
The Shirk-work Ethic in High School: Vegefication of Anglo-Australian Students

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan memahami kehidupan anak-anak remaja Australia dan pandangan mereka tentang keberhasilan di sekolah. Untuk mengetahui lebih jauh tentang pandangan keluarga mereka terhadap pendidikan, wawancara juga dilakukan dengan orang tua. Penelitian ini dilakukan di tiga keluarga, Morrison, Morgan, dan Marshall. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga keluarga ini berpandangan bahwa kehidupan yang baik bagi mereka diwujudkan dalam bentuk kegiatan olahraga dan bersenang-senang untuk menghilangkan stress. Bagi ketiga keluarga Australia keturunan Inggris (Anglo-Australian) ini, pendidikan itu penting tetapi tidak mengubah gaya hidup mereka dan tidak memberikan modal sosial kepada anak-anak mereka. Hal ini berbeda dengan gaya dan pandangan hidup warga Australia keturunan Cina yang menjadikan pendidikan sebagai sarana untuk meningkatkan kualitas hidup mereka. Orientasi ke arah perolehan material lebih menonjol di keluarga Australia keturunan Inggris daripada kelompok masyarakat Australia keturunan Cina.

Kata kunci: keluarga Australia keturunan Inggris (Anglo-Australian), keluarga Australia keturunan Cina (Chinese-Australian), perolehan material, gaya hidup

Social scientists have approached the issue of differential achievement in education from different theoretical perspectives. Functionalist theories of socialisation and Marxist theories of direct reproduction both tend to be deterministic in their interpretation of the process of schooling. These theories suggest that students' performance at school is basically influenced by factors external to what goes on in schools. Such theories tended to consider intelligence and home background factors as the main factors to determine students' performance and avoided an examination of schooling itself, even though in everyday life it is widely assumed that schools play an important part in determining educational success and failure. Most of this research, based on survey methods and questionnaires to collect data, focused on homes and schools and the linkage between them but did not investigate the arrangements that made them the way they are (Connell et al, 1982).

The assumptions and methods of dealing with inequality in education came in close scrutiny in the 1970s with the emergence of the Reproduction

Approach (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 1976) in the United States. Adherents of this approach argued that schooling reproduces the structure of inequality itself. The focus of research shifted from blaming the victim to blaming the society and the character of schooling. Reproduction theorists argue that educational system is a gigantic myth-making machine which serves to legitimate inequality. Education reproduces inequality by justifying privilege and attributing poverty to personal failure. The higher a person's class of origin the higher are his/her qualifications and vice versa. The working class is likely to be fairly content with the type of education system they have because it does foster the attitudes and abilities that are appropriate for work in a capitalist society and as such it meets day-to-day needs.

Although reproduction theory has made invaluable contribution in understanding the political nature of schooling it does not provide any major insights into how teachers, students and other human agents come together within specific historical and social contexts in order to

both make and reproduce the conditions for their existence. Also, this theory tends to exaggerate the correspondence between work and education.

Research on schooling in the United States (Apple, 1982), Europe (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994) and Australia (Connell et al., 1982; Walker, 1988) has both challenged and attempted to move beyond reproduction theory. Neo-Marxist approach to education modified the reproduction approach by advocating that working class pupils are actively involved in shaping their own education. The proponents of this approach argue that pupils draw upon their own cultures in finding ways to respond to schooling, and often these responses involve resistance to school. They consider schools as 'sites' of ideological struggle between the groups involved. Neo-Marxist approach to education emphasises the importance of human agency and experience as theoretical cornerstones for analysing the complex relationship between schools and dominant society, as well as the daily experiences that constitute the internal working of the school. Neo-Marxists argue that students are not passive individuals to be manipulated. On the contrary, they are reactive and sometimes resistant to the culture of the school and therefore to some extent responsible for their own fate. Schools and their processes may conflict with the needs of society as in the over production of credentialed individuals when the economy cannot absorb them.

Neo-Marxist micro-ethnographic studies of classrooms have investigated the routine everyday processes of classroom life. The main concern of such studies is to understand the complex and subtle aspects of verbal and non-verbal behaviour or paralinguistic features which influence the nature of interaction in small groups, teachers' evaluations or perceptions of their pupils and pupils' perceptions of their teachers. Neo-Marxist studies of schooling are influenced by symbolic interactionism. They argue that the reality of schooling is a dialectical process that involves subjective meanings and understandings. Struggle in schools is class based and a manifestation of wider struggle in society between the dominant and exploited ones (Giroux, 1981).

