite a few times, and his final comment to me the last time I spoke to him, was that he felt it was a shame that the headmaster and the teachers couldn't get an attitude adjustment, and to him they were back in the dark ages still, and that sort of stemmed from that first incident [in pre-primary]."* When questioned further about this issue, Michael stated that he felt sure the teachers had discussed X's involvement in the incident in pre-primary, and this influenced their attitudes towards his child, explaining : *"Well, all the teachers got to know about it, so it was - X couldn't sort of just leave it in one class and go to another class there ... It would have been better to have a clean slate."* In Michael's view, this situation resulted directly in the overreaction by teachers to his child's relationships with other children in the playground, and he described the situation thus : *"[X] would get into trouble, not being quick enough to step back when the teacher [came] - [or] somebody was about to squeal ... then X got hauled up before the teachers, and the teachers were not*

paying attention to the main issue. I think that should just simply be dismissed as a little bit of pecking order or a misunderstanding between children, and left at that - where it would then become an issue, and that's sad because that's where as a kid you learn how to avoid the kids who - the bullies and the bullied - the kids who get bullied learn how to avoid the bullies."

When asked if he noticed any differences in the school that his child now attended, Michael commented : *"There's definitely a different attitude from the teachers and the headmaster just in the day to day behaviour in dealing with the kids. Actually X came home and said 'Oh, it's wonderful the teacher let's me play with toys while she is talking'. Well, if they are sitting there doing nothing you will keep the [child's] attention for maybe 5 or 10 minutes and they drift off and start dreaming about something else, where as if you've got toys to play with - kids hear everything that goes on any way, and talking – well, fiddling keeps them awake."*

One of the Latin American participants in this research study, Sam, described some experiences with a teacher in later primary school, which he felt were not helpful for his child. He explained thus : *"I talked to the teacher who said that X wants to be laughing with the kids, talking and playing with the other kids. I spoke to the teacher because X said 'The teacher asked me do you want to be a clown? we'll have to bring you a hat of a clown,' and then X said 'There's nothing wrong with laughing.' I said 'Well, what happened was that this time you were not paying attention and probably she lost her patience with that'."* When Sam was asked how he felt about the teacher's comment about a clown's hat, he replied : *"The teacher was upset and has a lack of control. However I was concerned because it's not good for the child ...it did bother X, it upset X."*

In contrast, Brian from the Middle East, praised Australian teachers as follows : *"Here I found in the schools the teachers give more attention to the children and they always write Well done X, well done Y."* He remarked also that the teachers were not trained or very professional in the Muslim school his children had attended on Saturday and which had been closed.

Post Primary Teachers

Four of the minority group participants in this research study discussed experiences with post primary teachers, either in the course of their own university education or occupation in Australia. Peter, who had been a teacher in Latin America, explained as

follows : *"I was working here at X high school and I talked with one of the teachers...He was checking the homework, it was Year 8. I remember it was about some topic [I knew] and I said 'Oh listen, we gave to the students that topic in Year 4,' and here it was Year 8 ...He said to me 'You know we can't expect much in this year, because the students are not mature yet in Year 8' ... He said it was that students here are immature, and I always say - 'No, if you properly explain the things, they can do it for you [give] more information than that.' ... they described the process just in two lines, and he said that's enough ... I don't know if this was ... because it was a government school ...and he [teacher] said to me 'They try to teach the early students to use the calculators, and so they will not teach the times tables to the students' and I said 'Why?' and he said 'Because it's the fashion'."*

Colin, also a teacher in Africa, expressed concerns about the situations experienced in the high schools in which he did his teaching practice while upgrading his qualifications. He described his impressions thus : *"You see the government has even taken away a lot of past power - from the teachers, and as a result I feel that the teachers are frustrated having to put up with certain behaviours which couldn't have been tolerated then - because they are in state schools nobody is supposed reprimand them ... In private schools it is straight on, if a student makes a mistake they are reprimanded there and then and they know why they are being reprimanded, rather than being detained in an other room - or taken to the school psychologist in order to convince them that they were wrong. So with the state schools I see that my kids wouldn't perform very well."*

Later in his interview Colin elaborated further : *"The majority of teachers don't literally care, - they just don't care. Their duty is go into classrooms, be able to control the kids up to the end of their lessons, and if there hasn't been any - crises - well and good -they have done their day that day. If there is any crisis in the classroom then - they have to refer these kids to either to the school psychologist or send them to detention, it is literally waving the problem away from oneself ... I feel that teachers are supposed to be responsible for the well being of the students. If a student misbehaves ... teachers should get that child there and then when the knowledge is still fresh in his or her mind and educate or reprimand that child, rather than pushing them away. I don't believe in punishment, - you know - I believe in reprimanding and educating the child to stop causing problems to the society and there's still a lot of response ... I believe that it is the teachers' duty to help advise students however either the teachers have no power - or have themselves very little time for these extra activities such as giving advice to students. If they could just give themselves just five minutes to help one or two students then it could make a very big difference."* Later Colin reiterated *"The Department of Education should help teachers to give more of their time to help these kids."*

Elizabeth, from Latin America, described only briefly her experiences when upgrading her qualifications at university in Australia, commenting thus : *"I could perform very well with good teachers, teachers I could communicate with very well, but if it was a teacher that couldn't communicate then I couldn't perform. Even here in Australia I have the same feeling at university, with good lecturers I could have good marks, with bad lecturers I was totally failing."*

The last of these four minority group participants, Sylvia, also from Latin America, described her experiences of teachers at university in Australia in greater detail as follows : *"In my experience in X University [in Australia] well, teachers were not really helpful or giving you more strength to keep going. I think they were doing the opposite, they say 'Well you are lacking this and you can't go there, better if you stay where you are because its harder when you go' [on], this is not healthy for anybody ... they just say 'Well, don't try, because - the mainstream is harder than this,' it didn't happen only to me, it happened to my other friend ... and I think this is not fair for the students because it affects you, I mean, it was very shocking for me to hear the teacher say 'Well, you are doing very well, you got the knowledge, but - I think you better try in the other courses and not try with X course, because X course is very hard, you just do some [other] course' - and I don't want to."* When asked how she felt when the teachers said that, Sylvia replied : *"Oh I feel so frustrated, yes, very, very, very frustrated."*

Experiences of Australian Methods

The methods used during the primary school education of their children in Australia, were a source of interest and concern for certain of the minority group participants in this research study, several of whom discussed them in detail. Lorna from Africa explained : *"I like the way they do it - but I would really prefer to have little exams even as early as Year 1. For them to know that is the time - say after 3 months or the end of every term - just to have a little test where they would write things, not just continuously doing homework and if they don't want to do it, they are not reprimanded for that [or] for not doing well. Just to motivate them a little bit, I think here if you are lazy, you can really be lazy because there is nothing to force you to do work. Another thing I don't like is - they go from grade to grade and if they are not tested how do you know how well they are doing?"* Later Lorna also commented on the learning of maths and homework in later primary school as follows : *"They memorise them [tables] which I think is much better than doing it with the calculator, at least they have to learn to recall things."*

.... Every second or third day they have to submit something - but not much [homework] otherwise it will turn X off. If it's too much it will turn him/her off completely, X won't bother." When asked about the projects her child did in the later primary school years, Lorna explained : "They do all kinds ... on animals or plants or trees ... maths X tends to do in the class, s/he doesn't do a lot at night, occasionally but not very often."

Although happy with the early opportunities children have in Australian primary schools to learn the use of information technology, Philippa also from Africa, expressed concerns about such aspects as the lack of exams in primary school, discipline and appropriate punishment : "Children here don't have a concept of time because they are not made to sit for an exam until they are in Year 8 ... and here to be honest there's no discipline, because you are not allowed to do this and that to a kid ... kids should at least be punished by maybe a little bit of a cane and should be administered maybe by the principal or deputy principal... discipline is very, very poor here, yes very poor... punishment should always be there because I believe that if you give the cane to a kid once s/he will always remember and will tend to refrain from doing the same thing." However she added also : "If it's done too much it inflicts - you know - a kind of fear."

Philippa elaborated further on the punishments she had come across in primary school in Australia : "With this school there is a form of punishment whereby if a child cannot get something right and has trouble in doing it - the child is made to recite the same thing 40 times ... sometimes spelling, you are made to spell one word - yes many, many times ... another form of punishment some kids could get here ... detention, usually you are given detention during lunch hours, when the other kids are running around playing that's when you stay [in] ... detention is only given to the kids during lunch hours." Continuing in this vein, Philippa described the system of rules in her children's primary school as follows : "They have the school rules in their school diary front page so the parents are supposed to read it to the children. The children are read the rules first day of school and they go through it - 'Ok, if you do this, these are the consequences,' but of course the consequences here are what? - warnings 1st time, warnings 2nd time and then the detention for 15 minutes, 20 minutes - you know that's all ... but looks like they don't care - you know they don't really work." She elaborated further : "If you are self motivated usually you don't go looking for trouble the way they do. It [detention] is not something which will make them remember that - 'Oh I should not really do this,' because I can see that the kids take detention for granted, they don't care, it's not having any effect on them. Of course on rare occasions there's kids that have been suspended, but the suspension is [only] for a day - or so. Maybe[it's] lack of motivation, you ask your kids 'Oh how is school?' ... usually they just say 'Oh it's boring' you know, not with my kids but - a number of kids there. You say 'Did you have a good

day?' 'No' 'Why?' 'Oh it's boring,' you know. Why is it boring? - I don't understand - maybe they don't find school interesting, in the things they are doing ... [or] they just don't care to work hard."

One of the Latin American participants, Elizabeth, was also concerned about methods used in Australia primary schools, in particular the lack of homework and low expectations. She described the situation thus : *"The kids come home don't have enough to do, don't have homework, and I said 'Do you have homework?' and they said 'No,' or they have maybe 3 lines to do, and that's all their homework, whereas we used to do thousands of things, a lot of things [in Latin America]."* When Elizabeth was asked if she provided anything extra for them to do at home, she replied : *"Yes, what I do is they go to music lessons and X does gymnastics, and mainly they do sports because they don't do enough at sports at school, and the other thing is they also like reading, so I like to give them reading."* When questioned further however, Elizabeth responded that she did not set any work for them, explaining : *"No, I should do it I know, but at the same time I feel it's too much pressure because they don't want to ... when I asked them - it's like I have to confront them, and we start fighting because then I start asking them why they haven't done it and then - Oh it's too much trouble so I just leave them like that."*

The subject of homework was also discussed by another Scandinavia participant, Jane, in her interview, and in contrast her comments were very positive: *"Homework today for my kids I think some of it's fun ... they just have charts where they write up - how much preparation or reading they've done. They've sometimes got some reading programmes going from the library, where if you read so many books you get - a sticker or something. Other subjects I think they make more interesting today. They get a little bit of maths, I can't say I've seen a lot of it, it's more assignments they get to do yes. They will give you a famous person or a famous sportsman, or something, to write out a story about... they just get their guidelines, you know, on what it has to be included. You have to start with something, and then your main story, and then you've got an ending and stuff like that, and they do that rather early I think, to be able to sit down and write something that. We have the times tables, they have to do all those, that was learning off by heart, but that's about sort of the only thing that my kids ever had to memorise ... we do help them and we do both encourage them to - get involved in them... X is Year 7 now, and a very conscientious worker and would have done a lot of his/her stuff at school, but still has got probably an hour a day to do at home ... and then we do a bit of reading at night, it's not a chore for them. I've always let them come home and just let them have time to themselves, and for what ever is left, and then after tea we've done their homework, because I think that after a whole day they need just to let go a little bit yes."*

Despite her mostly positive attitude towards primary schooling in Australia, there were one or two aspects that Jane was not very happy with and described as follows : *"Sometimes I think the photocopied stuff that comes home is a bit overwhelming, you know - when you've got books and books and books coming home that's been photocopied and stapled together, and nothing ever happens to them - but that could just be an isolated problem I don't know ... at the end of the year when the kids bring home all their stuff ... there seems to be a awful lot where you've done page 1 and page 2 and there's 20 or 30 pages stapled together that's never been touched ... and you say 'Oh what happened with that?' and they can't remember, either they don't know or it's too long ago ... it's usually some reading you know with activities that perhaps sort of - you know, they've had all the intentions and it's never - happened."*

Second language learning in primary school was an issue with which Jane was unhappy, as the only language offered to her children was Japanese, which she considered was too hard. She explained thus : *"I think it must be the fourth year now that X is learning Japanese, and for some one who's been taught a language for four years and has got a very good ear for language, I know that because of his/her Scandinavian language, it's very little X has to show for it, and the same for the younger one. It's so limited, when I had been learning a language for four years, you could read a book and you could write a letter in that language ... they can't pick up a piece of paper and have a go at pronouncing the word because they can't read it. If you had something with the English alphabet in it, they could have a go to try to pronounce it, [by saying] does it look like any English word that you know?"* When asked what language she would like to see the children learn in primary school, Jane explained : *"I don't really mind so long as they use the English alphabet ... when they get to Japan they find - Oh, it's totally different language again, overpowering, you know. I just think it's not fair on the kids."*

Maureen from Scandinavia, also expressed her concerns about the lack of homework as follows : *"I believe they should have maths, English, a few subjects every day in the week. I don't believe school should be heavy. I think the first seven years should be a lot of fun and a lot of play, but to prepare them mentally for the idea of homework, that's all I want just the idea of homework, not the work of homework. Just the idea of this is how it is, and this is how life is, you know not much, just every day just a little bit to do."*

Another of Maureen's concerns related to the lack of practical and physical education in primary schools. She explained thus : *"What I probably react negatively on ... is the lack of practical education ... it is important Another thing I also react on is the sporting facilities for PT, I would really like to see every school in Australia with a swimming pool that's a minimum requirement particularly with this beach nation ... because I just think that's part of education – the physical part. What they learn here is skipping rope ... they actually take a whole hour off to go out ... run round the block and do a few skipping."* When asked about experiences of her children's education, Maureen elaborated further in similar vein : *"I was very disappointed when I saw that their physical education consisted of skipping, to me skipping is not a physical education, it is just a game at home when you are bored ... I would love to see more physical education in schools ... not just running around the school like they do here, or going orienteering as they do ... they do walk round the school and I find that strange, I can't understand why they should have 30 kids walking around ... or they run around the block and that's their physical outlet. I don't like having my child running around the streets, I don't believe they should, as a principle ... but obviously that's the only way they can have some running, I don't know why they do it. Or they have some times skipping in the school yard, and the whole class stretching, standing in the school yard doing stretches ... it is the same as doing aerobics basically in the school yard. I thought that it looked a little bit Russian, [like] communists – like that."*

These concerns that Maureen had about physical and practical education, were discussed in considerable detail in her interview as follows : *"What I would like to see is the equipment, more equipment and I'm sure that it costs money and that's what it comes down to, but I don't believe Australian schools don't have the money I think that's an excuse. Our school just got air conditioned every where, every single room, to me it would be more important to have a building made for physical education or for practical education instead, I don't believe children of this age need air conditioning... I know our school has the area, we have a big area - so they have the space for it, so it comes down to priorities."*

Sam from Latin America also expressed some concerns about methods in Australia primary school, in particular the lack of homework and frequent assessment compared with his experiences as a child in Latin America, and explained as follows : *"In general I think you have [all] the resources in Australia... One of the things I notice is that when I was at school we had marks for everything - an evaluation. I know that now [here] they say that they don't need to do much, it's enough with what they read, but I think sometimes that if they not prepared, they don't have the urge to do it. When the children are in secondary they could have a lot of problems and they cannot correct it ... it was much more specific when I was at school ... if I have a report with the maths I could see more what the standard is, what*

is wrong, what s/he is doing consistently badly. I say 'Have you had homework?' and they say 'No, I haven't,' or 'Yes,' or 'That is it.' I think here if kids get their homework and they don't do it there are no more consequences, because they get away with it."

Attitudes and Expectations of Education and Schooling in Australia

During the interviews conducted with minority group parents in this research study, several of the participants took the opportunity to discuss their ideas about both education in general, and Australia schools in particular. Maureen from Scandinavia related her attitudes and expectations of education and schooling directly to experiences in her country of origin, and she described her ideas as follows : *"I was shocked when I came to Australia and found that ... one girl I wanted to help me do a hem on a dress and she had never done it before ... my husband said to me 'But that as a parent is your job.' To me that should be a school activity, part of the curriculum, because that is part of what you need as an older person as much as you need to know what happened during the 1940's ... it is important to know how to darn, to hem ... That is something I particularly would like to see my children learn at school, and I find it very strange they don't ... I know we are going into the computer age, but we will still need to cook, to sew - do things practical."*

To Maureen, an emphasis on the *"physical and practical"* as well as the *"mental"* aspects of education was extremely important, and she explained thus : *"Sport you [must] get a child into, to be physically well you have to build up their physique, and I think that from 5 years to 13 years that is more important than the computer...if I had to choose I go for the physical... because they are only little for a few years - computers can always wait, and you will automatically learn computers by being a young person living in today's society ... I dearly would love to see more half and half here, half practical and physical and half mental. I don't think we can accumulate all the mental activities unless we have some breaks ... I often feel if X school could have 15 sewing machines, 10 wood turning machines, I would be very happy."*

When questioned further about her wishes for Australian education, Maureen elaborated : *"I think that we need a bit more money into the school system, but I can't see with the way the funding is now the state system will say yes to that ... we need and must have more physical outlets and equipment for it. You can't expect 7 or 8 year olds to love aerobics if they have to do it in the school yard on the bitumen, and we can't expect them to enjoy studying if they have to sit in the same classroom they did*

maths in, and English in. There has to be a variety of classrooms, and have a variety of buildings ... The play grounds here are very good ... here at X they've got huge areas of ground and oval, so I'd like to see ... a swimming pool and a bigger variety in sports ... here they don't seem to be as serious about sport, that's the whole thing ... there's no passion attached to it ... it's more [just] to fill up the last hour of school."

Another participant from Scandinavia, Michael, felt that for many parents, involvement with primary school was minimal or inappropriate, and commented thus : *"The parents who come and help with things at the school, it's a fairly limited effort. Yet there's a few of them will put in a huge amount of effort and the rest of them just don't put in anything at all. Some of the parents wanted to spend all the money that the P & C collected to buy computers, which would be totally outdated soon and a waste of money."*

During his interview, Michael described in detail his ideas about children's learning and education as follows : *"One of the things that I think is the biggest lesson that you can give a kid, is to teach them how to learn, and I know that can be taught to a child at 7 or 8, 9, 10, quite easily. Probably the earlier it is taught the easier it is ... emphasise how easy it is to learn ... make it easy for them, not make it difficult - not have this emphasis on failure, and the red dots and the red ticks - have the emphasis on the ease ... I always said being at school or with anything you are learning, it's easy and I'll show you how easy it is, there's nothing hard about it, and you keep on, you even do it for them to make it easy... when they see you do it, they realise it's easy. Ok, you might do it for them a couple of times but then they suddenly start doing it themselves because they know now it's a piece of cake. Whatever it is, maths or understanding moles, or anything even a new language, as long as they know it's easy and everybody thinks it's easy, well then it must be easy - so it is easy."* When asked how he came to discover that, Michael replied : *"In some ways by having to, and by realising that I could learn by myself."*

Later Michael elaborated further on his attitudes to children's learning as follows : *"One thing my mother always did was answer my questions, and that's actually one of the things where a parent and a school fail. They don't answer questions - if a 3 year old asks them ... where the sun is sitting in the solar system, they give them some offhand flippancy answer and tell them it's too complicated for them to understand. Whereas if a 3 year old asks you that question and you go into half hour explanation of it, both verbal and with illustrations, then it suddenly sticks and they can move on to understand something else ... I always tried to make sure that I told X exactly what was going on and how it functioned and why and where, even if it did get long winded, but do it in a funny way, and once X got too bored Ok, I stopped."*

In support of these ideas, Michael described those of a Czechoslovakian professor explaining : *"His basic philosophy of education was to tell the children exactly and fully any question they had, follow it up and continue with their questions ... but make sure that their answer was full and comprehensive each time they asked, whatever they asked. To other people it seems silly to sit there and explain, maths to a 3 year old, but if that's your thing and your child is interested, do it."*

In contrast, Colin, a trained teacher from Africa, in discussing the education of his children, emphasised the need for development of their potential, and explained his methods of encouragement them as follows : *"I believe in them trying to - look for the information rather than me giving it to them - I don't believe in spoon feeding ... I ask them as a teacher rather than as a father, I have my way of making students do more to look for the answers to problems ... They get the book, read through it and then the next day, I put my questions - 'Where is X? What is the population of X today? What do they grow? What is the main economy?' I mean to find out whether the child really read through and understood it, rather than you just - you know - just spoon feeding them ... with maths unless they are shown how to do it they won't be able to understand- so I help them. I show them by also probing their knowledge ability, the indication of their ability to grasp concepts and this is how you do it, so rather than doing it for them. I help them to see and show them that will give you the answer, I don't believe in that spoon feeding."*

During his interview Colin stated that teachers should be encouraged to do more to help 'kids who were causing problems' at school, and when questioned further about this, he explained his ideas as follows : *"Ask them [the children] 'Why are you doing this?' ... and find out their problems causing misbehaviour such as aggressiveness or disruption in class or school... explain to them, as one with experience in life, that if the kid continues to misbehave then 'After Year 12, what will be next in your life?' Wake students up to the consequences of their own actions and what lies ahead for them as a result."*

This participant was also asked to elaborate on his comments about *"the moral part"* of education in Australia *"lagging behind a lot,"* and explained his attitude as follows : *"Especially in public schools, there's a need to introduce sex education early to help kids understand problems of sex and early conception ... having children at home prevents the woman from earning a high salary as she can only work part time. Tell them 'The choice is yours, it's your future,' and talk early and in a friendly way about the importance of good education, the consequences, and the need for maturity of 20 years or over. Instead of*

teachers struggling to prevent it, let them give more information freely to the kids, and allow the responsibility for students to make the best choice for themselves."

