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**AN EXPLORATION OF ISSUES FOR
EFFECTIVE HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES WITH ASIAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Educational Leadership
at
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by
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Abstract

The far-reaching effects of 21st century globalisation have meant that schools are facing an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse parent community, a situation which presents educators with both opportunities and challenges. While international academic literature has recently begun to focus on the issues and challenges of cross-cultural communication with Asian immigrant parents in Western societies, New Zealand-based educational research has focused on independent international fee-paying students, as opposed to New Zealand-domiciled students and their parents. Post-modern influences, with the resultant emphasis on contextualisation of education, combined with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the parent community, has underscored the need for effective home-school communication practices.

This small-scale, exploratory, qualitative research project documents the personal home-school communication experiences of Asian immigrant parents. The study uses empirical data collected from semi-structured individual and group interviews with seven parents from Korea, Hong-Kong and Mainland China, who reside in Tauranga, a growing provincial city located in the Bay of Plenty region, New Zealand. By focusing on the implementation of the revised New Zealand Curriculum and the inaugural changes to the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 qualification in 2011, this research examines the extent of parental understanding and the effectiveness of current home-school communication practices.

The findings reveal that current home-school communication processes and practices are largely ineffective with this parent group, and highlight the disparity between high parental expectations and the rudimentary knowledge that they hold. A thematic analysis corroborates empirical data with academic rationale, and highlights an extensive language barrier, unrecognised cultural aspects of communication, inaccurate knowledge from alternative sources of information, and potentially conflicting worldviews of education.

A strategic leadership vision, along with a multifaceted commitment to action, is required to adopt approaches to home-school communication which facilitate effective communication, as well as the inclusion and integration of Asian

immigrant parents as legitimate and recognised members of the school community. This study recommends the provision of multi-lingual resources for parents, ethnic-specific parent meetings, a formal liaison and advocacy role, and the development of ethnic community links to enhance home-school communication practices.

The discussion concludes with an epilogue, which outlines an ethnic-specific Korean parent meeting and demonstrates the practical application of recommendations contained within the study.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Study overview

Education in the 21st century is not immune from globalization, the “...increasing interconnectedness in economic, political, and cultural realms...” (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2004, p. 403). Not only is globalization impacting on the commercial world but the societies within which we live. Globalization creates a demographic imperative for educators to respond to diversity (J. A. Banks, 2006; N. Pang, 2011) as the changing profile of parent groups increases complexities in the educational environment which may be evident in different interaction styles, expectations and concerns (C. A. M. Banks, 2007). As Cheney, et al., notes, “...globalization potentially increases cultural pluralism by recognizing and drawing attention to ethnic groupings, cultural niches, and local abilities” (2004, p. 387). It incites the need for educators to “...recognise differences in values, attitudes and behaviours amongst their school community and the importance to develop a dialogue on the basis of difference” (Crozier & Reay, 2005, p. 156). The emergence of multicultural educational institutions requires the development of communications skills and strategies that are appropriate to a diverse and multicultural society (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

1.1.1 The Asiatic diaspora

New Zealand is rapidly becoming a multicultural society and, as a consequence, secondary schools are facing greater ethnic diversity in their student population. The 2006 New Zealand census identified the Asian ethnic group as New Zealand’s fourth largest ethnic group, with 9.2% of the total population identifying themselves as being of Asian ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). As well as being a significant ethnic group in relation to the total New Zealand population, immigration patterns are also reflecting a much greater Asian influence. Overall, the proportion of immigrants making up the population of New Zealand residents increased from 19.5% in 2001 to 22.9% in 2006, and this census also records the fact that 28.6% of all New Zealand immigrants (people born overseas) were born in Asia (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The rate of change within this ethnic group is also worth noting, with the Asian population virtually doubling between the 2001 census and the 2006 census (Statistics New Zealand,

2006). Accompanying an increase in the level and changing composition of immigration is a decrease in the length of time that overseas-born people have been residing in New Zealand, with those who have lived in New Zealand for four years or less increasing to 32.3% (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Ethnic population projections from 2001 to 2021 suggest that this high rate of change is likely to continue, with a projected percentage change increase in the Asian ethnic population of 120% over this period (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). The expected increase in the Asian ethnic population in New Zealand is anticipated to be driven primarily by levels of net migration, rather than natural increase through births (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). These statistics suggest that New Zealand secondary schools will face an anticipated and accelerated rate of increase in the numbers of Asian students and their families, with whom they will be required to work. The level of acculturation for these immigrants is likely to be lower as the length of time resident in New Zealand is falling, which poses greater potential for language and cultural barriers in engaging with students and their parents.

Similar trends, albeit on a much smaller scale, are also becoming evident in the Bay of Plenty. The 2006 census documents a trebling of Asian immigrants in the urban, Tauranga City, from 1% to 3% in comparison to previous statistics (Family and Community Services, 2010, p. 7). In addition to this, 23% of the Tauranga City immigrants, who have lived in New Zealand for fewer than four years, are of Asian ethnicity (Family and Community Services, 2010, p. 12). Based on these figures, it is reasonable to surmise that a significant proportion of Asian immigrants in the Bay of Plenty are recent arrivals.

A locally-based report on issues and services for migrants, *Settling In: Tauranga City and the Western Bay of Plenty*, released in April 2010 by the Family and Community Services division of the Ministry of Social Development, acknowledges the efforts schools are making to celebrate diversity through international celebrations and the like (Family and Community Services, 2010). Nevertheless, this report also documents the call for greater information in relation to school curriculum, educational terminology, systems and practices (Family and Community Services, 2010). Similar issues are noted in New Zealand-based research that recorded the settlement experiences of Asian immigrants (Dixon, Tse, Rossen, & Sobrun-Maharaj, 2010). This recent report

and research are not isolated incidents, and are part of a growing trend which recognises the need to respond appropriately to diverse parent groups. International literature also acknowledges the growing challenge of engaging and educating culturally and linguistically diverse Asian students (Li & He, 2011; Qin, Li, Rana, & Han, 2011; Zhao, 2011) and reiterates the call for schools to “...develop pedagogical and cultural competence based upon the fusion of Eastern and Western civilisations...” (Li & He, 2011, p. 5).

1.1.2 The New Zealand Curriculum and the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA)

In this post-modern age, knowledge is not perceived to be absolute. Accordingly, within the New Zealand educational context, secondary schools have faced significant changes in curriculum focus and philosophy, as well as an accompanying review and change of the qualification structure. There is less emphasis on actual, discreet knowledge, with the focus shifting to a process-oriented approach to learning and key competencies – the essential attributes for learning and living in the 21st century and beyond. The recent implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum places greater emphasis on local context, which requires the engagement of parents and the community. The change represents a fundamental shift in pedagogical thinking and teaching philosophy, which needs to be communicated to parents, to build effective home-school partnerships. The changes have also required a different focus for subject-specific content and modes of assessment. The 2009 curriculum places a much greater emphasis on engaging students with their local communities as part of the learning process. However, this poses a challenge for new immigrant parents of Asian descent who choose to have their children educated in mainstream New Zealand schools because they face a philosophically and fundamentally different education system from their native country. Furthermore, in 2011 there have been functional changes to the NCEA Level 1 qualification, with the advent of course endorsements and changes to the ratio of internal/external credits.

1.1.3 Parental engagement

Academic literature is unequivocal in the positive influence parents exert on their child(ren)’s education and clearly suggests that high levels of active, well-informed parental engagement has a positive outcome on students’ academic

results (For example, Fan & Chen, 2001; Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Vazquez-Nuttall, Li, & Kaplan, 2006). The positive impact on academic achievement as a result of parental involvement has also been identified for ethnically diverse students (Grant & Ray, 2010; Jeynes, 2007). However, literature also reveals a latent tension between educators' perceptions of low parental interest in academic achievement by culturally diverse parents (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005), and the reality of empirically-based research on culturally diverse parental expectations (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009).

Bermudez and Marquez (1996) identify a number of potential barriers to developing strong home-school partnerships, including a lack of understanding of the school system and a lack of parental confidence. Supporting research also indicates that there are additional barriers faced by culturally diverse immigrant parents in engaging with their children's education, such as English language skills, acculturation, and differences in parental education (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). It is important to recognise that immigrant parents face significant challenges in educating their children. As Eberly, Joshi and Konzal point out, "Increasing diversity in the student population intensifies the need for and the difficulties of establishing culturally sensitive and meaningful communication between teachers and parents" (2007, p. 7).

1.2 Researcher orientation

I have noticed an increasing ethnic diversity of student enrolments in New Zealand secondary schools during 12 years of experience as a secondary teacher, particularly in more recent years. Coupled with this, my experience at middle management levels of responsibility also highlighted the challenges and misunderstanding when parents attempted to understand an educational system and qualifications that differed from their own personal experiences. Personal misgivings about the effectiveness of current methods of home-school communication, particularly with culturally and linguistically diverse parents, provided the impetus for this research project. My affinity with Asiatic cultures stems from a 12-month employment contract as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme following graduation from university. My predisposition is that schools should be places

where cultural diversity is valued, which is challenging in light of the increasingly multicultural demographic faced by schools.

Previous postgraduate study in educational leadership aroused an interest in academic research, which demonstrated the potential benefits of rigorous analysis to operational, as well as pedagogical, aspects of education. A Ministry of Education study award and a University of Waikato Masters Research Scholarship enabled me to have the professional release time and financial means to pursue an empirically-based research project, which sought to answer the following research question: How effectively is the educational philosophy of the New Zealand Curriculum and technicalities of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualification communicated to Asian immigrant parents? The ideological premise of this study asserts that cultural diversity is a strength in the increasingly globalized future that we face and actively demonstrates the mandate for a multicultural democracy in both schools and wider society.

1.3 Research context

This thesis documents an exploratory, small-scale, qualitative study which records the experiences and understanding of the NCEA Level 1 qualification and New Zealand Curriculum of seven Asian immigrant parents residing in Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. Tauranga is a growing provincial city to which immigrants are moving for lifestyle choices and family reunification (Family and Community Services, 2010). The research is located in a provincial area of New Zealand for the express purpose of documenting needs of Asian immigrant parents, outside of the main metropolitan areas. While the primary concentration of Asian immigration is in the Auckland region, resources and support systems are less likely to be available in provincial areas. Therefore, this research offers the potential to foreshadow needs for immigrant communities in provincial areas and aims to minimise discontinuities in the level of support.

Parents were drawn from five different state and state-integrated secondary schools. Two schools were single-sex schools and three were co-educational schools. These schools catered primarily for students from Year 9 to Year 13, with one school enrolling students from Year 7 to Year 13. Schools ranged from

Decile 5 to Decile 9, and the size of the schools varied from a comparatively small school of 750 students to the largest at 1870 students.

For the purposes of feasibility, the research project has been limited to parents of Sinic cultures, which refers to “...the common culture of China and the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and related cultures in Asia” (Zhao, 2011, p. x). Sinic civilisations include China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Vietnam, with a common influence of Confucianism (Zhao, 2011). At the outset, it is important to clarify that while the generic term ‘Asian’ will be used throughout this report there are distinct ethnic groups represented by this term, as well as diversity within each of the ethnic groups. The reader is cautioned against homogeneity. A similar caveat is frequently stated in academic literature (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Grant & Ray, 2010; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Qin, et al., 2011; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006).

1.4 Significance of the study

An extensive literature search has revealed a paucity of academic research related to Asian immigrants in New Zealand in the educational sector (D. Pang, 2002). Published material has largely focused on international fee-paying students and the role of New Zealand as an exporter of education, examining issues such as marketing and recruitment (Collins, 2006), pastoral care (Butcher & McGrath, 2004), transnational family immigration strategies (Butcher, 2004) and repatriation (Butcher, 2002). Scant regard has been given to Asian immigrant parents who adopt New Zealand as their new home and seek to educate their children as residents and citizens, despite the call to meet the needs of these students and address the adaptation issues they face (Campbell & Li, 2008; Chu, 2002).

This research project aims to raise an awareness of institutional home-school communication practices by examining current processes and procedures from the perspective of culturally and linguistically diverse Asian families. It is hoped to provide school leadership with insights into the needs of these parents so as to facilitate the socialisation and acculturation process for new immigrants, as well as enabling the active participation of Asian immigrant parents in their children’s education through the use of effective home-school communication strategies.

The following chapter provides a review of relevant international literature. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, research design and process. Chapter Four presents the research findings, which are discussed in greater detail with respect to the literature in Chapter Five. Chapter Six identifies the limitations of the study and offers recommendations that have emerged from the empirical findings. The thesis concludes with an epilogue that documents an ethnic-specific parent-meeting which took place at the conclusion of the data-gathering phase of research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the relevant literature on home-school communication practices and processes with culturally and linguistically diverse immigrant parents. The aim of such a review is to provide insights for effective home-school communication practices with Asian immigrant parents based in New Zealand. An extensive search of literature revealed that the research pertaining to New Zealand-based Asian immigrants is primarily limited to non-educational contexts such as visa migration patterns, ethnic identity development and settlement experiences. New Zealand-based educational research for Asian immigrants has largely focused on international fee-paying students and the role of New Zealand as an exporter of education, examining issues such as marketing and recruitment (Collins, 2006), pastoral care (Butcher & McGrath, 2004), transnational family immigration strategies (Butcher, 2004) and repatriation (Butcher, 2002). Consequently, this literature review draws on international research, based in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), which examines the experiences and perspectives of Asian immigrants who have settled in Western nations. While the review is primarily based on overseas literature, it is not unrealistic to assume that similar challenges and issues are also present within the migrant communities of New Zealand. This literature review examines philosophical and functional aspects of the New Zealand educational system; parental involvement in schools; perspectives of Asian immigrant parents; culture and communication; and potential home-school communication strategies.

2.2 An overview of the New Zealand Educational System

New Zealand's educational system is undergoing philosophical and functional changes at secondary level. This section outlines the rationale for, and implications of, these changes.

2.2.1 The revised New Zealand Curriculum

A common understanding of curriculum is a guide to the planning and content of learning in schools (Bradley, 2004), but the New Zealand Curriculum document renders a more comprehensive and inclusive view of curriculum and is one which recognises the convergence of knowledge and pedagogy, local community, and

diverse cultural and societal factors (O'Neill, 2005). The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum has the premise of a student-centred curriculum, with broad directions for learning combined with the capacity for schools to tailor the curriculum to their specific communities and local contexts (Ministry of Education, 2007b). Its predecessor, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), implemented between 1993 and 1999, outlined eight distinct learning areas but drew criticism for its standardised management approach (O'Neill, 2005). The revised New Zealand Curriculum articulates the need to address student-learning in a holistic manner, incorporating not only the eight specified learning areas but also values and key competencies necessary for "...confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 8). The implementation of the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum was required with the Year 11 student cohort for the first time in 2011.

Of particular relevance to this research question, is the emphasis on linking schools with parents and the wider community. Prior to the culmination of the New Zealand Curriculum document, major stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on the proposed curriculum, and a report, *Curriculum Stocktake Report to Minister of Education, September 2002* (Ministry of Education, 2002), was prepared. This report includes feedback from consultants employed by the National Council for Educational Research (UK) and the Australian Council for Educational Research. Both consultants raise concerns about the commitment needed to honour students with different social and religious backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 2002). Further on in the report, Ministry staff highlight a lack of knowledge in the wider community in relation to the scope and expectations of the New Zealand curriculum and make the following observation,

If students are to transfer their learning to the real world, parents/whānau and members of the community have a fundamental role in assisting this transfer. The more parents/whānau know about the curriculum, the more effective [sic] they will perform this role. ...Providing better information to parents/whānau about the curriculum has the potential to increase the expectations parents/whānau have for their children in terms of educationally significant learning. It may also change the expectations that parents/whānau have of schools and aid parents/whānau in better

supporting their children to achieve positive educational outcomes.

(Ministry of Education, 2002, Information for parents/whānau, para. 1)

The report also clearly states the need to provide appropriate guidance material for parents, including reasons for, and purposes of, national curricula; the different elements of learning such as essential skills, attitudes and values, and essential learning areas; and how parents can actively and effectively participate in their child's education. The Ministry resource, *From the New Zealand Curriculum to School Curriculum*, clearly stated the need for parents to be actively involved in curriculum development and implementation, "As well as teachers, students, families, whānau, and the wider community must be involved in the process of designing curriculum" (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 7). Effectively, schools are mandated to value and include diverse community perspectives in the development of their curriculum design.

2.2.2 National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA)

2011 also sees two significant changes to the NCEA Level 1 qualification. The first change is the phased introduction of the reviewed achievement and unit standards at Level 1 as a result of the standards alignment process started in mid-2008 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009). The review effectively changes the ratio of internal and external standards available in each subject, with a maximum of three external standards to be assessed in each subject.

The second change is the inaugural introduction of course endorsements, following on from the successful introduction of certificate endorsements in 2007 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009), which rewards strong academic performances in individual courses or subjects. Students will require a minimum of three credits from both internal and external assessments to show that they are competent in both forms of assessment. The course endorsements are designed to provide not only a motivating factor for students, but also provide tertiary educational institutions and employers with more information to identify the strengths of individual students. Parents should be kept abreast of these changes, as they have potentially far-reaching consequences in relation to employment and access to tertiary study in future years.

2.3 Parental involvement

Home-school communication is a conduit for parent involvement in a child's educational journey and, at the outset, we need to consider why schools seek to engage parents. Parent involvement is defined as "...the parent's engagement in home and school activities to advance children's education and development" (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009, p. 691). Literature is widely supportive of positive academic outcomes associated with parental involvement (Desimone, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2007; Joshi, et al., 2005; E. Kim, 2002; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009), even when taking ethnicity and gender into account (Grant & Ray, 2010; Jeynes, 2007). Parental involvement practices also provide an opportunity to recognise the diversity of values and perspectives within the community (C. A. M. Banks, 2007). With evidence that links parental involvement and improved student outcomes, there has been growing pressure for parental involvement strategies from government policy, in countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. As a result, schools are facing the dichotomy of increasing pressure of performativity and a requirement for higher levels of parent involvement in children's education (Crozier & Davies, 2007), although there is dispute over whether mandated programmes are more effective than voluntary programmes (Jeynes, 2007; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Parental involvement effects appear to be greater for grades-based measures of student achievement than for standardised tests (Desimone, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007), which indicates the importance of parental involvement in the assimilation and contextualisation of student learning (Jeynes, 2007). Effective schools and principals recognise the influence that parents have on their child's education, and they are purposeful in engaging parents, rather than leaving the nature and extent of parent participation to chance (Glanz, 2006).

2.3.1 A theoretical perspective of parental involvement

Several prominent educational theories highlight the importance of effective home-school relationships. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) was a catalyst that defined learning primarily as a social practice, with society and culture at the crux of the learning process. From this perspective, development and learning is significantly influenced by society and

culture and it places great significance on the opportunities for successful social interactions (Nieto, 2002).

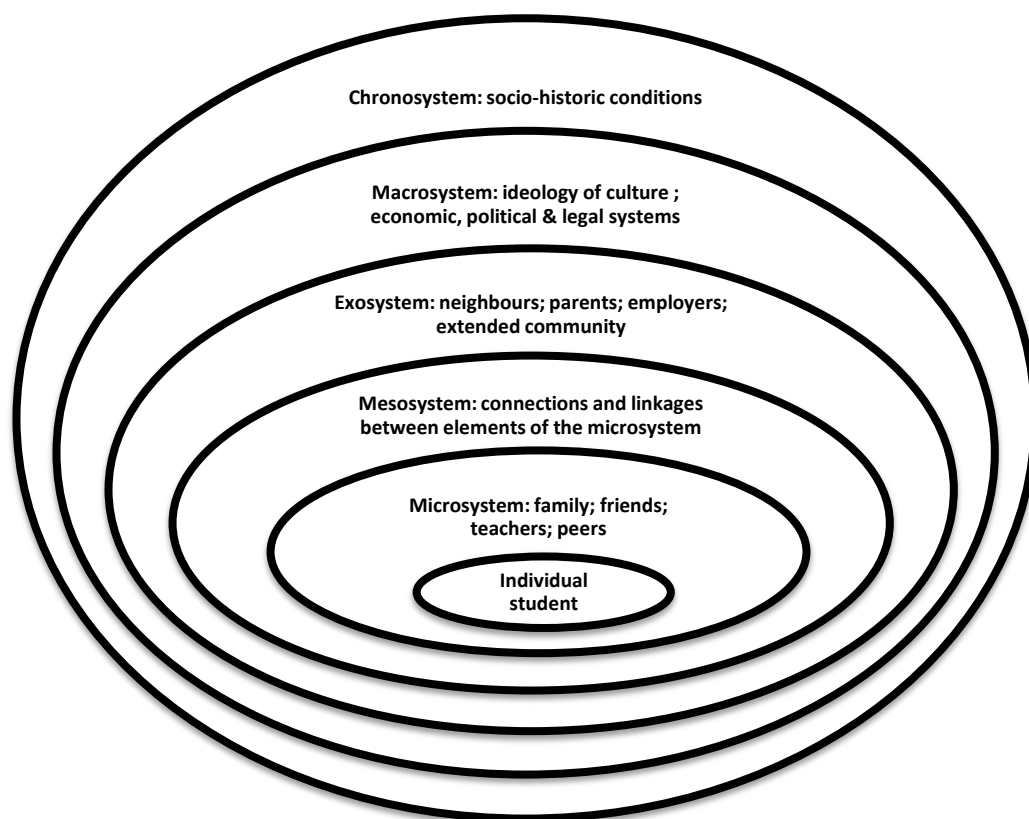


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Adapted from *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family involvement* (p. 35), by K.B. Grant and J.A. Ray, 2012, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission of SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC BOOKS.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) widely regarded ecological model (Figure 1) further categorises the social interactions that can influence a student's education. Figure 1 shows the interdependent nature of relationships between the different categories and the level of direct influence on a student's development. Of particular relevance to this study is the 'meso-system', which represents the quality of relationships between home and school. His theory purports that the quality of relationships between the child and the microsystem variables will impact on the child, e.g. strong, positive relationships between family and teachers will be beneficial for a child's progress. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model lends support to the active alignment of school and home cultures to minimise discontinuities between home and school (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). It is

also important to note that this model locates home-school connections within a cultural context, which implies that cultural factors influence these interactions.

Building on the importance of home-school interactions, a more recent, well-regarded model, Epstein's 'Overlapping Spheres of Influence' (Epstein et al., 2002), also champions the need for coherent and congruent interactions between home and school. Epstein argues that when philosophy and practice between home and school are in alignment, students are more successful because their families are empowered to support their child's education (Grant & Ray, 2010; Kreider & Sheldon, 2010). Although Epstein's original model does not explicitly refer to cultural contexts, her later work does begin to incorporate cultural considerations, with the contention that parent involvement activities can, and should, be designed to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse families (Hidalgo, et al., 2004).

Literature also suggests that immigrant students and parents have differing forms of resources available to them, which influence the manner in which they are involved. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) first proposed the idea of families and communities having 'social capital', collaborative relationships which, if utilised, can increase the resources available to meet the needs of a family and improve well-being. This proposition of social capital provides a basis for developing a 'funds-of-knowledge' approach (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2005, in Grant & Ray, 2010), which advocates educators to "...view families with a positive, strengths-based perspective that respects cultural values and practices and affirms that teachers can learn as much from families as children can learn from their schools" (Grant & Ray, 2010, p. 40). By adopting this stance, Grant and Ray (2010) suggest that educators can access networks of support, such as collaborative working relationships between parents and teachers, and that resources can be drawn on in the wider community, such as relatives or church affiliations.

All of these models highlight the significance that family and the wider community have on a student's education. While parental involvement is not imperative for a student's success, family, school and community can work in different, complementary ways to provide valuable moral support (Nieto, 2004).

2.3.2 Measuring parental involvement

Epstein's typology of parental involvement (Epstein, et al., 2002) is frequently referred to as a measure for parental-involvement in schools and it identifies six types of parental involvement that contribute towards successful home-school partnership programmes. These include parenting (assisting parents with parenting skills and setting home conditions conducive to learning), communicating (understanding school policies and programmes), volunteering (with a range of times and opportunities), learning at home (involving parents with homework and other curriculum-related activities), decision making (participating in school decisions and developing parent leadership) and collaborating with the community (co-ordinating resources from the community for families). However, this typology is developed from a school perspective and, in Western countries, it is often the white, middle-class culture that is acknowledged and encouraged through parental involvement activities, such as volunteering, and attendance at school events (Auerbach, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Glanz, 2006; Grant & Ray, 2010). Traditionally, parents have had to conform to school practices, which have been based on upper-middle class, economically self-sufficient nuclear families (Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006) and immigrant parents typically reflect low levels of parental involvement in terms of Epstein's typology (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). The distinction between home-based and school-based involvement is recognised in the literature (Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006), and has particular relevance for Asian students (Mau, 1997). For example, many Chinese parents are actively engaged in promoting and encouraging their children's education in the home, but may not necessarily have a matching interaction with school or staff (Hidalgo, et al., 2004).

