

Faculty of Education

**ENGLISH-SPEAKING MIGRANT CHILDREN IN
EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL TRANSITION**

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to investigate whether cultural dissonance was experienced by a group of migrant students during educational and cultural transition to new education systems which shared cultural markers of language and ethnicity. Cultural dissonance is defined in this study as:

A sense of discord or disharmony, experienced by participants in cultural change where cultural differences are found to occur which are unexpected, unexplained and therefore difficult to negotiate and which inhibit behavioural adaptation.

The study utilised case histories of children from forty-seven families. The respondents in the research were the children's parents. The families had emigrated from the United Kingdom to Western Australia during the period 1985-1995.

The families reported receiving little information about education systems in Western Australia prior to migration. In the post-migration period, little official information was provided at system or at school level. Because placing the children in schools was a priority for the families, encounters with Western Australian education systems took place within a few weeks of their arrival as migrants.

This lack of prior information meant that cultural differences in educational provision were unexpected and unexplained. In particular, families encountered unexpected problems in the appropriate placement of their children in Western Australian schools. Accented English and differences in word usage led to unexpected rejection and teasing. The perceived failure on the part of schools to address these and other differences caused confrontations between parents and many schools and disrupted the children's educational progress. These discordant experiences and difficulties led to what, in this study, is characterised as cultural dissonance.

The implications for the study are discussed on two levels. With particular reference to Western Australian education systems, the lack of induction policies for English-speaking migrant children was apparent. There appeared to be no system or school level guidelines which mandated the use of printed matter, provided at State system level to address these difficulties. The schools were not seen to make good use of the

information parents provided about the children's educational stages. The intervention of teachers at classroom level to discourage teasing was seen as ineffective and in two cases teachers contributed to the problems being encountered.

On a more general level, the study has implications for attitudinal change within Australian society towards the reception of skilled and financially secure migrant families. The new criteria for entry to Australia have implications for the socio-economic status of potential migrants. The self-identity of these families is influenced by their status in the social hierarchies of their country-of origin. Skilled and professional families are likely to resist policies for their children's induction being seen as a low priority in Western Australian schools simply because of the child's migrant status.

The research findings gave rise to recommendations that:

- Information of education systems in Western Australia should be made available to all intending migrant families with children.
- Induction policies for all migrant children should be in place and be utilised in Western Australian schools.
- The formulation of policy takes account of the effects of changes to migrant socio-economic status, brought about by the changes to the criteria for entry to Australia.

The study concluded that shared markers of language and ethnicity were not sufficient to ensure that the cultural differences in education systems were not experienced by the families. A lack of prior information on those differences and a lack of induction policies for the children led to difficulties and to experiences of cultural dissonance for the families.

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Table of Contents

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	<u>I</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</u>	<u>III</u>
<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	<u>IV</u>
<u>INDEX OF FIGURES</u>	<u>IX</u>
<u>INDEX OF TABLES</u>	<u>X</u>
<u>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
1.1 CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL DISSONANCE	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	2
1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	4
1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.6 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM AND RESEARCH MODEL	9
1.7 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	10
1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	11
1.9 THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH	11
<u>CHAPTER 2 CULTURE, CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE</u>	<u>13</u>
2.1 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE	14
2.2 CULTURAL DIFFERENCE	16
2.3 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE	18
2.4 THE CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	23
2.5 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN EDUCATION	25

CHAPTER 3	<u>MIGRANT ISSUES</u>	29
3.1	ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION	29
3.2	UNITED KINGDOM MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA	32
3.3	MIGRATION INTO WESTERN AUSTRALIA	34
3.4	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLANS AND POLICIES FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA	36
3.5	RESEARCH INTO ENGLISH-SPEAKING MIGRANT RESPONSES TO EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN AUSTRALIA.	37
CHAPTER 4	<u>THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY</u>	42
4.1	THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE	42
4.2	THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE	48
4.3	THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION	49
CHAPTER 5	<u>THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</u>	53
5.1	THE SELECTION OF A RESEARCH PARADIGM	53
5.2	THE SELECTION OF A RESEARCH MODE	54
5.3	THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	55
5.4	THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH	56
5.5	THE SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	61
5.6	SOURCES OF DATA	62
5.7	METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS	63
5.8	QUALITY CONTROL METHODS	65
5.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	67
5.10	DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE RESEARCH	68
5.11	APPENDICES	69
CHAPTER 6	<u>A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA</u>	70
6.1	SOURCES OF LITERATURE AVAILABLE TO PARENTS	71
6.2	CULTURAL INFLUENCES WHICH AFFECT THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	73
6.3	HISTORICAL INFLUENCES UPON EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	73

6.4	GEOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	77
6.5	CULTURALLY HELD BELIEFS ABOUT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	78
6.6	ROLES OF SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA AS AGENTS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE	79
6.7	EXTERNAL INFLUENCES WHICH IMPINGE UPON THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS AGENTS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE	81
6.8	THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	82
6.9	CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR NON-COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	85
6.10	CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	87
6.11	CURRICULUM POLICIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	88
6.12	TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	92
6.13	FUNDING FOR EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	93
6.14	THE APPOINTMENT OF TEACHING STAFF	95
6.15	POLICIES GOVERNING THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	96
6.16	POLICIES FOR THE EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	99
CHAPTER	<u>7 A PROFILE OF THE FAMILIES</u>	104
7.1	GENDER OF RESPONDENT ON BEHALF OF THE FAMILIES	104
7.2	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	105
7.3	YEAR OF EMIGRATION TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA	106
7.4	MIGRANT CATEGORY	107
7.5	FAMILY COMPOSITION	108
7.6	LOCATION OF FAMILIES WITHIN THE GREATER PERTH METROPOLITAN AREA	110
7.7	THE EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF THE CHILDREN	111

CHAPTER 8	<u>CONTEXTUAL EXPERIENCES</u>	115
8.1	THE DECISION TO EMIGRATE	116
8.2	APPLYING TO MIGRATE	117
8.3	PREPARING TO LEAVE	119
8.4	LEAVE TAKING	120
8.5	A NEW BEGINNING	120
8.6	SETTLEMENT	121
CHAPTER 9	<u>ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS</u>	124
9.1	INFORMATION ABOUT WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS PROVIDED IN THE PRE-MIGRATION PERIOD.	124
9.2	INFORMATION BROUGHT TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL STAGE	126
9.3	SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE POST-MIGRATION PERIOD	127
9.4	EXPERIENCES OF SYSTEM LEVEL DIFFERENCES	131
CHAPTER 10	<u>ENCOUNTERS WITH THE SCHOOLS</u>	141
10.1	PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SCHOOL SETTING	141
10.2	HELP OFFERED AT SCHOOL LEVEL	142
10.3	DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED AT SCHOOL LEVEL	148
10.4	SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS	157
CHAPTER 11	<u>CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES</u>	159
11.1	CLASSROOM SETTING AND CLASS NUMBERS	159
11.2	DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY ACCENT OR WORD USAGE	164
11.3	PARENT ATTRIBUTION OF EASE IN INTEGRATION	167
11.4	PARENTAL COMPARISONS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION	168

CHAPTER 12	<u>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</u>	173
12.1	OUTCOMES FOR A TYPICAL FAMILY IN THE RESEARCH	173
12.2	THE MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION DIRECTING THE STUDY	175
12.3	ESTABLISHED DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE AND IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA	176
12.4	CAUSES OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE IDENTIFIED IN THE STUDY	177
12.5	MITIGATION OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE	188
12.6	CULTURAL DISSONANCE AND CHILDREN AT-RISK OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE	193
12.7	THE FAMILIES' SITUATION AS MIGRANTS	194
12.8	RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH	197
CHAPTER 13	<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	200
13.1	CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND CULTURAL DISSONANCE	201
13.2	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY	204
13.3	RECOMMENDATIONS ON WIDER ISSUES OF CULTURAL DISSONANCE	206
	<u>REFERENCES</u>	208
	<u>APPENDIX 1</u>	215
	<u>APPENDIX 2</u>	218

Index of Figures

FIGURE 4.1A	THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE, DEMONSTRATING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODEL ADOPTED IN THIS STUDY	45
FIGURE 4.1B	EDUCATION SYSTEMS SET WITHIN THE CORE SPHERE OF CULTURE	47
FIGURE 4.2	THE MIGRANT FAMILY MOVING BETWEEN CULTURES WHICH DIFFER INHERENTLY	49
FIGURE 4.3	THE LIFE-CHANGE PROCESS OF MIGRATION	51
FIGURE 5.4	TIME LINE FOR THE RESEARCH	57

Index of Tables

TABLE 5.1	AXIOMATIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RATIONALISTIC AND NATURALISTIC PARADIGMS	54
TABLE 5.4	SCHOOLS APPROACHED IN THE STUDY	60
TABLE 7.2	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AS STATED BY RESPONDENT FAMILIES	106
TABLE 7.3	YEAR OF EMIGRATION	107
TABLE 7.5A	CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING EACH FAMILY	108
TABLE 7.5B	AGES OF THE CHILDREN	109
TABLE 7.6	LOCATION OF THE FAMILIES	111
TABLE 7.7A	SCHOOL CLASS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM	112
TABLE 7.7B	YEAR GROUP IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA	113

Chapter 1

Introduction

When children from one culture enter into education systems and schools governed by a second culture, differences will exist between the child's cultural background and the second, cultural background of the schools and education systems. No culture completely replicates another.

The thesis examines the course of the transition of children from one cultural background to another, related cultural background. Where cultural differences are unexpected and unexplained, the potential exists for discord and difficulties to occur. In this study, discord and difficulties are made manifest in cultural dissonance which is experienced by the children and their families.

The thesis examines reported cultural differences from theoretical, analytical and phenomenological perspectives in order to explore and assess the degree to which cultural dissonance was experienced in the particular contexts of the families' situation as migrants.

1.1 Concepts of Culture and Cultural Dissonance

Culture, in this study is taken as:

A generalised complex of interdependent, valued traditional and current public knowledge and conceptions, embodied in behaviours and artefacts, and transmitted to present and new members through systems of signs and symbols, which a society has evolved historically and progressively modifies and augments to give meaning to and cope with its definitions of present and future existential problems.

(Bullivant, 1986, p.7)

Furthermore, in relation to education:

Culture is a mediator of learning, affecting and shaping belief systems, cognitive styles, morals, and ways of doing things. As culture helps to define a person's identity, culture, cultural interchange and cultural dissonance influence behavioural adaptation.

(Gordon, 1992, p.13)

Cultural dissonance in this study was expected to arise from experiences of difference and of difficulties encountered in cultural change. The meaning of dissonance is given in "The Australian Oxford Dictionary" (1989) as "discord". An heuristic definition of cultural dissonance has been developed for the purposes of this research:

Cultural dissonance represents a sense of discord or disharmony, experienced by participants in cultural change where cultural differences are found to occur, which are unexpected, unexplained and therefore difficult to negotiate and which inhibit behavioural adaptation.

1.2 Background to the Study

Research and theory in the United States of America and in Australia (Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Sturman, 1985) suggests that when children in education systems experience cultural dissonance these children become vulnerable to educational disadvantage, and therefore are classified as at-risk in education systems. As such they are seen to need particular assistance. (American Institutes For Research Youth and Community Research Group, 1992; Bureau of Immigration & Population Research, 1995; Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Hartley & Maas, 1987; Taft & Cahill, 1978).

Previous studies of children placed at-risk (because of factors associated with the cultures in which they live) have focussed upon ethnically different minorities resident, or becoming resident, within dominant cultures or upon children whose language differs from that of the dominant societal group (Hartley & Maas, 1987; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Larsen & Rumberger, 1992; Taft & Cahill, 1978). Even when the cultural markers of ethnicity and language are congruent, however, other inherent cultural differences exist and may be incongruent with the culture of the host society. The question arises as to whether cultural dissonance occurs in these circumstances, and if it does, in which ways is the phenomenon made manifest.

Language differences can inhibit clear communication and hinder description of experiences that cause discord. The children of United Kingdom families who are emigrating to Western Australia share the cultural markers of language and ethnicity with the dominant group in their host society. These families are well placed to

describe their experiences in cultural transfer. Evidence from previous studies suggests that the children of United Kingdom migrants experience both short-term and long-term difficulties in the transition to Australian education systems (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1995; Hartley & Mass, 1987; Taft & Cahill, 1978)

This evidence, however, is scant and arises as a subsidiary factor on the periphery of studies which focus upon children from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds. The focus reflects a general tendency in research, in recent years in Australia, which has seen the markers of differing ethnicity and language to be of paramount importance. This has led to a neglect of issues surrounding English-speaking migrant children, despite some evidence that disadvantage exists for these children in education systems (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1995; Hartley & Maas, 1987; Taft & Cahill. 1978).

Schools, within education systems, are generally seen as being embedded in the culture of society and, as such, act as agents in the transmission of the traditional and long-held views and values of the society in which they are set (Bourdieu, 1983; Education Department of Western Australia, 1981; Giroux, 1981; Jayasuriya, 1985; Shor & Freire, 1987). In the case of migrants from the United Kingdom who move to Western Australia, an assumption has been made at education system level in this State that children from these families will experience only minimal cultural change (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). The reasoning which underlies this assumption is based upon the premise that:

Where the differences between cultural backgrounds of the immigrants and the mainstream culture are minor, as is the case with British migrants, the changes to either group's culture are small.

(Education Department of Western Australia, 1981, p.1)

This statement, within the framework of policies for multicultural education, makes two presumptions. The first is that a definable monolithic British culture exists and is reflected in a British education system, and the second statement implies that mainstream Western Australian culture has been and is a near replica of that in Britain.

The education system in Western Australia is presumed, therefore, to reflect this mirror image, and transition from one education system to the other is expected to pose few, if any, difficulties. There is a deficit in research information which would test the basis of the Education Department of Western Australia's assumptions and the policy decisions which follow from these assumptions.

The findings of a small pilot study conducted prior to this research and the researcher's own professional experience, in addition to such research evidence as is already in place, call into question the assumption that problems caused by cultural change are perceived as minimal by United Kingdom families and their children. The dearth of recent research evidence regarding the actual experiences of these migrant families in Western Australia prompted the present study.

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

The aim of the present study is to explore, describe and document the experiences of forty-seven migrant families from the United Kingdom, who brought with them dependent school-age children and who placed these children, or attempted to place these children, in schools within the education systems of Western Australia. The research is directed towards the identification and description of cultural differences, reflected in education systems, which were manifest as cultural dissonance in the experiences of the migrant families. The research seeks to explore these experiences of cultural dissonance in the period of the transition and induction of the families' children into Western Australian schools, and to arrive at an understanding of the causes and the nature and extent of any dissonance.

The purpose of this study is twofold. Within the wider focus, the study involves the investigation of the phenomenon of cultural dissonance (Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994), when this is manifest in a particular situation of transition between schools set within culturally separate education systems. Schools have been identified as significant agents of cultural transmission and, as such, form an appropriate location for the examination of manifestations of cultural dissonance. At this level, the study is intended to extend and deepen understanding of the concept of cultural dissonance, the evidence of beliefs and behaviours that are taken to indicate

the presence of cultural dissonance and its consequences for children and their families within the setting of school provision.

The specific focus of the research centres upon an examination of the experiences of the migrant families from the United Kingdom. At this level, the study seeks to identify issues relating to the education of their children in the period preceding emigration and following their arrival in Western Australia. The focus of the study relates particularly to the transition and induction of these children into Western Australian education systems.

Through the identification of issues encountered, the study at this level is intended to assist in the revision of Australian education system policies for migrant children from the United Kingdom. The identification of specific issues will alert the education systems of Western Australia to the presence and extent of difficulties for this group of children, and promote a revision of policies at system, school and classroom level.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The area of research into the experiences of English-speaking migrant children entering education systems in Australia has been substantially neglected over past decades. English-speaking migrant children from the United Kingdom form part of the largest group of immigrants into Western Australia. This study aims to increase understanding of these children's experiences as they make the transition into Western Australian education systems. In this way, the study addresses a deficit in research in one area of the migrant population.

In the light of the current debates raging in the public domain, the Parliament and the media over issues of multiculturalism, migrancy and the culture of Australia, the study is timely. The findings contribute to all of these debates.

The previous Federal Government had implemented policies which focused upon the changing demographic composition of Australian society. This focus led to the introduction of programs for multicultural education and to an emphasis upon

language and ethnicity as the cultural markers which governed a need for assistance in migrant populations.

At the inception of the research, the focus at Federal Government level was upon multicultural policies. These policies were present in education systems, focussed upon the needs of children from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds to promote access and equity "on account of a changing client profile."

(Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office of Multicultural Affairs [Dept PM], 1992).

As a result of this focus upon language and ethnicity, provisions which worked in favour of English speaking children in schools were seen at Government level to discriminate against non-English speaking ethnic groups. Affirmative policies which targeted migrant children from non-English speaking backgrounds were introduced to promote equity and access to education. In directing resources to this area, services which addressed the needs of all migrant groups were reduced. Ethnicity and language, not the immediate problems associated with migrancy, had become the factors which were presumed to cause difficulty in integration into Australian society.

The present research suggests that as a result of policy shifts made in an effort to ensure balance in issues of access and equity, a further imbalance was created. In focussing exclusively upon the needs of children from Non-English speaking backgrounds, the needs of English-speaking children in migrant groups have been neglected. The study proposes that initial difficulties in settlement may, in fact, be associated with the factor of migrancy in addition to differing ethnic and language backgrounds.

In this context, ethnic background and language problems can be seen as part of a series of sub-sets of difficulties which may cause migrants to experience cultural dissonance. The current research deals with a sub-set of problems which relate to school transition. Earlier research indicates that migrant children from both English speaking backgrounds and Non-English speaking backgrounds may experience identifiable difficulties as they integrate into Australian educational provision (Hartley & Maas, 1987; Taft & Cahill, 1978).

The study questions the degree of equity of access now provided for English speaking migrant children. Specific resources to assist this group of migrant children have been withdrawn, as the children were not seen to be in particular need of help because of the language and cultural similarities between English speaking countries, in particular between Britain and Australia (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). Policies at Education Department level in Western Australia fail to take account of the complex nature of culture and of inherent cultural differences.

At a more general level, the significance of this research may also contribute to an increased understanding of the whole issue of a separate and identifiable Australian culture. The issues centre on questions as to whether or not the country should move from a constitutional monarchy towards becoming a republic. The approaching centenary of Federation in Australia has added a degree of urgency to this debate.

One means of identifying a particular culture would be to examine how that culture is seen when compared to and distinguished from others—that is, the degree and nature of cultural differences which may cause cultural dissonance to be experienced in the comparison. Schools are seen as transmitters of the culture in which they are set and so are appropriate sites for such comparisons.

An assumption has been made on the existence of a single Australian culture, which is similar in most ways to that of Britain, and into which these families can automatically and easily merge (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). Evidence that a group of families from the United Kingdom believe that they have encountered cultural differences which have led to dissonant experiences would call into question this assumption.

Since the inception of the study, changes at Federal Government level have seen changes in the area of multicultural policy. There has been a downgrading of provision in this sector. Policies to assist migrant families have not been reinstated. Increasingly virulent attacks at Parliamentary and community level are being made upon incoming migrants and upon levels of migration. The focus of such arguments has rested upon the perceived effects of migration upon the mainstream of so-called Anglo-Australian society.

The proponents of this argument have set the issues firmly within Australian society, looking outward from a conservative Anglo-Australian perspective towards incoming migrant groups. The current research provides an alternative viewpoint, looking inward towards Australian society from the perspective of English-speaking newcomers to that society. The reported experiences of this group of English-speaking families from the United Kingdom can contribute to a shift from invective against migrants towards a more informed debate in which the migrants' views are also articulated.

In addition to the wider significance of the study, and to assist in the provision of insights into issues related to this wider significance, at a more particular level the study seeks to identify current difficulties experienced by United Kingdom migrant families in establishing their children in the education systems of Western Australia. Educational priorities in Western Australia can, historically, be shown to have differed from those in the United Kingdom from early colonisation (Gregory & Smith, 1995). Recent developments seem directed towards increased autonomy, accountability and cost-saving for schools within the State education system (Ministry of Education, 1987), student choice in courses (Education Department Policy Statements, undated) and towards a raising of the entry age to formal education (Scott, 1993).

It is significant to identify the problems associated with cultural dissonance which are faced by these migrant families because a linkage has been made in research between cultural dissonance and the factor of children being at-risk of educational disadvantage (Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994). This linkage has implications for system level policies for English-speaking migrant children, in Western Australia in particular and for Australian education systems in general.

1.5 The Research Questions

The research questions which direct this study are generated by the conceptual framework of the study. The study sets out to explore the experience of cultural differences and to establish whether these differences developed into experiences of

cultural dissonance for the families. A number of research questions were set out. The major research question which directed the study was:

What are the experiences of migrant families from the United Kingdom in dealing with cultural differences encountered during the transition and induction of their school age children into Western Australian education systems?

From this major research question, a number of subsidiary questions were then developed, as follows:

1. Do the cultural differences experienced by migrant families from the United Kingdom as their children transfer to Western Australian schools develop into experiences of cultural dissonance?
2. Are there areas of the school curriculum in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?
3. Are there other areas of school provision in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?
4. To what extent, in the view of the migrant families, do education systems in Western Australia act to mitigate experiences of cultural dissonance for these families:
 - a) at system level?
 - b) at school level?
 - c) at classroom level?

1.6 The Research Paradigm and Research Model

The nature of the research, which centred around the experiences of the migrant families, meant that a paradigm which allowed examination of these experiences was required. The unit of analysis, the experiences of the families during the transition and induction of the children into Western Australian education systems, could not

be extracted from the internal and external contexts of the family. The focus area was an integral part of the families' total migrancy experience and as such could not be examined in isolation. No set hypotheses directed the study, but rather the aim was to arrive at a series of "'working hypotheses' that described each case" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.238). To meet the demands of the research, the study made use of the naturalistic paradigm as described by Guba and Lincoln (1982).

Each family had separate experiences of migrancy. In order to allow for the greatest possible depth of understanding of those separate experiences, each family was seen as a discrete case. This view led to the mode of case study being adopted in which "A bounded system (the case) is given in which issues are indicated, discovered or studied so that a tolerably full understanding of the case is possible" (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976, p.141).

1.7 The Research Methodology

The research design was based upon three phases, an initial phase, a cumulative phase and a conclusive phase. Data collection took place during the first two phases of the study. During those phases, a documentary analysis of literature which compared the education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia was carried out. The final, conclusive phase was used to assemble all the data gathered in the study into a completed picture of the families' experiences and the immediate contexts in which those experiences were set.

Data were gathered from primary and secondary data sources. The primary sources were the case study families and other participants who contributed information of a contextual nature. Data were collected by interviews with the case study families, by responses to written interview questions or by telephone interviews. Data were analysed for each individual case and then across all the cases in the study. In this way emergent themes and patterns were identified and pursued, so that a holistic picture of the experiences of the families could be assembled. When those themes were identified and theoretical saturation was achieved, a further series of interviews took place with particular case study families (focus families) whose experiences exemplified the themes which had arisen.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

While the title of the research identifies the group of families studied as English-speaking, the group was drawn exclusively from the United Kingdom. Migrants from the United Kingdom formed the largest foreign group entering Western Australia according to the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (1994). Other smaller English-speaking groups do enter Western Australia, for example from New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994).

During the pilot stage of the study, one family from South Africa was interviewed. This interview revealed significant variables in the educational and cultural settings in South Africa when comparisons were made with systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia.

A decision was taken at this stage that the scope of the present study would preclude investigations into experiences of cultural dissonance during educational and cultural transition for families from differing national entities because of the additional educational and cultural variables which would be introduced into the study. Further investigations into each separate national grouping would be required to answer questions surrounding the experiences of these families.

The scope of the study was governed by the case study boundaries and by the criteria set for the inclusion of data. Interviews with the children in the families were limited to occasions when parental consent for such interviews was given.

1.9 The Structure of the Research

In order to fulfil the aims of the study, an understanding was required of culture, cultural differences and the resulting phenomenon of discord, or cultural dissonance. In addition, there was a requirement to understand the extent to which education systems are seen to act as agents for cultural transfer. These issues are addressed in Chapter Two.

Because the children in this study are part of migrant families, the issues surrounding their educational transfer are embedded within the family history of the process of

migration. For this reason, the contexts surrounding the migration process and regulatory changes to that process over a period of time must be understood. This area of the study is dealt with in Chapter Three.

The conceptual framework which was derived from the review of literature is set out in Chapter Four. This conceptual framework directs the questions guiding the research. Chapter Five describes the methodology used in the research.

To understand the areas of difference in education systems, which have the potential to give rise to experiences of cultural dissonance for these children and their families, the characteristics of education systems in the country of origin and the host country must be understood. A comparison of the basic provisions of education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia is made in Chapter Six using mainly official policy statements from government sources in the United Kingdom and Western Australia.

The structure of the study, therefore, follows two related pathways. Pathway one takes the form of the examination of, and comparisons between, educational provision in the United Kingdom and Western Australia. Pathway two explores, through the format of bounded case studies, the experiences of the migrant families in negotiating the process of educational transition and induction. The case study format of the research allows these experiences to be explored in depth and elaborated upon by the migrant families.

In Chapter Seven, the case study families are profiled and in Chapter Eight their contextual experiences in the process of migrancy are reviewed. Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven report the findings of the study at the levels of system, school and classroom. These findings are discussed in Chapter Twelve and the broader conclusions drawn from the research are set out in Chapter Thirteen.

Chapter 2

Culture, Cultural Difference and the Concept of Cultural Dissonance

Introduction The research is directed, on a broad focus, towards the general concept of cultural dissonance when this is experienced by a group of students and their parents. Cultural dissonance, in this study, is seen as manifest in experiences of discord and is likely to be present when cultural differences are found by participants in cultural change to be unexpected, unexplained and difficult to negotiate.

To understand experiences of cultural dissonance within a conceptual framework, it is necessary to adopt a model for the concept of culture, so that differences between cultures can be understood. This chapter introduces the model of the concept of culture which is used in this study and examines facets of cultural difference which could give rise to cultural dissonance.

Reports of the manifestation of cultural dissonance arise from the experiences of human participants. To enable this information to be collected, the experiences of a particular group of participants must be studied. The participants in this research were migrant families travelling between separate, but related cultures.

The general concept of cultural dissonance is studied with a particular focus on the experiences of some migrant families within a specific setting, that of schools within education systems. It is anticipated that the findings at this particular level will provide insights which illuminate the more general concept of cultural dissonance as experienced by the students.

The literature which was examined in the course of the study is reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The decision to examine the literature within two chapters reflects the broad and particular issues with which the research is concerned.

In Chapter Two, as part of the broad focus upon cultural dissonance, literature is reviewed in order to examine the concepts of culture, of cultural difference and of potential cultural dissonance. In relation to this broad focus, and to the situation of

participants in the study, Chapter Three reviews literature which deals with aspects of migrancy, the effects of the process upon migrants and plans and policies in place in Australia to assist migrants in their transition between cultures.

2.1 The Concept of Culture

The present study of cultural dissonance is related to research and theory which are developing in the United States of America, particularly in the work of Edmund Gordon (Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994). In that country, the concept of cultural dissonance is being explored in relation to at-risk factors for minority groups of students in schools. These studies have highlighted the importance of avoiding simplistic generalisations on the nature of culture, "...when we speak of culture, we are speaking of both the cause and the product of human affect and cognition" (Gordon & Yowell, 1994, p.51).

Gordon's work is relevant because it concentrates upon the concept of cultural dissonance and relates that concept to at-risk factors which stem from societal causes, rather than individual, physical disabilities. Notable among Gordon's observations on at-risk causation is the importance of the "failure of the surrounding environment to support the person's individual, culturally-influenced needs" (Gordon, 1992, p.14).

To emphasise the complexity of the concept of culture, in the present study the notion of culture also reflects the theories of Haferkamp (1989) and Lotman (1990). Lotman describes the concept as a concentric system of semiosmic spheres. The semiosphere is composed of semantic currents which: "flow not only across the horizontal levels of the semiosphere, but also have their effect in a vertical direction, and promote complex dialogues between the levels" (Lotman, 1990, p.130).

In this view, the notion of culture moves far from the simplistic notion of a set pattern established in any particular society, and becomes multi-layered and multi-faceted. Defining those layers and facets are boundaries (Lotman, 1990). These boundaries act as filters or mesh which adapt "the external into the internal" (Lotman, 1990, p.140). The most dynamic areas within the semiosphere occur at the boundaries between the internal and the external. Where these boundaries come into contact, change and interchange take place and cultural shifts occur (Lotman, 1990).

In any given culture a classification of the set of spheres will be ordered as:

1. The extra-cultural—beyond society’s mental horizon.
2. The non-cultural—known, but opposite to society’s culture.
3. The culturally peripheral—part of culture, but not central.
4. The culturally central—used by society to define it’s own identity.

(Koch, 1989, p.268)

Changes to any culture will be the result of shifts in these spheres, relative to others within separate classifications. “Non-cultural” ideas integrate with mainstream thought, while those which once were “culturally-central” shift to the periphery (Koch, 1989, p.269). These shifts in culture can, in turn, be brought about or influenced by movements of population, as migrants bring new ideas and integrate with existing populations (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

Culture in this study is seen, within the system of spheres, as representative of the beliefs and conceptions of society (Haferkamp, 1989, p.20). These beliefs and conceptions, rather than facts, guide the actions of society’s members, forming a “web or pattern of meanings, significations, ideas and values that are shared by people in a society” (Haferkamp, 1989, p.22). In this view, experiences of life are “permeated by patterns and representations of representative culture which provide a mapping space for our aims and desires, our concepts and ideas, our problems and situations” (Haferkamp, 1989, p.31). From this perspective, the layers and facets of culture within a series of spheres will contain patterns, signs and symbols which represent the beliefs, norms and perceptions of the society operating within the system. In addition, as is discussed later in this thesis, these beliefs, norms and perceptions will be influenced by historical events, the global location of the cultural setting, the variety of languages used in a particular society and the long-standing traditions of that society. The definition of culture proposed by Bullivant (1986), set out on page 1 and used in this study, emphasises the historically related aspects of the concept and the ongoing processes of change.

These derived meanings and changes are influenced in the present day by global communication networks. The development of these global communications further complicate and extend the nuances of any particular cultural setting, as extra-cultural ideas permeate the system of spheres.

Education systems act as agents in the transmission of cultural meanings and norms to the children of society, ensuring a continuity of ideas, beliefs and values. As society constantly changes, however, so ideas, beliefs and values will alter bringing about cultural change. Migration patterns will influence these changes.

2.2 Cultural Difference

Every culture “begins by dividing the world into ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space...what is not allowed with us is allowed with them” (Lotman, 1990, pp. 131-132). In this way, an internal organisation is created at the same time as an external disorganisation is perceived (Lotman, 1990). Because of this perception of internal and external space, cultural differences will occur inevitably. The notion that a colony, for example, can become and remain a carbon copy of the cultural heritage of a distant mother country, seen in this context, must be demonstrably incorrect. The culture of the colony, from its inception, will change to accommodate factors such as an evolving history, geographical location, economic imperatives and developing societal expectations, just as the culture of the colonial power will, for the same reasons take a different course.

The act of migration, in this case from colonial power to colony, imposes cultural change upon those who settle in a new society. At the same time, the fact that immigrants arrive to settle brings changes to the culture of the host country, which may be received negatively.

(Furnham & Bochner, 1986)

A common assumption has been that, where cultures are officially expected to be closely related and share a common language, few cultural differences will be present and so little difficulty will be posed through migrancy. For the same reasons, the effect of the migrant group upon the host culture is expected to be negligible when the migrant group has close historical and linguistic links (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). The expectations of migrants may be raised by such

assumptions to a level where few, if any, differences are expected and few problems are anticipated.

Such expectations, if proved false, can lead to a negative reaction to the experience of arriving in the host country according to Furnham and Bochner (1986). The more realistic the expectations of new migrants the more easily adjustments are made (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

A converse stance to that which anticipates few, if any, difficulties may be more correct. Any major geographical relocation has the potential to prove stressful, and this stress may increase as the distance travelled increases (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

In addition:

When people move to other cultures, value differences between them mean that previously established expectations and predictions are invalid. This poor fit between person and the environment may lead to distress and anxiety until the values of the new society are understood and internalized.

(Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p.199)

When this transfer occurs, the “codes” through which information is passed can differ and the extent of this difference, along with the extent to which the participants are unaware that such differences exist, may hamper communication and understanding (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). When both the migrant and the host group speak the same language, similarities:

may obscure the differences that might exist in their subjective cultures. Consequently, the participants may not realise that they are sending unintended messages and distorting incoming information.

(Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p.205)

Thus, for migrant families moving from an erstwhile colonial heartland to a former colony, several factors may mitigate against initial adjustment to the culture of their new society. In the case of transition, for example from the United Kingdom to Western Australia, distance from the country of origin can be great. Misleading expectations of an easy adjustment may have been raised based upon the sharing of a

common language, a main factor in any cultural exchange. A common language, however, while removing the more obvious hazard of incomprehension, may mask cultural and value differences and lead to cultural dissonance with associated distress and misunderstandings (McKelvey & Peters, 1993).

To alleviate problems of cultural adjustment in view of cultural differences, theory suggests that the degree of help which is offered to migrants will affect the success of cultural transition. A process which provides first information, then instrumental support can act as a buffer to stress. Emotional support may then be needed, in the form of supportive groups or significant others (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Morse & Johnson, 1991). This assistance is likely to be appropriate for all migrant groups as they move between the cultural settings of their country of origin and their new host country. The sense of self, engendered by a particular position in the cultural settings of the country of origin, may be threatened as migrants adapt to cultural settings and cultural differences in the host country, at the same time as they deal with the life-changes brought about by the factor of migrancy.

2.3 The Concept of Cultural Dissonance

Since cultural differences are inherent, strategies have to be developed to cope with these differences. A tourist intending to visit a culturally disparate society may read and study facts about that society, in order to understand cultural differences and minimise culture shock. Migrants intending to settle in a country whose culture and language is totally different from their own, will prepare themselves for the difficulties which may be expected to arise. In this study, the contention is made that the effects of cultural dissonance are also likely to prove troublesome when similarities of ethnicity and language mask the potential for cultural differences to be present.

In relation to the phenomenon of cultural dissonance Gordon (1992) states:

Culture is a mediator of learning, affecting and shaping belief systems, cognitive styles, morays, and ways of doing things. As culture helps to define a person's identity, culture, cultural interchange and cultural dissonance influence behavioural adaptation.

(Gordon, 1992, p. 13)

Seen from this perspective, the adaptations required in the process of migrancy will be influenced by the cultural background of the migrant. The belief systems, cognitive styles and self-values of the migrant will transfer to the new host country and react with the culture of that country, as is suggested by Furnham and Bochner (1986).

The place of the individual within their cultural setting contributes to a sense of self-identification. In Gordon's view, although the status of that person within cultural hierarchies and the beliefs, language and mores which are culturally learned "may be the antecedents of identity, it may be identity that provides the energy behind behavioural adaptation" (Gordon, 1994, p.54).

In the present study, the current criteria for the selection of migrants can be expected to preclude families who are in the lower socio-economic strata of society in the United Kingdom. Skilled and self-supporting families are those who are sought as migrants to Australia. The self-identity of these families will be linked to their social status in the United Kingdom.

A challenge to that sense of self-identity may presage the manifestation of cultural dissonance with the associated dangers of educational disadvantage. Factors of ethnicity, gender and socio-economic setting, which traditionally have defined the 'at-risk' status of children in schools, do not automatically result in educational disadvantage. What may be of greater importance in this area is what Gordon (1994) describes as "an individual's group and personal identity in the social interaction that constitutes the learning process" (p.57).

When the learning environment is not amenable to accepting the group and personal identity of the student, then disadvantage may occur and that student will fail to thrive within the educational setting:

Cultural dissonance places students at risk of educational failure. If education is to be made more effective for such students, efforts at the improvement and reform of education must address this risk factor.

(Gordon & Yowell, 1994, p.68)

This combination of perceived need and degree of help offered mirrors the support mechanisms proposed earlier in this chapter by Furnham and Bochner (1986) and Morse and Johnson (1991).

Researchers in the United States of America (Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994) view cultural dissonance as a factor when students are at-risk of educational disadvantage. In this body of research, the complexity of the concept of culture is accepted. In the field of education, the newness and inexperience of migrant families within the culture of host society, along with questions of ethnicity and language, might be thought to have the potential to bring all migrant children into an area of being at-risk of educational disadvantage.

Findings of the National Conference on Educational Reforms and At-risk Students (American Institutes for Research Youth and Community Research Group, [AIRYCRG], 1992) challenge generalisations based solely upon ethnicity. Thus, “It is essential not to group kids into at-risk or not-at-risk categories by ethnicity” (AIRYCRG, 1992, p.21). The conference focussed upon links between the cultural background of students and factors which placed these students at-risk.

Participants in this conference agreed that “Students are not naturally at-risk, but that risk develops from the interaction of student characteristics and characteristics of the school environment” (AIRYCRG, 1992, abstract of proceedings).

In this sense, educational disadvantage and at-risk status may be viewed not simply as inherent because of the particular characteristics of persons, for example as migrants, but may be:

...more appropriately conceptualized as a condition or circumstance brought on by the failure or incapacity of the developmental environment to support the needs of the developing person.

(Gordon & Yowell, 1994, p.53)

An adverse interaction between new migrant students in a process of transition and the schools which receive these students could cause cultural dissonance to occur. In an address to the conference, Gordon noted that:

People whose culture is different from the predominant culture may not find their developmental needs met, as their needs may not match these of the dominant reference

group... Since status affects access to resources, expectations, and the quality of society's investment in individuals, school reforms must directly result in assistance that addresses people's needs.

(Gordon, 1992, p.13)

The conference proceedings, however, noted that while:

Students may be classified according to typical risk categories...those who may fall into these categories can succeed academically and socially if the school values their assets and is prepared to meet their needs.

(AIRYCRG, 1992, p.6)

The contributions to the Conference (AIRYCRG, 1992) place the responsibility for the occurrence of cultural dissonance and at-risk status on the schools' responses to students rather than on the characteristics of groups of students and reinforce the necessity of providing understanding and support for individual migrant students at school-level.

The dangers associated with an automatic presumption of educational disadvantage based upon ethnicity could lead to individual students being constrained by perceptions of their capabilities in view of their ethnic background. Students in this scenario could be denied access to curricula which are within their academic reach. The discussions within the conference noted that at-risk factors applied also to European-American children and that these also required to be addressed.

The present research moves on from American developments in this field (Noley, 1992; Larson & Rumberger, 1992), in that the group of United Kingdom students whose experiences are examined are not ethnically different from the mainstream culture of their host country. They do not automatically come within the normal parameters of at-risk factors (Gordon & Yowell, 1994), although some of these factors may be present in individual cases. In this present study, the children's migrant status, not language or ethnicity, is the factor which, potentially, exposes them to risk in the schools of the host country, if those schools fail to support the children developmentally.

In Australia, the concept of migrant children being "at-risk of educational disadvantage" has been examined. In 1985, Sturman conducted a review entitled

“Immigrant Australians and Education”, in which research into potential disadvantage was examined. As with research in the United States of America, the research centred upon issues of ethnicity and language as indicators of educational disadvantage. The children whose educational history was studied came from Non-English speaking backgrounds. The term ‘cultural dissonance’ is not used in the body of research in Australia. In dealing with issues of equity and disadvantage, albeit in the context of multicultural policies in Australia, a Report from the Schools Commission in 1984 is cited by Sturman (1985).

In this Report, emphasis was placed upon the quality of the relationship between students, their parents and the school and the degree to which the provision offered “accords with their experiences, values, interests and aspirations” (Sturman, 1984). Commenting upon the issues raised by the Schools Commission, Sturman (1984) notes that:

This interpretation of participation means that an examination of disadvantage needs to consider attitudes of immigrant Australians to their educational experiences...

(Sturman, 1984, p.15)

The present study sets out to explore these attitudes from the perspective of a group of English speaking migrant families.

In the area of educational disadvantage, more recently, in Western Australia the Report of the Select Committee on Youth Affairs, (Watkins, 1992), examined the causes of educational disadvantage in that State. The Committee identified “at risk” factors for children and young people. The Report of this Committee, however, focussed upon socio-economic indicators of disadvantage, factors which Gordon and Yowell (1994) term the traditional indicators of students classified as “at-risk”. Ethnicity and language were not listed among causes of educational difficulty for students in Western Australia.

In this respect, the Report is at odds with the cultural focus of research in this area in the United States of America. The home background of students was, however, seen as significant in terms of support both in the Western Australian Report (Watkins,

1992) and the Report from the Proceedings of the 1992 Conference on Educational Reforms and At-Risk Students (AIRYCRG, 1992).

The latter Conference made recommendations regarding the roles various cultural and ethnic communities and parents should be encouraged to play in the education of their children:

If schools are to respond adequately to cultural diversity, they can no longer isolate themselves from their communities.

(AIRYCRG, 1992, p.28)

In this view, the educational contribution made by parents who are also representative of their communities is seen as significant. The wishes and aspirations of parents, regarding their children's education, cannot be ignored if a cooperative and supportive environment is to be provided for the children in the school.

2.4 The Cultural Backgrounds of the United Kingdom and Western Australia

The factors which have shaped the cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Australia are wide-ranging and complex. Within the present study, only a brief summary of these factors has been attempted. The scope of the study precluded a more in-depth discussion. The researcher acknowledges that this summary cannot hope to fully expound the diversity and depth of influences upon these respective cultures and upon the people who live within these cultural settings.

The sense of self-identity which migrant families have developed is embedded in their cultural backgrounds. A definition of culture which envisages a "web or pattern of meanings" (Haferkamp, 1989, p.22), by which the significant in a society's development is determined, preserved, altered over time, and distinguished from less important factors, pre-supposes the influence of historical contexts, as Bullivant (1986) suggests.

The history of the United Kingdom, from earliest times, has been that of a superimposition of cultures, in the anthropological sense of the term. Waves of incoming peoples have swept into and over the islands which make up the United

Kingdom. Romans, Celts, Angles and Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, French and others have contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the separate and often warring, histories that have developed into the heterogeneous cultures which mark the regions of the United Kingdom.

Even in the twentieth century, in areas such as the north-western islands of Scotland and in Wales, the native languages of Gaelic and Welsh rival English as the first language of many of the people. Within the realms of England and Scotland, the principality of Wales and the province of Ulster, modern events and attitudes are shaped by historical and geographical contexts. Rivalries such as those which exist between Yorkshire people and those born in Lancashire trace their roots back to the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century, while the present situation in Ulster has well established historical causation.

Within the last two hundred years, from this background, the British Empire spread through colonisation and conquest (James, 1995). As part of that Empire, the Australian colonies were developed. Laws which conferred British citizenship upon the peoples of the Empire operated, for this reason, in Australia (James, 1995; Jordens, 1995).

In the United Kingdom in the twentieth century, further waves of migrants have settled into society. These migrant peoples from former parts of the British Empire add to the mix of cultures which make up the present day United Kingdom.

The cultural heritage of Western Australia pre-dates that of the British Isles by many centuries, with Aboriginal people living in this country for at least 30 000 years (Houston, 1985). The peoples who inhabited these areas, however, were used to an oral tradition of the transference of significant beliefs and lived as semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers.

These beliefs, values and lifestyles were discounted by the settlers from Britain who arrived in the nineteenth century, at the height of British colonial expansion. Aboriginal peoples were denied the British citizenship granted to others in the colony. The cultural history of modern Western Australia has been linked, therefore,

to the history of the United Kingdom through the strands of the British Empire (Houston, 1985; James, 1995; Jordens, 1995).

A degree of cultural distance has always been present in comparisons between the cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Australia, due to historical, societal and geographical factors. In recent decades, however, both cultures have developed in ways which have increased the degree of cultural distance which separates them. The British Empire no longer exists. The United Kingdom has moved to closer economic and political ties with European neighbours, while Australia seeks to form links to countries in Asia. In an Australian context, within a post-colonial society, the question of national culture is vexing (Goodall, 1995; Jordens, 1995).

2.5 The Concept of Culture in Education

Schools operate as part of society and as open rather than closed organisations. Schools, by their nature, cannot isolate themselves from the community in which they are set, or from the social contexts which surround their staff and students. The role of schools in society is, therefore, an important factor in the well being of the community.

The ability of schools to accommodate social change, however, has been called into question. In relation to parental choice in Canadian schools, Levin and Riffel (1997) have noted:

School systems do not have good processes for learning about and responding to changes in their environments except in a very narrow sense. These limitations are not the result of ill-will or incompetence, but of long-ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour that will not be easy to change, no matter what policy makers may promulgate

(P.44)

Despite these limitations, schools have been regarded by anthropologists and ethnographers as major instruments in the transmission of the wider culture to successive generations of children, in that:

Cultural meanings are learned in an active social participation that is shaped by the child's own natural mental growth.

(Koch, 1989, p.80)

From this perspective, the school is an agent of the culture and functions to reproduce and maintain many aspects of the status quo of the culture, for example a hierarchical stratification related to particular social, ethnic and gender groups (Wilcox, 1982).

Cultural expectations of schools as agents can, however, be seen as contradictory. On one level, schools are expected to promote equality of opportunity for all children, while on another they are expected to work to maintain hierarchical structures. In this conflict of interests, “classrooms have been explored as arenas of cultural conflict” Wilcox (1982, p.446), and as sites of potential micro and macro level change.

A more radical view of the meaning of culture within education is adopted by some critical theorists (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1981; Shor and Freire, 1987). In the opinion of these writers, the concept of culture is used by the dominant groups in any society to impose their outlook, beliefs and norms upon minority and less powerful groups. This sense of the imposition of a particular set of resource allocations, which corresponds with the needs of the dominant group in society, finds echoes in current thinking in the United States of America (Gordon & Yowell, 1994).

In this sense, the concept of culture is used as an “official culture” or the central core sphere—with education one of the tools used to shape society in the image favoured by those who have control (Carter & Bednall, 1986). This, according to Gordon and Yowell (1994), is:

a function of the operation of a principle of social economy whereby social orders design and allocate resources in accordance with the modal or otherwise valued characteristics of the social order.