Feelings of dissatisfaction with aspects of education in Australia were common to many of the minority group participants in this research study. When asked what she thought of education in Australia, Elizabeth from Latin America responded in a negative manner *"It's poor, very poor,"* elaborating further thus : *"Because - kids learn when young ... it's easier for them to learn when they are younger than when they are older, so the more information you give them when they are little it is better, and for them it is no worry, it is so easy for them and there's no problems of learning at that young age. If you want to give them until they are in Year 11 it's too late, the brain is all formed and everything is not the same ... The psychologists they say 'Oh the kids shouldn't be put under too much pressure, they should play more,' but I don't think that's correct, because you can teach kids without putting kids under pressure... and that's the point, they tend to just leave them mucking around with small things but they don't teach them enough, and that's the main problem I am having."*

Elizabeth also expressed concerns about the way children with "difficult" behaviour were handled, due to her own experiences both as a child and a parent. She explained as follows : *"I was very determined, [as a child] my personality is like that, but a lot of kids are not. They have different personalities, and it's very easy if you put down someone to make them feel that they can not do anything, but maybe it is not true, maybe that person is capable of doing a lot of things. So a child shouldn't be judged like that ... on their behaviour, because there has to be some reason why the kid is behaving like that. That should be investigated and not just leave it [the child] as 'a problem child' and that's it, and say 'That's a problem child, put it in the bin and push it away.' That's not a proper way of dealing with it, there is a reason behind when the kid is behaving like that, yes. The other thing [is] I get worried all the time when I see it on T V - children diagnosed as A.D.D. children ... I could be labelled like that when I was little, and it was not true ... I am worried because drugs are used, and they can give you brain damage and they don't care, they give that to the children ... just to keep them quiet and to me that's dreadfully wrong ... I have a child[who] ... was very difficult to deal with ... once s/he started the second year X cried and cried and cried, and used to drive me crazy and was climbing everything ... Oh I couldn't stand it, but why [now] X is a good gymnast you see, very good, so that's the thing. We have to channel all that energy into something positive, and I could have said to the doctor 'Look I cannot control this child, give me some medication ... but that's totally wrong."*

Another of the participants from Latin America, Sylvia, also expressed dissatisfaction with her experiences of education in Australia, explaining as follows : *"I think schools are not working as hard as I expect. I think here there is a lot of blocking of things for the kids. I do not agree with that selection the teachers or the education staff do ... someone told me that kids in the very early grades have been classified, the good ones, the medium ones and the not very good. I do not agree with that ... I don't know if they are doing this at the school ... I'm not really complaining about the whole educational system, I think high school is very good, but I think primary school is not - it is very lax, I think - from my point of view, because I can see X's things going [downhill] and I think it is very poor Yes, because here they don't push the kids very hard, they don't give them the important knowledge about the subjects ... I am very concerned about this classification that they do and I think it is not fair for the kids ... one of the teachers in my friends child's class she was working harder with some kids, - giving them extra work and for the other kids - nothing, I mean just the normal stuff. They complained but the teacher said 'Well we can't do anything, we are giving them extra work because they are very good, and the others they can't cope with extra jobs,' but I think this is unfair because the kids can work if you push them ... I mean, this is racism [discrimination] as well I think."*

Sylvia elaborated further thus : *"For me it's totally different here, the methods are more free, more relaxed I think, but sometimes I think they need to be more strict or systematic ... kids from Year 3 in Latin America are more advanced than here, and I remember my nephew, he was very good in social studies, science and maths in Year 3 ... here it's more easy for the kids in primary school, very easy. It's very unfair for the kids, the shock that they receive when they go to high school, why don't they prepare the kids for that crisis, that step? Because it's very shocking, I understand why kids give up very easily, it's hard, that's why I try to teach X more things here because I know s/he will need it in the future."*

When asked specifically about her own child's education, Sylvia remarked : *"I would like X to have very good basics and I expect X to go to uni, to have a very good education yes."* Additional comments made by Sylvia also convey her attitudes and expectations for her child : *"I am very strict, I know it is not very good, but as a parent I expect too much from X. I want him/her to be - not the best, but good, good, and I think I have a conflict with X because I am not doing anything and I expect that X work for him/her self and for me at school. I have hard days and easy days."*

These feelings of anxiety were echoed by Peter, also from Latin America, who explained his attitudes about the education of his child as follows : *"I am worried about X you know, because maybe in the next year, Year 5 or Year 6 it's different, - because they push more, at the higher*

level, but they didn't receive the basics. I think that they didn't receive the basics and knowledge to go to Year 8 or Year 9. But we're going to help to teach X... we compared - because we know about that [as teachers in Latin America] - how we can teach, and how much we can teach to the students, it depends on the level, depends on the year, and I think that X didn't receive as much as we expect. I don't know if it is because this is the system, because - if that is what the education department expects of the students, and the school staff provides it, Ok! We can teach X outside the school more, if it is the system - that's what they expect - that's Ok! If I don't like it I can do nothing about that ... but I don't care because we can do it ... X is clever and can learn it from the school, and can learn it from us [also], or we can teach it, you know. For me the thing is that X feels better with his/her classmates, and the teacher and that s/he is becoming better and better, that is the most important for me."

In similar vein, the desire to teach his children himself was also expressed by Sam, another Latin American participant, who explained thus : *"For me, one of the ideals I always thought of is teaching X myself, I think it's better. I've taught X music, I think it's maybe not a teacher's direction of the human being, but the parents' tradition of what they know. Because its done with love there's no sort of jealousy - like I will teach you, but I won't teach you what will make you my competitor. You want to them to be better than you, you want them to be better - everything like that."*

Later Sam commented further : *"I want to get more involved with their learning, it's very difficult because we don't have time and we are busy, and I notice the kids grow up very fast now ... I want to teach the children time management ... that's why I am practising music regularly with the kids, it's a way to teach them a sense of that, and I go to the studio teaching them to sing and I practice every night for 2 hours ... there are very complex things that we don't have the answer to, we don't know if we are doing the best for them, sometimes I wish I would be better disciplined, make them learn and I am trying to doing it, but I am trying not to monitor their activities myself, but have them doing it themselves."*

In contrast, two of the Africa participants, Philippa and Lorna were concerned that their children might not be able to cope if they were taken back to Africa. Philippa commented as follows : *"If I - one day will go back to Africa, I find that these children may not be competitive enough. One thing is that here they tend to specialise a lot, - if you studied science - science is too general, you have to specialise in one field of science only ... So I find that is then it's a little bit narrow maybe. Yes it is a little, it should be broadened a little bit. On the other hand because of technology they are quite advanced here, and then if they go back there they will have advantages over the kids there ... here they don't know time*

management ... and there is no time limit set, like with the homework they do it maybe for a whole day or so. So if they are restricted to do it within a certain period of time, that's when panic maybe sets in and they are not able to perform."

This attitude was echoed by Lorna, who described her concerns thus : *"If I take them home, if I take them to Africa they will really stress up, because there they have to sit for exams and it's a serious thing, and if they fail they have to repeat the year. If they are not used to have that threat, that pressure I don't know how they will cope ... because - through the school system they are not used to having exams and I just don't know [why]? Then you go to uni and they have got exams there, so they should be a continuing thing or it should be introduced early, I don't know what they do in high school ... if they are not used to having that pressure, and then all of a sudden in high school they are introduced to that, not all the kids can cope with that, but if it's something they have started early in the primary school - they don't have to do many questions, just a few so that they can get the idea."*

In her interview, Lorna talked also about the importance of "pushing" children, a statement which she clarified as follows : *"I meant pushing them as to what they want to do, here they say 'Oh you can't - you shouldn't push, it's their own choice,' - in the end it's what they want to do - what they are interested in, but I think if they are not told the importance of having a career or anything, they think they can just leave school and do what ever they want ... My oldest said s/he wants to be a shop keeper. I said 'A shop keeper is having your own shop or working there' s/he said 'Oh I will work as a teller' and I said 'No, sorry you're not doing that, I pay all this money that I don't have [for school fees] so you should think of something more important.' I think in that way you have to give them a sense of direction ... Yes, otherwise they just go through and wouldn't bother. Even with the marks that X gets, even if I know that this is quite a good mark I say 'Oh I hope the next time you will do better' so that X knows that I expect a little bit more from him/her, but if I say 'Oh this is all right' X just wouldn't bother, and so that's what I do."*

When asked about her expectations for her children, Lorna explained thus : *"I really would want them to do well, I keep on telling them I don't want them to be like me - I was a refugee and I did it the hard way - I mean they've got all the opportunities, [I say] 'Just make sure you use it.' So I try to encourage them to do things and then, I don't know, that's all I can do, but you can push a little bit ... they say they can rebel, but a little bit won't hurt. I really want the oldest to do something s/he says s/he was interested in. 'Oh, when I grow up I will be a nurse' [X said] and I said 'Oh that's nice,' but the younger because s/he is really bright, I said 'Why don't you go into medicine?' Well, Y is a bit young to know."*

In her interview, Paula from Latin America, mentioned several aspects of Australia education in general, with which she was dissatisfied. One of the issues concerned was second language learning, about which Paula commented as follows : *"It should be taken a bit more seriously I think, at the moment the way it is being taught in schools at least at primary level ... From what I have spoken about with the other parents who have their kids in later years ... they don't really learn as seriously as I had to, where you were expected to be fluent in that language."*

Paula described discipline in Australia as too "lax," also remarking that when this was mentioned, teachers said that they can not *"do like in the bad old days."* In similar vein, this participant remarked that she felt society here had no respect for teachers, parents, and the elderly, and asked *"Why do kids do kids burn and vandalise schools? It puzzles me, we used to go to school sometimes to paint desks or clean up, plant roses, anything to make them more beautiful."*

A further source of Paula's dissatisfaction related particularly to her child's school, and stemmed from the lack of acceptance of migrant mothers by other mothers who were born and educated in Australia described earlier, and which she was concerned might have a direct impact on her child. She described the situation thus : *"A couple of times I did think of changing X because I used to find that s/he was treated and welcomed as a friend by the other mothers... because s/he doesn't look anything like me, but once they got to know me, they sort of - like [said] - 'Oh I'd better not hang around with that kid any more'. So I thought does X notice it? I don't want him/her to feel left out, maybe I should change schools. So I talked to X about it without - you know - saying every thing in black and white, and s/he loves school, s/he loves his/her friends. Things like that X doesn't notice, they go straight over the top of his/her head, and so I've left it like that."* When asked if she had considered changing schools, Paula replied : *"Well I would have to try the private system yes. I've sort of kept that in mind, but the thing is - the points for Y primary, then s/he can continue going on to Z high and that's got a very good name, and s/he's a very artistic child and it teaches very well in art so I understand. So we will try to hang in there, X is doing very well at school academically and does have some very good friends, so I think we've overcome that,"*

Paula was also asked about her expectations for her children's education, and explained her attitude as follows : *"I just want them to be able to learn as much – as they can, so they can appreciate what they are being taught, I hope. Although the score is more up to me, it isn't up to us as parents what you learn. Teach them to appreciate what they learn – just to be able to have the access is very significant, I think it's wonderful, there's so many more resources here."* In spite of these comments, Paula also expressed concerns about the concept of the TEE which she felt was unfair due to the pressure it put upon students, however when asked if she and her husband envisaged their children going on to university, her reply was in the affirmative : *"From my point of view that goes without saying, yes ... I think he has very high expectations about his kids, yes we do. Ideally I'd like them to have a career where they are going to make as much money as possible as well. [laughs] No, what ever makes them happy, what ever makes them happy, yes. You've got so many choices here ... I have my hopes."*

In contrast, Jane from Scandinavia was full of praise for education in Australia commenting as follows : *"I think it's terrific, it's good, perhaps later on there is a little bit too much pressure on the teenagers because they get to the T.E.E ... I think we really have all the choices that we can wish for, even if you today make the wrong decision somewhere along the line, you have always got the possibility of going back now to do another TAFE course or doing something, and it's not out of reach money wise or anything like that. You can do it alongside your job, so I think we're pretty lucky, and I think we've pretty much have got nearly everything we could wish for really."*

When asked about her expectations for her children, Jane explained thus : *"I can see now X will follow through and go the full line, be - whatever s/he likes and that's fine. I don't think the other one will, I think Y will go off and be a technician, something you know, that hasn't got so much to do with schooling, and if s/he's happy with that I'm happy with it. I can see where they are going, but I don't expect anything of them as long as they find their place you know ... We are not pushing them, we are encouraging them, we are not pushing them, not at all ... they have lots of opportunities here and if they make a wrong step somewhere along the line there's always time to go back and that's really good. All this pressure that's put on them - you can just tell them now, if you make the wrong decision it can be fixed. It's not the point of no return, it's not any more - that you are a dropout if you don't pass then , yes."*

Experiencing Education in Australia

Young Children's Voices

This section discusses the responses of the young children of these minority group parents to a series of questions about their school experiences. Due to the children's ages, ranging from 7 to 8+ years, interview questions were kept as simple and general as possible, in order to be non-threatening and allow any general concerns to emerge.

School Experiences

In response to the first question about what they did at school, Kim aged 7 years, whose father Brian, was from the Middle East, described his/her experiences thus : *"Most of the time the first thing we do is say good morning, we have news after we say good morning. We do maths and other work, then have recess and line up in our lines. We go inside and sit on chairs, then sit on carpet and teacher reads a story. A few weeks ago we did some things about Aboriginals, they use didgeridoos when they do their dances and in the book [there's] an animal called ... Mulli. There's a book about how the birds got their colours – about a bird who has a blood foot, and how the others got their colours, but it didn't, it was all black. Aboriginals used to paint their bodies and use spears to kill animals but only for food."* Another 7 year old, Ashley, the child of an African participant Lorna, explained : *"I get to play at recess and lunch, and you have to do work, and go to assembly. You - like in church learn about God, and sing songs lots of them. We have maths and our work book, we have boomerang maths, and we've got recess, it comes before lunch, it's half an hour, for lunch you get a whole hour."*

Of the three remaining 7 year old children, two had parents who came from Latin America. One of these Alex, responded only briefly to the first question thus : *"We do language in one pad, we do a sheet to finish at home, that's maths, and some science. Recess, lunch and afternoon recess."* In contrast, Lindsay gave a much more detailed account of school experiences as follows : *"We have Miss X. We have a book every year, and I can't remember last year, but this year it is Billy Bluett. It helps you improve writing, number and sums. The teacher gives you a journal and you can write in it, you can also do sport and meditation. When it rains we have to stay inside, we like to stay in 'cause you can do anything you like. I do like to go outside, we do a little concert, we go on the oval to*

practice. Sometimes we go to the oval with the teacher and we play sports and games – link arms. Sometimes the girls get annoyed when they have to hold boys hands. The girls just run around mostly, boys play a sport.”

The last of the 7 year olds, Jo, whose parent was Scandinavian, described experiences at school in both Australia and Italy thus : *“Here we do Xmas stockings, stories, reading, fitness and sometimes we play in the class. Sometimes we clean up our trays and clean up the floor. We do pictures. In Italy we had free activity and books to draw in pictures of ourselves, we kept changing our desks and had lockers for pencils and books and glues, we had lunch outside.”*

Two of the four remaining children interviewed, all of whom were between 8 and 9 years of age, Chris and Kye, were the children of the Scandinavian parents, Jane and Michael. In response to the first of the interview questions, Chris answered as follows : *“We in the morning have fitness, and after we do maths, spelling or language, then recess. Afterwards we have library then music, and we do spelling and have lunch. Then we have sometimes maths, then a drink and toilet, mostly at the end we have maths.”* While Kye described school experiences and activities thus : *“We work and if we finish we can play around in class, or run around in classroom. We learn scaling objects, maths and writing mysteries like the Bermuda Triangle, do art and paint in classroom.”*

Pat, whose father Colin had come from Africa, described his/her experiences of school in the following way : *“For homework we do the times tables, the class goal is all the times tables, I can do to 800 times table. We also have a class marble jar and when we be good we get a marble in the jar, when it is full we get a reward like a free dress day, sports day, or party. On Wednesday and Friday afternoon we have special groups and do Japanese, Phys. Ed, ... onology? sport and also going to Scitech.”* The remaining child, Shannon, whose parents were from Latin America, explained school experiences thus : *“On Monday we come in and do games and then mental maths, then recess and then probably something else. Then we come in, and after recess there's a big box with different coloured cards to read and do questions. After that we play games then have lunch for an hour. In the afternoon we play games and music.”*

Positive Experiences

In order to ascertain what positive experiences they had of school, the children were asked what they liked about it. The five 7 year old children interviewed gave the following

answers to this question. Kim explained his/her likes thus : *"I like music with Ms X, doing singing it's fun in groups and doing funny things. My favourite teacher is Ms X. Ms Y gives us jelly beans when were good on Friday. We have free time, it's good with Ms Z. I like sitting next to who you like, I love reading, on Friday we get to stand out in front of the class and sing group songs. I do like A's accent very much, s/he comes from Texas in U.S. – s/he's a lovely girl."* While Ashley described liking the following at school : *"I like lunch time, you get a lot of play, and I like boomerang maths. Lots of hard maths, some drawing, some writing, and you've got to put the right answers. On Monday, Wednesday, Friday, we've got swimming, not at our school but at high schools that have pools. I like all my friends ... We draw lots of things at school, my teacher Mrs S is a nice teacher."*

Alex and Jo commented only briefly about their respective likes, as follows : *"My friends, teachers, science, maths, language. Today we did some legos, mine broke but we will glue it. I'm learning Japanese ... I like reading, we've got reading partners at school – Planet X – I'm in Jupiter and there's Mars, and others as well. I like free activity, fitness, writing and Xmas things. In Italy I liked changing all our desks, pictures, Xmas stockings, and the lockers to put things in."* In contrast however, Lindsay described what s/he liked at school in much more detail thus : *"I like school because you can learn and draw, and when older you can learn more. I like science – it's fun, I like school because you can read, and the teacher reads to us too – a story about pirates, the name is in Spanish, 'Terra del Fuego,' it means ground [earth] of fire. The teacher can speak some Spanish, his brother works in Spain. There are 2 new classrooms at school, Miss X is in the old part and my 3 friends are going to be there. I like reading and maths, I have a C. D. 'I love maths'. I like going to computers every Monday and Friday. We did some Xmas cards and playing games, and also use it for school work, made a card for our buddy in Year 6."*

The four older children, who were from 8 to 9 years of age, mostly commented fairly briefly on their likes at school. Chris remarked only : *"I like doing maths, having book buddies and most of all recess, lunch and playtime. I play on the monkey bars normally."* While Pat mentioned mainly liking sports : *"I like maths, problem solving, sports, volleyball and cricket, hockey, basketball, tennis, and baseball."* Sport was also popular with Shannon, who explained thus : *"I like sport, I like music, lunch and recess. Sport is easy and fun, it's 1 hour long and I'm good at it. Music helps me, but we usually do it in a group of 5, last time was 2 weeks ago, and my group won."* In contrast, Kye compared his/her old school with the new one as follows : *"I like a lot of things, not in the old school, I didn't like anything. I like the fact that school's easy, and also having pets, like rats and hamsters. They are not in my*

classroom because the teacher doesn't like it, she is not too keen on 'ferals'. In this school - like - it's really, really free, like - art I guess it could be my favourite. In the old school I liked that I had lots of friends there."

Negative Experiences

The children of the minority group participants in this research study were also asked what they did not like at school and how it made them feel. In response Kim, the child of Brian (Middle East), explained thus : *"I don't like having library – it's boring. She [teacher] reads us a story, and then we go to the desks and we have to write in our books. It's a bit boring and my hands get all tired. I don't like sitting next to X because s/he's mean to me always. I don't like Y being in my group, s/he says to me s/he can punch my jaws – to make me feel scared, s/he makes me scared."* These concerns about other children were echoed by Ashley, whose mother Lorna, was from Africa, and who stated as follows : *"Don't like people hurting me, I feel angry, they hurt me because I do something wrong."* When questioned further Ashley explained thus : *"It's X and that's all. Sometimes playing soccer, X kicks the ball and it hits my leg real hard. X is mean, pinches people a lot and then after s/he laughs."* When asked 'Does X hurt you?' Ashley replied : *"Yes, I feel really, really, really angry and smoke comes out of my ears, but I do get angry for reasons."*

Alex, whose parent Paula, is Latin American, also had concerns about other children at school and commented : *"When my friends don't play what I like I get angry and go and play with someone else."* An aspect of school also disliked by Alex was language, about which s/he remarked : *"Sometimes we do language that I don't like sometimes, this one - English, spelling sometimes it's boring, and I get a sore hand. I don't feel cross, just put my pen down."* In similar vein, Shannon, the child of another Latin American participant, expressed a dislike for English reading lessons, and explained as follows : *"I don't like reading it's a bit boring. For me if you read a lot I get bored, not about gym it's interesting. Reading is boring if they force you, but you to have to do it, just a little paragraph not too much. I don't like - I get annoyed when I can't read Spanish, I would like to learn, and learn lots of languages."*

Another of the children of Latin American origin, Lindsay explained his/her dislikes as follows : *"I don't like this person called X who said when s/he was new - 'I'm going to bash you up'. I don't like running very much because I'm second last out of 5. I felt I wanted to get faster, but I can beat the teacher."*

This other kid is so fast s/he can beat the teacher, he says 'Behind me please,' but s/he is waiting at the other side of the oval."

Jo, whose parent Maureen was from Scandinavia, described his/her dislikes in both Australian and Italian schools in detail thus : *"I don't like going to play outside, it's too boring there's nothing to do, I feel sad. In Italy, I didn't like to eat. I have to go to the Pre-Primary to eat, they didn't let me stay in my class."* When asked why this was done, Joey remarked : *"I don't know why, I feel angry. I didn't like school work there, I hate drawing all the time. The teachers were nice, but I didn't like the pre-primary teachers being mean to me, saying 'Go and get paper,' I didn't know where it was. Sometimes you could eat at home and I didn't eat at school because of the pre-primary teacher. They had lunch tickets, and had spaghetti, pizza, Pepsi or cordial. I didn't like being with the Pre-Primary, I like being with my friends. There you had to press a button to get in the gate.[security] I don't like hard school work here, hard and scary stories, maths sometimes in groups. I'm in normal Grade 2, tests are really hard, I sometimes get 100 or 90 or 70, there's a kid gets 6 out of 100."*

In contrast Pat, the child of African participants, commented only : *"I don't like getting into trouble, we have to stay in. We get crosses for talking and not listening, and when you fight - not me I don't fight - and not doing homework. I feel upset."* While Chris, a Scandinavian participant's child, remarked : *"I don't like library and music, and don't like going to school because most of the time I finish early and sit and do nothing. I feel bored. If someone else has finished I would like to be able to play games with them."*

Another Scandinavian participant's child Kye, compared the old and new schools that s/he had attended thus : *"In the new school I don't like that there are only two recesses not three, morning and lunch only, and drink and toilet only in afternoons, but I don't care too much. In the old school it was really tough on you, last year was really bad, I had a terrible teacher Mrs X. I was very naughty because I didn't like it very much, I don't know why I just did. I felt very happy about leaving, but unhappy leaving my friends. I won't be going to X, [high school] I'm going to one of the new Christian schools. I just hated it [the old school]."*

Positive Peer Group Experiences

In order to establish what positive experiences these young children had of relationships with their peers, they were asked about friends at school, and what they liked about them. The first of the five seven year olds, Kim, answered as follows : *"X is very popular, everybody likes X very much 'cause s/he's pretty – but not always nice. I'm very upset because X phoned me to ask to go over yesterday, and I could, but-"* [child didn't ring back or no one was home when mother rang]. While Jo commented : *"Sometimes they are mean, but sometimes they will give me money, and they know what I like to play and help me when I cry, like when kids pushed and I hit my head. One boy wouldn't help, he was little - about 5 years old."*

In contrast, Lindsay explained in more detail: *"My friends are nice, but sometimes I get into a fight with them. I just play with my buddy and other people. My other friend's friend is too mean to me - X says they said a bad word. S/he's got two brothers maybe that they're annoying and s/he's angry with them. I like my friends because they are kind to me and like to play with me, sometimes they hide from me but they both invited me to their sleep over party. Y had a toy bug and put it on me, we woke up in the night and went to the kitchen to get a drink of water, we heard his/her father snoring."*

The two remaining seven year olds Ashley and Alex respectively, commented only briefly thus : *"Friends I like them, because one of them is funny, one of them X is my friend and when his hair gets all wet it gets all spiky."* and *"I play games with them, they are kind to you. My friend X, played the things I don't like, so I tried to get him/her not to play it but X wouldn't."*

Of the four children who were eight years of age, Shannon gave the most detailed answer as follows : *"Friends, they give me stuff and don't ask anything in return. They are very nice, don't fight, don't scream and are not selfish. They are smart as well, and are all Asians. They are still kind and don't want to hurt people. Some people don't like Asian people - X who's aboriginal, it's silly s/he's got a friend who's Asian. I'm not that popular, they think I'm naughty and rough. I still don't care, it's what's inside, but they [my friends] don't care."*

In contrast, Chris, Kye, and Pat respectively, replied only briefly as follows : *"I like how they play with me on the monkey bars and play 'dodge' - we have a ball and try and hit through the monkey bars. If I get hurt they stick up for me."* : *"Old friends, A,B,C,D,E I've known for a long time and are friends."*

*New friends W, X, Y, Z, I knew W before, s/he's the reason I went there, s/he liked it compared to X school." :
"They help me and support me. Special friends, when they come over to play we do things."*

Negative Peer Group Experiences

The children of the minority group participants in this research study, were also asked if there were any children that they did not like at school. Kim, whose parent was from the Middle East, replied as follows : *"W in my class is bossy and mean and always dobs on people. X wants to punch me, Y rolls his/her eyes at people [on purpose] and says 'Duuhh!' – it's very rude. I don't like Z 'cause s/he never invites me over to his/her house, I don't like when Z screams at me 'cause she tickles me, and W makes horrible faces at me. I feel they're just silly."*

When asked about the children they did not like, Ashley and Pat, the children of African parents, answered respectively as follows : *"Only X and Y, I don't know why, I just don't. Y speaks nice to people sometimes, I speak cranky to people when they hurt me. It's just that Y doesn't listen to teacher and makes me feel uncomfortable and Y is cheeky to the teacher."* : *"Sometimes they tease, call names, push, hurt, I hate when people tease."* When asked why they did this, Pat also explained : *"Maybe they get pushed around and bossed at home, so they take it out on other people."*

The responses of the Latin American children to this question were quite detailed. Shannon described the following difficulties with other children : *"I don't like one or two. I've said I'm sorry to them and my brother. One is X, and one kid Y, I don't know if I'm his/her enemy or not, I don't play with him/her or see him/her. S/he's in my class, I know s/he hates me, s/he bees mean to me. Some kids at gymnasium, because I've got dark skin and hair, if they don't like me they don't get near me, and I don't get near them. I don't feel bad I have other friends to fill in the spaces and another one will. One is jealous, s/he wants darker hair and skin, s/he wants to be tanned and can't."* While Lindsay gave the following answer : *"I don't like a boy called X, he goes silly and so mean and says 'I don't want this kid sitting next to me.' Also the friend of my friend pushed me, and always is mean to my friend, and doesn't want to play their way, but wants to play his/her way all the time. S/he only has one friend, and told a lie about the other friend, and my friend felt down. We all left him/ her because s/he was lying and s/he said mean stuff to him/her."*

In contrast to the previous responses, Alex's reply also contained a detailed description of the "card" system of punishments in operation at that school, as follows : *"X, at school*

s/he's really un-neat, his/her tray s/he never ever cleans it up - s/he's silly. Y, I don't like it when s/he's naughty. Z is a bully and pushes people round, bends peoples fingers, and hits me. I tell the teacher or do 'kungfu.' Z stops bullying and goes away. Z does it because s/he's a little bit bigger than me, I'm second biggest. Z falls on little ones who join in the fight but they cry. Sometimes it worries me and I tell the teacher, and sometimes she tells them off and me off. Sometimes teachers give out orange forms, you have to give it to the teacher. If it's really bad, sometimes children try to change the story so they don't get into trouble, but sometimes others hear, and then you get a orange form. When you get over 10 or 20 orange ones, you get a yellow one and then get sent to the principal. Over 30 then you get blue ones and get kicked out of school or have to work at home."