It is important to recognise that family and community involvement can be seen both as an institutional and cultural practice (Li, Du, et al., 2011) and school practices may not be culturally situated or appropriate for immigrant families. New immigrant or low socio-economic parents are particularly vulnerable, and may feel disempowered (Glanz, 2006). Immigrants can be pressured by the power of the institutionalized public school system (Samovar & Porter, 2003). There are also indications that the level of involvement is affected by the parents' degree of understanding and familiarity with the school system (Hidalgo, et al., 2004).

With the increasing diversity of society being reflected in school demographics, a much broader perspective of parental involvement practices needs to be taken, particularly in light of the fact that parents can act as a support for academic learning and can assist the transition from one cultural environment to another (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Research highlights a lack of consultation of the needs and desires of the immigrant communities and an imposition of traditional practices (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Cultural values and norms need to be taken into consideration when planning parent-involvement practices and programmes, because many traditional involvement practices are considered ineffective with families from culturally diverse backgrounds (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Glanz, 2006; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Regrettably, cultural differences are often used to justify a lack of parental involvement (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

2.4 School as a vehicle of socialisation

Pai, Adler and Shadiow (2006) propose that schools are an ‘agent of cultural transmission’ because they perceive schools to be specialized social institutions which transmit the culture of the larger society through structural organization, school personnel’s behavioural patterns, and values. Strong, functioning institutions, such as schools, are linked to community stability and well-being (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009) and schools play a particularly significant role in the lives of immigrant youth. Daffin and Anderson (2009) argue that education affects social mobility, social efficiency, and democratic equality. Social mobility enables individuals to transcend class barriers; social efficiency develops skills necessary for economic contribution to society; and democratic equality reflects the degree to which individuals can participate freely and equally in society. The successful acculturation of culturally and linguistically different youth is influenced by the quality of their learning environments and the relationships that they build (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). The idea that “...learning emerges from the social, cultural, and political spaces in which it takes place..., and through the interactions and relationships that occur between learners and teachers” (Nieto, 2002, p. 5) is widely recognised by critical educational scholars (J. A. Banks, 2009a; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Nieto, 2002; Olneck, 2004; Zhao, 2011).

Education has been used to acculturate immigrants by inculcating dominant modes of social participation (Olneck, 2004). Interactional, linguistic, and cultural codes acquired through school can then be transferred into family and community settings (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Olneck, 2004). Proponents of education as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural and societal values recognise that education is not a neutral endeavour (Nieto, 2002) and inculcation processes have not been without tension between coercion and beneficence, and acquiescence and resistance (Olneck, 2004). Olneck's study (2004) highlights the salience of the immediate school context for immigrant students. He argues that both tacit and explicit pedagogical, curricular and administrative practices of schools are significant in the formation of boundaries for immigrant students, which may be inclusive or exclusive. Schools need to be aware of the degree of discontinuity between cultural and structural characteristics of school and immigrant cultures, which can result in social distance and marginality (Olneck, 2004). Government and school policy tend to prescribe parental involvement in the dominant culture's patterns of parental involvement, which can cause dissonance between the values and traditions of home and expectations and requirements of school (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) point out that societal and cultural practices can result in differential access to resources and information, which subsequently affects the degree of participation. This situation can be further complicated by an unconscious misunderstanding of cultural norms, behaviours and values, which can result in unintentional social distance and marginality (Olneck, 2004). In particular Olneck notes that "...facets of school organization and practice impede the formation of such relationships" (2004, p. 398) and he cautions that this reluctance and disregard may be unwittingly transmitted to students and their families. Teachers need to be cognisant of, and acknowledge, the differences, and act as a bridge between the students' differences and the culture of the host society (Nieto, 2002). Culturally-appropriate relationships with school personnel can provide social capital for students, facilitating access to information about school procedures, advice and guidance, and advocates who are able to act as "bridges to gatekeepers", role models who offer emotional and moral support (Olneck, 2004, p. 397). Schools can act as resource brokers and help parents gain

skills and efficacy to facilitate increased and improved quality of parental involvement (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

2.5 The ‘eco-cultural niche’

Auerbach (2006) asserts that schools need to take into account the ‘eco-cultural niche’ and cultural logic and incorporate aspects, such as family structure, relational dynamics and the psychological frame of reference, into practices for immigrant parental involvement. Immigrant parents pose additional challenges for schools as a consequence of cultural and linguistic differences (Ran, 2001), and the current emphasis on parent involvement may violate cultural norms for many immigrant parents (Olneck, 2004). Olneck describes schools as being “... often opaque, confusing, distant, and uninviting...” (2004, p. 390) for immigrant parents, and research suggests that there are a number of areas that can affect the type and extent of parental involvement, including socio-economic status (SES), parental educational levels, stage of education, ethnicity and parental expectations. Fan and Chen’s (2001) meta-analysis of quantitative studies of parental effect on achievement found that ethnicity only has a small to moderate effect on the extent of parental involvement, although this finding is contrary to other studies. It appears to be more widely accepted that students of different ethnic groups respond to different kinds of involvement of parents, and schools need to understand their parent community and cultures to provide appropriate opportunities and support for such involvement (Desimone, 1999; E. Kim, 2002, p. 532; Olsen & Fuller, 2008).

Education is a socially-situated practice, and immigrant youth face discontinuities between home and school. The literature suggests that educational practitioners should endeavour to understand the eco-cultural niche of immigrant groups. Immigrant students and families are ethnically, linguistically, economically and experientially diverse (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). They will differ in terms of resources available to them, as well as the settlement context. Cultural and economic differences influence family involvement but, notwithstanding this, diversity still represents an opportunity to bring community values, lifestyles and realities into school – language, culture and expectations can become part of the dialogue (Nieto, 2004). John Ogbu (1987) also suggested that not only should the characteristics of the cultural

background be examined, but also the group's situation in the host society and perceptions of opportunities available within that society. Scholars of Asian education call for a specific Asian socio-cultural perspective, which takes into account their cultural background and historical heritage (Cheng, 1995; Pai, et al., 2006; Qin, et al., 2011). Zhao notes, "While Western notions of parental involvement can be used as points of reference, localized frameworks must be developed to reflect the cultural and socio-economic realities that shape the children's education in the school, community, and home" (2011, p. xiii).

Immigrants from Sinic civilizations share similar Confucian cultural influences, but they do come from countries with different political and socio-economic backgrounds, which mean immigrants differ in adaptation and resettlement patterns (Qin, et al., 2011). Pai, et al., (2006) suggest, "These generalizations are useful in coming to understand the general range of preferences, but they are counterproductive if they are viewed as rigid categories that individual students must disprove" (p. 219). Once the specific "eco-cultural niche" is understood, then schools are able to identify the support and assistance that may be necessary to assist Asian immigrant parents.

2.6 Asian immigrant parent involvement influences

Academics based in the United Kingdom and the United States of America have begun to focus their attention on Asian immigrants, including specific ethnic groups such as Korean, Pakistani, Chinese and Bangladeshi immigrants (Crozier & Davies, 2007; E. Kim, 2002; V. O. Pang, Kiang, & Pak, 2004; Ran, 2001). The combined body of research presents a number of common themes related to the level of parental involvement in immigrant students' education.

2.6.1 Level of acculturation

The level of acculturation is a significant variable in parental involvement in school (E. Kim, 2002; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Ran, 2001; Samovar & Porter, 2003; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006) and it appears that there is a difference in the confidence and skills of those immigrant parents who have been educated abroad and exposed to cultures different from their own (Crozier & Davies, 2007). The length of time in the host country will determine the extent to which parents have been exposed to mainstream cultural models, like parent involvement norms

(Auerbach, 2006). The issue of acculturation highlights the need for particular attention to be paid to recent immigrants, as new immigrants are more likely to communicate in their ethnic style than those who have higher levels of acculturation, and these culturally-conditioned responses may be ineffective in the new context (Samovar & Porter, 2003; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Where the host culture contrasts sharply with the native culture, there is a risk that immigrants may withdraw into community enclaves in order to minimise contact with the host culture (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

2.6.2 Significance of family

Research related to identity development of immigrant youth identifies that families are critical components of ethnic identity and adolescent development (Fuligni, Rivera, & Leininger, 2007). For many immigrants, "...family and community are the fundamental sociological and moral constructs..." (Olneck, 2004, p. 389). Social standards, peer pressure and community norms are significant for Asian students (Desimone, 1999). Additionally, Asian cultures have a strong orientation towards 'familism' (Fuligni, et al., 2007; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; E. Kim, 2002; Kitano & Daniels, 2001), that is, "...the family as a central referent, source of support, and obligation for individuals..."(Auerbach, 2006, p. 278).

For Asian students, family structure and influence is significant, "...the structure, interactions and behaviours of the Asian-American family unit are systematically different from those of other cultures and this affects the parent-involvement-student-achievement relationship" (Desimone, 1999, p. 22). There is a strong patriarchal role within Asian families and gender roles are clearly defined (Desimone, 1999; Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Kim (2002) suggests that each culture has its own distinct cultural family practices/parenting style, which need to be taken into consideration. Asian immigrant students tend to have a conducive educational environment at home, with intact family structures (Qin, et al., 2011). Parents are the authority figures, which is different from the democratic model in many mainstream Western families (Olsen & Fuller, 2008) and care must be taken not to undermine parental authority (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). While home support has been purported to be the least effective form of parental involvement in Fan and Chen's meta-analysis of predominantly North American research, (2001), this

is not necessarily the case for Asian students. Parental expectations and home support tend to be important for Asian students, and discussions with parents about school are significant (Desimone, 1999). The actual physical presence and involvement of parents at school, such as volunteering and fundraising, does not appear to impact on the academic outcomes of Asian students (Desimone, 1999; E. Kim, 2002; Mau, 1997).

Achievement is considered part of the child's obligation to the family (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). In Sinic cultures, students' achievements is "...not only an individual matter but a family (and community) affair" (Li, Du, et al., 2011, p. 105), because individual mobility is closely linked to the family's wellbeing, particularly the "face" of the family. In general, Asian immigrant parents have viewed academic success as having multiple potential benefits for their families, such as a higher standard of living and higher family status within the community. Conversely, the family can face shame and guilt if they fail (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Although the sense of familial obligation provides motivation for these students, it does not negate the need to provide actual assistance to families (Fuligni, et al., 2007). It is imperative to ensure that parents, and family, are integrated into the educational strategies for these students.

2.6.3 Home-school boundary

For most parents there is a fairly distinct boundary between home and school, with school and teachers assuming the principal educative role, and parents in a supporting role (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Tveit, 2009). Immigrant parents have differing views about the level of responsibility that the school should have (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009) and may not see the need to be involved in school-based parent involvement activities or understand the nature of home-school partnerships (Joshi, et al., 2005). For Asian parents, there is clear demarcation between home and school. Confucian influences result in teachers being highly respected as experts and the source and authority of knowledge, and parents take a supporting role (He et al., 2011; Li, Du, et al., 2011; Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Consequently, Western counter-cultural communication practices that rely on voluntarism and initiative, can limit participation (Olneck, 2004). Parents are not likely to directly contradict what is said by a teacher in their presence (Olsen & Fuller, 2008) and matters of curriculum and discipline are perceived to be the

responsibility of the school (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Raising issues or discussing problems may be difficult (Olsen & Fuller, 2008), and this situation is compounded by the fact that their culture has a professional distance and reverence for the role of teachers and educators. Ironically, the lack of school-based parental involvement by Asian immigrant parents may be perceived by educators to be a lack of care or concern about their children's education (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Grant & Ray, 2010; Hidalgo, et al., 2004).

2.6.4 Parental expectations and reinforcement

Fan and Chen's (2001) meta-analysis identified that parental expectations are the most significant factor in affecting student achievement outcomes. From a complementary perspective, surveys of adolescents also state that parental reinforcement for education is important (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2002). Research focused on immigrant parents clearly iterates the high expectations that parents hold for their children and the importance of education (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Jeynes, 2007; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; E. Kim, 2002; Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Qin, et al., 2011).

Asian parents have a strong heritage of valuing educational endeavours with Confucian ethos influencing parents' beliefs (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; Li, Du, et al., 2011; Li, He, et al., 2011; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; N. Pang, 2011; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Qin, et al., 2011). Parents are typically willing to use scarce financial resources to assist their children's education (Grant & Ray, 2010; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Ran, 2001) and typically display a high level of co-operation with teachers in Sinic societies (Jeynes, 2005b).

2.6.5 Language barriers

Language poses a barrier for those students and parents whose native language is not English (Ballenger, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Joshi, et al., 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Qin, et al., 2011; Samovar & Porter, 2003; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). It has been suggested that adolescents may face higher psychosocial risks and greater issues at school, due to the parents' limited English skills and consequent inability to access support services (V. O. Pang, et al., 2004). Length of time in the new host country (Ran, 2001) and educational level (Crozier & Davies, 2007) may influence the English ability of the parents.

Kim suggests that parents with a higher level of English proficiency are more readily acculturated in to the host culture and, therefore, are more likely to exhibit cultural norms in terms of parental involvement at school (E. Kim, 2002). Parents' proficiency in English affects how they are involved in their child's education. Low levels of English may preclude effective communication and parent-involvement at school (Hernandez, 2004; E. Kim, 2002) and may impact on the parents' ability to interpret student reports (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009), while higher levels of English proficiency tend towards a greater level of school contact (E. Kim, 2002). Parents who lack proficient English skills are unlikely to initiate contact with schools and may be reluctant to attend school events (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Olneck, 2004). Lower levels of English proficiency may also restrict the ability of parents to assist students' work at home (Ran, 2001) and is linked to the level of students' educational achievement (E. Kim, 2002). Low levels of English may also cause immigrants to retreat into immigrant-community enclaves, resulting in isolation from the mainstream host society (Hernandez, 2004).

2.6.6 Socio-economic status (SES)

Research conducted in the United States of America supports the proposition that students from low-SES backgrounds are at risk of having less support from home (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Jeynes, 2007). Immigrants may face reduced levels of support and socio-economic resources, which influences the financial, social and cultural capital available (V. O. Pang, et al., 2004; Qin, et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Parental-involvement factors may be grounded in socio-economic realities and institutional barriers, such as lack of transportation or limited knowledge which inhibits parental involvement (Auerbach, 2006). Culturally and linguistically diverse families from working-class neighbourhoods may struggle to meet school expectations of parental involvement (Nieto, 2004). Immigrants often face structural barriers, such as hours of work and transportation issues, as they adapt to a new country. Both parents may work, sometimes outside regular school hours, to support their families, which interferes with their ability to be involved with their children's education (Ballenger, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Joshi, et al., 2005; Qin, et al., 2011). Students, themselves, may be expected to have obligations outside of school that conflict with school

requirements, such as contributing to the family's economic resources or caring for younger siblings (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Encouragingly, there is evidence that supports the notion that, if schools become familiar with their parent body and wider community, it is possible for schools to ameliorate the effects and consequences of low socio-economic status (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; E. Kim, 2002).

2.6.7 Parental education

North American research also clearly links the level of parental education to the level of academic involvement in schools, with higher levels of education linked to higher levels of involvement (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; E. Kim, 2002). Educated, literate immigrant parents are able to assist with the moral and financial commitment necessary for successful education (Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; Nieto, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). However, it should be noted that parents' expectations of the level and type of involvement often reflects their own personal experiences of parental involvement, and parents from differing cultural backgrounds may well bring different experiences (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Research supports the premise that, if parents believe they can help their children, they will actively do so, even if their own education is limited. (Ballenger, 2009).

2.6.8 Parental role construction

Parental efficacy can also be an issue if there is a lack of parental-role definition (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Halsey, 2005; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006), which supports Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) proposition that parent efficacy and role definition are crucial aspects in parental involvement decisions. The lack of parental involvement is exacerbated at secondary level (Jeynes, 2005a, 2007). Parents are typically more involved in school-based activities in early childhood and primary school, with a notable change in the frequency and type of involvement as the student reaches adolescence and enters secondary education (Halsey, 2005; Walker & MacLure, 2005). It is suggested that dialogue between parents and teachers becomes more problematic once students enter secondary schooling, with asymmetrical interactional patterns indicating the greater degree of control over the direction and content of communication on the part of the school or staff (Walker &

MacLure, 2005). This reduction in parental involvement may be attributed to the fact that secondary schools tend to be larger and more impersonal than primary schools (Crozier & Davies, 2007) and subject content becomes more complex and specialised (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Many parents feel uncomfortable about their ability to offer academic support (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). If the child is not successful and the parents do not know how to support success, parents often feel both helpless and powerless (Olsen & Fuller, 2008).

It is possible to conceptualize the role of parents as active co-educators of their children, if parents are allocated the responsibility by the professionals. However, this approach will only work if the parents are suitably equipped for this role (Crozier & Davies, 2007), which further supports Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) call for developing parental efficacy. Deslandes and Cloutier (2002) argue for age-appropriate forms of parental involvement but parents may require guidance in this area. Another dilemma is that the responsibilities of this parental role is often decided by those in power, i.e. the schools, and expectations are often communicated in the dominant culture's terms of reference (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

The pattern of reduced parent involvement at secondary level is also true for immigrant students (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). This situation is compounded by parents who have little education or were not successful at school themselves, or are limited in English proficiency (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Immigrant children tend to acculturate faster because of exposure to English language and cultural norms at school (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Not surprisingly, immigrant parents often rely on their children to act as cultural brokers, with the students assuming significant responsibility within the family structure (Auerbach, 2006; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Consequently, parents also often relinquish authority, control and definition of their role to their children (Auerbach, 2006; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Where parents are not able to give concrete help and tangible guidance, students can lack a sense of direction (Nieto, 2004), or face additional difficulties and pressures (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). In some cases, while parents are willing to assist with studies at home, they feel that the students know more because the parents have not been schooled in the host country, so they defer to the students (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

In other cases, older siblings, who have personal experience of the process and systems, may assume the role of an informative agent and, therefore, those who do not have older siblings may face a greater challenge (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Auerbach's (2006) study of Latino immigrant students in America discovered that these students are typically independent of parents in making college-level decisions because of the lack of parental cultural and educational knowledge. Research similarly based in the United States of America has also found that Asian immigrant students often have to make their own educational decisions (Qin, et al., 2011). When students are isolated in this manner, they often make poor choices, which can affect their educational outcomes, although schools can ameliorate this with support (Qin, et al., 2011).

Secondary students can act as gatekeepers and exclude their parents because of a lack of parental education and/or familiarity with the current educational context (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Students have also cited language barriers and protecting parents from racial harassment as other reasons for excluding their parents (Crozier & Davies, 2007). This is a heavy burden for students to bear because immigrant students often face choices and dilemmas because of the complex and conflicting cultural values (Pai, et al., 2006; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004), as well as stress, and rejection from their peers, when they are striving to meet high educational expectations (V. O. Pang, et al., 2004).

2.6.9 Worldview of curriculum and pedagogy

Small-scale studies of parent-teacher interactions highlight significant differences in educational worldviews between Western educators and Asian parents. Sinic cultures tend towards a competitive, high-stakes examination culture and curriculum, with a high level of tests and examinations and a focus on the quantitative aspects of students' learning outcomes (He, et al., 2011; Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; J. C.-K. Lee et al., 2011; Li, He, et al., 2011). The Asian education systems have a tendency towards skill acquisition out of context, rote learning and memorisation, whereas the orientation of 'Western' curricula is focused on application in real-world contexts and integration of subject areas (He, et al., 2011; Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; J. C.-K. Lee, et al., 2011; Ran, 2001).

Analysis of parent-teacher interviews in the UK reveals that Asian parents are focused on accuracy of student work, whereas Western teachers are focused on norm-based achievement and developmental perspectives (Guo, 2010; Ran, 2001). Asian parents also appear to be surprised that parent-teacher interviews focus not only on academic achievement, but also personality and social development (Ran, 2001). Asian parents take the good points for granted and expect weak points to be highlighted to help the student improve but this contrasts with the Western preference to emphasize the positive to preserve and build self-esteem (Ran, 2001). Children should not be rewarded for what they are expected to do and, typically, acknowledgement comes in the form of encouragement to do better (Olsen & Fuller, 2008).

Research has highlighted other East-West differences in aspects of education. For example, there are differences in homework expectations with Asian parents concerned that there is insufficient homework (Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; Ran, 2001), and extra-curricular activities are often not seen by them as important or related to academic performance (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). There are also differences in assessment and marking systems used to grade students' work. Asian immigrant parents struggle to understand the grading system and many parents rely on their children and/or bilingual teachers to explain the system to them (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009).

2.7 Culture and communication

Communication is the bridge between home and school, and an analysis of home-school communication between culturally and linguistically diverse parents requires consideration of the impact of cultural influences. Communication is a socially situated process, with particular forms and functions that involve structures and processes for meaning making (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Delpit's (1988) ground-breaking work acknowledged that culture exists in linguistic forms and it is now widely accepted that communication occurs within contextualised cultural frameworks (Gay, 2010; Grant & Ray, 2010; Nieto, 2004; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Pai, et al., 2006; Samovar & Porter, 2003). As Gay notes, "Communication is strongly culturally influenced, experientially situated, and functionally strategic. ...we must be mindful that communication styles are multidimensional and multimodal, shaped by many different influences" (2010, p. 125). Culture

encapsulates “...social shared cognitive codes and maps, norms of appropriate behaviour, assumptions about values and world view, and lifestyle in general ...” (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991, p. 17). It affects the organisation, structure and philosophy of economic, social and political, and religious institutions and also affects social interactions (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Culture influences the form, function and content of communication as well as defining what is deemed to be appropriate and important behaviours (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2002; Gay, 2010; O'Reilly, 2005; Ryen, 2002; Samovar & Porter, 2003). Gay elaborates, “Sociocultural context and nuances, discourse logic and dynamics, delivery styles, social functions, role expectations, norms of interaction, and nonverbal features are as important as (if not more so than) vocabulary, grammar lexicon...” (2010, p. 79).

Cultural values and norms provide a basis for interpreting situations and the behaviours of others (Samovar & Porter, 2003). There are significant East-West cultural differences that impact on communication and require more thorough consideration, including individualism vs. collectivism, egalitarianism vs. hierarchy, and high-context vs. low-context cultures. As a caveat, these distinctions are problematic and generalist, but provide insights that may prove useful when analysing home-school communication between New Zealand schools and Asian immigrant parents.

2.7.1 Individualism vs. collectivism

The first cultural concept that impacts on communicative processes is individualism vs. collectivism. Schwartz (1994) defines this cultural concept as “the extent to which a society treats individuals as autonomous, or as embedded in their social groups” (in Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 302). The Confucian influence in Sinic cultures advocates collective values and interests and the importance of personal relationships (N. Pang, 2011). As a consequence there is an “...elaborate set of norms and moral directives governing and dictating conducts and attitudes in different aspects of an individual’s personal life and interpersonal relationships” (N. Pang, 2011, p. 19). Collective cultures demand the preservation of harmony, and promote humility in interactions (Hooker, 2003) as well as interdependence through an emphasis on social obligations (Samovar & Porter,

2003). In addition to this, a homogenous population gives an assurance of shared values, which expedites the collective orientation (Hooker, 2003).

2.7.2 Egalitarianism vs. hierarchy

Egalitarian or hierarchical structuring of relationships will also impact on communication. Schwartz (1994) describes this cultural dimension as "... the extent to which a culture's social structure is flat (egalitarian) versus differentiated into ranks (hierarchical)" (as cited in Samovar, 2003, p.303). Sinic cultures have a fundamental core belief in the hierarchical ordering of personal relationships. (N. Pang, 2011). Hierarchy provides norms for interaction, and interpersonal relationships adopt a vertical tendency, with differentiation of status based on age, gender, education or position (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Consequently, Asian cultures tend to have a high power distance, with deference to superiors, which rarely sees superiors challenged and an inherent reluctance to discuss problems (Gay, 2010; Hooker, 2003; Pai, et al., 2006).