(p.51)

Equality of opportunity, in this view, is sacrificed in order to preserve valued social structures.

Migrant groups can be viewed as part of the less-powerful sectors of society (Bourdieu, 1983). Their newness and inexperience of society norms complicate their initial placement in hierarchical structures. Status characteristics, such as ethnicity and language, are used to define placement within the social order. The status

granted is likely to influence access to resources and to determine the level of investment society is prepared to make in groups and individual cases. When self-concept is threatened by the denial of status, the energy to adapt behaviours and so gain acceptance may be diminished (Gordon & Yowell, 1994).

Summary Culture, in this study, is seen as a complex and dynamic construct. The concept is taken to mean the wide range of traditions, historical happenings, geographical locations, beliefs, norms and mores which shape the perceptions and actions of particular societies. Within this “web and pattern of meanings” (Haferkamp, 1989, p.), individual members of society build their sense of identity. Differences between each culture are inherent, given that the factors listed above will be different for each cultural setting.

Where these differences are unexpected and unexplained, self-identity may be threatened. Attempts to resolve discordant issues will be liable to cause experiences which are seen as bewildering and distressing by the participants. In this study, such experiences are taken to be manifestations of cultural dissonance. This dissonance may be experienced by all parties in the cultural interchange.

The cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Australia have diverged since the founding of the colony. In the United Kingdom cultures have been super-imposed over a period of centuries. The Australian colonies developed as part of an expanding British Empire, but the indigenous culture of Western Australia pre-dated colonisation by many centuries. This culture was discounted and devalued by the incoming colonists and the norms and values imposed by colonisation linked the modern cultures of Western Australia to those of the United Kingdom. However, in recent decades the cultural settings of the United Kingdom have changed to take account of closer economic ties with the mainland of Europe, while those of Western Australia have been changed by patterns in migration and by closer ties with neighbouring Asian countries.

Because schools are seen as agents in the transmission of culture, discordant issues which arise in the transition of children from one cultural setting to another would be expected to be experienced in schools and classrooms. Education system policies

which set out to identify and meet the needs of these students would, according to theory, minimise this cultural dissonance.

In Chapter Three issues which arise in the process of migration are discussed. Since the children in this study are part of migrant families, these issues are pertinent in the context of their educational transition. The factor of being a migrant is a key to the attitudes of the host society and schools in the reception of these children.

Chapter 3

Migrant Issues

Introduction In the present study, in addition to the broad focus upon the concept of culture and cultural dissonance, the particular focus is centred upon the experiences of a group of migrant families. In this chapter, literature which discusses factors associated with migration is reviewed and the history of European migration into Australia is reviewed briefly. Policies which govern the entry of migrants to Australia, policies to help migrant children in the process of transition and the background to research into issues involving English speaking migrant children are examined.

3.1 Issues Associated with the Process of Migration

A migrant in human terms is, by definition, a person who has left his or her country of origin to settle in another country (Australian Oxford Dictionary, 1989). The possibility that such a move may trigger anxiety at separation from friends and family, traumas associated with resettlement, and at least initial disadvantage in the host country is well documented (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; McKelvey & Peters, 1993).

Associated with all these factors, the migrant may experience a degree of culture shock, as they seek to reconcile their “world view” with that of the host country. Studies in Australia have shown that for United Kingdom migrant schoolchildren, or for second generation children of such migrants, difficulties can exist in the transition to education systems in Australia (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, 1995; Hartley & Maas, 1987; Taft & Cahill, 1978).

Who are Migrants? Human history is filled with instances of migration, from the earliest recorded movements of populations across the globe, to the migratory flows of the present day, as people search for a better life for themselves and for their children. The building of Empires, the collapse of Empires, war, famine and disaster, climate change, changing economic circumstances, increased ease of travel, all have ensured that populations are not static.

The condition of being a migrant in the present period of history is common in Europe, in the United States of America, in Canada, and in Australia. In all these countries, a body of literature examines the problems faced, both by migrants and by the host societies into which they seek to integrate (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, 1995; Csapo, 1992; Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Hartley & Maas, 1987; Jordens, 1995; McKelvey & Peters, 1993; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sturman, 1985; Taft & Cahill, 1978; Taylor & Macdonald, 1992, 1994; AIRYCRG, 1992; Vignaux, 1986).

The Effects of Migration The literature which examines the effects of migration shows that the optimism with which the venture may be approached can wither in the face of realities encountered in the process of settlement in a new country (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Jordens, 1995). In all migrant situations, the act of moving from one country to live in another causes a degree of stress. This stress has been brought about by separation from friends and family, from the familiar aspects of everyday life, and from the routines which were part of the society within the country of origin (Jordens, 1995; Taft & Cahill, 1978,).

The possibility that migrant children might suffer from a form of post-traumatic shock following these changes has been put forward in Canada by Csapo (1992). The fact that research into migrant populations had, in past decades, centred upon psychiatric studies of the mental health of migrants is noted by Furnham and Bochner (1986), and this emphasis denotes the expectation of stress associated with migration.

That some migrants suffer disproportionate burdens of poverty and disadvantage, especially when their spoken language does not correspond with the language in use in the host country, is shown to be the case in Australia (Sturman, 1985; Taylor and Macdonald, 1992, 1994). Government reports in Australia, which highlight aspects of equity and access for migrants from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, indicate that these factors of disadvantage are accepted (Bullivant, 1986; Dept PM, 1992; Ministry of Education, Western Australia, 1991).

Not all Non-English Speaking migrant families in Australia find trauma and hardship at the end of their journey (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, 1994; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Hartley & Maas, 1987; Sturman, 1985;

Taylor and Macdonald, 1992, 1994). Just as making general statements about the migrant case in regard to mental health might lead to problems, so too it will be wrong to assume that all problems are associated with language difficulties (Sturman, 1985, p.54). Indeed, even when the language spoken by the migrant is that of their host country, regional accents and differing usage can create problems and embarrassment (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; McKelvey & Peters, 1993; Taft & Cahill, 1978).

Migrant families For parents who migrate, bringing with them dependent children, there are additional factors to be considered. Not only do the adults in the family have to adjust their lives to the new society, but also they have to oversee the adjustment of their children. The placement of the children in schools will be an urgent priority, especially if they are still of an age at which education is compulsory. To have to make such choices at a time when other priorities, such as finding accommodation and work may also be pressing, adds to the stress and disadvantage which can affect even those migrants who encounter few language problems (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

The notion that disadvantaged groups in society look for someone to speak on their behalf is put forward by Pierre Bourdieu (1983). For families newly arrived in Western Australia, for example, their children's school could be seen as a potential source of welcome, information, contact, advice and assistance (Taft & Cahill, 1978).

Schools are seen, by Furnham and Bochner (1986) as well placed to act as a focus for a social skills training approach, to help overcome problems of cultural dissonance encountered while adjusting to a new culture. These expectations connect to the role of the school as an agent in issues of equity and access (Wilcox, 1982). If, however, school organisations act as agents for society in the transmission of culture and, in so doing, wrestle with conflicting demands (Wilcox, 1982), these expectations may provide yet another demand made upon scarce educational resources. In this case and coupled with difficulties associated with attitudinal change (Levin & Riffel, 1997), the expectations that schools have the capacity to act as support agents may not be able to be met, although "a rethinking of the ways schools interact with and

treat students” (AIRYCRG, 1992), may not be dependent upon additional resources, but rather a rearrangement of priorities.

3.2 United Kingdom Migrants in Australia

The early years The initial British settlers in Australia came with the task of forming colonies. Throughout the early history of this expanding colonisation the migrants who came to Australia were in the main British, remained British nationals and owed allegiance to the British Crown. Following the establishment of the colonies, Australian immigration policy was formulated around demands for population increase, the development of the country’s resources, and as protection against hostile incursion (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 1994).

In 1945, the then Minister responsible for the Department of Immigration, Arthur Caldwell, planned to increase the number of British migrants through an assisted passage scheme (Jordens, 1995). The economic and security needs of Australia demanded an expanding population and workforce and it was Caldwell’s hope that “for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom.” The free and assisted passage schemes, which this hope predated, began in 1947 (Jordens, 1995, p.27).

In the years between 1945 and 1951 however, despite these inducements, British immigrants formed a minority of the immigrant influx into Australia. Not only was this the case, but the usefulness of these British immigrants who did arrive was questioned. They were seen as less productive workers whose special status precluded them being directed into specific industries and who brought with them a disproportionate number of dependents (Jordens, 1995, p.33).

From January 1975, regulations allowing the free entry of British, Irish and Commonwealth citizens of European descent were changed to require that such entrants held visas. Political views, in regard to dual British and Australian citizenship, were divided in the 1970s along party lines. Those on the left of the political spectrum wished to amend the Citizenship Act, while those on the right wing opposed any changes to the status of British migrants and advocated a close and continuing relationship with the United Kingdom. In fact, until 1984, British

migrants to Australia automatically had the right to vote in Australian elections without taking Australian citizenship, and those who arrived before 1984 retain that legal duty still (Jordens, 1995).

The present situation The status of British migrants in the last decades has changed. A non-discriminatory immigration policy has been in place for the last twenty years. Under this policy, any person from any part of the world can apply to migrate to Australia provided he or she meets the entry criteria set down by law, and can satisfy strict health regulations (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 1994).

There are three main categories of migrant. The first, “preferential family” migrants are those whose family links in Australia outweigh family ties to another country, for example spouses or children of Australians. Also in this first category are “concessional family”—whose ties are not so immediate but who satisfy a points test to allow entry.

Migrants in the second category must satisfy criteria based upon humanitarian needs, for example refugee status. Australia accepts refugees whose status is determined by the criteria of UN conventions of 1967. Since 1993 the immigration program has been divided into two parts; migration and humanitarian entry.

In the third category are those whose skills enable them to meet a points test to allow entry. These people will either be employer nominated or will have sufficient skills and capital to establish themselves in business in Australia (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, 1994; Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 1994).

After two years spent in Australia as a permanent resident, migrants who can show that they have a basic understanding of English, who are of good character and who can show that they either intend to live in Australia permanently or to maintain close ties with Australia can apply to become Australian citizens. The period of residence is at present under review by the newly-elected Coalition Government, with a view to extending the time of residency in Australia before citizenship would be granted.

Immigrants who adopt Australian citizenship have all the rights and responsibilities of the native born population (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 1994). To be eligible to hold an Australian passport, British migrants must take Australian citizenship, though dual nationality by retaining United Kingdom citizenship is permitted.

Despite remnants of past relationships with the British Empire, the former Federal Government policies in Australia focussed upon the increasingly multicultural nature of the population, with emphasis upon the problems experienced by those from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (Sturman, 1985). The use of the word migrant in 1995 in Australian politics presumed that migrants would use a language other than English. Ethnic minorities have attracted political attention because of language difficulties even when the ethnic component has comprised many who have met the criteria required for citizenship and have taken Australian citizenship (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994). Since Australia is a sovereign nation, those who hold Australian citizenship, regardless of their origins, comprise the Australian component of the population.

Migrants from the United Kingdom and other English speaking countries, however, appear to be seen as included in the mass of the Anglo-Australian population from the day of their arrival. That this is a contradiction in terms in relation to migrant and nationality status has been ignored by policy makers in Australia.

Given the changes in the relationship between the United Kingdom and Australia, migrants who arrive now from the United Kingdom enter a foreign country, albeit a country which shares a Head of State, forms of Government and language. To maintain otherwise under existing law is a delusion, and to perpetuate that delusion by raising the expectations of migrant families would be a disservice to these families.

3.3 Migration into Western Australia

United Kingdom migrants. The present study focuses upon the cases of migrant families from the United Kingdom who have come to settle in Western Australia from 1985-1995. The situation in Western Australia as regards migration, while still

governed by Federal Australian law, differs in some aspects from the Eastern States of Australia. In this State, as opposed to Victoria and New South Wales, the major migrant intake in the years 1984-1993 has come from the United Kingdom, with a percentage of 34.8 in relation to all arrivals in 1992-1993 (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994). Of these, the largest proportion entered under the category of family reunion, followed by those who came as skilled workers (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994).

History of migration into Western Australia In Western Australia, in 1829, Captain James Stirling claimed the land around the mouth of the Swan River for the British Crown and established the Swan River Colony. The settlement was formed by free settlers, then as demands for an increased labour force prevailed, through the use of convict labour (Gregory & Smith, 1995). The original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area were displaced from their lands, in some cases imprisoned and in some cases killed (Stannage, 1979). The colony became self-governing and eventually formed the State of Western Australia, but retained strong linkages with the mother country of Britain, in terms of the cultural and genetic composition of the non-Aboriginal population (Barcan, 1980; Sharp, 1992).

As with the other Australian States, not until the conclusion of World War II in 1945 were substantial numbers of non-British migrants accepted into Western Australia. From 1947 to 1984, the Nationality and Citizenship Act in Australia defined as alien those people who were not British citizens, Irish citizens or protected persons (Jordens, 1995).

Migration from other sources The influx of post-war migration changed the demographic composition of society in Western Australia. Almost two-thirds of the migrants into Western Australia in the years 1984-1993 came from countries other than the United Kingdom. In the years 1992-1993, 47.9% of settler arrivals in Western Australia came from Europe and the former USSR; 18.3% from South East Asia; 9.6% from Oceania and 6.1% from North East Asia (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994, p.40).

For migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, certain avenues of assistance are provided. Migrant Centres, run by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic

Affairs in Western Australia, exist to offer translation services, advice, support and “Help with accessing services such as education...” (Australian Asian Association, 1996). Such centres, technically, could provide assistance to English speaking migrants. This, however, would be an unusual occurrence, according to Centre staff.

3.4 Federal Government Plans and Policies for Migrant Education in Australia

The present study argues that the word ‘migrant’ signifies all newly arrived settler groups in Australia whatever their language background. Over the past two decades, however, Federal Government policies for the education of migrant children have focussed upon issues surrounding multiculturalism, access and equity, and disadvantage to migrant groups who do not speak English.

Federal Government Policies for the Education of Migrant Children These policies have centred upon the provision of English language classes, intended to alleviate disadvantage. An “Evaluation of Post-Arrival Programs and Services” (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1982), looked at the provision of child-migrant services principally from the aspect of English-language teaching.

The Federal Government, through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office of Multicultural Affairs, brought forward an “Access and Equity Evaluation Report” (1992). This Report adopted a client-centred view. “If the client perceives a barrier to service, and has experienced it as such, it therefore represents a barrier” (Dept PM, 1992, p.35). Such a standpoint, while directed towards migrants from Non-English speaking backgrounds in keeping with policies prevailing at that time, would equally apply to any migrant group of clients. The Report notes that “there has been more success in addressing linguistic barriers than culturally-based barriers” (Dept PM, 1992, p.37).

“Migrant Advisory Committees” which are intended to “facilitate dissemination of information to N.E.S.B. groups” are in place (Dept PM, 1992, p.48). The term migrant used in these instances, and in Government policies, relates to so-called ethnic groups and these, in turn, are taken to mean groups whose native language is

not English. By their definition, these groups seem to preclude English-speaking migrants from seeking assistance and information.

Outcomes of the multicultural and Non-English Speaking background policies adopted by Governments in Australia have come under criticism for promoting what are termed “life styles” as opposed to “life chances” (Jayasuriya, 1985). In the view of Jayasuriya (1985), multicultural policy should aim at “uplifting migrants, easing their adjustment, and giving them equal access to the services of society.” (p.28). The author concludes that there is a need to make multiculturalism relevant to all Australians, not only to cultural minorities, and that:

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the education sphere where we have moved from the hard reality of issues relating to migrant education to the vague and ill-defined objectives of multicultural education.

(Jayasuriya, 1985, p.35)

The arguments put forward by Jayasuriya (1985) on the “hard reality of issues relating to migrant education” in issues apart from language, and in the context of societal changes in Australia, are equally as applicable to newly-arrived migrant families from the United Kingdom as to any other foreign group of migrants.

In discussing disadvantage experienced by migrants, Jayasuriya suggests that a focus on language and custom is in itself not sufficient if socio-economic factors are ignored. A broader approach to aspects of disadvantage is required rather than the “narrowly cultural view” adopted by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Studies. In the opinion of Jayasuriya (1985), this view constitutes an “ethnic identity model” which devalues cultural differences. In the context of the present study, the political views adopted on multicultural policies have over-simplified the nature of the problems facing migrants, by making assumptions based primarily upon issues of differing language and ethnicity and by ignoring other causes of cultural difference.

3.5 Research into English-Speaking Migrant Responses to Education Systems in Australia.

In 1978, research was sponsored by the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia as an extension of its Immigration Project. The study, which examined the initial

adjustment of immigrant children to schooling in Australia, was carried out by Ronald Taft and Desmond Cahill, and focussed upon immigrant groups in Melbourne. The initial population for the research comprised children of South American migrant families and their parents. Their native language was Spanish.

After an initial response to interviews by this group, the researchers concluded that the study would benefit by the inclusion of two other migrant groups to afford comparisons in data. The other groups which were selected were, respectively, forty-five families from the United Kingdom and a smaller study group from Malta. Both of these groups were either native English speakers, or had a good working knowledge of English.

While the prime focus of the study remained fixed upon the Spanish speaking immigrants, interviews were conducted with all three samples. Interviews with the children's teachers were included in the study. In respect of the British migrant children, Taft and Cahill, (1978), have noted that the emotional build-up prior to emigration and the severing of family and peer ties in the home country, the actual journey, can combine to produce in many migrant children, including English speaking ones a constricting of their normal mental functioning. Even without a language problem, many of the children seem to be affected by the upheaval and their ability is underestimated by teachers.

It is worth commenting that the newly arrived British seemed especially common targets for intolerance, perhaps because, in the view of Taft and Cahill, they understood the insults better than the newly arrived Spanish speaking children.

Two interviews with the British group were conducted, at an interval of one year. A comparison showed that:

Despite the similarities in cultural backgrounds the finding that the percentage of British children who said that Australian children had difficulty in understanding their spoken English rose from 45% at first interview to 56% at second interview. 40% had difficulty understanding Australian children.

(p.51)

Despite the findings of intolerance and language difficulties, the conclusions of the study contained only “a brief word” (Taft & Cahill, 1978, p.110) about the British immigrants. Problems encountered were dismissed as part of the “initial settling down period” and were said to be overcome within the first twelve months (this in the face of the percentage increases shown in the passage quoted above). The views of parents and students that schools in Australia were “less rigorous” than those in Britain, rated little mention, and generally the British children were seen as “happy in school and getting along well” (Taft & Cahill, 1978, p. 110).

The attitude taken by the researchers to their British sample could be attributed to several factors. The period in which the research was conducted was one in which Australia was still seen as predominantly British, and therefore British migrants would be expected to experience few problems. Evidence of distress and discontent, in this context, might be discounted as a passing aberration to be glossed over. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that the transition of schoolchildren from the United Kingdom to Victoria in 1978 was not trouble free and straight forward.

In the study conducted by Taft and Cahill (1978), recommendations for future action to assist in the transition of migrant children included:

The provision, prior to migration, of accurate and continually updated brochures regarding educational provision in the State of destination in Australia; the provision of advice as to the nature of information about the child's schooling in the country of origin which should be brought with the family upon emigration; Australian educators should be in possession of information about education systems in the migrant's country of origin; induction programs should be in place, with schools seen as “welcoming agencies”
(Taft & Cahill, 1978, p.115).

More recently, the views of migrant parents on the education offered in Australia to their children have been canvassed in a Report prepared for the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Multicultural and Migrant Education, “Getting a Lot Further” (Hartley & Maas, 1987). In this research the views of parents from Non-English Speaking backgrounds were compared with those of a sample from what the researchers term Anglo-Australian backgrounds. What was not made clear in the Report was the status of the English-speaking group, either as native-born Australians or as English-

speaking migrants. The assumption appeared to be made that 'Australian' and 'English-speaking' are synonymous terms.

While the researchers found concerns expressed by Non-English Speaking Background parents at their lack of understanding of the schools' teaching methods, the study pointed out that disadvantage also accrues to English speaking families who "lack information and skills to negotiate the education system" (Hartley & Maas, 1987, p.96). For the newly-arrived migrant parents of children from the United Kingdom, such disadvantage could be real and pressing.

In the context of the interest evidenced by teachers and schools in migrant children and their cultures, Smollitz and Wiseman in 1971 are quoted as coining the phrase "Indifferentism"—denoting a lack of interest in, or recognition of, different cultures (Sturman 1985, p.2). While these attitudes may have modified, Sturman (1985) notes that little documentation at that time existed dealing with school policies which reflected concern with the ethnic mix of the school.

A study of pastoral care provision in five Western Australian Government secondary schools (Macdonald, 1994) indicated that, in these schools at least, formal provision for the care of students focussed upon individual children seen to be "at risk". There was no evidence in plans or policies that the factor of migrancy, with associated potential trauma, constituted a recognised hazard to individual children or to groups of migrant students. The only provision noted was for the teaching of English as a second language.

Finally, research carried out for the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research entitled "The Second Generation in Australia" (1995) shows that:

a far greater proportion of students with fathers born in the United Kingdom or Australia leave school at 16 or earlier than do those from Southern European, Middle Eastern or Asian communities.

(p.4)

The students from Non-English speaking backgrounds referred to are the first family generation to be born in Australia. From the basis of an early exit from schooling, a

lower proportion of children with fathers born in the United Kingdom or Australia attained tertiary qualifications. The research refutes assumptions of automatic, long-term disadvantage in education to the sons and daughters of Non-English Speaking families and, in relation to the present research, raises a question mark over long-term advantages of migration for United Kingdom families and their children in the educational climate of Australia.

Summary In Chapter Three, issues associated with migration and the cultural transition of migrants have been discussed. The literature shows that the criteria set for migration and the ethnic composition of incoming migrant groups has changed in the period following 1945. As a consequence of these changes Federal Government policies in relation to migrant services and the education of migrant children changed to concentrate upon issues surrounding ethnic background and language. Research has shown, however, that particular difficulties for families from English-speaking backgrounds have been identified, although studies in this area have uncovered these difficulties while focussing upon families from Non-English speaking backgrounds. In Chapter Four, the conceptual framework for the research which was generated by the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three is set out.

Chapter 4

The Conceptual Framework for the Study

Introduction Chapter Four sets out the reasoning which underpins the research. This reasoning is directed by the literature which was reviewed and by the professional knowledge and experience of the researcher.

The study examines the broad concept of cultural dissonance through the particular experiences of migrant families from the United Kingdom. These experiences, in this study, focus upon the transition and induction of children from these families into the education systems of Western Australia.

While the term cultural dissonance occurred in literature, no definitive statement describing the concept was found, despite searches through Eric, PsychLit, Austrom and British Educational Abstracts. For the purposes of this study a definition was arrived at, in an attempt to deepen understanding of the concept. The conceptual framework of the study expands upon this definition and seeks to set the concept of cultural dissonance within the framework of culture and cultural differences, reflecting the manner in which these factors might be experienced by the migrant families.

The conceptual framework anticipates that background contexts comprising: the cultures of the country of origin and of the new host country; differences between these cultures; educational structures and policies within these cultures; experiences of school organisations and classroom practices, will all impinge upon and inter-connect with the experiences of the migrant families. These effects are expected to be of particular significance to the children in the families as direct participants in the educational systems, and also to impact directly upon their parents as carers and guardians of the children.

4.1 The Concept of Culture

The concept of culture adopted in this study utilises the theories of Lotman (1990). Each cultural setting is complex and multi-layered, consisting of a series of

concentric semiotic spheres with an inner core sphere which contains the signs and symbols used to represent the long-held beliefs and values of that society (Lotman, 1990). The peripheral sphere in the cultural field will contain ideas and beliefs which are tolerated by society, but are furthest from the ideas and beliefs contained within the core culture. Each inner sphere progressively contains ideas and values more acceptable to the core culture. As “the axiological value and hierarchical position of the elements” (Lotman, 1990, p.124), within the active cultural field, are in a state of constant change, so the ideas and beliefs in the outer spheres may permeate the core culture. Within each cultural field, cultural shift will be an ongoing process as new ideas enter the “web and pattern of meanings” (Haferkamp, 1989) and move from the periphery of the culture towards its core.

The pattern of spheres is repeated in each culture. Where the culture is homogeneous, the pattern may be relatively simple. The signs and symbols in use represent the beliefs and values of the one dominant group in society. A single national culture is the product of these beliefs and values.

The possibility exists, however, that an amalgam of separate cultures will be brought together as part of a heterogeneous national identity. In this case, the supposition may be that a national culture has been forged from these separate entities, or that a multicultural national society exists, as is at present assumed in Australia. Using the model proposed by Lotman (1990), this national culture would also be comprised of peripheral and core spheres and cultural interchange would take place. Within the peripheral spheres would be lodged separate subsidiary cultural groupings, each with their own core sphere of beliefs.

In this model, the core sphere of the national culture would contain the signs and symbols which are taken to represent the long-held beliefs and values of the national society. The difficulty in establishing a national culture in these circumstances, however, lies in the fact that these long-held beliefs and values are likely to reflect the norms of the dominant cultural grouping. Other subsidiary cultural groups may feel excluded. Ideas from the periphery of the national culture may fail to penetrate the core cultural concepts. Assumptions about the nature of national culture may neglect to take account of the ideas, beliefs and values of the subsidiary cultures, so

that the concept becomes divisive and exclusive rather than a unifying force. In making statements about a national culture, full recognisance has to be taken of the complex and intricate patterns of shift within all the cultural settings which combine to form a national entity. A lack of acknowledgment of differences, a lack of understanding of differences or a denial of differences can be expected to cause cultural dissonance to occur.

Figure 4.1a illustrates a construct of culture, based upon the theories of Lotman (1990), which incorporates the position of education systems located within the core sphere of the culture. These education systems are taken, in this study, to act as agents for cultural transmission. The components of Figure 4.1a form a description of the concept of culture adopted in this study. The concept is seen as a concentric series of semiotic spheres divided by permeable boundaries. Along these boundaries occurs a constant process of interchange and shift, as new ideas enter the cultural system and as peripheral ideas move towards the centre core. This central core is composed of the principal, long-held beliefs, values and traditions of society. At the same time as inward moving influences converge upon the central core, to accommodate these incoming influences core ideas will change over time, move outward or may be discarded if these ideas are no longer relevant in the particular cultural setting. The beliefs and values contained in the central core will, however, not be amenable to rapid change because they represent entrenched and long-held ideas. Incoming ideas may be resisted or rejected at this level, until a critical pressure causes their acceptance. The pressure for change may force violent, rather than orderly, shifts in the national culture of the society.

The culture of any given society is influenced by facets of history, geographical location, the ethnic composition of the society, traditions associated with this ethnicity and the language in use. These facets are, of necessity, different in each cultural grouping. The variables which make up each facet may have a common basis, but the combination of variables will alter from one culture to the next making cultural difference inherent. Other factors, such as political and economic imperatives, are separate from culture but influence cultural outcomes because of the constraints exercised upon society.

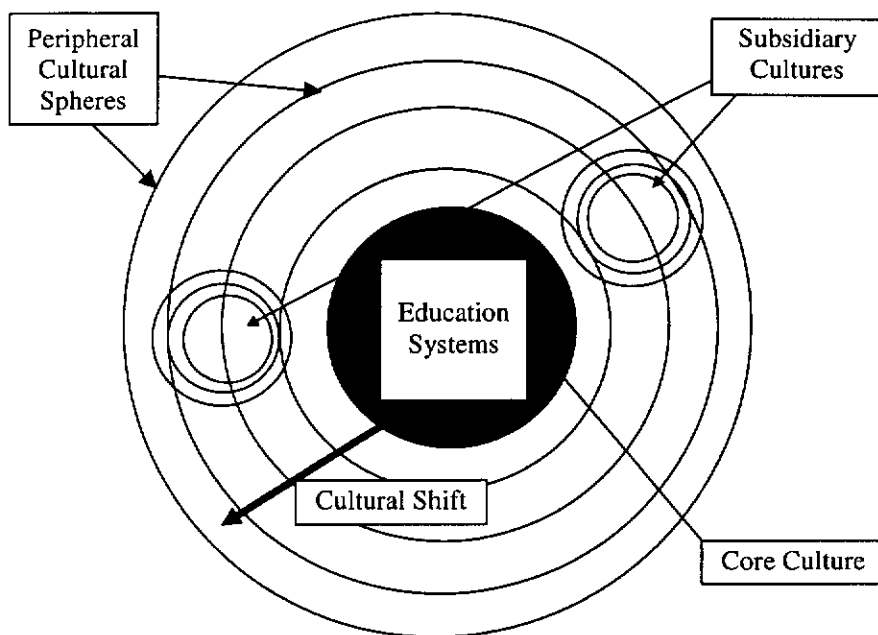


Figure 4.1a The concept of culture, demonstrating the characteristics of the model adopted in this study

Within each sphere and throughout the cultural setting there exists a “web or pattern of meanings” (Haferkamp, 1989). From this pattern are drawn the signs and symbols which are the fabric of the beliefs held in society, a fabric which changes as the culture changes.

Within the central core of the culture are the embedded education systems acting as agents in the transmission of culture. These education systems themselves can be examined. Just as a given culture will hold a core sphere of beliefs, understandings, societal norms and expectations, so education systems set within this sphere will reflect these influences. Education systems controlled by the political forces impacting upon the culture (as in the case of Government education systems) will conform to the constraints imposed by these forces. Schools which operate outside Government systems may have more freedom to express non-core cultural ideas. Some schools, for example those run by Muslim organisations in Western Australia, might in fact be set within the peripheral cultural spheres of that field and may contribute to cultural change.

Because the beliefs and values of the core sphere change slowly, the probability exists that education systems set within this sphere will also be slow to change and to adapt to cultural shifts. Furthermore, education systems are usually nationally based, so that the core sphere values they transmit are those of what is presumed to be a national culture. As has already been discussed, however, a presumption that a national culture exists does not guarantee that all the facets of that culture are represented in the core sphere of ideas and beliefs. The core sphere may reflect only the imperatives of a dominant societal grouping and therefore education systems may transmit only these values.

In Figure 4.1b, the influences which affect education systems and structures within the core sphere of a cultural setting are detailed. The key elements of Figure 4.1b are the components of the education systems. These components are made up of the historical influences which have affected educational provision and have given rise to educational traditions, the geographical location of the culture in which the education system is set, and the beliefs, founded upon these traditions, which society holds about education. These beliefs, in turn, reflect the composition and structures of society and are framed in the language used in the society. The education system, however, is set within the core sphere of the culture at a national level. Just as the beliefs and norms which the system transmits will represent those of dominant groups within the nation, so the language in use will mirror the language used by these groups.

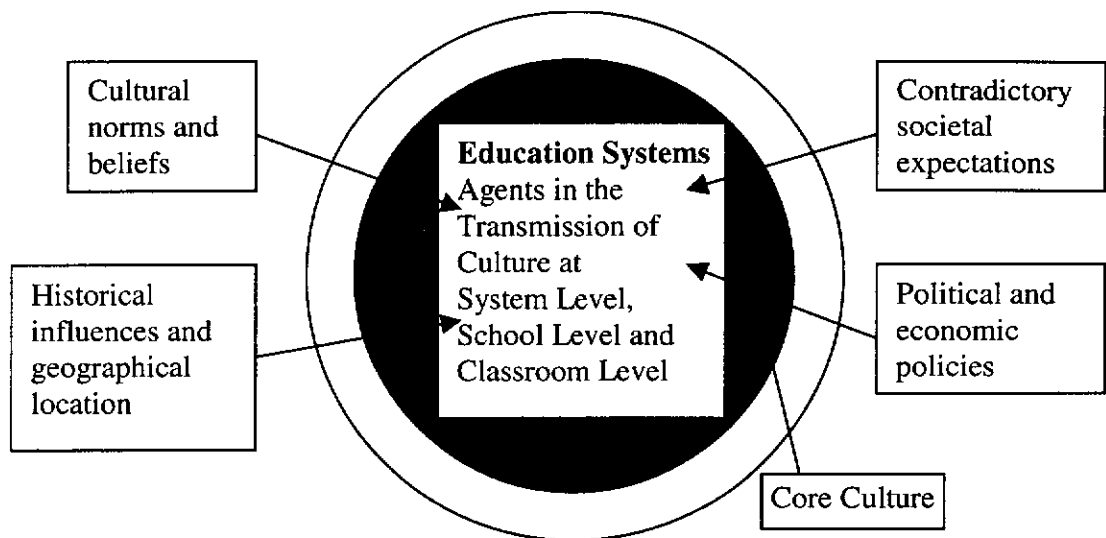


Figure 4.1b Education systems set within the core sphere of culture

The figure illustrates that schools, as agents in the transmission of culture, may be expected to undertake conflicting roles. These expectations could stem from political or economic imperatives as well as, or in addition to, cultural sources. Schools may be called upon to reinforce the norms and morays of the dominant groups in society and to maintain social structures and hierarchies, through a process of sifting and sorting students into what the core sphere of society regards as their appropriate hierarchical placement. At the same time, political rhetoric may call for all students to be given equity of access to educational provision.

As in the larger culture, of which the schools are a microcosm, external influences will constrain outcomes. Political decisions and rhetoric will govern expenditure on programs and plans and will provide a framework of legislation within which education systems must operate. The transmission of culture, bounded by these constraints, will occur through the curriculum but also, and perhaps more importantly, through the ethos and attitudes set out in policies and displayed by staff and students.

The long-held and traditional views of society, expressed as the culture of that society, and the effects of changes which are occurring will be mirrored in this fashion. Participants in this transmission within society (in the case of schools:

school staff; students and their parents) will carry the beliefs and perceptions, thus engendered, into their daily lives.

4.2 The Concept of Cultural Dissonance

The migrant family is conceptualised, in this study, as moving between related but separate cultures. Inherent differences between cultural settings are bound to exist, given differences in the variables of history, tradition, geographical location and the components of society which influence the perceptions of societies in each of the cultures. The degree of difference is governed by the relationship between the cultures. The closer the relationship, the fewer differences could be presumed to exist.

Any degree of difference, however, has the potential to change to cultural dissonance. The conceptual framework proposes that, where differences are unexpected and unprepared-for, discord may occur and cultural dissonance may be made manifest. This dissonance is likely to be experienced by the participants in the research in the form of jarring and discordant issues, which may disrupt the process of their transition.

Figure 4.2 shows the migrant family set within the framework of differing cultures. This figure conceptualises the movement between cultures as a process of cultural change. The experiences gained as participants in one cultural setting and the expectations engendered by those experiences will be set against experiences of the new cultural setting. Key aspects of the figure include the notions of cultural distance and cultural difference. While cultural distance and cultural differences are conceptualised as inherent, these factors alone are not seen as predictors of cultural dissonance. Differences which are understood to exist might be seen as positive, exciting, strange, fabulous and worth journeying to experience. Only when cultural differences are not articulated, and so are unexpected, discordant and difficult to negotiate are experiences of cultural dissonance predicted to become manifest, as the cultural expectations of participants are mismatched.

Because Western Australia was founded as a colony of Britain the supposition has been that, culturally, few if any differences exist between the two societies

(Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). As part of that cultural heritage, a common language is assumed to be of major significance, rendering the experience of migration presumably trouble free for United Kingdom families (Sturman, 1985). On the basis of these assumptions, policies and plans for migrant children have focussed on the teaching of English as a second language (Sturman, 1985). This supposition fails to take into account the complex nature of culture and of cultural change.

Within the conceptual framework for this study it is proposed that, upon migration, the beliefs and perceptions instilled by the education systems of the country of origin, as agents for cultural transmission, will be measured against the beliefs and perceptions of society within the host country. These beliefs and perceptions will, in turn, be transmitted by the education systems of the host country. Migrants will seek to make sense of their new surroundings in the light of their past knowledge and experience. Where sense cannot be made, cultural dissonance is likely to occur.

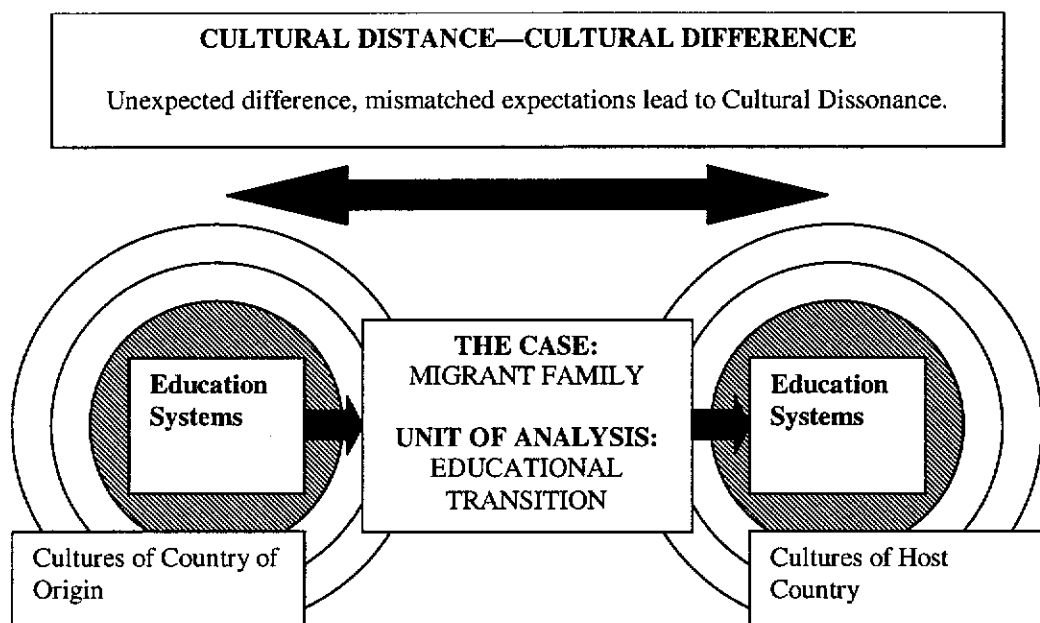


Figure 4.2 The migrant family moving between cultures which differ inherently

4.3 The Process of Migration

The process of moving between separate but related cultures is complicated for the migrant family by the life-changes which are part of the undertaking of migration. This undertaking involves much more than a simple journey between two fixed

geographical points. Literature reviewed in Chapter Three clearly sets forth the complexity of the migrant experience. The complex issues, which have to be negotiated, impinge upon the ability of the migrant family to adapt and to deal with unanticipated pressures.

The process, in this study, is conceptualised as commencing when a decision to emigrate is reached. For families from the United Kingdom, migration to Australia at one time involved a simple, if momentous, decision. To qualify as Australian Government sponsored migrants, families required to accept the conditions laid down, to agree to reside in Australia for a period of at least two years and to outlay a sum of ten pounds sterling. These conditions of entry have changed radically. Entry criteria now require even those emigrating to rejoin family already resident in Australia to satisfy a points system. The venture requires financial resources and professional or trade skills.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the steps required for the process to be accomplished. The linear model, developed in this study, emerges from what is already known about the process of migration. The process is equated to other patterns involving major life-change, as described by Morse and Johnston (1991) in their constellation model. Qualitative aspects arise from previous studies of cultural transmigration and from literature dealing with current regulatory controls.

Figure 4.3 shows that from the point of taking a decision to migrate to Australia, the United Kingdom family is committed to an initial series of steps involving bureaucratic intricacies, the meeting of specific criteria, uncertainty over selection or rejection of applications and, in the case of successful application, the granting of permission to emigrate. The granting of permission will set in train a second stage of the process. To avail themselves of the opportunity, the family must make the move to Australia within the specific time frame which their visas allow.

Within this time frame, steps have to be taken to prepare for the move. Financial provision for the journey and for arrival in a new country must be arranged, unless the migrants are sponsored by new employers in Western Australia. Property may be disposed of; choices must be made as to what should be taken with the family and what must be left behind.

As the time for the journey approaches, leave-takings of family and friends must begin and will continue until the final departure for Australia. Because the geographical distance to be travelled will take them halfway around the world, the likelihood is that reunions with these family and friends, while more possible than in the past, will probably not take place within a matter of years. The journey itself, in this decade of the twentieth century, is likely to be by air.

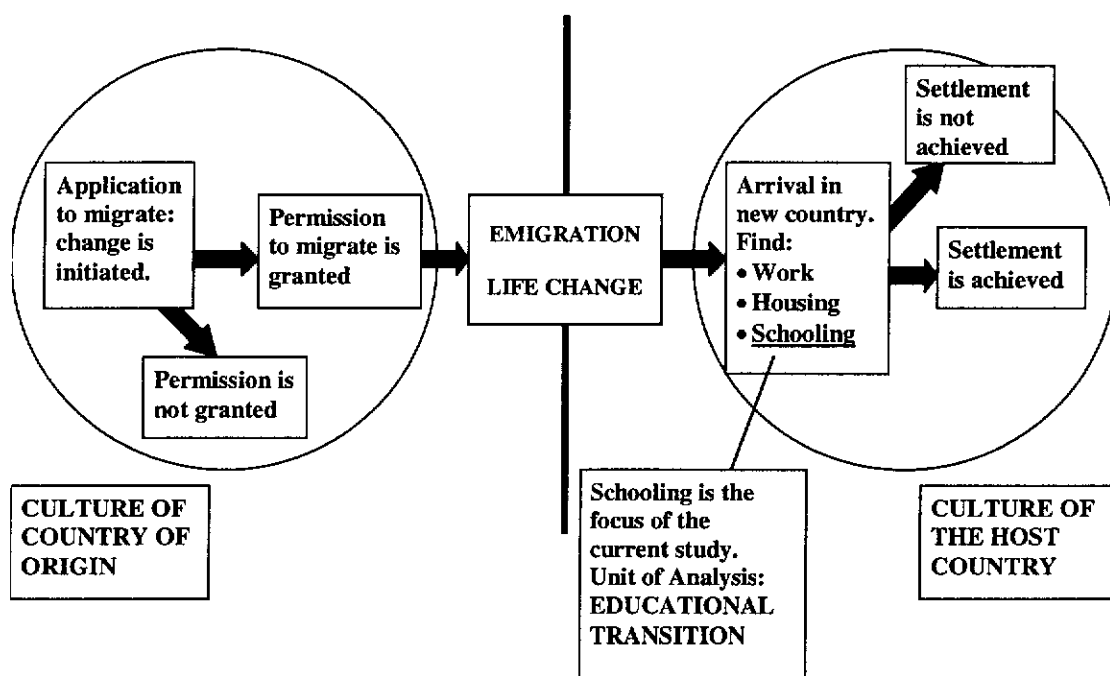


Figure 4.3 The life-change process of migration

Within twenty four hours of leaving the United Kingdom, the migrant family will be expected to commence the adjustment process associated with making a new life in Australia. This moment of arrival is seen within the conceptual framework as the crux of the life-change—a point of impact.

For families who bring with them dependent children, an early priority upon arrival will be to establish them within a school routine. There are legal imperatives involved in this matter, if the children are within the age of compulsory school attendance, as well as considerations of continuity of education.

The decisions which have to be made concerning schooling are likely to be only several out of many factors requiring attention in the initial stages of settlement. Housing, new employment, all are aspects of re-orientation in a new country which will also make demands upon the migrant family. At this stage of the process,

encountering unexpected and inexplicable cultural differences, in addition to all other decision-making tasks, could quickly and easily lead to the negative experiences of cultural dissonance.

The conceptual framework envisages the process of re-establishment being continual until such time as normal life-patterns can be resumed and settlement is achieved. In the event that the process proves too difficult, in that the family fail to settle and to adjust to their new surroundings, the conceptual framework proposes that they will either move elsewhere in Australia or will return to their country of origin.

Summary Chapter Four has set out the conceptual framework for the research. This framework demonstrates the complexity of the concept of culture, of inherent cultural differences and of cultural change. Set alongside this complexity, in the case of the migrant families, are the additional stresses of fulfilling criteria for migration and negotiating the process of migration.

The presence of inherent cultural differences, transmitted through education systems, raises the possibility that these differences may be experienced by the migrant families as cultural dissonance. Added to the stress of coping with cultural change are the stresses involved in the process of migration. The cumulative effect of stress from these changes means that the potential for cultural dissonance to occur may be increased because of the families' situation as migrants. The extent to which this has happened has not been documented previously. This thesis aims to provide insights, which are currently lacking, to illuminate the issues experienced by these families within the framework of a process of cultural change. Chapter Five describes the methodology employed in this study to address issues of cultural dissonance and the questions that directed the research.

Chapter 5

The Research Methodology

Introduction In Chapter five the methodology which underpins the research is described. The Chapter deals with the selection of a research paradigm and research mode suitable to the aims of the study. A time-line for the project is set out as part of the research design. Methods of identifying the primary data sources, who are migrant families from the United Kingdom, are described. The sources of secondary data in the study are also identified.

The methodology of data analysis is discussed, along with steps taken to control the quality of data. Since the study involved human participants, ethical considerations were of prime concern and the steps taken to ensure that the participants were protected are enumerated. Finally the chapter includes details of difficulties which were encountered in the course of the research.

5.1 The Selection of a Research Paradigm

The unit of analysis in this study—the experiences of the case study families in the transition and induction of their children into Western Australian education systems—was an integral part of the migrancy experience in the lives of these families. As such, the unit of analysis could not be examined in isolation, but was interlinked with the contexts of the families' lives and their educational settings. Data collection in the research relied upon a personal interaction between the researcher and the participants in the study. The aim of the research was to arrive at a series of “‘working hypotheses’ that described each case.” (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p.238) The study, therefore, was designed to take account of emergent findings which were expected to surface as the research progressed (Guba, 1977). Table 5.1 sets out the axiomatic differences between the Rationalistic and Naturalistic paradigms as envisaged by Guba and Lincoln (1982).