The children of the Scandinavia participants, replied to this question more briefly, however. Jo commented as follows : *"I hate the boys sometimes, they fight me and won't stop. I feel sad and angry, sometimes the teachers help and sometimes they don't, sometimes they be too bored to help. My teacher says she's 100, she says she's old but she's not.."* Kye answered thus : *"The Years 6 & 7, they started it. I was bugging them, and called one 'small fry.' It really wound him/her up, eventually s/he dobbed and we had to be friends (s/he was smaller than me) s/he was nasty because I was teasing him."* While Chris remarked only : *"The people that I don't like, at lunch time go walking over the road and are stupid, they play with kids that don't do the right things."*

Importance of School

The next question which the young children in this research study were asked, concerned the importance of school for children. When asked if they thought school was important for children and why, the five seven year old children gave the following responses. The Middle Eastern participant's child, Kim, answered this question as follows : *"I think school is important 'cause you need to learn, if you don't people will say you're dumb. School is important, you need to know how to spell, do tables, read stories, and the rules, also maths you wouldn't know."* Jo, whose parent was from Scandinavia, explained : *"Yes, because if you don't learn to read, when you get older you won't be able to write and spell and read. The people wouldn't be able to understand, and if you buy something you wouldn't know how much it was or anything."* While Ashley, the child of African parents, replied in the following way : *"Yes, because if you don't go to school you won't be able to learn, people might laugh at you if you don't know the answer. I think play is important, we wouldn't have friends otherwise."*

Of the two remaining seven year olds, Lindsay and Alex, who were both of Latin American origin, the former responded to the question thus : *"Yes, 'cause if there was no school I wouldn't learn how to write. If I was at home and wanted to make something, you couldn't, you need teachers to help you learn. For the little kids they would mess with food and wouldn't do anything right, they could break stuff and make Mum upset.."* In contrast Alex commented only briefly : *"Yes, you learn things from teachers, and then you get to be a grown up. If you did not you wouldn't be very smart.."*

Of the four children who were eight years of age, two were of Scandinavian origin. One of these children, Kye, gave the most detailed answer as follows : *"Sort of yes, it is. It's important so you learn to read and write and other things. After Year 3 you've learnt all the basis stuff, and after that you learn science, countries and how to scale, it helps you when grown up. If nobody went to school they'd have a very low I.Q. It would be hard to communicate, write letters, use computers, and go on with modern school. We really do need school even tho' most of us don't like it, we'd rather be playing, it's good to meet friends. The new school lets you sort out stuff, and is interested in you learning but have fun while you're doing it."* While the other, Chris, commented more briefly : *"Yes, because if you don't have school then you wouldn't be able to learn things like maths, and when grown up you wouldn't be able to get a job, and wouldn't earn any money, and so you would run out of money."*

In similar vein, Pat, whose parents came from Africa, was also concerned with job opportunities and replied : *"Yes, so when you're grown up you will have education and get a good job. If you did not go, you wouldn't be taught that well, and have a high standard."* The remaining child, Shannon, who was of Latin American origin, commented in a very original way as follows: *"It is important they learn things they haven't learned yet. Each new day you need to learn something new. I want to learn languages, I don't want to be ignorant, you need to learn to do new things, and how to talk English or others won't understand them."*

Other Comments About School

In order to conclude the interview, the children were asked if there was anything else they wanted to say about school, and all except one made further comments, which ranged from just a few words to more detailed observations. Three of the eight year olds made mainly brief remarks, Kye stating : *"I just like it a lot,"* Chris commented : *"Sports is good and*

most teachers are really nice," Pat explained : "School is fun, you learn about life in other countries. I like teachers, one came back from Japan and one left, one is a fireman and he brought in his hat and suit."

Two of the seven year old children told of some further concerns they had. For Kim these were to do with music, and s/he commented thus : *"All the instruments we have in music with Ms X, and Ms Y uses her voice. This term I didn't get a try in the raffle [as a reward] and I'm still a good singer."* While Ashley explained : *"I know a nasty teacher at my school, who is nice to big kids but not to the little kids. My uniform has a white shirt, it gets dirty very easily, and grey track pants in winter."*

In answer to this question Lindsay, also aged seven, elaborated further about the importance of school : *"If you didn't go to school you'd do all the wrong things and not learn right things – like not to scribble on a rented house, and your parents would get stressed out. If you'd like to read a book you couldn't. If you want to cook you can learn at school, we make jelly. My friend has also made a photo frame and put a photo in it."* Jo however, described some negative aspects of school in both Australia and Italy : *"The buildings in Italy have graffiti on the outside, and here there's problems cause people have been water bombs and toilet paper throwing and making fires lit with glass, - parents were there for the fire, but not the graffiti, it was teenagers and Year 7's. There's rubbish in Italy in the streets, it's dark and dirty looking."*

The remaining eight year old child in this research study, Shannon gave the following answer to this question : *"I wish school was not too easy, I need it to challenge me and put in things that are harder. I want to learn more maths to get smarter, learn about animals, sport and space. A lot of sports, I want to invent my own sport. I had a dream with a new sport ...[describes it] ... I'd like to be famous, but money isn't everything, you can't buy everything. I just want people to invent better things. Like some new ideas not boring old things, like chairs and wardrobes, and a wall made out of different squishy stuff."*

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter the results of this study are discussed initially in relation to each of the research questions posed in the three separate sections. Exploration of relationships between the prior experiences that the minority group participants have of schooling outside Australia, both as a child and parent, and those with their own children in Australian schools, will be presented in a concluding section. Implications with reference to educational theory, policy and practice are also discussed in order to promote increased understanding and empathy for culturally and linguistically diverse parents and children in Australian schools.

Education in Countries Outside Australia

Section one of this research study explores the experiences and perceptions that overseas born parents from non - English speaking backgrounds have of their own education and/or schooling and that of their children, in countries outside Australia.

Childhood Experiences of Parents

Research has established the importance of early experiences in childhood, which should not be underestimated in the development and formation of later attitudes and behaviour (Cullingford, 1991, 2000; Meadows, 1992; Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996). Furthermore, these early experiences of parents have been found to be an important influence on both the upbringing and education of their children (Brooker, 2003; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

Models based on their own childhood experiences [are] carried forward acting as filters through which the behaviour of one's own children are viewed (Goodnow & Collins, 1990, p.2).

Moreover, as these parental ideas are the main source of influence in the lives of young children, these authors assert that the perceptions of both parents and children can be explored using the same research topic (Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

Asking adults to reflect on their own childhood, remembering childhood helps to establish key themes, can identify continuity and change in practices, contributes to the empathy with the child ...[which is] particularly important because of the marked tendency for parents to repeat practices applied to them when they were children, even if they do not think those practices were appropriate or just (Evans & Myers, 1998, p.12).

The views that parents have of education and/or schooling and their role in the education system, are formed both by their experiences and relationships over many years, and the comparison of these experiences with observations of their own children's education (Brooker, 2003; Cullingford, 1996). If parents' previous encounters with teachers and schools are less than positive, it may affect their relationships with their children's schools. Such experiences can become 'obstacles to involvement,' creating problems in the day to day education of their children, due to unpleasant memories and parental insecurities particularly for those who may have suffered humiliation and/or discrimination, and setting up a pattern of avoidance of negative relationships with schools and teachers in general (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Keyes, 2002).

Preschool Experiences

An interesting feature of this research study was the difference in the ages at which the minority group parents commenced their own education, ranging from 3 to 7 years of age. Only three of the participants, all from Latin America, had experiences of preschool education, and attended "*kindy*" from 3 or 4 years of age for two years before going to primary school. During this time children were provided with enjoyable activities such as games, playing with plasticine and toys, as well as reading books with the alphabet. In addition, all three Latin American participants learned to read before entering primary school in contrast with common practice in preschools in countries such as Australia and Britain, where there are no expectations of any prior learning before formal schooling

commences (Cullingford, 1995). These findings echo statements by authors such as Amezcuita, Amezcuita & Vittorino (1995) who highlight the early age at which "informal" education starts in Latin American countries, initially under the mother's guidance. However, Bear (1993) and Landers (1998) emphasise also that in most areas of Latin America, this type of preschool education was unavailable to most children except the most "privileged" and some from the "middle class" until the 1970s.

The findings of both positive and negative experiences with pre-school teachers in Latin America, which were remembered and reported by several participants, emphasises the importance of good quality relationships with early teachers for children. A situation which is highlighted by Cullingford (1995) as follows :

Crucial are the relationships that young children make, their academic development depends on their chances and abilities to share in extended dialogues. Relationships with teachers subsequently become one of the most important factors in children's learning...someone who can take an interest in having a discussion, in bringing out and extending their ideas, in making them feel valued (Cullingford, 1995, p.159).

Early Primary Experiences

A difference of two years in the chronological age at which the participants commenced formal primary school as children was found in this research study. The Latin American participants started school the earliest, at 5-6 years of age, while some of the participants from Africa and all those from Scandinavia did not commence until as late as 7 years of age. This disparity is seen both as a reflection of the lack of availability of preschool education in the countries of origin of the minority group participants in this study, affirmed by authors such as Abu Duhou (1992), Bear (1993), Landers (1998), Telfer (1993), and the difference in age at which compulsory education commenced (Abu Duhou, 1992; Bear, 1992,1993; Jansen & Kreiner, 1995; Marsi & Bermamet, 1995; N.O.O.S.R, 1997; Polonsky & Suchard, 1993; Telfer, 1993). Moreover, in contrast with the free education available in the Scandinavian countries, the financial situation of participants' families in certain countries such as Latin America and Africa where free education was unavailable, placed constraints on their ability to enrol children early in schools (Bear, 1992, 1993; Hempel-Jorgensen, 1992; Landers, 1998; Telfer, 1993; West, 1992; Williams,

1993). Furthermore, findings such as these, of wide variations in the age of commencement at school, are seen as likely to affect the expectations that these minority group parents have for their own children at school in Australia, due to the likelihood that parents will make comparisons with their own educational experiences at the same age (Cullingford, 1996), an aspect which will be explored in a later section of this discussion.

When the minority group parents in this study were asked about early primary school, just over half described their experiences in mainly positive terms as *"happy," "enjoyable," "very homely,"* and *"a gentle breaking in."* However, several participants remarked that their positive feelings of anticipation about going to school for the first time were not matched by the reality, due to factors such as the size of the school, feeling *"scared," "unfriendly"* teachers, and excessively high expectations. Cullingford (1991) emphasises that children's opinions and expectations of school are formed well before actually starting, as a result of the influences of family, friends and community members, based on *"mythologies and rumour"* (p.18). These findings may therefore be some indication of the positive emphasis placed on education by those with whom the participants in this study interacted on a frequent basis as children, and the attitudes of the communities in which they lived.

Perceptions of childhood and corresponding attitudes towards children can be approximately understood only in the context of the social structure and dominant interests of society at that time (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996, p.14).

In contrast, the remaining minority group parents paint a picture of their early primary schooling which is predominantly negative, discussing their experiences in terms such as *"rough," "daunting," "frustrating," "in trouble all the time."* These participants vividly described feelings of fear and anxiety due to the unrealistically high expectations to which they were subjected, and the treatment including corporal punishment, which was meted out if they failed to meet the expectations of the teachers and strict discipline of the school. Practices which take place in classrooms, including the emphasis on the *"useful"* basics of literacy and numeracy, are seen by Anning (1992) as the *"inevitable"* outcome of past ideologies and policies, perpetuated without questioning by many early teachers due to the *"conservative"* nature of education.

The elementary school tradition which determines the beliefs of infant school teachers ...is about introducing children to the basic skills which will make them useful and productive citizens and workers ...interpreted as numeracy and literacy and learning to read ...the style of instruction in infant classrooms has continued to be largely didactic (Anning, 1992, p. 25).

Moreover, the findings in this study of strict discipline and punishment in the early years of school, can be viewed as an indication of what authors such as Ritchie (1981), Hyman (1990) and Jamrozik & Sweeney (1996) see as links to deep seated views still persisting in western educational theory in particular, of human nature as "innately depraved," with "discipline" and corporal punishment viewed therefore as necessary to change and guide the behaviour of children to ensure their redemption. Such views are also linked to the concepts of John Locke, in which the child is seen as a "Tabula Rasa" (blank slate) to be moulded by adults to the desired behaviour (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996).

When experiences with early primary teachers were discussed by the minority group parents in this research study, almost half of the participants described their female teachers in early primary school very positively as "nice," "affectionate," "loved," "good," and "homely," an indication of the help and support received in the early years of school. In contrast more than half the participants found their experiences with both male and female early teachers were negative, due to an excessive pressure to perform, and harsh treatment. Moreover one participant emphasised that the realisation that some teachers were good and others bad, occurred at an early age. These findings can be seen as further evidence of the awareness that children have of individual differences in teachers' feelings and expectations, and how much children are affected by their relationships with teachers (Cullingford, 1989).

The harsh treatment by early teachers, which included shouting, name calling, and "picking on you" as well as punishments such as caning, "clip" on the ears, and banging on the head with a book, seems to have occurred to participants in all the countries of origin in this research study, with the exception of the Middle East. The one participant from this region made no mention of any similar negative experiences in early primary school. While it

is realised that another participant from the same country may have different experiences, it is interesting to note that authors such as Hulmes (1989) draw attention to the Muslim culture's view of the child as innocent and a "gift from God," who therefore must be "treated with compassion" (p.46) during early education. "Anyone who instructs the young must be as tender to his pupils as if they were his own children" (Hulmes, 1989, p. 45). These findings therefore, could be seen as an indication of the difference in the philosophy of education in a non-Christian country, in comparison with those prevailing in countries whose cultural and religious origins are predominantly Christian.

In contrast, education in countries such as Africa and Latin America can be viewed as being formed as a result of historical influences of colonialism, Catholicism, and puritanism, in which emphasis is linked with views previously mentioned of children as manifestations of "original sin" and a "blank slate" (Hulmes, 1989; Bear, 1993; Amezcuita, Amezcuita & Vittorino, 1995; Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996; Zoller Booth, 1995). Concepts and ideologies inherited from colonial times, such as "discipline" and corporal punishment still persist in the conservative climate of education, due to the fact that many teachers may unconsciously perpetuate the cycle, repeating what was done to them in the past in order to retain "control" in the classroom (Newell, 1972; Ritchie, 1981; Anning, 1992).

Moreover, the historical influence of both Roman Catholic and Lutheran cathedral schools is also common to education in all Scandinavian countries, which were previously linked together as one nation. Furthermore, Lutheranism is still seen as a dominant force in Scandinavian society, influencing educational philosophy, policy and practice (Bear, 1992; Hempel-Jorgensen, 1992; West, 1992).

Historically, tactics of physical and psychological abusive behaviour were commonly used by teachers in "authority dominated" classrooms to control children through "pain and humiliation," the use of corporal punishment being officially condoned in ex-colonies including countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, U.S., Ireland, countries in Africa and Latin America, as well as in infants schools in Britain as late as the 1970s and the U.S.A in the 1980s (Newell, 1972; Ritchie, 1981; Hyman, 1990).

Attitudes of punitiveness towards children are...shaped by our own parents' practices, our religious beliefs, national identity and even the region in which we live (Hyman,1990, p.69).

Psychological research has established the undesirable effects of corporal punishment on children, indicating that those who experience being hurt in this way, will do all they can to avoid contact with those who hurt them. Punishment by teachers can result in a complete withdrawal by the child, demonstrated by unwillingness to answer questions, or make eye contact, retreating within themselves, or unwillingness to go to school and truancy (Ritchie, 1981). Furthermore, authors such as Ritchie (1981) and Hyman (1990) maintain that the consequences of such treatment are feelings of pain, anger and anxiety which interfere with the process of learning. "When children are forced to learn in these kind of states learning tends to be of a very narrow kind" (Ritchie, 1981, p.55).

Psychologically abusive behaviour by teachers in the form of verbal attacks, denigration and insults, are just as harmful as physical punishment, resulting also in the maltreatment of children usually too young to defend themselves. Such treatment includes "discipline" based on mental cruelty, such as denigration, intimidation and fear, destructive role models, and lack of positive interactions, resulting in blocking of the opportunities to develop feelings of selfworth and competency, particularly in children less capable of higher standards of academic learning, and the development of negative attitudes towards teachers and school in general (Newell, 1972; Hyman, 1990).

Reasons given for the physical and psychological mistreatment of young children by teachers as late as the 1970s and 80s, have been noted by authors such as Newell (1972) and Hyman (1990), who indicate that children were mostly subject to punishments as a result of excessively high teacher expectations which did not match the level of maturity in the child's development. Furthermore, Ritchie (1981) and Hyman (1990) maintain that memories of attacks by teachers, whether physical or psychological, become attached to the perpetrator rather than the reason for it. These findings are echoed in this study, in which minority group parents recalled vividly the teachers who caused them suffering at

an early age, while having only vague recollections or being uncertain of the reasons for it.

Children...(age 6 and 7) are often caned for untidy books and poor writing... 'infants caned for dirty marks in books, curled up at edges, untidy writing' notes another teacher from a church school [under 8]... a kind of immature sadism which one might expect in an atmosphere in which teachers permit...the infliction of pain as part of the educational process." (Newell, 1972, p.136-7).

Later Primary School Experiences

When minority group parents in this research study were asked about their experiences in later primary school, three quarters of the participants made comments about aspects of their education that they liked, including practical, activity based or outdoor subjects, geography, and competitions, some emphasising their desire for good marks. Furthermore, two participants described preferring the later years of primary school because of harsh treatment received in the early years. However, the negative aspects of school were again highlighted by two thirds of the participants, who described disliking certain features of later primary education including the lack of variety, strict rules, old buildings and lack of equipment, strict religious education, clashes with teachers due to behaviour that was *"too active,"* and in particular, the severe punishments by teachers, the continuation of which drove one participant to truancy.

Teachers in later primary school were mostly viewed positively by the participants from Latin America however, with several commenting on the respect and *"closeness"* accorded to primary school teachers by both students and parents. In contrast, Scandinavian participants emphasised the strict discipline of teachers and *"harsh"* treatment mostly *"depending on the temper of the teachers,"* while participants from Africa recalled the repressive discipline, authoritarianism and harsh punishments meted out by teachers throughout their primary schooling, resulting in a climate of *"fear and intimidation"*. The effects of this treatment were described vividly by one participant, who told of students *"quaking"* when they saw the teachers and being so scared that *"everything evaporates."* These findings echo those of authors such as Ritchie (1981) and Hyman (1990) who stress the undesirable consequences of harsh treatment by teachers.

A phobia may result as the child's brain links psychological fear responses with the appearance of the teacher, the classroom, and eventually the school. Hence approaching the school, class, or teacher may cause an automatic physical fear reaction that the child cannot control (Hyman, 1990, p. 67).

The findings in this study of childhood experiences of strict discipline and harsh punishment in primary school by participants is supported by authors such as Newell (1972), Ritchie (1981) and Hyman (1990), who found punishment to be a central feature in the control of children, throughout the 1970s and 80s. Moreover Ritchie (1981) maintains that even as late as the 1980s, "discipline" meant a physical "assault" which would be considered criminal if occurring to an adult. Despite this however, official methods of punishments using a strap, cane, or wooden "paddle" were still endorsed in schools in many countries in the 1980s (Newell, 1972; Ritchie, 1981; Hyman, 1990). Furthermore, although expressly forbidden, other types of punishment did occur, including slapping, punching, whacking with rulers, ear and hair pulling, "cuffs" on the head, shaking, and kicking. Books, sticks, swatches, rods, ropes, and hoses were also found to have been used by teachers in their attacks on children, with nuns found to be among some of the worst offenders (Newell, 1972; Ritchie, 1981; Hyman, 1990).

The use of religious beliefs was a major determinant of the amount of pain inflicted on children ...religions centred on warlike, angry or vengeful gods were more likely to promote anxiety and pain in order to socialise their children (Hyman, 1990, p.45).

The "devastating" effects of this cruel treatment by teachers of children who were initially happy has been emphasised by Hyman (1990) as follows :

The many students who initially feel protected and loved in school can be devastated by abuse by their teachers. The impact may be as certain as if their parents had maltreated them (Hyman, 1990, p.93).

Moreover, children's vulnerability and their basic needs and entitlement to the same human rights as adults, has been stressed by the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly in regards to the right to respect, dignity and avoidance of humiliation by corporal punishment or "shaming" by adults (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

Difficulties with teachers and their low expectations of her as a child, was an interesting issue raised by one of the Latin American parents who felt that teachers regarded her as a 'problem' and made comments amongst themselves in the staffroom about her behaviour. These findings would appear to be characteristic of the "pygmalion effect" which authors such as Anning (1992) and Cullingford (1995) see as the labelling and pre-judging of children by teachers as a result of what they had been told about them in the past. Cullingford (1995) stresses that this practice can affect the teachers' perceptions of the child, resulting in the "self fulfilling prophecy" of either higher or lower expectations, whichever the case may be (Anning, 1992; Cullingford, 1995).

Talking about individual children as teachers sometimes do with each other in the staffroom ...can remain on the level of gossip or anecdote, exchanging views on a particular child and his family, or telling the often foolish things someone has done[and] teachers are strongly influenced by what previous knowledge they possess about children (Cullingford, 1995, p.109).