2.7.3 High-context and low-context communication

Hall (1976) pioneered the concept of high-context and low-context communication. This concept refers to "...the degree to which within-culture communications are indirect versus direct" (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 304). High-context communication is implicit and relies on physical settings, shared norms and values with non-verbal cues and an understanding of rituals essential for comprehension. (Hooker, 2003; Le Baron, 2004). "... the context of the communication stimulates pre-existing knowledge in the receiver. ... meaning is inferred rather than directly interpreted from the communication." (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 304). This contrasts with low-context communication which relies on explicit, specific and literal verbal or written communication, rather than the context, to relay meaning (Hooker, 2003; Le Baron, 2004). Typically, Western cultures are oriented towards a low-context basis for communication, while Asian cultures are founded in a high-context environment (Hooker, 2003; Le Baron, 2004).

Understanding difference in cultural dynamics of interpersonal relationships and communicative processes will provide insight and improve the integrative potential of interactions (Cheng, 1995; Samovar & Porter, 2003). The Sinic tendency towards respect for authority, harmony and reluctance to criticise,

combined with an orientation towards high-context communication, poses challenges in a Western low-context, individualistic, egalitarian society.

2.7.4 Competing cultural and linguistic codes

Diversity in culture means that linguistic differences and behavioural norms may differ (Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006) and the degree of discontinuity between native and host cultures can influence the extent of participation of minority families within the host society (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Schools are governed by linguistic, sociocultural, and social interaction codes (Olneck, 2004), which presents the obstacle of social and cultural reproduction when catering for diverse perspectives, meeting styles and discourse in unfamiliar school jargon (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Immigrant students and parents face competing and, at times, conflicting linguistic and cultural codes and values of home and school, resulting in cultural discontinuities and communicative mismatches which may alienate them (C. A. M. Banks, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2004; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Shields (2009) makes a poignant observation and issues a challenge,

...when children from other than dominant groups arrive in school, they tend to find themselves in situations in which their home cultures are misrecognized, not valued, and rarely respected or legitimized.
...educators must teach all students how to navigate the implicit norms of schooling. (p. 475)

The ideology of dominant culture groups can produce cultural language practices that can displace, silence, or marginalize other cultural groups (Samovar & Porter, 2003) and those who lack access to privileged knowledge will be disadvantaged (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Therefore, it is important for educators to identify conflicting and complementary points between discourse styles so that they can pinpoint and prioritise specific places for interventions to improve intercultural interactions (Gay, 2010; Samovar & Porter, 2003). Barriers to effective two-way communication can be differing communicative purposes, or differences in status, age, gender, race or culture (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). It is not only spoken and written language that poses challenges but the subtleties of language such as tenor, tone and meanings of words. For example, terms like ‘good’ and

‘satisfactory’ can be perceived as being very positive for Asian immigrant parents (Ran, 2001). Asian populations are also noted for their literal interpretations, rather than the implied communicative intent (Cheng, 1995). Home-school communication at a secondary level in Western societies tends to be formalised, written forms of communication such as newsletters (Amatea, 2009; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Halsey, 2005). Teachers and parents can perceive communicative efforts differently, with schools tending to employ more institutional forms of one-way communication, such as newsletters, while parents desire a more individualised level of interaction (Amatea, 2009; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). These forms of written communication are often not translated and can, at times, be culturally inappropriate (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

Individuals possess tacit knowledge of their own cultural systems (Samovar & Porter, 2003). If we are not explicit, it makes it more difficult for the newcomers to navigate a complex educational system (Delpit, 1988). She argues that “...being told explicitly of the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (Delpit, 1988, p. 283). Other academics also concur with this proposition, “Cultural code-switching requires at least some degree of explicit knowledge about the cultures from which and to which one is shifting” (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 195). However, these are not insurmountable barriers for schools and, as Nieto points out, “...it is how these differences are viewed in society that can make the difference...” (2002, p. 14). The use of culturally appropriate values and practices in pedagogy and curricular processes have been found to be effective for immigrant students (Nieto, 2002), with the caveat that good communication does not eliminate all intercultural tension as there may be fundamental philosophical and moral differences (C. A. M. Banks, 2007). If schools work proactively to communicate explicit information and processes, this assists cultural understanding, which helps immigrants to adjust to unfamiliar environments, reduces stress (Cheng, 1995; Hooker, 2003) and helps them to develop ‘revised cultural patterns’, as the home culture is adapted to new environmental and cultural situations (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

2.8 Engaging immigrant parents

The increasing diversity of the parent population provides both opportunities and challenges for schools. Fortunately, there has also been a range of strategies

documented to facilitate their involvement in the education of their children. Research has called on educators to develop parent involvement practices and culturally responsive communication strategies that acknowledge and affirm diverse cultural and linguistic identities (Grant & Ray, 2010; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009), which facilitates involvement in different settings and at different levels of the educational process (C. A. M. Banks, 2007).

2.8.1 The need for information

Ideally, home-school communication should be timely, focused on school goals and activities, and relay information about the student's academic progress (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). The frequency of opportunities and level of interaction affects the degree of efficacy in intercultural communication (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Information allows parents to maintain involvement and influence in their children's lives and reduces cultural misunderstanding (Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Ran, 2001). Given different worldviews, and a lack of personal experience of education in the host country, it is understandable that immigrants, in particular, face unfamiliarity about society and the school system (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Hernandez, 2004; Joshi, et al., 2005; Qin, et al., 2011). Lack of timely and understandable knowledge or information about school systems may limit opportunities to assist students, inhibit parental involvement, and disadvantage students (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). This situation is particularly serious for parents who do not speak or read English fluently and information may need to be provided in different forms or languages (Hidalgo, et al., 2004). Additionally, with the complex nature of educational institutions and qualifications, it is not surprising to find that there is usually a reliance by ethnic minority parents on schools to inform parents and explain school processes and systems (Ran, 2001). Few educators question the process of communication, assuming that institutional, open-door invites are sufficient and they come to the, sometimes, incorrect assumption that parents are unwilling to become involved (Ballenger, 2009; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Effective two-way communication enables families to have the opportunity to offer insights, ask questions, voice concerns and gain additional information (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). It will assist

immigrant families to understand school programmes and systems, and develop a reciprocal understanding of families' cultures, strengths and goals.

2.8.2 Communication and relationships

The process of communication provides cues about the relationships between individuals and groups which may determine who is dominant or submissive and determines the level of inclusion or exclusion (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

Timperley and Robinson (2002), in their New Zealand-based study of home-school partnerships, provide insights into the nature of partnerships that can be transferred to the challenge of developing effective home-school communication. They suggest that

...if partnerships are to realise their potential benefits, both the relationship and task dimensions need to be integrated in ways that establish processes for the partners to work together and to learn from one another about how to achieve the task. (p. 14)

Partnerships are formed for the purpose of achieving a task and, in the absence of task there is little motivation to act in partnership (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). A student's academic progress provides a common juncture between home, school, and community (Hidalgo, et al., 2004). Partnership enables more diverse information and expertise to be available than if the entities work in isolation, and it also communicates mutual respect (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). It is important to ensure the task is clearly defined so that partners can clarify their assumptions and responsibilities related to the task and develop a shared understanding (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). One barrier to shared understanding is that the tacit conceptualisations of the task are not made explicit (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). When a task is poorly defined or the partners define it differently, they are likely to make arbitrary decisions based on different assumptions and private interpretations (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Genuine partnership demands consideration of the task, responsibilities, process, power and accountability (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

Partnerships always involve relationships, which may feature more or less prominently, dependent on the task, and they tend to evolve as the partnership develops (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). The relationship dimension of

partnership “...refers to the quality of connection or bond that emerges in communication” (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 422). Trust is an important element of partnerships, so schools need to focus on building trusting relationships with diverse families that adhere to the principles of benevolence, competence, honesty and openness (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Relationships also require attention to the way in which power is distributed, as it is an essential element of the relationship (Samovar & Porter, 2003; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Societal and institutional norms and philosophical perspectives may govern the way responsibilities are adopted within a partnership (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Equal power is rare among partners who have different roles, interests, time available, expertise and legal responsibilities, so we need to recognise these differences rather than insisting on equal power (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Defining the role of each partner is important, and particular care should be taken when partners are expected to take on responsibilities for which they may have neither experience nor expertise (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

Timperley and Robinson also give consideration to the level of interaction between partners, distinguishing between ‘thin’ and ‘dense’ partnerships. In thin partnerships, “...partners may agree on an overarching framework of task responsibilities and work relatively independently to achieve them” (2002, p. 18). Alternatively, dense partnerships “...involve little delegated authority and thus commit partners to a much closer working relationship...” (Timperley & Robinson, 2002, p. 18). Thin partnerships are appropriate for situations where intensive interactions would be burdensome, but the advantage of dense partnerships is that they offer greater potential for reciprocal influence and increased understanding (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

2.8.3 Create a welcoming environment

A caring attitude can facilitate a positive adjustment (Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003). Families need to feel that their presence, culture and contributions are welcomed, and this is determined primarily through the building of relationships (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Immigrant parents are highly attuned to insensitivity or hostility on the part of school and/or staff, some of which may be at an

unconscious level (Joshi, et al., 2005), and may be wary of token invitations to participate (Ballenger, 2009). Ethnic groups and families who have experienced the effects of stereotypes or racism may also have a greater distrust of strangers and society (Crozier & Davies, 2007, 2008; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Grant & Ray, 2010). Appropriate cultural gestures are appreciated, but those that are embedded into the culture of the school have a greater impact on student achievement (Crozier & Davies, 2007) and enable continuities between home and school (Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006).

2.8.4 Bilingual staff and resources

Communication becomes a significant barrier when a school has a diverse parent community that does not speak English proficiently, and proactive approaches to improving home-school communication frequently recommend providing important materials, such as handbooks and reports, to parents in their native languages (Glanz, 2006; Grant & Ray, 2010; McEwan, 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Ran, 2001; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). However, educators need to recognise that some parents may not be literate and it is important that schools do not rely on print material alone as a form of communication (Grant & Ray, 2010).

Literature highlights the benefits of bilingual staff or translators in assisting parent understanding at important individual student meetings and significant school-wide meetings (Auerbach, 2006; Glanz, 2006; Guo, 2010; McEwan, 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Ran, 2001; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Translators need an understanding of the intent and content to be conveyed and educational jargon needs to be minimised (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Nuances of language can be problematic and translators can also ensure culturally appropriate communication (Ginsberg, 2007). However, translation will not remedy a situation where there are conflicting worldviews on education held by staff and parents (Guo, 2010). In this instance, ‘institutional agents’ may be used to create connections and support gaps in the family and cultural capital. This is especially important for complex decisions, provided they are culturally appropriate and supportive of the students and parents (Auerbach, 2006). Bilingual staff and assistants are useful, but care needs to be taken because they are often used for disciplinary issues and can impede development of a personal relationship between teaching staff and parents (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

2.8.5 Utilise the extended immigrant community

Many immigrant families face a ‘sociocultural paradox’, where they immigrate to improve the general quality of their lives but, as a consequence, lose supportive networks and familial connections when grappling with a new culture, language, style of living, and educational system (Gay, 2010). Challenges, and conflicts between parents and children, become more prominent in areas where there is a lack of community and social service support (V. O. Pang, et al., 2004). Parents, who immigrate by choice tend to show a greater level of education, preparation, family and community support as opposed to other immigrants such as refugees who migrate under difficult circumstances (Grant & Ray, 2010). Immigrant communities and networks of relations provide advice and guidance for newcomers, and these social links are critical in orienting to an unfamiliar and, at times, confusing environment (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Immigrants can access social capital and information from ethnic enclaves, which assists with adjustment difficulties (Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; Qin, et al., 2011).

Extended family relationships are common in culturally diverse families, and traditionally provide support, guidance and motivation in the education of young people (Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Olneck, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Although extended communities differ in their composition and strength of relationships between members of the ethnic groups, these relationships pose a potential resource for educators to use, which may compensate for a lack of educational experience or social capital on the part of parents (Crozier & Davies, 2006). This conceptualisation demands a broader definition of family that includes not only the biological parents, but also fictive kin (friends or neighbours), siblings, grandparents, and aunts or uncles (Hiatt-Michael & Hands, 2010). These mentoring relationships, community ties and social networks of support play a key role in students’ education, are related to academic achievement and are culturally appropriate for Asian students (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Olneck, 2004; Qin, et al., 2011).

Immigrant communities may also be isolated enclaves, which can result in incorrect and out-dated information (Crozier & Davies, 2007). This isolation may limit the access to mainstream academic resources and result in fewer opportunities for students within these communities, unless the schools reach the

communities and provide accurate information (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Research calls on schools to identify and solicit access to community resources by identifying individuals or groups who are able to facilitate successful home-school partnerships, such as community and faith-based organisations to build bridges with cultural or ethnic minorities (Grant & Ray, 2010; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; McEwan, 2005; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). This approach establishes connections within the community to access resources that may not otherwise be available to the school (Glanz, 2006). For example, the 'Chinese American Parents' Association of New York City' is an information and referral service that assists recent immigrants with the American educational system through newsletters, workshops and a telephone hotline (Hidalgo, et al., 2004, p. 643).

2.8.6 Different modes of communication

Traditional forms of communication, such as reports and parent evenings, are not conducive for effective dialogue with immigrant parents, who have limited English (Power & Clark, 2000). While virtually all parents receive written reports, Asian parents find the comments are often too generalized and are limited by their understanding of the language (Hidalgo, et al., 2004).

There is, typically, a low rate of attendance at parent-teacher evenings and other school functions for Asian parents in Western nations (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Low rates of attendance at parent-teacher evenings are linked with language barriers, work commitments (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009) and a lack of understanding about the importance of parent evenings (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Parent-teacher meetings may also hold a negative association for Asian immigrant parents, as this type of meeting in their home country is often associated with students who have problems (Desimone, 1999).

Brevity, at time-bound parent-teacher interviews, poses a barrier for immigrant parents because of the language barriers and the time needed to communicate differences in expectations and worldviews. Longer time allocations alleviate the pressure these parents feel, and enable teachers to communicate the school's philosophy of education, as well as reporting on the student's progress (Ran,

2001). Home visits may help teachers to gain a better understanding of students' home lives, and provide links to the resources within the extended immigrant community (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Home visits provide an opportunity to apply the 'funds of knowledge' approach, enabling teachers to see student learning in context and allowing the teachers to seek out the strengths of immigrant families (Ginsberg, 2007).

While language barriers can be formidable, cultural factors affecting participation also need to be taken into consideration, because parental engagement and communication can remain low, even when the parents can understand and speak English, or translations are provided (Hidalgo, et al., 2004). It is important to have genuine dialogue between teachers and parents, which communicates values and cultural aspects of educational priorities, and assists teachers to more effectively teach the immigrant students (Ran, 2001). Lack of functional literacy and understanding of jargon creates barriers, especially for culturally and linguistically diverse parents. Parents who are familiar with the language and style of educational discourse are more likely to participate in their child's schooling (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Communication interventions, such as workshops, can assist parents to become better advocates for their children's education, limit ambiguous expectations and clearly articulate the school's beliefs and expectations (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009).

2.8.7 Professional development of staff

Typically, Western educators have had little preparation to work with culturally diverse families (Nieto, 2004), but to understand people from international cultures requires knowledge of their cultures and an appreciation of their diversity (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Most Western teachers have limited exposure to Asian cultures (Ran, 2001), and hold preconceived notions of these cultures (Joshi, et al., 2005). Professional development is essential. "...to create learning environments conducive to learning for students from other cultures, teachers need insight into the values, beliefs and practices of those cultures" (Joshi, et al., 2005, p. 12). Once staff understand how beliefs and values may conflict or correspond with the values and beliefs of the school, as well as the structural barriers that immigrant families face, staff are more able to accommodate these differences (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Culturally competent staff can facilitate a

welcoming environment (Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006), and preparation of teachers before they conduct home visits is essential in order to conduct the visits in a culturally respectful manner (Ginsberg, 2007).

2.8.8 Leadership

A review of the literature indicates both the need and support for purposeful leadership in engaging with immigrant parents for effective and equitable change (Hiatt-Michael & Hands, 2010; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Shields, 2009). Daffin and Anderson (2009) call for transformative, critical leaders, who will “...be the advocates for disenfranchised students both within their schools and through their advocacy for social policies that empower their students and their families” (p. 446). Unfortunately, there is a paucity of policy at strategic and operational levels in Western nations for working with diverse Asian parent communities (Crozier & Davies, 2007), other than that which has been mandated, such as the Home-School agreement in the UK (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Involvement of students’ family and community members has typically relied on the efforts of individual teachers or staff members, rather than as school-wide initiatives (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Principals can lead their schools towards a more inclusive and responsive partnership that encourages parents to participate in meaningful roles (Ballenger, 2009; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). They can demonstrate leadership by championing diversity, seeking to understand the cultures of their students, participating in religious and cultural organisations that serve the immigrant communities, and hiring diverse staff (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Principals affect social structures, networks and school culture through how they exercise their leadership as they legitimize programmes and allocate resources depending on their priorities (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Strategic leadership is needed to allocate resources for immigrant parent involvement and communication (Crozier & Davies, 2007) so that community activities link to the school’s goals and mission (Glanz, 2006). Persistence on the part of school leadership is proven to work (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009), but it is most likely to be effective when it is part of a well-organised, goal-oriented, sustainable partnership programme (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

2.9 Summary

In New Zealand, as in other Western nations, Asian immigrant students fare well with a greater degree of academic success than other immigrant students. Yet, probably because of the high level of academic success, there is little consideration of the experiences that these students and their families face as immigrants to the New Zealand educational system. Recent immigrants may well face many of the structural and institutional barriers highlighted earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, there is an almost inevitable clash of educational worldviews which needs to be taken into account, particularly in light of the New Zealand Curriculum focus on problem-solving, process and key competencies. Educators need to become competent cross-cultural communicators to meet the challenging, and growing needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse population in schools, and they need to become cognisant of worldviews, values, beliefs, social dynamics and communication styles so that they can identify communication strategies that are socially and culturally relevant.

Chapter Three: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The concomitant nature of research questions and research design is inextricable. As Madison (2005), points out methods are contingent on the purpose, research questions and theories that inform the research. This chapter will locate the research in the qualitative paradigm, elaborate on the theoretical perspectives and core values which underpin the study, and outline the method used to conduct this research project.

3.2 Research question

Research is "...a systematic method of inquiry" (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008, p. 4), which can inform practice by addressing gaps in knowledge and expanding knowledge (Creswell, 2002). Educational research actively participates in the development and improvement of educational practices (Griffiths, 1998) and "...lays no claim to abstract neutrality..." (Griffiths, 1998, p. 67). It is not just aimed at improvement, but also personal and political improvement, so there must be "...a strong ethical and political underpinning to the framing of any research which is undertaken" (Griffiths, 1998, p. 67).

The research question at the heart of this study is "How effectively is the educational philosophy of the New Zealand Curriculum and technicalities of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualification communicated to Asian immigrant parents?" Underpinning the central research question are four aspects to the inquiry:

- What are the current methods of communicating the values and principles of the New Zealand Curriculum/NCEA Level 1 by the school(s) to culturally diverse, Asian immigrant parents?
- How effective are the current methods of communicating the values and principles of the New Zealand Curriculum/NCEA Level 1 by the school(s) to culturally diverse immigrant parents?
- Are there communication barriers that these parents face in participating in their children's education?

- If so, what can schools do to address these communication barriers and improve home-school communication?

This exploratory study aims to document the experiences of Asian immigrant parents as they engage with the New Zealand educational system at the Year 11 level, to enable a greater understanding to improve the efficacy of home-school communication strategies. It is hoped that the findings will provide a voice for Asian immigrant parents in New Zealand.

3.3 Naturalistic-interpretive paradigm

Recent times have seen a proliferation of theoretical paradigms, with the broad triumvirate classification of positivist, naturalistic-interpretive and critical post-structuralist encompassing the majority of research perspectives. Postmodern influences have resulted in the breakdown of a cohesive worldview (Tierney & Dilley, 2002), and the resultant legitimacy of multiple perspectives “...privileges no single authority, method or paradigm” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 27). Categorisation is dependent on the ontological position, epistemological perspectives and methodological orientations of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). An investigation into the experiences and understanding of Asian immigrant parents is most closely aligned with the naturalistic-interpretive paradigm because it assumes “...a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate [sic] understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). It facilitates a hermeneutical approach to research, one which focuses on interaction and language by seeking to “...understand situations through the eyes of participants” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 27).

Philosophers of educational research suggest that an investigation into interpretations of reality requires an acknowledgement of the historical, cultural and social context within which the research takes place (Cohen, et al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2004; Hartas, 2010; Schram, 2006; Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004). Without this consideration, Guba and Lincoln argue, there is a “disjunction of grand theories with local contexts” (2004, p. 19). A post-modern, constructivist perspective of research recognises the diversity of context and

heterogeneity of social knowledge and shifts the focus from ‘universal knowledge’ to ‘situated knowledge’ (Kvale, 2007). The adoption of an interpretive approach enables research to elicit an understanding of cultural differences in particular interactional contexts (Samovar & Porter, 2003).

3.4 Critical research perspective

An exploratory study, such as this, is not specifically located in the genre of critical research, in that it doesn’t identify the necessary changes at the outset (Schram, 2006). However, an interpretive inquiry can contribute to a multifaceted understanding of reality with advocacy, activism and social justice underpinning such an approach (Creswell, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2004). This research resonates with Jenlink’s call for affirmation of diversity, “Affirmation of diversity is concerned with cultural and social invisibility; it is an issue of social justice and democracy” (2009, p. 15). As prominent feminist researcher, bell hooks, cautions, a political standpoint will “...determine whether issues of difference and otherness will be discussed in new ways or in ways that reinforce domination” (hooks, 2004, p. 156). Chronologically, this research project is located in what Denzin & Lincoln term the “eighth moment” (2005, p. 20), where qualitative research can no longer take a neutral or objective positivist perspective. The eighth moment calls for “...critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom and community” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3).

Educational research is “...always on/for/with other people...” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 35) and, therefore, it is important to privilege people over process (Griffiths, 1998, 2003; McNae & Strachan, 2010). Socially-just research considers power relations and methodology and acknowledges the need to collaborate and consult with people, with willingness to be prepared to accommodate their requests (Griffiths, 1998). As Griffiths states, “Establishing social justice is less about particular outcomes than about processes, including processes which may overturn themselves” (1998, p. 12). There should be collaboration at each stage of the research process (Griffiths, 1998) and reflexive practice which is responsive to changing circumstances and accommodating to participants’ needs (Griffiths, 2003).

3.4.1 Assimilation vs. Acculturation

Historically, migrations have been dominated by an assimilationist ideology, with migrant groups expected to forgo their cultural and linguistic heritage (J. A. Banks, 2009b). Assimilation ideology champions the quintessential ‘melting pot’, where cultural heritage is obscured and ethnic differences synthesise into a harmonious, homogenous existence (Martin & Nakayama, 2007; Pai, et al., 2006). However, this approach to migration has been challenged and codified in international law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (J. A. Banks, 2009b), and contemporary scholars have advocated for acculturation, which is a more inclusive approach that recognises ethnic identity (Amatea, 2009; J. A. Banks, 2009b; Castles, 2009; Martin & Nakayama, 2007; Pai, et al., 2006). Acculturation “...allows for the retention of one’s own beliefs and practices while assuming the cultural norms of a new and different culture” (Amatea, 2009, p. 151). Such educational practices can develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for a global community (J. A. Banks, 2009b).

This research project is driven by a desire for advocacy and provides a voice for Asian immigrant parents, one which has, effectively, been silent in New Zealand academic circles. A study of intercultural communication provides an opportunity to engage in dialogue about cultural realities and examine the ethical issues involved in intercultural communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2007).

3.4.2 Model minority

At first glance, Asian students appear successful in the New Zealand educational system and are the ‘model minority’; one wonders why we need to venture into an investigation of ‘successful’ students, after all, they are obviously successfully acculturating. However, like a façade, a closer look raises issues that are worthy of professional consideration.

The ‘model minority’ label appears flattering, but ignores the fact that some students continue to struggle against structural and other barriers (S. J. Lee, 2003). In fact, the label of ‘model minority’ is viewed as a burden by some Asian American students (S. J. Lee, 2003; Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Failure in school may be considered shameful and is typically handled within the family setting, without public admission (Cheng, 1995). Low-achieving students hide their difficulties, while high-achieving students face constant pressure to maintain their

performance (S. J. Lee, 2003). This additional pressure may go unnoticed because of cultural customs of social and emotional restraint (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Lee goes as far as to argue that ‘model minority’ stereotypes are “...hegemonic devices that silence the multiple voices of students, creating a ‘monolithic monotone’” (S. J. Lee, 1996, p. 6). The use of aggregated data perpetuates the myth of the ‘model minority’ and masks the variation in academic achievement, differing needs, and cultural and linguistic diversity that Asian immigrant students represent in schools (S. J. Lee, 2003; V. O. Pang, et al., 2004). Pang, Kiang and Pak (2004) highlight the comparable disregard and lack of interventions for the needs of Asian students, because of the use of this aggregated data. As Zhao (2011) asserts, an understanding of Asian immigrants can help to develop effective educational practices with Asian families that will assist their transition into the host society.