Table 5.1

Axiomatic Differences between the Rationalistic and Naturalistic Paradigms

	Paradigm	
Subject of Axiom Reality	Rationalistic Single, tangible convergent fragmentable	Naturalistic Multiple intangible divergent holistic
Inquirer/respondent relationship	Independent	Interrelated
Nature of truth statements	Context-free generalizations Nomothetic statements Focus on similarities	Context-bound working hypotheses Idiographic statements Focus on differences
Attribution/explanation of action	“Real” causes temporally precedent or simultaneous manipulable probabilistic	Attributional shapers: interactive (feedforward and feedback) nonmanipulable plausible
Relation of values to inquiry	Value-free	Value-bound

(Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p.237)

The research design indicated that a research paradigm was required which would permit the examination of a particular sub-set of the families’ experiences. This sub-set was part of the greater experience of migrancy in the lives of each family and as such could not be manipulated for the purposes of research. The researcher would relate to the participants in the study. In terms of axiomatic fit, the Naturalistic paradigm as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.237) was found to be most suitable for the purpose.

5.2 The Selection of a Research Mode

In this research project each of the forty-seven migrant families was seen as a self-contained entity. The conceptual framework envisaged each of the forty-seven families as being in transit between the cultural settings of their country of origin and the cultural settings of Western Australia. Embedded within these cultural settings were the education systems in which the families had been participants in their country of origin and in which they now participated within Western Australia. The cultural settings and their embedded education systems represented the external frames of reference in the study. The internal frame of reference was represented in the total migrancy experiences of each of the forty-seven families. The unit of

analysis, the experiences of each family in the transition and induction of their children into the education systems of Western Australia, was set within this internal frame of reference.

The aim of the research was to arrive, as concisely as possible, at an understanding of the experiences of the migrant families in the context of the educational changes for their children. From this understanding, a clearer delineation of the concept of cultural dissonance was expected to emerge. The process of migration was seen as ongoing from the moment a family decision to migrate was taken, until such time as the family believed that they had settled in their host country and had resumed their normal life patterns.

This interpretation of the migrancy process was based upon a “constellation model” proposed by Morse and Johnson (1991). The migrancy experiences in the study were equated to any major life-change process, and in this context school personnel within the Western Australian education systems were seen as having the potential to act as “significant others” with a role in adjustment and the easing of the change. The model of case study research, in which each family represented a bounded case (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1978), met the requirements of the research design. The case boundaries were seen as permeable so that external contexts influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, the situation of the case study families.

5.3 The Research Questions

The research questions which direct this study are generated by an initial conceptual framework which recognises that migrant families from the United Kingdom encounter the effects of cultural difference in the stages of the process of moving between their country of origin and Western Australia. The effects of these cultural differences are expected to be reflected in education systems in Western Australia, since these systems are embedded in the core culture of the host country. The children of the migrant families will be placed within the education systems of Western Australia.

The study sets out to explore the experience of cultural differences and of how they developed for the families. A number of research questions were set out. The major research question which directed the study was:

What are the experiences of migrant families from the United Kingdom, in dealing with cultural differences encountered during the transition and induction of their school age children into Western Australian education systems?

From this major research question, a number of subsidiary questions were then developed, as follows:

1. Do the cultural differences experienced by migrant families from the United Kingdom as their children transfer to Western Australian schools develop into experiences of cultural dissonance?
2. Are there areas of the school curriculum in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?
3. Are there other areas of school provision in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?
4. To what extent, in the view of the migrant families, do education systems in Western Australia act to mitigate experiences of cultural dissonance for these families:
 - a) at system level?
 - b) at school level?
 - c) at classroom level?

5.4 The Design of the Research

A research design which incorporated three phases was adopted for the study. Figure 5.4 sets out a time-line for the project.

December 1995	February 1996	November 1996	November 1997
Exploratory Phase	Cumulative Phase	Conclusive Phase	

Figure 5.4 Time line for the research

Figure 5.4 shows the three phases of the research within the context of the time taken for each phase.

The Exploratory Phase The first, or exploratory, phase commenced in December 1995 when ethical clearance for the study had been granted. In this phase, literature searches were conducted using the libraries of Curtin University, and CD ROM networks of ERIC, PsychLit, Austrom and British Educational Abstracts. Preliminary searches for respondents were initiated, using six community newspapers, radio, a Western Australian Council of State School Organisations newsletter to branches and the Uniting Church Family Services newsletter. Loosely structured interviews were conducted with five respondent families from these sources. Data of a contextual nature were also collected through telephone interviews with four other respondents whose family history did not correspond to the study parameters in that their date of arrival in Western Australia was not in the period 1985-1995. One family was located and was interviewed in this phase through the personal help of the school chaplain in a metropolitan school. This interview led to an introduction to another migrant family who were also interviewed.

At this stage of the research, a potential focus group was located in one Senior High School. A sports program in the school, according to anecdotal information, had a membership of forty boys from United Kingdom backgrounds. This source was explored in Term 1 of the 1996 school year during the Cumulative Phase of the research. The potential focus group constituted the only instance in this study when a large number of families from the United Kingdom were known to be congregated in a single school.

The questions which directed the early interviews were formulated in response to data collected as part of a limited pilot study carried out in advance of the research.

In this study, five contacts who were either known to the researcher or were introduced to the researcher were interviewed. The contacts had migrated from the United Kingdom bringing with them school-age children, but their migration had taken place before 1985. These interviews were unstructured and were seen as a means of exploring issues which were regarded as important by the contact families. The interviews, in association with the researcher's own experiences as a migrant parent and literature which had been reviewed, were used as a starting point in formulating interview questions in the study itself.

Secondary data collection, from newspapers, Department of Immigration material and Bureau of Statistics documents was also commenced in this phase. The collection of secondary data was ongoing throughout the first two phases of the study.

The Cumulative Phase The Cumulative phase commenced in February 1996 and was divided into three parts: in the first part, written response data from respondents whose children were participating in all sectors of Western Australian education systems was collected; in tandem with this process of data collection, a documentary analysis of official literature on United Kingdom and Western Australian education systems was commenced. Enquiries, through the University of London, directed the researcher to official sources of information in the United Kingdom. Comparable sources in Western Australia proved hard to locate. Not until the leaflet published by the Department of Education was found in mid-October could this documentary analysis be completed.

The third part of the Cumulative phase of the study saw focus families selected from the original respondents. These families were interviewed so that the depth of understanding of the main issues which had been identified in the Exploratory phase of the study and in the first part of the Cumulative phase could be increased. The documentary analysis was completed at this stage.

During the first part of the Cumulative phase, the main searches for respondents through schools in the greater Perth metropolitan area commenced and continued in the months from February to August 1996. Table 5.4 shows the number, type, sector

and geographical location of the schools which were approached in the course of the study.

In Term 1, a total of five Senior High Schools in the State education system and four secondary schools in the Independent sector of education were approached. One of these schools contained the sports program discussed earlier. The Principal of this school did not reply to correspondence and no responses were received from parents.

One school did write to state that the details of the research would be placed in the newsletter, and responses indicated that at least three other schools acted in this way. One school approached at this time declined to help as they believed that they had no families who fitted the criteria set for the research.

Table 5.4 illustrates that an attempt was made achieve a general balance in the types of schools, the sector of educational provision and the locations of the schools in which the searches were conducted. However, it should be stressed that only seven school Principals or other school staff contacted the researcher to confirm that the message would be placed in the newsletter (see Difficulties Encountered in the Research). Confirmation of other placings came through the spread of responses.

Data collection from respondents from these searches was begun. As the community and school searches increased and the number of respondents grew, it became obvious at an early stage of the Cumulative phase that individual family interviews would be impractical. No school search yielded more than three respondents. The geographical spread of these families along with complicating factors of work hours and other commitments in the families made arranging interview times difficult. A strategy using written interview schedules which were posted to each family was devised. The written interview schedule was based upon the questions which had directed the earlier loosely structured interviews in the study and incorporated additional questions generated by the responses to those interviews.

Table 5.4**Schools approached in the study**

	Number	Type	Sector	Location
Term 1	4	Senior High Schools	State	Northern suburbs
	1	Senior High Schools	State	Coastal suburbs
	4	Senior High Schools	Independent	Northern suburbs
Term 2	4	Senior High Schools	State	Northern suburbs
	3	Senior High Schools	State	Southern suburbs
	2	Senior High Schools	State	Coastal suburbs
	7	Primary Schools	State	Northern suburbs
	4	Primary Schools	State	Southern suburbs
	2	Primary Schools	State	Coastal suburbs
	4	Primary Schools	Independent	Northern suburbs
Term 3	13	Senior High Schools	Independent	Metropolitan Area
Total	48 schools			

In the initial telephone contact with the participants, verbal permission was sought to post the questions. In all cases this permission was given. During this telephone conversation, the researcher emphasised that the questions were to be seen as a starting point and encouraged participants to expand on the detail of answers or to use the final question to include matters which were of particular importance to their family. This approach yielded substantial data, including complete written histories of the family's migration experiences complete with time lines. Data reduction and display commenced shortly after data collection was begun and continued throughout the Cumulative phase of the study.

In the second part of the Cumulative phase, which commenced in September 1996, six focus families were identified. Each focus family had a case history which exemplified one or more of the main themes arrived at through data collection and

analysis. These families were approached to ask permission for interviews to be conducted.

The interviews followed the loosely structured pattern of early interviews in the study, but the interview questions were directed towards obtaining greater detail on the particular aspects of the families' experiences which corresponded to the themes being investigated (questions which directed these interviews are set forth in Appendix 2). The interviews were also used as a form of audit, as the families reviewed data they had supplied to the study and commented upon the emergent themes. During both parts of the Cumulative phase of the study, literature searches continued as themes and patterns emerged through data collection and analysis.

The Conclusive Phase The Conclusive phase of the study commenced in November 1996. At this stage, theoretical saturation had been reached and data collection was discontinued. Data reduction and data display went forward until data analysis was completed. The investigator's log was kept throughout the research as a record of the steps taken in the study and as an aid to replicability. The preparation of the final report was part of the Conclusive phase of the research.

5.5 The Selection of Participants

The objective of the research was to obtain as much information as possible about the recent experiences of United Kingdom families in the transition and induction of their children into Western Australian education systems. To achieve this objective, a sample of families was sought whose date-of-arrival in Western Australia fell within the period 1985-1995. This sample would be part of the total number of United Kingdom families who arrived in this period and who brought with them dependent, school-aged children.

United Kingdom immigrants formed the largest group of new arrivals in Western Australia in the years 1992-1993 (34.8%) and this pattern compared to 1984-1985, when the largest source group again came from the United Kingdom (26.0%) (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994). While statistical evidence was available from the Bureau of Immigration (1994) on numbers of United Kingdom immigrants to Western Australia (2,756 persons in the years 1992-1993),

no statistics are kept of the numbers of these persons who were school-aged children accompanying their parent or parents. No information on the numbers of such children within Western Australian education systems is held at education system level.

There was, therefore, no way of arriving at a target figure for the sample based upon a given population. The most informed deduction which could be made was that a significant number of these children had arrived in Western Australia, and that a proportion of this number had remained in the State. A lesser number of the children would have enrolled in schools within the metropolitan area and, depending on age at arrival, some would still be in schools there.

A process of searches through possible locations resulted in forty-nine families, whose date-of-arrival came within the parameters of the study, identifying themselves to the researcher. All these families formed part of a self-selecting sample. Of the families who initially responded, 96% contributed data to the study and so became the case study families who formed the basis for the research.

Of the two families who did not contribute to data collection, one family was scheduled to leave on an extended visit back to the United Kingdom within two weeks of the interview questions being sent. The family mother indicated in her telephone conversation that she would make every effort to respond, but could not promise to do so. In the case of the second family, the mother was agreeable to having the interview questions sent to her. The questions were not returned and despite being reminded after one month that the researcher was interested in her family's story, she failed to respond. All participants were informed that they might withdraw from the study at any time, so this parent's decision was accepted and no further contact was made.

5.6 Sources of Data

Primary data sources The case study families, along with other respondents whose contribution to the study was of a contextual nature, were the primary data sources in the research.

Secondary data sources Secondary data sources were drawn from literature reviewed in the course of data collection including Department of Immigration material, Bureau of Statistics documents, Education Department literature from the United Kingdom and Western Australia and information contained in the press.

5.7 Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis in the study is seen as comprising data collection, data reduction and data display. Data reduction and display were begun shortly after the commencement of data collection and this collection, reduction and display continued during the latter part of the Exploratory phase and throughout the Cumulative phase of the research. When theoretical saturation had been reached and interviews with focus families had been conducted, data collection ceased. All stages of data analysis were completed during the Conclusive phase of the study.

Stages of data reduction and display As soon as possible after data from the first interviews were collected, the interview reports were transcribed. Preliminary data categories were established at this stage. These categories were divided into two areas: data which dealt with the period prior to the family's migration; data which came from the post-migration period. Each category of data was assigned a colour code and data were sorted, firstly within each family case study and then across the cases according to these codes. As the collection of data moved to the receipt of written interview questions and finally to the collection of data through interviews with the focus families, this pattern of transcription, coding and sorting continued in tandem with data collection activities.

A second series of data categories, which were labelled system; school and classroom, was introduced when all data had been collected. All data which directly concerned the unit of analysis, that is the transition and induction of children into the Western Australian education systems, were then re-colour-coded and sorted, first through data from the individual families then across the cases.

Throughout the period of data collection, secondary data sources were identified. Contextual information from primary data sources other than the case study families was amassed.

Following the conclusion of data collection and the analysis of data in the second series of categories, all data from primary data sources other than the case study families (contextual material) and from secondary data sources was combined with the case study data to allow the findings of the study to be reported.

Data categories Within the preliminary data categories, questions addressed issues surrounding the unit of analysis and also wider issues in the families' migrancy experiences. These latter issues were included at this stage to provide contextual material. Early interviews clearly showed that these experiences were of importance to the families and added an extra dimension. Any difficulties encountered in transition and induction became complicating factors in what could be an already stressful situation.

The preliminary data categories which had been established after the first five interviews were set out as follows:

Pre-migration:

1. Information on education systems in Western Australia which was accessed in the United Kingdom.
2. Information on the child's stage of educational development which was brought from the United Kingdom.
3. Any pre-migration issues, other than those connected with schooling.

Post-migration:

1. Any post-migration issues which were not directly connected with schooling.
2. Time available to make decisions about schooling.
3. Experiences of difficulty in school transfer.
4. Experiences of difficulty with language issues.
5. Experiences of differences in school setting and courses.
6. Perceptions of outcomes in schooling and in the future for the children in Western Australia.

The second series of data categories was developed to allow closer scrutiny of issues which directly arose from the unit of analysis. These categories were set out as follows:

1. Issues which concerned educational systems in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia (system level).
2. Issues which concerned transition between particular schools (school level).
3. Issues which addressed particular classroom situations experienced by the children in the study (classroom level).

5.8 Quality Control Methods

The use of the qualitative paradigm in this research led to the adoption of quality control techniques which followed the pattern set out by Guba (1977). In Guba's terminology, aspects of validity, reliability and objectivity which would be of importance in the quantitative paradigm are replaced by measures of intrinsic and extrinsic adequacy, replicability and neutrality.

Intrinsic Adequacy The presence of the researcher is seen by Guba (1977) as having the potential to distort data responses in qualitative research. In the current study, data were supplied by each family to the researcher, either through personal interviews or through written responses. The researcher was present with the family for a period of approximately one hour, or was in receipt of written data submissions. In these circumstances any distortion caused by the researcher's presence was expected to be minimal. The technique of triangulation of data (Jick, 1979) was employed by checking data across the cases, and by using documentary sources where these were available to confirm data supplied by the families.

Notes of interviews were handwritten by the researcher. Of the twelve family interviews conducted in the course of the study, nine were structured by the families so that both parents and children were present. The technique of note taking by the researcher was felt to be less intrusive and inhibiting, in these circumstances, than directing speech to a recorder. The method also allowed the researcher to repeat what had been said, from time to time, so that the respondents could confirm the accuracy of the notes or could challenge the researcher's grasp of meaning in the

discussion. Throughout the study, data collected were considered to be jointly owned so that participants had the right to review interview transcripts.

Extrinsic Adequacy The degree to which the study is generalisable is seen by Guba (1977) as a means of measuring extrinsic adequacy. The steps taken to ensure intrinsic adequacy are also intended to safeguard the extrinsic adequacy of the study.

The common factor of migrancy and the spread of families within the education systems and throughout schools in a wide range of the greater Perth metropolitan area was expected to allow a degree of generalisability from case to case. The method of selection of participants, however, meant that there was no attempt to obtain a sample which could be held to be representative of all migrant families from the United Kingdom. Each case study family was seen as a separate entity whose experiences might be shared with other families and to this extent might be generalisable.

Replicability Replicability is defined by Guba (1977) as the degree to which the research could be repeated by others for the purpose of replicating results. The possibility of any case study being completely replicable is remote as time frames and contexts change.

To ensure that the study design could be replicated, two strategies were followed. Throughout the research, the steps taken were recorded in an investigator's log (Owen, 1987, p.186). The entries in this log form a record of the research process which could act as guidelines for any similar study. The second strategy saw the focus families review transcripts of data supplied by their family and discuss the general conclusions which were being reached as a form of audit.

Neutrality The methods used to safeguard the intrinsic adequacy of the research, described earlier in the study, were expected to contribute to the neutrality of the study. The use of a process of internal audit by the focus families was also expected to reinforce neutrality.

Criteria for the inclusion of data The criteria for the inclusion of data reflected those proposed by Guba (1977, p.59).

1. The inclusion of information which extended the researcher's understanding of the case.
2. The inclusion of any information which appeared to link information already to hand.
3. The inclusion of any information which appeared to identify new elements of importance to the study.
4. The inclusion of information which reinforced data already to hand (provided that such new information was not repeating that which was already well established).
5. The inclusion of information which seemed to clarify data already to hand.
6. The inclusion of information which appeared to represent a particular area of the study or to represent items of importance within that area.
7. The inclusion of information which appeared to refute existing information.

The extent of each case study was determined by the information provided by the family. When data from the families were seen to be repeating information already to hand in the study, a decision was taken that theoretical saturation in that area of the study had been reached.

5.9 Ethical Considerations

Each participant family was provided with a written statement which explained the nature and the purpose of the research. Assurances were given that any data presented by the family would be treated as confidential, and that the family's names and circumstances would not be made public. Each family was allocated a number in the research and they are referred to by that number throughout the study.

The methods to be used to collect data were specified in this letter, as were the rights of participant families to withdraw from the study at any time. Each family had the right to withdraw consent to the use of data they had supplied if they later believed its use would be damaging to them. In the case of one family, while the family mother

was anxious to contribute data, one of the children appeared uneasy to be the subject of discussion. In this case, the areas which seemed troublesome to the child were amended and certain data were not included in the study in deference to the child's wishes.

5.10 Difficulties Encountered in the Research

The major difficulty encountered in the research lay in the absence of any statistical information which would have helped in the location of the migrant families or the location of their children in schools. No readily accessible statistical information is kept on numbers of United Kingdom migrant families once they have entered Western Australia, so that their subsequent movements within the State, inter-State or out of the country are not recorded for statistical purposes. There was no means of determining the total number of migrant families from the United Kingdom accompanied by school-aged children in the period covered by the research. Migrant Reception Centres no longer cater for English speaking migrants. Migrant Information Centres apparently are structured to provide services mainly to non-English speaking migrants. Individual schools stated that they did not have information on numbers of United Kingdom migrant children in the school. The lack of information led to the strategy of searches being developed.

This strategy was hampered in several ways. Community newspaper information, in one instance, was published inaccurately. While these newspapers were willing to publish details of the research, it was not always clear as to when this would be done or what was the extent of the newspaper's readership. Radio appeals have coverage only for those who are listening at that particular time.

Within the education systems, the use of school newsletters to parents had several potential drawbacks. Firstly, there was almost no means of knowing if any of the families in the target group actually were within the school catchment area. Secondly, the publication of details of the research in the newsletter had to rest on the judgement of the school Principal and in forty one schools there was no confirmation, other than through family responses, that publication had taken place.

Even if details were included in the newsletter there was no surety that the newsletter itself was read by the families. Finally, of course, even if the newsletter was read, the families might decide not to respond.

A further difficulty was encountered in the course of undertaking a documentary analysis to allow comparisons to be made between education systems in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia. The lack of public knowledge which surrounded the Department of Education's "A Guide for Parents" hindered the location of this leaflet and made initial comparisons difficult.

5.11 Appendices

Appendix 1 sets out the questions which directed interviews in the study. In Appendix 2, the case histories of the individual families are detailed in the order that each family responded with data.

Summary In Chapter Five the reasoning behind the selection of the research paradigm and the research mode has been detailed. Steps taken in data analysis have been set out. Issues related to maximising the integrity of the research have been discussed as were ethical considerations raised by the research methodology. In the subsequent chapters the findings of the research are set out and are discussed.

Chapter 6

A Comparative Analysis of Education Systems in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

Introduction The present research examines the question of whether cultural dissonance is experienced by a particular group of migrant families as they integrate their children into the education systems of their host country. In the course of this examination two pathways were followed.

In this Chapter, the first pathway uses the technique of documentary analysis to compare official policy statements mainly obtained from official policy statements and Government Reports from the education systems of the United Kingdom and Western Australia. The decision to base the analysis on these sources was made because official policy statements were believed to be the most readily accessible documents available to the parents of migrant children.

The documentary analysis and comparison is made to establish what is known of the basic components of the education systems from which the migrant families in this study have come and the basic components of the education systems into which they enter in Western Australia. In this way, cultural differences are located, identified and explored, since education systems are agents in the transmission of culture. The identification of these differences will determine the potential for cultural dissonance to occur.

The second pathway was based upon the case study format of the research. This second pathway seeks to discover and identify elements of cultural difference which are noted by the migrant families who took part in the research. From this identification, the research traces issues arising from cultural differences and experienced as cultural dissonance by the migrant families. The respondent families are familiar with United Kingdom education systems and, upon migration, have become participants in the Western Australian education systems.

In this Chapter, the comparisons made between the education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia are generated by the conceptual framework of the study. This framework envisaged schools as agents in the transmission of culture and, because education systems are controlled at government level, the systems were seen to be embedded in the core sphere of what is presumed to be a national culture. In cultural terms, the components of the education systems were conceptualized as being influenced by the history of the cultural setting, the traditions which have been generated by that history and the geographical position of the country in which the cultural system is located. The education systems reflect societal beliefs, norms and values engendered by history and tradition and these are articulated in the language in common use in society. In turn, these beliefs, norms and values shape the views which society holds about education and about the importance of this field.

In addition to cultural influences, education systems were seen to be constrained by political and economic decisions. These influences, while external to culture, relate to, shape and impinge upon cultural beliefs.

In this chapter, the cultural influences which affect education systems in the two countries are discussed. The expectations of schools in each system, given their role as agents in cultural transmission, are examined and the effects of external constraints which influence this cultural transmission are discussed.

6.1 Sources of Literature Available to Parents

Official handbooks were utilised to make concise comparisons, within the basic educational provision offered in United Kingdom education systems and in Western Australia. For the United Kingdom, current information on all aspects of education is accessible through the handbook "Britain 1996", an annually updated publication from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. This handbook is available in Western Australia. The Scottish Office also published leaflets detailing that country's education provision which would not be directly accessible in Western Australia.

In Western Australia, on a smaller scale, the Education Department has published a leaflet "A Guide for Parents" which targets incoming families to the State. This leaflet has apparently been published on an annual basis since 1993.

Despite requests by the researcher for information from the Education Department, from libraries and from sources in the University, in the early stages of the study no indication that the leaflet was in existence was forthcoming. Sources of information were scattered and lacked detail which would provide a comprehensive overview.

The reasons for this lack of awareness of the leaflet's existence may lie in the limited nature of its distribution. One or two copies are, theoretically, sent to all schools. Any excess copies are sent at the end of the year of publication to the Universities for the information of trainee teachers. Since the leaflet targets all incoming families to the State, it is hard to see how such distribution can be satisfactory.

The leaflet was eventually located by the researcher in October 1996, through a migrant parent now working in a primary school. This parent came across references to it, located one of two copies in the school files and sent the copy to the researcher for information.

Other information available for State education systems comes from Reports, Department of Education documents and individual school information booklets. The Independent systems in Western Australia publish school lists and individual schools provide a prospectus which details features of the school. Like the Education Department leaflet, the possibility that these sources may be readily accessible in the United Kingdom seems remote.

Differences in provision In theory, it would be possible for Western Australian parents contemplating a move to the United Kingdom to access the handbook "Britain: 1996" through library services. No comparable source of information for Western Australia, such as the leaflet "A Guide for Parents" (Western Australian Department of Education, 1996), is likely to be readily to hand for United Kingdom migrant families unless the information is specifically supplied to them upon application to migrate.

6.2 Cultural Influences which Affect the Education Systems of the United Kingdom and Western Australia

Since education systems are embedded in the core sphere of culture, educational provision reflects the influence of history, tradition, geographical location, components of society and the language in use. These influences shape the beliefs of society, which are made manifest in the form and nature of educational provision for children.

The education systems in the United Kingdom were the forerunners of those introduced into Western Australia in the period following colonisation. While the initial beliefs about education were taken from United Kingdom systems, constraints imposed by a separate and developing colonial history, the geographical location of the colony, the components of colonial society and the influences of political and economic decisions for the colony meant that changes in patterns of educational provision started to occur from early colonial settlement (Gregory & Smith, 1995).

6.3 Historical Influences upon Education in the United Kingdom and Western Australia

The history of the United Kingdom and the history of Western Australia have influenced the development of their education systems. In both cases the components of systems are complex.

The history of heterogeneity in national and cultural backgrounds of the peoples of the United Kingdom is reflected in separate educational provision in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This historical complexity means that it is risky to generalise about a British education system. For example, in the collection of statistical records, separate searches have to be conducted for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Clark, 1988). Three separate Government education systems are in place in the United Kingdom, while central control of these systems rests with the Parliament in Westminster (Her Majesty's Stationary Office [HMSO], 1995).

From a European perspective, the history of Western Australia is short in comparison to that of the United Kingdom. The Colonial education systems in Western Australia, for historical reasons and reasons of distance, evolved separately from systems in other parts of Australia from the early days of British colonisation (Barcan, 1980). The Federal Government in Australia does not take responsibility for educational provision at school level and a knowledge of present provisions for education in, for example, New South Wales or Victoria will not ensure an understanding of educational provision in Western Australia.

In addition to the State education system there are, in Western Australia, independent education systems which run parallel to State Government provision and receive a degree of Government support (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996; Gregory and Smith, 1995).

Historical influences in England and Wales The first Government grants for education in these countries were made in 1833 and the Education Act of 1870 established a basis for compulsory elementary education. Government assistance provided funding for two types of schools, the first run by the churches and the second by the state and governed by school boards. In 1880 all children between the ages of five and ten were compelled to attend school, and the school leaving age was raised by 1918 to fourteen years of age. (HMSO, 1995)

The school leaving age was further raised by Act of Parliament in 1944, and as part of that Education Act schools were divided into primary and secondary sectors. All children received a secondary education, and a Ministry of Education was formed to oversee policy for England and Wales. At secondary level, children were directed to either grammar schools, secondary technical schools or secondary modern schools. Their selection was based upon tests which were taken at the age of eleven.

These streams of secondary education were replaced in the 1960s and 1970s in some LEAs by comprehensive schools. The selective testing procedures were phased out in these areas and the new schools took pupils of all abilities. In 1972-73 the school leaving age was raised to sixteen years (HMSO, 1995).

Historical influences in Scotland In 1872, an Act of Parliament made elected school boards responsible for the compulsory education of children between the ages of five and thirteen. For children older than thirteen, evening school was provided. The responsibility for education was thus transferred from church control to the state. The school leaving age was raised in 1901 to fourteen years, and in 1918 the school boards were replaced by management through local government authorities and the provision of voluntary secondary education for children who wanted this was made mandatory (HMSO, 1995). The school leaving age in Scotland was raised to fifteen years in 1947, and to sixteen years in 1972-73 (HMSO, 1995, p.427). Comprehensive schools took the place of senior and junior secondary schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

Historical influences in Northern Ireland The Government took over responsibility for a single system of education in 1923, under the direct administrative control of local government. Children between the ages of six and fourteen were required to attend school for elementary education (HMSO, 1995). The school leaving age was raised to fifteen years in 1947 and to sixteen years in 1972-73.

Historical influences in Western Australia The founding of the Swan River Colony in 1829 (later to become the State of Western Australia) pre-dated education system reforms in the United Kingdom. These reforms were mirrored in the early educational systems in the colony, although difficulties in staffing and constraints imposed by remoteness and financial priorities led to a more patchy implementation of educational services in Western Australia (Gregory & Smith, 1995).

The early colonists in Western Australia in the nineteenth century found that the struggle for survival in a harsh and isolated land area made first claim upon their energies and resources. The educational systems in Western Australia were modelled on those of the United Kingdom, from whence the colonists came. In 1899, free compulsory schooling for all children between the ages of six (as in Ireland) and fourteen was introduced.

Early educational provision in the colony was rudimentary, with few qualified teachers, and makeshift school buildings. A dual system of provision by the Colonial Government and the Catholic Church, through the work of the Sisters of Mercy, operated for much of the nineteenth century. Schools catered for the basic practical needs of children who would work the land or would manage homes. The public image of teachers was low, as recruits were drawn often from the lowest echelons of society. For the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the country, little or no provision was available as “the natives” were considered to be ineducable. (Gregory & Smith, 1995).

In 1897 an Education Department under Government control was established. Funding for schools was boosted by the prosperity which came with the discovery of gold in the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie areas. The opening up of the remote land mass to miners and settlers brought further pressures to provide some form of education for the children living there. In 1895, a fixed salary rate for teachers was instituted, and a training college for teachers was opened at Claremont in Perth in 1902 (Gregory & Smith, 1995).

By the 1920s Western Australia had, according to Gregory and Smith (1995), a modern and free system of education, with five full secondary high schools, two district high schools, nine central schools and a University. In country areas, schools were usually under the supervision of one teacher (Gregory & Smith, 1995).

These authors note a dearth of detailed history of education in the State in post-war years (Gregory & Smith, 1995). The State school system in Western Australia originally followed the British example of junior and senior High Schools, with the introduction in the 1960s and 1970s of Comprehensive Co-educational secondary education, following an Education Department statement of policy in 1958 (Gregory & Smith, 1995)

Differences in provision While education systems in Western Australia were modelled upon those in the United Kingdom, fundamental differences in beliefs as to what should constitute Government educational provision have arisen from early in

colonial history. While an attempt was made to duplicate the education systems of the United Kingdom in Western Australia, historical differences in education provision engendered by geographical and sociological distinctions between the colonial power and the colony are documented from the earliest days of the State.

The major cultural differences to emerge are the result of the heterogeneous nature of the culture of the United Kingdom. While education systems in Western Australia drew upon patterns established in the colonial heartland, these patterns reflected aspects of education in Ireland. At the time, all of that country was part of the United Kingdom. The patterns which were adopted, in turn, reflected the leanings of particular, powerful groups in colonial society and the restrictions imposed by isolation and economic necessity.

6.4 Geographical Influences on Education Systems in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

In addition to the cultural influences of history and tradition, education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia are governed by the practical considerations of the size and components of the respective populations, based upon the geographic location of each set of systems and the land mass covered by educational provision. While the land mass of the United Kingdom would occupy only a tiny fraction of that of Western Australia, population density is generally much greater and so the numbers of children in education systems in the United Kingdom far exceed those in schools in Western Australia.

School numbers in the United Kingdom In the United Kingdom at present there are 29 900 schools which are maintained from public funds, 1 800 special schools and 2 500 fee-paying independent schools. Over half a million teachers are employed and over 9 000 000 pupils are in the school systems, 600 000 of these in the independent sector. About 67% of students continue studying after the age of sixteen and almost one in three students will enter University or a College of Further Education (HMSO, 1995).

School numbers in Western Australia According to the “Review of Education and Training” (Vickery, 1993):

The Western Australian school system is extremely diverse with over a thousand schools widely differing in size, governance, geographic location, fee structure, student profile and resource level.

(p.12)

The Report also notes the fact that Western Australia has a below Australian average retention rate for post-compulsory schooling, with figures of 73% compared to a national average of 77% (Vickery, 1993).

Differences in provision The main cultural differences in this area are therefore the result of scale of provision governed by the demands of population density in the United Kingdom and a much smaller population spread over a much larger geographic area in Western Australia. What is educationally practicable in one location is rendered impractical in the other.

6.5 Culturally Held Beliefs about Education in the United Kingdom and Western Australia

History, traditions and geographical influences have influenced beliefs, expectations and the value placed upon education in the United Kingdom and Western Australia. Education in the United Kingdom is universal and compulsory. Children are compelled to attend school from the age of five until after their sixteenth birthday (HMSO, 1995). In Western Australia, education is also universal and compulsory, although the age of entry to formal education is in the year the child turns six and compulsory education ends in the year the child turns fifteen (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

In the United Kingdom, education is free of charge in the Government sector (HMSO, 1995). In Western Australia, similar ideals of free State education are in place (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). However, while teaching instruction is free, State policy has been to charge for books and materials (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

In the United Kingdom education systems follow Government policy but public education is de-centralised, that is, administered by Local Authorities (HMSO, 1995). Recent developments such as the National Curriculum in England and Wales have seen an increase in centralised policy making (Glatter, Woods & Bagley, 1997)

In Western Australia the State education system is centrally controlled. Parallel systems of private and Government schools operate in the United Kingdom. The government education systems in the United Kingdom are required in law to provide religious and moral education for all students. Schools which are affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church are part of the government education system (HMSO, 1995). In Western Australia, the State education system, historically, has been secular (Barcan, 1980). The independent systems incorporate schools run by the Catholic Church.

Differences in provision The education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia appear superficially to share educational philosophies. Differences in beliefs and values, however are apparent when detailed comparisons are made. The age of entry to formal education differs, as does the age at which compulsory education ceases. Free education in the United Kingdom entails an absence of charges, while charges for books and materials are levied in Western Australia.

Control over education is decentralised to some degree in the United Kingdom, with differing provisions offered by different Local Education Authorities. Control in Western Australia is firmly centred at State level. Differences exist in the provision of religious teaching in schools. Both countries have parallel systems of government or State and independent schools, but in Western Australia schools run by the Roman Catholic Church are part of the independent systems of education.

6.6 Roles of Schools in the United Kingdom and Western Australia as Agents in the Transmission of Culture

The conceptual framework for the research envisages education systems and schools being set within the core sphere of a national culture. As such they act as agents in

the transmission of that culture. Since the national culture is likely to reflect the ideas and beliefs of dominant groups in society, education systems will act to transmit these ideas and values. In some cases, however, political decisions will assign to schools a role in preserving minority cultural influences. In the United Kingdom, in addition to the teaching of English, in Wales and Scotland the traditional languages of Welsh and Gaelic are taught in areas where these languages were once the common tongue.

The geographical location of the United Kingdom in proximity to Europe has meant that classical Latin and the modern languages of French and German are taught. Traditionally, history and geography are taught as separate subjects in schools in the United Kingdom.

In Western Australia, the indigenous Aboriginal languages are not, in general, taught in schools. History and geography are grouped in the curriculum under the heading of social studies. The geographical location of Western Australia sees Indonesian and Japanese taught in schools (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). There are increasing programs of educational exchange within the South East Asia region.

All the schools in the United Kingdom have an important role in assessing students' academic capabilities, so that the courses offered to each student prepare them for a role in society. To this end, national testing is carried out and external examinations are sat prior to leaving school (HMSO, 1995).

As in the United Kingdom, in Western Australia all schools have a role in directing students towards the most suitable courses, especially in secondary schools through the Unit Curriculum. Access to courses in Post-Compulsory education will depend upon the level of units already studied. The Tertiary Entrance Examination is geared towards University entrance (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Issues of equity and access have arisen in regard to schooling in the United Kingdom, but implementation of these ideals has been patchy. In England and Wales, while some Local Education Authorities adopted the policy of comprehensive schooling in

the interests of equity in education, other LEAs have retained systems of Grammar and Junior High Schools. This system also pertains to Northern Ireland and is selective, so that children are placed in school according to examination results. In Scotland, all LEA schools are comprehensive. The independent sector of education uses selective measures and socio-economic status to control entry to its schools (HMSO, 1995). In Western Australia, all State Senior High Schools are comprehensive. A wider range of independent schools has come into being in response to demand for non-secular education. These latter schools are selective and intake is governed by the parents' ability to pay fees, unless scholarships are obtained.

Differences in provision The education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia differ in the teaching of languages and in the place of history and geography in the curriculum. All schools in both sets of systems have an assigned role in sifting and sorting the school population, so that students are assessed and directed towards particular courses. This direction influences the student's future role in society.

In the United Kingdom, some LEAs are still selective at the stage of transition between primary and secondary departments. Only the independent sector of schooling in Western Australia operates a selective intake.

6.7 External Influences which Impinge upon the Education Systems Agents in the Transmission of Culture

Political decisions and economic imperatives are separate from culture, but impinge upon it. In this sense, political decisions taken in the education sphere affect the provision of services and the role of schools as agents of cultural transmission. Similarly, economic constraints impinge upon the ability of schools to act in this role. For these reasons, although political and economic differences are external to cultural differences, their effects are considered in this analysis.

In considering these influences, the complexity of political rivalries on and between political levels has to be taken into account, as has the diversity and conflict which surround economic theories. Like the concept of culture, politics and economics are

complex, changing constructs and their influences upon culture reflect this complexity.

Political influences Political decisions and legislative imperatives govern what may or may not take place within education systems. Education systems in the United Kingdom are controlled politically at local government level by Education Authorities, although major policy directives will come from central government (HMSO, 1995). Funding comes from local sources although subsidies are granted by the central government (HMSO, 1995). In Western Australia, political control of education systems rests with the State Government. Funding for education comes from State sources, although Federal funds for education also exist (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Teachers in the United Kingdom are appointed by the Local Education Authority and their salaries come from this source, though qualifications are fixed at central government level (HMSO, 1995). Teachers are appointed centrally by the Education Department of Western Australia and their salaries come from this source.

Differences in provision The most obvious difference at this level is the decentralisation of control of education systems in the United Kingdom and the centralized control in Western Australia. This means that politically and economically, United Kingdom schools are answerable to local and sometimes school level bodies, while in Western Australia a more remote (and in some cases a very remote) central authority makes educational decisions. While political rhetoric in Western Australia has made much of the need for schools to take responsibility for their own decisions (Better Schools, 1987) control remains firmly vested with the Department of Education.

6.8 The Structure of Schooling in the United Kingdom and Western Australia

The structure of schooling in the United Kingdom Political decisions and legislative imperatives, as well as history, tradition and geographical location, have shaped the structure of education systems in the United Kingdom. Schools are

designated as Nursery, Primary or Secondary. Some LEAs in England and Wales have introduced the concept of a middle or junior school for age ranges from eight to fourteen (HMSO, 1995).

Around nine out of ten children in the Government systems in the United Kingdom attend secondary comprehensive schools which take pupils without reference to academic ability. The children in England and Wales and Northern Ireland who fall outside this category live in Local Authority areas which have maintained the concept of Grammar and Secondary Modern schools. In some areas sixth form colleges take senior students. In the independent sector, preparatory schools take younger children who then sit entrance examinations to gain a place in private schools (HMSO, 1995). In Scotland, in the Government sector of education, almost all secondary students are educated in comprehensive schools.

The structure of schooling in Western Australia In Western Australia, political policies and economic necessity have shaped education system structures. School education is divided into three stages. These are kindergarten and pre-primary education; primary education and secondary education. In the State system at secondary level, Senior High Schools provide comprehensive education for students in their catchment area (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). In Years 11 and 12, if the local school does not provide courses preferred by the student arrangements may be made, subject to place availability, to enrol the student in a school where these courses are provided (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). In remote areas Government hostels allow children to board near to their schools.

The independent sector of education (which includes all Catholic schools) provides fee-paying boarding school education for many country children who change schools and move away from home to access schooling. They board in the metropolitan area at these schools. Fee-paying day school places for children from the city are also available at these schools (Association of Independent Schools, 1995).

Year and term structures in the United Kingdom The school year in the United Kingdom commences at the end of the northern hemisphere summer, in August in Scotland and September in England and Wales, and proceeds through until the following June or July. The school year is divided into three main terms (HMSO, 1995).

Year and Term structures in Western Australia The school year in Western Australia starts in the midst of summer in late January. The year is divided into four terms, or two semesters covering the period from January to July and from July to December (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

External assessment External final examinations for students of school-leaving age in the United Kingdom are sat at the end of the school year, in Years 4, 5 and 6 of secondary schooling, according to (HMSO, 1995). Recent modifications also contain a component of school-based assessment, for example Standard Grade examinations taken in year Secondary 4 in Scotland (The Scottish Office, 1992).

External examinations in Western Australia Students who intend to proceed to tertiary studies must select courses which contribute to a Tertiary Entrance Score. These courses are examined in the Tertiary Entrance Examinations which are sat in the November of Year 12. Any student who enrolls to sit four or more examinations at this level will automatically sit an Australian Scaling Test. The student's score in the scaling test is used in the determination of his or her Tertiary Entrance Score (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Differences in provision The size and diversity of educational provision in the United Kingdom contrasts with the much smaller systems in Western Australia. Geographical location means that the starting dates for the school year vary. The main features of structural differences in arrangements for education systems lie in the terminology used to describe the sectors of schooling. The subdivision of school year is altered by geographical location and by political decisions in Western Australia which introduced a structure of two semesters and four terms in the school year. The arrangements for final external assessment differ in form and in terminology with the major differences being a system of progressive external

examinations during the final years of schooling in the United Kingdom. These examinations, at A or Higher level are part of the admission requirements for University entrance. To qualify, however, a simple formula of a stated number of passes at a given level will determine course admission. This contrasts with the one external set of examinations in Western Australia and the complex formula for calculating TEE scores.

6.9 Current Government Policies for Non-Compulsory Education in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

Non-Compulsory Schooling in the United Kingdom There is no compulsion upon Local Education Authorities in the United Kingdom education systems to provide schooling for children below the age of five. A number of LEAs, however, provide either nursery education from around three years of age, or early admission at four years and over to reception classes in primary schools.

Maintained nursery education “is staffed by qualified teachers and nursery assistants, most of whom have a nursery nursing qualification. No fees are payable for nursery education provided by the public sector” (The Education System of England and Wales, 1985, p.19). The demand for maintained nursery education in the United Kingdom is increasing substantially (Ball, 1994).

The “Start Right” Report, (Ball, 1994), also indicates that the shortfall of high quality affordable pre-school education in the United Kingdom may contribute to the high number of four year old children being admitted to Reception (1st grade) classes in primary schools.

Non-Compulsory Schooling in Western Australia In Western Australia children commence compulsory schooling in the year in which they turn six. Non-compulsory schooling at present takes the form of part-time voluntary attendance at Kindergarten in the year the child becomes four and voluntary full-time (four days a week) attendance at Pre-Primary classes in the year the child turns five. The present State Coalition Government is pledged to continue to implement a full-time program

in the area of pre-primary schooling (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

The Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Voluntary Full-time Pre-primary Education and Related Matters (Scott, 1993), points to difficulties caused by the discrepancy between the starting age for formal education in Western Australia and that of other States in the Federation. The date of a child's birth relative to lateness in the calendar year will determine the levels of difficulty experienced. As a general rule, the later in the year a child's birthday, the more likely it is that difficulties will be experienced:

A child turning five within the March quarter may begin pre-primary in any State or Territory in that year. A child turning five in the December quarter may begin a full-time program in Western Australia in the February of that year, in the fourth term of that year in South Australia and the Northern Territory but not until the February of the following year in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

(Scott, 1993, p.5)

Separate provisions for school entry exist in all States. Not only are entry rules inconsistent, but the curriculum levels at entry may also differ, dependent upon what pre-school provision has been offered (Scott, 1993).

In discussion in the Report (Scott, 1993), the full-time pre-primary programs alluded to refer, at least in Western Australia, to what is essentially a four days a week part-time preparation period leading to formal education. Western Australia, while lagging behind the entry age of five for formal education programs and a starting age of three in nursery provision in the United Kingdom, represents the State in Australia with the earliest entry age to full-time pre-primary (or preparatory) education (Scott, 1993).

Differences in provision Parental expectations in the United Kingdom would focus upon the availability of free provision of full-time (five days a week) Local Authority Nursery Education for children from the age of three. In Western Australia, Kindergartens are funded from sources other than the Department of Education, with

parental contributions. These services cater for children who have turned, or will turn, four in the year of entry. Kindergartens offer only limited sessions (morning or afternoon, one or two days each week). Pre-Primary classes in the year the child turns five are provided through schools. Full-time attendance, however, involves only four days in each week.

6.10 Current Government Policies for Compulsory Education in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

Compulsory education in the United Kingdom Children in the United Kingdom begin formal education in the year in which they turn five, except for Northern Ireland where children start school at four. They continue in compulsory schooling until after their sixteenth birthday and can continue further in post-compulsory schooling until the age of eighteen or in some cases nineteen (HMSO, 1995)

Compulsory schooling in Western Australia Children in Western Australia start compulsory schooling in the year they turn six. As the researchers Peck and Trimmer (1995) succinctly state:

...regulations make it compulsory for parents to cause their children to attend school at the start of the year in which their sixth birthday falls. From then on, students in Western Australia normally march locked in step through one grade per year until they leave school.

(p.37)

Recent Government changes to education policy are set out in the information leaflet published by the Department of Education (1996). The intention to raise the age of entry to formal schooling by changing the cut-off date for admission from February to July is stated. Children born after July in any year will not enter State schools until the February following their sixth birthday. Where at present these children would commence Year 1 at age five and a half, in future they will have reached the age of six and a half. The reasoning behind this change is said to rest on issues of “school readiness” (Scott, 1993), which premise that the older children are, the more ready they will be to commence formal schooling.

These changes are in line with recommendations in the Report on Voluntary Full-Time Pre-Primary Education in Western Australia (Scott, 1993). Prominence is given in the Report to research involving the educational advantage brought about by delaying the age of entry to formal education, (Scott, 1993). These research findings may be unreliable when long term effects on education are taken into account (Peck & Trimmer, 1995).

The end of compulsory schooling occurs in the year students turn fifteen. Students have the option of continued education until the age of seventeen or in some cases eighteen (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Differences in provision The entry age of five in the United Kingdom contrasts with that of six in Western Australia. The leaving age in the United Kingdom has been raised to sixteen, but in Western Australia remains set at fifteen.