Drawing upon Marxist sociology and adopting research techniques from symbolic interactionism Willis (1977) developed a distinctive approach to education. From his study of 12 working class boys from a high school situated in a predominantly industrial town in the UK Willis found that schools

were not as successful as Bowles and Gintis supposed in producing docile and conformist future workers. Willis argued that education could have unintended consequences on pupils which might not be completely beneficial to capitalism. Willis followed the 'lads' for eighteen months at school and a few months at work. In this study he found that the lads formed a friendship grouping with a distinctive attitude to school; with their own 'counter-school culture' which was opposed to the values espoused by the school. The lads felt superior both to teachers and conformist pupils who they referred to as 'ear oles'. They would boast for not putting pen to paper for weeks and kept themselves entertained with 'irrelevant marauding misbehaviour'. Willis's lads valued masculinity and devalued femininity and ethnicity, considered manual labour more worthy than mental work.

Following the lads into their first job Willis found remarkable similarities between the shop floor culture and the counter-school culture. From this study he concluded that education reproduces the sort of labour force required by capitalism, but not directly or intentionally. The lads were not persuaded to act as they did by the school, nor were they forced to seek manual labour; rather they actively created their own sub-culture, and voluntarily chose to look for manual jobs.

In Australia Connell et al. (1982) and Walker (1988) studied schools from neo-Marxist perspective. Connell et al. focused on two groups of families: people doing manual and semi-manual work, and those in professional jobs. To understand the situation of the teenagers the authors interviewed parents, teachers and students. In a nutshell, this study arrived at the following conclusions: Families are very powerful institutions which register their influence on every part of teenagers' lives, including schooling. (b) Relationships within the family are vital and children are active in the business from the start. The family doesn't just print its mark on the child like a rubber stamp. What children actually bring to the school is their relationship to their parents' educational experiences and strategies, and that relationship may involve rejection, ambivalence as much as endorsement or duplication. (c) Compared to family the schools do count less. But schools are active and influential producers of educational outcomes. (d) "The interactions among kids, parents and teachers are constantly being renegotiated and reconstructed. Privilege is not always passed

on and under privilege is not always perpetuated” (1982, p. 189).

Walker (1988) studied an inner-city all-male school in Sydney with the main objective to understand the school from the perspective of students. Following a group of boys from Year 10 through to Year 12 Walker found that they were divided into four groups: the footballers, the Greeks, the ‘three friends’ and the handballers. The footballers spent most time together in training and organised games at school. Outside the school they spent big ‘nights out’ at dances, discos, pubs and clubs. The footballers were in constant competition with each other and they expressed this within a framework of either real or mock physical violence, jokes and insults, sexual machismo and the constant use of accusation of being homosexual. They did not totally turn their backs on academic achievement but considered football as an alternative to the school, even as a form of employment in its own right.

The Greeks tended to form smaller groups but they were united by their sense of Greekness with their focus on Greek community beyond school. Their very status as relative outsider *wogs* made them all the more determined to be successful and not to be looked down upon by Aussie *convicts*. The Greeks were the most successful in the Higher School Certificate examination. They saw school as a vehicle to success.

The ‘three friends’ had no interest in sports and despised the central role it played in the school culture. They could not relate to the very physical, occasionally violent forms of interaction prevalent in the other two groups. They were often derided as ‘poofs’ and generally spurned, turning to the theatre as a basis for their identity outside the school. Handballers were composed of strong but loosely connected friendships. They were less interested in roaming around and were regarded by the ‘strong’ groups as colourless and treated with indifference.

In this study Walker found traditional ‘Aussie’ male sub-culture which placed high value on sports; Australian youths adoring rugby and footy, while Greek youths adoring soccer and both groups showing their contemptuous attitude toward a small non-sporting culture. From this study Walker concluded: “We should not ignore the freedom of individuals to accept or reject, for their own reasons what schools have to offer or even what they may try to enforce. While there may be certain

correspondences or similarities between what goes on in schools, and what goes on elsewhere, to point out to these alone in explaining people’s destinies is limited an approach” (1988, pp. 4-5).

In an ethnographic study of 11-18 year-olds at Parnell coeducational school located in an inner-city working class industrial county in the United Kingdom Mac an Ghail (1994) identified two main groups: the Macho Lads and the Academic Achievers. All the Macho Lads were in the bottom sets of the subjects. They opposed the authority of teachers and rejected homework. ‘Looking after your mates’, ‘acting tough’, ‘having a laugh’ and ‘having a good time’ were their key social practices. They labelled the Academic Achievers as ‘dickhead achievers’.