Primary School Methods

The methods of teaching and learning experienced by all the minority group parents during their own primary schooling in their countries of origin were described mostly as "*rigid*," "*strict*," and "*oldfashioned*," involving "*boring*" routines of copying, rote learning and repetition. These findings echo those of Cullingford (1991) who emphasises that parents remember the more formal aspects of their education, including classroom teaching and discipline, boring old fashioned methods, learning "parrot fashion," a strong emphasis on formality and a curriculum which "did not make sense to them" (Cullingford, 1996, p.17).

Brubacher (1966) sees methods of instruction based on imitation and memorisation, as a natural development from the methods used by early mankind prior to the development of writing, and perpetuated due to "sheer inertia" (Brubacher, 1966, p.235). These methods, with a heavy emphasis on formality, are based historically on ideas of what would be "useful" for "working class" children to learn, and requirements for children to absorb and reproduce the information and ideas supplied by the teacher in a "quiet and disciplined manner" (Connell, 1980, p. 4; Anning, 1992).

Rote learning focused on the basic three 'Rs' remained the feature in education of working class children and still lingers in many places to this day (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996, p.25).

Moreover, in Europe and Latin America in the past, primary school education was the only schooling provided for the "masses," as secondary education catered only for the wealthy "elite." This situation was echoed in colonial countries such as Africa, where the Indigenous population, who were also viewed as intellectually different and less capable, were provided with education which, although based on European traditions, was inferior to that of the white colonisers (Connell, 1980).

[African] Children who did attend school remained, in most areas, for about only three years and received, in ill equipped schools, an uninteresting education from poorly trained teachers (Connell, 1980, p.408).

Religion was a feature of primary schooling for many participants in this research study, and most of what had to be learned in religious education was also done by the rote methods of repetition and copying. This emphasis on religion can be seen as due to the strong influence of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in primary schools in Latin America, Africa, and Scandinavia, and the religious schools of the Islamic faith in Middle Eastern countries (Abu Duhou, 1992; Bear, 1993; Hulmes, 1989; Telfer, 1993). Historically, education in Latin American and African countries was developed originally by missionaries as a means of evangelising and assimilating the local Indigenous population into the ways of the European colonisers, and primary school teachers were therefore mainly priests, nuns or other clergy (Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino, 1995; Bear, 1993; Telfer, 1993; Williams, 1993).

In contrast with the rest of the participants in this research study, those from Africa described how their education in primary school was conducted in two languages, initially in their local language, then switching to the "official" language of the country, English or Afrikaans, after two or three years with both. These findings can be seen as remnants of the colonial systems of western education which were imposed during European rule (Polonsky & Suchard, 1993; Telfer, 1993; Williams, 1993).

At independence most of the countries inherited education systems designed by Europeans who applied western criteria ...often in conflict with the child's immediate surroundings (Zoller Booth, 1995, p.196).

Furthermore, for African participants, the main feature of later primary schooling was a continuation of the repressive discipline and harsh corporal punishments experienced in early primary school education. Connell(1980) sees this as a characteristic inherited in the imposition of western educational traditions on populations of European colonial territories.

Colonial education ...left a legacy of formalised teaching characterised by an excess of teacher talk and rote learning ... severe discipline ... concentration on language learning ... curriculum of literacy based subjects and by consistently unsuccessful attempts to introduce practical work through school gardens and agricultural plots (Connell, 1980, p. 411).

Post Primary Experiences

In contrast with the experiences of primary schooling previously described, and despite some difficulties related to differences in systems and lack of finance for fees, three quarters of the minority group parents highlighted their positive experiences of post primary education and their teachers. The findings of strict authoritarianism and harsh discipline evident in primary schooling, seemed to be less of a feature in post primary education for most of the participants in this study, three quarters of whom continued to tertiary level. This could possibly be seen as an indication that participants had "*learned the ropes*" to avoid incurring the wrath of teachers, that these students were academically "*good*" students who were not singled out, or that teachers of this age group relied on the self motivation of students in a competitive environment to maintain control in the classroom, as well as a sign that the less academic students did not continue in education to this level. Certainly in countries such as Latin America and Africa where large numbers of students "*dropped out*" due to a lack of family finance or available facilities, it would seem that only those most capable of performing at a high academic level continued with their education beyond primary school.

Figures supplied by Bear (1993) indicate that even recently in many Latin American countries, 50 percent of children in cities completed six years of schooling while only 19 percent did so in rural areas, because of a lack of available facilities. Moreover, although 25

percent of students entered Year 10, less than 5 percent completed Year 12, due to family financial responsibilities (Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino, 1995; Bear, 1993). In African countries, secondary schooling was also aligned with competitive European examination systems such as the British 'O' and 'A' levels, resulting in only about 27 percent of students going on to secondary education (Kariuki, 1995; Telfer, 1993; Williams, 1993).

In contrast, systems of free compulsory education operating in Scandinavia ensured that all the participants from these countries of origin were able to continue their education until 16 years of age, with further non compulsory upper secondary also available free to all (Bear, 1992; West, 1992). A similar situation existed for the parent from the Middle East where nine years free education was available to students at that time (Abu Duhou, 1992).

Family Attitudes and Parental Expectations

When asked about the attitudes towards education within their family, three quarters of the minority group participants in this research study stressed the high value placed on education by their parents, two thirds of whom were or had been teachers or employed in a school, and the remainder who felt they lacked the opportunities to continue with education themselves. However, for one participant from Africa, the only family encouragement came from her grandmother.

These findings echo those by authors such as Cullingford (1991, 1996) and Bempechat (1998), who maintain that most parents are concerned with their children's wellbeing, wanting the "best" for them and having a strong desire to enhance their prospects. Parents see encouragement of their children's education as a means of obtaining the necessary qualifications to ensure stable employment and a better life than they experienced themselves. Furthermore authors such as Moles (1993) and Chavkin & Williams (1993) stress that irrespective of cultural origins, low income, or "disadvantage" this intense interest in their children's education is common to almost all parents.

[Parents] show a single minded concern with the success of their own children and a clear sense of how this success is to be achieved. They want to have the experience of seeing their children do so well at examinations that they gain the qualifications necessary to a good job ... parents see jobs

as the primary concern for education ... a 'better chance in life' or 'something to fall back on.' They talk about their 'ambition for their child' and their fear of their child's inability to find employment. (Cullingford, 1991, p.162).

For the Latin American participants in this study, there was strong parental emphasis on becoming "*a professional*" and attaining the higher standard of living only achievable by obtaining a "*good job*". These findings reflect those of Espinosa (1995) that Spanish speaking parents have high regard for education, want their children to do well and have a better life. This situation was echoed as well by two of the participants from Africa who also stressed a higher standard of living as one of the "*fruits of education*." In addition such findings can be seen also as an indication of attitudes towards education as an "investment" for the future, in certain regions of the world, including Africa and other third world countries, in which children are valued as future contributors to the family income and supporters of their parents in old age (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996; Lancy, 1993). Furthermore, Munn (1993) maintains that high expectations of education systems in Latin America and Africa, are the result of parents' own education in former colonies where education is viewed as bringing both money and power, and a desire for their children to also reap the benefits.

Differing parental expectations and attitudes were evident in the comments made by participants from Scandinavia and the Middle East however, for whom the emphasis was less on achieving a higher standard of living and continuing higher academic education to improve their long term prospects, and more on goals such as having a "*trade*," job, or education before marriage or travel, and avoiding military service. These findings can be seen as an indication of the egalitarian emphasis in Scandinavian countries on education for democracy and social equality (West, 1992) rather than as a means of gaining wealth and status in the community (Hempel-Jorgensen, 1992; Bear, 1992). Moreover education in Islamic countries such as the Middle East also emphasises equality, freedom and justice as well as belief in God, Arab unity and culture (N.O.O.R, 1997; Marsi & Bermamet, 1995). Further discussion of education policy and practices in the countries of the minority group participants in this research study will be continued in a later section of this chapter.

Experiences as a Parent

This section deals with the minority group parents' experiences of their children's education in countries other than Australia, and includes experiences in either the country of origin of the participant, or in a third country. The importance of the prior experiences of parents is recognised by authors such as Valsiner & Litinovic (1996) and Bempechat (1998), who stress the influence these experiences have on parents' ideas, including those about school.

The individual parent is self constructed through his or her own personal history ...sequences of construction of various symbolic elements and complexes in social groups and institutions in which the person - now in the parent's role, has found himself or herself (eg the family, the school) (Valsiner & Litinovic, 1996, p.60).

Of the five participants who had experiences of their children's education in another country, only one from the Middle East described these in positive terms. Education in Britain prior to entering Australia was very positive for this particular parent, whose children were able to attend a Muslim school where the subjects included Arabic language, culture and religion as well as the regular British curriculum, a most culturally appropriate form of education for children with a parent from an Arabic country (Hulmes, 1989). In contrast, the remaining participants emphasised the negative aspects of experiences of their children's education, either in their country of origin, or in one instance during temporary relocation from Australia to Italy. This participant, originally from Scandinavia, found primary schooling there compared with prior experiences in Australia, to be disliked by her children and very "*oldfashioned and formal*," while the alternative of Australian Distance Education was a "*good quality*" experience for both parent and child.

All of these parents stressed the importance of good quality education for their children, and emphasised they were prepared to pay for private schools or tuition, if the only other alternatives were felt to be unsatisfactory. This was particularly true for one participant from Latin America, who felt that as sufficient financial resources were unavailable to government schools, due to the advent of civil war in her country, the only alternative was

to try to enrol her child in a private school despite the restrictive admission policies and extremely high fees. These findings of a lack of resources in the government schools of Latin American countries at this time, due to the advent of civil war is supported by authors such as Bear, (1993), Landers (1998) while Jamrozik & Sweeny (1996), emphasise the detrimental effects of war on education and the need for "peace and quiet" "law and order" for education to flourish (p.611).

Moreover, the anxieties of this participant from Latin America about the quality of schooling in her country were further compounded by the realisation that the standard of education provided by the cheapest of the private schools was not high, and problems had arisen with her child which replicated those she had experienced in primary school, the challenge therefore was to find a school which would treat the child in a more positive way.

As a parent, the basis of our hopes for our children are always the experiences of our own lives. We may want it to be similar or different, but always better (ABC radio, author unknown, 2000).

Findings such as these can be seen as an indication of parental "mistrust" which authors such as Cullingford (1991,1996) and Finders & Lewis (1994) maintain is a result of parents' memories of their own experiences and comparison with that of their children, especially if those experiences are bad.

Parents have high expectations of schools. They do not wish to be forced into accepting something potentially harmful ...choice is not so much the ability to seek out the best, as the means to avoid the worst (Cullingford, 1996, p. 66).

Educational Policy and Practices Outside Australia

In this section, the minority group parents' prior experiences of the policies and practices of education in countries other than Australia, both as a child and as a parent, are discussed separately, concluding with experiences of their children's education overseas.

Childhood Experiences

Scandinavia

Although the Scandinavian participants in this research study were from different countries, they described very similar systems of compulsory free education experienced from the age of 7 years, including free books, stationery and a "*student bank*" available at the age of 18 years to enable further education. These three participants drew attention also to the influence of the Lutheran church on society and education, describing the emphasis on rote learning of psalms and verses, and listening to bible stories during their primary schooling. These findings are a clear indication of the close ties of race, culture and religion in Scandinavian countries, which at one time were linked together as one country, and the influence of the Lutheran church schools on which origins of Scandinavian education systems are based (West, 1992).

The free compulsory system of education in operation throughout Scandinavia is available to children from the age of 7 years, and was extended to 16 years of age in the 1960s (West, 1992), the late entry age being justified by the harsh winters and distances required to travel to school in many areas (Bjorndal, 1995). The supply of free materials, such as books and stationary, free transport, and the availability of student loans for further education at 18 years of age is also highlighted by West (1992), Bear (1992) and Marklund (1995).

Education policies in Scandinavia can be seen as a reflection of an egalitarian philosophy which aims to raise the general level of education in the population as a whole, and provide a democratic system for all. Although education costs are shared by the state and local municipalities, schools are run at the local level, with individual schools retaining the control over their own curriculum within the specified guidelines laid down (Bear, 1992; Jansen & Kreiner, 1995), thus ensuring considerable freedom in the choice of activities provided (West, 1992), with equal emphasis on practical areas of schooling as well as academic subjects (Marklund, 1995; Bjorndal, 1995). Emphasis on physical and practical as well as academic subjects, was highlighted by one participant in particular, who stressed the important contribution these physical and practical skills made later in adult life.

Practices

Common practices in Scandinavia schools experienced by the participants, included small class sizes of 20 - 22 in Years 1-3, with 25-26 in later years, and children remaining in the same class and with the same teacher right through from Year 1 to Year 6. One or two main teachers from Years 4 - 6 (eg. for language and maths) and specialist subject teachers in Years 7-9, were also mentioned.

These findings are supported by authors such as Bear (1992) and Marklund (1995), who emphasise the small class sizes averaging from as low as 18-22 in compulsory school Years 1-9 (up to 16 years of age) and 24 in upper secondary. Classes any larger than this are felt to be unfavourable to learning (Bjorndal, 1995). Authors such as West (1992) and Hempel-Jorgensen (1992), also highlight the system of continuous, flexible, comprehensive primary and lower secondary schooling, which enables children to remain in the same group of classmates from Year 1 to Year 7 (West, 1992; Bjorndal, 1995), and with the same class teacher for most of compulsory schooling and additional specialist teachers in the later years (West, 1992; Hempel-Jorgensen, 1992; Bear, 1992).

It is unthinkable...to separate children at the age of 11 or 12 and send them to different kinds of schools (Bjorndal, 1995, p.738).

Subjects taken by participants during their time as students in Scandinavian schools included reading, writing, maths, history, geography, biology, foreign languages from Year 4 or 5, and religious education (Lutheran). Bjorndal (1995) emphasises the aim of the first six years of education in Scandinavia is to provide both boys and girls with the basic skills of reading, writing, maths, science, and social sciences using the same curriculum, but controlled individually by the schools, within the parameters laid down by the national Ministry of Education (Marklund, 1995).

Middle East

The system of education described by the participant from the Middle East was one in which features such as the "*Baccalaureate*" system retained from an earlier period of colonisation by the French, combined with Islamic education, resulted in a "*very good*"

but "*old fashioned*" system of government education, with some private schools run by Roman Catholic nuns and missionaries from other European religious groups. These findings are supported by authors such as Abu Duhou (1992) and Masri & Bermamet (1995) who highlight the influence of both European culture and Islamic heritage on education in this region of the Middle East prior to 1946, and subsequent cooperative education policies and practices in neighbouring Arab states within the area.

Education policies emphasised by this participant, included a free government education system in which children received free books and uniforms, but with limited facilities, old buildings, no grounds, and large classes of about 50 children. Separate school sessions in the morning and afternoon enabled the available facilities to be used by the maximum number of children, while in contrast the private schools were available only to wealthy European "expats." This emphasis on free public education is indicative of the general philosophy of freedom, equality, and justice in education in Arab countries of the Middle East, the emphasis on the equality of opportunity for all, and the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of the individual (N.O.O.R. 1997). In addition, Abu Duhou (1992) emphasises the lack of finance and adequate facilities however, to fully implement six years of compulsory primary schooling.

Practices

Education practices highlighted by this participant included the study of Islamic religious education in both primary and high school, with politics also introduced in secondary years, a limited number of other subjects available, no outdoor activities, an emphasis on copying, constant repetition of the same subject matter due to lack of textbooks, and the requirement for students to repeat the whole year if results in annual exams were unsatisfactory.

These findings of an emphasis on Islamic religious education with learning and copying of the Koran, is seen by Abu Duhou (1992) and Masri & Bermamet (1995) as a reflection of the philosophy of education in Arab countries, which includes belief in God, and the reinforcing of cultural ties between Arab nations. Abu Duhou (1992) also confirms

the emphasis on the acquisition of the basic skills in subjects such as religious education, Arabic, maths, science, social studies, writing, civics and health education, and the system of annual examinations even in the first three years of primary school, with repetition of the grade if results are not satisfactory. Furthermore at the end of Grade 9, a diploma exam similar to the French Baccalaureate, selectively limits the student's entry to secondary education based on the scores received (Abu Duhou, 1992), a situation also mentioned by this participant, who stressed the lack of credits towards the required points for university entrance obtained by compulsory subjects such as religion and politics (Abu Duhou, 1992)

Africa

Education policies and practices described by the participants from two different African countries had many common features, including fee paying school systems in which families had to provide uniforms and all school requirements, with any delay leading to the exclusion of the student until fees were paid; large classes of up to 80 children from 6 - 11 years of age in Grade 1, due to the need for families to "save up" for school fees, or insufficient academic progress in end of year exams, resulting in repetition of the whole year by the child; the use of children as unpaid labour to clean and maintain both the inside and outside of the schools especially in primary school years and work in the school "fields" and "yard" in secondary school frequently as a form of punishment.

Historical influences and past practices of European colonisation, such as slavery, and apartheid (Hulmes, 1989; Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa, 1995), together with the dominance of the missionary societies initially responsible for the education of African children throughout the continent, have resulted in a legacy of western style, fee paying and examination dominated education systems (Kariuki, 1995; Telfer, 1993). Traditional African views of education have been subject to imposed European ideas and emphasis on academic subjects and exams, as well as value of teaching children how to do "work" around the school and later in the fields, as part of the preservation of the "privileged status" of Europeans in Africa (Hulmes, 1989).

The substitution of European for African values was carried out everywhere not just in the schools. African values were derided and attacked ...thus did the colonial schools manufacture meek, grateful and loyally submissive Africans (Hulmes, 1989, p.117).

However, the use of children to clean and maintain the schools may also be seen as a reflection of traditional African concepts of education as a form of 'initiation' into the community in which students live, in which they learn the customs, beliefs and family obligations and are subject to physical demands designed to promote such characteristics as endurance, courage and obedience, which are important to the survival of the community and its members (Hulmes, 1989).

Authors such as Telfer (1993), Polonsky & Suchard (1993) and Zoller Booth (1996), draw attention to the lack of free and compulsory education for all races in African countries in the past, a situation which still persists in many places despite the current objectives of most African governments, placing extra financial strains on impoverished families and communities and further limiting the education opportunities for their children.

Families must pay fees and provide uniforms and school supplies...during times of need school children from the poorest families might not succeed simply because economic constraints deny them uninterrupted school attendance or essential supplies (Zoller Booth, 1996, p.254).

Moreover, the incidence of large numbers of children in classes mentioned by participants, is corroborated by Telfer (1993) and Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa (1995), the latter also emphasising the large number of students who are older than the minimum age required, often by more than four years, and the frequency of grade repetition, several times for many students, resulting in what these authors see as a "pedagogical problem" for both teacher and students (p.687). These findings were confirmed by one participant in particular, who stressed that children as young as 7 years of age were treated "*as if they were in high school*" with excessively high expectations and strict discipline.

As a result of these earlier colonial influences, and despite wide regional variations in traditions and languages, much of Africa has inherited systems in which western educational traditions are valued (Hulmes, 1989), with an emphasis on the introduction

of formal education conducted in the "official" European languages such as English, German, or Afrikaans, as soon as possible in primary school (Telfer, 1993; Kariuki, 1995; Williams, 1993; Polonsky & Suchard, 1993). For the African participants in this study this occurred in about the third year of schooling, after an initial period of education in the local language of the district while the compulsory language was established, and it was regarded by them as a necessity to enable communication between the different tribes throughout the country who all spoke separate languages. However Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa (1995) regard these language policies as indicative of the deliberate bias towards white European cultures in African education policy which did not cater for the needs of the majority population.

The language policy in education was a deliberate part ... to deprive the Black population of a fair social, cultural and economic development (Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa, 1995, p.685).

Furthermore, authors such as Hulmes (1989), Telfer, (1993) and Kariuki (1995), stress that this emphasis on the intellectual traditions of European countries, has led to domination of schooling at all levels by extremely competitive western style examinations such as the British "O" and "A" levels, and those set by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate, a situation which was confirmed by participants in this study. Moreover, Zoller Booth (1995, 1996) highlights the continuing dependence on western style formal education in many African countries even in the 1990s, due to the requirements of a high standard of school achievement as a prerequisite for many types of employment.

Practices

Educational practices mentioned by the African participants in this research study and echoed by Kariuki (1995) and Telfer (1993), included initial attendance at day school for half days in the first two years of school, increasing to 8am to 4pm in the later years of primary; passing the Primary Leaving Examination at approximately 13 years of age; and attendance at secondary boarding school from about 14 years of age, a common practice for children from rural areas in Africa (Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa, 1995).

Kariuki (1995) emphasises the continuing use of external exam results as a means of determining promotion to further education at primary school level in Africa even in the 1990s, a situation which results in teachers resorting to "drilling" of students and teaching specifically for these examinations. These findings are also echoed by Craelius, Kann & Mukendwa (1995) who stress the continued use of "outdated" methods, which rely on rote learning in schools throughout Africa in the last decade of the twentieth century.

The use of rote learning, copying, and repetition were common features of education for the participants from Africa, who also stressed the lack of teaching aids, books, and even paper, necessitating the use of slates especially in primary school. Furthermore, strong emphasis on formal methods of rote learning as preparation for competitive exams, was linked with harsh corporal punishment in which children were caned with sticks and "*over punished*" for minor transgressions or being academically less capable, resulting in an atmosphere of "*fear and intimidation*" particularly for primary students, many "*dropping out*" altogether.

Connell (1980) sees the legacy of education in colonial times in countries such as Africa, as resulting in an emphasis on very formal teaching, rote learning, and discipline which was "severe," as well as learning of languages and "literacy based" subjects, a situation which Zoller Booth (1995) maintains conflicts with the child's prior knowledge and surroundings.

Children begin formal school using cognitive constructs, language patterns, and a knowledge base that hinders their learning certain concepts using western based methods (Zoller Booth, 1995, p.195).

Subjects studied by participants in primary school included maths, English or Afrikaans, history, geography and religion, rewards were given by the white missionaries for "*good work*," however if a lack of academic progress was indicated by the end of year exams, the year had to be repeated. Telfer (1993) notes the aim of education at primary school level as the gaining of proficiency in literacy, numeracy and "pre-vocational skills." In addition Kariuki (1995) highlights the fact that only 50 percent of students who finish primary school actually gain entry into secondary schools, due to the competitive nature of

the Primary Leaving Exam, while those who do not succeed are relegated to forms of "vocational training" (Williams, 1993).

Latin America

The Latin American participants in this research study who came from two different countries, described systems of education which were similar in many aspects, and included policies of free and compulsory government schooling to all students in Years 1- 6, with the primary responsibility for children's continuation on to further education regarded as that of the parents; the availability of an alternative fee paying Catholic school system; and an emphasis on the early commencement of formal skills such as reading, as a means of facilitating children's progress as soon as possible, to enable them to make the most of the available free education, and ensure better opportunities and a higher standard of living in the future.

Education policy and practices in many Latin American countries have their origins in the historical influences of colonisation of the American continent by European powers, most predominantly those of Portugal and Spain. Colonial education in these countries, although initially catering only for Europeans, was introduced to the Indigenous population in order to facilitate both their conversion to Christianity and assimilation into the culture of the European "rulers" (Bear, 1993; Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino, 1995). In some Latin American countries free and compulsory primary schooling was established by the Spaniards as early as the mid nineteenth century, while in others public education did not begin until after independence from Spain (Bear, 1993). Connell (1980) draws attention to the prevalent attitude in both Europe and Latin America in the early 1900s, that primary education was sufficient for the 'masses' with secondary school education regarded as a separate stage, and only available to those who could afford it.

In colonial territories the native population received an education inferior to that of their white colonisers and were thought to be less capable of profiting by equal facilities (Connell, 1980, p.8).