3.4.3 Cultural institutions

Over time, dominant dispositions and consequent organizing principles become normalized and recognised as legitimate authority, which can result in educators failing to be aware that processes may privilege some students while tending to marginalize and disempower others (Amatea, 2009; May, 2009; Shields, 2009). Critical ethnographer, Soyini Madison (2005), eloquently elaborates that, by understanding ‘racialization’ as a construction, as opposed to a purely biological feature, we can consider power dynamics, such as ideology, images and institutional features which hold race in place (Madison, 2005). This conceptualisation raises issues for educational institutions, such as schools, because “Cultural institutions, at the level of superstructure, create ideas and images of acceptance and acquiescence to the *status quo*” (Madison, 2005, pp. 53-54). A similar assertion is made by Allen, “...cultural differences are not just interesting and fascinating, they exist within a hierarchy in which some are privileged and set the rules for others” (2004, as cited in Martin and Nakagawa, 2007, p. 453).

Discontinuities between home and school for culturally and linguistically diverse students can have lasting consequences for the fabric of democratic societies. If educators are willing to examine their own beliefs and expectations, they can create a school culture, and policies and practices, that works to affirm diversity

and validate the culture of their students (Amatea, 2009; J. A. Banks, 2009a; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Jenlink, 2009). Pluralistic research, such as this, demonstrates a critical predilection focused on principles of social justice, equality and empathy (Hartas, 2010), and forces a consideration of structural and social inequalities that may disempower culturally and linguistically diverse students (Griffiths, 1998, 2003; Nieto, 2002). Critical, reflexive multiculturalism allows "...participants to recognize and explore the complex interconnections, gaps, and dissonances that occur between their own and other ethnic and cultural identities..." (May, 2009, p. 44).

3.5 Research design

Methodological aspects of research design are influenced by the theoretical paradigms and perspectives that underpin the study. Socially-just research calls for "...a thoughtful, well-designed and culturally informed approach throughout all stages of the research process..." (McNae & Strachan, 2010, p. 41). Griffiths also asserts, "Strategies are needed to listen to quiet, less powerful, voices" (1998, p. 96). Democratic, collaborative, and culturally appropriate processes are valued (Griffiths, 1998; Lincoln & Denzin, 2005; McNae & Strachan, 2010).

3.5.1 Phenomenological approach

Naturalistic-interpretive research is an emerging process, which focuses on subjective experiences and relies heavily on qualitative techniques (Creswell, 2002; Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004) and enables collaborative, participatory approaches to research that are appropriate for a formative, exploratory phase of research, where the findings can contribute to a process of understanding, rather than revealing a predetermined truth (Stanfield, 1994).

The study adopts a subjective epistemological process of phenomenology because there is a paucity of research documenting the experiences of Asian immigrant parents in New Zealand secondary schools. Individuals are central to phenomenological research (O'Leary, 2010) and the focus is on understanding meanings and interpretations of the personal descriptions of their experiences (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Schram, 2006). Phenomenological inquiry desires "verstehen"- a German word literally translated as understanding or comprehension (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 27). Consequently, phenomenological

research requires a qualitative methodology so that the perceptions and perspectives of individuals can be recorded and analysed in an attempt to gain insight into their experiences in a situated context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). While the emphasis on "...the individual's construction of a 'life-world'. ..."

(Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 18) distinguishes phenomenology from ethnography, ethnography influences this research by attempting to "...discover the essence of a culture and its unique complexities to paint a portrait of the group, its interactions, and its setting" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006, p. 277).

3.5.2 Research method

In-depth interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection for this study because language is a fundamental medium for interpretation and understanding through dialogue and reflection (Schram, 2006). As a method, interviews recognise the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasise the situated nature of the data (Cheney, et al., 2004; Cohen, et al., 2007), which is appropriate for phenomenological research (Lodico, et al., 2006).

Interviews have been broadly described as an interaction, or interactive conversation, which has both structure and purpose (Cheney, et al., 2004; Johnson & Weller, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). An interview is, literally, an 'inter-view', "...an interexchange of views between two or more people..." (Kvale, 2007, p. 1). The distinction between positivist and naturalistic approaches to interviewing, requires "...a focus on the dynamics of interaction between interviewer and interviewee, a methodological awareness of question forms, and a critical attention to what is said" (Kvale, 2007, p. 15). Mishler's ground-breaking work (1986) challenged the assumptions and implications of 'standardized interviews'. He argued for interview participants to be more actively involved in the interview process by allowing them to express their own idiosyncratic experiences, rather than designating a priori categories of responses. His call to empower interview respondents and respect their agency continues to echo in post-modern qualitative research, in interview models such as 'responsive interviewing' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), 'active interviewing', and 'in-depth interviewing' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Miller & Crabtree, 2004) and 'dialogical interviewing' (Kvale, 2007). The commonalities of these schemas are

a commitment to dialogical processes of interviewing to enable partnership in the co-creation of knowledge.

Qualitative interviews are grounded in naturalistic-interpretive philosophy (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and present an opportunity to construct a ‘listening space’, “where meaning is constructed through an interexchange/cocreation [sic] of verbal viewpoints ...” (Miller & Crabtree, 2004, p. 185). The interview is depicted as “a construction site of knowledge” (Kvale, 2007, p. 21) with meaning and understanding co-constructed and transformed during the interview process. (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Rosenblatt, 2002). Participants are “...viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information...” (Warren, 2002, p. 83).

Research informed by a critical, social-justice perspective should also have a methodological orientation that empowers the participants and promotes collaboration, with careful attention paid to position and voice (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; McNae & Strachan, 2010). This study consciously adopts an empathetic approach, with an ethical stance in favour of the parents being interviewed, in order to allow the interviewer to become both an advocate and a partner in the study (Fontana & Frey, 2008).

3.5.3 Conceptualisation of an interview

In framing the interviews, individual semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were chosen because they allow for a variety of question formats, as well as enabling dialogue to elicit clarity for ambiguous, contradictory and diverse statements (Cohen, et al., 2007; Drew, et al., 2008; Johnson & Weller, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2002). Individual interviews provide an opportunity to ‘democratize experiential information’ where “Individuals, in their own right, are accepted as significant commentators on their own experience; it is not just the “chief” community commentator who speaks for one and all...” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 5).

Semi-structured interviews use an interview protocol which provides an initial context for engagement with the participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Open-ended questions focus on the topic of research and are designed to elicit understanding and feelings (Kvale, 2007; Miller & Crabtree, 2004). The questions

in the protocol are designed to activate the participant's 'stock of knowledge', while still allowing the participant to explore the meaning they attach to the phenomena (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). It is important to recognise the primacy of these questions and ensure that the orienting questions are explicit, thereby enabling the researcher to lead the interviewee towards certain themes, without imposing specific opinions (Kvale, 2007).

The interview protocol helps to facilitate 'specificity' in the research process (Kvale, 2007) by providing a germane framework for conceptualising issues and making connections, seeking to both constrain as well as provoke answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The protocol aids the systematic and focused collection of data (Lodico, et al., 2006), which helps to make reasonable and valid comparisons between participant responses in a meaningful way (Johnson & Weller, 2002) and ensures that the fundamental research questions are addressed (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) without presumptively imposing limits on the process (Fontana & Frey, 2008). A semi-structured interview can access participants' thoughts, beliefs and values by allowing participants to express their experiences in their own words (Cheney, et al., 2004), and may also provide the opportunity to highlight a broader range of issues than by observation alone (Hobson & Townsend, 2010).

The format provides a more participatory process than a structured survey response (Peterson & Ladky, 2007), because a semi-structured interview still enables the opportunity to digress beyond the protocol without being confined by predetermined agendas (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Lodico, et al., 2006). Such an approach enables the participant to have more control over the agenda and direction of the conversation (Powney & Watts, 1987, cited in Hobson & Townsend, 2010, p. 226), and allows the researcher to adopt a more non-invasive stance (Creswell, 2002), facilitating an 'emic perspective', that is, "...how the participant(s) view the phenomenon being described or analysed" (Drew, et al., 2008, p. 188). It also allows 'qualified naïveté' on the part of the researcher, facilitating "... openness to new and unexpected phenomena..." (Kvale, 2007, p. 12).

3.5.4 Limitations of interviews

Individual interviews are more time-consuming (Drew, et al., 2008; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) and, consequently, the constraints of personnel and time necessitate a small-scale study; albeit that a qualitative design is still effective for a small number of participants (Drew, et al., 2008).

As well as that, while dialogical interviews imply partnership, it is crucial to recognise the asymmetrical power-relationship inherent in the process. The interviewer initiates and terminates the interview, and usually retains control over the interpretation of meaning (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Kvale, 2007).

There is also an unwitting assumption of truth and accuracy of participant responses during interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Rosenblatt, 2002). To be more precise, it is important to note that interviews actually document the participants' perceptions, grounded in long-held assumptions and their own worldview and frame of reference (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

3.6 Research in cross-cultural contexts

Cross-cultural research is contested ground (McNae & Strachan, 2010) and pluralistic research, such as this, must pay particular attention to social and cultural sensitivities. Although Ryen (2002) suggests that cross-cultural differences are beginning to be mediated by the effects of globalization, it is important to acknowledge that challenges to 'value-free methodological procedures' to study the 'others' remains (Stanfield, 1994). Consequently, this demands research procedures that are not only sensitive to individuals and sites but also behoves idiosyncratic, culturally-responsive, collaborative practices that locate power and control within the participants' communities (Creswell, 2002; Denzin, 2008; Griffiths, 2003; McNae & Strachan, 2010). Stanfield notes that while racialized ethnic concerns have given rise to token gestures of reference to skin colour and ethnicity, he recognises the participatory research movement as a partial solution to addressing the issue of 'studying the others' (Stanfield, 1994) and by adopting a semi-structured approach, it allows participants more control over the content of the interview.

3.6.1 Insider/outsider problem

In almost all cases, researchers have characteristics that set them apart from interviewees, such as class, gender or ethnicity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These differences are likely to "...determine what researchers see and do not see, as well as their ability to analyse data and disseminate knowledge..." (Stanfield, 1994, p. 176). As a privileged, Western, female researcher interacting with Asian immigrant parents, the influence of insider/outsider status and differences in ethnicity must be acknowledged; these form the social context and backdrop against which, and within which, the interview is situated. This is particularly important in research related to collectivist cultures because "...self-identity is interdependent with in-group membership ... and make stronger in-group-out-group distinctions than individualists..." (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 303).

With even indigenous-insider researchers facing challenges through sectarian divisions and the like, the best way to approach this is to acknowledge reflexivity in research and frame the interview experience (Ryen, 2002). Ryen notes the status of an outsider can give an "...advantage of naïveté ..." and "investigatory advantages of the novice" (2002, p. 339). In a similar vein, Madison suggests adopting a stance of 'positive naiveness' - "...acknowledging that you do not know and that you must rely with humility on others and trust upon the knowledge of knowers" (2005, p. 32).

3.6.2 Social and cultural sensitivity

Culture is a complex dynamic that requires understanding not only in terms of the language, but also social conventions and the 'calibration of social distances' within the culture (Sennett, 2004). For the purposes of this study, culture has been defined as "...the unique character of a social group. It encompasses the values and norms shared by members of that group...Cultural values direct group members' attention to what is more and less important. Cultural norms define what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 302). As an outsider, it is crucial to 'orient to culture' to understand the "...interactive and moral contours" of social dynamics (Ryen, 2002, p. 348). In cross-cultural research, researchers must become culturally competent and new protocols, processes, systems and social mores need to be learnt and acknowledged (McNae & Strachan, 2010). Respecting cultural rituals and

protocols "...sends messages that we have been observant, paid attention and respect the protocols" (McNae & Strachan, 2010, p. 46). Kvale (2007) also points to a need to become familiar with verbal and non-verbal cues.

Cross-cultural research recognises the importance of relationships with community members, and approaches should foster strong, mutually-respectful relationships based on trust and rapport (Fontana & Frey, 2008; McNae & Strachan, 2010; Ryen, 2002). "It is those from the culture with whom we work who are the cultural experts...This is why it is important to use local expertise" (McNae & Strachan, 2010, p. 44). Connecting with local networks is essential and should be acknowledged and utilised (McNae & Strachan, 2010). It is possible to gain entry to a community by way of personal introduction from a staff and/or community member, which leads to "...improved levels of trust in the interviewer" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 70) as well as facilitating valid data collection (Ryen, 2002). Fontana and Frey suggest locating an informant who would be willing to act "...as a guide and translator of cultural mores..." (2008, p. 132). Kvale also suggests "Familiarity with the local situation may also sensitize to local ethico-political [sic] issues of the community, which need to be taken into account when interviewing and reporting the interviews" (2007, p. 40).

Accordingly, research was undertaken in consultation with the support of the Waikato Migrant Resource Centre and Tauranga Regional Multicultural Council in order to minimise misunderstanding and ensure cultural validity. These organisations provided assistance and advice on cultural mannerisms, dress and reciprocity. Both of these not-for-profit organisations have extensive links to, and alliances with, the immigrant communities that they serve. The role of these organisations is to promote and protect the democratic rights and interests of ethnic groups, while protecting their ethnic heritage.

In cross-cultural research, choices about communication methods and processes must be considered when interacting with others. Less traditional methods of contacting participants may need to be adopted, as culturally-appropriate methods may not align with Western ethical considerations (McNae & Strachan, 2010). The interview protocol was reviewed to highlight procedural elements (Drew, et al., 2008) by a culturally-similar associate (Douglas, 1985, cited in Miller & Crabtree,

2004, p. 195) from the Waikato Migrant Resource Centre, to ensure that the protocol questions were appropriate (Hartas, 2010).

3.7 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are important ramparts for rigour in qualitative research, but they need to be conceptualised differently. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) substitute the positivist terms of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity with the qualitative terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to whether the participants' perceptions of the settings or events match up with the researcher's portrayal of them, as well as to whether the researcher's interpretation of the processes and interactions in the setting is valid (Lodico, et al., 2006). Accordingly, a 'member validation' can check accuracy and enables the participants to validate or clarify their statements, as well as permitting the researcher to gather additional information, where necessary (Cohen, et al., 2007; Kvale, 2007; Lodico, et al., 2006). In cross-cultural research, member checks are particularly important in order to establish cultural validity in the process (Cohen, et al., 2007). By using member checks, it also demonstrates an ethical stance of providing respondents a degree of control in how their stories are reported and interpreted (Poland, 2002).

Multiple, individual interviews also represent an attempt at external triangulation, and this allows the researcher to clarify meaning and verify repeatability of an observation through multiple sources of data and comparison of responses and perspectives from different participants (Drew, et al., 2008; Lodico, et al., 2006; O'Reilly, 2005; Stake, 1994). However, in qualitative research, no observation or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, so triangulation serves a more distinct purpose to clarify meaning, by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen (Denzin, 2008; Stake, 1994). In the construct of this research, triangulation is more closely aligned to the concept of crystalline validity, proposed by Laurel Richardson (1994), which denotes a greater level of complexity than a simplistic, two-dimensional conceptualisation of triangulation. She suggests that crystalline validity:

...combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities [sic], and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors [sic], patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose. ... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (p. 522)

By utilising the concept of a crystal as a framework for triangulation, the validity of knowledge is justified as ‘relative consensus’, where knowledge is accumulated through a dialectical process and understanding is confirmed as different perspectives are brought into juxtaposition (Guba & Lincoln, 2004).

3.7.2 Transferability

The situated nature of qualitative studies focuses on transferability, rather than generalizability. Transferability “... refers to the degree of similarity between the research site and other sites as judged by the reader” (Lodico, et al., 2006, p. 275). It is likely that the analysis and themes borne out of this research project will not be directly applicable in another setting (Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004), so by endeavouring to provide thick descriptions of the researcher, participants, and context, it will enable the reader to determine comparability between the presented research and their own situation (Lodico, et al., 2006).

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability “... refers to whether one can track the procedures and processes used to collect and interpret the data” (Lodico, et al., 2006, p. 275), and parallels the notion of reliability in quantitative research. Dependability of qualitative research can be enhanced by theoretical and methodological rigour. ‘Theoretical rigour’ ensures that the research strategy is consistent with the purpose, research questions, theory and concepts, while ‘methodological rigour’ requires researchers to maintain an audit trail of methodological and analytical decisions to enhance credibility (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability aligns itself to a quantitative measure of objectivity, which assumes an objective reality can be described (Lodico, et al., 2006). To have confirmability, qualitative research needs ‘interpretative rigour’, an accurate representation of “...the understandings of events and actions within the framework and worldview of the people engaged in them” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 39). Hammersley argues that all qualitative data is reliable because “...they document the world from the point of view of the people studied ...” (1992, p. 45) and direct quotes are used to provide the reader with a clearer sense of the evidence on which the analysis is based (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

3.8 Reflexivity

According to Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, “There is no privileged place from which to experience and report on experiences objectively – only positions in dialogue” (2008, p. 395). Therefore, qualitative research demands reflexivity. Reflexivity is the active declaration of role position, personal biases, values and assumptions in the write-up of the research (Creswell, 2002; Lodico, et al., 2006). Qualitative researchers postulate a degree of researcher influence in all methods of data generation (Hobson & Townsend, 2010; Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004), although researcher influence is particularly significant for interviews because the researcher is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge (Kvale, 2007). Kvale cautions that unacknowledged bias may invalidate research findings, although he also contends, “A recognized bias or subjective perspective may, however, come to highlight specific aspects of the phenomenon being investigated and bring new dimensions forward, contributing to a multi-perspectival construction of knowledge” (2007, p. 86).

Interviews are interactional encounters, and social dynamics shape the knowledge that is generated, with the resultant effect that interviews are particularly vulnerable to the influence of variables such as the interviewer-respondent relationship, gender and gender roles, race, social status and age (Fontana & Frey, 2008). Past experiences and cultural backgrounds will also affect interpretations and conclusions (Creswell, 2002). Research was conducted at educational sites independent of where I am employed, to ensure that there was no vested interest (Creswell, 2002) and to avoid the ‘halo effect’, where the influence of

“...knowledge of other data about the person or situation exerts an influence on subsequent judgements...” (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 145).

3.9 Ethical considerations

Educational research is “...complex for three main reasons: human agency; social relations, especially the effects of power; and ethics” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 36) which pertain to the significance of human beings in educational research. This research project was subject to a formal ethics approval process facilitated by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee in accordance with the University of Waikato’s Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations 2008. Furthermore, beyond this process, the inherently invasive nature of phenomenological research demands an ethical stance; one based on core principles of justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence (Cohen, et al., 2007).

3.9.1 Informed consent

Marginalized individuals can regard outsiders with suspicion (Dunbar, et al., 2002) and, to minimise this eventuality, participants were provided with details of the research questions, methods and processes in their native language, to ensure that each participant had a comprehensive understanding of the purpose, methods and risks involved (Drew, et al., 2008). Documents were translated by reputable, native speakers who had previous experience in translation, to enable participants to give informed consent, namely “...receiving consent by the respondent after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research” (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 142).

Participants were asked to give written permission. However, given the contradiction between anonymity and signed consent forms (Warren, 2002) and the potential hesitancy some participants and ethnic communities might have held about signing official documents (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), it was also deemed acceptable to have taped verbal consent for this research project. Participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, without prejudice, until the copy of the transcript was confirmed.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity addresses the need for participants' right to privacy and protection from harm (Fontana & Frey, 2008). To provide anonymity, participants were not expected to provide information that identified them in any way for inclusion in the analysis (Lodico, et al., 2006). Participants' privacy was protected, as much as was feasibly possible, by assigning pseudonyms to individual participants in the analysis. The importance of confidentiality was stressed throughout the process. Every effort was made to provide confidentiality by using pseudonyms and broad descriptions for the schools and participants. Information leading to the identity of the participating schools and participants was not included in this report. All quotes remain anonymous.

3.9.3 Reciprocity and respect

Research also needs to demonstrate reciprocity and respect. Reciprocity can "...acknowledge inequalities at the same time as using them for the mutual benefit of all partners." (Griffiths, 2003, p. 104) and, ideally, reciprocity means that participants, or their community, can gain from the research experience (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). As reciprocity is culturally situated (Madison, 2005), culturally-appropriate protocols were followed and participants were given a small gift in appreciation of their participation in the interviews. They were also offered the opportunity to receive an electronic copy of the finished thesis. Providing feedback or results to participants is another way of showing respect (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), and information was supplied, at a later stage, to address any gaps in knowledge that were identified during the course of interview, in order to remedy these deficits.

3.10 Data Analysis

Within the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, findings are typically presented in terms of pattern theories. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and, in relation to this research project, data analysis consisted of text analysis to identify and develop themes (Creswell, 2002). Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes/patterns that emerge from the data analysis that provide tentative explanations of what has been observed (Lodico, et al., 2006), and is used "...where occurrence is assumed to indicate important trends" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 270). This approach is suitable for analysing and reporting personal qualitative

interview data, and enables a flexible format for analysis (Lodico, et al., 2006). Thematic analysis involves the inductive identification of codes from the data and does not require a theoretical sample (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). “Inductive analysis refers to approaches that “follow the data” rather than comparing the data to an a priori construct” (Drew, et al., 2008, p. 347), which makes “...interpretive practice paramount” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 78).

The development of a conceptual framework and coding system is an emerging process (Creswell, 2002), which means that both the framework and the codes may change depending on the questions / purposes of the study and feedback or responses received from the participants. An inductive method of reasoning does not follow any predetermined coding system (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Lodico, et al., 2006). However, this is essential because it enables participants’ voices to direct the study, rather than the researcher imposing their own perspective (Creswell, 2002). “...the value of interview data lies in both their meanings and in how meanings are constructed” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 16) and “...the outcomes are each “partial truths,” which need to be woven together for a more complete representation” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 54). There is a power-imbalance present which must be acknowledged. Even though committed to empathy and multiple realities, the researcher has a ‘monopoly of interpretation’, with “...an exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant” (Kvale, 2007, p. 15).

3.11 Research process

This research was conducted in Tauranga City because I have lived in this region for the past 12 years and have established professional networks in this area. It also enabled the frequent opportunities necessary to build trusting, working relationships with the parents and ethnic communities involved in the research.

3.11.1 Sampling frame

This study focused on the parents of current Year 11 students that met three specific criteria. In the first instance, students identified themselves as being of Asian descent and had been born overseas. Second, the student had been enrolled in a New Zealand secondary school for at least the past 12 months. Third, they had been resident in New Zealand with at least one parent. The justification for

these criteria was that the Year 11 students enrolled in 2011 have been the lead-cohort for the roll-out and implementation of the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum. With a minimum 12 month enrolment period criterion, parents have had exposure to school communication for at least one full academic year. The selection of students who resided in New Zealand with at least one parent endeavoured to document the experiences of immigrant families and parents, not temporary sojourners. Finally, by focusing on this cohort, the research was also able to gauge the currency of their knowledge, given that this cohort faced specific changes related to the ratio of internal-external assessments and the inaugural introduction of course endorsements in 2011.

Because of the criteria established, and the need for participants to volunteer without duress, there was a limited parent population or ‘sampling frame’ (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Lodico, et al., 2006) from which to draw for this research. However, while this study faced finite resources of personnel, time and finance, it was important to interview sufficient participants to be confident that the sample was a good estimate of the characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2002). In qualitative research, sample size should be determined by theoretical, as opposed to statistical, grounds (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) and, because the priority was to develop an in-depth understanding of their experiences, only a small group of participants was required for a ‘realistic population’ (Lodico, et al., 2006) that would give an authentic representation of the parent community. The aim was to sample to the ‘point of redundancy’ (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) or ‘saturation’ where additional interviews no longer add new perspectives or insights (Miller & Crabtree, 2004; O’Leary, 2010). Random sampling to select a representative sample was not appropriate (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) because the primary concern was to record the experiences of individuals in a natural context (Lodico, et al., 2006), as opposed to the distribution of the experiences. Therefore, potential participants were identified and approached using a purposeful snowball sampling method (Cohen, et al., 2007). ‘Criterion sampling’ also applied, which is when all participants must meet one or more criteria as predetermined by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This is similarly known as ‘homogenous sampling’, which selects individuals who belong to a subgroup that has defining characteristics (Creswell, 2002).