The Academic Achievers consisted of a small group of male friends who had a positive orientation to the academic curriculum. They adopted a more traditional upwardly social mobile route via academic subject credentials. This group consisted of a high proportion of Asian and white young men from a skilled working class background.

The Study

In a recently concluded doctoral study (Malik, 2000) the author found a lot of evidence in support of the claims made by micro-ethnographic studies of schooling by Willis, Walker and Mac an Ghail. It was noted that the students from Anglo-European families with comparable ability and with the provision of quality educational resources at home do not perform as well as their counter parts from the south and east Asian migrant families settled in Australia. Although there are some high and low achievers from both groups of the families, in general, Chinese-Australian students tended to be academically-oriented and Anglo-Australian students tended to be sports and recreation-oriented. The main focus of this paper is to discuss the attitude and performance of four Anglo-Australian high school students from three Anglo-Australian families. More specifically, this paper aims to identify the factors and processes that led to the lack-lustre performance of these students.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology has been used to understand the home life and school experiences of these students who were followed for five years (Year 9-Year 12) at Paramount (pseudonym) Senior High, located in a predominantly middle

class suburb of Perth, Western Australia. By using ethnographic techniques, mainly participant observation and conversational interviews, I could enter into the lives of teenagers to understand their world-view of success at school. Interviews were conducted fortnightly and later monthly for three years (1994-1996). Children and their parents were interviewed in their homes. At school, children were observed in my own class, in the classes of the other teachers, in playgrounds and on their way to home after school hours. With some parents I played a few games of golf and tennis, while with most of them I shared meals and went for picnics.

The Three Families and their Children

The Morrison Family

Love of beach, sports, beer, outdoor life, having a friend of the opposite sex and a part-time job at an early age, and owning a house on a big-sized block are some of the attributes of the Australian culture. The Morrison family represents most of these values.

Don Morrison is in his early forties and his wife Maureen in her late thirties. Both are tall and second generation Australians of English ancestry. Mr Morrison enjoys talking about fishing and sports but finds himself lost when forced to talk about academic matters. He works almost from dawn to dusk from Monday to Friday and half day on Saturday. Not only does he work long hours, his work in a noisy glass factory is physically tiring. Mrs Morrison often says about her husband, "He works in a noisy factory and complains about back pain. He comes home to sleep. If he had an extra time he wouldn't know what he would do with it". Most of the time, Mr Morrison came home so exhausted that he could hardly find time to talk to his sons about their schoolwork, even though the family members ate their meals together. While Mr Morrison remained busy in monotonously repetitive work his wife did part-time work as a shop assistant four days a week.

Morrison's two sons, Clint (16) and Glenn (14) bear a remarkable resemblance to their parents and like them, are very keen on sports, surfing and outdoor life. At Paramount Senior High they had earned the admiration of their physical education teachers but other teachers would be happy to get rid of them. After school hours, Clint and Glenn either spent time watching television or

playing sports or doing part-time work with the full encouragement of their parents.

Glenn started at Paramount Senior High as a focus student (needing extra help at basic level) in English and remedial class in maths. Based on his poor performance at primary school level he was enrolled in low-achieving classes where he stayed for three years. To the delight of his parents but to the agony of his teachers, Glenn managed to stay at school till the end of Year 12. He summed up his attitude towards school and teachers: "School sux.... my teachers (maths and science) can drop dead.... I will celebrate with a piss party when I leave school".

Clint (Glenn's older brother) was an average student in Year 8. In five years at Paramount he excelled in sports, enjoyed non-educational activities such as peer group leader and helping the people in the community through school-sponsored activities. In most subjects he achieved C and D grades, except for physical education where he got an A grade. In year 11 he selected TEE subjects but as he could not meet the commitment of these subjects he decided to study TAFE subjects in Year 12. When he changed to TAFE subjects his parents were not disappointed. Said Mr Morrison, "This is the way to go about.... We shall be very happy if Glenn could do the same which Clint aimed for".