6.11 Curriculum Policies in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

As with the rules governing compulsory and non-compulsory schooling, curriculum decisions are taken at education department level but are constrained by political interventions.

Curriculum policy in England and Wales The National Curriculum is made up of core and foundation subjects. The former are compulsory for children from five to sixteen and the latter must be studied until at least fourteen. The core subjects consist of English, mathematics and science, and the foundation subjects are technology, history, geography, music, art, physical education and a modern foreign language for secondary students. In Wales, by the end of this decade almost all secondary students will learn the Welsh language. Religious education is required for all pupils and all secondary schools must provide sex education. Parents have the right to refuse to have their children taught these subjects. The National Curriculum is currently being revised and streamlined. National testing and assessment of students takes place at the ages of seven, eleven and fourteen in the core subjects.

The General Certificate of Secondary Education is the main qualification available to students who leave school at sixteen. After this age students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can stay on at school or move to a further education college. The main examinations in this post-compulsory period include the academic General Certificate of Education, an Advanced (A) level of this examination taken at the age of eighteen or nineteen, an Advanced Supplementary (AS) level at the same age, and vocational qualifications either at Advanced level (GNVQs) or at ordinary level (NVQs) (HMSO, 1995).

Curriculum policy in Scotland In Scotland, responsibility for the content and management of the curriculum is not prescribed at national level, resting with the local education authorities and the individual Headteachers. A major program of review has been carried out for the five to fourteen age range. Standardised tests are now administered in English and mathematics whenever pupils in this age range complete each of five levels in the curriculum. Provision is made for the teaching of the Gaelic language (HMSO, 1995).

Pupils take the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) at Standard Grade when they reach the end of their fourth year of secondary education. Most students leaving school at sixteen will now have an SCE qualification. At post-compulsory level, Higher Grade examinations are sat in years five and six of secondary education, in addition to the possibility of taking the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies examinations, which are designed to act as a bridge between school and University courses, or vocational National Certificate units (HMSO, 1995). Religious and moral education is to be provided in all schools though parents may withdraw their children from these subjects.

Tertiary Education Following the period of secondary education, several options are present for young people in the United Kingdom. In England and Wales “In 1983-84 a total of 2,418,066 people attended courses at publicly maintained further and higher educational establishments” (The Educational System of England and Wales, 1985). In Scotland in 1993 there were twelve universities, five colleges of teacher training, and ten other colleges offering courses ranging from science through architecture and art and design to health care. These colleges either have authority to

award their own degrees or have validating arrangements with the universities (The Scottish Office, 1993).

Curriculum Policy in Western Australia All Western Australian schools are expected to follow the approach to education centrally laid down at State Government level, so that Local Education Authority differences do not occur. The curriculum is divided into eight learning areas: English; Mathematics; Languages other than English; Health and Physical Education; the Arts; Science; Technology and Enterprise; Society and Environment (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Students in Western Australia will receive certificates throughout Years 8, 9 and 10. The Year 10 certificate, which comes in the year that fifteen year olds may leave school, shows the units that the student has taken, the level of difficulty in these units and the grades for each unit. Since 1996, a Certificate of Secondary Education has been issued to all Year 12 students who have completed at least one accredited Secondary Education Authority course in that year. This certificate records the courses taken in Years 11 and 12. Secondary graduation requires that ten grades of D or better and a demonstrated English language competency have been achieved. A Western Australian Certificate of Education is awarded provided eight grades of C or better have been achieved and literacy and numeracy competence have been demonstrated (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

From 1997 two documents will be available to students in Upper Secondary education. The first gives a statement of results. This contains the same information as appears upon the certificate of Secondary Education with added details of Upper Secondary achievements. The second, the Western Australian Certificate of Education will be issued to all students who complete Secondary graduation (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

The Unit Curriculum courses in Years 8, 9, and 10 are expected to lead to schools taking more individual responsibility for the curriculum they offer and to increasing diversity among State secondary schools. The Unit Curriculum is based upon 40

hour units, as opposed to year long courses, with a view to introducing greater flexibility in studies. Students select course units which can be closely matched to their needs, so that student choice is encouraged. The actual arrangements for implementation of the Unit Curriculum have been left to each school. A minimum number of courses will be taken in each curriculum component over the three years. Each student will follow a sequential “pathway”, in that some units have to be completed before others can be undertaken. The curriculum is divided into components, or groups of subjects. Units are allocated to seven components:

1. English, Languages and Communication
2. Mathematics
3. Personal and Vocational Education
4. Physical Education
5. Practical and Creative Arts
6. Science and Technology
7. Social Studies

Each student is expected to take at least three units from each component during their first three years of secondary schooling. Units are numbered in stages of progress from Stage 1 to Stage 6. The units with higher numbers will be taken by students who are either older, more experienced in the subject or more capable in the subject, so that a given student might be working on Stage 3 or 4 in English, while working on Stage 1 levels in mathematics. Students who experience significant difficulties might complete a number of units at Stage 1 or 2 levels.

The new units are designed for standards-referenced assessment, so that work is graded according to pre-determined standards which relate directly to the extent to which the unit’s objectives have been achieved. Progress is reported using letter grades A, B, C, D, and F (Education Department of Western Australia, undated information leaflet).

The program undertaken throughout the Unit Curriculum years will effect choices in Years 11 and 12, as a lack of certain units might limit subject choices at this level. Schools are expected to provide counselling programs which will provide sufficient information to allow students and their parents to make informed decisions about unit selection (Education Department of Western Australia, undated information leaflet).

For historical reasons, Australia wide, the State sectors of schooling are secular (Barcan, 1980). No specific religious education is permitted to form part of the curriculum. Schools in the Independent sector will normally have some link to a specific religion or religious denomination. Independent schools will make curriculum decisions influenced by the sector of schooling to which they belong.

Tertiary education In Western Australia at present there are five Universities, one of which is a private Catholic foundation. The universities are based in Perth, but may have campuses in different parts of the metropolitan area or in regional centres. Technical and Further Education Colleges provide vocational training.

Differences in provision At the level of school curriculum, the differences and complexity of the contrasted systems becomes increasingly obvious. While these differences are in part caused by political ideology, they become 'the way we do things here' and as such, enter into belief structures. Terminology, the structures of course-work (especially at secondary level) and the diversity of qualifications gained, require skills on the part of student and parent "to negotiate the education system" (Hartley & Maas, 1987, p.96).

6.12 Terminology Used in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

The language in use in both the United Kingdom and Western Australia is English. A common language, however, does not mean that common terminology has been adopted in education systems.

Terminology on placement in the United Kingdom Terminology relating to placement in school years differs in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia.

In the United Kingdom the school years are designated from nursery school, through reception classes to Primary 1-7 and then through Secondary 1-6, with some schools also having an Upper Sixth form. Terminology in the area is in the process of change. Some Local Education Authorities now use the concept of Junior schools covering the late Primary and early Secondary years (HMSO, 1995).

Terminology on placement in Western Australia In Western Australia the Years are designated K-12, that is Kindergarten to Year 12 (equivalent to Secondary 5 in the UK). Years 1-7 are part of Primary provision with Years 8-12 in the Secondary sector. A Pre-Primary year is located between Kindergarten provision and Primary school (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Differences in provision Major differences in terminology echo the basic structural differences in the education systems and flow from history, tradition and political decisions. These differences have the potential to lead to confusion and misunderstanding unless they are clarified from the outset.

6.13 Funding for Education Systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia

As with political decisions and ideologies, the funds allocated to education systems change the shape of these systems and so change cultural beliefs and expectations about what should constitute educational provision.

Funding for Compulsory Education in England and Wales Most public expenditure on schooling in these countries comes from the Local Education Authorities, with indirect funding from a Revenue Support Grant from central Government, and separate Government funding for teacher recruitment. State grant-maintained self-governing schools are not financed by LEAs since they have opted to leave LEA control. Grants to these schools are paid through Government funding agencies in England and Wales (HMSO, 1995). Expenditure on education in Britain in 1992-1993 was thirty one thousand, five hundred million pounds (HMSO, 1995).

Funding in Scotland and Northern Ireland Most state schools in Scotland are funded by local government authorities which are also education authorities. Self-governing schools receive direct funding from the Government. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland provides funds for school and library boards (HMSO, 1995).

Funding in Western Australia State schools in Western Australia are funded through the State Government, with assistance from the Federal Government. Figures for education spending in 1994 show that \$4.77bn was spent by the Federal Government on all State Government schools, while the States themselves spent \$5.83bn. Independent schools were funded through private means, with State and Commonwealth assistance ("Funding for Schools", 1997).

The spending rate on education in Western Australia compares unfavourably with other States, spending being assessed by the Grants Commission at \$112.5 million or 11.4% in 1991-1992. OECD figures show that Australia, as a whole, spends only 4.8% of GDP on education compared to 6.8% in the highest spending country (Vickery, 1993).

In Western Australia 70% of children attend State schools. Parents are expected to contribute to the costs of their children's education through the purchase or hire of textbooks, consumables and amenity fees. "The school charge in Years 8, 9 and 10 is set by the Department each year. In 1996 it did not exceed \$225.00" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996, p.5). This fee does not cover the student's personal equipment, excursions, activities and consumables beyond the basic school issue (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

These fees, according to Vickery (1993), have increased in recent years. The figures from the Parliamentary Research Service: Social Policy Group in Canberra in 1996 suggest that:

WA parents have to spend up to six times more than those in other States to send their children to government schools.

("Education Costs", 1997)

Independent schools in Western Australia, including schools governed by the Catholic Education Authority, charge varying fees for tuition and boarding. The scale of fees will reflect the nature of the school (community schools, or longer established schools attached to the Catholic, Anglican or Uniting churches which take day and boarding students).

Differences in provision While Western Australia has a far greater land mass than the United Kingdom, population density is much greater in the latter countries. Expenditure on education is therefore far in excess of expenditure in Western Australia. On a per capita basis, however, it would appear that expenditure in Western Australia may compare unfavourably with other States. This is attributed to a lack of priority being given to educational provision (Vickery, 1993). The fundamental precept of free state education in the United Kingdom is replaced in Western Australia by a system which ensures free instruction in schools, but involves charges for books and materials.

6.14 The Appointment of Teaching Staff

The appointment of teaching staff is under political control. The cultural ethos of each individual school, however, reflects the quality of teaching staff. Classroom teachers are the first line of communication between children, the home and the school.

Teachers in the United Kingdom Teachers in government schools in England and Wales are appointed by the Local Education Authority or by school governing bodies. They must hold qualifications approved by the Department of Education and Employment. In Scotland, all teachers in education authority schools are appointed by the local education authority and must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland. All entrants to the teaching profession are graduates (HMSO, 1995).

Teachers in Western Australia Teachers in Western Australia are appointed by the Education Department of Western Australia. Teachers can be appointed to schools anywhere within the State.

The Education Department of Western Australia, as a matter of policy, employs the same percentage of graduates from each university. The Government controls the number of students entering teacher education based upon predicted future needs.

(Curtin University of Technology, 1996)

Differences in provision The main differences in provision lie in the bodies responsible for the appointment of teaching staff. In the United Kingdom, appointments are made at local and sometimes school level. In Western Australia, appointments are centrally controlled by the Education Department.

6.15 Policies Governing the Role of Parents in Schools in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

While students form the main “client” component of education systems, parents of these students are generally involved as the adults responsible in law for their children’s well being and education. Parents, in their role of legal guardians, can be viewed as “consumers by proxy” (Woods, 1988, p.323), while students are seen the direct consumers of educational provision.

The migrant parents in this study will themselves have experiences of schools as students. In addition, they will have acted within the definition of the role allocated to them as parents in schools in the United Kingdom. Their beliefs and expectations of what constitutes educational provision will be shaped by these experiences.

Policies for parental roles in England and Wales The present United Kingdom Government is moving to implement its predecessor’s plans for more autonomy at school level in England and Wales, based partly upon notions of school accountability to parents and, more significantly, upon political belief in the operation of market-forces in education (Choice and Diversity, 1991; Glatter, Woods & Bagley, 1997; HMSO, 1995; Sallis, 1988; Woods, 1988, 1992).

Government policies have proposed a decentralisation of power to give schools a greater say in financial matters which directly concern them. (HMSO, 1995; Sallis 1988). By 1980, political imperatives had changed educational priorities. Among the provisions of the Education Act of that year were policies to elect parent and

teacher representatives to school governing bodies (The Educational System of England and Wales, 1985).

School governors have a major input into school level decisions, including budgetary considerations and staff appointments (Sallis, 1988, Appendix 1). Accountability to parents and community has been increased, along with opportunities for parental involvement at managerial level in schools (Sallis, 1988; Woods, 1988, 1992). Parents in England and Wales now have the right to choose schools for their children. This choice is based upon information provided through national performance tables, and through an individual prospectus for each school giving examination results, vocational qualification results, attendance figures and the numbers of students moving into Higher Education (HMSO, 1995). It should be noted, however, that these choices may exist more in the rhetoric of education systems than in everyday reality, because of factors embedded in the systems (Hughes, 1997).

All parents in the state school system are given an annual report, not only detailing their child's class performance and attendance record, but also the results of any National Curriculum assessments along with comparative results of pupils nationally and within the school (HMSO, 1995). Recent changes have seen an upsurge in the notion of partnership between home and school. "Accountability and participation have also become key issues..." (Woods, 1988, p.323). Again the caveat must be entered that the notion of partnership may not always translate into an active cooperation between home and school (Glatter, Woods & Bagley, 1997).

Apart from parents serving on school governing bodies in England and Wales, there are throughout the United Kingdom school-based Parent Teacher Associations which act as a forum for discussion between the teaching profession and parents on educational issues. Nationally these groups come together, as the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations in England and Wales (Woods, 1988).

Policies for parental roles in Scotland Most schools in Scotland have school boards with elected parent and staff members. These boards take responsibility for school/community relationships and are involved in the appointment of senior staff to

the school. Parents can vote to have the school take on self-governing status when funding will transfer from the local education authority to central government. The school must publish a handbook for parents and must provide information on the child's attainments, along with teacher's comments in a report to parents. As with England and Wales, national tables are published listing the achievements of all secondary schools. The parents receive a summary of school inspection reports (HMSO, 1995).

The Government has published a parents' charter for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which explains the rights of parents in the education of their children (HMSO, 1995). Apart from these arrangements, each school may have a Parent Teacher Association, with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council acting as a national forum for these bodies (Woods, 1988).

Policies for parental roles in Western Australia In Western Australia, at school level, parent participation may take several forms. Within the State sector of education, under the guidelines laid down in "Better Schools for Western Australia" (1987), parents are expected to play a part in School Decision-Making Bodies through representatives chosen to serve in this capacity.

For most parents of children in State schools, however, involvement would entail membership of a Parents and Citizens group (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). These organisations exist to foster community interest in education, to promote communication and cooperation between students, teachers and parents and to raise funds to provide extra amenities for the school (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Parents may be asked to help, on a voluntary basis, in the running of school canteens (Sallis, 1988). These canteens provide food at lunchtime for students to purchase, and this food requires preparation and serving. Parents may also find themselves expected to undertake rostered non-teaching duties in classrooms, especially in the first years of their childrens' schooling.

In the State education system, schools may be affiliated to a body which acts as a focus for parent organisations. The Australian Council for State School Organisations has a Western Australian affiliate, the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, which has its headquarters in the Education Department Buildings in East Perth (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). Government support for this organisation sees not only office accommodation supplied, but also staff, stationery and transport for members (Sallis, 1988).

In Independent schools, according to spokespersons for these organisations, the role of the parents could vary considerably. In the Catholic sector of education parents could be elected to a school board. The system is devolved and school-based. Parents and Friends organisations operate in the schools. In the non-Catholic sector, most schools would have a Parents and Friends body. There might be a School Council, depending upon the school's charter. The older and "more prestigious" schools select Council members on the grounds of the expertise they can bring to the role. These members may or may not include parents. Newer schools in this sector, especially Community schools, can have much stronger parental involvement, with parents managing the school.

Differences in provision In the United Kingdom emphasis has been placed on parental choice in schools, while in Western Australia curriculum changes have been designed to increase student choice. The expectations placed upon parents differ, with a role in school governance more central in the United Kingdom. These powers are less developed in Western Australia where a support and fund-raising role for parents is more obvious.

6.16 Policies for the Education of Migrant Children in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia

Policies for migrant children in United Kingdom Schools At present, and in addition to the historical mix of cultures, schools in the United Kingdom may have on their rolls students from the West Indies, from India and Pakistan, from Hong Kong and Africa, who have migrated to live in Britain. Students, born in the United

Kingdom, may be the children of first generation migrants from these and other countries (McKelvey & Peters, 1993).

As part of the National Curriculum, schools in England and Wales may teach the main ethnic minority community languages at secondary level, while at primary level there is a growing appreciation of the value of bilingual support. The teaching of English continues to receive priority (HMSO, 1995). Issues of language arise, as new migrants bring with them their own native tongues or variants of English. In the words of one Afro-Caribbean student, "I thought I spoke English when I arrived but I learnt I didn't. I was ridiculed and laughed at in school" (McKelvey and Peters, 1993, p.79).

System policies for migrant children in Western Australia Like the United Kingdom, Western Australia has experienced waves of cultural transfer as a result of post-World War II migration from Southern Europe, and more recently migration from Asian countries in this region. Originally policies for children from these groups focussed upon assimilation into Australian society (Gregory & Smith, 1995). More recently, Australia-wide, the concept of multiculturalism in society and in education has been adopted (McConnochie & Kapferer, 1985).

Policies for the education of migrant children in Western Australia In Western Australia at present, provision for the education of migrant children is centred around the teaching of English to those newly arrived migrants who come from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. To this end Intensive Language Centres have been set up, with provision for primary and secondary school aged children (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996).

Following these courses, the children are then referred, where this can be done, to a school which has an "English as a Second Language" support program for further help (Ministry of Education, Western Australia, 1991). The paper "Social Justice in Education" (Ministry of Education, Western Australia, 1991) makes little mention of the needs of newly arrived migrant children, other than those who would qualify for admission to the Intensive Language Centres. No statistics are held on the placement of English-speaking migrant children in schools by the Education Department of

Western Australia nor are records of their present whereabouts in schools kept. In 1981, a policy paper prepared for the then Director General of Education in Western Australia presumed that cultural changes for British migrant children would be “minor” (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). The more recent “Review of Education and Training” (Vickery, 1993) makes no mention of the fact that the education systems of Western Australia admit migrant children each year.

Differences in provision Education systems in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia have intakes of migrant children. In the United Kingdom, the use of the language of the country of origin as a teaching medium is increasing to minimise disadvantage. Differences in English usage are already common due to the endemic cultural mix of the United Kingdom, but this diversity does not prevent difficulties over accent and usage by migrant children. In Western Australia, migrant education centres around the teaching of English as a second language. No policies or plans appear to be in place to expedite the transition of migrant students whose native language is English.

Summary Chapter Six has shown that differences exist between educational provision in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia. Because schools, within education systems, act as agents for cultural transmission, these differences can be presumed to reflect differing cultural settings.

The cultural settings are influenced by history, tradition, geographical location, the components of society and the language in use. The effects of political ideology and decisions on policy, which reflect changing priorities in education as in, for example, proposals for a new Education Act in Western Australia, impinge upon the schools in their role as agents for cultural transmission. Economic strategies have a similar impact upon schools and in time also affect cultural beliefs. While the influences of policy and economic ideology are separate from cultural influences, educational provision is re-shaped through political and economic choices. In time, this re-shaping enters the cultural belief systems as “the way we do things here” and becomes part of societies expectations as to how education is shaped and provided.

These influences are reflected in differences in educational provision when comparisons are made between the United Kingdom and Western Australia. For example, differences exist in the beliefs as to when children are ready to start in formal education, what the appropriate age for leaving school should be and whether, in fact, “free educational provision” means just that or means that only some aspects are free. The place of religious instruction in schools differs for long-standing cultural reasons as does the scale of educational provision in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia.

While this chapter has attempted comparisons between education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia, these comparisons have been based upon literature which could be expected to be accessible to parents undertaking the process of migration. The researcher acknowledges that the pace of change within education systems, (as, for example, changes to the system of numbering school years in England and Wales following the introduction of the national Curriculum in 1996 and recently proposed changes to the format of Tertiary Entrance Examinations and to school fees in Government schools in Western Australia) makes such comparisons

difficult and quickly outdates information provided. The process of detailed analysis of education systems is made more complicated because of the rate of change in educational policy.

In this chapter, the effects of political and economic imperatives and their influence, alongside cultural influences, are demonstrated. In the next chapters, the experiences of the migrant families in dealing with cultural differences in educational provision are explored.

Chapter 7

A Profile of the Families

Introduction The case study format of the research centres around the experiences of forty seven families as they moved their children into schools in Western Australia. This chapter is intended to provide the reader with an overview of the composition of the forty-seven migrant families, analysed across the cases, to facilitate an understanding of the time-scale of their migration and of their experiences during this process.

In the conceptual framework of the study, Figure 4.3 shows the migrant family moving between two cultural settings. This chapter focuses upon the particular case study families in the research. The family relationship of the original respondent or respondents are given so that the voices enunciating the family's experiences are identified.

Also in this chapter, details include the country of origin of the migrant families, the year in which the families migrated and the category under which permission to migrate was granted (where this information was provided). The chapter provides details of the number of children who accompanied the families and the gender and ages of those children. The school stage reached in the United Kingdom is discussed, along with the school year in which the children were placed in Western Australia. The location of the families in the greater Perth metropolitan area is set out so that the location of their schools is clear. The selection of focus families is discussed. Individual details of each family are included in Appendix 2.

7.1 Gender of Respondent on Behalf of the Families

The experiences of the families were explained to the researcher by family members. These experiences were explored through initial interviews with 11% of the families and through answers to written interview questions by 89% of the families. These responses were further probed in 'focus family' interviews with 13% of the families.

In the initial interviews, during the early stages of the cumulative phase of the research, mother, father and children from the family took part in the discussion. When the method of data collection moved to written interview responses, 94% of respondents in this phase of the study were the family mothers.

In all the 'focus family' interviews, the family mother was the main participant, although in three cases other family members were present and contributed information. An analysis of responses, in which the personal pronoun "I" was used, indicated that the mother was, in all cases, the parent who dealt with the school when difficulties arose at school and classroom level in the instances documented in the research.

7.2 Countries of Origin

The question of country of origin was put to the families because of the differences in education systems in the countries of the United Kingdom, as shown in Chapter Six of this study. Table 7.2 shows these countries of origin, as stated by the respondent families.

The Table shows that 70% of the families in the study came from England. Of the remaining 30% of families, 17% specified a particular country, other than England, within the United Kingdom as being their country of origin. The term "United Kingdom" or "Great Britain" was used by 13% of families to describe their country of origin.

Table 7.2

Countries of Origin as Stated by Respondent Families

Country	Number of Families	Families
England	33	1 2 4 5 6 7 8 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 23 24 27 28 29 30 33 36 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 47
Scotland	6	3 9 10 12 34 35
Wales	1	32
Northern Ireland	1	22
United Kingdom	5	25 26 31 37 46
Great Britain	1	11
Total	47	

7.3 Year of Emigration to Western Australia

The study spanned the period from 1985 to 1995. This choice was adopted to maximise the clarity of the families' recollections by limiting the case study families to those who had most recently migrated from the United Kingdom.

Table 7.3 demonstrates that 72% of the respondent families arrived in the years 1990 to 1995 and that 28% of the respondent families arrived in Western Australia in the years between 1986 and 1989. For 87% of the case study families their migration to Western Australia represented the family's first experience of such a journey. In the cases of 13% of the families there was a family history of more than one migratory journey. Table 7.3 shows the year in which the families were taken to have emigrated to Western Australia.

Table 7.3**Year of Emigration**

Year	Number of Families	Families
1985	0	
1986	2	3 28
1987	2	14 24
1988	7	9 16 31 32 38 41 44
1989	2	2 7
1990	7	1 6 17 19 20 27 47
1991	6	4 10 11 22 29 45
1992	5	25 26 30 39 42
1993	5	5 8 15 23 37
1994	6	13 18 21 33 36 40
1995	5	12 34 35 43 46
Total	47	

Of the families with experiences of more than one migration, 4% had family members who had migrated to Western Australia with their families, either as children or as young adults. In the cases of 9% of the families, they came to Western Australia as a family unit then returned to live in the United Kingdom before re-entering Western Australia. Family 23 had emigrated to Sydney, then returned to live in the United Kingdom before re-entering Western Australia. In the cases of all these families, the last date of entry to Western Australia was taken to be pertinent to this study.

7.4 Migrant Category

The issue of migrant category has been included in the study to indicate the potential support available to the newly arrived families in Western Australia. The migrant category under which the families emigrated was stated in 70% of the cases. In the cases of 30% of the families, permission to emigrate was granted for the purposes of family reunion. In these cases family members were already resident in Western Australia. For 11% of the families, permission was given because a family member was either employer nominated, or came to take up specific employment in Western Australia. The category of independent migrants was given by 29% of the families. Family 3 had originally migrated under a specific program for single parents, took

Australian citizenship, returned to the UK to live but then re-entered Western Australia.

7.5 Family Composition

In this study, 92% of the respondent families consisted of mother, father and one or more children. In the cases of the remaining 8% of the families, the family mother accompanied one or more children. Families with two children accounted for 51% of the respondents. Families who brought one child to Western Australia made up 26% of the respondents and families who brought three children made up 15% of the respondents. The remaining 8% of families brought four or more children. In Family 47, two older children remained in the United Kingdom to complete University studies and commuted to Western Australia in their vacation time.

Table 7.5a

Children accompanying each family

Number of children	Families
1 in family	3 5 6 15 16 25 26 28 40 41 44
2 in family	2 4 9 10 11 12 13 14 18 20 21 23 27 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 38 42 45
3 in family	7 17 19 22 24 37 39 46
4 in family	1 43 47
5 in family	8
100 children	47 families

Table 7.5a sets out the number of children who accompanied each family.

Ages of the children Including the two older children at university in the United Kingdom, a total of one hundred children were part of the respondent families. Of this total, 76% of the children were over the age of five. At this age, these children would have entered full-time Primary education in the United Kingdom, as shown in Chapter Six. A further 14% of the children were aged between three and five, and could be enrolled in nursery schools in the United Kingdom, or in the reception classes of Primary schools. While the study asked for details of school-aged

children, the responses showed that parents considered full-time, structured, nursery education to be part of their children's schooling and included these children for this reason.

In Table 7.5b, the Table shows that, including the 6% of children who were under three, 78% of the children were below the age of twelve at the time of migration. Older children, in the age range from twelve to seventeen, made up 18% of the children in the families. No precise age was given for 4% of the children. Table 7.5b shows the ages of the ninety-six children whose age were stated and includes the four children whose ages were not stated.

Table 7.5b

Ages of the children

Age	Number of Children
under 3	6
not stated	4
3 years	10
4 years	4
5 years	14
6 years	6
7 years	13
8 years	8
9 years	4
10 years	10
11 years	3
12 years	7
13 years	4
14 years	3
15 years	0
16 years	2
17 years +	2
Total	100 children

The Table also shows that 14%, or the largest age group of children in the study, were five years old, the age at which they would start formal schooling in the United Kingdom.

Gender of accompanying children In the study, 43% of the children were identified as being boys and 49% were identified as being girls. The gender of the remaining 8% of children was not specifically stated, nor could the information be extracted from the wording of the responses.

To summarise these findings, data show that the typical respondent family was composed of mother, father and two children. The family emigrated from England in the period between 1990 and 1995 and came to join family members already resident in Western Australia. The children were under twelve years of age and were enrolled in government primary schools in the United Kingdom. On arrival in Western Australia, the children were enrolled in State primary schools located in the northern suburbs area of the city of Perth.

7.6 Location of Families Within the Greater Perth Metropolitan Area

The schools in which the children were placed were located in, or near to, the areas in which the families settled. For the purposes of this study, families were deemed to be located either in the northern suburbs of Perth, in the southern suburbs of Perth, in the coastal area between these two locations, or in the inner suburbs rather than in specific, named districts. This device was adopted to simplify the discussion of findings and to protect the identity of families and schools. Table 7.6 sets out the location of the case study families within these broad area categories. The northern suburbs area was home to 43% of the families. A further 23% lived in the southern suburbs, with 19% of the families living in the median coastal area and 9% living in the inner city area. The remaining 6% of families did not live within the areas described and are included in the Table under the heading of “other”.

Table 7.6

Location of the Families

Area	Number of Families
Northern suburbs	20
Southern suburbs	11
Coastal area	9
Inner suburbs	4
Other	3
Total	47 families

In this Table, the spread of families throughout the metropolitan area is shown.

7.7 The Educational History of the Children

School class in the United Kingdom Table 7.7a sets out the stage of education which the children had reached in the United Kingdom at the time of migration. The school year in the United Kingdom in which 84% of students had been placed was known.

Of the remainder, 14% of the children were not in schools or in nursery education in the United Kingdom and 2% of the children were at University in the United Kingdom. In the case of one child, while the response identified the boy as being at Primary school, there was no way of deducing his year of schooling.

Table 7.7a shows that 73% of the children in the study who were in schools, were in Primary school in the United Kingdom, 18% were in Secondary schools and 9% were in nursery school. Of the case study families, 72% had placed their children in government schools in the United Kingdom while 19% of the families had placed their children in private schools.

Table 7.7a

School Class in the United Kingdom

Class	Number of Children
Nursery	8
Primary 1	16
Primary 2	9
Primary 3	8
Primary 4	10
Primary 5	3
Primary 6	10
Primary 7	5
Secondary 1	9
Secondary 2	3
Secondary 3	2
Secondary 4	1
Secondary 5	0
Total	84 children

School class in Western Australia In Western Australia, 76% of the children were able to find places in an educational setting. 74% of the case study families placed their children in State system schools or in kindergarten or pre-primary provision and 22% of the case study families placed their children in schools in the private sector. Because of the child's age, no school places were provided for an only child in 4% of families. In 11% of families, although other children in the family were placed in schools, no provision was at hand for one child in the family because of that child's age. Table 7.7b shows the Year group in which the children were placed in Western Australia.

Table 7.7b illustrates that, of the children placed in schools in Western Australia, 73% were placed in Primary schools, 16% in secondary schools and 11% in pre-school provision. The placement of one child was in a primary school but the year is unclear. No appropriate schooling could be found for 8% of the total number of

children who came to Western Australia because of their age related to school age in Western Australia.

A comparison between placement figures for children in the United Kingdom set against those for placement in Western Australia (84% of children as opposed to 76% of children) illustrates the degree of dislocation caused by the differences in the starting ages for formal education.

Table 7.7b

Year Group in Western Australia

Year	Number of Children
Pre-primary	9
1	9
2	8
3	8
4	8
5	6
6	8
7	8
8	5
9	4
10	2
11	1
12	0
Total	76 children

In making comparisons between Table 7.6a and Table 7.6b even when the transfer figures seem correct according to age, automatic differences in educational stage have to be taken into account. These differences are brought about by an earlier starting age in formal education in the United Kingdom and by in-built differences caused by separate starting dates for the school year. This means that any comparison of figures distorts and minimises the actual extent of dislocation caused by the later age of entry to formal schooling in Western Australia.

When the case histories of individual families are examined, data show that 43% of the families reported major difficulties in terms of their children's school placement. A further 53% of families stated that some degree of difficulty caused problems for them. Only in 4% of all the cases were placement outcome difficulties outweighed by satisfaction over general aspects of the transition.

Summary In Chapter Seven, a profile of the case study families has shown that the families came from all parts of the United Kingdom. They identified themselves, in the main, as coming from a specific country within the United Kingdom. A spread of families over the span of time allowed for dates of emigration within the study is shown.

The ages of the children and years of schooling in which they were placed in the United Kingdom indicates a broad range in both areas. Children in nursery education in the United Kingdom were seen by their families as being in formal schooling.

The location of the families illustrates that they live within a wide number of districts in the greater Perth metropolitan area, so that their children's schools are spread throughout these districts. The year group into which the children were placed in Western Australia shows discrepancies when comparisons are made to their stage of education in the United Kingdom. In Chapter Eight, the family contexts which surrounded the focus of the study during the process of migration are explored.

Chapter 8

Contextual Experiences

Introduction The focus of the study is centred upon the transition of the children in the migrant families from schools in the United Kingdom to schools in Western Australia. This transition is, however, part of the larger undertaking of family migration. Factors which influenced this migration are expected to impinge upon the educational transition of the children because of the cumulative effect upon the families of coping with the demands made by the life-change process.

Literature reviewed in Chapter Three suggested that migration could be a time of considerable stress, in terms of cultural change. The cumulative effects of general stress brought about by working through the migration process, if this is added to by additional unanticipated stresses, for example surrounding the educational transition of children, would increase the possibility of the occurrence of cultural dissonance.

The conceptual framework for the study, which developed from the review of literature, the pilot study and the researcher's own migrant experiences, anticipated stress in the period leading up to and following migration. This was to be expected, as permission to emigrate was not granted automatically and so uncertainties would exist in the waiting period between application and the granting of permission. Even when permission was granted, stress could persist through the leaving of family and friends. Arrival in a new society and the imperatives of making a new beginning in that society also were expected to be stressful.

The process of emigrating from the United Kingdom to Western Australia is complex. In the conceptual framework of the study, Figure 4.3 sets out the linear stages of that process, starting with a decision to apply for permission to emigrate. The process is seen as being completed when the family believe that they have settled in their new society.

Two strands run through this process. The first involves the practical steps which have to be taken to apply, to emigrate and to settle. The second, experiential strand relates to the impact of emigration upon family members. Bearing in mind that this

study seeks to explore and identify causes of cultural dissonance in the families' experiences, the second strand is of particular importance to the research.

The question which dealt with pre-migration issues was not included in early interviews. The responses to those interviews, and responses in early written returns, indicated that these issues were of importance to the respondent families as part of the contexts in which the education of their children was set. Accordingly the question was inserted into subsequent written interview schedules.

8.1 The Decision to Emigrate

Information on the reasons for deciding to emigrate was provided by 13% of the families as part of the response to a question concerning pre-migration experiences. For these families, specific factors in the United Kingdom had contributed to their decision to emigrate.

One family expressed concern that the social patterns in their neighbourhood had been changed by immigration into the United Kingdom. "One street near to us was all Indian people." (Mum, Family 2). For Family 4, a move from the depressed city areas of North West England was imperative for the children's sake. "We came out here as refugees from Thatcherism, but I wonder now about the politics out here" (Dad, Family 4).

Family 14 cited concerns over the Cold War and the fact that they lived near a Royal Air Force V Bomber base. They anticipated that their children would be safer in Australia.

I was determined to come. Lots of people were applying. I rang them nearly every day. I think they let us come in the end just to shut me up.

(Mum, Family 14)

After one failed attempt to settle the family returned to the United Kingdom. On their return, the Chernobyl disaster and fall-out fears prompted the decision to try, once more, to settle in Australia. They re-emigrated to Tasmania, found that their son's asthma was made worse there and returned to Western Australia.

Mum, in Family 29, had been brought with her family to live in Western Australia in the 1960s. At the time she didn't want to come. She saved up and travelled round Australia, then returned to the United Kingdom to work and marry. When the marriage ended she brought her children on holiday to Western Australia to be near her parents. The children loved Western Australia and so she decided to stay.

Family 37 moved to work in Norway, where Dad worked in the oil industry. This move was planned so that the family would have enough money to allow them to emigrate to Australia.

We could have got information about Perth, because the family who bought our house in Scotland came from Western Australia, but at the time we thought we would settle in Sydney, where my brother stays, so I didn't pay much attention. Then we found work was more plentiful in the West. You really have to be prepared to settle anywhere so you need information about all Australia.

(Mum, Family 37)

Dad, in Family 22, expressed his disillusionment with what was happening in schools in Northern Ireland, which were divided on sectarian lines and about his work situation.

I was on the board of the State school there. We were going to work to make it an integrated school. There were financial incentives offered by the Government for schools which had a mixed Catholic and Protestant intake. When it came to the bit, however, integration was turned down. The headmaster could not speak in favour because he was told that if he did he would never work in a Protestant school again... I felt I was in a rut. I needed to get out of my comfort zone.

(Dad, Family 22)

8.2 Applying to Migrate

A decision to leave the country of origin and to settle in another society involves a major change in life-style. The pre-migration processes involved in application included the filling in of required forms, a family interview at a given venue, usually in London, Manchester in the north of England or Edinburgh in Scotland and medical examinations for all the family. For 57% of the migrant families, this period leading to migration held no particular problems.

For the remaining 43% of the families, particular difficulties occurred around the time of application. For 19% of the families, delays and the time taken to receive permission to migrate posed problems. In the cases of Families 1 and 20, application papers were lost, so that nine and eighteen months had passed before permission to migrate was finally given.

We faced nine months delay in the United Kingdom because the reference number of the application was misplaced by the emigration office. We had no word for these nine months so in the end we enquired. We got permission within a fortnight then, although I had some problems with the medical. The subsequent tests were OK so I got the all clear. Then my uncle in Sydney who was sponsoring us died, but the paperwork was all completed so that was not a problem. We came to Perth because we had other relatives here and house prices were cheaper than in Sydney.

(Mum, Family 1)

We applied to migrate in August 1988, but were not accepted till September 1989. They said that they had lost the application form.

(Family 20)

Families 3 and 34 had their original application to migrate turned down. Mum in Family 3 was a single parent with one daughter.

We were on our own and I had itchy feet and wanted to travel. I applied to emigrate to South Africa, but was turned down because I was a single parent. I then applied to Australia House and was turned down because of lack of money. My work skills were not in demand. Then I saw an advertisement in the "Daily Record" about a special scheme aimed at one-parent families. I applied and we were interviewed and accepted.

(Mum, Family 3)

Family 34 was granted permission on their third application to join family already resident in Western Australia.

The whole process took eighteen months during which heaps of paperwork was requested. Many of the documents they wanted to see were over twenty years old and some of them hadn't been kept.

(Mum, Family 34)

Difficulty with medical requirements which had to be met before permission to emigrate was given was experienced by 6% of the families.

Both children had to have hip operations when they were younger. This caused problems. We had to have proof that they were both "fit to work" before permission to emigrate was granted. The medical procedure to obtain proof was very drawn out and traumatic.

(Family 21)

Single parent families made up 8% of the case studies. In all cases the remaining parent was the family mother. All the families encountered delays and difficulties in the process of emigration, particularly over the custody of their children. In Families 29 and 39, Mum was returning to live with family members who had emigrated to Western Australia years earlier.

I was a single parent. My husband had walked out of our lives. My children were still involved in court custody because of divorce proceedings. I came to WA on holiday to be near my Mum and decided to stay. Then we had to come back to the United Kingdom to get permission for the children to emigrate. I found that permission could not be granted until I had gained custody. The process was drawn out because of court delays. I had to have sufficient funds to support my application to bring them to WA, so the proceeds of the house sale were tied up in this. I had no money and my father was sending money from WA to support us. Even after all this, my application was not accepted until I had signed a form declaring that I would not claim any benefits in Australia for five years.

(Mum, Family 29)

There were delays because I was a single parent. All my direct family are in WA and I had lived there for seven years as a child, but this didn't count.

(Mum, Family 39)

8.3 Preparing to Leave

Permission to emigrate having been granted, pressures then mounted to complete arrangements for the journey. The time granted for travelling within the dates of their migration visa was, for 6% of the families, insufficient to allow them to finish business, such as house sales, in the United Kingdom.

We encountered difficulties in selling our house.

(Family 36)

There was a long delay in selling our house. My husband had to come to Western Australia three months ahead of the rest of the family.

(Family 35)

When we were notified of permission to emigrate we only had a six months time gap before we had to be in Western Australia. In our case this was not long enough.

(Family 47)

Family 11 had a horror story of their removal truck being stolen as their belongings were being loaded for shipment.

We had major problems with the removal company as the removal truck was stolen half-way through packing—very traumatic for everybody

(Family 11)

8.4 Leave Taking

For 4% of the families the leaving of family and friends was a major difficulty.

It was emotionally traumatic. We were leaving all of our family and friends. We knew no one in Australia and knew very little about Australian life.

(Family 10)

8.5 A New Beginning

While a small number of respondents identified actual leave-taking as a major difficulty, problems associated with the loss of family and friends surfaced in the initial period of settlement. Homesickness was a major cause of post-migration stress for 44% of the case study families. Loneliness and the separation from friends and family made settlement difficult.

In the first three months we could have packed up and gone home any time.

(Family 1)

We were very homesick. We saved up to go back to Scotland. When we got back, however, house prices were very expensive so we decided to give Western Australia another try.

(Family 3)

When we first came to WA we felt very isolated. We used to see all the families going back among their folks—we had no one. We went back to the UK. There people acted as if we had tried this and failed—now we would just have to settle down—but we had changed. We decided to give it another go.

(Family 14)

We felt very lonely and found it difficult to approach anyone.

(Family 19)

I couldn't come to terms with what I'd done in coming out here. I desperately missed the close female company I had had at home. I don't think I was able to give the children the support they maybe needed. My sister in Western Australia loves the place and is working hard to persuade her husband to love it, so she didn't want to hear that I was unhappy and lonely and missed home.

(Mum, Family 22)

My son was upset by the move and lonely. I had problems finding work in Perth, so we moved to Kalgoorlie soon after we arrived. That spelled "Culture Shock" and we returned to Perth. The idea of moving to Australia had been to give my son a better life, not a worse one.

(Mum, Family 25)

My son was very homesick. He had to adjust to living with his grandparents in Western Australia. We were all going through a form of culture shock. Our four-month visit before migrating did help though.

(Mum, Family 29)

The eldest girl hated high school and really missed her old "gang". Both girls were very homesick and very anti-Aussie. They still say that they are going home when they turn eighteen.

(Family 34)

I feel we were all a little traumatised by our choice to come to Australia. We knew no one when we arrived and we had to learn as we went along.

(Mum, Family 38)

The first six weeks I was ready to jump on the first 'plane home—it was a nightmare. I felt so isolated. We had rented this house and the next door neighbour came to the door—didn't introduce himself or anything—just said our pool pump was annoying his wife and could we turn it down.

(Mum, Family 43)

8.6 Settlement

Having arrived in Western Australia, the families began the task of resuming their lives in new surroundings. The lack of official interest in, or help for, English speaking migrants after arrival was noted by 6% of the families.

I found it strange that after so much paperwork and interviews prior to migration, that when you get here there is no follow-up

(Mum, Family 34)

The issue of difficulties in having United Kingdom qualifications recognised in Western Australia was raised by 8% of the families.

Electricians from the United Kingdom, with all their papers, have to go back to colleges of further education.

(Dad, Family 14)

I was a teacher in the United Kingdom. When we first came here I offered to help for six months, free of charge, at our local Primary School. There was no reply to my letter making the offer. I applied to the Education Department in November 1994. I waited until the end of February 1995 for an interview, then another three months to get a letter with my rating on it. I was then told that I would have to "go bush" for three years if I wanted to work for them. We started our own business instead. The irony is that in July 1996 I got another letter from them. They now have a shortage of teachers and did I want a job? I think the Education Department is very poorly organised.

(Mum, Family 21)

I had been in hospital administration for years, but the only way I could get work out here was to go back to work on the wards and I didn't get much help with the adjustment.

(Mum, Family 36)

For Family 2, while disclaiming any great homesickness, events since their arrival in Western Australia had been a catalogue of disasters. Their home had been burgled twice. The motor bike was stolen. The father had been involved in three car accidents. Business failures had compounded the difficulties, with money from a house sale being lost. A new baby had joined the family and, shortly after the birth, news came that Mum's mother in the United Kingdom was seriously ill. Before the formalities of obtaining an Australian Passport for the baby could be completed, so that Mum could fly home, news of her mother's death reached Western Australia. "We haven't taken Australian citizenship because we don't feel welcome" (Dad, Family 2).

Summary In this chapter the practical problems which arose for a number of the families in the period leading to migration and in the period following migration have been discussed. The information given by these families offers insights into the contexts surrounding the educational transition of the children.

The emotional effects of homesickness and being cut-off from the support of United Kingdom family and friends are graphically described. The information contained in this chapter confirms the discordant qualities of the transitional process identified in the conceptual framework of the study. Difficulties for the families arose throughout the process of migration, with those difficulties being most severe in the period immediately following arrival in Western Australia.

Chapter Eight demonstrates the emotional mindsets of the families, mindsets affected by varying degrees of stress in the process of migration. The families approached schools soon after arrival in Western Australia at a time when they were still affected by some degree of migration-induced stress. In Chapter Nine, the families' encounters with the educational systems in Western Australia are examined.

Chapter 9

Encounters with the Education Systems

Introduction In order to maximise the possibility of a smooth transition for their children, two steps were necessary for the families in the period surrounding migration. They needed to access information on Western Australian education systems, so that they could make informed choices between systems and schools for the children. This information could be sought from official or unofficial sources. They also needed to know what information on their children's educational history would be of use to schools in Western Australia.

The profile of the respondent case study families in Chapter Seven demonstrated the diversity of the families. They originated from all areas of the United Kingdom. They brought with them children whose ages spanned the complete range of school provision. These children were located in schools throughout the greater metropolitan area of Perth and in schools in the State and private sectors of education. In Chapter Eight, the contexts of the family migrations were explored.

Despite the diversity of the families' backgrounds, it became evident early in the research that particular experiences in the process of the transition and induction of the children into Western Australian education systems were shared by the case study families. In Chapter Nine, the experiences of the families as they initiated these transitional processes at system level are examined.

9.1 Information about Western Australian Education Systems Provided in the Pre-Migration Period.

The most obvious source of official information on education systems in Western Australia was the Department of Immigration at Australian Consulates in the United Kingdom. There was also the possibility of obtaining unofficial information from sources such as family and friends already resident in Western Australia.

Information provided by the Department of Immigration No information on education was made available to 55% of the migrant families, either from this official

source or any unofficial source. Of the remaining 45% of families, no specific information on Western Australian education systems was reported as being provided through the Department of Immigration. Only 4% of the families reported that they had received any information on education in Australia. These information pamphlets had “a small section on education, basically telling you that you had to pay for State Education” (Family 21). Another family responded that “some—not very much—information was given by the Emigration Department” (Family 18).