Due to the many inherent problems in Latin American countries highlighted by authors such as Bear (1993), including factors such as overpopulation, political unrest, natural disasters and lack of adequate finances, free and compulsory education for all students up to Year 9 has not yet been realised, especially in many rural areas. In these districts facilities may only be available for 3 or 6 years of primary education if at all, and even these schools are ill equipped and in many cases completely inadequate. Moreover, the use of T V lessons in education described by one participant, is a practice confirmed also by Bear (1993) as a means of transmitting lessons to combat illiteracy, which even in the 1990s was found to be as high as one third of the population in certain Latin American countries. The private schools which in the 1990s cater for around 15 percent of children (Ruiz-Esparza, 1995) and are supervised by the state, are run mainly by church groups, and are not free (Diaz Diaz, 1995; Ruiz-Esparza, 1995). Moreover, poor families depend on the financial contribution of their children in post primary years, leading to the discontinuation of their education at an early age (Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino, 1995; Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996).

In addition to the emphasis on the family's ultimate responsibility for the education of their children, highlighted by Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino (1995), the inequality in educational opportunities between the rural and urban areas noted by Ruiz-Esparza (1995), can be seen as an additional motivating factor in the early emphasis on the development of young children's formal skills, such as reading and writing, by parents who place an important emphasis on success at school and obtaining a good education, as a means of obtaining more financial security and a better life than they have themselves (Munn, 1993; Espinosa, 1995; Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino, 1995).

These findings are echoed by the Latin American participants in this study, moreover the participants from more urban areas had the additional advantage of opportunities to attend local preschool centres from 3 to 4 years of age, and to obtain a further three years of free government schooling which was unavailable in many rural areas, necessitating the relocation of the whole family to enable children to continue with their education in the larger centres or cities (Bear, 1993; Ruiz-Esparza, 1995).

Practices

Education in the countries of the Latin American participants in this study, was conducted in Spanish, with other languages introduced in government schools after six years of primary education, or possibly earlier in some "European style" private schools primarily run for "expats" and their descendants. Ruiz-Esparza (1995) sees this domination of the education system by the Spanish language as indicative of past "repression" and the assimilation of European cultural values, which has resulted in the eradication of most of the languages of the Indigenous peoples in many Latin American countries.

Common education practices described by these participants included a strong emphasis on rote learning, memorisation and homework from early years, with advancement to the next grade dependent on satisfactory marks at the end of year exams. In some regions supplementary exams in the summer vacation were available for those who did not achieve the desired level at the first attempt, while in others, children had to repeat the entire grade. The influence of the Roman Catholic church was also evident throughout education in Latin America, with religion an integral part of the curriculum, strict discipline emphasised particularly in the Catholic schools, and corporal punishment a common practice in early primary years.

Findings of an emphasis on teacher directed rote learning and exams is echoed by authors such as Ruiz-Esparza (1995) and Bear (1993), who also highlights the lack of encouragement and active participation in many Latin American schools as well as the provision of religious education in government schools by the Roman Catholic church. Juan Samaniego (1995) describes the use of repetition in classroom practices in many Latin American countries as follows :

Much is repetitive ... This is characterised by the predominance of rote, cognitive development, and the passivity of the student (p.285).

In addition, the practices mentioned by the Latin American participants, such as rote learning and repetition, very formal teaching methods, harsh discipline and corporal punishment can be seen as evidence of what Connell (1980) maintains is a legacy of the colonial past in countries previously "ruled" by European powers.

Experiences as a Parent

Three participants had experiences of their children's schooling in countries other than Australia, and described the differences that they found there in the educational policy and practices of education. The undesirable effects of war on education were highlighted by one parent from Latin America who described the situation in her country of origin at the time her oldest child commenced school. She emphasised the lack of resources available in government education and the deteriorating conditions since she attended, due to the advent of civil war and political unrest, and the lack of affordable private schools as an alternative.

This lack of stability in many Latin American countries due to revolutions, civil wars, dictatorships and military coups, is well documented by many authors including Amezquita, Amezquita & Vittorino (1995), Ruiz-Esparza (1995) and Bear (1993). The latter confirms the difficulties faced by education systems in such circumstances, due to lack of funds, insufficient texts and other educational materials, and the closure of schools in many districts. Furthermore, Jamrozik & Sweeney (1996) stress the detrimental effects of war on education, which requires peace and stability to ensure satisfactory progress overall.

One parent from Scandinavia, in observations on education policies in the region of Italy where her children attended school, highlighted the strictly formal nature of the primary years, with formal teacher directed activities, a lack of equipment and physical or practical activities, and an excessive regimentation of children in early primary classes. In contrast however, comments were also made about the behaviour of a teacher in the early years, who removed and reapplied both her makeup and nail varnish in the classroom

in front of the children, also putting it on them, a situation of which the parent disapproved. Later primary schooling in Italy was characterised by extremely high expectations and an emphasis on the 'theoretical' and academic aspects of learning, with a formal 'interrogation' of the individual child in Grade 5 by a panel of teachers.

These findings of excessive formality and lack of equipment in early education, which in Australia could be considered as pedagogically inappropriate for young children, may well be viewed as a reflection of the centralised management of state funded education in Italy, in which the uniform control of the teaching/learning processes are closely monitored by school principals (Visalberghi, 1995), and the supply of books and other equipment is controlled by district and school committees (Giorgi, 1992).

The strong emphasis on academic education may also be seen as directly related to the focus on formal exams, with the Primary School Diploma, which is assessed by the teacher "team" for the class, a prerequisite for entry into lower secondary schooling after five years of primary education (Visalberghi, 1995). These findings are supported by the experiences of this participant, who described the process of examination by a panel of teachers in Grade 5 of an Italian primary school.

Furthermore when the system of teacher training of both pre-primary and primary teachers in Italy, as highlighted by authors such as Visalberghi (1995) and Giorgi (1992) is considered, the lack of maturity, displayed by an early childhood teacher with the removal and reapplication of her makeup and nail varnish in the classroom in the presence of the children, is not so surprising. In fact, the training of teachers for this level is undertaken at only upper secondary school level which takes place from 14 to 18 years of age, compared with that of Italian secondary school teachers who must attend a university. The training courses undertaken for pre-primary and primary teachers are three and four years in length respectively, with the prerequisite being a Lower Secondary School Diploma which is obtained at 14 years of age. It can therefore be seen as possible for some one to have completed the training course for preschool or primary school teaching by the age of 17

or 18 years, thus explaining the lack of mature and appropriate behaviour by this teacher of young children in Italy.

The education policy and practices in an Arabic school in England described by the parent from the Middle East, highlighted the study of Arabic language and culture in conjunction with the English and core subjects required by British education authorities in such schools, and the quantity of homework received. Also noted were the smaller class sizes and the availability of more activities, including sport, art and music, at this Arabic school than he had experienced at school in his Middle Eastern country of origin.

Halls (1995) maintains that despite predictions that problems with minority group children will decline, due to strict immigration policies resulting in most children of migrants being born in the U.K., and the emphasis on integration of minority groups, there is a demand for Arabic and Muslim schools in Britain. The existence of government funded schools run by Anglican, Roman Catholic and Jewish religious denominations has been cited as supporting the formation of similar Arabic and Muslim schools in U.K.

For those that wish to follow some wishy-washy culture based on something roughly British, the state system is fine ...we ask no more than that which is already established for Jewish and Catholic children (Yusef Islam, 1986, (former Cat Stevens) cited in Hulmes, 1989, p.28).

Moreover, Hulmes (1989) stresses that for Muslims education is regarded as the transmission of Muslim culture and heritage and values, combined with physical, mental and moral development of potential citizens as good and cultured human beings. Therefore as western education policy is perceived by many as based only on materialism and foreign secular values, it is seen as conflicting with those values espoused in Islam and many Muslim parents may wish to avoid the "corrosive" influences of education in state run schools and have their children attend schools where their cultural values are adhered to.

It is clear that children raised in an education environment in which cultural values are outwardly valued but implicitly ignored will find it difficult to accept for themselves the cultural values and beliefs of their parents. The values of school and the values of home will be in conflict but not in a constructive educational way (Hulmes, 1989, p.37).

Hulmes draws attention to the practices emphasised in Islamic education including an emphasis on the awareness of Arabic culture and traditions and the memorisation of the Koran (Hulmes, 1989). These findings are echoed by this Middle Eastern participant in describing his children's education in Arabic school in Britain, where core subjects studied in all U.K. schools were integrated with those of the Muslim culture in a culturally relevant way for the children of Muslim parents.

Culture and Language Outside Australia

This section discusses the different cultures experienced by the participants in this research study prior to their arrival in Australia. Furthermore, the importance of the influence of culture on the development of the individual should not be overlooked, as all experiences from childhood through to parenthood are culturally based, resulting from historically determined shared knowledge and understandings of the community (McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Subramanian, 1996), as well as the behaviour and values of individuals living within them (Clark, 1995; King, 1995; Lynch, 1998).

Culture is what one thinks is important (values); what one thinks is true (beliefs); and how one perceives things are done (norms) (Owens, 1987, cited in Irvine and York, 1995, p.489).

In fact, Kluckhohn (1951, cited in Waldrup & Fisher, 1995 p1) regards culture as "the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete design for living". Furthermore, the numerous ways in which daily living is influenced by culture may be unrecognised by most of us, and includes subtle and unconscious patterns of behaviour and perceptions based on social learning which affect every individual (Huang, 1993).

There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture ...personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organised as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function (Hall, 1976, cited in Lynch, 1998, p.37).

Of the more easily recognisable aspects of culture such as language, religion, community values and norms, language as the means by which an individual seeks to understand the world and people in it, is one of the most clearly visible indications of cultural differences (Lynch, 1998). Furthermore, the importance of non-verbal forms of communication is also stressed by Lynch (1998) who highlights the differences between high context cultures such as African, Arab and Latin American, peoples and low context cultures of Scandinavians and Anglo-Europeans in the transmission of ideas or information through non-verbal means such as gestures, facial expressions and eye contact.

When discussing the influence of culture on the participants in this research study, it is also important to emphasise that schools do not exist in isolation, but within a culture, and function specifically to reproduce and further its' "economic, political and cultural ends" (Bruner, 1996, p.67). Furthermore, as the processes of learning and thinking "always" take place within cultural settings (Bruner, 1996) it is imperative to recognise the cultural context of all cognitive activities resulting from the "passing on" from generation to generation of "the products of cultural history, including the technologies developed to support problem solving" (Rogoff, 1990, p.51).

Common cultural features mentioned by the Latin American participants, included the dominance of both the Spanish language and the Roman Catholic religion. Amezcuita, Amezcuita & Vittorino (1995) see this as indicative of the common organisational characteristics evident throughout Latin America, including political, legal, social structures and customs, originating from the cultural values imposed by Spain, based on a belief that the local Indigenous people and their culture were inferior to that of the colonial European powers. However, in contrast certain areas of Latin America have almost one third of the population who mainly speak languages other than Spanish, due to such factors as the inaccessibility of the mountain terrain and the influx of immigrants in more recent times (Bear 1993). This was found to be the situation in the country of origin of one Latin American participant, who highlighted the important emphasis on learning to speak other languages fluently, not just personally because s/he was from an immigrant family, but throughout the whole country.

Cultural differences in the values and attitudes of society in Latin America which were highlighted by these participants, included the importance of a strong sense of family responsibility for education, the emphasis on early education, "*pushing*" children to make the most of their schooling and become a "*professional*." These findings are supported by authors such as Amezcuita, Amezcuita & Vittorino (1995) who stress the responsibility that Latin American women in particular, have in educating their children, and the high value placed on education as a means of ensuring financial and social status in the community through entry to professions such as medicine, dentistry or law. Participants' comments that their mothers in particular had emphasised in effect : "We have no money, all we can give you is a good education" are echoed by Amezcuita, Amezcuita & Vittorino (1995, p.177) who stress the honour educational achievement brings to the family.

The "*closeness*" of teachers in Latin America who would "*kiss and hug*" the children was also a feature discussed by several participants. This can be seen as a clear indication of the type and amount of physical contact permissible in the Latin American culture, in which individuals are comfortable with closer contact than that applicable in other cultures (Lynch, 1998).

Despite the imposition of the "official" European languages upon the Indigenous population from an early age, the cultural climate described by the participants in Africa was more bilingual. The use of different tribal home languages was common practice, in spite of the use of "official" languages of English or Afrikaans exclusively in schools from Year 3 or 4, and in all business and commerce. The "official" language was therefore seen as an essential means of common communication between the different tribal groups. The strong influence of the Christian religion introduced by missionaries of both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches was also an additional cultural feature, all three African participants describing the teaching of religion in schools and "*rewards*" given by clergy for good behaviour including the showing of films of countries in Europe.

Findings such as these can be seen as resulting from the past influences of colonisation by European powers particularly evident in education, in which the cultural values of the west were imposed upon the Indigenous peoples whose own cultures were seen as inferior to those of European countries (Connell, 1980; Howard, 1999; Hulmes, 1989; Zoller-Booth, 1995). Furthermore, the punitive attitudes described by participants as prevalent in African schools, particularly in the early years, is also seen by Ritchie (1981), Hyman (1990) and Jamrozik & Sweeney (1996) as linked to historical western attitudes and educational theory of "original sin" and the "innate depravity" of children who require "discipline".

In addition, the attitudes held in African traditional society, of education as a form of "initiation" into the responsibilities and obligations of community life, are highlighted by Hulmes (1989) who draws attention to the infliction of physical pain as a means of testing endurance and obedience, in order to ensure the conformity necessary for the stability of the community as a whole. As such, punishment and hardships were therefore regarded as something which had to be endured by those who desired to continue with their education.

Furthermore, the lack of career opportunities for black students described by one participant, and the absence of free education, can be seen as reflecting past influences on the attitudes and values of African society, due to what Connell (1980) regards as the inferior standard of education received by Indigenous African people resulting from the unwillingness of colonial governments to provide for people who were felt to be incapable of profiting from the same opportunities as Europeans.

The close cultural ties between different Scandinavian countries highlighted by participants included languages which are very similar, the dominant influence of the Lutheran church to which the majority of the population belonged, and common aspects of Scandinavian history as one country from the fourteenth to sixteenth century (West, 1992; Hempel-Jorgensen, 1992; Bear, 1992). Moreover, the emphasis in Scandinavian culture, was very strongly on the equality of opportunity irrespective of socioeconomic status,

gender, or ability, with free education available for all. Welles-Nystrom (1996, p.192) maintains : "Equality ideology ... is the thread that binds together the social fabric of culture in which the child is raised".

Despite the often harsh climatic conditions, the value placed on outdoor activities in Scandinavian society was high. One participant in particular regarded the emphasis on physical and practical aspects of education as more important for children's future progress than "theory". These findings are echoed by authors such as Nyhus (1998) and Welles-Nystrom (1996) who draw attention to the importance placed traditionally in Scandinavian society on children playing out in the countryside from a very early age, and being allowed "free reign with nature" (Welles-Nystrom, 1996, p.208).

Nature provides children with rich learning experiences, both cognitive and moral ... children benefit tremendously from being out of doors so much in natural surroundings (Welles-Nystrom, 1996, p.19).

Despite earlier colonisation by Europeans who banned the Muslim religion and use of the local language, the Middle Eastern participant in this research study highlighted the domination of his country's culture by the Arabic language, Muslim religion and the history and geography of the region. Hulmes (1989) sees education as the means whereby common standards of behaviour, values, attitudes to life, and beliefs are developed to the benefit of the community, and stresses the importance of the guidance of children by both parents and teachers who act as transmitters of the Islamic values important in Muslim society. Education is therefore viewed as vitally important to the development of the future citizen and member of the Islamic faith, and the teacher regarded "more than the parent" (Owen & Razaq, 1996, p.178) as one whose responsibility is to instill in the young their responsibility to serve God with their "talents" for the benefit of mankind (Hulmes, 1989).

Summary

Despite the differing cultural backgrounds and countries from which these minority group participants originated, education systems ranging along a continuum from egalitarian and free in Scandinavia to fee paying and selective in Africa, and the wide

variation in the age at which their education began (3 to 7 years of age), a picture emerges of common experiences of very formal and repressive schooling outside Australia. Features described included methods involving rote learning, copying and repetition, stern and authoritarian teachers most of whom were strict disciplinarians and used corporal punishment as a means of controlling large classes of 40 to 80 children. This was particularly the case in Africa where resources were limited and children from 5 to 10 years of age attended the Year 1 class. In contrast, Scandinavian participants attended schools with good resources and small class sizes of approximately 20 children in early primary and 25 in later years, despite these favourable conditions many Scandinavian teachers were also described as authoritarian.

Experiences of cruel or tyrannical teachers, many of whom had unrealistically high standards and expectations and meted out harsh corporal punishment, were common, many participants vividly described feelings of anxiety, fear and intimidation as a child and dreaded going to school. In African countries the unrealistically high standards and expectations led to highly competitive external exams excluding those who did not excel from any further education, and in Latin America where education was seen as the key to a better life, there was parental pressure on children to maximise their learning before free primary schooling ended and families had to assume the responsibility for education costs.

These features of repressive discipline, harsh corporal punishment, the boredom of rote learning and extremely large classes, mean that for many participants experiences of early education in particular were largely negative. Therefore these parents have a history of past educational experiences which may leave lingering feelings of fear, anxiety, or hostility, and are not conducive to building warm personal relationships with teachers or schools.

These issues are a cause for concern in light of the findings by authors such as Cullingford (1996) Chavkin & Gonzalez (1995) Finders & Lewis (1994) Hidalgo et al (1995) and Keyes (2002), that parents' own experiences including those of education, can affect their attitudes and 'block' full participation, influencing relationships with schools and teachers in general. It is vital therefore, to recognise that many parents of young

children in the early years of school, particularly those from countries of origin which are culturally and linguistically different from 'mainstream' Australia, may lack positive experiences of their own education, thus influencing their attitudes towards schools, teachers and their children's education.

Experiencing Education in Australia

Parents' Perspectives

Section two of this study deals with the experiences and perceptions that overseas born parents from non-English speaking countries, have of their children's education/schooling in Australia. In addition to prior experiences of education in countries outside Australia which affect their views and perceptions of education, parents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds also have experiences and encounters with their children's schools and other education institutions in Australia, which are influential in the formation of their ideas and future relationships with schools and teachers in this country (Cullingford, 1996; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Keyes, 2002; Salinas Sosa, 1996).

Experiences and Interactions with Schools.

It has been established that parents from minority non-English speaking backgrounds are as concerned with the well being of their children as those parents who are perceived as 'mainstream' (Chavkin, 1993). Furthermore, authors such as Epstein (1992) and Hidalgo et al (1995) emphasise that the primary reason for any form of communication between parents and schools is a desire for the facilitation of the development, learning, and educational progress of their children. In addition, research has established that positive relationships between parents and schools are vitally important to the wellbeing and educational achievement of the child, due to the sharing of the major responsibility for education by both schools and families (Epstein, 1992; Foot et al., 2002; Keyes, 2002; Rich, 1993; Wolfendale, 1992).

Despite the emphasis in Australia and elsewhere, on the importance of these connections between families and schools, by authors such as Allexsacht-Snyder (1995), Cullingford (1995), Foot et al (2002), Hidalgo et al (1995), Hughes & MacNaughton (2000), Keyes (2002), and Osborne (1995), difficulties and lack of satisfaction with home-school relationships and parent involvement have also been reported (Bermudez, 1993; Cullingford, 1996; Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Treppte, 1994; Trumbull et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies in Australia have found some parents to be dissatisfied and "alienated" from the school system as a result of the lack of meaningful and positive communication between home and the schools (Arthur, 1996; Crump, 1996; Howard, 1994; Osborne, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001).

Authors such as Brooker (2003) and Epstein (1992) see this as indicative of the lack of communication of the historically based differing ideas, standards and goals of families and schools and the common objectives of these equally important institutions. Hughes & MacNaughton (1999, 2000) maintain however, that the difficulties encountered in both involving and maintaining the ongoing participation of parents in their children's education are due also to the past and present approaches utilised in formulating parent/teacher relationships.

In spite of the recent push for greater democracy in the processes of education, as evidenced in the ongoing discussion and debate about greater parent involvement (Foot et al., 2000; Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999), improving home/school relationships (Brooker, 2002; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; Keyes, 2002) and parental participation in parent/teacher partnerships (Foot et al., 2002; Keyes, 2002), findings from the U.K. indicate that despite the perceived desirability by educators of increased parental participation as a means of providing additional knowledge and "accurate" information (Foot et al., 2000, p.203), parental participation in preschool education still "falls short of genuine partnership" (Foot et al., 2002, p.17). Moreover, in these studies the methods used were largely quantitative, involving researcher promulgated questionnaires and "semi-formal" interviews to elicit responses from a large number of participants, 99 percent of whom

were categorised as “white” (Foot et al., 2002). This contrasts with the more democratic qualitative research process utilised in the exploration of the experiences and perceptions of linguistically and culturally diverse parents which was undertaken in this study, in which parents were invited to tell the researcher about their experiences of education, allowing participants to give voice to their concerns in their own way.

Many of the experiences of their children's preschool education discussed by the minority group parents in this research study were positive. Participants highlighted features that they liked including all the different activities, shorter hours than primary school, the amount their child was learning, and resources and facilities which were very good. Two parents commented how happy they were in comparison with their own experiences of school commencement in Latin America and Africa, one describing differences in Australian education in contrast to that in Africa, as “*welcoming*” and “*very conducive to learning*.” These findings echo the views of Cullingford (1996) who asserts that parents compare their children's experiences of school with the memories of their own experiences as a child. In addition, half of the minority group parents also described features of their children's early primary schooling which they liked.

Despite these positive experiences however, all of the participants also discussed experiences of their children's early education which were negative, including problems or “*mistakes*” due to a lack of knowledge or familiarity with the education system in Australia, a feeling of being “*fobbed off*” by schools and teachers who lacked awareness of the problems or didn't want parents involved, as well as a lack of information on their children's academic progress and how they could help at home. The experiences of these minority group parents highlight the difficulties which may be encountered in Australian schools by parents who are culturally and linguistically different, resulting in feelings of confusion and dissatisfaction with the education of their children (Keyes, 2002; Moles, 1993; Yao, 1993).

Furthermore, many of the negative experiences and feelings of dissatisfaction expressed by the participants in this research study were found to be related to problems in the communication between these linguistically and culturally diverse parents and Australian schools and teachers. The need for more communication with teachers was stressed by one participant from Latin America, who felt she was *"the worst mother in the world"* due to her difficulties resulting from unfamiliarity with the education system in Australia, and teachers' assumptions that all parents had attended school in Australia and therefore knew what was expected of them. She remarked poignantly :*"I feel parents need just as much training"*.

These findings are supported by those of authors such as Brooker (2002), Chavkin (1993), Treppte (1994) and Yao (1993), who emphasise that migrant parents who have grown up in a different culture, may have no knowledge or understanding of the 'mainstream' school system and classroom practices, and require initiatives and structures to be put in place by the school to help parents understand and become involved. In addition, Chavkin & Williams (1993) also highlight the erroneous assumptions of many educators, that all children come from 'mainstream' backgrounds, or that education systems are similar in other countries and cultures (Brooker, 2003; Ebbeck & Glover, 1998; Fields, 2000). Furthermore, Finders & Lewis (1994) note that it is also often assumed that all parents have prior knowledge about the goals of education which matches that of the schools, and without which they are disadvantaged in home/school communications.

Moreover, the difficulties experienced by minority group parents and school staff in understanding each other may result in alienation of linguistically and culturally diverse families from the education system (Bermudez, 1993; Keyes, 2002). Therefore there is an urgent need for schools to take the initiative in bridging the communication gap between parents and schools.

Culturally and linguistically diverse families remain alienated from the school system because of...lack of confidence...English language skills ...understanding of the home school partnership...[and/or] insensitivity and hostility on the part of school personnel these parents are not apathetic or 'hard to reach' they simply need to know more about their role, rights and responsibilities, in the education of their children (Bermudez, 1993, p.179,180).