The Morgan Family

Paul Morgan, a tall, medium -built man with receding hairline, is in his late forties. He is a mechanical engineer in an industrial plant. As a young man he was a fine athlete, excellent player of squash, basketball and Aussie Rules football. His wife, Nancy, is slim, medium built is in her forties. She is a primary school teacher. Both are second generation Australians with English ancestry. Happily married for twenty four years they describe their married life a bliss. The Morgans have three children: Shane, a gifted athlete and academically oriented; Anne, a good athlete and mediocre student; and Ben, a fine athlete but academically a below average student.

At the start of the high school Ben was slightly an above average student. Unlike Glenn, Ben was a polite and good- natured student who, most of the time, completed the given task in class. He was performing at B level in academic subjects and A level in woodwork and physical education

and woodwork. Although Ben wanted to emulate his successful brother who excelled academically as well as in sports, Ben was not so committed to academic subjects. In five years at Paramount Ben turned out to be a super athlete and earned a spot in state basketball team. In Year 11 he surprised his parents as well as teachers when he decided to select all TEE subjects (including chemistry and higher maths). Mr Morgan was very happy with Ben's choice of subjects but Mrs Morgan maintained that Ben was lazy, and did not have enough ability (to handle harder subjects). She proved herself right when Ben decided to switch over to more water down TEE subjects in Year 12.

The Marshall Family

Mike and Susan Marshall are third generation Australians with British ancestry. They are in forties. Stocky, sun-tanned and rugged-looking, Mike always worked on blue-collar jobs. Currently he is a shift worker at the domestic airport fuelling aircrafts. His wife is a tall, slim and fair complexioned. She is a part-time secretary to a physiotherapist. They have four children: Chris in Year 11, below average in academic subjects; Rachel in Year 9, academically very bright; and Felicity and Mark who are in primary school.

Mr Marshall's ambition in life to be a mechanical engineer remained unfulfilled because of the untimely death of his father. Circumstances forced him to drop out of school after Year 10. A man of tough physical and mental strength, Mr Marshall accepted the economic responsibility of the family by necessity but without any rancour. His belief in hard work and life experience gave him a lot of self-confidence. He lived by the skill and strength of his hands. He enjoyed physical activity and related to the physical world through the manipulation of tools and materials. Mr Marshall's practical skills in extending, repairing and maintaining the house received the admiration of the entire family.

With shoulder-length hair, Chris was a disappointment to his parents because he did not conform to their advice to take his studies seriously. In primary school he was hyperactive but an above average student. He started high school as an average student but his grades kept on deteriorating as moved through the high school. His preferred activities at school during recess and home were to socialise with his peers, none of whom was

academically-oriented. During his after-school hours he spent most of his time watching television, listening to stereo and surfing, which was his main passion in life. Part-time work had given him the taste of economic freedom. His parents found it very hard to motivate him in his schoolwork.

The Anglo-Australian Approach to Education

Anglo-Australian parents grew up in an era of the Australian history when most teenagers finished school in Year 10 and went on to find jobs. From "shop floor to management" was the general path to social mobility. These parents grew up with the attitude that higher education was not a prerequisite to enjoy good life. The concept of good life for them was encapsulated in their interest in sports and leisure activities, satisfying short-term gratification and a stress free life. In both families the parents achieved material comforts independent of higher education, and they believed that the Asians were changing their values and life style in Australia. They had a much broader view of school: a place to learn new skills and acquire knowledge, a place for vocational training, a place to excel in competitive sports, and a place to socialise with friends.

Anglo-Australian parents realise that education is important but do not change their life style, and so fail to provide the necessary social capital for their children. Parents' emphasis on their children's early social and economic independence, and their sports and leisure-oriented life style encourage their children to be peer group oriented. Ben, Glenn and Clint therefore got the message that higher education was not crucial to their lives. They were unwilling to extend the extra effort needed for success in studies.

The Morrisons and the Morgans provided quiet study areas, an abundance of educational resources and wanted their children to take schoolwork seriously. When their children were in primary school parents were involved in their schoolwork, but when they started to go to high school there was a gradual parental withdrawal from the study programs of children. When it came to helping children in their schoolwork the Morrisons were not sure how to help them, and the Morgans were inconsistent. Mrs Morrison explained:

I want to help them in their homework but I don't know how to do it. When they were small kids they used to listen to what I told them but now they don't listen. From Grade

1, Glenn had bad experiences with his teachers. He gets into arguments frequently. He is very aggressive and has a negative attitude towards work. We don't know what to do with him. They get cross with me sometimes. I try to make them realise the importance of study and homework now so that in future they will have a good education behind them. I put the TV on to watch news, current affairs and documentary but they like to watch programs like sports and pop music or late movies. Sometimes Don lets them drink light (low alcohol) beer at home so that they don't drink with their friends.