3.11.2 Access to institutions and participants

Initially, a review of Education Review Office (ERO) student enrolment statistics for the wider Bay of Plenty identified potential research sites based on the percentage of Asian students enrolled. These possible sites were then compared with a regional demographic profile (Family and Community Services, 2010) to confirm distinct residential settlement patterns for Asian immigrants within Tauranga city. Subsequent approaches to the principals of two schools within this geographical zone resulted in ready permission to conduct research within their parent body. Based on the indication of student enrolments, the ethnicity of the participants was limited to Sinic cultures, to ensure that the necessary preparations for culturally-sensitive interviews were feasible within the limitations of this research project.

However, from these initial approaches, it also became apparent that the number of Year 11 Asian students enrolled in the 2011 cohort was very low in these schools, varying from one student in one school, to four students in the other. A research decision determined that a greater number of schools might need to be involved in order to contact a sufficient number of parents, rather than compromise the participant criteria. The decision was based on the premise that the fundamental purpose of the research was to document the experiences of immigrant parents, rather than a comparative study of home-school practices between two schools.

Even at this early juncture, processes to establish contact with the parents began to diverge. Understandably, due to the restrictions of the Privacy Act, schools were not able to directly divulge parent contact details. The first school was willing to use staff from their international department to make a personal approach to the parents, on my behalf, effectively acting as brokers. While such a formal introduction established legitimacy and professional credibility, most importantly, it indicated that the school was willing to endorse the forming of a relationship. This approach was also more culturally appropriate as it gave the parents the opportunity to be involved, but decline without 'losing face'. However, perhaps surprisingly, while these staff were supportive of the research and were willing to assist, their actual contact with the Year 11 parents was limited, and they instead

made a referral to an international agent who was the primary liaison person for the parent. This process established contact with one Korean parent.

The second school limited their assistance to an offer of forwarding my letter of introduction and supporting documentation to the parents, effectively ‘cold-calling’. The level of assistance was justified by the limited resources and significant workload that staff were already facing, an all too familiar reality in many schools. Preliminary cultural research preparation, and my own personal experience in Asian cultures, strongly suggested that this approach was unlikely to be successful.

Given the limited sample frame, each point of parental contact was going to be critical and this demanded a culturally-appropriate approach that would allow the research to proceed rather than falter due to cultural improprieties. At this point I chose to adopt a more circumspect approach to establish contact with potential participants. Research suggested that immigrants tend to establish enclaves to try to maintain their cultural identity and heritage in host cultures (Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007, 2008; Y. M. Kim & Greene, 2003; Qin, et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Based on this premise, my efforts began to focus on cultural and faith-based activities connected to these ethnic groups. These investigations located a small Chinese church and a fledgling Mandarin language class for Asian immigrants. The language tutor made an approach to a parent of a Year 11 student in her class, while an endorsement, through church affiliations, from the pastors, and actual attendance at the Chinese church services established links with a further five parents. As potential participants came to light and their willingness to participate was confirmed, formal written approval was sought from the principal and BOT chair of each relevant school (Appendix A). Ultimately, the seven parents included in this study were drawn from five different state secondary schools, all located within the urban area. The final composition of the research participants was one Korean parent, one parent from Hong-Kong and five parents from Mainland China.

3.11.3 Configuration of interviews

Interviews were conducted on four separate occasions, in various configurations, over a period of three weeks. The configuration of the interview participants was

different from that anticipated in the conceptualisation of the research. At the outset, the conceptualisation was to conduct individual in-depth interviews. However, only one interview opportunity eventuated in this format. Following the request of the Asian parents, the other three interview opportunities were comprised of family and group interviews. In accordance with a critical, social justice perspective, it was important not to allow "...linear or procedural methodological narratives..." (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 398) to determine the course of this research. A decision was made to adopt an ethical stance and cede the authority to determine the configuration of the interviews to the parents themselves in a deliberate attempt to shift the emphasis from research 'on' people, to research 'with' people. Ultimately, the composition of participants, setting and support people were determined by the participants themselves. The semi-structured interview protocol remained unchanged and was used for all four interviews.

3.11.4 Research participants

The following thick descriptions inform the reader of individual participants and their personal history, which may potentially impact on the analysis of the findings in the following chapters (Lodico, et al., 2006). Pseudonyms have been used to protect participants' identities.

The first interview involved, Mrs Park, a Korean mother, who has lived in New Zealand with her son for the past 14 months. She is a graduate of a Korean university, and lived in the Philippines for two years prior to immigrating to New Zealand. Mrs Park was the only international fee-paying parent in the sample and had a New Zealand-based Korean agent. Her interview was conducted solely in English at her agent's office.

The second interview was with a Mainland Chinese family in their own home. Mr Lee, Mrs Lee, and their teenage daughter, Jiao, had been living in New Zealand for the past 10 years. They initially settled in Auckland for the first seven years, but have lived in the Bay of Plenty for the past three years. The parents own their own domestic services franchise. Mr Lee is a university graduate and has previously been a secondary teacher in China, while Mrs Lee has studied to

college level. Their English was limited to very basic conversation, and they elected to have their daughter present for the interview to assist with translation.

The third interview involved a group meeting with eight parents from Mainland China, of whom three were parents of Year 11 students. The remaining parents had students enrolled in Year 9 and in Year 12. Only the comments from the Year 11 parents have been included in this report. The first parent from this group was Mrs Huang, who had been in New Zealand for the past nine years. She had graduated from a New Zealand university with a business degree. She was currently employed in the banking industry and was competent in English. The majority of the group spoke very limited English so Mrs Huang took on the responsibility of translating for the parents at this interview who were not comfortable communicating in English. The second mother, Mrs Wong, had studied to college level. She had been in New Zealand for two years, and was currently employed casually in the kiwifruit industry. The father, Mr Chuo was employed as tradesmen and had been in New Zealand for five years. He had been educated to intermediate level in China. All three of the Year 11 students were present at the meeting with their respective parent. The students were all enrolled at different schools. The meeting was conducted in Mrs Huang's home.

The final interview opportunity involved a mother, Mrs Zhu, from Hong Kong and her son at their own home. They have been living in New Zealand for the past five years and relocated directly to the Bay of Plenty to join family members while the father remains in Hong Kong for employment. The mother was educated to Year 9 level in Hong Kong. The interview was conducted primarily in English, with occasional assistance from her son to provide vocabulary and clarify understanding.

3.11.5 Conducting the interview

The interviews were timed so that they did not interfere with cultural and/or religious practices of the participants. Interviews were conducted in locations suggested by the parents, in order to ensure cultural appropriateness and maximise the responsiveness of those being interviewed to increase the likelihood of attaining high-quality information (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). By endeavouring to interview in natural settings, it also attempted to reduce the

potential power-imbalance (Kvale, 2007). All of the interviews were conducted away from the school sites, with three of the interviews conducted in the parents' homes and one interview conducted at the agent's office. During the visits to the home to arrange, conduct and follow-up interviews, the participants were very hospitable and followed the cultural conventions of offering refreshments, and I followed social obligations, as a guest, to accept their proffered hospitality graciously.

Participants were provided with an information sheet, translated into their first language, which fully outlined the nature and purpose of the research project (Appendix B). Potential risks and benefits were identified and explained to the participants, prior to seeking their consent. This ensured that participants were aware of the nature of their involvement and any possible implications of being involved in this research project. One parent elected to give verbal consent, with the remainder completing formal consent forms (Appendix C). Participants were invited to have a support person present for the interview, if desired, for moral support and/or to adhere to cultural protocols. Support person(s) could help to explain a question or answer, or assist with translation, but their own personal opinion could not be included. This was explained at the outset to the support person, and he/she was asked to complete a confidentiality agreement prior to commencing the interview (Appendix D).

My lack of linguistic ability in the participants' native languages necessitated the interviews to be conducted in English. To mitigate this barrier, interview questions (Appendix E) were provided to participants in their native language prior to the commencement of the interview to reduce pressure. Both family meetings had the Year 11 student in attendance to assist with translation, where necessary. The group interview had one parent who was proficient in English and translated on behalf of the other parents. Individual and family interviews took approximately one hour, while the group interview took almost two hours. The interviews were audio-taped, with the participants' permission, which permitted a detailed record of verbal interactions, which is more accurate than relying on memory or notes (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Field-notes were taken to support audio-recordings by noting key responses (Lodico, et al., 2006).

Once the extent of parental knowledge was ascertained regarding the New Zealand Curriculum and the NCEA Level 1 qualification, interview probes focused on other home-school interactions, systems and processes. These probes identified other points of connection between school and parents, such as the extent of involvement and understanding about school reports and parent-teacher interviews in both host and native countries. These probes yielded interesting findings in terms of frequency and form of communication. Once differences and similarities were identified, these could potentially be incorporated into recommendations and strategies and used to reconcile home and school for these parents.

3.11.6 Data transcription

Following the conclusion of the interviews, the data from each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Verbatim transcripts are not as selective as memory or field notes (O'Reilly, 2005), and enable the features of interaction to be scrutinized (Poland, 2002). Transcribing audio-tapes prior to analysis is recommended for novice researchers (Lodico, et al., 2006) and minimises the researcher's bias on the study's findings (Lodico, et al., 2006). While computers can assist with transcription, software may not have recorded verbal aspects of the interview, such as change in tone and pace, which could prove to be crucial in cross-cultural research (Poland, 2002) and so transcription software was not utilised.

While transcription appears to be a mechanical and straightforward process, it is also timely to point out that there are differences between the spoken and written word, which means that the fullness of the interview is lost in translation (Poland, 2002). As Kvale succinctly puts it, "...transcripts are impoverished decontextualized renderings of interview conversations" (Kvale, 2007, p. 93), which is why they need to be supported by field notes. It is important to maintain a "reflexive scepticism regarding the multiple interpretive acts that constitute the transcription process" (Poland, 2002, p. 636). What is assumed to be a full account of the interview is, in fact, what Hammersley (1992) terms 'subtle realism' as a result of re-presenting the data in a different form.

Transcripts were reviewed by participants, as part of a member check, prior to analysis to ensure that the data was recorded as accurately as possible. Due to financial limitations, it was not feasible to translate the transcripts into the participants' first language. However, participants were given a minimum of one week to review and deliberate on the transcript before granting final permission to reproduce their comments. This approach was adopted to ensure that the participants were not under time pressure and that they had sufficient time to seek clarification, where necessary. All four transcripts were authorised for inclusion in the analysis.

3.11.7 Data analysis process

Once the interviews were transcribed, participant responses were analysed and used to develop a conceptual framework and coding system through an inductive and recursive/iterative method of reasoning which did not follow any predetermined coding system (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Lodico, et al., 2006). The initial review involved all transcripts being reviewed, alongside of field notes, to enable a comprehensive, integrated view of the data and establish the breadth and scope of the data (Lodico, et al., 2006). Text analysis was used to note the frequency of key word or terms, themes, and characters/persons (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) in relation to the foreshadowed research questions.

The second iteration aimed to code and categorise the data by identifying different segments of the data that described related phenomena and labelling these segments with broad category names (Lodico, et al., 2006). This process of abstraction identified major and minor themes, and developed thematically-connected, broad categories/coding system of the participants' meaning (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Cohen, et al., 2007; Creswell, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Lodico, et al., 2006). Particular care was taken to note the concentration of individual responses, and examined whether these concentrations were similarly repeated in other interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

This recursive process became increasingly discriminating and was repeated to refine the data and look for commonalities in data, both within and between interviews, to support subcategories for information analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This process also sought to highlight contrary or divergent

evidence which required further exploration (Creswell, 2002; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Lodico, et al., 2006; O'Leary, 2010). Care was taken to note any 'repositioning' of participant responses (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), where the participants might have commented on their experiences as a parent and then, possibly, switched to a perspective of their own personal educational experiences, which may have altered the sampling perspective for participants. Subsequent iterations reduced overlap and produced a coherent view of the patterns in the data (Creswell, 2002; Lodico, et al., 2006). This process continued until a saturation point was reached where further examination did not provide any additional insight (Creswell, 2002).

Direct quotes were selected to provide detail and insight to substantiate the analysis and support themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2002), which facilitated a more authentic representation of interviewees and their experiences (Lodico, et al., 2006). The particular quotes that have been included were selected to give 'catalytic authenticity' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Lodico, et al., 2006, p. 275), a realism that provokes thought and instigates change for the better. Punctuation and linguistic conventions that indicate hesitation or pauses were edited for the purposes of readability. Additional words have been added, on occasion, to clarify the participants' comments for the reader and these have been clearly identified. Every effort has been made to maintain the integrity of their statements.

3.11.8 Review alternative sources of information

Following the interviews, further investigation was made on the basis of interview statements related to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website and ethnic-specific newspapers, radio and television. The qualitative data from the interviews was then supplemented with information procured from these sources. An analysis of this supplementary information assisted with the triangulation of interview data and confirmed the nature and extent of the information that was available to the parents.

3.12 Summary

The findings of the data analysis are outlined in the next chapter, with an awareness that “writing is not an innocent practice” (Denzin, 2000, p. 898). There has been a conscious awareness of the monopoly that I have, as the researcher, on the presentation of findings. The subsequent interpretation of findings and discussion on the effectiveness of current home-school communication practices with Asian immigrant parent are outlined in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research project was to document personal experiences that could be used to provide insights into the effectiveness of current home-school communication practices with Asian immigrant parents. A number of findings emerged as a result of the interviews with the research participants. This chapter presents findings in a thematic format and outlines the limited extent of parental understanding, communication barriers, consequences and concludes with participants' suggestions of strategies that schools could adopt to assist them. Some of the issues raised were specific to individual parents, but the majority were of general concern to all parents included in the research project.

Voice has been given to the participants through researcher-selected quotes, which articulate their experiences in an honest and forthright manner. It must be noted that during the course of the interviews these quotes were frequently preceded by prolonged silences. These silences were not due to processing or language issues; rather they reflected a bona fide lack of conscious understanding on the part of the parents. Breaking with academic convention, quotes have been italicised for emphasis. The vast majority of quotes have not been altered, in order to preserve authenticity. On occasion, text has been added to clarify the participants' comments for the reader. These additions are clearly identified by the use of square brackets and non-italicised font style. Every effort has been made to retain the authenticity and uniqueness of each conversation.

4.2 Optimism and sacrifice

What became evident in all of the conversations with the parents included in this study was that they had migrated to New Zealand with optimistic expectations for the future. While all participants in this research were voluntary migrants (Qin, et al., 2011), families did not necessarily migrate as an intact group, with some mothers residing in New Zealand with their children, while the fathers remained in their native country. Where fathers were residing in New Zealand, they had relocated because employment opportunities were available. They had made the move to a new country primarily for the benefit of their children. Parents appeared to recognise and value the future benefits that education would provide for their

children. Mrs Zhu, from Hong Kong, when talking about the importance of education, commented, *“Yeah, I think good for their future...their find good job, I think.”* All of the parents involved in this research project held high aspirations for their children and indicated they would like their children to attend university, if possible. Mrs Huang expressed their sentiment clearly, *“Basically, we all hope that they can go as high as they can, and at least university...every singles parents probably wish to university at least.”*

Parents highlighted the stress that their children would face in their native education system and indicated that they had sought a less-pressured and more holistic educational environment for their children. Mrs Park, the Korean mother who had previously lived in the Philippines, said,

In our family case, my husband and me, we want they to have lots of experience in the world...Korean education system is very hard, stressful, for most students... Korean education is focus on the academic part, so my children and I, my family, want to learn more other things.

This comment was not isolated to Mrs Park and a similar comment was made by Mr Lee, the father who was a former teacher in Mainland China. When asked about the difference in pressure between education in Mainland China and New Zealand, he said, *“... I like here...still really relax, not too hard...”*

The decision to move to a new homeland for the sake of their children was not without personal cost to the parent(s). Mrs Park’s comments alluded to the price these parents were willing to pay for their children, saying, *“...Most Korean mum think they sacrifice [living in Korea] for their children’s education...I think...for the future...”*

4.3 Deafening silence

US civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., once said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends”. His astute comment attests to the fact that the most profound and telling statements are often said in silence. What became increasingly disturbing through the course of the interviews was the palpable, deafening silence every time discussion ventured into the realms of the New Zealand Curriculum educational philosophy. Despite being

promulgated as foundational cornerstones of the New Zealand curriculum document, broad questions about core values and key competencies were inevitably met with long, sustained, silences and blank stares. Discussions were devoid of any knowledge of the foundational principals, values and key competencies outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum and resulted in a typically negative response of “*No. We don’t know anything*”. The overall impression was that parents appeared to be completely oblivious to any philosophical underpinnings of the New Zealand educational system. Their limited understanding reflected a narrow, perfunctory perspective of education, which will be outlined in the next section.

4.4 Partial, fragmented understanding

As the interviews turned attention towards the more routine technicalities of the NCEA Level 1 qualification, parents’ understanding remained limited. Initial impressions were of disjointed knowledge, rather than a cohesive understanding that lends itself to developing a strategic partnership between schools and parents in the education of young people. Some rudimentary, factual knowledge was indicated, but confusion and lack of clarity was also evident.

Two parents from the Mainland Chinese group, Mrs Wong and Mr Chuo, were completely oblivious to the technicalities of the NCEA qualification and simply reiterated a negative response for even the most basic question. In Mrs Wong’s case, although her son had been enrolled in a secondary school for the past two years, she was unaware that formal NZQA external examinations were due to commence in just over one months’ time. Mrs Huang relayed their predicament explicitly, “*...we don’t know anything about the school, we don’t know anything about what they are doing, you know, what they are learning ...oh, basically we don’t really know.*” Mrs Wong’s body language conveyed unspoken trepidation and apprehension, while Mr Chuo’s frustration was apparent in his brusque answers. Mr Chuo’s daughter had been enrolled in a New Zealand secondary school for almost three years and when asked to clarify the extent of communication with the school, Mrs Huang recounted (for Mr Chuo), “*He said, basically no communication from the school with the teacher and the parents here in New Zealand...*”

The other five parents included in this research fared only marginally better with the extent of their understanding reiterated below. Their responses indicate a partial, but incomplete and fragmented, understanding. All five of these parents knew what ‘credits’ were. When asked if they could describe what a ‘credit’ was, Jiao Lee translated for her parents, “...*like, for each subject...you pass it, you get credits for it...*” Parents also showed an understanding that credits could be gained in subsequent year levels. Mrs Zhu commented, “...*after finish test, they [the students] want to keep the credit. I know...I think Year 11 begin and after this next year have some...*” However, most parents did not seem to know how many credits were offered in a typical subject at this level. Mrs Zhu attempted to answer this question, but then her lack of understanding became apparent, “*I don’t know...six or...oh, I don’t know, I don’t know...*” Mr Lee, like many of the other parents, simply said, “*No, I don’t know.*” The one exception to this question was Mrs Park, the Korean mother, who confidently stated, “*Oh ...nearly 18 to 24 each subject...*”

Only two of the five parents knew about the distinction between internal and external credits. When I asked the group interview if they knew what assessments were important during the academic year Mrs Huang replied, “... *they just know there is an exam, and not much else...*” Similarly, when I asked Jiao Lee if her parents understood that some assessments during the year were important, she responded, “*No, not really*” When Mrs Park was asked about internal and external credits, she said, “...*my son told me....this month he had some test...my friends said to me it’s not important because it’s internal assessment, so he explained about that one [internal credits]...and short time was I knew about internal assessment.*” However, comments made later in the interview suggest that she still thought the external credits were more important than internal credits, saying “*Actually, my son want to go to university...he needs to get good record...But is it right? More important to assessment, this external....*”

Only two of the five parents, Mrs Park and Mrs Zhu, knew about the distinction between ‘Achieved’, ‘Merit’ and ‘Excellence’ grades and their respective ranking. Mrs Zhu said, “*I think E [Excellence] is best one, and M [Merit] is second, third...A[Achieved],...and N [Not Achieved].*” The other parents did not clearly understand the difference in the grades. When I asked Mrs Zhu how she knew

about the ranking of the grades, she said that her son had explained this to her, “...because in Hong Kong ‘A’ very good ...A-B-C-D-E..., ‘E’ not good...” Evidently the alphabetical letters that were assigned to represent higher or lower quality achievement in Hong Kong were opposite to that of New Zealand. This grading system was also confirmed as being in use for the other countries as well.

Both Mrs Park and Mrs Zhu knew about certificate endorsements, but couldn’t explain the significance of these. Only one parent, Mrs Zhu, had heard of the recent introduction of course endorsements, and even that appeared to be a hazy memory. When asked to elaborate on how endorsements were allocated she wasn’t able to and simply referred to the meeting she had attended, “*I think, last year...I forgot because too long time...*” Mrs Park did not know about the introduction of course endorsements. For all of the other parents, when I asked if they knew about course endorsements, the all-too-familiar reply came, “*No. Nothing.*” Mrs Huang, the translator at the group meeting, found literal, non-academic, translations difficult when trying to understand educational jargon such as these terms, “*I just have to look up the word endorsement in Chinese (gets dictionary)... ‘endorsement’ ..., no, it doesn’t make sense....explain it then...*”

It became obvious that the two parents with the most comprehensive understanding had accessed support from outside of the school community to assist them. Mrs Park had a New Zealand-based Korean agent and demonstrated the greatest level of knowledge. She understood all but the recent introduction of course endorsements. When I asked Mrs Zhu who helped her to gain her tentative understanding of the educational system, she freely acknowledged a high level of reliance on her brother-in-law to assist with the translation of the material saying, “*...just my brother-in-law because his English is very well...*”

The data showed the absence of cohesive, cogent understanding, despite glimpses of factual knowledge. Parents showed only a rudimentary understanding. They lacked an understanding of how the different aspects of the qualification related to each other. It was evident that parents did not have the depth or breadth of knowledge needed for integration of knowledge.

4.5 Sources of information

The irrefutable evidence of limited parental understanding demonstrated that current home-school communication practices clearly have varying degrees of success. One of the pressing questions became where did these parents procure their understanding? What sources had been successful and why? What clues may these sources of information provide for an improvement in home-school communication practices?

4.5.1 School information

It is germane to point out that the schools were not being entirely negligent in their responsibilities. While parents made no mention of communication related to the New Zealand Curriculum or school philosophy, the interviews did record the fact that schools are attempting to provide written information for parents. Two parents, Mrs Park and Mrs Zhu, directly mentioned receiving information from the schools. When referring to the actual content of communication from the school, Mrs Park commented, *“I never received [information] about subject. They just want to for sports or like this [school activities]...”* so it appears that, at times, written information is primarily disseminated for administrative and functional purposes.

The paradox of providing information in English, given the lack of proficiency in English on the part of Asian immigrant parents, was highlighted. Mrs Zhu mentioned receiving information from the school, but when asked if she could read it, her response was, *“Can’t ... I can’t...but my brother-in-law explain to me...”* The extent of effort that parents had to maintain to communicate was evident. Mrs Park said, *“...sometime they sent mail, e-mail or mail, so I can know what they do, but if I don’t concentrate their news [information], we can’t know....we always have to concentrate their news or voice....”*

4.5.2 Parent information meetings

Another common mechanism for the dissemination of information and method of home-school communication is the parent information evening. It is apparently a global practice, with parent meetings identified as a medium of communication in all three of the countries represented in the research. Mrs Huang recounted the pattern of attendance at school meetings in China, saying, *“...every term we have*

a parents meeting like we have here (signalling to the group of parents)...most of the, 99%, of the parents will attend the meeting because it's important...very important to us...” Her comment illustrates the extent of the parents’ commitment to attend these meetings. The four interviews confirmed that all of the information meetings in the parents’ countries of origin were held on school premises.

However, it is interesting to note a change in the pattern of attendance at parent meetings here in New Zealand. Mrs Park commented, *“The school prepare many things for foreigner, and actually they do, but...if they have some event, they try to gather many parents, foreigner, foreign student parents...if they want to join there, they are afraid to go...join...because of the English.”* Her reluctance to attend generic multi-ethnic parent meetings, even when arranged by the school specifically for parents of international students, appears to be based on the reliance of English as the lingua franca.