The Department of Immigration was aware that children of school age were accompanying the families because of information in application papers and medical reports. Despite this, the reported information offered was of a general nature which related to regulations on “transporting furniture and financial arrangements” (Family 6) and “Endless booklets regarding banks and places to visit” (Family 40).

The researcher accessed one document available at the Australian Consulate in Edinburgh, Scotland. This appeared to be the only educational information which staff there had to hand, according to the family friend who made enquiries on the researcher’s behalf in May 1996.

This document is an introductory leaflet describing a seminar, offered by Network Immigration Services Ltd. which describes (in one page) educational provisions in Australia:

The Education Act and subsequent amending legislation provides for free education in state primary and secondary schools, and attendance is compulsory until the age of sixteen years.

(Start up Down Under, undated)

The leaflet continues with the information that education is compulsory from the age of five and that some children start schooling at the age of four. In the light of the documents analysed in Chapter Six of this study, this information is patently incorrect and misleading in respect of Western Australia.

Data supplied by 4% of families referred to “migrant newspapers”. One publication was called “Australian Outlook” which, in the words of the mother in Family 37, “is woeful on basic stuff”. This publication is apparently accessed through Pickfords

(the removal company) and copies can be found at the Australian High Commission Offices in London (Mum, Family 37). The other publication mentioned came from the Department of Immigration and was entitled "Living in Australia: A Guide for new Settlers". Apart from these documents, no evidence of published official information on Australia in the pre-migration period was forthcoming in the study.

Information provided by family and friends in the pre-migration period

Unofficial information sources in the study were the families and friends of the migrant families who were already resident in Western Australia. For 19% of families in the study, information about education systems in Western Australia came from these sources. In the case of one family, which was anxious to have information about the Catholic Education system, a friend in Western Australia was unable to find a ready source of information and sent pages of school lists torn from a telephone directory.

Family members in 10% of the families had already lived in, or visited, Western Australia prior to migration. Another 6% of families had family members who were in Western Australia ahead of the remainder of the family and they sent information back to the United Kingdom and started school arrangements.

9.2 Information Brought to Western Australia Regarding the Children's Educational Stage

Just as information which would allow the families to make informed choices was sparse, so too information which would help to ascertain which educational records to bring was lacking. The families relied upon their own judgement in this matter.

In 79% of the case study families, this led them to bring whatever information they could gather, in the form of records, reports, work books, letters from teachers and examples of work. For 11% of the families, younger children were either not at any school in the United Kingdom or were in Nursery school. No reports or records were issued for these children.

Difficulties in obtaining records were noted by 6% of the families. "I asked, but the school would not give me them" (Mum, Family 19). In the remaining 4% of cases,

the family asked the school to provide records and was told that such records were confidential. They were told to forward the name of the school in which their child was enrolled in Western Australia and the records would be sent to that school.

Family 31 followed this procedure but, to the best of their information, the records were not sent. Family 34 encountered a similar problem with medical records which led to difficulties in providing dates of immunisations.

Parent assessment of educational capability In responses, 51% of parents commented upon their own perception of how their children were performing in the education systems in the United Kingdom prior to moving to Western Australia. Given that 14% of the total number of children in the families were below school age, this percentage of comment represents a majority of the families with school-age children. Out of this 51% of all the parents who had experienced their children being at school, 75% viewed their children as “bright” and were pleased with their educational performance. For the remaining 25%, some educational problems had been identified prior to migration.

9.3 Sources of Information about Western Australian Education Systems in the Post-Migration Period

Upon arrival in Western Australia, the families were faced with making educational choices without the benefit of a time of preparation for this task. Not only had information in the pre-migration period been sparse, but a major constraint which now confronted them was their anxiety to settle their children quickly into a school routine.

Time available to acquire information After the families had completed their journey, very little time was at their disposal in which decisions regarding the education of their children could be made. For the children of 94% of the families, schooling started within weeks of arrival. Constraints such as the legal duty to have the children in school and a wish to return to a normal routine were given as reasons for this rapid move into the education systems.

When we first came we were part of a special scheme. We were based in a country centre and my daughter had to attend school there. On the day after we arrived I had to drop her off at the school and I was taken to Perth to look for work.

(Family 3)

They started school very soon after coming. They had had a six week gap and needed to be at school.

(Family 37)

As soon as possible because we wanted to settle into our chosen life.

(Family 38)

Immediately—three days. After the trauma of leaving England I decided to put the children into school directly to help stabilise their lives.

(Family 39)

Within one week of arrival 39% of the children were in school. Children in 23% of the remaining families started school within the first fortnight and 32% of families took between two and eight weeks to re-commence the education of their children. In 6% of the latter cases the family arrived at the start of the main school holidays.

Only 2% of the families had their children out of the education systems for three months after arrival “We were on the move a lot” (Family 19). For 4% of families, a single child was below school age and they could find no provision for them. Family 10 found a pre-school place three months later.

Sources of information accessed upon arrival in Western Australia As with the search for information in the United Kingdom, the families looked for official and unofficial information sources when they reached Western Australia. Unofficial sources were the greatest help in this area.

Family or friends in Western Australia provided support and information for 38% of the families. “But there were still quite a lot of surprises.” (Family 41) For Mum in Family 40, the advice given was that she should enrol her daughter in an Independent school.

I was horrified about what I was told about State schools and so worried about sending my daughter there. I put her name down for a place in a Catholic primary school, but had to enrol her in a State primary. If I had been given the Education Department information brochure by anyone I would not have panicked as I did

(Mum, Family 40)

In the cases of 36% of the families, reports indicated that they had no ready access to information on education systems when they arrived in Western Australia.

We used the Urban Street Directory to locate a school.

(Family 2)

It was very difficult to get information. No help was given.

(Family 27)

Find out the information when you fall over it. UK families are left to sink or swim.

(Family 14)

We applied to the Education Department. They were unhelpful and defensive. Our Real Estate Agent helped us and we put in a lot of footwork. You have to ask for everything. Nothing is forthcoming. You are expected to fit in easily because you speak English. Emigration is no picnic!

(Family 37)

Families 40 and 45 likewise received help from their Real Estate Agent. Family 45 also used the Yellow Pages in the telephone directory, as did Family 42.

Family 43 contacted a private re-location agency after six weeks in Western Australia. A director of this agency was interviewed as part of the contextual setting for this study. The agency, ideally, is contacted prior to arrival and provides executive client families with assistance in housing, school choice and in any other areas of concern. A comprehensive analysis of the area in which the family intends to settle, giving detailed information ranging from days of garbage collection to the best local shopping precincts, is part of this service. Mum in Family 43 had found the support offered by the agency to be invaluable. "I know I can 'phone them if I have any problems and they have the local knowledge to sort things out" (Mum, Family 43). The costs of the service vary according to what is provided, but an average cost would be around \$4 000 (Executive Steps Director, 1996).

For 11% of families, members who were former migrants and had returned to the United Kingdom relied upon their previous knowledge. Interviews at local schools were arranged by 6% of families. For 4% of families, sources other than family or friends provided information. In the cases of 9% of families, a family member had travelled ahead and arranged for schooling. In the case of private schools, 6% of families collected school prospectuses to help with choice.

Education Department published information In October 1996, details surfaced which called into question the dearth of official information claimed by families who emigrated after 1993. The existence of the leaflet mentioned by Mum in Family 40 came to light. This leaflet is published by the Education Department, and targets newly arrived families in the State.

The existence of this information source was revealed in conversation with a parent in a Focus Family interview. This parent had seen the leaflet mentioned in an Education Department communication with the school in which she works. She found two copies in the files. Although the school admits “up to a dozen or so migrant families in a year” (Mum, Family 29), neither she, as school officer nor, she believes, the school Principal was aware of the leaflet’s publication. Subsequent conversations with staff from other schools revealed, according to the informant, a similar lack of awareness. The leaflet is intended to be distributed through State schools to all newly arrived families.

An urgent request for two dozen more copies was sent by the school to the Education Department. The response was that this number could not be sent, but three more copies were received.

To investigate the apparent discrepancy in the availability of information, letters and copies of the 1994/1995 leaflet (from fifty back copies discovered at a Perth University) were sent to the 17% of case study families who arrived after 1993 and who had placed their children in State schools.

Responses to the request for further information were received from 75% of these families. The leaflet had not been seen by 63% of those who were approached. These families reported that they would have found the leaflet extremely helpful,

especially if it had been accessible in the pre-migration period in the United Kingdom. Only one family believed that they had seen “something similar but less detailed, which was helpful.”(Family 33). Family 11, on learning of the leaflet’s existence, had written to the relevant branch of the Education Department and had, the next day, obtained one copy. This had been posted to a family in Scotland who are about to move to WA.

9.4 Experiences of System Level Differences

The documents analysed in Chapter Six make it apparent that system level differences exist when education provision in the United Kingdom is compared with education provision in Western Australia. The following differences at system level impacted upon the case study families and contributed to experiences of cultural dissonance.

The families, as earlier sections of this Chapter have shown, had sparse advance information and so had little opportunity to prepare to deal with differences. The first decision which required to be made was whether to place the children in schools in the State or independent sectors of education. The choice of 74% of the families was to place their children in State system schools at levels of pre-primary classes and above. Independent schools took 22% of the children and for 4% no suitable schooling could be found.

Lack of choice of school within the State system In the State system of education in Western Australia, children attend the school zoned for the area in which they live. This system of attending a designated school, while different from the system in the United Kingdom which fosters parental choice of school, was accepted by 74% of the case study families. For 14% of the families, however, the initial school proved unsatisfactory to the children and parents and the children were removed and re-enrolled elsewhere.

Given that the Government system in the United Kingdom now fosters parent choice of school (HMSO, 1995; Woods, 1988, 1992), the limitations imposed by catchment areas in the State system in Western Australia were noted by 6% of families.

It was a complete nightmare. I rang the Education Department and they were no help. The Deputy at the High School was helpful but we were out of their catchment area and they had no spare places.

(Mum, Family 4)

We found it quite hard to find a rental home within the required boundaries of the school we had chosen.

(Mum, Family 33)

It came as a complete surprise to us that you could not choose the school for your child

(Mum, Family 34)

Secular State education The lack of religious education in State schools in Western Australia was a problem for 12% of the families. Those families opted for independent schools on a religious basis. The families had had their children in government schools in the United Kingdom, but these schools had been run by the Roman Catholic Church. The secular nature of the State education system in Western Australia meant that a choice within the State system was impossible for those parents. Mum, in Family 40, was particularly distressed by a lack of religious teaching in State schools and by what she perceived as an uncaring approach from students in the State primary school in which her daughter was enrolled. The daughter was transferred to a school in the Catholic education system, although the family were not members of the Catholic Church.

Independent School Systems The costs of private education for their children in Western Australia compared to those for similar schooling in the United Kingdom were contrasted by 9% of the families. In their view, private schools in Western Australia were within their reach financially, in a way that would have been impossible in the United Kingdom:

I was pleased with the Government System in the United Kingdom. Out here, however, I was very disappointed in my own and my son's experiences in the State system and grateful that I could place them in private schools.

(Mum, Family 21)

Family 22 entered their children directly into the Catholic Education System in Western Australia:

My sister arranged for the children's enrolment before we came. We had no problems with this. I didn't realise until I got here that it can be difficult to get the children in.

(Mum, Family 22)

Difficulties in finding a place for her son in a local Catholic school were very apparent for Mum in Family 2

After our attempt in Kalgoorlie, we settled finally in the Northern suburbs. Every Catholic school there has a waiting list. As the following year approached (Grade 6 and the run-up to confirmation year) we were again told that no places were available. I approached the Catholic Education Authority for help, but was told that there was nothing they could do. Frankly, they did not seem to care either. My parish priest's reaction was that he could do nothing. I explained that my only option seemed to be to drive my son 60 or 70 kilometres daily into a school in Perth where he would be far from friends and from links with the parish. Eventually, because he was an only child and so there were no siblings to follow, one of the local schools made room for him

(Mum, Family 25)

Family 40, after a year's wait, was able to enrol their daughter in their local Catholic school, although the family had no affiliation to the Catholic Church. The family was delighted with the new school and with the local Catholic High School. In the United Kingdom they had been happy within the Government system:

I hate to say this, but if any of my friends was migrating to Australia I would not recommend a State School. The Independent schools are not expensive and the discipline and education are much better than in the State schools.

(Mum, Family 40)

Placement by age of child Having decided upon the system of choice for the family and having located a school, the next system-induced problem to face the families was that of the educational levels in which their children were placed. Of all the differences at system level which were noted, by far the major issue, which recurred throughout 92% of the case-studies, related to the difficulties caused by system policy in Western Australia on placement by age rather than by developmentally appropriate practice.

For parents and children who had been participants in United Kingdom education systems, schooling could be started at age three in Local Education Authority Nursery provision. Reception classes in Primary schools frequently admitted children aged four (HMSO, 1995)

Upon arrival in Western Australia, with scant prior information having been made available, parents were confronted with a system which admits children to pre-school in their fifth year and to primary school in the year in which they turn six. To move children into this “march...in step” (Peck & Trimmer, 1995) involved difficulties for 92% of the families and proved impossible for 6% of the families. Only 2% of the families seemed to have experienced only positive outcomes. Even in this case, the best outcome which could be hoped for, given the different starting dates for the school year, was that children arriving around Christmas would repeat months of schooling.

An examination of data will show the extent of disruption caused to the children’s schooling when students, who had completed as many as three years in education systems in the United Kingdom (Family 25), or who were reading at a stage appropriate to eight year olds in Western Australia (Family 8) were expected to accept a place in pre-school provision. This dilemma for parents led to confrontations with schools which are detailed in Chapter Ten.

Children in 21% of families were in full-time Primary 1 classes in the United Kingdom or were expecting to start in “big” school. On arrival in Western Australia these children found that they were either returned to sessional pre-primary or kindergarten schooling, or that no provision could be found for them. The degree of stress caused by this necessity is documented at school level in Chapter Ten and in Chapter Eleven at classroom level.

At a later stage in education, the same rigidity of placement by age led to children in 6% of families having to back-track from Secondary 1 in the United Kingdom to return to Year 7 or Year 6 in Western Australia. The transition from Primary to Secondary school carries status as well as curriculum changes. For the children of the above families the step downwards was seen as a demotion. Mum in Family 37 insisted that her daughter be placed in Year 8, although the school resisted this. “I

was determined that they would not put her back into Year 7 and I was proved right by her progress.”

For children from 10% of families, the insistence on placement by age had other consequences. Children who had just commenced or would have been commencing one year of schooling in the United Kingdom in September, found themselves catapulted forwards to the end of that year in the third or fourth term in Western Australia. As a consequence of this move they “lost” most of one year’s school work and either had to struggle to remedy this loss, or found themselves struggling socially in a much older age-group (Families 33 and 36). “It was really weird” (Daughter, Family 8). The difficulties caused by different starting ages for education were by far the greatest cause of distress, confrontation and disruption experienced by families in the study.

Other structural differences The move into schools having been completed, other structural differences in system level provision had to be grasped and dealt with by the families. For example, Mum in Family 37 had enrolled her daughter just before school holidays and took her back to school in accordance with the information on a publicly printed calendar. On arrival, they found that the school arrangements had changed and schools had recommenced lessons two days earlier, but that no one had thought to warn the family of this.

Term structures In Western Australia the school year starts in late January and is divided into four terms. For 6% of families this caused difficulties as the children arrived late in the school year in Western Australia although they had been moved during holidays or early in the school year (September to November) in the United Kingdom. These circumstances found them having to fit into a well-established class group.

Curriculum differences Experiences of differences in curriculum settings and in terminology were reported by 43% of families. Families 1 and 27 brought out children who were placed in Year 6. Because they had not been in primary schools in Western Australia in Year 5 they had not been tested for admission to the enrichment program for academically talented students. Both were bright students who subsequently managed to gain places in Academic Extension programs at

secondary level. Both suffered difficulties through not being offered an enriched program in primary school:

My oldest child was finishing Primary 7 in Scotland and looking forward to Secondary school. He was placed in Year 6 in WA. He was bored and evidenced behavioural problems, which had never happened in the past. He had missed Year 5 assessment for academic enrichment. He was placed in this program in Secondary school and is now very happy.

(Dad, Family 1)

Our eldest daughter was in Grade 6 so she missed assessment for academic enrichment program. This meant that she could not join the academic extension program at Senior High School. She was moved into this group in Year 9.

(Family 27)

The children from the United Kingdom had been in school since they were at least five. This led to problems in reconciling their educational stage with that of their peers in Western Australia:

The course content is different particularly in regard to expectations about reading age. They were reading at Level 2 in the United Kingdom. Out here they were given books with pictures and no words. One twin thought it was funny and just stopped working, but the other was really embarrassed.

(Mum, Family 8)

Of specific curriculum differences, the greatest problems centred around the style of printing and writing used in Western Australian Primary schools. The style taught is termed Victorian Cursive Script. For the children of 12% of families, the change required in writing style caused major difficulties:

Reading and writing were taught by a different system in the UK.

(Family 16)

He seemed very unhappy about the way class work was done. Very different from what he'd done in England, particularly the style of writing. All the children have to write the same way. They don't like children to have their own style of writing. I feel strongly about this.

(Mum, Family 19)

Writing was an especial problem. A printing style is used in the United Kingdom. My older child is now in Year 8 and still can't do Victorian Cursive Script.

(Mum, Family 20)

My daughter came home with all her written work scored over in red pen. Even her name was scored over. She was very upset. In England she had been taught to print, but her teacher here expected her to do curvy writing. The teacher didn't want to talk to me, so I had this "discussion" with her in the middle of the corridor. I told her that if she acted in this way again I would withdraw my child from her class and teach her myself. The Principal passed us and asked his colleague if she was having problems. I said, "No, I'm the one who is having problems." He didn't want to know.

(Mum, Family 37, ex-teacher in United Kingdom)

He was still printing in Primary 4 in England and to be put into Primary 5 and expected to do running writing caused problems.

(Mum, Family 39)

State System expectations of children A concern with lack of system level expectations in the area of the academic capabilities of the children was expressed by 17% of the families.

They are on another planet in academic terms.

(Dad, Family 4)

There is a wide range of choices but not enough rigour in academic areas

(Mum, Family 36)

On the matter of preferences as to system expectations of learning capabilities, not all members of individual case study families shared views. For example:

I like the scope that is offered to the children in WA.

(Dad, Family 22)

School out here was more fun. I could have got a higher Tertiary Entrance Examination score if I'd wanted to, but there were lots of other things to be doing. It evens up in the end anyway, because I can move on to post-graduate studies—even back in the UK if I want.

For 10% of families the “more relaxed and less stressful” atmosphere in Western Australian schools was an advantage to their children. Mums in Families 4 and 8, however, felt that this relaxed style of learning had led to their sons’ under-achievement at Tertiary Entrance Examination level. Both boys, according to their mothers would have been pressured to work harder and would have had fewer distractions in the United Kingdom.

Mum in Family 25 was concerned that expectations of children’s independent capabilities were different in Western Australia, regarding ability to manage school buses and to travel considerable distances to school. She contrasted this with what she saw as a lack of high academic expectations of children at system level.

Cost of education Books and educational materials are provided free of charge in Government schools in the United Kingdom. The costs of books and materials in Western Australia were not an issue for 91% of families in this study. For 4% of families, the surprise of having to purchase books was noted. Finding out how books could be purchased was a problem for another 4% of families.

Meal provision The differences in meal provision at lunchtime were commented upon by 17% of families.

We always had a hot cooked meal in Scotland.

(Daughter, Family 3)

The canteens just serve junk food.

(Mum, Family 4)

They have no sit down lunch. They just eat running around the playground with no one to see what they are doing. There is no one to teach them table manners as used to happen in the United Kingdom.

(Mum, Family 43)

Staff changes in State schools School staff in the State education system in Western Australia are appointed by the State Department of Education. They may move anywhere within the State. A period of long-service leave is granted under the provisions of the Education Regulations (Regulation No. 130, 1960). Such a

provision is not in place in any education area of the United Kingdom. Frequent staff changes in their children's classes were noted by 13% of the families and in the parent's view these changes were detrimental.

He had five teachers in one year.

(Dad, Family 2)

He had five teachers in Year 6 and three in Year 7.

(Mum, Family 27)

He really liked his Primary 1 teacher but then she left and he didn't get on with the others who came.

(Mum, Family 29)

I thought that having sometimes three different teachers in a week while her teacher was away was very bad.

(Mum, Family 40)

State System expectations of parents The expectations in the role of parents in State schools were commented upon by 11% of families. Much more fundraising was necessary in Western Australian schools than had been the case in the United Kingdom.

Voluntary contributions are expected.

(Mum, Family 6)

I was a School Governor in the United Kingdom. We had the power to hire all the staff from the Headteacher down. The only people we were not responsible for were the cleaners because that work was contracted out.

(Mum, Family 8)

There is more parental involvement in Western Australia.

(Mum, Family 22)

I did not know about Parents and Citizens Groups,, canteen rosters and voluntary support parents are expected to participate in, including fundraising.

(Mum, Family 28)

There is much more fundraising and busy bees out here

(Mum, Family 33)

You have to fund raise because they are so lacking in equipment.

(Mum, Family 37)

Summary At system level the varying degrees of difficulty experienced by the forty seven case study families were compounded by an almost total lack of official pre-migration information on education systems in Western Australia. By the time the families reached Western Australia it was too late to reconsider options. Children were enrolled in schools early in the period of settlement. At this point, the differences in provision became apparent.

The differences were unexpected because of a lack of information about education systems in Western Australia. For all but one family, the issues over placement in a school year caused difficulties. These difficulties were very difficult to negotiate in many cases because of the inflexibility of rules relating to placement by the age of the child. The unexpectedness and lack of explanations on the part of the schools, coupled with an inability or unwillingness to make adjustments to ease transitional difficulties, led to the distress and discord which are taken in this study to signify cultural dissonance. Other difficulties surfaced over curricular issues, terminology and system expectations of parents and children.

While experiences of cultural dissonance were reported by all but one family, the severity of the effects of those experiences was wide-ranging. For some of the families, the problems were manifest through distress, confrontation and disappointment. For others, while degrees of distress and discord were reported, the effects appeared to be less troublesome. The issues impacted upon the families when their children were enrolled, or when they attempted to enrol their children, in Western Australian schools. This impact is examined under the heading of school level effects in Chapter Ten.

Chapter 10

Encounters with the Schools

Introduction While system level policies brought about difficulties for number of the case study families, the effects of these policies were felt at school level. The families enrolled or attempted to enrol their children in schools in Western Australian education systems. Chapter Ten examines those issues which were based in the school setting, school organisation and at school policy level. The degree of help offered to the families at school level, in terms of information and practical support is explored.

10.1 Physical Differences in the School Setting

First impressions are important. The difference in school appearance was noted by 89% of the families, who favoured the setting and architectural style of the schools. They appreciated the airiness, grassiness and openness of the schools surroundings.

The appearance of schools in Western Australia is influenced by climate, building methods and costs (Gregory & Smith, 1995). The families from the United Kingdom were accustomed to schools built to stand the rigours of a northern winter, rather than an Australian summer.

Schools out here are much more outdoors.

(Son, Family 1)

The school in England was just one big building.

(Son, Family 2)

These comments were typical of the family responses. Only in 2% of cases were the effects of climate specifically mentioned. Mum, in Family 24, commented that their arrival was in February. This is one of the hottest months in the Western Australian calendar and also the month in which students are settling back in school after summer holidays. Air-conditioning is not a standard feature in school classrooms. For the two children in this family, at least, having no fans or air conditioners in their classrooms in high daytime temperatures proved very difficult in the first months.

School layout Just as external appearances were obviously different, so too the internal layout of the schools caused a little confusion. This confusion was noted by 13% of families. “The school layout with no hall, gymnasium or school dining hall was unsettling for a while” (Mum, Family 29). The “better” sports facilities impressed 4% of families, although the daughter of Family 21 disliked having swimming lessons in the sea.

Mum in Family 2 commented “I’ve stopped believing that little schools are better, because out here the big schools get all the money.” School size was also an issue for 10% of families, with the schools their children joined in Western Australia being much larger than their schools in the United Kingdom.

10.2 Help Offered at School Level

Upon arrival at the school, the parents needed to make official contact so that their children could be enrolled. The degree of help and support offered to the families upon arrival at the school and in the weeks which followed appeared to have made a significant impact on their experiences of the education systems.

Negative perceptions of these aspects of the school were reported by 68% of the families. The designation of the person with whom contact was initially made was given by 34% of the families. Of these families, 56% met the school Principal, 25% communicated with school officers and 19% met with a Deputy Principal.

Information offered Information provided at official level both in the period prior to migration and at system level following migration had been sparse. The schools represented the best remaining official opportunity to provide information to these families about education in Western Australia.

As was discussed in Chapter Nine, an information booklet for parents bringing children into the State system has been available to schools since 1993. This information should have reached 17% of the families on arrival at the school. Only one family reported that they thought that they had received a similar booklet from the school. “I found it informative, and it helped us to feel more secure with the

education format and system here in WA than we would have done without it” (Mum, Family 33). Family 24 noted that a school information booklet helped.

There was no evidence in this study to suggest that a consistent, system-directed, school level policy for the reception of migrant children from the United Kingdom was in place. The existence, in the State education system, of the information booklets from 1993 onwards, appears to have made a difference only in the case of Family 33. The school transfer form in the booklet, which should act as the basis for induction strategies, appeared not to be used with the case study families.

Support offered In the absence of official information at school level, the general consensus for 68% of the families was that the school they approached was not helpful.

We got no help from the school

(Families 8, 9, 11, 17, 26, 27, 33, 37)

There were no support services.

(Families 4, 16, 26, 27, 32, 37, 38, 39, 44)

It was a case of sink or swim.

(Family 34)

Schools should be more aware of the difficulties which may exist for families new to WA. Support and advice should be offered to parents to allow them to make the right decisions regarding education.

(Family 16)

For 9% of families, the information given at school level was that no type of provision was available for at least one of their children because of age, although these children had been in either nursery school or primary school in the United Kingdom.

We thought things would be the same out here. He would have been going to a free Local Authority playgroup with trained teachers and learning to socialise. We came to join the family and we would have had to make some difficult choices if we'd known about education. There will only be playgroup type activities for him for the next two or three years and I would have to pay and to go with him. He is bored at home already.

(Mum, Family 5)

In the case of Family 47, where more than one child was entering school, good experiences in one school were counter-balanced by negative experiences in another. When matters went very wrong the results were distressing for 21% of the families and especially for the children. In the case of Family 8, the boy concerned found a place eventually in another University to study Physics.

The first primary school we sent our daughter to was a disaster.

(Family 4)

I found out by accident that, because of my daughter's December birthday, she would not automatically progress from pre-primary into Primary 1. This came as a shock because I had committed myself to longer work hours. I asked at the school and was then told that my daughter had been assessed, in the previous May, and was ready for Year 1 work

(Mum, Family 6)

We got no help whatsoever from the school about decisions my older son had to take so that he could avail himself of the best range of courses for University. He was going into Year 11 and nobody told him he would have to take a chemistry unit if he wanted to do Physics at UWA.

(Mum, Family 8)

My son was turned away from the first school because his visa was "the wrong type". Frantic 'phone calls followed—then an apology from the school and my son was accepted. It turned out that the secretary had written down the wrong reference number. I had to be very pushy to get any information on the curriculum and I felt that little effort was made to welcome my child and to settle him in school.

(Mum, Family 11)

I put him into a State school here because my friend's son was there. Unfortunately, the boys had nothing in common so the support I had hoped for didn't arrive. He came from a school of 270 pupils to a school of over 600 pupils with many more "streetwise" kids.

(Mum, Family 25)

The school gave us no information or explanations. At our children's first Primary school they experienced racism and discrimination towards them. This was because there was a high ratio of Chinese children in the school. In my son's class of twenty-six there were only five or six children who could speak English. For the eight months he was there his education did suffer.

(Mum, Family 30)

The school was little help. The boys' school in England was first rate and I had grave misgivings about taking them from that school and bringing them out here. Sadly, my misgivings have been proved correct.

(Mum, Family 36)

We got no help from the school at first. I made an appointment with the achievement teacher at the High School to discuss my enormous fears and misgivings about the school.

(Mum, Family 37)

She was just another pupil arriving from England and the school did not have the manpower to treat her specially.

(Family 40)

The school promised me that they would give him a place in Year 1 the following February. On the evening before the parents' orientation day, the Master in Charge of the Junior school telephoned me. He said the school had changed its mind as our son was still too young. I was completely shattered.

(Mum, Family 43)

A total of 32% of the families said that the schools had been helpful, at least to some extent. Where Principals and staff were supportive the parents were glowing in their praise:

The school here was great.

(Family 12)

We were very lucky in the school we chose for our daughter.

(Family 16)

The schools here are very good and the teachers at the High School are of good quality—but the academic standards here are lower than in the very good schools they attended in the UK.

(Family 21)

The school Principal was helpful and used the information we brought.

(Family 22)

The Head teacher was very helpful. The school was wonderful—parents were welcomed into classrooms at any time to stay as long as they wanted.

(Family 24)

It was easy for my daughter to settle. The school was helpful.

(Mum, Family 28)

As soon as we arrived at this school I liked the ethos. In other schools they were just not interested in my problems. Here, the Principal came out and welcomed us. He interviewed my brother and I in his office and gave us coffee. He listened, and offered advice. When I explained that I had to take the children back to the UK to get permission for them to emigrate, he gave me the school's 'phone and Fax numbers so that I could tell him when to expect us. When we got here finally, the Principal was always available and willing to help. He checked on the children in their classrooms to make sure they were OK.

(Mum, Family 29)

The schools helped us. We visited the schools and talked to the Deputy Heads.

(Family 35)

The teachers and Principals were very approachable. The school Chaplains and counsellors were accessible. Parents are welcome to attend assemblies and Chapel. My son's learning difficulties were handled positively and sensitively.

(Mum, Family 42)

The school made our daughter welcome.

(Family 47)

Aside from the support which was, or was not, forthcoming from the school staff and any official help which was offered, mention was made of the role of other parents and parents' organisations as unofficial sources of support and help by 28% of the families. As with reactions to staff responses, reports of help and welcome received at this level were mixed. As before, negative experiences caused distress.

I picked up information from the P and C. No one there spoke to me until the third meeting I attended! Other parents also helped with information.

(Mum, Family 6)

I became inaugural Vice-President of the P and C at my daughter's school. I gave the post up though. I felt an outsider. Decisions were taken and no one told me about them.

(Mum, Family 8)

Speaking to other new people for help seems to be the standard procedure.

(Family 13)

We had difficulty finding a private school for our oldest son. The one we liked was in the wrong district. Eventually we had a choice of two in our area, but only one was prepared to make room for him. The class was already very large. This led to problems for us with other parents who resented our son being fitted in. No one would talk to us for six weeks! We got into trouble for parking our car in the wrong place, but how were we supposed to know? The only thing that changed this was when my son made friends with another boy and his mother 'phoned me up—I suppose to check us out. This broke the ice a bit, but there are still a group of parents who won't talk. They seem to resent incomers. Each class had a classroom rep. (a Mum). She tried to introduce me to other Mums but they just ignored me.

(Mum, Family 43)

It was difficult to get to know other parents at first. When my children made friends, then I began to have contacts.

(Mum, Family 22)

I tried to start communicating with other parents—small talk sort of thing, but I was just ignored. I still get this to some extent

(Mum, Family 24)

We would have liked someone to be identified to help people settle in. Everyone assumes that you know where and how to buy books for school and so forth.

(Mum, Family 31)

Where support was forthcoming it was gratefully acknowledged by 8% of the families.

We got information from other parents

(Family 24)

We got no help with terminology, but help was given by the other school Mums. Many of them had relocated and were empathetic.

(Family 33)

We, surprisingly, had less contact with the Primary school, but it did have a very good Parents' Association.

(Family 35)

Both schools had parent groups who were welcoming and supportive.

(Family 42)

Use made of information brought by parents In Chapter Nine, when questioned about information brought to Western Australia relating to the children's educational stage in the United Kingdom, 79% of the case study families stated that they had brought as much information as they could. In the view expressed by 57% of the families, this information was ignored at school level. For 11% of the families this was particularly upsetting:

She was not in the least interested in the fact that my daughter had been in nursery school in the UK since she was three.

(Mum, Family 6)

The schools definitely did not make use of the information we brought with us to place the children in the best courses.

(Family 8)

There was no discussion about her previous education or anything. I brought the workbooks she was using in Primary 1, but no one looked at them. There was no information from the school and no explanations about anything.

(Mum, Family 10)

The attitude was as if the children had to go to school and that's it. No use was made of the reports we brought with us.

(Family 13)

They made no use of the information we brought—they assessed age only.

(Family 39)

Only 12% of families expressed a firm belief that the schools made use of the information which had been brought and 10% of the families did not express an opinion or had not been able to find a place for their child. The lack of interest shown in the children's previous educational history exacerbated problems which arose when displacement was encountered.

10.3 Difficulties Encountered at School Level

Having brought their children to a particular school, and typically having been met with little help or support, the parents were told which Year group their children would enter in Western Australia. As was explained in Chapter Nine, differences in the entry age to formal schooling between the United Kingdom and Western

Australia brought about the predominant difficulties for 92% of the case study families. The differences were unexpected because of a lack of prior information and were made more stressful by the schools' disinterest in the child's previous educational history.

Placement Strategies Adopted by the Schools The majority of schools placed children according to their chronological age, regardless of the educational stage they had reached in the United Kingdom. The schools, in the cases of 21% of the families, ignored the expressed wishes of the parents for a different outcome.

For 40% of the families the issue of placement was a particular cause of anxiety, setback and friction with the school. The responses by the parents give a clear picture of the degree of stress brought about by the schools' decisions. From their answers it is obvious that being placed in a higher level of schooling, because of age, was as liable to cause problems as being placed in a lower class.

Our oldest son had finished Primary 7 in the United Kingdom and was looking forward to starting in Secondary school. They put him back into Primary 6 here. He was bored, restless and caused problems.

(Family 1)

Our oldest child had moved to High school in the UK, but was put back into Primary 7. This was a backwards step for her as she is a bright girl. We were told later we could have placed her in Year 8—but no one gave us the choice.

(Family 17)

My daughter was placed in Year 2 where she had been in Primary 1 in the UK. This was because of when her birthday is. The work was a lot harder than anything she had done before.

(Mum, Family 18)

My son should have been in Primary 1 but he was put in pre-primary. He hated this.

(Mum, Family 19)

Older child was put down a year and the younger child had to move back to pre-primary.

(Family 20)

I had to resist the suggestion that he go into pre-primary because of his December birthday. Only when I pointed out that he had been in pre-primary, P.1, P.2 and P.3 in the UK did the Principal agree to accept him.

(Mum, Family 25)

I asked that she move into Primary here as she would have in the UK, but I was told that it would be unfair due to “change of lifestyle”—so she painted pictures for another year.

(Mum, Family 26)

Both children were placed a Year too low.

(Family 27)

There was some concern that she should be placed in pre-primary because she had been born at the end of the year. They were happy in the end for her to commence in Year 1 as she had been in school in the UK since she was 4.75 years old.

(Family 28)

My son found starting school here very stressful. He is a sensitive child who had completed two terms in P.1 in the UK. Because of his age he was put back into sessional pre-primary. He marked time then until he started working again in P.2

(Mum, Family 29)

My children were ahead and I wanted them to go up a year but the school said they couldn't go early to High School so they would end up repeating a year anyway.

(Mum, Family 32)

Principals at the schools we went to were reluctant to let her skip a grade (she was only two weeks too young anyway) and she had done one year's more schooling than her peers. A review of her work won out in the school we chose ultimately.

(Mum, Family 33)

For their convenience (I believe) the school placed him a year above his age group in Year 8. He was doing very well in England (both boys had won scholarships against strong competition to get to the school there). The school out here is very sports orientated and he was much smaller than the rest of his group as well as younger, so he could not get into any of the sports teams. I think this made things more difficult for him to fit in.

(Mum, Family 36)

Despite excellent school results, the Primary school wanted my child who had just completed Year 4 in Norway to go back and repeat from Year 3. The schools are very ageist. You must be strong to get what your children deserve—I got my way!

(Mum, Family 37)

It was not easy for our children to settle. My eldest was moved back from Secondary school to Primary.

(Mum, Family 38)

Our younger son had been in Primary 1 in England and in formal education since he was three. There was no provision here for him at the school. We got him into a private Kindergarten in West Perth. He hated going back to “baby” school. The school promised me that they would give him a place in Year 1 the following February. On the evening before the parents’ orientation day, the Master in Charge of the Junior School telephoned me. He said the school had changed its mind as our son was still too young. I was completely shattered. We tried the other school in our area and they said they could take him but they still had no place for our older son. In desperation, I approached the British Consulate. They were absolutely useless “You’re out here and you just have to fit in!” They were my last avenue of help and they just didn’t want to know.

(Mum, Family 43)

She had already started in full-time primary schooling in England. I had to push to get her into P.1 here because she was the age for pre-primary. She was assessed by the school psychologist for “readiness” and was given the OK. I think the transition was much more stressful for me as a parent.

(Mum, Family 41)

Learning difficulties in the UK were ignored so our daughter was placed into the wrong year and had to repeat.

(Family 46)

December Birthday effect The language used by these parents graphically illustrates the degree of frustration which was engendered by their dealings with inflexible organisations. For 6% of families, the fact that the child had a birthday late in the calendar year was seen as an issue at school level—the so-called “December Baby” effect (Peck & Trimmer, 1995; Scott, 1993). That the children in question had been in formal education for at least a year in the United Kingdom was disregarded by the schools. In these cases, the suggestion was made that they be placed with their age group in pre-primary provision, or were too young for pre-primary provision (Family 6). The school instanced in the case of Family 6 was represented in the discussion by the school officer. No member of the teaching staff reviewed the information brought by these parents. In all three cases, the parents resisted these suggestions.

While the rules in this area were set at system level, six schools adopted a pragmatic approach to the admission of the students. Two schools, in the cases of Families 18 and 24 acceded to parental wishes on the placement of the children.

In the interests of a satisfactory outcome for the student, the school psychologist, in 9% of the cases, was asked to test the child for school (or school stage) readiness. A degree of pressure from the parents, however, seems to have brought about this outcome.

The school wanted my daughter, who had just completed Primary 7 in the United Kingdom, to do another year in primary school. I insisted that they test her for admission to secondary school. She was more than adequate so they allowed her to start in the middle of Year 8.

(Mum, Family 8)

The school tested our four-year-old daughter, who had already had a year of private schooling in the UK and had started to read and write. As a result of the tests the school suggested she skip pre-primary and go into Year 1. She had no problems.

(Family 45)

For 6% of the families, although the children were placed in a lower year than had been the case in the United Kingdom, this move had advantages.

I had been struggling with maths back home and I got straight As out here.

(Daughter, Family 3)

We could have placed both our children in Year 2 in WA (because my son was a bright student). The head teacher suggested that they both repeat a year to give them time to settle and to be with their peer group. This turned out to be a good decision.

(Family 24)

She could have gone straight into Year 11 but we decided that she should repeat part of Year 10 and then do Year 11 to give her more chance to settle. This certainly paid off as she scored 425 in her TEE.

(Family 47)

The fact that the schools were not seen to make use of the information the parents were able to provide compounded levels of stress. This stress was also evident when the decisions taken on placement impacted upon curriculum concerns.

Curriculum Effects at School Level The majority of the schools adopted placement strategies based upon the child's age. This, along with the difference in starting dates for the school year, meant that the children found they were either repeating work, or being given work which was ahead of their educational stage.

Curriculum issues were reported to have caused difficulties for 30% of the families. For 19% of the families, general issues were extremely problematic:

The second school was OK but she was placed in a Year 5/6 split class. She needed Year 6 work but was the wrong age. The school finally agreed to let her see the Guidance Officer. He said that she was capable of Year 7 work but was socially too young. He told her, "Australian kids are thick". His report got her into Year 6, but she really did no work in Year 6 and Year 7.

(Family 4)

English history was studied in depth in England, here they were pitched into the middle of the discovery of Australia. They were automatically learning a second European language in England and there was no possibility of that in the school here. Some maths. had already been learned in the UK—some they had not done and did not understand.

(Family 11)

I practically had to have a stand up fight with the Principal to get more suitable (but still not appropriate) reading material for the girls. The Principal asked me to come to the school. He was there, confronting me, with his two Deputies for support. I was obviously meant to feel intimidated. The attitude was "this is our system, and children in Primary 1 do not read above Level 2." I persuaded them to test the girls and they were reading at the level expected of an 8-year-old out here. It made little difference—I was told that they should read in depth at Level 2 but not move on. They ended up reading the books their older sister brought home and stuff from the library. You'd think that they would want children to progress if they are capable.

(Mum, Family 8)

There were curricular differences between the State school and the Catholic school so he repeated work yet again—with no increase in the depth of work.

(Family 25)

We had a major problem with French classes. My daughter was at least two years ahead in French and could not be placed in a different class. She was frustrated and very bored. My son was not offered French though he had studied it for two years in the UK. There is no Latin taught. The school in WA does not set as much homework. The learning

environment is more casual. Much less learning of tables and punctuation in WA. Less work done all round

(Family 21)

The school placed our older son in his correct Year Group (Year 9). Though he had done science for two years and was a bright student, the science teacher made him repeat all the Year 8 and Year 9 work, which he found very distressing. He never felt he was given recognition for his work, it was as if he was marked down because he had come from overseas.

(Family 36)

There were rules we didn't understand, like hats and sunscreen. The whole process was traumatic, but they did adapt.

(Family 38)

There was no religious teaching in the school. I feel that religion in the school teaches children to get on with each other. After one year in the State school I moved her to a private Catholic school although we were not Catholics. The welcome there was so different. I believe it is the best thing I could have done for her future. The Principal and the teachers are definitely more interested in the children.

(Mum, Family 40)

Considering how shy and sensitive our older son is I'm sure he found it very difficult. He was ahead in work though—repeating stuff he'd already done in England. He was one of the oldest in the class here while he'd been one of the youngest in England.

(Mum, Family 43)

A major disruption at curriculum level for 11% of the families was the writing style used in schools.

The elder boy had difficulty with the writing format. The situation became intolerable and we complained. Our son was made very unhappy and we moved schools.

(Family 7)

All the children have to write the same way—they don't like children to have their own style of writing. I feel strongly about this.

(Mum, Family 19)

Phonics was not used in the UK so the school sent my son to a special education class, which he felt singled him out. Maths was taught differently and writing was an especial problem. My oldest child is in Year 8 now and still can't do Victorian Cursive Script.

(Mum, Family 20)

My daughter was considered to have beautiful handwriting in school in England. Because the style is different here she had to “learn to write” all over again, which caused her some anxiety.

(Mum, Family 24)

My son had a few learning problems. He was still in Primary 4 in England and printing, so to be put into Year 5 and to be expected to do running writing was a problem. The ramifications of this problem were not addressed so the last four years have been more difficult in the area of English, spelling and grammar. He is still struggling to redress the gap in his knowledge with missing part of Year 4/5.

(Mum, Family 39)

Along with the general reports of a lack of information, specific differences in terminology within the curricula used in Western Australia were noted by 19% of families. “We got no help with terminology and were very confused over science and social studies and why there was no history and geography” (Family 42).

Not all the case study families were dissatisfied with the curriculum and with teaching methods. While noticing differences, the attitudes of 15% of families to those differences were positive. For Family 12, the move from a LEA school in the United Kingdom to a prestigious private school in Western Australia was particularly pleasing.

The school in WA gives far more help to the individual student than they had in the UK. Schools in the UK work to the curriculum not the students’ needs. My sons found that they were being taught in the private school here. More sport is available at their school here.

(Mum, Family 12)

The school chosen by Family 33 met their expectations. They were impressed by the range of options available.

The school was more learning centred and experiential here. There was more emphasis on environmental issues. Italian was taught from Year 3—no languages until much later in England. School in England was a small village Catholic school and very traditional. The school here is quite large and non-denominational. There are more opportunities here to use the outdoor areas. All the children have swimming lessons. There are more opportunities for sport. There is more socialising with children from other grades here. More self-development.

(Family 33)

Family 47 were more than happy with the education offered to their daughter in the private school system, but less satisfied with their son's State primary school. They moved their son to a school in the private sector. "The one we chose is all right, but not, I think, brilliant" (Mum, Family 47).

In one case, Mum in Family 28 reported that the teacher was helpful in ensuring that her daughter had extra reading resources, "Because she had already been in school in Scotland she was ahead in this area."

Assessment procedures The parents still faced a deficit in information either from official or unofficial sources. The methods used by the schools to assess their child's ongoing progress might have lessened this deficit. As a general practice, schools communicate with parents through newsletters and through School Reports for each child.

In Chapter Six, new procedures for reporting to parents in the United Kingdom, based upon national testing procedures, were explained (HMSO, 1995). The documents analysed in Chapter Six also made clear the complexity of the Secondary Unit Curriculum in Western Australia. Choices in subjects, range of options, stages of work-levels all combine to create potential confusion. Added to this, is the need for certain units to be completed to allow students to make choices in post-compulsory schooling (Education Department, 1996).

For 15% of the families, the lack of information offered when their children were enrolled was compounded by a lack of explanations as to how the school would assess the children's work.

We got no explanations about assessment—just got school newsletters like anyone else.

(Family 1)

I question the lack of information—how do they grade children? The reports are just ticks in boxes but we do know we can go and talk to the teacher.

(Dad, Family 15)

We were very confused as to how they assess performance and how we had to choose pathways she would follow in Year 10. Parents' evenings helped.

(Family 34)

10.4 School Expectations of Parents and Students

Differences already experienced were added to when the families encountered the schools' expectations of the role of parents and students. These expectations differed from the roles in the United Kingdom

Expectations of the role of parents The degree of "voluntary" help which is expected of parents in schools in Western Australia was noted by parents in 17% of the families. Mum, in Family 8, contrasted the degree of power exercised by parents in the United Kingdom with the fund-raising role expected in Western Australia. For Mum in Family 37, experiences at Secondary school level in respect of any role in the school were negative:

I was unprepared for the way the Secondary school wanted nothing to do with parents. They also have a way of treating all children as if they are bad. Secretarial staff are not very friendly and regard all queries by children as abuse. This applies equally to enquiries by parents.