The Morgans were equally frustrated in their efforts to motivate Ben to take interest in his schoolwork. After paying a few visits to the Morgan family I summed up Ben's interaction with his parents:

Mrs Morgan serves reminders to Ben to go to his room to study. Ben ignores her. She serves another reminder. Ben's standard response is: I am going Mum (agitated). She tells her husband, "Paul you tell him" (to do his homework). In a stern voice Paul tells Ben to go to his room to study. Reluctantly, Ben goes to his room. Half an hour later parents check (whether or not he is studying). More often than not, they find him half asleep, lying on his bed with a book on his chest.

Ben's parents socialised him to take sports with keen interest but at the same time they wanted him to do well at studies. By Year 11 he had become passionately involved in sports. His parents were struggling to get him interested in studies. Mrs Morgan explained:

Ben loves football and he likes his part time job.... After 7 p.m. we send him to his room to study. From 7 to 9.30 is study time for him. What he does in his room we don't know. If I or Paul check on him he will say, "Don't you trust me?" Paul will say, "I wanted to find out if you need any help". Ben's response will be: "I will call if I need help". He is the type of a boy who is not academically oriented. If we tell him to work up to 9.30, he will not work up to 9.35. He is good with his hands and is doing well in woodwork. In fact, I will be quite happy if he does TAFE but Paul thinks he should do TEE. He likes to do these subjects but he does not have the commitment.

Interest in Sports and Leisure Activities

As teenagers parents in these families were very keen on sports. In fact, before their marriages they started courting each other in the playgrounds and until they got their own children they played sports with keen interest, the Morgans and the Marshalls continued even much later. Mr Morgan had been helping the local teams in baseball and Aussie Rules football as an umpire. Mrs Morgan elaborated:

All our children are naturally talented in sports but Paul (husband) has got a lot to do with it. When our children started primary school Paul encouraged them to play hockey, cricket and Aussie Rules football. He used to play with them in the backyard all the time. On Saturday and Sunday Paul spends (even now) a lot of time in Ben's sports activities.

Interest in sports and leisure activities was the most obvious area where parents and their children were involved with each other. During their annual leave at Christmas time parents took their children to the coastal towns to enjoy fishing and water sports. Emphasis on sports and recreation was quite evident in their home leisure activities as well. These families had excellent barbecue facilities in their backyards that were frequently used. The Marshalls had a swimming pool, piano, table tennis, caravan basketball practice ring and a dartboard; the Morgans had a basketball practice ring and a dartboard; and the Morrisons had a basketball practice ring, dartboard, billiards and a caravan.

The data given in Table 1 shows that most of their after school hours were spent in doing part-time work, socialising with their friends and watching TV. Anglo-Australian parents did not employ home tutors for their children, even though these children experiencing problems in studies and parents were economically well off.

Almost religiously, these parents encouraged their children to play and enjoy sports as they themselves did. Parents were physically and emotionally involved in the sports related activities of their children and enrolled them in organised

Table 1: Number of hours spent in doing various activities per week

	Homework	Part-time job	Tuition	Sports	TV/stereo/ computer	Socialising with friends	Socialising with parents	Household chores
Chris	8	15	-	9	15	24	2	-
Clint	5	12	-	10	22	20	2	6
Glenn	3	10	-	6	31	16	2	4
Ben	11	14	-	15	15	10	6	4

sport clubs and invested time and money in these activities. And to the delight of parents their investment in sports paid off. Ben Morgan was selected in the Australian Institute of Sports to play baseball, while Clint represented his school in basketball and won a national trophy. How children spent after school time became a powerful indicator of their performance at school. Most days of the week between 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. they were either doing part-time work or playing sports. They spoke about their after-school hours routine:

At three I came home. Watched TV. At four I went to footy training until six. Dad came to see me train. After dinner we had a family conversation, mostly about sports because we all love sports. After lunch, went with Dad to the beach surfing and swimming. Came back at 4.15. Talked about surfing for half an hour. Mum and Dad went out and I invited my friend to watch video at my place. On Sunday got up at 9 and watched the video again. At mid-day my friend went home. I went to play footy. Mum and Dad came to watch me play. I came home and watched footy with Dad on television-Ben

After school I stayed with me mates, cos we wanted to have a good time. The whole night we watched horror movies, played video games. On Saturday we went to the local shopping centre and ate fish n chips in the park. Got ready for job interview (part time work at McDonalds). Came home to watch TV. Went to sell newspapers from 7 to 11. Watched TV until 1 (a.m.). Got up at 10.30. On Sunday watched TV the whole day-Glenn.