Parents’ ability to attend school meetings is also impacted by logistical difficulties and the complexity of finding a suitable time for meetings became apparent. Mr Lee, who had his own business, remarked *“...different job, maybe time different...”* Jiao, his daughter, elaborated, *“If it’s for lots of people...might be better at night...or on weekends...”* Mrs Park raised the challenges of familial commitments faced by Korean mothers, who are often based in New Zealand without extended family or spousal support, *“...if they want to attend there, they have to bring young children...so it’s very uneasy, so they forget...give up easily...to attend...”* Mrs Zhu recalled attending a mainstream NCEA parent information evening with her brother-in-law the previous year, saying, *“...brother-in-law...I with him to meets teacher and meeting about NCEA before...last year, I think...”* She mentioned the need for her brother-in-law to accompany her to school meetings, which was bound by his work commitments. Evening meetings tended to suit her better so that she was able to have the necessary support, *“[he]...finish work, so I think I can if he meet with teacher, I think better....if the day, I think can’t, because just me...I can’t understand how they say...”* These logistical difficulties appear to impede the parents’ ability to engage with the school.

4.5.3 Relayed via students

Parents also received incidental, opportunistic information via their own children. It is worth noting that this information was not reaching the parents directly and relies on student understanding, the willingness of students to communicate with parents, and the ability of parents to make appropriate enquiries. Lack of parental understanding, combined with the normal teenage reluctance to communicate, poses challenges. As Mrs Huang explained, *“Normally it just stops there (signalling to the students present at the meeting)...we don’t know what to ask...we don’t understand, we don’t have any idea of NCEA. We don’t even know where to go or what to ask...”*

There appeared to be a difference in the level of support offered by schools to international fee-paying students, compared with non-fee-paying New Zealand domiciled students. International fee-paying students were given a high level of assistance from school staff. Mrs Park, who was the only fee-paying parent in the sample, said,

...when my son choose the subject they [international teachers] used to help him...and they explained about NCEA step and I know they are helping him every time,...but it’s not enough for my son because my son does not understand about NCEA system completely.

The non-fee paying New Zealand domiciled students represented in this research project had all transitioned from local contributing intermediate schools. When a question was asked to ascertain their level of assistance, Qian, Mrs Huang’s daughter, responded, *“...there’s a teacher in charge of the subjects, but he’s really busy ‘cause he’s in charge of like, a thousand students.....”*

4.5.4 New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website

Parents were knowledgeable of the official NZQA website but remarked on the volume and complexity of the information contained on this site. Compounded by a lack of proficiency in English, parents appeared reluctant to make extensive use of this site. They readily recognised their lack of understanding and were quite open about their pursuit of information from alternative sources to supplement their knowledge. When asked if the school had provided information to her about NCEA, Mrs Park said, *“They didn’t, but I wanted to know about NCEA so*

sometime I search about NCEA so I know". When I asked Mr and Mrs Lee questions about what information they had found on the NZQA website, their daughter, Jiao, replied, "*...there's like, lots [of information], but in English...they don't understand...*" This was a similar comment made by other participants.

Later enquiries to the NZQA publications staff yielded one multi-lingual pamphlet, which had been translated into Chinese and Korean, amongst other languages. This pamphlet, 'Secondary School Qualifications' (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2008), contained information about the qualifications framework, personalised learning pathways, NCEA, certificate endorsements and access to NZQA results. No reference was made to the principles, values, or key competencies outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum document. No mention was made about course endorsements. The revised 2011 version will be available in Māori and Pasifika languages but, at the time of writing this thesis, is not planned for release in any Asian languages as they are waiting on advice from overseas educational marketing personnel. The pamphlet was located several 'clicks and scrolls' away from the home page. It was difficult to navigate the NZQA website to procure this resource even as a native English speaker, which suggests that this would be an almost impossible task for those who are less proficient in English.

4.5.5 Unofficial ethnic sources of information

Interviews with the parents revealed that they were also pursuing information in their own ethnic language using unofficial sources and channels of information. Participants mentioned sources such as websites, radio, newspapers and television broadcasts.

Mrs Park revealed that the internet provided viable non-official alternatives to gain information, such as blogs, internet cafes, and social networking sites. She explained, "*I maybe can find about information from website and,....include NZQA and there are so many website, Korean website...some website organise Korean who live here so they try...let them know about that NCEA...some Korean site, they translate NCEA...but not many....*" Mrs Park made reference to the multiple sources and channels of information available on the internet, saying "*Yes, it [the internet] is good. Useful, and easier than interview or*

presentation... ”, although she also referred to an obvious limitation of this form of communication, “*...if they [the parents] can use the computer easily.... ”* Despite accessing these blogs to assist her understanding, Mrs Park had an awareness that this information was not complete, as she noted, “*Blog ...and café...social community....but sometimes it’s not enough... ”* There was clearly an attraction to resources and information in their own language, but awareness that the information was not complete.

Chinese radio stations and newspapers were mentioned as another source of information by Mr and Mrs Lee, who had previously lived in Auckland where a large percentage of the Asian immigrant community resides. However, when asked to specify when this information was released to determine how current it was, it became apparent that the information wasn’t necessarily recent. Jiao, their daughter, relayed, “*...maybe one years ago this came out... ”* While this was obviously not a current source of information, it had apparently been a beneficial source of information in the past. Further investigation at the conclusion of the interviews confirmed the existence of a Chinese radio station which was broadcasting on three frequencies within the Auckland region: AM936, FM 99.4, and FM 104.2. This station broadcasts 24 hours a day in Mandarin. Investigations also confirmed the existence of two Chinese newspapers. The ‘Chinese Express’ is a community newspaper distributed free to over 11,000 readers in the Auckland metropolitan area. This newspaper focuses on New Zealand and international news as well as economic items and topics of interest to migrants. The second newspaper, ‘New Zealand Chinese Mirror’, is available in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Its primary focus is on informing readers of newsworthy events as well as promoting New Zealand offshore. However, Chinese language newspapers were not readily accessible in the Bay of Plenty region. As Mrs Huang said, “*Chinese newspaper is very popular in Auckland but not in here...we haven’t got. ”*

Mrs Zhu mentioned learning something about NCEA on television, stating, “*I have Sky-TV, so there...sometime there...I watching [Chinese] TV about NCEA...just TV news... ”* Inquiries about television identified three possible options for parents. The first was CTV8, Chinese TV8, which is a continuous live-feed programme distributed direct from China, with broadcasts predominantly in

Mandarin. This station is available on Freeview HD Channel 028. The second option was TV33, a Chinese programme produced here and overseas which is currently available on Freeview HD Channel 033. The channel to which W. referred was the pay-to-view Sky TV service, primarily a live feed from overseas, interspersed with local news updates.

It is clear that radio, newspapers and television provide potential sources of information reassuringly presented in their own language. However, the information gathered from these sources is piecemeal and unofficial. These sources tend to focus on topical, newsworthy aspects of education rather than a regular, purposeful, planned informative release of information from official sources, such as NZQA or educational institutions, which may be more beneficial to parents.

4.6 Communication barriers

A second aspect of the research focused on identifying if there were any communication barriers that could impede parents' understanding. Findings suggest that several barriers are present, including lack of English proficiency, differences in educational practices and processes, and underlying conflict in worldviews.

4.6.1 Lack of proficiency in English

All of the parents mentioned the difficulties of communicating in English. Mr Lee voiced an all-too-familiar problem, “...*English not so good, so I can't understand...*” When asked about how much of a problem English was, Mrs Park replied, “*Most...biggest problem*” A significant effort was required on the part of the parents to understand and assimilate the information that the school had provided. She elaborated,

...we want to know about the information from school, but my thought is even if they wanted to tell us very much ... sometime I don't want to receive that because I very hard to understand and hard to listen and to speak...so actually, international teachers are try to tell us many things, but if I don't get it, it's my problem.

Parents clearly articulated the fact that communicating in English was daunting and difficult. Mrs Park said, “...*include me, most Korean women scary to talk in English with others...*” Parents displayed a definite hesitance in contacting the school because of the language barrier. She remarked,

Do you know, Korean mum very passionate (sic) about their children’s school life, so many Korean mum visit often, so they can get new information if they want to know...but here [in New Zealand] they are afraid to go school because language is problem...

These parents were not necessarily confident of the knowledge that they did possess and wanted it verified. Mrs Park said, “*It’s very hard and I can’t understand sometime, so they want to hear this from others...*”

Interestingly, even those parents who had lived in New Zealand for five to ten years, such as Mr Lee, Mrs Lee, and Mrs Zhu, still commented on the challenges of English. It appears communicating in English as a second language has a prolonged influence on parent involvement and length of time in the host country doesn’t necessarily mitigate this factor. The only conversation where the issue of English did not dominate was with Mrs Huang, who had graduated from a New Zealand university.

Parents who faced the challenge of communicating in English indicated the need for support, relying on a range of family, friends and professional associations to overcome the language barrier. Mrs Zhu, who had familial connections, noted: “*Because my English is poor, if school interview I with my brother-in-law together, to meet teacher...*” Alternatively, those without family to assist turned to friends and colleagues. Mr Lee said, “...*but if I’m no good English, sometime another people together, to meeting teacher...*” For international fee-paying students, agents are available to assist the process. Mrs Park noted, “*In my case, friends help me a lot but then agency ... I feel more comfortable my friend is good, but some Korean mum is feel agency is more comfortable than them...*” In some cases formal professional associations in the community also proved to be useful. Mrs Zhu remarked, *I can’t understand, but they have a private English teacher so I ask her to explain to me...* While these connections outside of the immediate school community proved useful, Mrs Park highlighted a drawback of

relying on people within her own ethnic community for assistance, stating, “...*Korean social community in Tauranga is very small, so something happen...it’s everybody knows...*” Given this situation it is unsurprising that she expressed a preference for general information to be conveyed in a group, but indicated information specific to her son would best be conveyed privately.

4.6.2 Structural educational practices and processes

Interviews also revealed differences in functional and operational aspects of New Zealand educational practices and processes to which parents were oblivious. Their unconscious lack of understanding of these differences has the potential to impede the effectiveness of communication and may influence their level of motivation for engaging with the system.

Drawing on personal educational experiences in their native countries, parents from China and Korea were expecting only one significant external assessment each academic year. Mrs Zhu, the parent from Hong Kong, referred to two significant assessments per year. The results of these assessments were used to determine placing in classes, and, ultimately, entrance to tertiary institutions. The concept of internal and external credits was foreign to them. Consequently, parents did not appear to anticipate the need to engage with the system and monitor their child’s progress more closely throughout the year.

All of the educational systems, apart from Hong Kong, dictated compulsory subjects for students at the equivalent level of Year 11. The only variation in this regard was the choice of non-English foreign languages. Choice was an option only considered in the final or final two years of senior high school. Parents were oblivious to the fact that subject choices have ramifications for university entrance in New Zealand in later years. Mrs Huang illustrated a situation Mrs Wong faced, “...*now he’s going to choose the subject now, she doesn’t know what he should choose because she doesn’t know if he’s good at this one [subject] or he’s bad at that one...*”

In their native country, all of the parents liaised with only one homeroom classroom teacher at school to monitor the progress of their child. They appear to find multiple points of contact at school in New Zealand confusing and difficult. For those parents who had made the effort to attend parent-teacher meetings,

brevity of time was an issue and gave very limited opportunity to dialogue. This was particularly evident in comments surrounding parent-teacher interviews. Mrs Huang explained Mr Chuo's experience,

They went to one [parent-teacher evening] with their friends helping out with the language thing...he set up the time...he probably only got 5 minutes because the teacher going to see a lot of parents that day...and go to a big room, and each has their own space...and they give you probably 5 or 10 minutes and give you a very brief [meeting], you know, say what he good at, what he don't really good at, and all those things...but too short...

Specific comments about the short length of time gave the impression that a longer length of time is needed for effective communication with these parents.

There also appeared to be a distinction between individual and collective communication initiated by the school. Group meetings were the generic source of information and teachers apparently initiated student-specific contact directly with parents only if there is a problem. Mrs Park commented, *"If teacher want to meet some parent, that's why student being behaviour problem...many Korean mum doesn't want to meet the school teacher...we worried about children behaviour...some problem, big problems..."*

4.6.3 Dissonance in educational world views

Parents' comments revealed a latent tension and mismatch between their native educational philosophy and systems and the educational system with which they are faced in New Zealand. Asian immigrant parents come from a competitive, elitist educational system with an onus on rank and accuracy. The parents' native educational environment contrasts sharply with New Zealand's purported focus on the pedagogical processes and contextualisation of learning. Report comments and teacher feedback in New Zealand appear to be too generalised for Asian immigrant parents and are not sufficiently focused on specific areas of student improvement. Mrs Huang said, *"...I collect all her school reports from the primary school to the now and I haven't really found anything that say, OK, she need to improve in this area or whatever...everything is just too general and too good..."* A similar comment was made by Mrs Park, *"...sometimes I*

wonder...curious, just curious...we want to know what subject my children have to study more, but when we New Zealand letter [report] read, we can't know easily..." In both of these cases there appeared to be a definite emphasis on student improvement on the part of the parents.

4.7 Consequences

The lack of knowledge and compounding operational and cultural differences appear to have resulted in three significant consequences: loss of parental agency, student autonomy and, in one case, deliberate disengagement from home-school communication processes.

4.7.1 Loss of parental agency

The conversations revealed not only a resounding lack of knowledge and understanding amongst the parents but, more poignantly, an acute awareness of their helplessness to help their children and a lack of agency. Mrs Huang expressed their helplessness, *"I just feel like I'm just here looking and watching...and I don't know what's going on there...and I don't know how to help...I feel helpless..."* Even previous experience in an educational context as a professional didn't appear to bridge this gap. Mr Lee, the former teacher, commented, *"If in China, maybe we can help...before I teacher, so I can help her choose...in here, big difference to us..."*

A lack of parental agency leads to reliance on others to support them, which can potentially undermine their roles as parents. Mrs Zhu lamented, *"I can't understand...my brother-in-law, I think, know....I don't know this one...."*

Parents' comments also revealed feelings of alienation and inadequacy as they compared themselves to New Zealand parents. Mrs Huang revealed, *"Like, the communication of the parents and the teacher...is it because we are Chinese...we are afraid of...to talk to the teacher...because of the language...or is the kiwi parents the same problem as us...?"* During the interview Mrs Huang voiced the extent of their anguish, saying, *"Some feel very regret because they feel like they bring the kids here...want a better education...better chance, better opportunity for them but now they feel, because they can't help, they feel helpless..."*

4.7.2 Student autonomy

All of the students exhibited a high degree of autonomy in relation to their education as they were not necessarily able to seek advice or assistance from their parents. Mr Lee made a comment regarding Jiao's subject which illustrates the level of autonomy these students have, noting *"I know she choose Japanese...and other [subjects] not really understand..."* When I asked why students didn't seek assistance from their parents, Qian, Mrs Huang's daughter, explained: *"Because when we talk, they don't understand"* These students are vulnerable as interviews revealed the fact that the students may not necessarily understand the system either. Qian's comments made this clear, *"Sometimes I don't understand, there are lots of things I don't understand."*

Parents recognised the independence that their children had and worried about their achievement, particularly in relation to future prospects. Mrs Zhu worried, *"But...he not thinking about it [the future]...just (mimics typing on a computer)...no study"* Mr Lee also expressed his concern, *"...but I can't understand....so now, I just everyday pray (demonstrating with his hands), pray to Lord for Jiaocan't understand"*

4.7.3 Deliberate disengagement

One of the revelations in the interview process was a conscious decision, by Mrs Huang, to disengage from the communication process with the school. During the course of the group interview she disclosed her frustration,

I don't know if it's all the same, but, for me, all I heard was how good she was. How excellent she was. And never said anything like, what she need to improve...She was really good, she was, but I know that she needs lots of things, like she need to learn English better, and all those things...then after two or three of those meetings I just can't really be bothered to go, because all I heard was 'good, good, good'...

Despite being competent in English and a graduate of a New Zealand university it appears that she had made the surprising choice to disengage. The lack of detail and direction in relation to student improvement and achievement, and Mrs Huang's subsequent response, suggests that the content of communication was not meeting her needs.

4.8 A way forward

The final aspect of this study was to determine the forms of assistance that schools could provide to address communication barriers and improve home-school communication from the parents' perspectives. When asked, the parents endorsed two main forms of communication to assist their understanding of the New Zealand educational system, namely written information, and ethnic-specific parent meetings.

4.8.1 Written information

Parents expressed a preference for information in writing. Mrs Park said, *"I prefer to receive mail or letter, and...it...more able to understand easier because it's...I have short time to read..."* Parents did not necessarily display confidence in the knowledge that they did have. Mrs Park commented, *"It's very hard, and I can't understand sometime, so they want to hear this [have the information confirmed] from others..."* Interviews revealed the fact that reliance on verbal communication alone could cause problems. Mrs Park recalled a previous meeting, *"...That time, I lost many information and if I even concentrate, listen... I can't [have] confidence whether it's wrong or it's right...very, very confused."* As Mrs Huang noted, even information in English had the potential to be useful: *"Even if we do not understand, we can go out to find someone to translate for us, or use the dictionary to find out..."* However, it is judicious to point out that these comments should also be considered in light of previous statements about the complexity and volume of information available on the NZQA website and the need to understand educational terminology. Ideally, information would be in their own ethnic language. As Jiao Lee said, *"It would be great if, like they put it on the internet, in Chinese, so the parents could see it."*

4.8.2 Ethnic-specific parent meetings

The second form of communication that the parents endorsed was the idea of ethnic-specific group parent meetings. When asked what parents would like to do, Mrs Park said, *"...we want to make a time, like as a workshop... presentation... about NCEA for students and parent together..."* However, the spectre of English was never far away as Mr Lee's comments revealed, *"...because no good English, so maybe if it's in Auckland for one same community...Chinese community...school and community together...same this meeting (signals our*

meeting)....*and talk with translator to Chinese people, ...*” Mrs Zhu expressed this request even more succinctly, *“I think, if they can just explain to Chinese parent, I think better.”* The desire for bilingual support to overcome the language barrier was clearly evident.

4.9 Summary

The interviews conducted as part of this research project confirmed the sense of disquiet that I had at the outset. These research findings have revealed the extent to which English, amongst other challenges, remains a problem. Throughout the interviews, the desire of parents to be able to partner in their children’s education was evident. However, these parents’ comments clearly illustrate the extent of isolation and alienation that these families face in the New Zealand educational system. The next chapter analyses the research findings in light of the previously-presented academic literature, with a view to presenting well-founded recommendations that may enhance home-school communication practices with Asian immigrant parents.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this small-scale exploratory research project was to document the personal experiences of Asian immigrant parents, in order to ascertain if current home-school communication practices and processes were effective. The previous chapter highlighted the disparity between high parental expectations and rudimentary parental knowledge of the NCEA Level 1 qualification and complete unfamiliarity with the New Zealand Curriculum philosophy. Key findings also emerged in relation to worldview of education, accuracy of alternative sources of information, and cultural aspects of communication, which potentially impeded the effectiveness of home-school communication. This chapter corroborates empirical data with academic rationale, and discusses the possible reasons for the extent of the disconnection between home and school for these parents. Recommendations and strategies for culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to address these challenges are offered in the next chapter.

5.2 Ineffective home-school communication practices

The corollary of the findings from this study is that, despite the best of intentions, current home-school communication practices are largely ineffective for Asian immigrant parents. Interviews revealed an absence or partial understanding in relation to educational philosophy and qualification systems, a lack of agency and parental efficacy, high levels of student autonomy, and a lack of foundation for an educational partnership. The similar refrain from geographically-dispersed parents suggests that these comments are indicative of systemic issues, which are not isolated to a specific, individual school's processes or practices for home-school communication.

5.2.1 Lack of understanding

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007b) clearly states, as a foundational principle, that curriculum should "...have meaning for students, connects with their wider lives, and engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities" (p. 9). Furthermore, this document also espouses cultural diversity and inclusion by stating that "...students' identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed..." (p. 9). However, the findings have

demonstrated that there is overwhelming evidence that Asian immigrant parents do not understand New Zealand educational philosophy. Even though the New Zealand Curriculum calls for the inclusion of parents and the wider community, it is clear that without effective home-school communication this consultative process cannot take place.

Parents were more familiar with the NCEA Level 1 qualification but, even so, there are also signs that even mechanical technicalities of the education system are not being communicated effectively between home and school. For example, while some parents did know that an NCEA Achievement Standard could be awarded an ‘Achieved with Excellence’ grade, they were not aware that these credits contributed towards both certificate and course endorsements, which distinguished academically-capable students. Another example from the interviews was the confusion and misinformation about internal and external assessments. The information that was held was primarily acquired through haphazard, circumstantial means. Integration of knowledge was not evident and, therefore, information was not connected in meaningful ways. The parents included in this study did not have a congruent breadth or depth of knowledge, nor did they appear to have confidence in the knowledge that they did possess.

5.2.2 Loss of agency and lack of efficacy

The optimistic aspirations for a better educational system contrasted sharply with the loss of agency and helplessness revealed by the parents during the course of the interviews. The parents had to trust that their child(ren) were being properly advised because they were not sufficiently informed to act as their child’s advocate themselves. Current home-school communication practices assume that parents are fully informed about the choices students are making, but findings indicate that parents are either not aware, or not actively engaged. The parents in this study had little knowledge of how the school system operated and did not know about what types of interventions might be necessary to ensure their child(ren)’s success at school.

It is important to dispel the notion that this lack of communication was a result of parental reticence; rather the limited extent of parental participation was a reflection of the degree of discontinuity that the parents felt. Academic literature

(Glanz, 2006; Olsen & Fuller, 2008) highlights that immigrant parents can be prone to feeling disempowered as a result of cultural incongruities. Ineffective home-school communication practices cause a lack of understanding which, in turn, contributes towards a lack of parental efficacy. A lack of knowledge means that parents don't know how to help their child(ren). Bereft of knowledge, they appear to have little choice but to forfeit control to their children. Academic literature highlights the fact that parents can only become active co-educators of their children if they are equipped for this role (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). From a critical, social justice perspective there is clear evidence that these students and their parents are isolated, alienated and, in effect, marginalised (Griffiths, 2003; Madison, 2005).

Parental involvement influences are greater for grades-based assessments (Desimone, 1999; Jeynes, 2007), and a lack of communication with Asian immigrant parents has the potential to be a significant influence on the level of their students' success. While Asian students have historically achieved well in the New Zealand educational system, the increasing emphasis on the contextualisation of learning as the new curriculum is implemented, may pose problems for the future. However, the scope of this study stops short of assessing whether ineffective communication actually prevents parental assistance with study or has an impact on students' level of achievement, as suggested by Kim (2002) and Ran (2001).

5.2.3 Student autonomy

Lack of parental knowledge clearly resulted in a change of family dynamics and an increasing level of autonomy by students. The findings clearly showed that the students were making their own independent decisions, a possibility that Qin, et al., (2011) suggests is prevalent with Asian immigrant students. This situation can result in these students being vulnerable to making poorly-informed choices, particularly if school pastoral support is weak. The inability of parents to be actively engaged with their child(ren)'s education may go against the familial orientation of indigenous Sinic cultural traditions. It is important that educators recognise that these students may need assistance to ensure that they understand the system well enough to maximise their potential.

The reliance on students to act as cultural brokers was evident (Auerbach, 2006; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). Parents were very aware of their limitations in relation to their English skills. It was evident during the family interviews that students acted in a supporting role to assist their parents to communicate. However, the willingness of students to act in this role can be compounded by the natural progression towards independence typical of adolescence (Halsey, 2005; Walker & MacLure, 2005).

5.2.4 Lack of an educational partnership

The research findings highlight the lack of alignment between New Zealand schools and Asian immigrant parents. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) as a framework for evaluation, it is evident that a lack of communication between home and school will inhibit effective interaction at the meso-system level of influence. The consequent lack of congruence in expectations and understanding between the home and school can inhibit a strategic partnership, which as Nieto (2004) points out is essential in order to harness the potential of the complementary roles of parents and educators. A similar conclusion is reached when using Epstein's model of 'Overlapping Spheres of Influence' (Epstein, et al., 2002), which highlights the potential impact of discontinuity and disparity between the philosophy and practices of home and school. Both of these models emphasise the need for a coherent, congruent and complementary strategic direction between school and home. Findings highlight the lack of alignment between schools and Asian immigrant parents, given the current home-school communication practices. Significantly, the lack of home-school communication contradicts Sinic cultural predilections to the co-operative, formalised, working relationships between home and school as proposed by Jeynes (2005b).