(Mum, Family 37)

School uniform The issue of school uniform requirements within the State system was raised by 9% of families. For Family 38 the requirements were similar to those in the United Kingdom while the remaining families believed a less formal standard applied in Western Australia.

Summary The lack of information about Western Australian education systems, which was noted in the pre-migration and immediate post-migration period in Chapter Nine, was exacerbated at school level. There was evidence, in a majority of cases, to suggest that school administrative staff and parents of other students were insensitive to the difficulties faced by migrant parents from the United Kingdom and their children. Support was not offered, lines of communication were not established, placement was by age, terminology and course structures were not explained.

The major sources of difficulties were that, in many cases, school staff attitudes to the incoming children and their parents did not permit the provision of looked-for help, information and support. Support was not always forthcoming from parent

organisations associated with the school. These difficulties were shown in Chapter Ten to be experienced at school level in schools in the State and the private sectors.

For families with more successful outcomes, the difficulties were diminished when understanding and help were offered by school staff and parent groups. Official information was still lacking for even the more successful families, but an empathetic ethos in the school helped to overcome discordant issues.

The unexpected differences encountered at school level and the unanticipated disinterest of some staff and some other parents caused feelings of rejection and distress in a majority of cases. These feelings, in conjunction with difficulties in negotiating with schools, especially on the issue of placement, gave rise to the sense of discord characterised as cultural dissonance. In Chapter 11, the study moves to explore the experiences of the children at classroom level in the schools.

Chapter 11

Classroom Experiences

Introduction Following their enrolment, the children were placed in schools and allocated to Year Groups. In the two previous chapters, issues which caused difficulties for the case study families, at system and at school level, in the transition and induction of the children from the United Kingdom into Western Australian education systems have been explored. In Chapter Eleven, the findings which relate to the children's classroom experiences are examined. The parents had little day to day contact with happenings in the classroom, so the experiences in that setting are those reported to parents by the children or by the children to the researcher.

11.1 Classroom Setting and Class Numbers

The physical appearance of their classroom setting and arrangement were similar to those they had experienced in the United Kingdom for 82% of the children. Children in 17% of families reported differences in classroom setting and in class numbers.

The school in England did Montessori type of work. You dealt with one topic and based all the lessons on this until you understood it. You can have four or five topics in a day here. I could move freely around the classroom in England.

(Son, Family 2)

Classes are smaller. More sport out here. More discipline in the school. More homework.

(Mum, Family 18)

Class layout and means of teaching are different here. More open plan and casual. The heat made the children miserable for the first month or two as there were no air conditioners in their classrooms.

(Family 24)

We chose the school because of small class sizes. We had no idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the schools and could only ask around. We went back to the UK and then came back. The second time round was much easier.

(Family 31)

Much less formal contact with teachers. Less open days in WA much less encouragement to visit the school. We are always told though that we can pick up the 'phone and talk to the teacher and the one time I had to do this it worked out well.

(Mum, Family 35)

Classes are held outside.

(Family 38)

Differences in teaching methods for writing and printing. Great differences between the systems. More structured approach in WA to learning to read, write and spell.

(Family 39)

They had attended a small pre-prep school in England with 15 children in each class. My daughter had no problems though she missed pre-primary and went straight into P.1 here. My son found things more difficult. He was unsettled by the large class numbers and arrived in the middle of third term when all the other children seemed to have been together since pre-primary.

(Mum, Family 45)

There were double the class numbers in WA compared to the UK. They found it difficult to concentrate because of the noise. There seemed to be a lack of individual attention and guidance—they were expected to self-motivate.

(Family 46)

Teacher effects Experiences of teacher behaviour and classroom organisation were perceived as negative by 28% of families. The comments by parents make clear the degree of distress caused.

Our oldest son had a personality clash with his Year 7 teacher. The teacher was not responsive to our efforts to try to resolve the issue.

(Family 1)

The school we sent our son to had an academic extension program. It wasn't the school we would have chosen but we were in its catchment area and the one we would have chosen had no room for him. He came home shortly after he went there and said to me "Put it this way, they have discipline problems in this school." I visited one of the classrooms during a lesson. I'm an ex-teacher from the UK. You know how kids will quieten down if there is a visitor in the room. Well, this lot were swinging from the lights! I went back to my first choice of school and badgered them until they took him in.

(Mum, Family 4)

Kids here have less respect for teachers.

(Family 2)

Welcome depends upon the teacher they get. My elder son was greeted with "You're the X migrant we've had in this class this year."

(Mum, Family 7)

Teachers are powerless here—they just have to follow what they are told. There was a lack of educational equipment available to teachers.

(Mum, Family 8)

I told the teacher we had just arrived from the UK in case there were any problems. There is a lack of teacher sympathy for immigrant children.

(Mum, Family 10)

My son had an awful teacher at first.

(Mum, Family 14)

My son was placed in a Year 3/4 split class. He was in Year 3 but was put to sit with the Year 4s. When they went elsewhere he was left sitting alone with no one to help him. He was very unhappy until I went and saw the teacher. My middle daughter reacted later to the change (after nine months). Her work was torn up and she was asked where she came from. She slept in her sister's room for a while because she was so upset. I went and saw that teacher too.

(Mum, Family 17)

I insisted on meeting the teachers with my children before they started school. I think that if I had not asked to meet the teachers my children would just have been herded into class very frightened. My daughter was put forward from Year 1 in the UK to Year 2 here because of her birthday. The work was much harder than anything she had already done. She was constantly running away and having to be taken back to class. She is coping really well with the work now. The teachers' attitudes are different.

(Mum, Family 18)

Teacher sat one daughter at a table of boys. Youngest child had five teachers in Grade 6 and three in Grade 7. There was a lack of coordination with work being repeated. Too little attention is paid to the needs of students. One teacher went on an environmental course for one day a week shortly after taking over the class.

(Family 27)

One teacher called my younger son a "bloody Pom" and a "lamebrain" because he preferred European history. I complained, but nothing was done. Another teacher

'phoned me to ask me to talk to my younger son into moving away from another student in class. I pointed out that the situation was in her classroom and that if she felt that he should move she should arrange this. I don't know what goes on during school hours.

(Mum, Family 36)

Found things out via other parents or the odd friendly teacher. I told the Form teacher that I hoped my child would be entered on the computer to receive her newsletter and calendar through the post. The teacher was very unpleasant and showed no interest in helping my child. She has since left our area, thank God. My children were used to swapping schools around the world but they found the school culture out here very different. It seems to us that the teachers don't really care about work or about the individual child's progress or needs. Very competitive about sport however and quite rough—some of the teachers are rough too.

(Mum, Family 37)

She got no support in her Primary class, but when she moved to High School the situation reversed. There was a totally different attitude by staff.

(Family 44)

A positive response by individual teachers to the incoming children was warmly welcomed and such responses were noted by 19% of the families.

The teacher in my daughter's first primary class advised me to move her to another school to get her among better students. She told me, "I wouldn't have my child in this school."

(Mum, Family 4)

The staff were delightful and approachable.

(Family 24)

One teacher took him under her wing and still recognises him in shopping centres and stops to speak.

(Family 25)

My son was suffering from the after-effects of a major family trauma and was difficult in class. He liked his Primary 1 teacher very much but she had to leave because of ill health and this made things bad for him. His Primary 2 teacher had been a migrant herself and she was very helpful and caring.

(Mum, Family 29)

The younger girl was lucky enough to get a sympathetic teacher who was very good to her.

(Family 34)

Our eldest daughter was very upset in the first week. Her English teacher recognised this very quickly and sent her to the school nurse who was quite helpful to her.

(Family 35)

At classroom level, the education of the children proceeded on a daily basis. When difficulties arose either in teacher/student relationships or in peer relationships, these difficulties were believed to impact severely on the progress of the children.

Peer acceptance A lack of integration into the peer group caused further problems for the children of 13% of the families.

Classmates were unfriendly to strangers despite the teachers speaking to them. I struggled to make friends with the parents of those children.

(Mum, Family 24)

The children were subjected to racist abuse. In my son's class of twenty-six there were only five or six children who could speak English.

(Family 30)

My daughter was slightly younger than her classmates out here. She coped well with the work but was socially a little immature and struggled to settle.

(Family 33)

When she went into the classroom she was very scared. Not one child spoke to her. I will never forget seeing her face, sitting there all on her own with all the other children talking to each other and no one talking to her.

(Mum, Family 40)

Socially it is totally different. The attitudes of peers and staff in the first few months were rude and racist. Our older son is a very quiet boy and just got along on his own. The school felt he had integrated, but we never saw anyone at home who was a school friend. In the end we decided that he would be better to go back to board in his school in England to complete his senior schooling and he was delighted to do this. People said he wouldn't fit in back there, but his friends threw a party for him when he got back. It was just such a contrast and he seems really happy. My younger son was placed in a class above his age group. Academically he was well able to do the work. I think, however, he was trying to gain acceptance in the older age group and got in with boys who were non-academic and probably made trouble. I fought and fought to have him placed with his correct age group. Only a few weeks before matters came to a head, the school decided to move him back (this was at the start of the fourth term and I said it would be better to wait until the new school year but they went ahead anyway). The Head Teacher was still saying that he remained to

be convinced that there was a problem with his school work (despite school suggestions that he might have ADD and psychologist's reports which placed him in the top 4% of his age group in Australia). In the end he did get into serious trouble through one of the boys in his original group.

(Mum, Family 36)

The children came from a co-ed school to a single sex school. They found their peers very brash and unwelcoming.

(Family 46)

In Chapter Eight, the post-migration difficulties caused by homesickness which affected parents and children were detailed. A lack of support and welcome into the new peer group would constitute an additional stress to these students and may have contributed to feelings of loss.

11.2 Difficulties Caused by Accent or Word Usage

The fact that the cultural language-in-use was the same for the incoming group as it was for the established group did not always eliminate difficulties. The children from the United Kingdom had grown up with English as their official language. The complex cultural history of the United Kingdom, however, means that variants of the English language are valued as local dialect, and differences in accent are common and accepted. "My next door neighbour was from Ireland and I never had any difficulties with the way she spoke" (Mum, Family 1).

Education System-level assumptions that English-speaking children from the United Kingdom would find no difficulties in communication in Western Australian classrooms were proved, in this study, to be based upon a false premise of tolerance of differences. This section explores the extent of distress caused to the children by a lack of teacher and peer acceptance, which stemmed from differences in accent and word usage. The fact that the migrant children spoke with an accent which was different to that of their Australian peers was believed to have contributed to teacher and peer rejection by 53% of the families.

Accent differences For 19% of the families, this teasing and abuse caused by accent difference was a major problem. In the case of Family 3, the perpetrator was a member of the teaching staff.

The children were teased about their accent. We are Australian citizens now and I still find people at work laugh at my pronunciation.

(Mum, Family 1)

The school didn't like Poms. They thought he was a cry baby.

(Family 2)

When I came to Australia for the first time all the kids in my class called me "bagpipes", but it was in fun. One teacher, though, in another class used to make me repeat my message at the front of her class (when I was sent with messages) so that she could ridicule me. It was horrible, but my Mum went up to the school and sorted it out.

(Daughter, Family 3)

Unfortunately my daughter had a very strong Lancashire accent for the first six months.

(Mum, Family 6)

My daughter had a Scottish accent which she was teased about. She reacted badly to this. She became very quiet and would not answer questions in class because the kids laughed at her accent. The teachers were understanding but could do little. School reports said that she "sometimes" contributed to class activities, but her accent was the problem. She also had difficulties understanding the teacher. I spoke to the teacher and asked her to check. We had a laugh about it, but I don't think she did anything because the problem persisted and my daughter did not want to ask her to repeat or explain.

(Mum, Family 10)

He was taunted about how we spoke differently. He found it hard to understand Australian slang.

(Family 19)

They were called Poms. Caught on to the Aussie accent quickly to avoid this.

(Family 20)

Teased and bullied by peers due to accent and being new students.

(Family 30)

The accent is hard to understand. The fear of speaking with an English accent is very real. You might get bashed or laughed at. They very quickly picked up an Oz accent so as not to appear different. They went really over the top so as to fit in. They change back when they get home though because they know I don't really like it.

(Family 37)

Teased and tormented by her peers because of her accent.

(Family 44)

For 6% of the families, the areas in which they lived had a large number of migrant families from the United Kingdom. This fact was believed to make their children's accent acceptable in the schools and classrooms.

We don't have any problems about our accent because there are so many English people around here that no one thinks anything of it.

(Daughter, Family 4)

There are so many English families around here it's not funny. We came out to experience life in Australia and we are surrounded by people from back home.

(Mum, Family 8)

There are UK immigrants in this area. There were no problems

(Family 16)

Word usage differences In addition to problems caused by the children's accented English, commonly used words were found by 40% of families to differ in meaning between the cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Australia. This led to difficulties and misunderstandings and stigmatised the families as newcomers.

There are differences in common phrases. I used to wonder what they were talking about when they said, "Catch you later".

(Mum, Family 1)

Words don't mean the same here as at home.

(Family 2)

We didn't understand Australian words and vice-versa with English slang.

(Family 6)

She had difficulties with Australian word usage. She tried to lose her English accent quickly when we came back to WA

(Family 26)

Word usage is different here eg. recess here is morning break in England.

(Family 26)

Difficulties with Australian word usage eg. dobbing, lollies and textas.

(Family 27)

The terminology was different eg. factions for sports carnivals.

(Family 33)

Terminology was different eg. Social studies for history and geography.

(Family 34)

Phrases: Do it—translated means have sex. Recess—translated means playtime.

Bathers—means swimsuit. Joggers—means trackshoes.

(Family 37)

Although initial difficulties had been encountered, for 6% of the families the transition of their children to High School had seen a marked improvement in adjustment and the child's happiness within the school. Children in 13% of the families have completed schooling and have made the transition to University. In 7% of these cases the student is completing or has completed a degree in medicine and 6% of the students are enrolled in engineering faculties.

11.3 Parent attribution of ease in integration

Parents in 19% of the families stated their belief that the child's success in integrating, or failure to integrate easily, was attributable to aspects of the child's nature, to the child's age or to luck.

Shy and sensitive children were seen to be much more at risk of failure in re-establishing peer friendships. For outgoing and friendly children, the task was seen as being much simpler, even when they encountered initial rejection. Younger children with little school experience were thought to integrate more easily, if they

were outgoing. Since little prior information on schools in Western Australia had been available to parents, success was also seen as a matter of good or bad luck.

My daughter is a more outgoing child and she settled in very easily.

(Mum, Family 29)

Choosing a new school, despite arranging interviews with the respective Principals still felt like a lottery.

(Family 33)

Being a chatty kid, she soon made friends.

(Family 34)

My older son is shy and sensitive, so he found settling in a larger class difficult.

(Mum, Family 43)

11.4 Parental Comparisons of Educational Provision

In the words of Mum, Family 43, “You can’t help making comparisons with UK when you come here. After all, that’s what you know.” In response to questions on comparisons between the educational provision at system, school and classroom level the families had experienced in the United Kingdom and that experienced in Western Australia, opinion was almost equally divided. The education provision offered to their children in the United Kingdom was preferred by 32% of families, while 26% of families expressed a preference for the setting in which their children were placed in Western Australia. In the cases of the remaining 42% of families, arguments were raised for both sides of the question.

For 11% of those families, initial difficulties had been overcome and the situation in Western Australia is now positive.

Good now. Our second son has a scholarship in music. We came one year too late for our oldest child.

(Family 1)

The sad factor in this particular case study was that the family had applied to emigrate, but faced a delay of nine months because papers were lost. Had permission been granted sooner, the negative outcomes for the oldest child might have been avoided.

Families in a further 11% of cases expressed a belief that the educational provision they had experienced in the United Kingdom was little different from that in Western Australia. A lack of information on which to base comparisons was noted by 9% of families.

Better in Western Australia in terms of personal development and pastorally. I don't know enough about the United Kingdom system to comment further.

(Mum, Family 33)

I'm not sure about education here at the moment, perhaps because I don't fully understand the system in secondary schools and examinations.

(Mum, Family 45)

For Family 14, differences in social class expectations in the United Kingdom might have adversely influenced their children's choice of career. Working class children in their area were not expected to move to Universities, but rather to follow their father's work patterns.

It means a lot to us that our oldest son is at University here and our younger son plans to follow him. It makes it all worth while.

(Dad, Family 14)

An even-handed approach which held that good and bad points could be made in any comparison was adopted by 10% of the families. Where families expressed a negative view of Western Australian education the reservations, as in Family 4, centred around academic standards.

Outcomes are worse for academic education, but better for practical things maybe. You get a good all-round education but academically it's not on the same planet.

(Family 4)

Better in Western Australia in many ways. General knowledge is sadly lacking though. They learn a lot about Australia.

(Family 24)

More opportunities during school but less choice in Tertiary studies because Perth is so isolated. You have a choice of fifty Universities and Polytechnics in the United Kingdom.

(Family 27)

Family mobility related to professional commitments was a potential problem for 9% of the families. These families expressed reservations as to educational outcomes if they relocated in the future.

I fear that if we moved on and they went to another international school they will be very far behind. If we stay here they will be OK, but will their qualifications be worthless?

(Mum, Family 37)

There are good and bad aspects. The children are at least six months ahead when they come here. I think if we go elsewhere or go back to the United Kingdom they will have lost ground. They get lots of choices here though and lots of sports. We would stay here if we could because we have the means to educate them privately. Some of the private schools in England are very good too though.

(Mum, Family 43)

Despite the setbacks and difficulties which had been experienced, the families remained convinced that their children experience long-term benefits from migration. They were overwhelmingly optimistic about the future prospects for their children following their decision to move to Western Australia.

Expectations of Future Outcomes When their life-style in Western Australia was compared to the life-style left behind in the United Kingdom, 79% of the families viewed the change as positive.

I'm not a whingeing Pom. This is now my home. I knew things would be different and came with the intention of living the Australian way. I just needed basic information.

(Mum, Family 6)

Family 42, of all the case study families appeared most satisfied with the educational outcomes of the transition. The children moved from a small Scottish village school, in which they were the only English children, to private schools in Western Australia.

One of the major factors behind our decision to emigrate was to provide the children with what we hoped would be great educational opportunities.

(Family 42)

In the cases of 4% of families, their children's self-confidence was believed to have increased as they had successfully negotiated the school transition. Optimistic

comments were modified with a caveat concerning employment prospects in Western Australia by 3% of the families.

Future outcomes were undecided for 13% of the families. Mum, in Family 36 faces a dilemma. Her younger son does not want to return to school in the United Kingdom, though her elder son has already done so. Educational outcomes in Western Australia have been negative for both boys. “If things don’t improve, I will have no choice but to take my younger son back to England and to live there to be near them” (Mum, Family 36).

Family 37 is confronted by different quandaries. Elderly parents in the United Kingdom, who now have no children living in that country, have been refused permission, on health grounds, to join Family 37 in Western Australia. Mum now does not know what the outcome of this situation will be.

Previous experiences of school transition had been in place for 6% of families. Family 31 felt that the fact that the children had already moved school several times had been helpful, though both Families 14 and 37 felt that this experience of previous transitions was not helpful to their children.

For a further 4% of the families, comparisons showed equal advantages or disadvantages in both settings. Family 2 had met with a run of distressing difficulties in the years since migration. Rather than consider a return to the United Kingdom, however, their intention would be to move elsewhere in Australia if the work environment in Western Australia proved too difficult.

Only 4% of families expressed a view that their life in Western Australia was not better than life in the United Kingdom. The difficulties faced in one case had been particularly severe, though the son’s recent transfer to High School appeared to have been positive. Family 9, while expressing positive views about their prospects in Western Australia, had already made a decision to return to the United Kingdom within months of completing the interview questions.

Summary Chapter Eleven has shown that the children experienced both positive and negative outcomes in their new classes in Western Australia. Positive effects

were generated by those teachers who were caring and supportive and, in the view of some parents, by the experience and self-confidence gained through transfer. Negative effects stemmed from difficulties with accent and word usage and from teasing and rejection by peers and staff members. The difficulties experienced contributed to discordant, negative qualities associated in a majority of cases with transfer to Western Australian schools and are interpreted as further indicators of cultural dissonance experienced by the migrant families in the study. In Chapter Twelve, the findings of the study are discussed.

Chapter 12

Discussion of Findings

Introduction In discussing the findings of the research in relation to the research questions and as contributing factors to a wider debate on cultural dissonance, the fact that these findings represent the particular viewpoints and experiences of the case-study families must be kept in mind. The fact that the families' language of use corresponded with the language used by the researcher allowed a clear understanding of those perceptions and experiences to be arrived at. A focus upon English speaking migrant families had other benefits in the study. These families did not confront obvious language barriers in the process of cultural change, so that any misunderstandings or difficulties which arose were not expected to be the result of incomprehension based upon a lack of understanding of the language in use. Experiences of cultural dissonance would not be based upon the ethnicity of the families nor upon obvious language differences.

The families chosen as the focus of the study came from the United Kingdom, for reasons which are set out earlier in the research. The experiences of these families, however, might be taken to suggest that other English-speaking groups of migrants could also face difficulties and misunderstandings upon their arrival in Western Australia. Further investigative studies involving other English-speaking groups would be required to explore these possibilities

In Chapter Twelve, the questions directing the research are related to the findings of the study. The answers provided by the data collected in the course of the research are discussed under the headings of the main issues revealed by data.

12.1 Outcomes for a Typical Family in the Research

A portrait of the typical family in the study has been found to show the following characteristics. The family, of mother, father and two children had emigrated from England to Western Australia in the period between 1990 and 1995 and were coming to Western Australia to join family members already resident in the State.

In the period prior to migration, the family encountered no special difficulties associated with the process and they received no information on Western Australian education systems in this period. The family used common sense, in the absence of instructions, to bring material to Western Australia which would demonstrate the educational stage and history of their children.

The family had not found leave-taking difficult, but experienced difficulties on arrival in Western Australia, such as homesickness, difficulties in having qualifications recognised, and difficulties in finding accommodation. No official information about education systems in Western Australia was received upon arrival, but the family accessed unofficial information from family and friends, from Real-Estate agents, from telephone directories or by walking around the neighbourhood until they found a school.

The family took their children to the chosen school within three weeks of arrival to enrol or attempt to enrol them. They believed that they had received no official information, help or support from the school at this juncture and that the school was disinterested in the information on educational history which had been brought from the United Kingdom. They believed that other parents and parents' groups were unsupportive.

The family were told which Year Group the children would be placed in. **At this point, the differences between the education systems of the United Kingdom and Western Australia became apparent, as well as the implications for the children in terms of school transition.**

The children were placed in their designated classes. The age group of their classmates matched the age of the children, but the educational stage of their classmates was approximately one year behind that of the migrant children, especially in the area of reading and writing. The educational mismatch of age and educational stage was compounded by difficulties over teasing because of accent and newness, and by confusion over word usage and meanings in Western Australia.

Over time, the family expected initial difficulties to be overcome. They were optimistic about the future of the children in Western Australia.

12.2 The Major Research Question Directing the Study

The major research question which directed this study was generated by the review of literature and by the findings of a small pilot study conducted prior to the main body of the research. The question sought to ascertain what the experiences of the participant families were in the transition and induction of their children into Western Australian education systems.

The key issue, which the research explored through the participants' experiences in the educational transition, was the extent to which understandings and expectations of cultural difference were replaced by misunderstandings, discord and conflict as the educational transition process took place. These negative experiences were characterised in this study as cultural dissonance. The major research question addressed these issues:

What are the experiences of migrant families from the United Kingdom, in dealing with cultural differences encountered during the transition and induction of their school-age children into Western Australian education systems?

The degree to which dissonance was experienced was expected to depend upon the extent and effect of identifiable cultural differences noted by the families and upon the host country's responses to those differences. Dissonance would be mitigated by accessible information which would prepare the families for educational changes brought about by migration and by the response of schools to the developmental needs of these children. To establish primary differences in the education systems of the United Kingdom and Western Australia comparisons in literature were investigated as part of the findings; the outcomes are presented in Section 12.3.

These comparisons illustrated that long-standing differences in educational provision were present. The differences were shown to arise from imperatives in both sets of systems, generated by historical and geographical cultural settings. For the parents and children in this study it was anticipated that educational provision in the United Kingdom prescribed their beliefs in what constituted education and how this education should be delivered. For the other participants in this cultural exchange,

“the way that things are done” in Western Australia in education would be exemplified by arrangements in the State. Where the expectations of participants were mismatched and where differences were unexpected, unexplained and caused difficulties, in this study manifestations of cultural dissonance were expected to arise; the outcomes of dissonance are presented in Section 12.4.

12.3 Established Differences in Culture and in Education Systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia

The general literature which examined the nature of culture and cultural difference made clear the degree of complexity associated with these concepts. Assumptions which over-simplified cultural relationships, such as the relationship between “British” and “Australian” cultures (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981), could not be soundly based.

In the cases of the United Kingdom and Western Australia, literature demonstrated the development of cultural differences. Literature also located the place of schools as agents in the transmission of culture. Since demonstrable cultural differences existed between the cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Australia, schools set within these cultures would transmit the different cultural settings. This was especially so since the settings in the United Kingdom reflect the heterogeneous nature of the cultures which are established there. From this reasoning, logically, children in transition between schools set in the cultures of the United Kingdom and the culture of Western Australia would be bound to encounter the transmission of cultural differences.

The documentary analysis of literature on education systems in the United Kingdom and Western Australia indicated the scope of differences in basic factors such as the locus of control of education; religious education as compulsory in all schools, opposed to secularity in State education and basic differences in political and economic priorities. Instances, such as a fundamental difference in the age at which children are thought to be ready to commence formal education, were shown in literature to be based upon early cultural separation of educational aims. In the case of Western Australia, the later age of starting formal schooling could be traced to the

difficulties, both social and economic, which faced colonists in a remote and harsh environment. The means adopted to deal with these difficulties became, in turn, part of the culture of the colony—‘the way we do things here’.

Subsequent changes in the starting age for formal education in the United Kingdom, and the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen, have not been mirrored in Western Australian education systems. This aspect of schooling, engendered by historical and cultural attitudes, was found to be the major cause of cultural dissonance experienced by the case-study families.

12.4 Causes of Cultural Dissonance Identified in the Study

Subsidiary questions in the research were designed to allow a greater depth of exploration into the issues directing the study by subdividing these issues into discrete areas. The first of these subsidiary questions asked:

Do the cultural differences experienced by migrant families from the United Kingdom as their children transfer to Western Australian schools develop into experiences of cultural dissonance?

A lack of information The findings of the study demonstrated that accessing information about education systems in Western Australia at official level proved almost impossible and that even unofficial information was scant and sometimes misleading. Most of the families were unable to find the information they required. Their inability to do so paved the way for experiences of cultural dissonance.

Official information on the State education systems, which could have assisted these families has been available since 1993 in the form of the leaflet “A Guide for Parents”, published annually by the Department of Education in Western Australia. The publication is directed at the parents of incoming families which include migrant children or children transferring from schools Inter-State.

Data in the study revealed that none of the families who could have been expected to access this information received the leaflet from schools, though one family believed that they had seen something similar. The loss of this source of information was

particularly unfortunate, given the information deficits already experienced by the families.

The absence of statistical information on the placement of incoming migrant children is particularly surprising at Department of Education system level, given that this Department is spending funds on producing this leaflet. The scattergun approach adopted by sending one or two of these leaflets to each school in the State system (as described by a Department staff member in 1996) can only be described as resource wastage, unless specific information about the likely whereabouts of migrant intakes and incoming families in general is gathered from the schools themselves. An individual school in the study was described as enrolling “an average of twelve migrant families each year” (Mum, Family 29). That school had two of the Department leaflets for parents in school files. Neither of these had been used, because the staff members who would have utilised them were, until October 1996, unaware of their existence.

Urgent requests from this particular school for more copies of the leaflets were met by Department refusals to send the number requested, which were required to meet the school's anticipated needs. In the light of this reported refusal, it became even more surprising to discover that over fifty “surplus” copies of the leaflets had been handed over to a University faculty “for the information of trainee teachers” and that this was standard practice at the end of each year of publication (staff member, Department of Education, 1996). In the meantime, families in this study who were starved of information, were not offered this help by State schools.

In the Independent sector of schooling, official information for the families was more easily obtainable. Individual schools offered prospectuses. Booklets listing all the schools, their addresses, telephone and Fax numbers and the name of the Head or Principal Teacher are in print. In the case of the Catholic Education Authority and indeed within the whole Independent sector of education, issues seemed to revolve more around the availability of places than actual information about the systems.

For the case-study families, therefore, there was little opportunity to learn about educational provision in Western Australia prior to emigration and in the immediate post-migration period. The families had few resources to draw upon which would

allow them to prepare for educational differences and to make informed decisions and choices about education for their children.

Dissonance within the School Curriculum The second subsidiary research question explored dissonance within curriculum settings:

Are there areas of the school curriculum in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?

Assumptions have been made that cultural changes for United Kingdom migrant children moving to Western Australia are centred round a simplistic notion of a homogeneous “British” culture and “British” education system (Education Department of Western Australia, 1981). The findings of the study suggest that the variables introduced at United Kingdom education system level limited, or made complex, discussion of experiences of cultural dissonance in the area of curriculum. Specific issues could be identified, however, where experiences of cultural dissonance were associated with difficulties.

At the outset of this study, curricular differences were expected to form a major focus of cultural dissonance, given the changing relationships between the United Kingdom and Western Australia. In fact, many of the curricular differences which surfaced were the result of, and related to, issues arising from inappropriate placement strategies. Children from the United Kingdom were either ahead in schoolwork, or in a few cases had been left behind, because of the stage in which they had been placed.

Of major concern for some families, however, were inflexible, system rules in State Primary schools governing how a child should form letters. The interpretation of these rules at classroom level caused distress for a number of students and led to one family withdrawing their children from a particular school.

The replacement of history and geography as separate subjects, with a program of social studies also baffled families. Obviously, history taught from a European standpoint contrasted with the history of Australia taught in the latter program.

The second languages offered also differed for some families, with less emphasis on modern European languages such as French and German. These second languages were seen by families to be standard in most United Kingdom schools.

A major example of cultural dissonance at curriculum level was shown to be the secular nature of the State education system. For a number of parents this was a source of difficulty. In the United Kingdom, based upon historical precedent, some form of religious worship is mandatory in schools. One family, in particular, was distressed at what they perceived as negative outcomes brought about by the lack of religious teaching. Although they were not members of the Catholic Church they enrolled their daughter in an independent Catholic school. The fact that the Catholic Education system is in itself part of the Independent sector is a major shift from the situation in place in the United Kingdom.

The issue of secular as opposed to non-secular education in the State system of Western Australia is not a recent innovation. The history of Australian education shows that a reluctance in New South Wales, in the early days of that colony, to have education controlled by the Anglican Church led to the secular choice being made (Barcan, 1980). This choice was then transferred to education systems in other colonies in Australia and has persisted. Again, the lack of information available to the families meant that the differences between systems were unexpected and inexplicable.

When discussing cultural dissonance in the curriculum, system differences in the United Kingdom and differences at Local Education Authority level must be kept in mind, as these introduce variables into the families' country-of-origin experiences. The background of the families within these systems and their experiences of the curricula offered coloured their perceptions when Western Australian curricula were discussed. Subjects offered in a particular Local Education Authority area of the United Kingdom differed from those in other areas. Arrangements for schooling, with choices between comprehensive schools in some areas and selective practices in others were also reported. The variables introduced by these differences in provision made simple comparisons in the area of curriculum possible for individual families, but difficult when analysis across the cases was carried out.

Dissonance in Other Areas of Educational Provision A third subsidiary question examined experiences of cultural dissonance in other areas of school provision:

Are there other areas of school provision in Western Australia in which cultural differences are experienced as cultural dissonance by migrant families and their children from the United Kingdom?

Placement by age of child The major cause of cultural dissonance, which was cited by almost all families in this study, centred around placement in schools. This difficulty had bearings upon issues for the families, both within the schools' curricula and in other areas, such as social acceptance. Neither the choice of State or Independent schooling, nor the date of the family's arrival in Western Australia appeared to have any effect upon outcomes in this matter.

The issue of placement and differences in the age of entry to formal education can be regarded as evidence of culturally related differences governing attitudes and philosophies related to education and resource allocation for education. Age of entry to education systems has been set at least at five years of age throughout this century in the systems in the United Kingdom. The school leaving age was raised to sixteen in 1971. Children in the United Kingdom spend at least eleven years, from the age of five to sixteen years, in school. Many start school before they are five years old and can continue until they are eighteen, a total of thirteen to fourteen years in school (HMSO, 1995).

Children in Western Australia enter formal schooling in the year they turn six. The formal age at which they can leave school is fifteen, making a total of nine to ten years of compulsory schooling. Two more years of post-compulsory schooling bring that total to twelve years in school. There is no equivalent to a sixth form in Western Australian schools.

The later age of six for school entry in Western Australia seems to stem, according to historical records, from early difficulties in providing teacher numbers and school facilities in the new colony and perhaps from the influence of the Sisters of Mercy in educational provision. This later entry date corresponded to some earlier patterns in the United Kingdom and particularly in Ireland. When these changed, and when the

school leaving age changed, a corresponding change was not instituted in Western Australia. Resources were allocated to what were seen to be more pressing concerns of survival and economic growth.

This history of less than average resource allocation for education when compared to other States and to OECD countries is seen, according to statistics, to persist in the State education system to the present day (Vickery, 1993). Recent changes to society in Western Australia, brought about by migration from countries other than the United Kingdom and an alteration of global loyalties, appear to have had less of an effect upon educational systems than have long-held priorities for resource allocation arising from early Governmental attitudes in the State towards education. The issue of proposed changes to the entry age for formal education, raising that age to the year in which children turn seven (Department of Education, 1995; Scott, 1993) will certainly worsen the transfer problems of age as opposed to educational stage already shown in this study for future migrant children from the United Kingdom.

In regards to resource allocation for education, however, the economic benefits of raising the school entry age to the Government in Western Australia, in terms of reduced educational funding, were set out in the Report of the Ministerial Task Force as being “approximately \$300,000,000 over twenty years, assuming the compulsory entry age was altered also” (Scott, 1993, p.ix). Given the State system history of depleting resources for education, savings of this magnitude might be expected to outweigh research findings which pointed to difficulties caused by the implementation of such policies.

Children in this study had started in formal education at the age of five or earlier and were well in advance of their peer group in Western Australia. In their parents' view, the children had been advantaged by their early educational experiences. Many of the case-study families had no means of knowing that schooling in Western Australia does not start until the age of six because there was no educational information offered to them prior to migration. The fact that children in the United Kingdom start school at the age of five, however, cannot be unknown to policy makers or to members of the teaching profession in Western Australia, given the history of migration into Western Australia from the United Kingdom. That the discrepancy in

age as related to stage of education, when the child transferred into schools in Western Australia, should be problematical can come as no surprise to educators in the State. This group of children forms part of the largest group of incoming migrants, so parents might reasonably expect that policies to assess their children's educational needs on arrival in schools would be in place. The independent relocation agency discussed in Chapter Nine, in fact employs an "educational expert" to assess all the children of client families so that the best possible placement outcomes are ensured (Director, *Executive Steps*, 1996). The agency would be unlikely to provide this service unless client responses demonstrated that there was a need for such help.

At education system, school and at classroom level, however, there was little evidence in this study of any such assessment. Only in cases where the insistence of the parents forced the school to take action was evidence of developmental stage assessed. System level policies for the placement of children strictly in relation to their chronological age prevailed in the majority of cases. The educational information brought by the parents and given to the schools must have revealed, (had it been studied by the school staff), the mismatch of age and educational stage.

The inference could be drawn that staff in educational systems might be aware of difficulties faced by children, such as those in this study, in the past. For reasons of organisational convenience or because of cultural attitudes, however, the difficulties have been ignored.

Unfortunately for the children, the evidence given in this study suggests that school administrators, with few exceptions, did ignore proffered information and brushed aside parents' testimony. In some cases, far from any professional educator's assessment of the child's educational stage being forthcoming, the parents did not meet any member of the teaching staff, but were dealt with by the school officer. In another school, one mother had to insist that she and her children be given the opportunity of meeting the teachers who would be in charge of their schooling.

Where help and support might have been resourced at system and school level, but were seen to be lacking, antagonism and conflict developed as the parents (in all cases the family mothers) felt obliged to confront the schools in their children's

interests. Most of these mothers believe that, despite the distress evidenced by their child, their intervention was regarded as inappropriate interference in the school's business. An attitude of "This is our system and you must fit in" was reported throughout the research.

This attitude engendered a sense of injustice in the families. Little information, in the period prior to making application to migrate or when permission had been granted, was offered which would have given warning of possible difficulties.

Data show that the families had come to Western Australia in the belief that their children would enjoy a better way of life and comparable educational opportunities. Where misgivings existed, the inference was that these were without foundation. "We thought we had done all the research" (Family 36).

To achieve the aim of an improved lifestyle and life-chances, the families had dealt with bureaucratic demands, gained permission to emigrate, left family and friends and faced the threat of homesickness and loneliness. They had done what they could to inform the schools in Western Australia of their child's age and educational stage. They did not seek special favours, but badly needed information and to be courteously received, rather than to have difficulties ignored or brushed aside. Attitudes expressing a sense of rejection, hurt, anger and injustice were prevalent in the data received in the course of this study.

Where school personnel were welcoming and gave assistance, the attitudinal differences were striking. Not all problems were easily resolved, but conflict was absent and a co-operative climate was established in which both points of view were recognised and respected. Parents gratefully recorded their appreciation of such help and support.

The outcomes for many of the children, as a result of the system-engendered placement policy, were a cause of difficulty and distress. Children were pushed from one stage of schooling back into a much earlier stage, or forced to struggle with large deficits in curriculum because they had been placed in a stage beyond their educational level. That this has the potential to constitute at least short term educational disadvantage for these children seems certain.

What is most striking in the families' responses is the lack of attention they believe was given at school level to the children's struggle and unhappiness. Not only was their reception at the schools dismissive in many cases, but classroom arrangements worsened the problems. The peer group was unfriendly. Children were put to sit in isolating groups (Families 17 and 27). Work levels were totally inappropriate (Families 1, 8 and 18). Differences in terminology were not explained. Assessment methods were not explained, although the Unit Curriculum is complex, TEE examinations have a complicated formula of calculating scores and Universities have specific entry requirements.

The only ad hoc methods of gathering this, or other, needed information were shown in data to come from entering potentially non-welcoming P and C groups, from receipt of normal school newsletters which did not address their particular problems, or by making contact with other new parents. Where help was forthcoming, again it was gratefully acknowledged. The situation for the majority of the case-study families however, from having to locate schools through the help of Real Estate agents to finding that their children were rejected by peers, at least initially, was damaging and disadvantageous.

For the families who arrived after 1993 and placed their children in State schools, some of those difficulties should not have occurred. Had they received the information leaflet targeted at them, they would have had information on education system policies, on curriculum and on District offices where help might be obtained.

The difficulties caused by placement policies, in most cases, diminished over a period of years. For the families whose arrival date was in the early years of the parameters set in the study, most of the difficulties had since been overcome and the educational outcomes for their children had, in the long term, been positive. Transitions to High School and to University had been accomplished successfully. The evidence in the study supports the families' pre-migration perceptions of the children as educationally able and socially resilient. Experiences of cultural dissonance arose when schools in Western Australia devalued the worth of the children's cultural heritage and educational skills, because neither corresponded to norms in this society.

For the more recently arrived families, wounds still seemed raw. In these cases, anger and a sense of bewilderment and injustice was reflected in the language used in responses. The jarring sense of cultural dissonance was obvious in the data gathered from these families in particular.

Accent and word usage A second major issue that generated major discussion and reporting of conflict in this study, following upon the issue of placement in schools, centred around difficulties experienced because of accent and word usage. At the outset of the study, United Kingdom families were sought as participants because, in their cases, issues of language-of-use and ethnicity were presumed to be insignificant. The common threads which flowed from a British colonial past were presumed to remove these issues from consideration in the transition to schools in Western Australia. While cultural differences were expected to be present, these were expected to centre on cultural markers other than language and ethnicity. The findings of the study showed that these early presumptions were sanguine and misplaced for a significant minority of the families.

The influence of local accent and dialect from the United Kingdom was seen by a large number of families to cause rejection, teasing and the threat of physical abuse at school level in Western Australia. In two particularly distressing cases, verbal abuse centred around issues of language and ethnicity was directed by teachers towards students, according to the families.

The study has shown that homesickness and loneliness were patterns experienced by many of the children. Rejection because of the way they talked added to, or caused, their distress at this time. That this rejection should be seen to come not only from peers but also from professional teachers is surprising on ethical grounds. Professional ethics should certainly preclude this type of inappropriate response to any child's background or use of their language. Families believed that teachers who had themselves been migrants, or who had travelled widely, were more inclined to empathise with the emotional state of homesick children and to be more tolerant of differences in approach to schoolwork.

Adding to difficulties engendered by accent, were the differences in the meaning or substance of common words. One family illustrated this point with the tale of a child

from Scotland who had asked the Canteen Supervisor for “a piece”. In his home country dialect he was asking for a sandwich, but the Supervisor did not understand and ignored him. It was only when he told his mother that he was having no success in obtaining lunch that the difficulty was recognised and corrected. The surprise and offence which was generated by Western Australian perceptions of incorrect use of language and strangeness of accent was particularly marked for the many of the case-study families. These families, after all, originated from the countries which have given the English language to the world and have an ingrained sense that their usage is correct and acceptable.

School lunches The issue of school meals may seem an unlikely focus for cultural dissonance, but again expectations in the United Kingdom and in Western Australia differ widely. Free, or subsidised, cooked school lunches eaten in a dining hall are an accepted part of the school day in much of the United Kingdom. To have to adjust to a system of canteen provision, without explanation of that system and its working, proved difficult for a number of the children and worrying for their mothers in terms of the children’s nutrition. Although this point was minor in comparison with other issues in terms of dissonance, the cumulative effect of discord was increased.

Teacher change A further instance of cultural dissonance was raised when teacher change at classroom level in the course of the school year was discussed. Instances of five or seven teachers taking charge of a class in one year in State schools were put forward in data. The families were completely bewildered by these changes.

In the United Kingdom, teachers are in the employ of the Local Education Authority. The policies of each LEA govern teacher supply and school Boards of Governors may have control of appointments. Teacher change during the year would be a relatively rare event. Parents could expect that staff would remain in a particular school in a given area over a number of years, unless promotion or exceptional circumstances forced them to move.

In Western Australia, because teaching staff are employed by the State Education Department, they can be posted to, or apply for posts in, schools throughout the State. State Education System Regulations govern the number of teachers allocated to any school according to a set formula which relates to pupil numbers. This formula is

strictly adhered to so that student shifts in population may increase or decrease the number of teachers allocated to a particular school.

Teachers may be posted to a school which is in a country area and have to move to that area. Indeed, to achieve permanent status as an employee of the Department of Education, teachers must serve a period of time in country schools. Subsequent professional moves may be calculated to obtain a posting near to home.

Added to these reasons for change are factors such as maternity leave and long-service leave provisions. The latter provision is not part of teachers' conditions-of-service in the United Kingdom. Its existence in Western Australia seems anachronistic, if anecdotal information is correct. Public servants in the colony were entitled to three months long-service leave after a given period of years spent working away from Britain. The period of leave was calculated according to shipping schedules. One month was allocated for the journey to Britain, one month for leave there and one month to allow the return journey to be made. This allocation of long-service leave persists and the current regulations for teachers date from as recently as 1960.

The effect of all these factors is frequent staff change in State Schools in Western Australia. As long-service leave falls due, teachers will leave for three months. Temporary staff will replace them. Teachers may be moved as pupil numbers change, or may move of their own volition if promotion is offered or if a posting nearer to their home falls vacant. Movement will be exacerbated in schools not seen to be desirable places of employment. This teacher change caused considerable distress to children and anxiety to parents in the case-study families because it did not relate to anything within their prior experience.

12.5 Mitigation of Cultural Dissonance

The final subsidiary question sought to ascertain the extent to which negative experiences of cultural dissonance had been mitigated by affirmative strategies on the part of Western Australian education systems and schools. In the terms of research in the United States of America (Gordon & Yowell, 1994), had the systems, schools and teachers responded appropriately to the developmental needs of the children in these

families? With the exception of only two families, the answer found in data in this study must be negative.

To what extent, in the view of the migrant families, do education systems in Western Australia act to mitigate experiences of cultural dissonance for these families:

a) at system level?

b) at school level?

c) at classroom level?

System level At State system level, the assumptions made were that no help for migrant children was needed unless they spoke little or no English. No statistics appeared to be collated which would provide information to the State education system on details of incoming school-age children from the United Kingdom. The Departments of Immigration and Education seemed to have no mechanisms through which this information could be transferred.

The leaflet which was published by the Department of Education and aimed at incoming families, failed to reach all but one of those families who should have received it. Given these factors, it is not surprising that the case-study families found a deficit in information available to them. The view of the families was that, in the State system, little or no help was provided to them by the Department of Education, although this help was badly needed.

In addition to a lack of help, system policies insisted that children be placed in schools according to their chronological age rather than their educational stage. No account was taken in system policies of the mismatch between age and educational stage in Western Australia for the children in this study. Differences in curricula were not taken into account when the children were placed in courses. System-led policies for the placement of teachers were not explained.

Within the Independent systems decisions were taken at school level and in Catholic schools by the Catholic Education Authority. Experiences in the Independent systems, for the case-study families, were mixed. A small majority of the families

were pleased or very pleased with the outcomes for their children. A minority of families reported a very negative reception which caused great difficulty and distress. The difficulties, except in one case involving the Catholic Education system, were centred at school rather than at system level.

At system level, if family and friends were already resident in Western Australia, their presence, advice and support, to some extent mitigated experiences of dissonance. Family members made arrangements for the enrolment of incoming students. The effect of family support, however, vanished at school and classroom levels because only the children and their parents could be involved.