In addition, Epstein (1992) highlights the tendency for schools and families to pay little attention to each others ideas or values, until more serious problems arise over issues such as behavioural or learning difficulties, or children coming home distressed, a situation which can have undesirable consequences for both children and parents, leading to further difficulties and the possible alienation of families from schools and teachers.

This was certainly the experience of one particular parent who felt that his child's later education was affected by the escalation of an incident in preschool. In this instance no direct communication between the school and parent was initiated to discuss the issue, and initial information regarding the incident was relayed in an accusatory manner by another parent. The decision to call in a psychologist as a result of a 5 year old child's behaviour, which to this Scandinavian parent seemed "*perfectly natural*," was also regarded by him as an "*overreaction*," and can be seen as further evidence of inadequate communication between school and home. Moreover, this can also be viewed as a clear indication of the lack of sensitivity, highlighted by Bermudez (1993), which is evident in some middle class professionals who have "internalised a single set of behaviour standards and mores and recognise only these as the avenue to social and academic integration" (Bermudez, 1993, p.180). Further issues arising from this incident will be discussed in a later section on experiences with teachers.

In contrast, however, the concerns of another participant about her Year 1 child, who said teachers were "*being mean*," were able to be addressed satisfactorily by discussion with the teacher, and the setting of additional work which overcame the lack of sufficient occupation for this child and the resulting boredom and disruption in the classroom. These findings echo the views of Moles (1993) and Chavkin (1993) that parents from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds are very concerned about their children and any problems they seem to be having, and do respect the knowledge and experience of schools and teachers, seeking advice from them on how to help their children (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Cullingford, 1996).

However, despite the importance placed on the building of connections and good relationships between parents and schools to facilitate positive attitudes in children's learning and school by authors such as Dauber & Epstein (1993), minority group parents may find it difficult to gain access to someone they feel will listen to their problems and concerns and address them in a sympathetic manner (Gougeon, 1993; Treppte, 1994), and many report feeling "intimidated" by school personnel (Davies, 1993) in an "alien and impersonal environment" (Moles, 1993, p.35). Furthermore, Hughes & MacNaughton (2000) see this situation as symptomatic of the difficulties which occur when the relationships between parents, children and educators are dominated and regulated by bureaucratic organisations who regard education as a "commodity" to be bought and sold (p.250).

Dissatisfaction with their children's progress was expressed by several participants in this research study, particularly those from Latin America. However, in spite of concerns about a lack of continued progress in the early primary years, parents felt unable to go to the school and discuss the situation. One parent described feeling that his child was "*stuck*" and "*becoming lazy*" in comparison with previous years, while another expressed the view that children didn't learn anything but simply played and read books that were "*too easy*" and were not sufficiently academic compared with Latin America. These sentiments were echoed by a third parent from Latin America, who stressed that schools were not working as hard or covering as many topics as she had expected. Furthermore, although she was a teacher in Latin America and wanted to help her child, she did not know what the school was teaching and felt unable to "*bother*" the school "*every week*."

These findings are an indication of the concerns which many parents of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, feel unable to express, about the lack of information available on what happens in schools and the progress of their children. This situation can be viewed as indicative of what Robinson & Timperly (1999) regard as the lack of an "educative partnership" in which there is an "accurate" sharing of information on common standards, between parents and schools, due to the fact that many reports on student achievement are ambiguous and hard for parents to interpret. Moreover, it is emphasised

that parents do not want to interfere, seeing themselves as "helpers" and "supporters" Cullingford (1996), furthermore Davies (1993) highlights the fact that minority group parents want to help but don't know how to.

As a result of their difficulties and dissatisfaction, several of the minority group parents in this research study reported feelings of powerlessness due to their inability to help children personally or get help from the school with any perceived problems. These feelings abated for one participant when she was able to contact the teacher and discuss the problems that her child was having with teachers "*being mean*," however for others, concerns about their children's problems were not being addressed, leading to feelings of frustration and utter helplessness. These issues included the dearth of information from schools on their child's progress, not being told when their child seemed to be "*falling behind*" in class, lack of awareness of children's problems, and underestimation of children's potential, as well as lack of encouragement and motivation, and other issues which will be discussed in a later section on teachers. One participant stressed the importance of parents monitoring their children's progress in case "*the child falls behind and no-one tells you*," while several others remarked poignantly "*What can parents do?*" if they disliked certain aspects of the situation in the classroom.

The feelings of powerless reported by minority group parents in this study echo the findings of authors such as Sui (1993) and Mizuochi & Dolan (1994). Moreover, Gougeon (1993) emphasises that feelings of powerlessness in minority group parents spring from factors such as dependence on others, anxiety due to a lack of adequate English language skills, uncertainty as to how to gain access to teachers and administrators, and fear of being misunderstood or looking foolish (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Keyes, 2002). However in addition, parental feelings of powerlessness are seen by Howard (1994) as symptomatic of a "model of disempowerment" in which parents feel they are unable to have any influence on situations about which they are concerned. Furthermore, the consequences of approaching the school with any grievances may be perceived as not in the best interests of either themselves or their child, and/or may achieve nothing, therefore the decision of many parents may be to do nothing. As a result of these experiences parents

may be disillusioned withdraw from any interactions with the school and its personnel (Howard, 1994; Keyes, 2002).

Experiences and Interactions with Teachers

Despite the positive comments made by several participants, particularly those from Africa and the Middle East, teachers in Australian schools were also a source of concern for many of the minority group parents in this research study. Of particular concern were the low expectations that many teachers had of their children, and the lack of extension both in the classroom and with work undertaken at home.

Findings such as these can be seen as indicative of what Lubeck (1994) and Tomlinson (1993) maintain, is the general low level of expectations that many teachers seem to have of children from minority groups whose backgrounds, languages and/or cultures and race are different from the 'mainstream' in school and society. In addition, Suarez-Orozco (2001) stresses that migrant children are frequently put into classes which are academically less rigorous where the focus is more on routines with little intrinsic value and the teaching is culturally inappropriate and irrelevant for children from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds.

The formulation of negative views of students, particularly those with a different skin colour than that of 'mainstream' students, has been found to be influenced by conscious or unconscious racism (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Moreover, the negative and stereotyped views of minority group families can be seen as "Setting the stage for self-fulfilling prophecies about the child's abilities" (Moles, 1993, p.34), while in addition, the lower level of English language skills than 'mainstream' children may further prejudice teachers against minority group students (Owen & Razaq, 1996).

[This] should be treated as a lack of English language skills which can be trained. Not as a weakness in their [student's] mind some teachers start saying they [students] are 'slow' and 'illiterate' (Owen & Razaq, 1996, p.177,180).

Research has demonstrated that negative attitudes of teachers towards students and their low expectations have a strong influence on student outcomes and achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and that children are more likely to do well at school if the expectations of their teachers are higher rather than lower (Anning, 1992; Cullingford, 1995; Wilks, 2000).

How teachers...think about education and students makes a profound difference in student performance and achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.22).

One parent in this study had particular concerns about the "labelling" and negative expectations of his child by teachers throughout the primary school, as a result of the incident in Pre-Primary mentioned in a previous section, which he perceived to be due to the teachers' discussion of the incident amongst themselves. This situation can be construed as an example of the "pygmalion effect" in which teachers have been found to pre-judge students and their abilities based on information which has been previously conveyed to them, often by other teachers in the school staffroom (Anning, 1992; Cullingford, 1995).

This issue is quite justifiably a source of concern for parents, as it has been demonstrated that those students who are perceived to have lower academic ability receive education with a different emphasis, little stimulation, innovation or challenge in class (Fields, 2000).

Students in the lower ability groups are exposed to a less varied less challenging curriculum, and to instruction which is more focussed on the maintenance of order as opposed to academic excellence (Fields, 2000, p.4).

As well as the concerns about the low expectations of their children, minority group parents in this study felt that many teachers lacked awareness of children's problems and individual differences, working only with the children as a group and lacking the time or interest to *"concentrate on one who's different"*. Several participants commented that teachers were overworked with too many things to do and were thus unable to concentrate on teaching. Other points raised included the *"stress"* on teachers due to large classes of 33 children in early primary years, the difficulty of *"split"* classes, and the inclusion of children with learning or behavioural *"disabilities"* in *"regular"* classrooms.

Findings such as these echo those of Cullingford (1995) who draws attention to the lack of opportunity that teachers have to analyse their students, ascertain their individual needs and plan appropriate learning activities, with many therefore resorting to "undemanding" and routine work more as "occupation" rather than stimulation. Moreover, despite the fact that children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds are increasingly part of the makeup of every school class (Suarez-Orozco, 2001), presenting a challenge to teachers to modify their teaching methods to suit the different student demographics (Fields, 2000), research findings indicate that teachers, who are predominantly white, Anglo-Celtic and middle class, do not try to accommodate the educational needs of all students in their classes (Fuchs et al., 1997 cited in Fields, 2000). It has been established that teachers decide instead to "teach to the middle of the class," whom they perceive to be the majority, and who are regarded as "capable of learning" (Fields, 2000, p.5) thus bringing some measure of satisfaction to the teachers. Despite the adverse effects of such a decision on many children, teachers were reported as defending their actions, many seeing "no need to modify or differentiate instruction for academically diverse learners" (Tomlinson et al., 1998, cited in Fields, 2000, p.7).

Furthermore, with the advent of "inclusive" classes, teachers have to cope with a broader range of learners including those with disabilities and diverse backgrounds, however it has been found that most teachers lack the skills needed to cater for these demands and many do little to modify their teaching for those at either end of the student continuum or cater for children who differ from the 'mainstream' Anglo-Celtic "norm" (Tomlinson et al., 1997; Fields, 2000).

As a result of the current circumstances existing in schools several participants maintained that teachers become frustrated, feel powerless and lose interest in doing anything but the "basics" and minimum required by education system. These findings are supported by Cullingford (1995) who highlights the deleterious effects of stress on the performance of teachers and the feelings of isolation and powerlessness felt by many working within the teaching profession. Moreover, many teachers feel heightened concerns about the increase in demands and complexity of their workloads (Burton, 1992; Fields,

2000; Keyes, 2002), pressure on their time inside and outside the classroom (Arthur, 1996) and frustration with children whom they perceive as "disinclined" to learn (Harris, 1996).

Also highlighted by participants in this research study were the shortcomings of some teachers with whom they came in contact, in particular the manner of many was felt to be cold, excessively formal or *"too polite."* Several parents felt that although teachers would not say as much to the parents, they were unable or unwilling to cater for children who were different, were only nice *"to get parents out of the room,"* or were reassuring to parents who later were dismayed to find out that their child had failed subsequently. In addition, a school principal was perceived as acquiescing to the demands of P & C members to avoid *"making waves"* and lacking in interest in the point of view of others. One parent regarded teachers as being subdivided into two groups, those whom parents *"agree with and feel comfortable"* and those they do not, and described them further as falling into a ratio of one third who were very good, one third good, and one third who were not. These findings are indicative of the dissatisfaction with teachers in Australian schools reported by the parents from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds participating in this study, particularly when their concerns about their children are dismissed or ignored.

Findings such as these are echoed by authors such as Moles (1993), Lubeck (1994) and Forster (1999) who report similar expressions of dissatisfaction regarding teachers and schools by parents. The avoidance of intimacy and the distance evident between schools and families is highlighted also by Powell (1991) who sees this as due to the aim of schools and teachers to retain their "autonomy," a situation which is also reflected in the lack of implementation of educational policy reforms within the classrooms of individual teachers (Powell, 1991). Hughes & MacNaughton regard this as symptomatic of the lack of democracy existing in relationships between parents and educators, in which the knowledge of teachers is still regarded as that of "professionals" and that of parents as "other" knowledge which is "supplementary" "inadequate" and "unimportant" and thus devalued (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000, p.242)

Moreover, despite the fact that parents want the best opportunities available in education for their children and seek the help and support of teachers to achieve these aims, many teachers see parents as having different goals and requiring direct control and direction in order to achieve satisfactory educational outcomes (Arthur, 1996; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; Woods, 1999). Furthermore, the perceived amount of preparation required to facilitate parent help, particularly with those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, is felt by many teachers to add to the already heavy workloads that they feel burdened with (Burton, 1992; Cullingford, 1995; Keyes, 2002; Woods, 1999), or to be outside the professional requirements of the teaching profession (Burton, 1992).

Experiences of Australian Methods

Many of the participants in this research study were concerned with what they perceived to be a lack of learning in primary school, and children becoming "*bored*" and "*lazy*" with work which they thought was "*too simple*" and had no "*challenge*." The standards in many classrooms were regarded as low in comparison with that of other countries in which children were regarded as capable of learning more at a young age, while good work habits, motivation, and the preparation for the harder study required in high school were felt to be lacking. Authors such as Sui (1993) and Kalantis, Gurney & Cope (1993) have also found that parents from backgrounds which are linguistically and culturally different from the 'mainstream' have concerns about issues including low academic expectations and a lack of information from schools about their methods and goals, which they want addressed. Furthermore, the lack of English language skills does not preclude parents from having "interests in education and sophistication in desires for their children" (Tomlinson, 1993 p142), and the need for an academically "demanding" curriculum to foster the educational achievement of minority group students is stressed by Mehan et al. (1995).

Several of the participants in this research study expressed further disquiet about the lack of assessment by testing in primary school, stressing the need for preparation for later education and evaluation by examinations. They were particularly concerned about the

"*shock to the system*" for the child if exams do not begin until Year 10 or 11, and the resulting unaccustomed "*pressure*" in the later years of secondary schooling. The concerns of parents about the stress and pressure on their children is highlighted by Cullingford (1996), who emphasises the view that parents have of the unfairness of the results and lack of reliability in such circumstances. In addition, two African participants were more worried that their children would "*not cope*" with the competition and pressure of exams when returning to their country of origin, findings which echo those of Mizuochi & Dolan (1994) regarding the attitudes of linguistically and culturally different parents in Britain.

Homework

Homework was an issue about which most parents in this research study spontaneously expressed concerns, findings which are confirmed by authors such as Kalantis, Gurney & Cope (1993), Forster (1999) and Warton (1998). These included the dearth of homework in primary school, lack of motivation by children to do their homework and lack of consequences if they don't, and the desirability of giving young children the "*idea*" of homework to set a pattern of good work habits for later education and encourage responsibility. In contrast however, another parent expressed disquiet that excessive homework might "*turn off*" the child from education in general. In addition, one parent experienced hostile reactions from an early primary teacher when the subject of homework was broached, however another teacher did agree to give some homework "*on the side*." The same parent mentioned also using the homework of a friend's child when none was forthcoming from her child's teacher.

Despite concerns about homework that parents make obvious to school principals, Kalantis, Gurney & Cope (1993) maintain that principals find the issue difficult to coordinate and so it is left to individual teachers to decide. As a result there are a wide range of individual differences in the experiences of parents with teachers and their differing attitudes towards homework as demonstrated in this study, a situation which is confirmed by Corno (1996). Moreover, Corno (1996) and Forster (1999) also emphasise the importance placed on homework by parents many of whom use it as a means of determining what their children are doing at school, and observing their work practices and

capabilities. Furthermore, parental views of homework as a valuable means of fostering good study habits and responsibility are also reported by Warton (1998), who emphasises the vital role of parents in developing children's attitudes towards homework and education, and the importance of establishing their beliefs about this issue by consultation and mutual exchange of ideas to ensure the support of school homework practices by all. Moreover, this author's findings also support those of this research study that parents felt their children did not receive sufficient homework, while only one was concerned about too much (Warton, 1998). In contrast with the positive features ascribed to homework however, many parents may feel unprepared and uncertain how to help their children, due to a lack of information on the curriculum and methods used (Kay et al., 1994), particularly in the case of parents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds with different prior experiences and beliefs (Forster, 1999).

Forster (1999) who views homework as a primary reason for communication between parents and teachers and a natural "bridge" between home and school, maintains however, that it also has the potential to cause further friction and deterioration in relationships. Moreover, this author stresses that parents see homework as a means of assessing the standards of their children's schools and teachers compared with those of other schools and teachers, regarding homework as so important that it can affect their relationships with schools and teachers either positively or negatively, a situation confirmed by findings in this study (Forster, 1999). Moreover, parents whose attempts to negotiate over homework were unsuccessful or whose concerns were dismissed, exhibited signs of frustration and anger undermining their relationships with the school and teacher concerned, findings which again echo those of Forster (1999).

Particularly emphasised by the findings of this study are the views of linguistically and culturally diverse parents that they wanted to be informed of the homework philosophy, expectations and methods of the school and teachers, and to be able to discuss these issues negotiating when necessary, in order to enable them to help their children at home and obtain vital feedback. Moreover, these findings are confirmed by Kay et al., (1994) who highlight the desire of parents to be able to talk more to teachers, have their opinions heard

and paid attention to, and recognition of the unique knowledge and understanding that they bring to the partnership between home and school in the interests of their child.

Discipline

Discipline was another aspect of schooling about which minority group participants in this research study spontaneously expressed strong views. Many parents were concerned at what they perceived as a lack of discipline and respect for teachers in Australia schools, resulting in a loss of control in many classrooms and schools. These findings are supported by those of Cullingford (1996), Groundwater-Smith & Forster (1994), Sims & Omaji (1997), Sui (1993), that parents particularly those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, have concerns about lax discipline particularly in schools.

Furthermore, Hyman (1990) stresses how personal this issue is, as it deals with standards of behaviour, morals and values, while parents see schools as responsible for the teaching of values as well as the curriculum subjects (Cullingford, 1996), and mothers of Non-English speaking background in particular, equate discipline in school with teachers that "care" (Groundwater-Smith & Forster, 1994). In addition, parents remember being disciplined at school themselves, and feel the different standards of morality nowadays results in lower values and standards of acceptable behaviour (Cullingford, 1991; Sims & Omaji, 1997).

Despite these comments about the lack of discipline, however, parents in this research study described punishments in operation throughout Australian pre-primary and primary schools, including being made to sit without moving in the "thinking chair" in a corner for "timeout" in preschool years. The use of "timeout" as a behaviour management strategy in preschools which is confirmed by Gruss & Jackson (1999), is strikingly reminiscent of the earlier use of the "Dunce's Chair" prevalent in schools in the early 1900s. (Connell, 1980). Other punishments in early primary years described by this participant included writing of children's names under a "happy" or "sad" face on the blackboard for good or bad behaviour, warnings, lines, spelling lists and detentions. These were regarded as mostly ineffective however, both by this parent and several others, all of whom felt that corporal

punishment would be more effective in the correction and prevention of misbehaviour in schools. In contrast however, one participant from Africa recalled her own experiences and stressed that punishments not be too "*harsh*" due to the resulting fear engendered in the child which is counterproductive to education. Moreover, one parent maintained that in his experience since schools are now unable to use physical punishment, they resort to what he termed "*slow mental torture*," with punishments delayed until the following day even at 7 years of age. In addition, the lack of positive guidance and expectations that were more suited to 15 year olds, had resulted in his dissatisfaction with government schools and seeking of an alternative form of education for his child in the private school system.

These findings correspond with those of Mehan et al., (1995) that dissatisfaction with government schools has led to the development of alternative models of education. Moreover, many of these schools are church based, and cater for parents who are not satisfied with what they perceive is a lack of moral guidance in education and poor performance by students. These sentiments were echoed by several minority group parents in this study who felt that their children would not "*perform well*" in government schools, and that Catholic schools in particular reprimand students promptly and educate them about the need for acceptable behaviour.

Language and Culture

Language problems were the source of further concerns for parents in this research study. These included fears that their child's lack of English language skills might be detrimental in the early years of education. These findings are supported by Owen & Razaq (1996) who highlight the concerns of minority group parents and the problems experienced at school by their children due to a lack of fluency in English. Moreover, the inability of many parents to discuss misgivings with teachers or help with school work is also emphasised by Grieshaber (2003) and Mizochi & Dolan (1994), who highlight the plight of many linguistically and culturally diverse parents in Britain for whom communication in the English language is a struggle.

Concerns raised by the Middle Eastern participant related to his children's loss of the Arabic language skills, culture and religion when educated in Australian government schools. Findings such as these highlight the importance placed on the maintenance of their cultural identity by families from differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds who live in 'mainstream' communities (Hulmes, 1989). For this reason it is important for schools and teachers to show respect for the backgrounds and cultures of minority group families by learning about their language and culture and building on their children's prior knowledge to ensure a "welcoming and psychologically safe environment" in the classroom (Ladson - Billings, 1994, p.24).

Differences of language and culture from the "mainstream" members of society caused problems for several participants in this study, and the issues raised by them gives some indication of the prejudice and discrimination experienced by many families with minority backgrounds. One parent from Latin America described the lack of acceptance by "Aussie" mothers who don't talk to the "migrant" parents at primary school, forcing the overseas born parents to socialise exclusively with each other. Furthermore, this parent also had concerns about speaking to her child in Spanish, worrying that other children would stare and make remarks which could be upsetting. In addition, another participant from Africa was disturbed at what he perceived to be encouragement to disobey "parental instructions" by a Year 1 teacher who had advised the child to refuse to do jobs around the house as the parents had wanted, and emphasised "Australia is a free country, children are free." Moreover, when the subject was broached with the school principal this parent felt that he was being "brushed off." Other issues raised by another parent from Latin America, who found racism "scary," included a lack of attention by teachers who seemed to "prefer" other children, children picking on Asian students and teasing others because of a lack of sporting prowess. In addition, minority group parents complained that while other children in the class were being given extra work, there were low expectations for their children whose school work that had gone "downhill," a situation which parents felt was tantamount to discrimination against their children.

Negative attitudes towards people of differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds were also evident in education at post primary level. Participants described a lack of help and/or motivation for themselves by some university staff who made comments such as *"Don't try, it's harder at the next level"* or *"Try other courses, it's too hard"* when they sought to continue or convert courses begun in their country of origin. Findings such as these are corroborated by those of Wright (1992) who draws attention to the presence of "structurally embedded racism" (p.viii) existing both in education and society despite attempts in Britain and elsewhere to overcome this tendency by "multicultural" programmes and a "celebration" of differences of language and culture. Furthermore, Tomlinson (1993) maintains that despite pressure on minority groups to give up their traditions in order to become accepted and have equal opportunities in 'mainstream' societies such as Britain, this is almost impossible due to ignorance and longstanding beliefs endemic in society of racial discrimination, prejudice and the superiority of white Anglo-European culture.

In addition, the system of formal education can be regarded as instrumental in perpetuating attitudes of inequality in which minority groups are seen as "associated with deficiency and deviance" (p.12), which results in feelings of rejection by "mainstream" society (Treppte, 1994). Furthermore, linguistically and culturally different parents are frequently considered as a "problem" for schools, due to the negative stereotypes and low expectations held by school personnel who lack adequate training and understanding in dealing with minority group families (Bermudez, 1993; Giles, 2002; Tomlinson, 1993). "Labelling" such as this is seen by Owen & Razaq (1996) as another form of racism, moreover the negative views that many educators hold of families and their practices actually disadvantage large numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse children in school (Lubeck, 1994).

Attitudes and Expectations of Education in Australia

Many parents in this research study, spontaneously made comparisons of their children's education in Australia with their own education. Participants from Africa commented on the *"gentle"* treatment of children by Australian teachers in contrast with the

harsh treatment they experienced in their country of origin, and were particularly pleased with the concern, help and support evident in Catholic schools which they felt emphasised the importance of responsibility and family relationships to students. However, despite these favourable remarks most African parents felt Australian schools in general lacked discipline and time limits, furthermore children were not motivated, worked too slowly and were not prepared enough in primary for the requirements of later academic education.

Parents from Latin America stressed the low expectations and lack of homework in Australian schools compared with those in their country of origin, a situation which they felt would prevent many children taking advantage of the opportunities available in Australia. However in contrast, a Scandinavian participant felt that there was too much emphasis on the academic side of education in Australia and not enough on the practical compared with her country of origin, and more concentration on children's physical development and equipment to "*build up their physique*" was needed in schools, in order to ensure the optimal "*all round*" development of children, in preference to providing money for the P&C to air condition the whole school.