5.3 'Successful communication' – a relative term

Two parents from the Mainland Chinese group, Mrs Wong and Mr Chuo, who had been in New Zealand for a relatively short period, had an extremely limited understanding of the New Zealand educational system. All of the remaining parents in the study understood about credits and the national external examinations. Some of the parents knew about the distinction between 'Achieved', 'Merit', and 'Excellence' grades. At this point, it is worth examining the findings to glean insights into how this information was able to be

communicated to these parents, in order to improve the efficacy of home-school communication with Asian immigrant parents.

5.3.1 The international department

The parent of the international fee-paying student had the most comprehensive understanding of NCEA, and this suggests that the use of an international department to aid Asian immigrant families could prove to be beneficial. Findings revealed that parents can be reluctant to attend the information evenings offered by the international department. As an alternative, the international department provided information to the student, and the student then relayed this information to the parent. However, there are also some drawbacks which must be considered if utilising this means of passing on information. The information may be only partially relayed, without complete understanding, as the students who took part in the interviews professed that they did not understand the system in its entirety. Participant comments also indicated that this information appeared to be for functional and administrative purposes, which does not address the need for Asian parents to develop a philosophical understanding of the New Zealand educational system. Furthermore, without dialogue, written media of communication have an inherent limitation, in that they only facilitate one-way communication, rather than two-way communication (Amatea, 2009; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Schools cannot be certain which parents are reached nor be able to ascertain the level of their understanding (Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Communication needs dialogue and discussion to facilitate this process, and effective two-way communication provides the opportunity to ask questions and gain clarity of understanding (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

In this research project, the international department at the school did not establish contact with this parent directly; rather they referred me to an educational agent. The use of an agent to contact the Korean parent demonstrated that schools can effectively delegate responsibility for communication with parents to a suitably skilled and experienced agent, but it impedes a personal connection between parents and the school itself. Crozier and Davies (2007) cite a similar situation where bilingual staff and assistants avoided the need for a personal relationship. This situation sounds a warning that schools need opportunities to build relationships, rather than abdicating this responsibility to agents, because

relationships require multiple interaction-opportunities in order to develop (Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Another potential problem alluded to in the findings is that the agent themselves may not be conversant with the most recent information, which could explain why Mrs Park was not aware of the introduction of course endorsements in 2011.

This research project also appears to suggest a distinction in the level of support provided by schools for international fee-paying Asian students and New Zealand domiciled students, a claim which was supported by the students' comments. Differing approaches to immigration and the incorporation of migrants and minorities do have important consequences (Castles, 2009). New Zealand-domiciled students tend to transfer into secondary schools from a domestic, contributing school, as opposed to relocating directly from overseas. While the New Zealand-domiciled students may have been in New Zealand for longer than more recent arrivals, the findings suggest that these students still need support due to the length of time of the acculturation process. Schools need to be aware of the dominant ideology of Asian students as international fee-paying students, rather than as legitimate residents and citizens of New Zealand.

5.3.2 Familial support

Family and ethnic community links are important for immigrants (Auerbach, 2006; Fuligni, et al., 2007; Olneck, 2004), and this was evident in the finding, as parents linked to familial members for support. This response is what Hernandez (2004) posits as retreating into enclaves to seek familial and ethnic community supports. Family and community support can ameliorate a lack of English proficiency on the part of the parents. Where families or friends were available to assist with cultural and linguistic support, parents were able to navigate unfamiliar educational terrain. Mrs Zhu was a prime example of this situation. Her lack of English proficiency wasn't necessarily a limitation; she knew virtually as much as Mrs Park, who had the Korean agent to assist her. While Mrs Zhu's lack of English proficiency posed challenges, she still attended a mainstream NCEA parent information evening. Consequently she was able to recall a hazy understanding of course endorsements because she had actually attended a school meeting the previous year, albeit in English, with the support of her brother-in-law. Glasgow and Whitney (2009) suggest that older siblings can also act as an

‘informative agent’ for families. However, while family support is useful, there remains a consequential lack of agency on the part of the parents, which may thwart constructive and long-term efforts to improve the knowledge and efficacy of the parents themselves. It is important to recognise that while these resources provide support, the need for schools to provide actual assistance to these families (Fuligni, et al., 2007) is not negated.

5.3.3 Alternative ethnic sources of information

Parents had purposefully and independently sought out an eclectic array of alternative ethnic sources of information independently. While the parents included in this study mentioned the NZQA website, they had rarely accessed information via this site because they had to navigate a complex website in a second language. Parents cited examples of using blogs and other social-networks available on the internet, as well as Chinese television, radio stations and newspapers. What the interviews confirmed, though, was that such information may be partial and may not necessarily be accurate or up-to-date as suggested by Crozier and Davies (2007).

While these sources were mentioned as possible sources of information, most parents did not appear to exhibit a strong reliance on them as a definitive source of information. While the parents mentioned them as a possible source, none of these sources was highly recommended or mentioned consistently throughout the interviews by more than one or two parents. Given the native languages used and the inability to access historic information, it was difficult to gauge the usefulness of these resources or the nature of their content, but the infrequent and inconsistent mention of the sources suggests that the content is sporadic, piecemeal, and topical, and not used as a primary source of support. The inherent drawback of information from these ethnic media sources is that it is produced by well-intentioned lay people, rather than by official sources. Another important issue that arises from parents using such an approach to accessing information is that it does not allow access to expert advice or experienced educators.

5.4 Communication Barriers

The findings from the research reveal that there are possible communication barriers which may explain the lack, or inhibit the efficacy, of communication.

5.4.1 English proficiency

One of the dominant themes to emerge from this research is the barrier of English language. Inevitably one of the first responses when discussing communication with the school was the challenge of communicating in English. The use of English as the ‘lingua franca’ in New Zealand educational contexts became apparent early in the research process. Unfortunately, reliance on the host language appeared to preclude effective communication, as suggested by Hernandez (2004) and Kim (2002). Parents were united in conveying both the challenges that they faced when comprehending information in English and the desire for information in their own native language. Parents displayed a definite hesitance and reticence in communicating with the school because of their lack of proficiency in English, apart from Mrs Huang who demonstrated strong proficiency in English.

While information was available on the NZQA website, participants’ comments also reflected difficulties related to the volume and complexity of the information available in English. This suggests that relevant information should be conveyed in concise, succinct, plain English, unless it is communicated in native languages. Information on the NZQA website focuses solely on the qualifications available in New Zealand, which also limits the information parents are able to access. Parents are forced to search separate Ministry of Education websites to learn more about the New Zealand Curriculum document and educational philosophy.

The parents were unequivocal in their desire for bilingual resources. This supports the proposition that information should be provided in different forms or languages to improve communication and parental engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Hidalgo, et al., 2004), with a caution that schools should not rely on print material alone because parents may not be literate in their native tongue (Grant & Ray, 2010). Despite an increase in the number of Asian immigrant parents residing in New Zealand on a long-term or permanent basis, the need for bilingual resources in the educational sector appears to have

gone largely unnoticed. The statistical term ‘minority’ is misleading, and implies an insignificant number, which may explain the paltry resource provision for these parents. As illustrated in the introductory chapter, the number of recent Asian immigrants is increasing to such an extent that to deny the need for more comprehensive bilingual resources is tantamount to professional negligence.

English skills do not necessarily appear to improve with acculturation and length of time in the host country. Mr and Mrs Lee, who had been living in NZ for the past 10 years, still expressed concern about their English language abilities. English conversation lessons appeared to have been beneficial as those parents who had undertaken such lessons were able to converse in English, at a social level, in a shorter period of time. However, the length of time in the host country and English conversation lessons may not necessarily alleviate the challenge of communicating in English. As Glasgow and Whitney (2009) point out, the specificity of educational contexts uses complex and idiomatic language, which poses particular challenges to second-language speakers of English who may not be familiar with the language of education. An example of this situation was evident in the interview with Mrs Huang, when there was a brief discussion about the word ‘endorsement’. Without dialogue, educational terms, particularly those terms which are used in colloquial language, are easily misunderstood and prone to causing confusion.

5.4.2 Education and acculturation

The literature suggests that the educational levels of parents can impact on the level of parental involvement with schools (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; E. Kim, 2002). However, findings reveal that all three of the parents in this study that held university-level qualifications were still not actively communicating with the schools. For the parents included in this study, level of education did not appear to be a significant determinant in doing so. Given this situation, it is not unreasonable to assume that this is even less likely to apply for parents who have lower levels of education.

Ran (2001) suggests that the length of time in the host country can make a difference in immigrant parents’ level of engagement. Findings support Ran’s contention, as the two parents with the least understanding were two of the more

recent arrivals. However, on closer examination, research findings also reveal three contradictions to this proposition. The first contradiction was that Mrs Park had only been in New Zealand for 14 months, yet she had the most comprehensive understanding of all the participants. One explanation for this was that she had had two years of experience in the Philippines, prior to her arrival in New Zealand, which may have developed cross-cultural skills that assisted her adjustment process. Secondly, Mr and Mrs Lee, parents who had been living in New Zealand for 10 years, indicated a high level of difficulty in communicating with the schools. The third contradiction was Mrs Huang, a parent who had been living in New Zealand for 10 years, and was competent in English. It appears that she was dissatisfied with home-school communication at primary level and was disengaged from home-school communication as her daughter, Qian, entered secondary schooling. The latter of these examples contradict Kim (2002) who suggests that parents who have been here longer are more likely to show a greater degree of acculturation and may exhibit cultural norms of parental involvement at school. Extended length of time doesn't necessarily translate into acculturation and cross-cultural capacity that can facilitate greater involvement with schools. This gives support to Hidalgo, et al.'s (2004) proposition that cultural factors related to communication may also need to be taken into account, because there can be a low rate of engagement even when parents can understand and speak English. Factors, other than time, are also required to acculturate and to navigate complex educational systems confidently.

5.4.3 Brevity of time and lack of dialogue

All participants affirmed that they had previously attended parent information sessions in their native country. However, parents included in this research project exhibited a low rate of attendance at parent-teacher and information evenings in New Zealand. Mrs Huang's comment about the rate of attendance at parent information meetings in China accentuated the difference in behaviour in the host country. Similar trends in immigrant parent attendance have been identified in overseas research (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Hidalgo, et al., 2004; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Olneck, 2004). Without attending these meetings, parents were eliminating a potentially valuable source of information about NCEA and the New Zealand Curriculum.

The parents' reticence to attend meetings in New Zealand may be perceived as a lack of interest or concern, or an assumption that they are satisfied with the status quo by educators. Desimone (1999) suggests that Asian parents may also choose not to attend parent meetings because of negative cultural connotations, but the findings in this research project show some contradiction to this proposition. Parent meetings were widely endorsed and, in fact, requested, as long as the information was generic and informative. Mrs Park's comments about the reluctance to attend meetings suggest that this is more to do with school-initiated, student-specific contact, because the hesitation only began to be revealed when the school wanted to see an individual parent. Further evaluation of the parents' comments confirmed the findings of Ji and Koblinsky (2009) that the low rates of attendance may be linked to both a lack of English and to work commitments, although participants' responses suggest that the prime reason for avoidance is the use of English as the medium of communication. Structural barriers, such as timing of the meeting, also created logistical difficulties that could prevent parents from attending, particularly for those who needed support.

However, the findings showed that although all of the parents had attended at least one parent-teacher meeting in New Zealand, they appeared to have an ambivalent feeling towards such meetings; because they found them ineffective, for the most part, for a number of reasons. Parents found the comments related to interpersonal skills and effort levels to be too general, and not sufficiently related to achievement and areas for student improvement. In a similar vein to Ran (2001) and Guo's (2010) findings, the length of time allocated for these meetings appeared to be too short for genuine dialogue. Teacher comments appeared to be too general for these parents.

5.4.4 Frequency of communication

The findings also confirmed that information needs to be communicated on a timely and relevant basis, because otherwise it can become out-dated and inaccurate. Parents may lose confidence in their knowledge because of the length of time that has elapsed, as indicated by some of the comments made by Mrs Zhu. As Sanders and Sheldon (2009) suggest, home-school communication should be timely, focused on school goals and activities, and relay information about students' academic progress. These criteria for effective home-school

communication are also endorsed by Hiatt-Michael (2010), who suggests that communication should be frequent and persistent to develop effective partnerships between home and school.

5.5 Cultural differences in communication styles

A simplistic, reductionist response to communicating with culturally and linguistically diverse parents would be to translate all the material into the parents' native language. However, this approach ignores culturally-bound variables that dictate the norms of interaction and which have implications for styles of interaction. Communication extends beyond obvious language barriers and incorporates non-verbal communication patterns and dynamics, which become particularly significant in intercultural communication (Gay, 2010; Hooker, 2003; Samovar & Porter, 2003).

There is a degree of cultural naiveté and ethnocentrism reflected in current home-school communication practices with Asian immigrant parents. Schools are operating in an environment of implicit, cultural assumptions and may be ignoring the presence of culturally-specific priorities. Educators need to consider assumptions about local/current approaches and discern differences in cultural patterns that may assist, or inhibit, the communication process. School practices may not be culturally situated or appropriate for immigrant families (Li, Du, et al., 2011). Misunderstanding of cultural norms, behaviours and values can also lead to unintentional social distance and marginality (Olneck, 2004). Cultural patterns dictate school-family interactions and, therefore, there is a need for culturally-appropriate relationships between immigrant parents and school personnel (Olneck, 2004). Effective communication strategies will accommodate the parents' needs, validate their culture and create a welcoming, inclusive environment as legitimate members of the parent community.

Le Baron argues for 'cultural fluency', "...recognizing and working with authentic differences..." (2004, p. 299), which can allow conscious choice-making, versatility in understanding and interpreting behaviours and implicit rules. Intercultural communication skills enable the development of cultural fluency and discernment of cultural patterns, and relational adeptness (Le Baron, 2004). Le Baron states, "As we become familiar with cultural dynamics, we learn

ways to bridge differences that yield synergy not confusion” (2004, p. 32). Appropriate interactional or communication strategies will take these aspects into consideration. Key school personnel, such as agents and international department staff, may be able to act as resource brokers who help develop the skills and efficacy of parents (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Cultural norms used as terms of reference are broad, generalist terms which can be problematic, and it needs to be reiterated that these cultural considerations can rightly be negated by individuals. It is crucial to avoid generalising, and important to note that these are cultural starting points, not absolutes; there will be variation within and between different nationalities (Le Baron, 2004).

5.5.1 Transitions from high-context Sinic cultures

Sinic cultures are notoriously recognised as high-context communication cultures, which rely on well-known, often tacit, rituals and practices (Hooker, 2003; Le Baron, 2004). Generations of homogenous, ritualised culture in countries of origin has refined communication beyond the need for words, which can confound outsiders who try to navigate complex, non-verbal interactions. When Asian parents immigrate to a low-context Western culture, from a high-context Asiatic culture, the extent of cultural disorientation may be even more marked. The contrast makes the transition to a low-context host society even more challenging.

Samovar and Porter (2003) contend that when the host culture contrasts sharply with the native culture, immigrants will retreat into community enclaves to minimise contact with the host culture. While initiating contact with the parents involved in this research project was a protracted process, it did reinforce that Asian immigrants had formed enclaves in the Bay of Plenty community. Immigrants had aligned themselves within a network of ethnically-similar family and/or community organisations, such as the Bay of Plenty Chinese Culture Society, Chinese church, extended family networks, migrant English lessons and suchlike. The response of these immigrant parents may, in part, be attributed to the extent of difference between high-context and low-context cultures.

The strength of the parents’ comments in this research project expressed the degree of disorientation that they faced. The chasm between the native and host country educational systems, and the ensuing disorientation, may overtly present

itself through the extent of loss of agency and anguish of the parents' experience. Parents may be unfamiliar with social systems and structures, which compounds the problem of parental role construction, and parents may hold different expectations for parental involvement in education. Internalised cultural settings work like an internal cultural compass, with parameters set by cultural norms, personal experiences and parental experiences. It is not unreasonable to assume that a natural response is to draw on previous personal experiences to attempt to make sense of a new environment. In a foreign educational environment, social cues and expectations can be missed, which requires tacit and explicit articulation of expectations to enable 'cultural code-switching' (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Effective home-school communication, which makes the tacit explicit, may assist parents to recalibrate internal settings to reorient to cultural norms of the host society.

The parents in this study had effectively withdrawn into isolated enclaves. These enclaves were not actively engaging with quasi-governmental agencies, such as Settlement Support or multi-cultural organisations such as the Tauranga Regional Multicultural Council. With a strong collective orientation, they might have had a stronger sense of the division between insider/outsider. They might also have been exposed to overt and covert racism in New Zealand, which had perhaps made them more wary. Local ethnic activities for immigrants do exist, but these community links are not clearly defined or sufficiently established. These links are organic and fluid, and are reliant on personal connections and relationships. The challenge for educators is to work collectively within the community, to be able to establish and strengthen pathways. I found it was easier to contact parents aligned with a formal organisation and established roles, such as Mrs Park through her Korean agent. In contrast, it was much harder to locate the Chinese families, because their contacts were through a relationship-based organisation, the church. The differences in contacting these two groups of parents suggest that there is value in schools developing a clearly-defined purpose and formal roles when engaging with parents. At the present time, the Bay of Plenty Chinese Cultural Society does not have a website or membership database which could be utilised to establish formal links to schools, although this organisation may have potential as a community link in the future.

5.5.2 Reluctance to challenge authority

In Sinic societies, authority is intrinsically assigned to educational institutions and educators because of the value placed on educational endeavours, and the interviews revealed an anticipated demarcation between home and school as proposed by the literature (He, et al., 2011; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li, Du, et al., 2011; Li & He, 2011; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; N. Pang, 2011). Conversations about the native educational systems revealed the parents' reliance on the schools to provide direction for student learning and achievement. The hierarchical orientation of Asiatic cultures means that parents tend to formalise roles and relationships, with complex rules of behaviour and language use, and have an ingrained respect for authority (Pai, et al., 2006).

Parents in this study recognised that they had little understanding of the New Zealand educational system. However, despite the value placed on education, there was a notably passive response to openly challenging authority and a reluctance to openly challenge this situation. This inherent reluctance to discuss problems was signalled in the literature (Gay, 2010; Hooker, 2003; Pai, et al., 2006). In response to their situation, the parents in this study had sought out their own information, from an eclectic array of alternative ethnic sources, rather than openly challenge the schools' practices and processes. In an egalitarian society, such as New Zealand, there is an implicit, unstated assumption that if parents don't understand something they will ask, but this assumption contravenes the native cultural practices of Asian immigrant parents.

Another insight in relation to the hierarchical nature of Sinic cultures became evident in the course of this research project. Introductions to establish authenticity and integrity were crucial to accessing these communities. A cultural orientation towards hierarchical social structures requires the recognition of formal roles and responsibilities so that codes of conduct can be established (Pai, et al., 2006).

5.5.3 Collective orientation of Sinic cultures

Family and ethnic community links are significant for immigrants, and this is particularly so for Asian cultures (Olneck, 2004). The configuration of the interviews, as determined by the participants in this study, demonstrated a

practical outworking of the strong collective and familial orientation that they hold. Initially the research design had proposed that individual interviews be conducted in a setting determined by the participants. In hindsight, the pursuit of individual interviews reflected ethnocentrism in research conceptualisation and, as the research progressed from ‘thematizing’ into the field, a broader, more flexible, and culturally-appropriate approach was required. As Kamberelis and Dimitri note, “Individual interviews strip away the critical interactional dynamics that constitute much of social practice and collective meaning making” (2008, p. 396).

In reality, this conceptualisation was only utilised in one of the four interview opportunities, with Mrs Park, the Korean mother. The remaining three interviews were conducted in home settings in family or group configurations. In two of the three interviews, students were there to provide assistance with translation for their parents. Interestingly, in the third interview, even with a competent English-speaking adult present to undertake the role of translator, the young people were still present.

The most recently immigrated parents, from Mainland China, preferred to meet in a group setting, which follows the contention that recent immigrants tend to have a stronger preference for their own cultural mores (Samovar & Porter, 2003; Vazquez-Nuttall, et al., 2006). While Mrs Park was also a recent immigrant, she had had experience in a foreign country, in the Philippines, prior to her arrival in New Zealand. The exposure to another culture might have made a difference to the extent of her acculturation and ability to adapt (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

A collective orientation also places an emphasis on harmony and conformity in interpersonal interactions, engendering indirect, passive and docile responses and a tendency to defer to group norms (Hooker, 2003; Pai, et al., 2006). The active demonstration of conflict avoidance means that individuals will suppress their own personal frustrations to avoid ‘losing face’ with the group. In the group setting, personal conversations regarding individual student enquiries were conducted after the research interview was completed.

Anecdotal evidence from this research project appears to suggest that, if immigrants do not have family nearby, they reach out to other ethnically-similar organisations, such as the Chinese church. Where the immediate or extended

family lived close-by, these ethnic community links and relationships did not necessarily form to the same extent.

The collective orientation, as well as hierarchical ordering of social systems, suggests that a system of mentoring may be effective for Asian parents as it is a collective approach and is based on relationships. Examples of suitable mentors could be immigrants who have resided longer in the host country and who exhibit a greater degree of acculturation and bicultural competence. A compelling, practical example of mentoring was the leadership and facilitation of the group interview by Mrs Huang during the group interview with the Mainland Chinese parents. Schools may be able to foster an internal mentoring programme, building an ethnic-specific community within the school, if they are able to establish contact with suitable candidates amongst the ethnic communities.

5.5.4 Cultural epistemological manifestations

There are national differences in the way educational aspirations are manifested, with cultural and philosophical differences underpinning decisions. Academic literature illustrates that there can be disparity in cultural educational perspectives (Guo, 2010; Ran, 2001) and cultural mismatches in academic expectations and motivation can impede effective home and school communication.

There are commonalities between Confucian ethos and the New Zealand Curriculum document, such as respect, care and consideration for others, and community. Confucianism is an interconnected philosophical system that informs and guides the rituals, habits and practices of Sinic societies (N. Pang, 2011). As a philosophy, it has a strong humanist, collectivist and hierarchical premise and a profound orientation towards human relations, with desirable and acceptable norms for personal and social behaviour (N. Pang, 2011). Parents responded favourably when these aspects of New Zealand educational philosophy were discussed. However, without clearly articulating the New Zealand educational philosophy and practices, it renders these parents immobilised in a culturally communicative context vastly different from their own.

Even when competence in English is established, such as in Mrs Huang's case, there can still be a clash of educational views and philosophy, and this was evidenced by her deliberate disengagement with the school. Cultural mismatches

were also alluded to in other general comments related to textbooks and homework, which suggest a serious disconnect in terms of the parents' frame of reference. For example, the organisation and layout of assessments was different. In Mainland China, the grade was determined solely by the percentage of correct answers, whereas in New Zealand the quality of the grade was determined by the skill level and complexity of analysis shown by the student. There is also evidence of differences in fundamental, underlying educational philosophy between New Zealand cultures and Sinic cultures in terms of individualistic and collective orientation. New Zealand allows subject choice, usually at all levels in secondary school. We tailor academic programmes to individual needs, interest and strengths, whereas in Sinic cultures students are treated equally for the majority of their education, at this level, and have to do the same, compulsory subjects. Students are assigned to a set class for the duration of a year and while subject teachers may change, the form teacher and classmates remain the same for all lessons. Rank, in relation to the other classmates, is important.

Parents indicated the need for assistance to navigate a new and complex educational system, and this finding is in agreement with the literature. Olneck (2004) notes that tacit or explicit pedagogical, curricular and administrative practices can form boundaries. Delpit (1988) and Shields (2009) clearly argue to make tacit knowledge explicit in intercultural communication. Translation alone will not overcome differences in conflicting worldviews on education (Guo, 2010). Schools need to facilitate dialogic conversations and discourse to clarify understanding to assist with 'cultural code-switching' (Samovar & Porter, 2003). While Hidalgo, et al. (2004), suggests that understanding and familiarity affect the level of involvement, these findings also suggest that a level of acquiescence in educational philosophy is also needed. Dialogue will help immigrant families understand school systems and, in a reciprocal manner, schools can also become more aware of the families' culture, strengths and goals (Hidalgo, et al., 2004). While there are some commonalities between Confucian philosophy and the New Zealand Curriculum, there do not appear to be any links drawn between similarly aligned fundamental philosophical directions. This situation suggests that explicit communication is required to facilitate genuine dialogue with these parents.

5.5.5 Ethno-specific contexts

Educators will need to become familiar with each local immigrant community as they are ethno-specific contexts and add complexity to the development of communicative partnerships. Auerbach (2006) asserts that schools need to understand the 'eco-cultural niche' of their school community. Contemporary scholars of Asian education support the notion that Asian immigrants from different countries have similarities, but still require adaptations to their specific social and community needs. Localized frameworks need to be developed to cater for national differences (Pai, et al., 2006; Qin, et al., 2011; Zhao, 2011).