School level The experiences of the case-study families at school level present the greatest cause for concern arising from this study. The almost total absence of help, of policies for the induction of incoming students and their parents, of information on assessment, curriculum and about avenues of support, seemed to indicate to parents a lack of care for individual students and a blinkered unawareness of potential difficulties.

Added to this, were the system-led placement policies and their interpretation at school level, and a confrontational approach by some administrative staff when difficulties were brought to their attention. For many of the families, the schools themselves offered little by way of assistance in matters of cultural misunderstandings. In itself, this might be taken as evidence of cultural dissonance, in that the misunderstandings were clearly in place and were unrecognised or dismissed at school level.

An outcome of this lack of support at school level and at classroom level was that parents attributed blame for the situation, to some extent, to their luck in finding sympathy or to ill luck in meeting difficulties. Particularly for the mothers in the study, perceptions that a degree of guilt attached to parents for failure to ensure a smooth transition for their children were reported. These feelings must add another dimension to the burdens parents (and in this study migrant mothers) faced at a time of family re-location and emotional distress. It is hard to see how, in the absence of advance information, parental actions could change outcomes at system, school and classroom level if help and sympathy were not forthcoming from the schools.

Classroom level At classroom level, issues over differences in accent and language use proved distressing and intractable. That Australian English differs from the language in other parts of the world is accepted. “Nothing distinguishes the Australian more sharply from the average Anglo-Saxon than his very special brand of English” (Sharp, 1992, p.23). This very special brand of English had to be learned and learned quickly, if incoming migrant children from the United Kingdom were to gain acceptance from their peers and in some cases from staff members. Teacher intervention to attempt to assist children struggling with peer rejection was seen by parents to be futile. Only families who lived in areas which were home to large numbers of migrants from the United Kingdom escaped issues of accent and word usage.

Where teachers were sympathetic and helpful the families responded with gratitude and relief. Where teacher attitudes were seen to be uncaring or destructive, confrontation arose.

There is an obvious difficulty here for both sides. For parents, educational outcomes for the individual child are paramount. Families who participated in this study included parents who were running their own businesses, had skilled professional employment, were University lecturers, teachers, administrative officers and, in one case, were taking Honours courses at University.

These parents, and indeed all the parents in the study, had high expectations of educational outcomes of academic success and social integration for their children. Only in a small number of cases was one child in the family seen to be at-risk through learning difficulties and in one of these cases the school was supportive. The adverse reaction of the parents when schools and teachers ignored or devalued their children’s skills was predictable.

Teachers on the other hand, faced by a class of thirty or more children, may be forced to focus more upon outcomes for the group at the expense of individual students. Their freedom of response may be constrained by school or system policies. This argument, however, does not totally explain instances of discrimination, racist abuse and obstructive behaviour by classroom teachers which were reported by families in this research.

Unwelcoming attitudes noted in peer groups were also found to exist in dealings with other school parents. Parent and Citizen Groups were not always helpful. Overtures from the migrant parents were thought to have been ignored. This rejection might also reflect cultural dissonance, in that the approaches made by the incoming families may have been seen as inappropriate in the host society. Guidance and introduction by the professional teaching and administrative staff might have been needed to assist in helping newcomers feel part of the school community. Families in both State and Independent education systems reported these negative experiences. The findings indicate that neither education systems, nor the majority of schools, acted in ways which would minimise experiences of cultural dissonance.

Not all the findings in the study, however, were negative. Long-term outcomes for a number of the children had been satisfactory. University courses had been embarked upon; successful transition to further educational stages had been successfully negotiated.

The academic progress of the children shows promise that they can make positive contributions to Western Australian society. The early difficulties which they have overcome could, however, have been avoided or at least mitigated by a far more flexible approach to their learning stages. Schools have reading material on hand which could be offered to a child reading above the stage expected in their peer group. Teachers have the skills to recognise and provide help for students who are placed out of their educational stage. What is required is an approach based upon the level of the individual child's development rather than rigid expectations as to what is correct for children of a certain age group.

At classroom level, instances of help, support and encouragement were recorded. The main perceptions of the parents, however, were that a greater degree of understanding for their children's difficulties, at least in the short term, was required. The perceived failure of many Western Australian school staff to understand and relate to these difficulties contributed in a major fashion to the families' experiences of cultural dissonance.

At the commencement of this research a definition of cultural dissonance was set out to facilitate the research process:

Cultural dissonance represents a sense of discord or disharmony, experienced by participants in cultural change where cultural differences are found to occur, which are unexpected, unexplained and therefore difficult to negotiate and which inhibit behavioural adaptation.

This heuristic definition of cultural dissonance, with its emphasis on the sense of dissonance arising from unexplained differences and difficulties, assisted in the analysis of data and promoted an expanded understanding of the causes of unease and distress reported by the participants. The negative perceptions of participants arose from identifiable differences and difficulties.

The study found that these unexpected and unexplained cultural differences in the area of schooling and in other areas of the post-migration experience were encountered by the majority of families in the study. The degree to which those differences caused difficulty varied from case to case. The possibility arises that the degree of reported dissonance might relate to the degree to which difficulties and differences that were unexpected occurred for each family. The findings suggest, however, that variables are brought into play by the characteristics of individual participants in the study. The resilience, outgoing nature and inherent optimism of a number of children, as described by their parents, might mean that experiences of dissonance in school transition were minimised for the family even when considerable difficulties were experienced. Conversely, similar difficulties could, if the participant was stressed and lacking in confidence, cause experiences to be seen as more harrowing and perceptions of dissonance to be magnified. These findings reinforce a need for caution in making generalisations as to outcomes of any set of circumstances for particular participants (Gordon & Yowell, 1994). Never-the-less, the lack of information in the period surrounding migration and the lack of induction strategies within schools were unhelpful to the participants and were a cause of experiences of dissonance.

12.6 Cultural Dissonance and Children At-Risk of Educational Disadvantage

In the light the research findings and other research, a possibility of educational disadvantage being associated with the factor of being a migrant child has arisen.

Research in Australia (Hartley & Maas, 1987; Taft & Cahill, 1978) demonstrated that identifiable difficulties for English speaking migrant children did exist within Australian education systems. Based upon findings from these sources, the possibility existed that children in the case-study families might suffer educational disadvantage, when experiences of cultural dissonance were proved to have occurred during the process of transition and induction into education systems in Western Australia.

The children in the case-study families had, with few exceptions, been regarded by their parents as performing well in the educational settings of the United Kingdom. The findings of the study make it evident that in a majority of cases the children were educationally disadvantaged, at least in the early stages of transition, by factors associated with their migrant status

12.7 The Families' Situation as Migrants

In examining the experiences of the families with a view to identifying issues which caused distress and discord, the effects of their situation as migrants has to be taken into account. The literature reviewed in the course of the study and the findings from the pilot study pointed to the process of migration as being a time of stress. Even with no significant barriers of language or ethnicity, migrants from the United Kingdom might be expected to encounter difficulties in the cultural transition.

In addition, criteria for acceptance as a migrant in Australia have fundamentally changed and are still changing. Acceptance, in present circumstances requires several factors to be in place. The most common reason for families in the study gaining permission to migrate was that other family members were already resident in Western Australia. Even in these cases, the family from the United Kingdom had to satisfy a points system to obtain permission to emigrate, had to finance their journey to Western Australia and had to have means to support themselves upon arrival. These criteria have implications for the social standing of migrant families in their communities in the country-of-origin. The families required to be financially capable of sustaining the expenses of migration and to have professional status or

skills to offer. This makes it likely that, in the present climate, migrant families will not be drawn from the lower socio-economic strata of society.

The findings of the study showed that the period immediately after arrival in Western Australia was particularly fraught with difficulties, as families struggled with the effects of homesickness and sought to establish themselves in their new community. This period coincided with the time-frame for enrolment of the children into Western Australian schools and contributed to experiences of cultural dissonance in that situation because all the families were already under some degree of stress.

Summary The data presented in this study call into question the notion that, for migrant groups, Western Australian society is seen at all times as open and welcoming. For the case-study families there were many instances when rejection and dismissal were the common perceptions. The lack of realistic information prior to emigration compounded the difficulties that they encountered.

It must be noted that this study was not focussed upon the impact of colonial history upon the education systems of Western Australia. Never the less, some difficulties encountered by the respondent families stemmed from long-standing historical differences in educational provision.

Evidence reviewed in this study suggests that cultural differences have been present from the earliest days of the colony of Western Australia. Attempts to mirror the cultural settings of the United Kingdom in education were thwarted by a poverty in resourcing education brought about by constraints of distance, lack of funds and shortage of trained personnel (Barcan, 1980). Attitudes towards the priority to be afforded education systems were shaped by those constraints and by rivalries between the churches and the civil authorities. Parallels occurred in the naming of school sectors and later in the move to comprehensive schools. Other factors associated with the status of Western Australia as a colony whose public servants required leave to visit the “mother country” and whose independent settlers wished no church establishment bias in their government schools persist to the present day. These factors seem still to exert influence in the Western Australian education systems and to account for significant differences between the systems of the United Kingdom and Western Australia, differences which were noted by the participant families.

Cultural dissonance arising from differences between United Kingdom educational systems and Western Australian education systems is shown, in the cases of the families in this study, to be experienced in the transition process. The differences which cause this dissonance should be recognised and acknowledged in Western Australia. The pretence that migrant students from the United Kingdom will automatically integrate without difficulty into Western Australian education systems should be abandoned. Policies to assist these students and their parents should be put in place and implemented at system, school and at classroom level. In this way, experiences of cultural dissonance can be lessened and tensions eased for all parties in the cultural exchange.

12.8 Recommendations Arising from the Findings of the Research

System level At education system level in Western Australia, the need to provide advance information on education systems should be addressed.

A. Ideally in the State system, the leaflet “A Guide for Parents” now in print, should be updated annually as at present (Education Department of Western Australia, 1996). Distribution of this material should be reviewed urgently. Instead of so-called surplus copies being deposited at universities, alternative strategies should be devised. These strategies would allow either the Department of Immigration to access copies for incoming families or should allow schools to order copies based upon an informed assessment of their likely requirements.

In the view of parents in the study, the most useful time to access this information would be in the pre-migration period. This could mean that copies of the leaflet are made available through Australian Consulates and through the Department of Immigration, as standard practice when a family with children indicates their intention to settle in Western Australia. At this level, information about private education systems should also be disseminated.

If this approach presents insuperable difficulties (and it is hard to see how this could be so), then State schools should be allowed to order as many copies of the leaflet as they think they may require. This ordering would be based upon a system of record-keeping which kept statistical track of incoming migrant families. The statistics would be part of the school’s personal files on each student, but would be collated at State system level so that data on placement of all incoming families were recorded.

Avenues of communication between the Department of Immigration and the Department of Education should be established to assist in the collation of data. Data assembled in this way would assist, not only in the distribution of information to incoming families, but would make planning and policy-making more accurate and informed.

Use could be made of advances in technology which might allow information to be disseminated through Internet pages. In this case, however, the information offered would have to be apposite and continually updated. Access to this information is obviously limited to families who can obtain computer generated information and so printed matter would still have a major role to play in providing assistance.

B. Placement policies which only take account of the age of each child should be replaced by more flexible strategies involving developmentally appropriate practices.

These policies would assist, not only English-speaking migrant families, but all migrant families and families transferring on an inter-State level.

School level At State school level, amendments to record-keeping should be put in place. The school should be able to tell from its computer system how many incoming families have arrived in any year and their point of departure prior to coming to Western Australia.

The patterns of intake which emerge from these records would direct school-level policy for these children. That induction strategies should be in place is taken as a given in this situation. These strategies should form part of the School Development Plan and as such would be reported at district and system level.

C. Responsibility for the implementation of induction strategies should be placed with designated, senior, staff members so that these staff members are clearly identified to incoming families as providers of help and information. The present practice of an ad hoc approach to incoming families should change as an immediate priority.

The designated staff members would take responsibility for initial interviews with parents and children, for arranging initial assessment and for reviewing records and reports brought from previous educational systems. Their responsibilities would also include the keeping and updating of computer records concerning incoming children. They would act as liaison officers between the parents and school staff and would facilitate the introduction of parents into Parents and Citizens Groups.

The designated staff members would ensure that parents had seen a copy of the leaflet produced by the Education Department, or would provide them with a copy of this. They would be available and able to answer any queries arising from differences in curriculum, assessment methods, University requirements and course structures.

Classroom level At classroom level, if the above strategies are implemented, then the role of the teacher will be to monitor the progress and educational stage of the incoming students and to report any difficulties which occur to the staff member with induction responsibilities. At this point, liaison with parents, which would be ongoing on a basis of need, could be reactivated as necessary to handle any difficulties before conflict was generated.

To fill this role, the teacher will require to be informed on issues of comparative education, so that an accurate assessment of educational stage and progress can be made. Some degree of knowledge of the education systems in the migrant child's country of origin would be an essential part of teacher training for such a role.

D. More flexible teaching strategies should be developed which could accommodate differences in teaching methods which are manifest in the work of migrant children. Their skills, while not matching practices in Western Australia, should not be devalued.

The enrichment of classroom experiences, to which these migrant children could contribute in the light of their differing backgrounds, should be recognised and utilised. The differences in accent and word usage, now painfully disguised by the children, could be a source of creative development in the use of the English language.

Chapter 13

Conclusions

Introduction In Chapter Twelve the findings of the study, as they related to the particular issues under investigation in the research, were discussed. Chapter Thirteen explores possible implications for the wider concept of cultural dissonance arising from the findings of the study.

There is no suggestion in these discussions that a study of a limited number of cases in one State of Australia should be seen as definitive. Rather, the suggestion is made that these cases are symptomatic of a wider malaise and, as such, provide insights which may be of use when the broader and more entrenched problems associated with cultural dissonance in Australian culture are discussed.

While the study focussed upon the experiences of families during the educational and cultural transition of their children, the situation of the families as migrants was crucial to the research. Any transitional experience has the potential to cause difficulty. What is suggested in literature, however, is that the migrant experience brings an added dimension to the possibility of a misunderstanding of differences and to the possibility of difficulties being encountered (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Hartley & Maas, 1987; McKelvey & Peters, 1993; Taft & Cahill, 1978) This aspect of the families' background meant that contextual factors associated with migration and with the families' reception in Western Australia were found to influence their perceptions of cultural dissonance.

This chapter presents one interpretation of the causes which may occasion such perceptions. This interpretation is based upon two considerations which arose from the study.

The first of these is associated with unhelpful attitudes Towards many of the participant families which seemed to prevail at system and, in some instances at school and classroom level. In this discussion, the suggestion is not put forward that these unhelpful attitudes, with a few notable exceptions, stemmed from a conscious attempt to disregard or downgrade migrant families. What is suggested is that "long-

ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour” (Levin & Riffel, 1997, p.44), at system, school and classroom level may help to hinder the formation of adaptive strategies. These patterns, it is suggested, have their genesis in attitudes which are based upon preconceptions of the hierarchical place of migrants in society.

The second consideration deals with the changing nature of the migrant intake, based upon Federal Government policies and plans. Set against attitudinal factors which place migrants at a particular level within hierarchical structures is the increased professional or skilled nature of the migrant intake. As recently as April, 1998, the Minister for Immigration is quoted as stating that ongoing changes to migrant intake “reflect...the need for ensuring the skilled migration program is given primacy.” (Migrants to pay more”, 1998). The suggestion is made in this chapter that these professional and skilled migrant parents are likely to have high aspirations for their children, aspirations which schools may not be able to recognise because of long-held beliefs and attitudes.

Other interpretations might be equally valid. The intention of this chapter is to open discussion in an area which has been somewhat neglected in recent research.

13.1 Cultural Difference and Cultural Dissonance

The findings of the study showed that particular issues experienced during the process of transition and integration were problematic for the migrant families. The conceptual framework of the research highlighted that a mismatch of expectations may generate cultural dissonance on the part of the migrant families and the host society. This mismatch of expectations, if it existed, would be demonstrated within schools in education systems, since schools act as transmitters of wider cultural values.

That dissonance was present became clear early in the research. A majority of the forty-seven migrant families experienced some degree of difficulty in the education system/school domain. The issue of placement of the children in a Year group in Western Australian schools, raised issues for all but one family.

What also became clear, however, as the study progressed was that cultural difference manifest in plans and policies alone might not account for the severity of dissonance experienced. While a much greater amount of pre-migration information on education systems was clearly required, a further dimension relating to this information emerged. Simple explanations of culturally based differences in education system policies and practice would not prepare prospective migrants for the attitudinal difficulties which were encountered at school and classroom level in this study.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two suggested that schools act as transmitters of culture and as agents in this matter for the wider society. This transmission may occur to some extent through the curriculum, but is also inherent in the attitudes of the staff members as they relate to the client population.

The literature also suggested that society's expectations of schools might be conflicting (Wilcox, 1982). On one hand, the principles of equity and access are proclaimed, while on the other hand schools are expected to stratify their students according to the socio-cultural hierarchies which prevail in that society. Educational systems have, historically, been based upon hierarchical structures (Owens, 1987). While individual members of staff do make positive contributions to the well-being of students, as is shown in data collected for this study and in research into the field of pastoral care (Best, 1988; Crane, 1991; Dynan, 1980; Macdonald, 1994; Watson, 1990), these studies also discuss the effects of basic hierarchical structures in schools. Given the evidence in these studies, the possibility exists that schools at organisational levels tend, in reality, to focus upon hierarchical structures. If this is so then some of the findings of this study are more easily explained in terms of the difficulty schools might have in adapting to changing social and cultural environments (Levin & Riffel, 1997).

Cultural differences relate to comparisons between respective cultures. These cultures are, however, the product of human decisions regarding what is important, what is valued and who are important in social hierarchies (Furnham & Bocher, 1986; Haferkamp, 1989). The place assigned to migrant groups within the social strata of any given society is therefore pertinent to a study such as the present

research. In the United Kingdom, for example, tradition and history have high cultural values. At the height of the British Empire, socio-cultural hierarchies in the United Kingdom tended to rely largely upon the status of the family a child is born into as a deciding factor in the highest social status assigned to that child.

In Australia, there has been a history of migration since the founding of the colonies. The early, simply structured, society of the colonies was probably stratified on a British model. Status at birth would define the higher echelons of that society, followed by degrees of wealth, through free settler status, down to convict status and concluding with “the other—that which we are not” (Lotman, 1990), in this case the Aboriginal peoples.

Through time, social position in one stratum of Anglo-Australian society might be determined by length of tenure in Australia, so that those who had arrived first were seen as more important socially than new migrant arrivals. Exceptions to this rule would occur, for example when length of tenure was over-ridden by high birth status.

Migrants who were not born into the aristocracy, from this viewpoint, were assigned a position near to the bottom of the socio-cultural hierarchy in the Australian colonies, and were expected to work to assimilate into higher echelons. This expectation of colonial society may have been thought to be implicit, for early migrants from the United Kingdom, in schemes to assist migration. At this stage of Australia’s development, most migrants would have come from the United Kingdom and would have come to provide labour and population, in the ‘populate or perish’ scenario. The allocation of low social status to migrants may, like other relics of colonial policy, have persisted and become an ingrained part of Australian culture. Through time, the reasoning which directed these social placements would fade to the extent that they simply became ‘the way we do things here’ and non-negotiable in cultural terms.

Migrants, however, have social status in their own country’s social hierarchy and derive their sense of personal identity from that status. If this social status of early migrants was low, then difficulties inherent in being allocated a low status in the host country might be acceptable, in that their concept of self-identity was not disturbed.

The nature of the migrant intake to Australia has changed significantly over past decades. As demands for professional qualifications, for skills and for financial resources, increase when migrant intake is decided upon, so the socio-cultural status of some migrant groups in their country of origin changes. The migrant's sense of self-identification hinges upon this culturally conferred status. Migrants might still accept a low social status in the host country if they have no command of that country's language, or if ethnically they are a diverse group from the main populations. The differential factors then become not socio-hierarchical status, but the language of use in the country of origin and in the host country and the ethnic background of migrants.

Otherwise, if migrants are fluent in the language of the host country and have enjoyed a relatively high social status in their country of origin, their self-identity and feelings of self-worth will reflect this status. If there is no explicit information to inform them that the social hierarchies in the host country cannot or will not accommodate them at this level, then their perceptions of self-identity are challenged. Expectations will be completely mismatched and cultural dissonance will surely occur.

13.2 Implications for the Present Study

This explanation, if it is accepted, would explain the phenomena encountered in this research. The school organisations which the children entered would accept, without conscious thought, society's attribution of low social status for these migrant children. Their needs might be perceived, but their status would preclude any resource allocation towards meeting these needs (Gordon, 1992). Only when staff members had experience of migration or travel would the difficulty be understood within the school organisation. For the families from the United Kingdom, this reluctance to address obvious needs would be unexpected and incomprehensible, since the perceptions of their host country, in terms of their new, perceived, low social status as migrants, are not explicit.

Resistance to assignment to the lower echelons of society would complicate the families' problems and further disorientate them. Not only were their children's

educational qualifications not accepted, but also their own qualifications and potential contribution to society were seen to be under-valued. Migrant families, in this scenario, experience rejection and the host country sees their aspirations to immediate acceptance at higher levels of socio-cultural hierarchies as a threat.

If length of tenure in Australia is the only reason to expect higher social status, when wealth and educational status are not present, then the threat to hierarchical position posed by well-educated, wealthy migrant families becomes critical and reaction will occur. The present debate on migrant intake, centred supposedly upon racism, may be no more than a protesting response to threatened displacement from a hitherto secure hierarchical position by a sector of Australian society.

Summary The suggestion is made that two factors are operative, when explanations are sought to account for the findings of the study. The first relates to long-standing, ingrained, cultural attitudes in Australian society. The second relates to the progressively changing criteria for the acceptance of migrants into that society.

As these criteria demand, for economic reasons, higher qualifications and financial security in the migrant population, so embedded attitudes which consign these migrants to the lower socio-hierarchical strata of society will be more strongly resisted by the incoming population.

Migrants who are qualified in these ways, especially those who speak English, are not likely to accept placement at the bottom of such hierarchies. At education system level, such migrants could be presumed to have high aspirations for their children and an academic orientation. Their expectations of schools and education systems will be high and their reaction to less-than-satisfactory provision will be predictable.

If this resistance is successful, and migrants move rapidly into the higher echelons of society to which their professional skills or financial circumstances entitle them, then hierarchical displacement in the established populations will occur. This in turn will be resisted, if migrants' rights to anything but low initial status still form part of ingrained cultural attitudes.

The scene for cultural dissonance and potential societal disruption will be set. In terms of the cultural theory of Lotman (1990), the boundaries between cultural spheres will be shifting and these shifts require to be accommodated.

13.3 Recommendations on Wider Issues of Cultural Dissonance

The discord and disharmony associated with cultural dissonance holds no benefits either for migrant families or for the society of the host country. Mismatched expectations require to be addressed and corrected.

At the level of Australian culture, the present questioning and debate provides an ideal opportunity to examine premises which may have held good in early colonial times, but which may have been outgrown and outworn. If present day migrants are required, for reasons of the economic well-being of society, to be highly qualified and skilled, to pay emigration expenses and to have the means to settle in this country with minimal assistance, then the question of socio-cultural hierarchies and migrant status within these must be addressed.

Even in the category of migrant family reunion, if the original family members were skilled and well provided for, there is no reason to suppose that incoming family members would accept low, social, migrant status. The only group left who might accept disadvantage in this way would be those who enter as refugees.

The debate would entail an honest appraisal, as part of ongoing cultural review, as to how socio-cultural hierarchies in Australia should be stratified. There is no doubt that such an appraisal would cause discomfort. Whether the social or political will exists to engender such a debate is questionable.

The alternative strategies may hold as little appeal. The economic advantages of having a skilled and wealthy sector of migrant intake might have to be foregone. This in turn would expose the shortages in skills brought about by political neglect of education systems.

In the long term, population increase through migrant intakes may be necessary, but some of the dissonance would be alleviated if skill levels were increased in the

existing populations. In this way, the socio-hierarchical status of existing Australians could be maintained even when migrant intakes were raised.

One point seems evident. Length of tenure in Australia for the Anglo-Australian population, including the fact of being born in this country, is no longer, of itself, justification for claiming higher socio-hierarchical status. A highly skilled migrant intake comes with a price attached. Whether Australian society is prepared to pay that price will be shown as debate widens and changes are introduced.

In the shorter term, however, the thesis has demonstrated the extent of distress and bewilderment, along with the depths of frustration experienced by United Kingdom migrant families as their children make the transition from one educational setting to another. These experiences were usefully conceptualised in this study as manifestations of cultural dissonance. The causes of dissonance, such as difficulties in appropriate placement of the children in schools, could have been mitigated by effective communication at education system and school levels, a sympathetic reception in schools and a greater attention to the developmental stage of the children in individual classrooms.

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Appendix 1

The Questions Which Directed the Initial Interviews

Interview number

Migrant category

1. First name(s) of parent(s) taking part in the interview.
2. Year of immigration to Western Australia?
3. Country of origin?
4. Number and ages of dependent children who accompanied you to Western Australia?
5. Did your family encounter any problems, related to emigration, in your country of origin in the period leading up to emigration?
For example: Delays in obtaining permission to emigrate.
6. What year of education were your children in within your country of origin?
When you came to Western Australia, what year were they placed in?
7. Which type of school did your children attend in your country of origin?
8. Were you able to bring records of your children's school achievements in the United Kingdom with you to Western Australia?
9. Did you receive information regarding the education systems in Western Australia prior to emigration?
For example: Did you know that charges are made in the State education system for books and materials?
10. If your answer to Question 9 was yes, who gave you this information?
11. When you arrived in Western Australia, where did you locate information about which school or education centre your child could attend?

12. How soon after arrival did you have to make choices about your children's schooling?
13. When your child started to attend that school or centre, did a staff representative provide you with information to help you make decisions on courses for your child?
14. Do you believe that the school organisation used any information you were able to provide to place your child in the best possible course?
For example: Did they take into account the class your child was in within the United Kingdom and the standard of work being done?
15. Did a representative of the school or centre explain the terminology used to describe courses in the school?
For example: The differences between English and English Literature in Secondary courses?
16. In comparison with your country of origin, did you or your children find differences in the courses and subjects taught in the school in Western Australia?
17. Were all other aspects of your children's school or schools in Western Australia similar to your children's school or schools in the United Kingdom?
If not: What seemed familiar? What seemed different?
18. Were you informed upon arrival at the school about methods of assessing your child's performance in the school?
For example: How performance is reported to parents at Primary level. How Tertiary Admission Scores are arrived at Secondary level?
19. Were there any support services available through the school to help you and your child in the process of settling into the school community?
For example: Peer Group Support; introduction to Parents and Citizens Group; clear identification of staff who could be approached if difficulties arose?
20. Do you believe that your children found the process of settling into their new school in Western Australia trouble free?

21. If the answer to Question 20 was No: what were the main causes of difficulty?
For example: the school year in which your children were placed; emotional upsets caused by missing friends and family in your country of origin; language difficulties in understanding Australian word usage and in being understood because of accent or words used in the United Kingdom?
22. Do you believe that your child will receive a better education in Western Australia than would have been possible in your country of origin?
23. Do you believe that eventual outcomes for your child, in terms of employment and lifestyle, will be better in Western Australia than in your country of origin?
24. Is there any further information that you believe would help me to understand the issues you experienced during the transition and induction of your child into Western Australian education systems?

Questions Which Were Used to Direct the Focus Family Interviews.

Focus Family Number.

Major issues identified:

1. The above issue or issues seemed, in your earlier response, to have been particularly important to your family. Can you tell me again why this was so?
2. Can you think of any ways in which changes could be made so that dealing with the issue or issues we have talked about could be made easier for new migrants from the United Kingdom?
3. This is a list of other issues which the study has shown were of concern to migrant families from the United Kingdom. Did any of these issues affect your family? Do you have any views on these issues?
4. Is there any other information which you believe would help my understanding of your family's case?

Appendix 2

Case Histories of the Families in the Study.

In this appendix, the case histories of the families, as they relate to educational and cultural transition, are summarised in the order that the information was received. Factors, other than those which directly relate to this area of migration, are only included when their effects influenced outcomes for transition. Where the family respondent was the mother, her name is used first in the case history. Where the family took part in Focus family interviews, the story is told in the words of the respondent.

Family 1

Mum and Dad came from England in 1990. They brought with them four children boys aged 10, 7, and girl twins aged five. They emigrated under the family reunion category. In the United Kingdom the children had been finishing Primary school Years 7, 4 and 1. When they came to Western Australia they were placed in Years 6, 3 and 1. Information on schools in Western Australia was provided by relatives.

The children started in school ten days after the family arrived. Difficulties included the placement of the children by age, especially the oldest child who had been expecting to start in Secondary school in the United Kingdom and was placed in Year 6 in Western Australia, and teasing because of their English accent.

Family 2

Mum and Dad came from England in 1989. They brought with them two boys aged 7 and 5. The family was given permission to emigrate because of the father's trade skills. In the United Kingdom the boys were in Primary 3 and in Primary 1. They received no detailed information about education systems in Western Australia and located a school by using the Urban Street Directory.

The older boy started in school straight away but the younger boy had to go back to pre-school. The first school they attended was not considered by the parents to be

suitable and after six weeks a decision was taken to change schools. By this time the parents had some knowledge of the system and made sure that they had an interview with the Principal before starting the boys in their new school. Difficulties encountered included the lack of information, a younger son who was “bored stiff” with pre-school work, the rate of teacher change in the schools and differences in word usage.

Family 3

Mum came from the Scotland the first instance in 1981 and brought with her a daughter aged 8. At this time she was given permission to emigrate through a special scheme designed to help single-parent families. The scheme was based at Fairbridge at Pinjarra, south of Perth. As part of this program, Mum was required to agree to her daughter attending a specified school for the first six months of their stay. Mum was taken to Perth two days after their arrival to look for work and the little girl was left at this school. Mum obtained work in Perth, but her daughter had to board at Fairbridge to comply with the schooling agreement, so they could only see each other at weekends. The daughter had been in Primary 4 in Scotland and was placed in Year 3 in Western Australia.

The scheme was in its last months so this situation ended earlier than the six month period and the daughter moved to school in Perth. There she encountered a teacher who made fun of her in front of the class because of her accent.

After two years, the pair travelled in Australia and then returned to Scotland. Settling down in that country again proved difficult and housing costs were high, so Mum and daughter took the decision to return to Western Australia in 1986.

By this time the daughter had moved into Secondary school and transferred to Year 9 in Perth. Difficulties included the early period of separation and teasing over accent and word usage. Initial placement in a lower year in primary school was not a problem as the period of revising work helped with mathematics skills. Problems were encountered on arriving for the second time due to differences in the secondary curriculum, particularly in science and in the style of written English.

Family 4

Mum and Dad came from England in 1991. They brought with them two children, a son aged 12 years and a daughter aged 10 years. They were given permission to emigrate because the father was nominated by his employer, one of the Perth Universities. They were given information about Western Australian education systems by a friend of Mum's who had taught in Western Australia for a year.

In England the children were in Secondary 1 and Primary 6. In Western Australia they were placed in Year 8 and in a Year5/6 class. The family arrived during the July holidays so they had one week in which to make choices about schools.

Major difficulties faced included coming to terms with the zoning system which directs children to specific schools. The son required to be part of an academic extension program and the school which the parents approved of was outside their zone. After enrolling the boy in the school for their area, the parents were very disappointed with the ethos of that school. Through Mum's persistence the school of their choice eventually agreed to make room for their son. The placement of their daughter also caused difficulties. In the first school she attended, the level of work was unsuitable and the school ethos also was problematic to the parents. The second school was more academically orientated but the work level was still below that which had been experienced in the United Kingdom. Eventually the daughter was moved into the Year 6 class.

Although she was a year younger than most of her peers, this did not cause difficulties for her. The son is now in University in Perth and the daughter, aged fourteen and a half is studying in Year 11 and intends to proceed to University.

Family 5

Mum and Dad came to Western Australia in 1993 from England. They brought with them one boy who was not of school age, but who was preparing to enter full time nursery school in the United Kingdom. The family emigrated under the family reunion scheme. They had no information about Western Australian education systems and assumed that the systems would mirror provision in the United

Kingdom.

Because of their son's age there was no educational provision such as nursery school available. The only service was a parent-run playgroup which took place two mornings each week and meant that Mum had to accompany the child. Because a new baby has joined the family, even this provision is difficult to access now. Mum believed that her son was ready to learn to socialise and is bored at home, but still has to wait until he is five before any form of schooling will be available.

Family 6

Mum came to Australia in 1990 from England. She brought with her one daughter, aged nearly four. The daughter had been in nursery school in England since she was two and a half. The family had no access to information about education systems in Western Australia prior to leaving the United Kingdom but had a friend in Perth who is a primary school teacher. They were given information by this friend but some of the information was incorrect.

Two weeks after arrival, Mum went to the local Primary school to make enquiries. She was interviewed by the school officer, who showed no interest in the fact that the daughter had been in nursery education for eighteen months. Mum was told in November that there might be a place for her daughter in pre-primary in the following January, after places had been allocated to the older children. The impression was given that, as a December baby, she would be too young to start in pre-primary in the year she turned five, despite having been in that type of program already for a year and a half in England.

Due to Mum's persistence, the school found a place for her daughter in the January. She had already covered all the work which was being done, to the extent that, in the view of the pre-primary teacher, she was ready for Year 1 work. However, because of her December birthday, her transition to Year 1 in 1992 depended upon her satisfying the school of her skills level. She was able to do so with no difficulty. The daughter is now in the top five places in her class in Year 5, despite being almost a year younger than her classmates.

Apart from the difficulties experienced in getting her daughter into schooling, Mum also encountered a lack of welcome when she attended the P and C Group in the school. "No-one spoke to me until the third meeting I attended." Having moved house and schools, Mum is now happy with her daughter's progress and found the second school much more helpful "perhaps we were just unlucky first time round?"

Family 7

Mum and Dad came to Western Australia in 1989. They brought with them three children, two boys aged eight and seven and a daughter aged three. They obtained "some basic information" from the Emigration Department and from friends who had previously lived in Australia. The boys were in Primary 4 and Primary 3 in the United Kingdom. In Western Australia, the family arrived at the beginning of the July holidays. They located the nearest primary school and approached the staff.

The school took the records the family brought and told the parents that their children would be placed in the appropriate class.

The older son experienced difficulties with the writing format he was expected to use in Western Australia. In addition, he was greeted by his new teacher with the words "You're the x migrant this class has had this year." The writing problems made him very unhappy and the parents complained. There was no response to the complaint so the boys were taken from that school and placed in another.

Family 8 (Focus Family 2)

Mum and Dad came from England in 1993. They brought five children to Western Australia, a son aged sixteen, a daughter aged six, twin daughters aged five and the youngest daughter aged between three and four. The family emigrated under the auspices of the family reunion program and obtained information about education systems in Western Australia from family members. The children were placed in school in Western Australia within two weeks of arriving in the State.

Mum's Story:

In the United Kingdom the twins had been in half-time nursery school, in reception

class for one year and had spent six weeks in Primary 1. We had no idea that there would be no full-time schooling here for them, only part-time pre-primary (and all the places were full anyway). We arrived in October and we didn't find a place for them until the next February.

One twin really dropped back in work. She is the more outgoing and she had been halfway through Level Two reading in the UK. The other twin had finished Level Two.

When they started school here they were given books with pictures and no words. The first twin just laughed at the whole thing but her sister was embarrassed. She used to come home and say, "Mum, look at what they've given us."

I went to see the teacher and "bullied" her into at least giving them books with some reading. I then had a meeting with the Principal. There was me, two Deputies and the Principal. The message was "our system is our system." He wouldn't allow her to read books above Level Two. "Primary One don't read above Level Two".

He agreed to put her into a 1/2 year split class to bring her up nearer her work standards (they tested her and found that she was reading at a level of an 8 to 9 year old out here). Still they would only give her books with a few words. She was supposed to "read in depth" at this level. She ended up reading library books I brought for her and her older sister's school readers. I can't understand it. You would think they would want to encourage children to move ahead. In the UK she was free to choose any book she wanted from the school library. I wondered what on earth I had done bringing them here. I brought all their reports and schoolwork but the school didn't pay the slightest attention to them.

We had the same problem with our older daughter. She was well ahead in reading. She missed nearly all of Primary 2 because of the change over. She was in the beginning of Primary 2 in the U.K. and was placed right at the end of the year here. "I thought it was pretty weird" (daughter). No problems with English but she had missed a lot of maths work. She kept telling me that she was having problems but the school didn't seem to notice. I went to see the teacher (who was Scottish!) and she gave her extra work to do at home, so we worked to cover the areas that she had

missed.

My son arrived right at the end of Year 10. He had to make choices right away about subjects he would take in Year 11. He knew nothing about the courses and no one offered him any help. He made some major mistakes in his choices. He should have taken chemistry. When he applied to do Physics at UWA he found he wouldn't be accepted because he had not done a chemistry unit out here. He's at Curtin now doing Physics. He has always been bright and might have been looking at Oxford or Cambridge in the UK. He made friends with Australian kids at school—relaxed and took things very easily and ended up with a much lower TEE score than he should have obtained. I think he's got the message about work now though.

I was a School Governor in the UK (LEA primary school). There were twelve Governors, business people, the local vicar, teacher reps. and three parent reps who were voted in. We were able to hire the Ed Dept Rep. as our secretary to help us keep to guidelines. Schools have their own budget, divided into areas and we could exercise control on how this was spent. So much went on staffing, but because the staff were happy and didn't use up much sick leave we were able to pay for an extra teacher. There were problems with vandalism and we were able to pay to have a security system installed. We hired all the staff from the Head Teacher down, except for the school cleaners who were on contract. Out here the school council has nothing like those powers. The P and C is very clique ridden. I was made Vice-Chairman before I went back to University but I used to find that decisions were taken without any consultation—for example they chose a very expensive school uniform. I found most of them very unfriendly and snobbish. The teachers are fantastic though, but they have to stick to the rules—no freedom of choice—they are powerless to make changes.

There were no problems with accent. My husband had lived in South Australia for twenty years before coming back to the UK where I met him. He knew all the Australian phrases. An English accent isn't an issue up here anyway because there are so many people from England. We came here to be Australians and most of the people living around here are from the UK.

Family 9

Mum and Dad came from Scotland in 1988. They brought with them two children, a son aged five and a daughter aged three and a half. The son had been in Primary 1 in Scotland. They received no information prior to emigration about the education systems in Western Australia.

On arrival in Western Australia, friends and family gave advice about schools. Their son was taken to school in Western Australia within two weeks of the family's arrival. At this stage the parents realised that their son would have to return to pre-primary schooling (two mornings and two afternoons a week). "This upset everyone's routine." Although the family have been in Western Australia for some years, Mum still feels that she lacks information especially about the State secondary education system. The family returned to Scotland two months after answering the request for help in this study.

Family 10

Mum and Dad arrived in Western Australia in 1991 from Scotland. They were accompanied by two children, a daughter aged six and a son aged three. In Scotland their daughter had been in Primary 1 and was due to start in Primary 2. Their son had been in pre-primary provision. The family was given literature by the Emigration Department, but it was of general interest and not very helpful. Family and friends in Western Australia gave information on schooling. Because the family arrived at summer holiday time they had two months to wait before taking the children to school. Mum simply enrolled her daughter at the local school and turned up with her at the start of the school year to start in Year 2. No one discussed her prior education or looked at the work which Mum had brought with her. Mum informed the teacher that the family had just come from Scotland in case there were any problems.

The son had no educational provision available to him because of his age other than Mother and Toddler groups. He was bored with the type of activity offered and had to wait for three years to get into school.

The daughter had a Scottish accent and experienced teasing which upset her. She

also had difficulty in understanding what the teachers were saying. Spelling posed problems with words which would be correct in Scotland being marked wrong in Western Australia. The little girl became very quiet and withdrawn in class because she did not want to answer questions in case her accent was laughed at. Mum feels that there was a lack of teacher understanding about the problems immigrant children face.

Family 11

The family came from Scotland in 1995. Dad worked for an oil and gas company, so the family were sponsored by the company to come to Western Australia. The family only had six weeks in which to plan their move. They brought with them two children, a daughter who had just started in Secondary school and a son who was in Primary school. Mum looked for information on education but could find none. She contacted the Education Department of Western Australia on arrival but got little help. In fact, in her view, no one would have known if they had decided not to put the children into school at all.

Difficulties encountered were made worse by the lack of information. The daughter was placed in Year 7, a return to primary school. At the son's first school a clerical error led to him being rejected as having the wrong type of visa. This mistake led to panic for the parents and frantic 'phone calls to the Department of Immigration, before the mistake was corrected. The children encountered a degree of teasing because they were English and found it difficult to make new friends...although these difficulties have since been overcome. Mum states that anything they now know about the education system has been found out by their own efforts. Their daughter is now approaching TEE and "We have only just had this examination explained to us."

Family 12

Mum and Dad came from Great Britain in 1995. They were accompanied by two sons aged fourteen and twelve. The elder son was in Secondary school and the younger son was in Primary 6 in the United Kingdom. The boys were attending Local Authority schools in their country of origin. Information about education in

Western Australia was provided by family and friends.

On arrival in Western Australia the boys were enrolled in a major Independent school run by the Catholic Education Authority. The parents are very happy with this transition and with the ethos of the new school. The only difficulty encountered related to placement of the younger son who had just completed Primary 6 in the United Kingdom. Because the family emigrated in July, he was placed in Year 7, but in the middle of that school year, so that he had to adjust to demands for more mature work and this was difficult for a time. Despite this difficulty, Mum was more than pleased with the outcomes of the school transition for her sons.

Family 13

Mum and Dad came from England in 1994. They brought with them two girls aged eleven and nine. The girls were in Primary 7 and Primary 5 in England. Information about education in Western Australia was provided by an Aunt who had lived in the State for twenty five years. Also, Mum and Dad had lived in Sydney, Australia before they had the children. They had returned to the UK in 1983.

The family set aside three weeks after arrival to get to know their new surroundings and went round to look at local schools. The schools were not very helpful. "it just seemed that the girls had to go to school and that was that." This was their first change of schools and they could have benefited from more support. The children found that their accent and word usage caused problems for them and they badly missed their friends from home.

Family 14

Dad and Mum came from England in 1987. They brought with them two sons. This was their second attempt at migration. In 1981, they came to Western Australia when their oldest son was four. They were nominated by the father's employer, so had no family in Western Australia. They were lonely and homesick, to the extent that they returned to England in 1984.

Settling back in England was not easy and Mum was especially worried about fall-out from the Chernobyl disaster. Their initial move had been partly brought about by

the proximity of an RAF base near to their home at the time of the Cold War. Australia seemed a much safer place to bring up children.

In 1987 they made a decision to return to Australia, moving first to Tasmania, which proved not to suit their younger son's asthma condition. They moved back to Western Australia five months later. Their older son had actually started school during their first stay in Western Australia, so they re-enrolled the boys in that school. The younger son had been unwell during Year 1, so the parents were happy that he repeated this year in Western Australia. The older boy is now enrolled in UWA studying engineering and the younger son is successfully completing Year 11 and intends to go to University also. The parents feel that their social position in the United Kingdom might have hindered the boys and that their academic success here makes all the difficulties surrounding emigration worth while.

Family 15

Dad and Mum came to Western Australia in 1993 and brought with them a daughter aged four. They received no information about education in Western Australia while in the United Kingdom and would have welcomed having a list of schools to write to. Family and friends provided information in Western Australia. Their daughter started school here within a week of arrival as there was only one place left in the pre-primary group. Basically, because she had already been in pre-primary in England, she had to repeat this work in Western Australia. She is now doing very well in school and has gained self-confidence from her experiences, though she missed friends back home. In his response, Dad stated that he still feels that, as parents, they lack information about what is happening in the school.

Family 16

Mum and Dad arrived in Western Australia in 1988. They were accompanied by their five-year-old daughter who had been in Primary 1 in England. They brought with them a referral from the Headmistress of their daughter's school, which Mum had specially requested. They found out about schools in Western Australia through their Real Estate agent. Because the daughter had only spent two terms in her school in England, Mum felt that it was easy for her to adapt to school in Western Australia.

The school in which she was enrolled was in an area where there are a large number of migrant families from the United Kingdom so this helped.

Family 17

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1990, bringing with them three children, two girls and one boy. The girls were aged twelve and ten and the boy was aged seven. The older girl had started in Secondary school in England, while the two younger children were in Primaries 6 and 4. The children started in school in Western Australia within three weeks of arrival.

The family had no information about education systems in Western Australia and got no help with decisions. The older girl was placed in Year 7, which was a backwards step from Secondary school. The parents found out later that, since she was a bright student, they could have applied to have her placed in a Secondary school, but no-one gave them this information. Their son, aged seven, was placed in a Year3/4 split class. He sat with the Year 4s, but was given Year 3 work, and was left sitting alone when the Year 4s went elsewhere. He had no-one to ask about new routines and was upset until Mum went to see the teacher. Nine months after the transition, the younger daughter became very upset when written work was torn up by the teacher and she was asked where she came from. Mum went to see this teacher too.

Family 18

Mum and Dad came to Western Australia in 1994. With them came two children, a son aged eight and a daughter aged six. They received “not very much” information on education in Western Australia while in the United Kingdom and had help from family and friends in Western Australia. The children had been in Primary 3 and Primary 1 in England.

In Western Australia, the school Principal agreed with the parents that their son should repeat Year 3, to help with some learning problems which had developed.

Their daughter was placed in Year 2, because of her age. Because the family emigrated in June, this meant that she joined this group in the middle of the Western Australian school year and so missed half of the year’s work, which made for initial

difficulties. Mum believes that the children have become more self-confident and self-reliant as a result of emigration. The daughter has now been placed in a split Year 4/5 class because of her improved grades and is coping really well.

Mum commented that she received no explanations about the system here from the school, but persisted with questions until she was satisfied. She also insisted on meeting the children's teachers with them before they started in the school and believes that this helped the children.