In contrast to these critical comments however, the parents in this study also praised aspects of Australian education including the combination of physical and mental learning and short hours in preschool, good resources and facilities, choice of state or private schools, freedom from religious dogma in the government schools, attention by teachers particularly in the Catholic schools, and the understanding of parents' desires for their children evident in private schools. Most parents liked the methods used in primary school and were happy with their children learning multiplication tables, computer skills and music, and the generally good and flexible opportunities available in Australian education.

These findings that parents make comparisons of their children's education with that of their own, are supported by Cullingford (1996), who maintains that parents see many improvements in schools due to more friendly relationships between teachers and children, less rote learning and formality. However, this author stresses also that due to the memories

of their own personal experiences of education in the past, the view that most parents have of the school curriculum can be regarded as basically "traditional" (Cullingford, 1991). In addition, the concerns that many parents feel about their children may also be related to memories and perceptions that teachers and schools failed to help them when they were children (Groundwater-Smith & Forster, 1994; Keyes, 2002).

Parents attribute great importance to education and its affect on their lives in general, not simply academically (Cullingford, 1996), and are vitally concerned with giving their children the opportunity for a "better chance than we had " by obtaining a higher level of skills and qualifications for future employment (Cullingford, 1991, p.16). Research in Australia and New Zealand has also demonstrated the high aspirations that mothers, particularly those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, have for their children for whom they desire a good education and a career to ensure a guaranteed source of income and independence (MacIntyre, 1999; Groundwater-Smith & Forster, 1994).

In addition, minority group parents have been found to have expectations that schools and teachers would prepare children for future academic success as well as providing social and moral education, and many experience disappointment and dissatisfaction with what they perceive to be a lack of professionalism and responsibility by those working within the education system (Forster, 1999; Cullingford, 1996; Kalantis, Gurney & Cope, 1993). In order to compensate for perceived deficiencies in the schools therefore, many parents take other measures to ensure that their children get every opportunity to obtain a high standard of education (Sui, 1993), while also emphasising the value of working hard as a means to achieve success (Lopez, 2001).

These findings are echoed by those of this research study which indicate that many of the participants saw their role as guiding and extending their children's learning beyond that provided by the school, and assisting with further enrichment for their children in areas such as music, reading, drama, sports, with the express aim of enabling the child to achieve a higher standard of education than they had attained themselves. These findings are supported by Hidalgo et al (1995), who highlights the fact that families are capable of

nurturing, monitoring and facilitating their children's education even when financially impoverished, furthermore MacBeth (1993) highlights the powerful influence of this learning which occurs in the environment of home and family.

Summary

Minority group parents are equally as concerned as other parents about their children, and their experiences of Australian schools are important in the formation of their attitudes towards education (Cullingford, 1996; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Salinas Sosa, 1996). In comparison with schools in the countries of origin of most participants, resources, facilities and the 'welcoming' atmosphere were regarded as superior in Australia, however many parents also had negative experiences of schooling here, which can be attributed in many cases to poor communication between schools and parents (Keyes, 2002; Trumbull et al., 2001). Participants' unfamiliarity with the Australian system, and the dearth of information on class routines and programmes, a lack of awareness and/or interest by teachers, and feelings of being "fobbed off" were issues of concern. Dissatisfaction with their children's progress was common, particularly by Latin America participants, who felt that children were not extended enough, many were also concerned that they would be unable to help if their children fell behind. The resulting feelings of powerlessness which are seen as likely to lead to parental disillusionment and withdrawal from contacts with schools, is also cause for concern (Howard, 1994; Keyes, 2002).

The lack of awareness of individual differences, low expectations and the influence of early negative "labelling" throughout primary school, and lack of the intellectual extension of their children demonstrated by teachers, also concerned parents. Teachers were regarded as barely coping with large, "split" or "inclusive" classes, and seen as frustrated and only interested in doing the "basic" minimum. Their manner was felt to be cold, unsympathetic, or in some cases even hostile.

Academic rigour was felt to be lacking in primary school, inadequate setting and marking of homework, little emphasis on good work habits and poor motivation was also a source of

anxiety for many parents who felt that there was little preparation for harder study required later to enable their children to continue to university. Despite not wishing to subject their children to the harsh punishments they had experienced, parents regarded discipline particularly in government schools as inadequate, and the punishments used from pre-primary level, as mostly ineffective or inappropriate and lacking in positive guidance. Also described were problems and concerns due to a lack of understanding or acceptance and apparent discrimination or rejection demonstrated by 'mainstream' Australian adults and children towards those from cultural and linguistically different backgrounds.

Despite these negative experiences many parents had positive attitudes about Australian education, and several were particularly concerned with guiding and extending their children's learning beyond the perceived boundaries of what schools provided, to enable them to take advantage of all available opportunities to attain a high standard of education.

Experiencing Education in Australia

Young Children's Voices

The final question in this research study explores the experiences and perceptions of the young children of the participants, regarding school in Australia. This was regarded as vital in any investigation of families and education, which historically have concentrated only the viewpoints of teachers and parents while those of the children have been ignored and devalued, (Jamrozik & Sweeney, 1996). Past perceptions of children as "chattels" belonging to their parents (Waters, 1998), and unable to contribute in matters concerning their own lives (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997) are both viewpoints contributing to the silencing of children's voices in educational research. Exclusion of children's voices calls into question the validity of research, as pointed out by Flekkoy & Kaufman (1997):

Asking children about how they view the world is not yet a common part of scientific procedures which means many studies lack important information. Interpretation of results may therefore be faulty (Flekkoy & Kaufman 1997, p.17).

Moreover, despite increasing attention focussed on the rights of children as a result of emphasis on fundamental human rights, and acceptance of the U. N. Convention of the Rights of the Child (Freeman, 1997; Flekkoy & Kaufman 1997), authors such as Jamrozik & Sweeney (1996) maintain that in Australia the needs and rights of children have been perceived to be less important than those of adults. This has resulted in the denial of many of children's human rights including a lack of genuine participation and freedom of expression in matters concerning them. Furthermore, Prout maintains that the reality of contemporary childhood, is one of "surveillance, constraints and controls" (Prout, 2001, p.198) particularly in school which he sees as basically an "anti-democratic environment for pupils"(Prout 2000, p.312). This may be particularly true for children from minority group families in Australia, whose rights and needs are at risk of being overlooked due to lack of awareness of their family circumstances, prior experiences, concerns and difficulties at school (Candy,1997). Examined within this context, the data from children in this research study discloses views of schooling in this country which have gone unnoticed in the past.

School Experiences

Previous studies in the U.K. and elsewhere, by authors such as Cullingford (1991,1995) and Sherman (1997) have indicated that the amount of time spent in school outside the classroom is of equal importance to children as that spent on formal work under the direction of the teacher.

From the child's perspective the experience of school includes arrival, the activities of the playground, and dinner [lunch] dinner time features strongly as a significant moment in the child's day (Cullingford, 1991, p.49, 52).

These findings are supported in this study in which children were asked what they do at school. Quite spontaneously recess, lunch, routines such as assembly, other activities including games, music, and those involving physical education, were mentioned by the children more frequently than any of the academic subjects except maths.

Furthermore, play was referred to by more than half of the children in this study only in the context of games, sport or recess times, although two did comment that they played in the classroom after their work was finished. This would seem to be an indication that even in the early childhood years (Years 1-3), the emphasis in school was on "work" and playing was regarded as a "filler in" or "reward" with little intrinsic value. Children in this study appeared to view play as not "productive" but rather as counterproductive to the learning process in school and society. These findings echo those of Sherman (1997) who found that even for 5 year olds, play at school was thought of as "completely separate from the working and learning process" (p.120) and therefore relegated to taking place after "work" is completed satisfactorily (Sherman 1997, p.120).

In the light of these findings it was not surprising to find that what children liked best in school was the time spent outside the classroom at recess and lunch with friends, followed by "free" activities involving creativity and motor skills such as drawing, singing, music, sport and "fitness," and some academic subjects including maths and reading. When these preferences were analysed further, it was noted that while sport, recess and lunch were liked equally by both girls and boys, four out of the five children who mentioned liking maths were boys and all those who liked reading were girls. Drawing was more popular with boys however, and music with girls. In addition, all the children who listed friends among their likes at school were boys, an indication that girls may have more difficulty with their peer group relationships, an issue which will be dealt with later in this discussion. This is supported by the findings of Cullingford (1991) who contends that the times that children like most at school are not the formal lessons but the intervals between them such as lunch time when they are in the playground with their friends, and sporting activities.

In contrast, the dislikes reported by children were mostly related to their peers, who were described as either making them "scared" or "angry," an indication of the difficulties many children, especially those from different backgrounds, may have in relationships with their peer group at school (Candy, 1997). In addition, children described subjects such as library, language, reading, and in one case even school itself, as "boring." The latter expressed was most poignantly by the child concerned : *"I finish early and sit and do nothing. I feel*

bored. If someone else has finished I would like to be able to play with them." Cullingford (1991) emphasises also that children find school repetitious, full of similar activities and routines, and time spent waiting for the teacher's attention :

They tend to blanket things they don't like with the term 'boring' ... the worst aspect of school is not just its dullness, but the repetition of similar work (Cullingford, 1991, p.65).

In addition to the difficulties with peers to be addressed in the following section, and dislike of "boring" routine, several children mentioned disliking teachers and getting "into trouble" at school. In Italy teachers were perceived to be "mean" by a child who was told to "Go and get paper" not knowing where it was, a clear indication of the sense of "failure" and "humiliation" felt by the child in unfamiliar surroundings due to lack of understanding and sympathetic handling by the teachers concerned. This situation echoes the findings of authors such as Cullingford (1991,1995) and Sherman (1997), who maintain that children can feel "picked on" and mortified by some teachers' treatment of them, and therefore have both positive and negative experiences of teachers in general.

The classroom may be...never fully secure, as long as some lessons are pervaded with the difficult, the demanding or embarrassing (Cullingford, 1995, p.105).

Further insights into the causes of "difficult" behaviour may also be revealed when comments such as those made by a child who "hated" a previous school, are considered : *"Last year was very bad. I had a terrible teacher Mrs X. I was very naughty because I didn't like it much. I don't know why."* Sherman (1997) stresses that :

Careful examination of their [children's] remarks provide us with a remarkable reflection of the classroom (Sherman, 1997, p.125).

Previous studies by Cullingford (1991, 1995) emphasise that the experience of school for children is not always happy and can be full of anxiety due to negative experiences with "lessons," teachers, and other children. Moreover, the fear of failure and the resulting shame and embarrassment, is in many cases stronger than any fear of punishment.

As well as negative comments about teachers however, there were children in this research study who said they liked teachers. These were all in the younger age group - 7

years old, perhaps an indication that teachers of the earlier grades may be perceived as requiring a more gentle manner, in order to support young children and help them learn. However, previous studies note that while children of all ages acknowledge that teachers are figures of authority and that discipline is needed, they also want to be liked by them. Some teachers continue to be remote, and the children are very much aware of it (Cullingford 1989, 1995). It has been established in the past that many teachers are unaware of the concerns of the children, focusing instead on "improving the standard of skills taught" (Candy, 1997, p.74). Earlier studies on children's ideas about teachers and schools suggest that they are well aware of differences between teachers, and have firm views about what they would prefer. "Children want to feel that teachers are interested, concerned and responsive" (Cullingford, 1995, p.107).

Children appreciate what good teachers are doing...show them *how* to do things and not just what to learnimportant question is the friendliness or the distance of the teacher (Cullingford, 1989, p.117,128).

In addition, it was noticeable that although these children were all from families with at least one Non-English speaking background parent, little mention was made of languages other than English except by the children of Spanish background, one of whom commented that the teacher had a brother working in Spain and could speak some Spanish words. This child also told of being read a story with a name in Spanish, a recognition of a linguistic and cultural background which brought obvious pleasure to the child concerned. Another child expressed a dislike for English language spelling, while a third did not like being "forced" to do reading [English] which was "boring" and also felt annoyed at not being able to read Spanish. The learning of Japanese was a positive experience for one child of Latin American background as there were both past and present links with Japan within the extended family. These findings seem to indicate that although there may be some recognition of the backgrounds of children with minority group parents, by and large the majority of these children are not having their linguistic and cultural differences affirmed and utilised. Such differences are seen by Thomas (1992) and Candy (1997) as valuable resources to enrich learning and increase understanding for all students in the classroom.

Peer Group Experiences

As noted in the previous section, all the children who mentioned friends among their likes at school were boys, while the girls listed issues relating to their peer group frequently among their dislikes. Girls expressed a dislike of children who were mean and scared them by being physically threatening, while boys disliked those who would not play the way they wanted or hurt them deliberately while playing, making them angry. When the children in this study were asked about their friends at school, all but one of the boys made only positive comments, talking mainly about playing games and support given by their friends, while in contrast the remarks made by girls were more negative than positive, including comments that friends could be "*mean*", "*not nice*" and fight. Hill, Laybourn & Borland (1996) assert that for girls, concerns centre on particular friendships and they worry about "falling out with friends" (p.139) compared with boys, for whom friendships are less intense, more related to interest groups and, apart from occasional physical clashes, less prone to difficulties.

Issues significant to them...under estimated or even dismissed by grown-ups ... included the emotional impact of falling out with friends, especially for girls ... [and] peer insults (Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996, p.142).

Upon further questioning about those peers disliked at school, a picture emerges of difficulties in relationships among many of these children, some of whom were described using words such as silly, mean, selfish, make faces, threaten, name call, tease, hurt, push, lie, bully, fight, as well as naughty and cheeky to teachers. Peer group tactics such as bullying and harassing, Cullingford (2000) maintains are a part of the constant pattern of changing groups and friendships which exists in the social structure of schools, and which children learn to cope with as part of their growth and development in childhood.

The testing of friendships and the exploration of other people's emotional weakness is a widespread phenomenon. Those who are most easily provoked are especially vulnerable to such treatment (Cullingford, 2000, p.6).

However, earlier studies by authors as Kelly & Cohn (1988), Epstein (1992), Jamrozik & Sweeney (1996), and Candy (1997), emphasise that because of the differences in physical appearance, dress, language and behaviour from the majority of children in school,

migrant and minority group children may be particularly at risk of suffering from name calling and rejection by peers. In this study, it was noted that physical differences of skin and hair colour were given by one child as the reason for dislike and avoidance by other children, some of whom were also described as disliking Asians. Such racist tendencies, even in preschools and primary schools, have been found to be quite common by authors such as Kelly & Cohn (1988), Palmer,(1990), Epstein (1992), Siraj-Blatchford (1994), Troyna & Hatcher(1992). Furthermore, the latter asserted that racism in predominantly white British primary schools, occurred more frequently and was more entrenched than teachers and schools were prepared to acknowledge (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992).

Authors such as Palmer (1990) and Harper & Bonnano (1993) found this behaviour to be prevalent also in Australia towards children whose skin colour differed from that of the mainstream "Anglo" population, and intercountry adoptees. Such attitudes can also affect children from families with bi-cultural, bi-lingual and/or bi-racial backgrounds, as was the case with several children in this study. These authors and others, stress the need for information and strategies to combat racism and facilitate the optimal development of identity in children with dual cultural and/or racial backgrounds (Harper & Bonnano 1993, Morrison & Rodgers 1996).

Experiences of overt racism by peers both in and out of school, can create a sense of insecurity and fear of rejection, due to the child's difference from the perceived 'norm' of 'mainstream' peers, feelings which can be detrimental to the development of the positive social relationships and friendships which are vital for a child's wellbeing (Epstein 1992).

The friendship of at least one child is vital for the development of self confidence ... to facilitate participation within the group and alleviate feelings of loneliness, isolation and inferiority especially in the migrant child (Candy, 1997, p.58).

Furthermore, the need for esteem, acceptance and the respect of others as well as oneself, is seen by Maslow, in his "Hierarchy of Needs," as essential to the development of the higher order of "self-actualisation" needs required to facilitate further learning and

academic education (Papalia & Olds, 1981, cited in Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

"Getting into trouble" at school for things such as talking and not listening in class was also mentioned by the children in this research study. However it was established that the main reason for reprimands were fighting with other children, presumably in the playground. Some evidence of positive reinforcement of "good" behaviour was noted, with a system of marbles as "rewards" placed in a jar, which when full resulted in a "treat" for the whole class. In contrast however, a punishment system was described by one of the younger children in this study (Yr 2), which involved the handing out of different coloured cards by teachers, mainly for fighting or similar playground behaviour. The accumulation of sufficient of these cards resulted in either exclusion or expulsion from school. In general however, teachers did not seem to be involved in helping to solve any of the problems with the peer group experienced by the children in school, a situation illustrated vividly by the following comments : *"...they fight me and won't stop. I feel sad and angry. Some times the teachers help and some times they don't, sometimes they be too bored to help."*

Cullingford (1991) maintains that children wish teachers would help more, however despite the fear engendered by the threat of bullying, such issues are mostly not discussed by the class as a whole or with the teacher, and only mentioned at home if a child is very unhappy.

They wish teachers would do more to control it but they recognise that being 'picked on' and 'picking on' people are part of the social world of the school (Cullingford, 1991, p.60).

Unhappiness at school was found generally to be less related to activities in the classroom, and more to teasing, bullying and breaking up of friendships due to the fact that for children school is in the main a "testing ground" for social relationships (Cullingford 1994, 1995).

For many of the children school can be a threatening environment not because of what takes place academically ... but because of what takes place as a result of so many children coming together in one place (Cullingford, 1994, p.14).

Minority group children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are particularly at risk from the consequences of behaviour such as "belittling" of appearance and speech, which has been found by Nansel et al.(2001) to be a very common form of bullying in both boys and girls, the main reason given being that the child "didn't fit in." Australian research has found bullying to be damaging to the physical and academic well being of children in school, resulting in psychosomatic and psychological symptoms and deterioration in physical health in victims, as well as a "risk factor" associated with future anti-social and delinquent behaviour in offenders (Foreno et al.,1999; Rigby, 2001; Morrison, 2002). World wide, bullying is recognised as psychologically, socially and physically destructive behaviour resulting in significant mental and physical health problems, in both childhood and later life.(Nansel et al., 2001; Karstadt & Woods,1999). Extensive research conducted in Europe, United States, and Australia has documented the long term effects of bullying in childhood. Authors such as Nansel et al.(2001), Spivak & Prothrow-Stith (2001), Rigby (2001) and Parada, Marsh & Yeung (1999) highlight the deleterious consequences of this behaviour on both the victims of bullying, in whom low self esteem and high levels of depression were reported as young adults, and perpetrators who were more likely to have exhibited violent behaviour and criminality at a similar age.

However, despite the need for urgency in dealing with the problems of bullying in the schools, the importance of avoiding excessively punitive responses is stressed. Spivak & Prothrow-Stith (2001, p.2,3) draw attention to the "disturbing" practices of "labelling" children rather than seeking to understand the causes of their behaviour. These authors view bullying as a "red flag," and stress the need for school based strategies such as "curricula on social skills," "changed social norms," "clear rules and consequences," which have been found to be effective in Europe. In Australia, Morrison (2002, p.2,3) sees schools as a "microcosm of society" having the potential to either "nurture and integrate individuals" or "stigmatise and exclude," and advocates conflict resolution programmes such as "The Responsible Citizenship Programme," as a means of imparting skills which can reduce the bullying behaviour in schools and increase respect and consideration for others. Moreover, Schmidt-Neven (2000) stresses the need for an authentic partnership

between teachers and parents to find solutions to the prevalent problem of bullying in schools.

The Importance of School

When the children in this research study were asked about the importance of school, they discussed the need to learn to write, read, do maths, science, and spelling as well as learning the *"rules."* However most of the children talked about how schooling would help one when *"grown up,"* in areas such as skills for daily living, obtaining a job and in higher education seen as a prerequisite for gaining employment at a higher level. These findings are consistent with those of Cullingford (1991) who established that even primary school children see school as a preparation for the future, but relate it only to prospective employment rather than an intrinsically valuable experience in its own right. "Getting an education" and the learning of the "basic" skills, are seen to be concerned more with "getting a job" than developing other skills such as creativity, problem solving and social relationships. As a result the purpose of education is viewed solely as preparing them for the future job market. This situation is seen by Cullingford (1991) as a reflection of the lack of discussion between teachers and children about the "purpose" of schools, and the emphasis by parents on the importance of qualifications in order to obtain a "good" job, a high standard of living, and avoid the danger and insecurity of unemployment.

In contrast, going to school is viewed as involving more than just getting an education by Schmidt-Neven (2000), who maintains because it is the place in which all aspects of a child's personality are developed in interactions with others, it needs to be regarded as a setting for learning skills other than those relating purely to academic subjects. The function of education is seen also by Rogoff (1990), Bruner (1996) and Flekkoy & Kaufman (1997), as a mechanism for enculturation of potential adults to ensure the transmission of the culture of society, furthering its "economic, political, and cultural ends" (Bruner, 1996, p.67). This is supported by the work of Cullingford (1991), who found that teachers see schools as "microcosms of society" in which, as well as the formal academic curriculum, children need to learn things such as self-reliance, self-control, and self-discipline, for their future life as a citizen. Moreover, teachers never talk about jobs or

employment with children, and while privately they stress the importance of the "hidden curriculum" and the "social aspects" of education that children need to learn in order to behave acceptably and understand the "organisational signals" of school, this is rarely conveyed explicitly to the children in school (Cullingford, 1991, p.161).

The social aspects were also emphasised by the children in this study, who felt that without school one would not know how to behave and do the wrong things, not be "*smart*," have a "*low IQ*", plus other people would not understand you, would laugh and say you were "*dumb*". These findings also echo those of Cullingford (1991) who stressed the need that all children have to feel competent and avoid the discomfiture and humiliation which comes from making mistakes and feeling ignorant in social situations both in school and in the outside world.

Knowing how to behave and doing well in school is significant otherwise they [children] would feel silly or incapable (Cullingford, 1991, p.168).

Among other points raised by the children in this context was the perception that teachers are necessary for learning. Cullingford (1989) in his work on children's perceptions of teachers, notes that children see primary teachers as understanding people with a lot of knowledge which they pass on, giving help when needed.

The teacher is there to help them learn the *process* of work, and not just the information....an explainer of *how* to go about work (Cullingford, 1989, p.126,127).

Furthermore, the need to enjoy school was emphasised by several children, who saw play as an important means of developing friendships, the main preoccupation for most children at school (Cullingford 1991). Moreover, in one instance changing to a "*new*" school was a revelation, which in contrast with the previous school, was : "*interested in you learning, but have fun while doing it*," an attitude more conducive to learning for children at school particularly in the early primary years (Sherman, 1997).

While concluding their interviews, three of the older children (8yrs) spoke positively about school and teachers, most of whom were perceived as "*really nice*." In contrast, one of the younger children (7yrs) described a "*nasty*" teacher as being nice only to older children,

further evidence of the sensitivity and vulnerability of children to distress and humiliation in school by some teachers (Cullingford, 1991, 1995). Negative aspects of schools in Italy and Australia, including graffiti and anti-social behaviour, were highlighted by one child, who attributed this to Year 7 students and older children, possibly as a result of end of year "pranks" or other vandalism. Comments such as these would appear to confirm assertions by Cullingford (1991) that children are extremely sensitive to the appearance and atmosphere of schools.

Final remarks by one 8 year old who expressed a wish for school to be "*harder*" and more of a "*challenge*" were interesting. It was thought probable that these comments were a reflection of the attitudes of the child's parents, who along with other Latin American participants, had expressed concerns about the quality and quantity of school work in the early years of schooling in Australia compared with their experiences in Latin America. Cullingford (1991,1995) emphasises that beliefs about school are based on expectations of families, memories of parents, and the assumptions of the community in which we live.