The challenge for educators, when developing effective home-school communication practices, is to consider the context and situation for individual immigrant ethnicities. For example, suitable meeting times suggested by Mrs Park, the Korean mother, differed from the times preferred by the Chinese participants in this project, who requested evening meetings due to work commitments. Immigrant families which have both parents or other family members residing in New Zealand may be more able to attend parent-meetings. Such characteristics are important for schools to know and it is imperative that schools take such matters into account. Social and cultural protocols will also differ between ethnicities (Magee, 2011) and these should be observed to assist the communication process.

5.6 Summary

Research findings and discussion raise complex questions about reflecting and incorporating diversity within a school community. Prevailing educational practices are deficient for Asian immigrant parents, and schools will need to review and expand cultural and linguistic repertoires for home-school communication. Schools must recognise that repeated and substantial efforts, with a cultural orientation, will be required to engage in meaningful interactions with culturally and linguistically-diverse parents. Schools need to be purposeful and intentional about communicating with parents. Engaging with the immigrant parent community also offers the potential to build a positive perception of the opportunities and assistance available to them as legitimate members of the school community. This chapter has provided an examination of both tacit and explicit aspects of current practices, which have been identified and supported by

evidence. Recommendations of ways to engage with Asian immigrant parents in appropriate and legitimate manner, as a means of addressing these challenges, are provided in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, current home-school communication practices are largely ineffective for Asian immigrant parents. However, as schools face an increasingly diverse demographic in the 21st century, there is a need for strategies that facilitate cross-cultural communication. The purpose of this chapter is to make concluding remarks about findings, and present recommendations for culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to home-school communication with Asian immigrant parents. This final chapter is followed by an epilogue of an ethnic-specific Korean parent meeting, modelled on the recommendations contained in this chapter.

6.2 Strategic leadership

In an age of globalisation schools need strategic leadership. Globalisation presents a reality that demands the educators deal with complex educational issues in ways that demonstrate their espoused democratic ideals. As Hiatt-Michael asserts, “Communication affects human perceptions, the formation of beliefs, and subsequent action” (2010, p. 25). Globalisation differs from colonisation, where these communicative challenges can be imposed by a hegemonic culture. It is important to recognise that voluntary migration can still result in communicative practices that can disempower citizens within New Zealand society, and raises the challenge of how to integrate newcomers into the school environment.

School policies and practices have the potential to change patterns of interaction, and the school ethos will determine the level of inclusiveness or exclusiveness for Asian immigrant parents. Parental involvement is dependent on the school making the effort (Hiatt-Michael, 2010) and is necessary to provide a co-operative basis on which to approach an educational partnership between home and school.

If we accept the arguments for the transmission of cultural and societal values through education promoted by multicultural educational scholars (J. A. Banks, 2009a; Nieto, 2002; Olneck, 2004; Pai, et al., 2006; Zhao, 2011), then school leadership must acknowledge that a strategic vision is needed to ‘catalyse’ action. School leaders must adopt a more inclusive approach that facilitates ‘cultural

code-switching' (Samovar & Porter, 2003). Educators need to demonstrate a willingness to learn about and legitimize cultural practices for Asian immigrant parents. Effective home-school communication practices require a multi-faceted approach with several factors playing critical roles, which will determine the extent of Asian immigrant parent involvement in the school. To assure this group that they are valued as legitimate members requires both a deliberate strategic decision and commitment to engage and integrate them into the school community.

School leadership, through strategic vision and ensuing actions, will determine the extent of the parents' involvement. The level of commitment and interaction will determine whether a 'thin' or 'dense' partnership (Timperley & Robinson, 2002) is established. 'Thin' partnerships tend towards a more superficial relationship, but as the research points out, a 'dense' partnership offers much more scope in terms of a partnership that can generate reciprocal influence and increased cultural understanding.

New Zealand has a potentially transformational educational system that will equip learners for the 21st century, and schools need to articulate clearly their vision, values and principles, as well as key competencies, to parents. While this statement may be valid for all parents, it is particularly important for the Asian immigrant parents who come from a vastly different and diverse cultural frame of reference for education. The integration of Asian immigrant parents into the school community requires a conscious decision to access and draw upon endemic experiences to promote the values of cultural diversity and inclusiveness championed by the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum. Authentic relationships demonstrate integrity and empathy, and school leaders need to show consistency between vision and action to accept and validate cultural differences. Efforts need to recognise that these Asian immigrant parents are actually legitimate residents and citizens of New Zealand, as opposed to transitory, revenue-earning, sojourners in the New Zealand educational system.

6.3 Intercultural communication strategies

This study has shown that there are a number of issues related to home-school communication strategies and practices with Asian immigrant parents. It is possible to undertake practical steps to address the challenge of intercultural communication, including the provision of multi-lingual resources, ethnic-specific parent meetings, providing a liaison and advocacy role and accessing ethnic community resources.

6.3.1 Multi-lingual resources

The most obvious, and perhaps anticipated, barrier in relation to communication with Asian immigrant parents is that of lack of proficiency in English. A rational response to this situation is the development of multi-lingual resources.

Limited resources at an operational level within schools, coupled with a low per-student benefit ratio in provincial schools, suggests that there is merit in central agencies, like NZQA, shouldering responsibility for development of these resources. Multi-lingual resources could be provided in Asian languages, via official websites. The provision of resources, via the Internet, would allow information to be accessible to parents and schools in urban, provincial and rural areas and would prevent information being bound by geographical limitations. Such an approach also avoids unnecessary duplication of efforts and may also assist with the currency and accuracy of information available. While it can be argued that these resources are available at present, the difficulty in accessing the pamphlet, 'Secondary School Qualifications' (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2008), and the limited content, create barriers in themselves. Links to multi-lingual resources on the home page of the NZQA would provide a much more direct route of access for parents who struggle with the volume and complexity of information in English. Such resources should also include the philosophical underpinning of the New Zealand Curriculum, as well as the technicalities of the qualification system.

Alternatively, schools could develop their own multi-lingual resources. While schools have limited financial resources, the costs are not as prohibitive as might be anticipated. To provide a concrete example, the financial outlay of translating all of the documents contained in Appendices B-E into one language was just over

NZ\$600 per language. Translators were readily available through the regional migrant resource centre and were able to translate the material within seven days. A similar quote and delivery time frame were received from the Department of Internal Affairs translation service.

However, it is important for educators to remember that multi-lingual resources on their own will not suffice. The extent of the disparity between New Zealand and Sinic educational systems, along with the inherent complexities of educational systems, means that the simplistic provision of bilingual or multi-lingual information will be inadequate. Schools also need to provide opportunities to dialogue with parents to clarify understanding and expectations.

6.3.2 Ethnic-specific parent meetings

The research findings indicate that ethnic-specific parent meetings offer the potential to overcome language and cultural barriers. Group meetings are also likely to appeal to the collective consciousness of Sinic cultures. To overcome the language barrier, bi-lingual staff or translators can expedite the communication process, but ideally they will have familiarity with the educational context. Bi-lingual resources can also be utilised.

Schools need to specifically invite parents to attend and participate or social cues may be missed. Schools are advised to draw around key events in the academic year, such as student enrolment, annual year-group meetings, applications for university enrolment, and transition points. These junctures provide both the purpose and impetus to engage parents and build relationships as Timperley and Robinson (2002) suggest. Once established, these points of contact can be expanded to incorporate regular, curricular-based communication as envisaged at the conceptualisation of the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum. Outlining the specific purpose for the meeting provides a rationale for parents to attend and, as Hidalgo, et al. (2004) point out, students' academic progress often provides a motivating factor. It is recommended that time be allocated for individual discussions, following any group presentation, to discuss student-specific behaviour or individual academic issues in a more private forum.

Consideration needs to be given to the logistics of when and where these meetings can take place to accommodate the needs of the parents. School is an appropriate

venue, as all parents included in this study had attended parent meetings at school in their native country. However, for immigrant parent groups that are operating in isolated enclaves, it may prove to be more advantageous to hold the initial meetings in a location familiar to the ethnic community, such as a community centre or an affiliated faith-based organisation.

6.3.3 Formal liaison and advocacy role

It is also recommended that schools nominate and clearly identify (a) specific staff representative(s) to operate as a liaison person and advocate for the Asian immigrant parents within the school community. This recommendation is based on the confusion that the parents felt as a result of multiple points of contact during parent-teacher interviews, as well as the sense of isolation felt by the students enrolled in 'mainstream' classes. By clarifying the point of contact within the school it minimises the stress and confusion for these parents and is more culturally compatible. By using an institutional agent, such as a specific liaison role to assign formality and status, not only does it conform more closely to cultural norms of native countries, but it also establishes a chain of authority. Such an approach may also address the issue of staff turnover and enable continuity in the role, which assists development of longer-term relationships and partnerships. An advocacy role also gives a mandate to learn about and initiate contact with the eco-cultural niche of parents, in order to address their specific needs. This role is likely to require professional development for staff to develop their repertoire of culturally and linguistically appropriate communication strategies (Joshi, et al., 2005).

This research also highlights that New Zealand-domiciled Asian immigrant students may be vulnerable and at risk given the potential extent of their parents' alienation in the New Zealand educational system. It is important that 'model minority' assumptions are not made about transitioning students from contributing schools. Schools should have deliberate and explicit processes to assess the level of assistance required by these students. One option is that these students could be included in pastoral support systems, similar to those offered to the international fee-paying students.

6.3.4 Engage with ethnic community links

Where student enrolment numbers warrant, schools may be able to employ bilingual staff to assist with community liaison and translation, such as high-density immigrant areas like metropolitan Auckland. Unfortunately, in many provincial areas this is untenable. A possible alternative for a provincial school is to draw on community links for resourcing. Schools need to adopt a broad conceptualisation of immigrants and the communities within which they live, when initiating contact within the Asian immigrant community. Quasi-government organisations, such as Settlement Support, may not be able to provide the necessary introductions to these communities, if they have retreated into enclaves. However, as this research project has shown, immigrants tend to develop informal ethnic associations to maintain their cultural identity, such as Mandarin language lessons or the Chinese church. Schools can be proactive and establish links with these types of local ethnic community groups and ethnic community leaders to enable them to tap into local expertise (McNae & Strachan, 2010), which can provide a foundation for educational partnerships between home and school. Such relationships could also allow educators to access additional resources and networks of support to assist the transition into the educational system as Grant and Ray (2010) suggest.

6.4 Limitations of this study

There are three main limitations in this study. Firstly, it is a small-scale qualitative research project, with inevitable and restrictive resource constraints of time and personnel. Secondly, the exploratory nature of this research, and subsequent research design, simply records the perceptions of experiences of parents included in the study. For these reasons, the themes identified from the data, and subsequent discussion and recommendations, should be recognised as tentative propositions. Thirdly, interviews were conducted in the participants' second-language and findings were subject to the nuance and interpretation of the researcher.

6.5 Further research

This study offers a small contribution towards the understanding of effective home-school communication strategies with Asian immigrant parents in New Zealand. The scope of the research needs to be broadened and deepened. It would be possible for further studies to replicate this project with different populations to provide a basis for generalisation (Creswell, 2002). This research project is limited to a small number of parents from Sinic Asian cultures and it may be relevant to conduct similar research with other Asiatic nationalities, such as South-East Asian immigrants who represent different religious or philosophical dispositions. A longitudinal study to implement the proposed recommendations and evaluate the effectiveness of changes in home-school communication strategies could also prove to be valuable.

6.6 Summary

This research project documents the personal experiences of seven Asian immigrant parents as they engaged with the New Zealand educational system at Year 11 level. It aimed to ascertain if current home-school communication practices and processes were effective for this parent group. The unique contribution of this study is that for, the first time in New Zealand, the experiences and understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum and the NCEA Level 1 qualification have been documented from the parents' perspective. It highlights the disparity between the aspirations the parents hold for their children and the extent of their understanding of the philosophical and functional aspects of the educational system. It is hoped that the findings of this research will be useful for senior leadership in individual schools and may provide a basis for collaborative ventures between schools in provincial areas.

This thesis concludes with an epilogue, which outlines an ethnic-specific Korean parent meeting and shows the practical application of recommendations contained within this chapter.

Epilogue

This epilogue documents an ethnic-specific ‘NCEA parent-information’ meeting held with Korean parents from the Tauranga community following the conclusion of the data collection phase of the research project. As the research interviews had progressed, it became apparent that Asian immigrant parents held only a rudimentary knowledge of NCEA. During a conversation with the Korean agent, I offered to assist with a parent information session for the Korean parents. By being a little unorthodox and including an epilogue as part of my thesis, I hope to provide the necessary evidence to motivate and instigate change at an operational level in schools.

The meeting was arranged by the respected and well-known local Korean agent and held at the *Korean Times* office, a local community resource centre for the Korean community in Tauranga. The purpose of the meeting was clearly articulated to parents as an opportunity to outline the recent changes in the NCEA Level 1 qualification, as well as an opportunity to discuss any questions they might have about the New Zealand educational system. The parents were informed that a translator would be available to assist the discussion. A large number of Korean parents are, effectively, solo mothers, because the fathers remain in Korea for employment. Taking this into consideration, the meeting was scheduled from 10am to 12pm to accommodate their preferred meeting time.

The number of parents who attended exceeded initial expectations, with a total of 20 parents and 4 secondary students present. These parents had students enrolled in Year 9-12 at a range of secondary schools in the area. The meeting took a little under two hours and covered information such as credits, grades, certificate and course endorsements, internal and external assessments, changes in literacy and numeracy requirements, and key competencies. The final stage of the meeting offered an opportunity for parents to ask any questions that they might have had. I fielded questions pertaining to improving student results, university entrance, comparability of New Zealand qualifications for entrance to overseas universities, ESOL courses and literacy requirements for New Zealand universities, as well as challenges to grades allocated for summative assessments. At the conclusion of

the meeting, some parents also approached me, independently, to discuss their individual child's progress, which was more difficult to answer, as I did not have first-hand knowledge of their son/daughter. In these instances I recommended that they contact the year group or pastoral dean in the relevant school. I assured them that their inquiries would be welcomed.

This meeting successfully demonstrated several of the key recommendations made in the previous chapter of this thesis. Firstly, use leaders within the ethnic community to initiate contact with the parents so that you can gain the trust of the community and tap into local expertise. Secondly, clearly articulate to parents both the purpose and potential benefits of attending the meeting. Thirdly facilitate discussion through the use of bilingual resources and/or translators. The meeting was designed to provide opportunities for both a group presentation and individual discussion time. The meeting was held in a familiar location, and the use of the *Korean Times* office enabled parents from more than one school to attend the meeting.

The feedback from the agent said that this type of meeting was valuable and useful for the parents who attended. It is possible to conceptualise similar meetings with parents from other nationalities, and these may prove fruitful as a collaborative venture between schools to address the needs of immigrants in our communities. All that is required for meetings like these to become a reality is a strategic vision and a genuine commitment to action.

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Appendix A:

Introductory Letter and Permission Form

To the principal and Board of Trustees of (*name*) school /college,

My name is Karen Gilby and I am seeking permission to conduct a small-scale research project at your school/college. This study is made possible as a result of a Ministry of Education study award and a 2011 University of Waikato Masters Research Scholarship. The research project has been approved by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and will be conducted under the supervision of Senior Lecturer Anthony Fisher and Associate Professor Jane Strachan.

The purpose of this research project is to document the understanding that Asian immigrant parents have of the NCEA Level 1 qualification and the New Zealand Curriculum. I would like to interview between 5-8 parents or caregivers of Year 11 students who identify themselves as being of Asian ethnicity and who are recent immigrants to New Zealand. The data collected from the interview will be analysed to identify common themes and it is hoped that the analysis will provide insights into how schools communicate with these parents and assist with the development of school leadership strategies to enhance home-school communication for this parent group.

If I have permission to proceed, I would appreciate an appropriate representative from the school to act as a liaison person with potential participants as introductions and relationships are often important in Asian cultures. Interviews may need to be conducted on the school site, depending on the preferences of the parents or caregivers.

The research project will primarily be used to write a thesis for a Master of Educational Leadership degree at the University of Waikato. It is also possible that this study may be adapted for publication in an academic journal or used as the basis for a presentation after the thesis is completed. This information would be useful for your school's self-review and planning processes and I would be willing to present my findings to your staff, if so desired.

As the Tauranga Moana region has distinct and, therefore, easily identifiable schools it will not be possible to offer your school total anonymity. However, every effort will be made to provide confidentiality by using pseudonyms and a broad description of your school in the analysis of the data.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details attached. I look forward to your response.

Mrs Karen Gilby

Research Project Permission Form

- We agree to the small-scale research project, as outlined in the introductory letter, to be conducted in (name) school / college.
YES / NO
- We will provide a suitable liaison person from our staff to assist the researcher.
YES / NO
- We grant permission to hold parent/caregiver interviews on site, if necessary.
YES / NO
- We would like an electronic copy of the thesis, once it is completed.
YES / NO
- We would like the research findings presented to our staff at the conclusion of the thesis.
YES / NO

Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Principal	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
BOT Chair	Date	Signature

Contact Details

Researcher: Mrs Karen Gilby

(07) 5780212

gilby@ihug.co.nz

Senior Lecturer: Mr Anthony Fisher

(07) 838 4466 Ext. 7836

afish@waikato.ac.nz

Associate Professor: Jane Strachan

(07) 838 4466 Ext. 7836

jane@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Ni hao (or other culturally appropriate greeting, relevant to specific ethnic group)
You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Mrs Karen Gilby, a Master of Educational Leadership student at the University of Waikato. This research study is made possible as a result of a Ministry of Education study award and a 2011 University of Waikato Masters Research Scholarship.

The purpose of this research project is to document understanding of Asian immigrant parents regarding the NCEA Level 1 qualification and the New Zealand Curriculum. I want to analyse how effectively schools communicate with Asian immigrant parents and help develop strategies to improve home-school communication. The research project will involve interviewing between 5-8 parents or caregivers of students who identify themselves as being of Asian ethnicity and then analysing the data collected in the interview to look common themes/issues.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your son/daughter(s) is a permanent resident of Asian ethnicity who is currently enrolled as a Year 11 student, and who has been enrolled in a New Zealand secondary school for at least the past 12 months.

The principal has agreed that I am able to conduct this research in (*school*) and he/she has assured me that your decision to participate or not will not impact on your son/daughter's future education. Any personal information that can be used to identify you will remain confidential and will not be given to the staff of (*school*). Any personal information will only be disclosed with your permission, or as required by law. Data identifying you personally will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research project. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identify in the analysis of the interview data. Written records and data from the interview will be kept in a secure, locked location for five years after the completion of the research project, in accordance with the University of Waikato's *Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations 2008*.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw your consent without giving a reason, although you will need to say that you are withdrawing in writing or tell the researcher verbally.

If you decide to participate, you will take part in one face-to-face interview, which will take about one hour to complete. Interview questions will be sent out prior to the interview. You may bring a support person with you to the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will ask you about your own education, your understanding of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 qualification and the New Zealand Curriculum, how the school has explained the qualification to you, as well as how effective you found this, and any other possible issues you have faced. You can choose to decline any, or all, questions during the interview.

Once you have completed the interview, you will be provided with a transcript (written record) of the interview to check and sign as a true record of the interview. There may be a 30 minute follow-up meeting, if necessary. You can withdraw permission to use the information from the interview until you sign the transcript. You will be provided with an electronic copy of the research thesis at the conclusion of the research project, if you request a copy at the bottom of the consent form.

The information that you provide during the interview will be used to write a thesis to be submitted for a Master of Educational Leadership degree at the University of Waikato. A digital copy of the Masters' thesis must be stored permanently at the university and, therefore, will be accessible for the public to read. It is also possible that this research study may be used for publication in an academic journal or used as the basis for a presentation after the research thesis is completed.

This research project has been approved by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, postal address: Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240. If you have any questions, please contact us using the contact details below. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact my supervisors, Senior Lecturer Anthony Fisher or Associate Professor Jane Strachan. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Researcher: Mrs Karen Gilby

(07) 5780212 gilby@ihug.co.nz

Senior Lecturer: Mr Anthony Fisher

(07) 838 4466 Ext. 7836

afish@waikato.ac.nz

Associate Professor: Jane Strachan

(07) 838 4466 Ext. 7836

jane@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in the research project stated below. Your signature indicates that you have decided to participate, having read the information provided on the information sheet.

Title: The Asiatic diaspora: An exploration of issues for effective home school communication strategies with Asian immigrant parents.

Researcher: Mrs Karen Gilby, Master of Educational Leadership student,
University of Waikato

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the research project above and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
YES / NO
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am able to withdraw at any time, until I sign the interview transcript, without giving a reason.
YES / NO
- I agree to take part in the research project outlined in the information sheet.
YES / NO
- I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.
YES / NO
- I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in publications.
YES / NO
- I agree that my data gathered in this study may be used for future research, publications and/or presentations.
YES / NO
- I wish to receive an electronic copy of the research thesis once it has been completed.
YES / NO

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement for Support Person(s)

Ni hao (or similarly appropriate cultural greeting).

(participant's name) has requested that you accompany him/her as a support person to an interview for a research project at (name) school/college. A support person may help to explain a question or answer, or assist with translation, but the support person's own personal opinion cannot be included in the research project.

The interview will take about one hour to complete and will be audio-recorded. (participant's name) has received a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview. There may be a 30 minute follow-up meeting, if necessary.

It is important that the answers, (participant's name), gives remain confidential and you may not share the questions or answers with anyone else once this interview is completed.

- I have read this document and I agree that I will keep all information shared during this interview confidential.

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Support Person	Date	Signature

Appendix E: Interview schedule / guide

Ni hao (or similarly appropriate cultural greetings and cultural protocols e.g. serving drinks)

My name is Mrs Karen Gilby, and I will be conducting this interview. I am a post-graduate student enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato. The information that you provide during the interview will be used to write a research thesis for a Master of Educational Leadership degree at the University of Waikato. I am working under the supervision of Senior Lecturer, Anthony Fisher, and Associate Professor, Jane Strachan. You will be one of approximately 5-8 parents or caregivers that will be interviewed as part of this research study.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this research project is to find out what Asian immigrant parents know about the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 qualification and the New Zealand curriculum. The answers from all participants will be analysed to understand how effectively schools communicate with Asian immigrant parents and help develop strategies for schools to improve home-school communication.

Interview Process

This interview will take approximately one hour. I would like to audio-record this interview to ensure that I am able to transcribe this interview accurately.

Remember that you can choose to decline any, or all, questions during the interview. Any personal information that can be used to identify you will remain confidential and will not be given to the staff of (school).

You will be provided with an interview transcript (written record) of this interview for you to verify. If necessary, there will be a 30 minute follow-up meeting to clarify any parts of the transcript. You can withdraw permission to use the information from the interview until you sign the transcript.

Possible prompts / interview questions

Establishing participant meets the purposive sampling criteria:

- What is your name?
- Is your child (name) currently enrolled in Year 11 at High School/College?
- How long has he/she attended secondary school in New Zealand?
- What ethnic group do you identify with?
- What is your occupation in New Zealand?
- What is your educational level?

Current forms of school communication:

- Can you tell me how (name) school/college communicates with you about the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 qualification? What do you know about NCEA Level 1?
- Can you tell me how (name) school/college communicates with you about the New Zealand curriculum? What do you know about the New Zealand curriculum?

Possible extension question/prompts for NCEA:

- Do you know that students can gain NCEA credits for internal and external assessments? If so, how did you learn this?
- Do you know that students can gain different grades (Achieved, Merit, and Excellence) for NCEA assessments? If so, how did you learn this?
- Do you know that students can gain subject endorsements and certificate for NCEA qualifications? If so, how did you learn this?

Possible extension question/prompts for the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) document:

- The New Zealand curriculum focuses on key competencies, such as relating to others, participating and contributing, as well as academic subject content. Did you know about this? If so, how did you learn about this?
- The New Zealand curriculum also focuses on values, such as cultural diversity and sustainability as well as academic subject content. Did you know about this? If so, how did you learn about this?

Reflection on cultural context home-school communication:

- What differences, if any, do you notice between how New Zealand schools communicate with parents about qualifications and curriculum compared to schools in your home country?

Strategies to assist immigrant parents:

- How could New Zealand schools help you to understand the NCEA qualification and the New Zealand curriculum better?

Concluding comments

Thank you for letting me interview you. I will provide you with a transcript of this interview for you to verify by (date).

Observe cultural protocols for concluding a meeting / interview.