Family 19

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1990 from England. They brought three children to Western Australia, the eldest son having been in Primary 1 in England. For the first three months they travelled a lot so did not start this child in school. Mum asked the school in England for the child's school records but was told she was not entitled to see them. She found it very hard to find out about education in Western Australia and felt that no help was given in this task.

Difficulties arose over placement of the boy in his school in Western Australia. Because of his age he was put back into pre-primary and hated this, after having spent eighteen months in "proper school" in England. He was teased because he spoke differently than the other children and found the Australian accent hard to understand. He was unhappy in Year 1 because the way that work was done was very different from teaching methods in England, particularly the style of writing used here. Mum feels that he is fine now that he has got over the initial differences and has settled into school.

Family 20

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1990 from England. They brought with them two boys aged seven and four who were in Primary 3 and Primary 1 in England. The family's emigration was delayed for over a year because their original application papers were lost. Information about education systems in Western Australia was provided by family and friends already living here. The family arrived during the Easter holidays, so the children started school two weeks after their arrival.

The elder child was placed in Year 2, a year lower than the stage in England. The younger child went from full-time Primary school, back to mornings only pre-primary in Western Australia. The older child was placed in a special education class because phonics had not been taught in his school in England. He was also required to completely change his handwriting style to conform to what the Western Australian school required. Now in Year 8, he still struggles with Victorian Cursive Script. He was embarrassed by being placed in the special group and both children were teased and called “poms” because of their accent. Mum believes that the move to High School has helped her older son because all the children are new to that school.

Family 21

Mum and Dad came from England in 1994, bringing with them two children, a girl aged 14 and a boy aged 12. The girl was in Year 10 in a Grammar school in the area of England in which the family lived, while the boy was in the Middle school in Year 7. The family received quite detailed information from the Emigration department, which had a section on school charges and also had help from family and friends in Western Australia.

The children were placed in schools as soon as the family arrived, because it was nearly the end of the final term before summer holidays. The daughter found a place in a local Independent school, which was welcoming and helpful. She was placed in the higher stream in that school wherever this was possible. Mum had brought leaving Reports and examples of schoolwork with her to help with the transition.

The son could not be accepted into the Independent school because there were no vacancies in his class. He was enrolled in the local State primary school. According to Mum, in contrast to their daughter’s reception, no one in the primary school showed the least interest in the boy’s educational history and no one made any effort to explain the system to the parents. Both children found that they had covered much of the work being set for them at their school in England and so found school easy and a bit boring. The daughter was at least two years ahead in French studies but could not be placed in a more appropriate class. The son was not offered French, although he had studied it for two years in the United Kingdom. Both children are

now in the Independent High School, which Mum believes offers a good all-round education, but which has lower academic expectations than the excellent school the children attended in the United Kingdom

Family 22 (Focus Family 5)

Mum and Dad came from Northern Ireland in 1991. Three children accompanied their parents. The children were aged 9, 8 and 3. The two older children were in Primaries 4 and 3 in Northern Ireland. Relatives in Western Australia arranged for the children's enrolment in a primary school run by the Catholic Education Authority. The Principal of the school was helpful.

While the children's enrolment in the school was trouble free, the level of work was found to be too easy and boring. There were difficulties over the children's accent and word usage. Mum felt that there was a lack of support and help, both in relation to the school and in general terms. She herself was homesick and distressed so that she perhaps coped less well than she would have liked. She believes the children needed support from her which she was unable to offer at that time.

Mum and Dad's story:

(Mum) In Northern Ireland the children go into reception class when they are four and into Grade 1 when they are five. My nephew just turned four and he started in school in September.

(Dad) They still have an 11+ examination when the child is eleven and from that either go to Grammar or to an ordinary Secondary school. They didn't move to Comprehensive schools. The Catholic Education system is funded like the Government system but with separate schools. There are a very few what they call Integrated Schools which take Protestant and Catholic children.

I was elected to the Board of our children's Primary school (we had sent them to this Government school because we believed they should have a chance to mix with all the children and not just Catholic children) because we were working to make it the first integrated school in our area. There are strong financial incentives for schools to integrate, but in our case the Board voted against the move. I was very disappointed,

but surprised that the go-ahead headmaster didn't speak out for integration. I asked him why and he told me that he had been told that if he did he would never work in another Protestant school. We heard since that he is teaching in Japan so I suppose they got to him in the end.

(Mum) The education in Northern Ireland is academically stronger than in WA. They have the basic spelling and tables drilled into them from a very young age. I think this stands them in good stead as they move up the schools.

(Dad) There is greater breadth of courses in WA—I like the scope of this. Our children are doing very well. Our oldest girl is in Year 9 now and was dux of her primary school. Our son is doing well now too in Year 8.

(Mum) We were lucky in the school that we sent them to when we got here. Each of them was allocated a “buddy” to help them till they got used to things. My sister was out here before we came and she arranged admission for us. I sent her a package with examples of their work and we had no problem getting them a place. I sent first communion documents and things like that. There was an American nun in charge and she was very sympathetic. It was only later that I learned that some people have real difficulty in finding places in Catholic schools here.

Sport is very important out here, much more so than in Northern Ireland. It's also quite expensive to get them into sports clubs but neither of our older children has any particular sport they are interested in and I think this is a disadvantage to them when it comes to making friends widely. Everything is very organised out here—it makes me laugh, they have all these sports organised for them and they won't walk the length of themselves. Not that we would be happy with them walking about here anyway.

The culture here is very materialistic and I notice my son is learning this. He would like us to have two cars and he doesn't like me catching the bus to go out.

I think the children kept a lot to themselves about being teased about their accent. Our daughter settled easily. She is outgoing, but our son found it much more difficult. He is much more sensitive and I think the child's personality makes a great

difference in a move like this. I felt very much that when I spoke I was different. People dropped back at my accent. I'm always asked where I have come from. I felt very much an outsider. Most of the people that I am friendly with were migrants or have come from Inter-State. One parent sticks in my mind. She was from Melbourne and she was very helpful because she had found the move to WA difficult. As the children became more settled and made friends we got to know their friend's parents, but it took about a year.

(Dad) We came out here because we were really needing a change as a family. We were in a comfortable rut where we were. We needed to get out of our comfort zone.

(Mum) I couldn't come to terms with what I'd done in coming here. My mother was widowed when I was eleven and I'd had a big hand in bringing up my younger brothers and sisters, especially my younger brother. Even after I was married I was still really involved with the extended family and I think you have to focus on your own close family. But I felt really guilty at leaving them. My younger brother got married just before we came and I think that helped me to move.

I was very homesick, to the extent that I probably couldn't give the children the support they may have needed at first. I desperately missed close female company. My sister was settled here and very pro WA. Her husband was less sure so I think that made her even more anxious to convince him. She was not prepared to acknowledge my unhappiness—kept pointing out the advantages, so I wasn't really close to her. I expected my husband to come home at night from work and fill all the gaps in my life. I had worked all my life too, and now I had so much time to fill and nothing to fill it with.

I fantasised about my home, but then I went back one Christmas and that really helped. I saw things as they were and they were not as I had imagined. Anyway, my Mum is coming out this year to spend Christmas with us. I don't know what she thinks she is coming to because before I had seen "Muriel's Wedding" I told her she and my aunties should see it because it was about Australia. Well, when I saw it myself I could see why these poor seventy year old women had been shocked about where we were living—I think they think we are in Porpoise Spit!

(Dad) Her Mum is going to be very pleased when she sees how we live here—she will like it.

Family 23

Mum and Dad had migrated initially to Sydney, where their two children were born. They returned to the United Kingdom when the children were two and five months old. The family re-migrated ten years later and came to Western Australia. At this time the children were in Secondary 1 and Primary 6 in England.

While the earlier stay in NSW had given them information about Australia, they were unaware of the fact that charges were made in the State education system. The children were placed in schools in Western Australia within four weeks of the family's arrival. Their son was placed in Year 7, despite the fact that he had started on his secondary courses. He became "a little ambivalent about school at this stage."

However, when he returned to secondary work in High School he was much happier and the children are doing well now.

Family 24

Mum and Dad emigrated from England in 1987. They were accompanied by three children, aged 6, 5 and 2. Mum had hoped to bring school records with her, but could not access these. The oldest child, a girl, was in Primary 2 in the United Kingdom, while the second child, a boy, was in Primary 1. A brother in Western Australia provided educational information to the family and the children started in school here within days of their arrival.

The Principal was very helpful. Because the boy was a bright student while the girl was seen as average, both children could have gone into Year 2 in Western Australia. The Principal, however, suggested that they both repeat a year so that they were with their correct age group. For these children, this turned out to be a good decision.

The major difficulties encountered concerned curriculum. The daughter was considered to be a very neat writer in England, but because the style used is different here, she had to learn to write all over again, which caused her some anxiety. Mum

was also concerned that spelling was taught in a different way with spelling mistakes going uncorrected. Sports activities (swimming) brought similar difficulties where style was considered incorrect and had to be changed.

Family 25

Mum came to Australia in 1992. She brought with her a son aged 7, who had been in a State-run Roman Catholic school in the United Kingdom, in Primary 4. Mum attempted to gain information about schooling in Western Australia prior to emigrating but found this very difficult. She had friend in Western Australia whose son was enrolled in a State primary school, so the decision was made to enrol her son in the same school so that he would have initial support. As it happened, the boys did not have common interests and so the hoped-for support did not occur.

Soon after arrival in Perth, Mum took work in Kalgoorlie and moved to the Goldfields. The setting there was very different from anything that they had been used to and they quickly returned to Perth. At this point Mum decided that she should enrol her son in a school within the Independent sector governed by the Catholic Education Authority.

Her major difficulties arose from this point. In her words “the Catholic Education system seemed impenetrable”. No vacancies existed and the nearest Catholic primary school had a waiting list. In fact every Catholic school within the area had a waiting list. Her son returned to his original State school.

As the next school year approached and with it her son’s entry to Year 6 and the run-up to confirmation year, Mum was again told that no places were available. She approached the Catholic Education Authority and was told that there was nothing they could do. “Frankly the impression I got was that they did not care either.

I spoke with my parish priest who at first said he could not help.” Mum then explained that her only option seemed to be to drive her son 60-70km each day to a school in the city where he would have no friends and no links with the parish. Eventually, because her son had no siblings “ironically for a Catholic school that swung it.” One of the local schools found a place for him.

The change of schools brought more repeated work because the Catholic primary apparently followed a different curriculum. So the child repeated work when he arrived from the United Kingdom and again when he changed schools in Western Australia. While Mum understands that “repetition and consolidation are important teaching practices”, she believes her son had more than his fair share of these experiences. Transition to High School has, however, been good and the boy is now settled happily.

Family 26

Mum and Dad came to live in Western Australia in 1988. A daughter accompanied her parents. In 1988 this little girl was five and was attending a private pre-primary school in the United Kingdom. The family had no information about education systems in Western Australia prior to emigration and got advice from friends already resident here. The girl was taken to school two days after the family arrived. Mum asked that she be allowed to start in Year 1, as this was the stage she was at in the UK and the school assessed her as being capable of Year 1 work. However, Mum was told that due to the change in lifestyle it would be unfair to the child to place her in Year 1 “so she painted pictures for another year.”

The family returned to the UK for a year in 1991 and the teacher in Western Australia sent letters with the child to the school in the UK. The daughter adjusted well to the state school there, then after a year returned to WA. She went back to her school here and to her friends and teachers she had known, so the second transition was easy. The only difficulty at that stage was that she required to shed the accent she had picked up in England very quickly to be accepted by her peers.

Family 27

Dad and Mum emigrated in 1990, accompanied by two daughters. The girls were 10 and 8 years old and were in Primary 6 and Primary 5 in England. The family had no information about schools in Western Australia before they emigrated and went to the local school here six weeks after arrival at the beginning of a new school year in Western Australia. They received very little information from the school and obtaining even this was difficult. Dad felt that the school made no use of the

information which was brought with the family from the UK.

Because their eldest daughter was placed in Year 6, she missed consideration for PEAC (an enrichment program for primary students) and so, when she moved to secondary school she could not join the academic extension course there. She eventually joined that course in Year 9—though Dad does not support the idea of separate courses for academically gifted students since academic excellence should be the aim for all students. Both girls were placed in a Year below that which would have suited them and which saw them repeating work already done in the United Kingdom. The younger daughter was put to sit at a table with only boys beside her and was very lost. In addition, the younger girl had five different teachers in Year 6 and three in Year 7. Both girls found that words in common usage in WA differed from those used in the UK and this added to their confusion.

Family 28

Mum and Dad moved to Western Australia in 1986. They were accompanied by their 5-year-old daughter who was in Primary 1 in her school in England. They received information about schools in Western Australia from a sister already living in Western Australia and took the child to school almost straight away as Mum intended to start work here.

The school and the teacher were very helpful, although the daughter's December birthday caused some concerns that she should return to pre-primary. In the end, her standard of work and the fact that she had been in Primary 1 in the UK before she turned five and was already reading convinced the school. Her teacher made a special effort to ensure that the child had extra reading resources as she was ahead in this area. The teachers loved her English accent but she lost this very quickly.

Family 29 (Focus Family 3)

Mum came back to Australia in 1991. Her own family had emigrated to WA when she was 17 and she had returned later to the UK to work and to marry. All her immediate family were still in WA.

Her marriage had ended in divorce, leaving her with two children. Her ex-husband

did not want to maintain contact. She came back to Western Australia to visit her family and since the children liked it here, she decided to stay. The children, however, were British citizens, so she had to return to the United Kingdom to apply for permission for them to emigrate.

Mum's story:

I lived here in the mid-sixties when I was aged 18 and I travelled in Australia. My parents had emigrated, bringing my brother and I. I hadn't wanted to come. I had started work in the UK and had lots of friends. I went back to the UK leaving my family here. I worked round Europe and met the man I married. He was English.

After our marriage we spent six months on a working visa in WA but my husband hated it here so I was happy to go back to live in England. We had two children and my parents used to come back to visit us.

When my youngest child was three my marriage collapsed. My husband helped me to put the children to bed, kissed them goodnight then came downstairs and said he was leaving and walked out of our lives. The children and I were very distressed and I needed my Mum! We came out to WA and stayed for four months. The children loved the place and didn't want to go back to England. They had been born in England, however, so we had to go back to apply for permission for them to emigrate. I had no idea how complicated that would be.

Because I had just got my divorce, the children were still within the jurisdiction of the courts. When I applied for permission for them to emigrate the people at Australia House were helpful, but I had to go back to the courts to apply for custody before they could process my application. This took six months because the court system moves very slowly.

There were ground rules about the application. I had to have a certain amount of money, which I got from the sale of our house. Having this money committed in this way meant that I had no money for living expenses, so my father was supporting us from WA. I also had to sign what was termed "An insurance to support" which meant that I signed away any rights to welfare help for five years in Australia. These

are understandable provisions but the whole episode was incredibly stressful. When the court decision came in my favour, we got our visas to travel within nine weeks, so that was not too bad.

My brother had completed his schooling in WA so we knew about the school system. When I came out with the children and knew we wanted to stay I did the rounds of the nearest Primary schools. Some schools were not helpful, some gave me booklets—but none seemed very interested until I went into the one I chose in the end. I just liked the whole feel of the place. The Principal came out of his office and asked my brother and I in. He gave us coffee and was so helpful. He showed us round the school and gave me all the information I asked for. He even gave me a sheet of notepaper with the school's address and 'phone number and told me to write to him from England when things were settled for us. I did this and he wrote back to say that they would expect us.

He welcomed the children personally and took a real interest in them. He visited them in their classrooms. I think the degree of support may depend upon whether the Principal or teachers have travelled or migrated, because if they have they understand the problems. It was just such an upheaval on top of everything else that we all went for counselling. The children would tell the counsellor things they couldn't tell me. For example, I learned that my son had developed a real fear. "Daddy put me to bed one night then he left. Will Mummy do the same?"

He was coping with all this anger and grief when we came here. He had started school in the UK in Primary 1. I knew he would have to go back to pre-primary out here and I discussed this with the Principal. We agreed that he might benefit from a bit of a break. He went from full time primary classes, where he was starting to read, back to three half-day sessions in pre-primary for one term. We knew he could read but he refused to do this for a full year. He became very aggressive and resentful towards these children who still had fathers—used to beat them up in the playground. The Principal knew the background and was supportive. My son loved his Year 1 teacher, but she became ill and had to leave the school. After that he had a series of relief teachers whom he didn't get on with. It was just another setback, another person moving out of his life.

His Year 2 teacher had migrated to Australia and she helped a lot. By Year 3 he had caught up with the class and was doing well. The Principal had left, however, and the new Principal's attitude was very different. I felt that my son had been labelled as a bully and a troublemaker because of his earlier behavioural problems (which had passed). I moved him to another school. He is happy there and is working well.

My daughter took to life out here like a duck to water. She is much more independent and outgoing. My son is more sensitive and demonstrably affectionate. She stayed at their first school and has made a very successful transition to Senior High School.

The parents at this first school did not make me feel welcome. I came to the conclusion that they resented me being a single parent—I even took to wearing my wedding ring again! They seemed very much of a clique that I couldn't break into even though I got involved with the P and C group.

I wish we hadn't had to through all the stress before migrating—but I can understand the reasons for it. Finding a Principal teacher who was so supportive was a huge help. Some teachers just seem to be in the job for their salary—have no commitment to their students. The attitude of the classroom teacher makes all the difference too.

You need someone to give you help and advice. Other parents could be a big help if they were willing.

Family 30

Mum and Dad emigrated to Western Australia in 1992. Two children came with the family, a boy 10 and a girl aged 5. The family had no information about schools in Western Australia prior to their journey, but had help from family and friends already in Western Australia. The children were enrolled in school two weeks after the family arrived.

The children were teased and bullied because of their accent and because they were new students. There was what is described by the parents as inverse racism, because the school had a high ratio of Chinese children. In the son's class, only about five children could speak or understand English. Both children were homesick and

unhappy. After eight months, the parents removed them from their original school and believe that eventual outcomes will be better for the children in Western Australia.

Family 31

Mum and Dad and their two daughters arrived initially in Western Australia in 1988. The family returned to the United Kingdom from February 1993 until December 1994. When they returned the girls were in Year 8 and Year 4.

While the family had known nothing about education in Western Australia prior to their first stay, apart from help from family and friends, on the second journey they approached the Education Offices during the school holidays and found them “not very helpful.” The children re-started school in Western Australia straight away after the holidays. The parents chose their new schools after “a huge amount of detective work” because of anecdotal information about small class sizes.

The parents were told by school staff that no choices were available in Year 8 and Year 4. The Primary school kept the information the parents brought, while the High School “hardly looked at it.” The parents still feel uncertain about aspects of education, such as assessment. Mum had asked that school records be provided by the Grammar School in the UK for her older daughter, but the school would only agree to forward these to her new High School. Although Mum wrote with the school’s address, she does not believe that the records were ever sent.

When the girls returned to the UK Mum says they were teased about being Aussie kids, and when they came to WA about being poms. Mum believes that the fact that the girls had moved school several times stood them in good stead during the transitional period.

Family 32

Mum and Dad came to Western Australia from Wales in 1988. They had two sons aged 8 and 10 and the boys accompanied them to WA. The family had little, if any, information about Western Australian schools, either prior to migration or before they enrolled the boys. In Wales, the boys had been in the “first and last years of

junior school.” The boys started school in Western Australia right away because the school year had started two weeks before the family arrived.

The school placed the boys according to their ages. Mum wanted them to be advanced a year, because the work they were accustomed to was ahead of work these classes were doing in WA. She was told by the school that they could not go on to High School until they were of the age to do this, so whatever happened they would end up having to repeat a year.

The boys settled in quite easily, although there was some teasing because of their accents. The younger boy found the transition trouble free, though the older son took a little longer to adjust.

Family 33

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1994 from England. Two children came with them to Western Australia, a girl aged 6 (nearly 7) and a boy aged 4. Their daughter had just finished Primary 2 in the United Kingdom and their son had spent one year in a Local Authority nursery school. At Mum’s request, the girl’s teacher provided a report on her schoolwork and the little boy’s nursery school had given him records to take into Primary 1.

The family had no information about schools in western Australia prior to emigration and when they arrived Mum arranged personal interviews with the Principals in local schools within a week of arrival “because our daughter wanted to be back in school.” She wanted her daughter to “skip a Grade”, as she had already completed two years of primary work but by age should have gone back into Year 2 in Western Australia. Most of the Principals were reluctant to allow this, but in the school the parents eventually chose, the standard of the girl’s work won out and she was admitted to Year 3. This school also had a full time pre-primary program, although the boy was unable to join this until he became five and missed the stimulation of his five mornings a week at nursery school very much.

Mum found she got help from other school mums who had travelled or had relocated. Because the family selected the school as a priority, they then had to look for rental

accommodation within the school zone and found this quite difficult but worth the effort for the children's sakes. The only major difficulty, once placement had been worked out, was that the daughter's work levels were appropriate but she was "a little immature socially and struggled a little with the slightly older children."

Family 34

Mum and Dad brought two children to Western Australia in 1995. Getting permission to emigrate to join family in Western Australia had been difficult, with two applications being refused. The children were aged 13 and 11 when permission was granted on the third application. Both children were girls and had been in Year 2 in the local secondary school in Scotland and in Primary 6. Mum was able to bring records for the Primary student, but the Secondary school would only supply records after the older girl was enrolled in a school in WA. The family had no information about schools in Western Australia and school charges came as a complete surprise to them as did the fact that there was no possibility of choosing the school you could send your children to.

Family and friends helped with information in Western Australia and the children started in school within a month of arrival. The schools were helpful "to an extent" but a lot depended on whether there was room in courses. The High School had a "quick look" through work the family had brought and asked which subjects the daughter had been studying in Scotland. The family found terminology confusing, especially in science and social studies (which would have been separate subjects of History and Geography in Scotland). There was also confusion about assessment and how to choose "pathways" that their daughter would follow in Year 10, but parent's evenings helped.

The primary school did not have parent's evenings and seemed only to see parents whose children were having difficulty. "It was really a case of sink or swim for all of us."

Both girls settled into school and quickly made friends but they were both very homesick. They both maintain that they will return to Scotland when they are eighteen. They experienced some, mostly good-natured, teasing about their accent

form peers and from teachers too. The older girl hated High School and found she was behind the class in mathematics but far ahead in English and French. The younger girl was “lucky enough to get a sympathetic teacher who was very good with her.” Mum reckons that things were easier for her because she was a chatty kid who soon made friends.

Family 35

Mum and Dad emigrated from Scotland in 1995. Problems encountered prior to migration in regards to the sale of the family home meant that Dad left for Western Australia three months ahead of the rest of the family. The family has two daughters who were aged 13 and 10 at the time of their migration and were in Secondary Year 1 and Primary 6.

A benefit from having their father in Western Australia, before the children arrived there, was that he was able to visit schools and arrange for enrolment for the girls.

The girls were able to start in school immediately after arrival. The parents met the Deputy Principals when they took their daughters to start school and they believe that the information they brought was used and that the schools were helpful to them. The charges made by State schools in Western Australia came as a surprise to the parents.

Both girls were very homesick and, in the elder daughter’s case her English teacher realised this and sent her to the school nurse for help. Subsequent visits from both grandmothers have helped to overcome this. Taking all things into consideration, Mum believes that the girls coped very well with the change to their lifestyle and is optimistic about future outcomes.

Family 36 (Focus family 6)

Mum and Dad emigrated from England in mid-1994, bringing with them their two sons aged 14 and 12. The boys had both won scholarships to a well-known Independent school in the United Kingdom and were happy and successful in that environment. They were in Secondary Year 3 and in Secondary Year 1 in this school. Mum admitted that she had reservations about moving the boys, but they

were enrolled in a long established Independent school in Western Australia. The parents believed that they had done the research necessary to ensure a relatively smooth transition as delays in the sale of their house had meant that the boys' father had moved to Western Australia eighteen months before the rest of the family. He had had time to visit schools and obtained written material in the form a prospectus from each of the major Independent schools before making a choice.

Mum's story:

We came out here in connection with my husband's work. Both our sons were at a well-known Public School in the Independent education sector in England. They had both won scholarships in a competitive examination to gain entry to the school and the school considered them to be bright students. We brought out examples of their work, although the school here was not interested in these.

My husband came to Western Australia eighteen months before the rest of the family. We arranged to enrol the boys at a major Independent school here. I was in hospital administration back in England, but in order to find work here I have had to update my nursing qualifications and to work back in the wards again which has not been easy for me.

When the boys and I arrived, the school placed our older son in his chronological age group. Our younger son was placed according to the level of work he had been doing which meant that he was in a class of boys who were much older than him. I think the school put them in the Years which were convenient for the organisation, really.

Our older son had covered all the work being done in science in England. Even so, the science master made him repeat modules from Year 8. He found this humiliating.

The school seemed to think that he had settled in well, but I knew he was unhappy and we never saw a single friend from school at our house. After two years we offered him the opportunity to return to board in his English school, so that he could complete his education there. He was delighted to do so and his friends threw a party for him when he got back. It was just such a contrast to the school in WA and he is

very happy and doing well in the subjects he has chosen.

For our younger son, the situation was even more unhappy. The group he was placed in made things very difficult for him in social terms, although he had no problem with the work at first. The school is very sports orientated so, because he was smaller than the others and could not get into sports teams, he became very isolated and found it hard to make friends. He missed the fellowship of being part of teams which he had enjoyed in England.

His work began to deteriorate and the school had no idea what was going wrong. One teacher was abusive and called him a “bloody Pom” and a “lamebrain” when he said he preferred European history to Australian history. I complained to the school about this but no action was taken. I’ve fought rings round the school to try to sort things out for him.

They started to say that perhaps he was suffering from ADD, so the school psychologist did tests which showed that he was in the top 14% of Year 9 students in Australia. When I pointed out that, in terms of age, he was nearly a year younger than his class, they re-tested and this time he came out in the top 5%. It seemed to me that the school always wanted to blame either our son or us for the problems. In fact, I’ve told them several times that they should look at what they are doing. For example, one teacher ‘phoned me and asked me to tell my son to move away from the boy he was beside as “he was a bad influence.” I told her that she was the person in charge of the class. She could see what was happening, so she should move the students.

Our son became involved with an unsuitable group of students. He denied to us that he was being bullied, but I believe that he decided that to gain acceptance he had to be part of the “in crowd” and this led him into serious trouble. Just before things came to a head, the school had eventually decided to move him back with his own age group. This was just at the beginning of the fourth term and I said that I would prefer the move to be made at the beginning of the next school year, but they went ahead anyway. Shortly after this we removed him from the school to avert further trouble.

I took him for counselling and was told that there was nothing wrong with our son, but that he was in defence mode as a result of all that had been happening to him in school. He has reacted to the stress of being placed out of his social group, and the fact that he is bright and well aware of what is happening has led him to attempt his own solutions to the problems. The advice given was that he should return to England, but he is adamant that he does not want to do this. However, subconsciously, he may want to return and he certainly is very positive about how happy he was there. Meanwhile we have enrolled him in another school with his correct age group and will see how things go from here.

Family 37 (Focus family 4)

Mum and Dad moved from Scotland to Western Australia in 1991. To arrange for permission to emigrate they had returned to Scotland from Norway. Dad works within the oil industry and the move to Norway was undertaken to make extra money so that the family could emigrate. Mum had been an English teacher in Secondary schools in England. While in Norway, the family's three children attended an International school. The children were aged almost 12, 8 and 3 at the time of emigration. The older children had been in Secondary 1 and Primary 4 prior to emigration. The youngest child was not in any form of schooling.

Mum's story:

My husband is in the oil industry. We had lived all over the place and did a spell in Brunei. We lived in the North of Scotland where the children were at a very small local school with 40 children. They really got lots of individual attention and encouragement. We didn't like the political atmosphere in the U.K. so we decided to come to Australia. My brother lives in Sydney. We wanted to have sufficient funds, so my husband went to work in Norway and we took the children into the British school there. The school was based on the English education system so transfer was not always easy for Scottish children, but our children did very well.

After a spell in Norway we came back to Scotland and the children went back to schools there while we sold the house. We had permission to emigrate to Australia and were going to live in Sydney. By coincidence, the woman who bought our house

had just come back to Britain from Perth, Australia. She put her kids down a year when she went back to Scotland. She was a teacher in WA and she really felt that they would be behind. She told me a bit about Perth but it didn't seem relevant at the time. We had been taking the "Australian Outlook" (you can get this from Pickfords, the removal company, or they have copies at Australia House in London). It's pretty woeful, but we thought we were all clued up on Australia.

We arrived in Sydney then found that the best job opportunities were in the West, so we moved to Perth. My children were quite used to swapping around among schools.

My oldest daughter had moved into first year of the Secondary school in Norway and Scotland. When we got here I did the rounds of all the schools, State and private. They all said that at her age (just on twelve) she would have to go into Primary school. It was a nun (Principal of a Catholic Primary school) who told me about academic extension and suggested I try to get a place for my daughter in this. The Principal she recommended wouldn't even give me an interview. I tried the two local State High Schools which offered this course again.

One of the schools just didn't want to know, but the other must have had a few spaces, so they tested my daughter and said "Fine". They took her into the course in the middle of first year.

I have misgivings about every High School out here. I was a secondary teacher in the UK (did my training in a really tough inner city area). The students out here seem to be in charge of the show. The schools don't respond to parents and the teachers do nothing to bridge the gap. They don't want to know about parent's views and aspirations. You get no help. I went to see the "Achievement" teacher at the school to express my concerns. He was in charge of the academic extension group and was helpful. He was great with the students, took them on excursions and camps. I asked him what would happen if things went wrong, and why I should send her to the State school rather than a nearby Catholic school. You always wonder if you are doing the right thing. He said "We have strategies here, there they will tell you to pray." Anyway, I trusted him and left my daughter at that school because he was there. He left and I sent our second daughter to a different school.

My oldest daughter did really well. She was Dux of the school and is doing medicine at University. It was very difficult to know about subject choices though and pathways. The Career Guidance teachers were no help. I think she didn't really want to tell them she wanted to do medicine, so she just brought the University booklet home and we worked it out from here.

They wanted to put our second daughter down a year too when we came. I fought that battle and won. We brought reports from the British school in Norway. It's difficult to get full records from the UK. The Norway reports were comprehensive because the school was used to children moving in and out. The schools out here basically ignored them.

The transition of our oldest daughter was hard, but when our youngest daughter moved to Secondary it wasn't much better though we'd been here for a while. Communications out here is a mess. They hold meetings at the last minute and there is no information.

Back in Scotland when they were to show a sex-education film in the schools they showed it on late night TV in advance so that parents could see what was being offered and could talk things over with their children. Out here there is a Drugs Awareness campaign being run. I have been in and out of the Health Centre to look for the booklet that is supposed to be available but they haven't got it.

One of the reasons I changed my second daughter's school was that we didn't want her to be in the shadow of her sister. She's doing well now. When she started in primary school, however, I had a major run-in with one teacher. She came home with all her written work scored out in red ink—even her name—because she was using the printing style she had been taught in Scotland and the teacher wanted “curly writing”. I had this “discussion” with the teacher in a corridor in full view of everyone because she didn't want to talk with me. I told her that if this happened again I would withdraw the child and teach her at home (I feel I do this anyway—home schooling after school!). The Principal came past and said to his colleague (ignored me) “Are you having problems?” I said, “No, she's not having problems. I am!”

Accent isn't really an issue because there are so many English families around here. It's a bit of an English ghetto. My kids soon picked up an Aussie accent though—in fact they went a bit over the top in an effort to be accepted. They don't use it around me because I can't stand it. It's not so bad now anyway because I think they've got themselves sorted out about who they are and are secure personally. One of my friends, though, is Arab and her little boy is still learning English. He's as bright as a button but the teachers write him off as stupid because his English is not the best.

I don't feel that people out here are very friendly. When I said this to a non-English friend she said "Come on—you're English. How do you think the rest of us feel?" In a way, you've got to remember that the people who came from Britain in the days of assisted passage weren't very well off and maybe hadn't a good education. They may be prejudiced and they are the second and third generation Australians now.

I would recommend that the booklet from the Department of Education should go to everyone who is bringing kids here. They know who you are because you've got to have medicals and so forth. Also there should be someone nominated in the school to help. They have enough Deputies. Otherwise you just end up seeing the secretarial staff.

Our worst problem now is that my father and mother are in the UK and all their family are abroad. They have been refused permission to come here though because my father had heart problems twenty-five years ago. They could appeal but my father says he won't go begging to them. They've got their own money and wouldn't be a burden, but the rules are inflexible. I don't know what I will do.

Family 38

Mum and Dad emigrated to Western Australia in 1988, bringing with them two children, a boy aged 11 and a girl aged 7. They came from England and brought with them reports on schoolwork which had been completed and the levels which had been attained. Their son had started in his first year of Secondary school, while their daughter was in Primary 3. They had no prior information about education in Western Australia before they migrated.

The children were placed in school in Western Australia as soon as possible after arrival to help the family settle into their chosen new life. Both children were placed in Primary school because of their ages. The school was helpful, but no other choices were offered, despite the son having embarked upon Secondary courses in the UK. The family were unaware of any support services which existed and Mum does not think the school made any use of the information which had been brought from the UK.

The children encountered difficulties in adapting to their new environment, with accent and word usage causing some problems. There were school rules which the family did not understand, like those involving wearing hats and sunscreen. According to Mum, “the whole process was traumatic, but they did adapt. I feel we were all a little traumatised by our choice to come to Australia. We knew no-one when we arrived and we had to learn as we went along.”

Family 39

Mum brought three children to Western Australia in 1992. Her marriage in the United Kingdom had ended and she had sole custody of her children. All her immediate family were in Western Australia, following their emigration in 1970, when Mum had lived in Western Australia for seven years. Despite this situation, and a very difficult position in relation to her ex-husband, she faced delays in getting permission to bring the children to live in Western Australia.

At the time of migration the children were aged 9, 7 and 3 and all were in some form of education at the local Primary school. Because of the marriage difficulties, Mum did not want to draw attention to her decision to emigrate and so did not seek reports from their school. Her own experience of living in Western Australia and attending school here alerted her to the difficulties she might encounter in educational transition.

Family and friends in Western Australia helped with information about schools and the children started school within three days to help stabilise their lives. The schools only took notice of the children’s ages when placing them in class groups. For the oldest child, a boy in Year 5, there were difficulties. From being the oldest child in

his class in England he became one of the youngest in his new group. He had still been printing in England and was suddenly expected to be able to do running writing. His problems, according to Mum, were not addressed and this, she believes, has led to ongoing problems in English, spelling and grammar, as he is still struggling to address the gaps in his knowledge caused by missing most of Year 4 and part of Year 5 in the transition. In other subjects he consistently scores A grades but struggles to maintain a C grade in English.

Mum believes that the effort she made to keep them in their original school here, despite having to drive distances to do so, helped maintain continuity and was beneficial. For the younger child, who was placed in Year 3, the transition posed no problems largely due to Mum's efforts. Mum is now at University in Perth and the family has settled well.

Family 40

Mum and Dad brought one daughter with them when they emigrated from England in 1994. They brought her school reports with them. At the time of emigration their daughter was nearly 11 and was in Primary 6 in England. They had no information about Western Australian schools prior to arriving in the State.

The Real Estate agent helped them to locate the local State school on arrival and their daughter was enrolled there within three weeks. She was placed in Year 4 and according to Mum, when she was placed in class not a single child spoke to her and she was very scared. Mum was surprised to learn that State schools here are secular. She attributes the lack of welcome and friendliness to this factor, which she believes causes a lack of teaching about being kind and caring for others. The school Principal, according to Mum, was not interested in anything other than positive comments. Both the Principal and the class teacher went on six months long service leave during the year the child spent in this school "something which would never have happened in England."

While Mum had been very happy with the Local Authority school in England, the lack of religious teaching in WA distressed her and she applied to have her daughter enrolled in the local Catholic school, although the family were not members of the

Catholic Church. After a year, a place was found for the girl and Mum believes that this is the best move she made as the daughter's new teacher was extremely helpful and "amazing" in the amount of care he took to help the child. Mum says that the whole ethos of the Catholic school in terms of welcome was very much more positive. If she knew anyone who intended to move from the UK to WA she would recommend that they select an Independent school for their child. On a positive note Mum really approves of the amount of sport which is offered in WA schools.

Family 41

Mum and Dad arrived in Western Australia at the end of 1988. Their daughter, who was four and a half years old, came with them. The girl had been in the reception class at her local primary school in England. The school sent a letter with the family explaining their daughter's stage of education. A friend who was a Primary teacher in Western Australia and family members provided information about Western Australian schools, but in Mum's words "there were still quite a lot of surprises." Because the family arrived in December the school summer holidays had started and their daughter did not start school until February of 1989.

The girl's age meant that the school automatically assumed she would be placed in pre-primary provision. Mum says that she had to push to have her accepted into Year 1 as the school Principal clearly did not want to take her into that level. Agreement was only arrived at when the school psychologist had assessed her for school readiness and given a positive opinion.

The daughter settled quickly into her new environment and was very enthusiastic. Mum feels that the girl's age helped her, as she wasn't old enough to feel intimidated by starting something new. She took to Australian words "like a duck to water" and had an Australian accent within six weeks. The class teacher was helpful and approachable and provided all the information the family needed. In fact, Mum believes that the whole school transition was much more traumatic for her than for her daughter. She clearly recalls saying to someone at the time that, in terms of the school system, "it was as if I had landed on another planet."

Family 42

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1992 from England with their two children. The boy was aged 9 at the time of migration and their daughter was aged 7. In England, the boy was in Primary 5 and the girl was in Primary 2 at the Local Authority school.

They brought reports from the children's teachers and special reports because their son had been diagnosed as dyslexic, with associated learning difficulties. While the family are English, Dad's work had taken them to a rural area of Scotland where the children were the only English children in a small village school.

The parents located schools in WA through the 'phone book and through personal contacts. The children started in Independent schools near where the family lived within three weeks of having arrived. The children were placed in classes which matched their ages. Mum was impressed with the variety of courses which the schools offered and both children settled in very well, although their son resented the fact that he had not been consulted about the migration project and missed friends at home. He also had some difficulty with adjustment to city living after being in the country in Scotland.

The schools were very supportive and made parents welcome at assemblies and at Chapel. High standards of dress and behaviour and respect for themselves and for others were emphasised to students. Assessment methods were clear and easily understood although TEE scores remain something of a mystery. Both schools had well-established parent groups which were welcoming.

Mum was particularly impressed by the way in which her son's learning difficulties were handled positively and sensitively. She believes that he has made great strides in self-confidence and self-esteem and is now willing to "have a go at anything." He has had opportunities for oral presentation of assignments and experience in public speaking. Mum also believes that the multi-cultural school community is valuable education for life and has taught her children to see themselves as part of a global environment.

The family are now Australian citizens and the children have had the advantage of living in two cultures and being aware of the many other cultures around them. Mum has always believed that there is more to education than academic results and is

delighted that the children are being given opportunities to develop academically in tandem with the development of their own interests. One main reason behind the decision to migrate was to provide the children with what the parents hoped would be great educational opportunities and, for this family, these hopes are being realised.

Family 43 (Focus Family 1)

Dad came to Western Australia in connection with work prior to the decision that the family would emigrate. While in WA he visited Independent schools and collected information about the private education system. Mum arrived in 1995 and brought the family's four children, aged 7, 5, 3 and 8 months. The two boys had been at private school in England in Primary 3 and Primary 1.

The choice of schools was limited because the company Dad worked for was providing accommodation for the family. The school the parents were most happy with was on the other side of the city and out of reach. The family arrived in the middle of the third school term in Western Australia. Two private boys' schools were in their area but one of these had no places for the older boy, so in the end effectively there was no choice for the family.

Mum's story:

Our sons had been in a private primary school in the United Kingdom. Our older son was in P.3 and the younger in P.1. My husband had been in WA before on business and had picked up the prospectus for each independent school and had gone round to visit these schools. We really liked one of the schools, but the area was far from where we intended to live. With another it seemed as if you had to have your son's name down from birth. That left us with a choice of two schools. One could not take our older son because of their numbers, but the other was prepared to fit him in.

We didn't realise that there would be a problem for our younger son until we got here. When we tried to find a school place for him we realised that he was too young for schools here. We arrived in August, and eventually we found a private kindergarten in West Perth which would take him, though the owner really pressured us to agree to keep him there till he was six. He hated being back in "kindy school"

after being in a formal classroom with school uniform. The school our older son was at agreed to find him a place in P.1 the following year. This seemed fine, but the night before orientation day at the school the Master in Charge of the Junior School 'phoned me. The school, he said, had changed their mind and there would be no place for my son because he was still too young.

I was in a terrible state. We contacted the other school in our area and they said that they could place our younger son, but still had no room for the elder. In desperation, and as a last hope, I contacted the British Consul's Office. They were worse than useless—more or less told us that we were out here and had to fit into the system. They were my last hope of finding suitable schooling for my five-year-old—I was desperate and they just didn't want to know.

After a few weeks, the first school got in touch with us again. They had changed their minds yet again and would accept our younger son. I found out afterwards that, at orientation, three children had arrived who spoke very little English. I think they decided that our young son would pose fewer problems for the school. If there had been any other choice of formal full-time (five days a week) pre-primary schooling, we might have kept our younger son back because he is young for the group he is with, although the work is no problem. I worry because the school is large and all the Junior schoolboys have the same play area. I think this could lead to the younger, smaller children being bullied.

The first six weeks in Western Australia were a nightmare for me. I was ready to jump on the first plane home. We knew no one. The next door neighbour arrived at our door, not to say welcome, but to tell me that the noise of our pool pump was annoying his wife. We went back to the UK for Christmas and that helped. At the school, the other parents seemed to resent a place being given to our older son. The class sizes were already large. None of them would speak to us for six weeks. We got a row for parking our car in the wrong place at school, but how on earth were we to know? Eventually, one boy made friends with my son and his Mum 'phoned me—I suppose to see what we were like. That broke the ice a bit, but there are still Mums who won't talk. They had a classroom rep. (a volunteer Mum) and she tried to introduce me but I was ignored. My older son's teacher was helpful to him and they

have a new Master in Charge now who seems to be organising things.

You can't help making comparisons with UK when you come here. After all, that's all that you know. I have been to California and I see many things here that make me think there is a strong American influence. It's quite weird because it's grafted onto really strange things like pipe bands. Another thing I dislike is the way the children eat lunch around the playground with no one to check that they have had their food. In the UK they had a sit-down hot meal, with teachers eating with the children and teaching them table manners. A lot of the children here have poor manners and this would help.

It would be really helpful to have someone to turn to, perhaps a family who had migrated some time before and who knew the ropes in WA. We eventually got in touch with a relocation company, through an English lady we met, and the company director has been very supportive. I know I can 'phone her if I find a problem. We like the lifestyle out here and would really like to stay, but you do need help at first and I was very disappointed in the British Consulate.

Family 44

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1988. They have one daughter who was 10 at the time of coming to Western Australia. The girl was in Primary 6 in her school in England.

The family had no information about education systems in Western Australia prior to emigration and received advice from family and friends when they arrived in Western Australia. Their daughter started in school within eight weeks of arrival. Mum felt that the school was unhelpful, with no information on courses and no explanations about technology. She also believes that the school ignored information that she provided and offered no support services to the family.

Their daughter was placed in "the wrong year" initially, so she had to repeat a year. In England she had been experiencing learning difficulties, but this information was disregarded by the school in her initial placement. The school was small and on the outskirts of town and the girl joined when her peers had been together in a close group for several years. According to Mum, her daughter was teased and tormented

continually by the peer group.

When the girl moved to High School, however, the situation was reversed. Staff were supportive and had an entirely different attitude. Mum is now confident that eventual outcomes in Western Australia will be positive.

Family 45

Mum and Dad came from England in 1991. They have two children, a son who was 6 and a daughter aged 4 at the time of migration. The children were in Primary 2 and the pre-primary section of a private school. The family had no information about education in Western Australia prior to coming to WA. When they arrived they located schools through looking in the Yellow pages directory and through the help of their estate agents. The children started school within eight weeks of arrival.

On arrival in the school the daughter was tested for school readiness because she had already spent one year in school in England. She had already started to read and write so the school suggested that she miss out pre-primary and start in Year 1. She had no problems and the transition was easy for her.

The older boy was not so happy in his new surroundings. The school in England had been small and he moved into a much larger class. The move was made in the middle of the third term of school here, so that he was placed with children who all seemed to have been together since pre-primary and he found it difficult to fit in socially. He was very homesick and missed his friends.

Family 46

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1995, bringing their three sons to Western Australia. At the time of emigration the boys were 6, 3, and three months old. The older boys were both enrolled in school in Primary 2 and in pre-primary. The family received information from friends in WA about schools.

The boys were enrolled in Year 2 and in the pre-primary section of an Independent school in Perth within a week of the family's arrival. The school in the UK had been coeducational and small whereas the school in WA was single sex and much larger.

The boys were very homesick and missed family and friends in the UK. The size of classes made concentration for the older son difficult. They found their peers somewhat brash and unwelcoming and were teased as “poms.” Mum believes that there was a lack of individual attention and guidance in the school “they were expected to self-motivate”. Her comparisons between the school in the UK and the school in WA were unfavourable, but she hopes for positive future outcomes.

Family 47

Mum and Dad emigrated in 1990. They brought with them their two youngest children, aged 16 and 7. Two older girls, aged 20 and 18, remained in the UK to complete University courses and “commuted to WA in the holidays.”

At the time of emigration their youngest daughter was in the 5th. Form of a private school in the UK and their son was in Primary 3, also in a private school. The family brought reports and GCSE scores for their daughter with them. Both children started in schools in Western Australia after a month.

The daughter was enrolled in an Independent school. Both school and parents agreed that she would benefit from repeating part of one year, rather than attempting to move into the middle of TEE courses and this proved to be beneficial as she eventually scored over 400 at TEE level. The school was welcoming and helpful throughout. Their son joined a State primary school. “He was placed in a class a year lower than the one he had left in the UK and found the school somewhat uninspiring.” The parents made the decision to move him into an Independent school. Their choice, Mum feels, is “all right, but not brilliant.” She notes that there is no examination pressure to get into the Senior School, that Junior schooling goes on for “so many years” and that the TEE marking system is complex and difficult to understand.