Summary

When viewed from the perspective of young children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, a picture emerges of Australian schooling in the early years which differs from that which is commonly portrayed. Despite the fact that most children in this research study expressed a preference for non-academic activities outside the classroom, these times are fraught with difficulties for children from minority group backgrounds. Moreover, the feelings and concerns expressed by many of these children are a clear indication that they are "at risk" of negative outcomes in the important area of building positive self esteem, due to the difficulties of making friends, and other problems such as bullying and racism in school.

Children's relationships with teachers were seen as both positive and negative, however generally speaking, little help with peer group problems has been forthcoming for these children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, teachers being often more

concerned with academic outcomes than helping children learn to solve any problems with their peer group. Furthermore, there was little evidence of affirmation by teachers of the cultural and linguistic differences of the children in this research study, or discussion of any of the aspects of schooling other than academic learning, which are equally as important for the future wellbeing of the child as preparation for future studies and employment.

It is seen therefore, as vital that teachers obtain support and training to extend their understanding of the importance of listening to children, and build up their confidence in dealing with all the issues which concern them in schools, in order to facilitate optimum future outcomes for all children, including those from backgrounds which are linguistically and culturally different from the English speaking 'mainstream' children in the classroom.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Implications and Recommendations

This study portrays the educational background and experiences of parents from linguistic and cultural backgrounds which differ from those of the Australian “mainstream” population, whose children are attending either government or Catholic schools in this country. These families are seen as coming from systems and structures differing widely from those operating in Australia which basically are derived from English speaking Anglo-Celtic and Christian traditions (Epstein, 1992; Fields, 2000). When viewed from an “ecological systems” perspective therefore, the sets of “nested rings” making up the different ecological structures of linguistically and culturally diverse “non-Anglo” families and those of “Anglo” Australian schools containing teachers and children can be seen to have little in common, with the only overlap occurring during interactions between home and school. Thus, children from minority groups who are situated at the centre of this overlap, can be seen as being influenced by and interacting with two very different ecological systems (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Keyes 2002).

The importance of building strong links between a child’s “microsystems” of home and school, and the powerful influence of good connections on children’s development, increasing competency and positive outcomes, has been well established in the past (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Such links or “mesosystems,” include the participation of parents and families in school activities, and the sharing of common values and experiences with the educators of their children (Gabarino, 1982; Keyes, 2002). The importance of relationships between the school and family has been further highlighted in the “overlapping spheres of influence” model, which extends and develops the original ecological model and focuses on the interactions at an interpersonal level between parents and teachers, as well as those of schools and families generally (Epstein, 1992; Hidalgo et al., 1995).

The importance of good quality interactions and relationships between parents and teachers is regarded as all the more vital due to findings of long term benefits of parental support, involvement, and encouragement on children's learning and development (Epstein, 1992). Furthermore, the importance of positive relationships and good communication in the establishment of common goals of education and how best to achieve them, cannot be over-emphasised, particularly in the light of the changing emphasis of education from the more traditional methods of rote learning and replication of teachers' concepts, to constructivist approaches in which learning is viewed as individually and socially constructed by the student as a result of their experiences (Candy, 1991).

The establishment of good relationships and mutual understanding between parents and educators is facilitated by similar values and experiences upon which to build, however these may differ in families from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and result in inadequate home - school links and weaker "mesosystems" with less potential to facilitate positive outcomes. Due to their varying cultures, personal life histories, and own "lived" experiences, the participants in this study have perspectives and interpretations of the world which are not the same as those parents and children who were born in Australia (Burns, 1995; Denzin, 1992). Moreover, most teachers are also from "Anglo" Australian backgrounds and are thus unlikely to have any exposure to similar "world views" or experiences (Arthur, 1996). In addition the way that individuals interpret day to day "lived" experiences, including their interactions and relationships as parents with schools and teachers, is dependant on their prior experiences, perceptions and cultural understandings, and is instrumental in the formation of their attitudes and beliefs (Brooker, 2003; Keyes, 2002; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Subramanian, 1996; Ogbu, 1995a; Soto & Swadner, 2002).

This study has demonstrated clearly that many minority group parents have experiences of their own early education and that of their children which are negative. Such experiences are likely to be detrimental to the formation of good relationships and strong ecological "links" which are seen as so important for the wellbeing of young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, cited in Berk, 1994). Moreover, most of these parents had

experiences of severe, authoritarian teachers and harsh punishments as children at school, and it was noticeable as a result, that few felt able to approach their children's teachers easily with their concerns about education. Furthermore, although these parents did not want their children to experience the same harsh treatment, many were also very concerned about what they saw as a lack of discipline particularly in government schools in Australia. Despite these perceptions, spontaneous descriptions of *"getting into trouble"* at school and the resulting punishments, particularly by the boys involved in this study, would seem to indicate that an emphasis on punishment, although no longer corporal, still persists in many Australian schools, confirming the view held by several of the minority group parents that redirection and methods of positive guidance especially for young children are lacking.

Formal methods of rote learning and *"lots"* of homework from early primary years experienced by parents in this study, led also to spontaneous comments regarding concerns about a lack of homework and the perceived lower standards and expectations for their children. However, in endeavouring to communicate their differing ideas, standards and expectations about methods of learning, and express their concerns in a legitimate manner to teachers, it was noticeable that the few parents who felt able to do so were in most cases *"brushed off"* or met with indifference or hostility by schools and teachers, making them feel as if they were *"problems"* or causing *"trouble"* resulting in further frustration.

In addition, lack of congruence with the traditionally accepted methods of parent involvement in "mainstream" schools, due to unfamiliarity with the Australian system, practices and goals, means that the knowledge of these parents, as well as their different standards and ideas about education, are often discounted by schools and teachers who view it as inappropriate, invalid and irrelevant. Moreover, these families may be perceived as ignorant, indifferent, apathetic or not contributing to their children's education, and thus excluded from participation in home-school partnerships (Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999, 2000; Howard, 1994; Keyes, 2002; Lopez, 2001; Treppte, 1994). However, many families from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds may actually be involved with their children's education in ways which are not within the "normal" parameters of parent involvement operating in schools (Lopez, 2001). Moreover, denying minority group parents

the right to be involved in their children's education is likely to disillusion and disempower them further, causing them to turn away from schools and teachers in general or pursue their aims for the family by alternate means, and further exacerbate the existing bias of student recruitment towards white and middle class teacher trainees (Fields, 2000; Howard, 1994; Sui, 1993).

Racial discrimination and prejudice due to differences in language, culture and appearance were also issues of concern for both minority group parents and their children in this study. Stereotypical, negative, and paternalistic attitudes towards those of different cultural backgrounds by teachers, other parents and children, may be demonstrated by rejection, exclusion from certain activities, lower expectations, devaluation of languages other than English, and encouragement to give up cultural practices which are perceived to be "non - mainstream" (Moles, 1993; Tomlinson, 1993). Such differences in culture, language, beliefs and traditions can be regarded however, as simply the results of the geographic and historical influences existing in the countries of birth of each individual and their families (Hulmes, 1989).

Thus the "world views," experiences and perceptions of education that the linguistically and culturally diverse parents in this study hold, may form a "block" preventing attempts to bridge the "gulf" between the differing "microsystems" of home and school (Moles, 1993). Alternatively, the efforts made by parents to do so, may be met by negative responses from schools and teachers, which can foil any bids to reach mutual understanding for the benefit of their children and facilitation of their educational progress, making parents withdraw due to feelings of powerless and inability to make any difference in their child's education and thus to their future life in Australia (Howard, 1994).

Using the analogy above therefore, the home and school "microsystems" of families from "non -Anglo" backgrounds in particular, can be visualised as being separated by a "chasm" which may be difficult or impossible to cross unaided, necessitating the building of a "bridge" across the gap to facilitate interactions with those on the other side. The evidence of lack of communication between minority group parents and Australian teachers

in this study, can therefore be seen as inhibiting or actually hindering the attempts of parents to build bridges over this "gulf" due to a lack of encouragement by teachers, their failure to meet parents halfway, or the actual rebuffing of any attempts to cross the divide between home and school by the rejection of the approaches of parents with ideas which may differ from those of the "mainstream." Moreover, the findings in this study of a lack of mutual understanding, shared goals, and how to go about achieving these, and the resulting miscommunication leaves parents and teachers on opposite sides of the "chasm" endeavouring to make their differing points of view heard and understood from a distance. Despite these negative experiences however, several of the minority group participants in this study were not deterred and continued their attempts to reach mutual understanding with their children's teachers, in some cases even changing schools to one which they felt was more conducive to their family's needs.

Facilitation of the involvement of parents in the education of their children is seen as particularly important due to the evidence of improved educational outcomes which result (Epstein, 1992; Epstein et al., 1997; Hidalgo et al., 1995, 1995; Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999, 2000). Satisfactory parent involvement requires that common understandings with shared knowledge be established between parents and schools (Arthur, 1996; Lopez, 2001) which can only be achieved through positive communication between parents and teachers and opportunities for parents to be heard without having to wait for formal parent-teacher conferences (Corno, 1996; Keyes, 2002). Initially teachers need to discover what the aims and expectations of individual parents are, and treat these goals with respect and understanding (Arthur, 1996; Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999). Thereafter, the open access to their children's teachers enables parents to have a direct source of information and feedback, and the important recognition that their participation, knowledge and understanding of their child is of value in the education process (Kay et al., 1994).

The communication of ideas about education is seen as all the more important due to the changes occurring in education from traditional methods in which students are required to learn material presented by teachers by rote and repetition, to constructivist approaches where learning is viewed as not transferred but individually and actively constructed by the

student based on previous knowledge, experiences and interactions (Biggs & Moore, 1993). Changes in education philosophy and practice may result in dissatisfaction for linguistically and culturally diverse parents, but can also be an issue for those in the community who are not from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds or members of minority groups.

Moreover, the implications of this study can be further related to the "mainstream" population. The influence of an individual's experiences in the formation of their attitudes and beliefs cannot be overemphasised. Despite the fact that individuals living within a community have similarities in language, culture, race or physical appearance, it is important to recognise that as a result of their unique "lived" experiences, assumptions that people will think or act the same way, even within families, are erroneous and undemocratic. Therefore, in education particularly, there is an urgent need to bear in mind and respect the vitally important aspect of an individual's own unique perspective on the experiences of life (Van Manen, 1990).

Furthermore, negative experiences of education may also have occurred to many "mainstream" parents, particularly if involvement in their children's schooling has been largely tokenistic instead of a genuine "partnership" (Hinde Macleod, 1994; Howard, 1994; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). Examples of "pseudo-participation" have been found to lead to a process of "disempowerment" in which parents who feel frustrated, powerless, and disillusioned withdraw from association with the school and their children's education (Howard, 1994). To avoid this undesirable situation, all parents must be listened to and made to feel that their participation and the expertise that they bring to their children's education is valued by the teachers and schools. This can be achieved through friendly open communication and collaborative relationships between parents and teachers in which respect, mutual understanding and facilitation of the child's educational progress is of paramount importance (Hughes & MacNaughton, 1999).

In addition, many parents are looking for more information from teachers on their child's progress in comparison to the rest of the class and how to facilitate their learning

at home (Cullingford, 1996). Homework is seen by many parents as a way to help them realise the goals they have for their children (Forster, 1999), however, prior to implementation teachers need to consult with parents about their aims and expectations of homework policy and practices, without assuming that all parents support the ideas of teachers and schools (Warton, 1998). The issue of homework can be fraught with difficulties due to a wide variation in policies and practices between individual schools and teachers, however it is also a valuable "bridge" between home and school, particularly when "inspired" by the individual child's interests and the family's motivation (Corno, 1996; Forster, 1999).

Implications for Policy and Practice

Several important implications for those working with children and families result from the findings of this study.

1. Teachers and other professionals need to understand that all their own attitudes and understandings are culturally determined and examine them for bias (Lynch, 1998). It is vitally important to be aware of one's own personal cultural "baggage" (Hulmes, 1989; Zaharna, 1989; Kendall, 1996), particularly in the light of claims by Hodgkinson (1998) that as early as the year 2010 the entire white population of the world will only amount to 9 percent of its total (Fields, 2000). Because of the impact of culture, which may be overt or hidden, on the established beliefs, expectations and practices of our education system, and the rapidly increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of families and children attending Australian schools, examination of the attitudes and practices of teachers and schools in this country is imperative (Harrington, 1994; Waldrup, 1995; Fields, 2000).

To facilitate the development of cultural awareness, active measures should be taken by teachers to examine and reflect on the historical and cultural origins of both their family and country of birth (Lynch, 1998). In addition,

teachers should not assume that all families in Australia have the same backgrounds and experiences as their own, but seek out and interact with those from differing cultural, linguistic and/or racial groups. In order to discover any similarities or differences teachers should listen to and discuss the experiences and ideas of those who are perceived to be different (Harrington, 1994), a process which is best described as learning to "walk a mile in another man's moccasins"(Hulmes,1989, p.149). The increasing diversity of the population in Australia, which is particularly noticeable in the schools, presents valuable opportunities for teachers to facilitate discussion of common and differing experiences in the lives of individual children and their families in an open friendly and caring environment. This is especially important for the development of understanding, acceptance and respect for the many children and parents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds in Australian schools (Candy,1997; Marland, 1993).

2. It is important to understand and respect the importance of a parent's own 'lived' experiences in the formation of their attitudes, ideas and perceptions of life. All the past experiences of parents, including as their relationships and interactions with teachers, as a child and a parent, affect the way that their daily "lived" experiences are perceived and the formation of attitudes and ideas about their children's education (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramanian, 1996; Finders & Lewis; 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Understanding "lived" experiences, the individual's interpretation, and their significance in the formation of attitudes towards education (Van Manen, 1990), is necessary for the establishment of trust, shared understandings and common practices between parents and schools which is vitally important for children's educational progress and the facilitation of optimum outcomes in Australia (Arthur, 1996; Finders & Lewis,1994). This is an important incentive for encouraging teachers to develop warm friendly and open relationships with the parents of children in their classes, and thus acquire

understanding and respect for the kind of past experiences and relationships which have led to the formation of a parent's current attitudes and beliefs about their life and the education of their children.

3. There is a need to improve relationships and build authentic collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers by utilising the expertise of both to further the educational progress of the child, while also reducing the heavy workload of teachers (Wilks, 2000; Finders & Lewis, 1994). The development of collaborative partnerships in which the skills, expertise and opinions of both teachers and parents are valued equally and utilised to maximise learning, is of long term benefit to children and contributes to their progress in education. The equal sharing of the responsibility and decisions concerning children's learning in a meaningful and constructive manner enables parents to contribute their expertise and knowledge of the child within the context of their family and community, providing valuable sources of enrichment for children's learning and development which complements that of the school (Wilks, 2000). By involving parents as active and enthusiastic equal partners working alongside the teacher to further their children's education, the excessive work loads of teachers can be reduced and the parents' responsibility for their children's future increased (Wilks, 2000). Moreover, an increased knowledge of children and greater understanding and empathy with their parents and families (Howard, 1999), as epitomised by the "teacher as a social worker" model, has been found to be indicative of greater "effectiveness" of teaching in primary schools (Marland, 1993, p.15).
4. More information needs to be provided about school programmes and activities for all parents, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. Parents require information on the goals of both the school and individual classroom teachers, how teachers aim to go about achieving these outcomes, and what they can do at home, but also need to know that their help is

valued and appreciated. The importance of parents being able to put forward their point of view in discussions with teachers concerning their children, can not be emphasised too strongly. Furthermore, these views must be taken into consideration when decisions are made in schools, otherwise the danger is that consultation with parents may become simply tokenistic, resulting in their disillusionment and withdrawal from the education process in general (Howard, 1994).

The use of parents' expertise and children's home experiences as resources upon which to build and develop learning experiences, also builds trust, facilitates enjoyment of school related activities and parental participation in their children's education. The organisation of workshops, based on parental knowledge and expertise, in which "mainstream" and "non-Anglo" parents of differing cultural backgrounds make personal contacts and form partnerships to benefit both their children and the school, can also facilitate the involvement of parents in their children's education. This process can minimise barriers and misunderstandings due to differences of language and culture for those from minority groups, and create more awareness and understanding of families from different cultural backgrounds, resulting in improved educational outcomes particularly for children from minority groups (Wilks, 2000; Hidalgo et al., 1995; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Epstein, 1992).

5. Teachers need to be more aware of the difficulties in peer group relationships experienced by children who are from backgrounds which are culturally and linguistically different from the "mainstream" population. These children are particularly at risk of being bullied, harassed, and rejected by others because of their differences, at a time when the need for respect and acceptance is essential to their development and learning (Candy, 1997; Epstein, 1992; Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997; Nansel et al., 2001). Furthermore, such behaviour has been established as damaging to the physical, psychological, and

academic wellbeing of the victims, and a "risk factor" associated with delinquency and anti-social behaviour in the perpetrators (Foreno et al., 1999; Rigby, 2001; Morrison, 2002). Therefore, teachers need to discuss personal interactions and relationships with children, as a means of developing tolerance and understanding of others, as well as problem solving and conflict resolution skills both in and out of the classroom, thus enabling children to deal with their feelings in a socially acceptable way (Candy, 1997; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992).

As increasing numbers of children with linguistic and cultural backgrounds differing from those of the "mainstream" population, enter schools throughout Australia, it is vitally important to recognise the diversity of these families and consider their individual perspectives in order to maximise the educational opportunities for their children. For families whose countries of origin are not historically Anglo-Celtic and English speaking, many difficulties can arise when the children attend Australian schools, due to differences in understandings, values and expectations, and a lack of common prior experiences of education upon which to build and develop positive relationships between parents and teachers, families and schools. Moreover, many parents may also have negative experiences with schools and teachers which can influence their attitudes affecting future relationships with teachers, and disadvantage their children further. Therefore, increased understanding and empathy of the perspectives of parents and families particularly those from cultural and linguistic backgrounds which are perceived as not "mainstream," is seen as vital to the establishment of the positive connections between families and schools necessary for the wellbeing of children in Australian schools.

Educators [need] to have better information about the diversity among families, including family backgrounds, cultures, histories, languages, strengths, values and goals for their children ...All families - whatever their background, culture, or language - want and need assistance from schools in helping their children succeed each year...knowledge of the influence of families from all cultural groups on their children throughout the years of school and...the importance of school and family partnerships ...[indicates] connections must be made and strengthened (Hidalgo et al., 1995, p.519).

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Appendix A

Early Education: Experiences and Perceptions of Minority Group Parents and Young Children.

Consent Form

I

have been informed about all aspects of the above research project and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to let my child..... participate in this activity realising that I and my child may withdraw at any time.

I understand that all information given will be treated in the strictest confidence, and that anonymity will be maintained.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided neither I nor my child is identifiable.

Parent or authorised representative

Date.....

Investigator..... Date.....

*Early Education: Experiences and
Perceptions of Minority Group Parents and Young Children.*

Consent Form

I
have been informed about all aspects of the above research project and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that all information given will be treated in the strictest confidence, that anonymity will be maintained.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Participant or authorised representative

Date

Investigator Date

Appendix B

Guiding Interview Schedule

Parents

1. Tell me about your own early experiences of education and/or schooling as a child.
What can you remember about them? How did you feel about these experiences?
2. Can you tell me how your family felt about education? Can you think of any reasons for this?
3. Tell me about your later experiences of education/ schooling as a child. What can you remember? How did you feel about these experiences?
4. Tell me about your early experiences of education/ school as the parent of a young child. Were these experiences in Australia or elsewhere? Can you tell me how you felt?
5. Tell me about any later experiences of education/ school as the parent of a young child.
6. What are your ideas about education/ schooling in Australia?
7. Are there any other aspects that you would like to tell me about?

Children

1. Tell me about school. What do you do at school?
2. What do you like at school? Can you tell me about it?
3. Is there any thing that you do not like at school? Can you tell me about it? How does it make you feel?
4. Tell me about your friends at school. What is it that you like about them?
5. Are there any children that you do not like at school? Can you tell me about it?
6. Do you think school is important for children? Can you tell me why?
7. Is there anything else you want to tell me about school?

Appendix C

Researcher Initiated Contacts and Interviews

September	8 th dropped forms in to Michael
	9 th rang Jane to arrange visit
	10 th visited Sylvia 1.30 to 2.30
	14 th visited Maureen 10.00 to 11.00
	15 th visited Jane 4.00 to 5.00 going overseas
	15 th rang X&Y to arrange visits
	16 th X 5.00 - not interested
	17 th visited Y not home
	18 th rang Y to arrange visit
	21 st visited Y not home - not interested
	21 st visited Sylvia 1.30 to 2.30
October	22 nd visited Brian 6.30 to 7.30
	26 th rang Sylvia to arrange visit
	29 th visited Sylvia 1.30 to 2.30
November	2 nd visited Brian 6.30 to 7.30
	6 th visited Peter 10.30 to 11.30
	6 th rang Maureen to arrange visit
	11 th visited Maureen 2.30 to 3.30
	13 th rang Brian to arrange visit
	16 th visited Brian 6.30 to 7.30
	24 th visited Sylvia 10.30 to 11.30
	24 th visited Peter 11.30 to 12.30
	24 th rang Maureen, Brian, Sylvia about visits
December	30 th rang Sylvia to arrange visit
	14 th visited Maureen 10.00 to 11.00
	16 th visited Sylvia 4.00 to 5.00
	21 st visited Maureen 8.30 to 10.00
	21 st visited Brian 6.30 to 7.30
	22 nd visited Brian 6.30 to 7.30
January	4 th rang Michael to arrange visit
	4 th rang Sylvia re another parent interested
	4 th rang Jane to arrange visit
	5 th visited Michael 7.00 to 8.00
	6 th sent Jane interview schedule
	6 th rang Lorna to arrange visit
	8 th visited Lorna 2.00 to 3.00
	14 th visited Lorna 2.00 to 3.00
	14 th rang Michael to arrange visit
	19 th visited Paula 2.00 to 3.00
	21 st rang Paula to arrange visit
	27 th visited Michael 7.00 to 8.00
	27 th rang Paula to arrange visit

February

- 1st rang Jane to arrange visit
- 2nd visited Lorna 2.30 to 3.30
- 3rd rang Paula to arrange visit
- 4th rang Jane to arrange visit
- 4th rang Michael to arrange visit
- 4th visited Paula 10.00 to 11.00
- 8th visited Lorna 2.30 to 3.30
- 9th visited Michael 7.00 to 8.00
- 12th visit with Jane 2.00 cancelled - sick
- 13th visited Colin 3.30 to 4.30.
- 13th visited Philippa 4.30 to 5.30
- 15th rang Jane to arrange visit
- 15th rang Michael to arrange visit
- 15th rang Lorna to arrange visit
- 17th visited Lorna 3.30 to 4.30
- 26th visited Jane 2.00 to 3.00

March

- 4th visited Paula 4.00 to 5.00
- 8th visited Lorna 2.30 to 3.30
- 9th visited Michael 7.00 to 8.00
- 30th visited Z 7.00 to 8.00

April

- 3rd rang Jane to arrange visit
- 4th rang Z, not interested in continuing
- 4th rang Philippa to arrange visit
- 13th visited Jane 10.00 to 11.00
- 14th visited Philippa 2.00 to 3.00
- 17th rang Jane to arrange visit
- 18th rang Philippa to arrange visit
- 23rd visited Jane 3.00 to 4.00
- 30th visited Philippa 2.00 to 3.00

May

- 4th rang Philippa to arrange visit
- 4th visited the 'Smiths' 1.00 - not interested
- 21st visited Philippa 2.00 to 3.00
- 28th visited Philippa 2.00 to 3.00

June

- 2nd visited Philippa 3.00 to 4.00
- 2nd visited Colin 4.00 to 5.00
- 11th rang Elizabeth to arrange visit
- 12th visited Elizabeth 2.45 to 3.45
- 12th visited Sam 3.45 to 4.45
- 17th visited Elizabeth 12.30 to 1.30
- 18th visited Sam 1.00 to 2.00
- 31st visited Elizabeth 2.45 to 3.45