It is against my religion to study on Friday after school (laughs). I went to my part time work (pushing trolleys at a nearby shopping centre) from 4 to 6.30. Watched TV until 11. On Saturday after dinner went to my mate's house to watch videos. On Sunday got up at 4.30 (a.m.) and went surfing with my mates until 1 p.m. (five of them, all doing TAFE subjects). From 5.30 to 7.30 went to play basketball. Dad came to watch me play. From 8.30 to 10 listened to my stereo-Clint.

Straight after school I went to my girl friend's place until 11. On Saturday I got up at 5 and went surfing. Returned home at 10 and went to my part-time job for four hours. Came home and listened to stereo for two and half hours. At 5.30 went to my girl friend's place to watch a video about surfing. When I come home from surfing I am buggered mate. I am so tired that I don't like doing any work. I go to my room and lock myself in and sleep for 10 hours. You feel so good when you get up. Surfing is a great sport-Chris

From the above extracts it is self-evident that these boys spent almost entire of their after school hours doing non-educational and sports and leisure related activities. They participated in organised sports and spent several hours a week training and playing. Moreover, their parents were fully aware of such activities. In fact, whenever possible

parents participated in sports related activities of their children.

Peer Group Orientation

The boys from these families spent most of their time, especially at weekends, in the company of their friends. Their parents held the view that children should be socialised into being economically independent, assertive and making their own decision at an early stage. Chris's socialisation with his peers was typical of the three others. Mrs Marshall told me:

Chris belongs to a gang of students. Some of them are older than him. They have left school. None of them did TEE. During holidays and sometimes at weekends they go to the non-smoking nightclub and Time Zone. He has tasted alcohol, cigarettes, and possibly marijuana. I have told him that if he wants to drink I can buy for him but he should not come home drunk.... When Chris was in Year 10 he got a part time job. He got the taste of birds (girls). He started to go downhill in his grades. (grinding her teeth) I wish I had some power to change his mind.... Sometimes I'd like to wring his neck.

Children from the other families also socialised with their friends in a similar fashion as Chris did. In school they socialised with their peers (in the isolated areas where some staff members on yard supervision reported the cases of smoking). Chris and Clint cut classes and went surfing. At home, they spent most of their time sleeping, watching video or television. Their parents had very little control over their activities.

The more high handed approach these parents used with their children the more it pushed them in the peer group camp and the more they tended to experiment with socially unaccepted things.

Lack of Commitment to Education

Although all parents were very keen to see their children do well at school and complete TEE or TAFE studies, they were not committed to the idea of sending them to the university. They had provided them with quality educational material but they were not so successful in forming good study habits and motivating them to use these resources. Mrs Morrison explained her inability to motivate Glenn and Clint to take studies seriously:

I want to help them in their schoolwork but I don't know how to do it. They lock themselves in their rooms and pretend to study. And I know how much work Glenn would do with his loud stereo and closed door. They do not keep homework diary. They like to read comic books only. I tell them to read through

their files to revise their notes but they get cross with me and sometimes there is a big argument. I put the T.V. on to watch news, current affairs and documentary but they like to watch programs like sports and pop music or late movies. They are interested in reading books on surfing and fishing like Don (husband). They don't borrow books from the school library.

Mrs Morgan about Ben and Mrs Marshall about Chris gave similar accounts.

If Ben's door is half closed it means he is studying. If the door is fully closed he is asleep. Ben is very lazy. Books do not interest him much. There are so many books at home and the local library is around the corner but he does not borrow books often. He is the sort of boy if you ask him to study up to 9 p.m. he won't study extra five minutes. If you don't stop him he will watch T.V. endlessly □ Mrs Morgan

Books put Chris to sleep. Surf magazines and girls keep him awake. Most of his time goes in eating, sleeping and listening to music. What upsets us most is that he does not take interest in his schoolwork. He is lazy and we cannot motivate him □ Mrs Marshall

Children's grades had dropped as they progressed through the school. In fact, the pattern of performance of Chris, Glenn and Clint resembled their parents' when the latter were in the high school. These parents had dropped out of high school after Year 10. Mr Morgan and his wife had completed tertiary studies as part time students. These parents did not mind if their children dropped out of high school after Year 12. Although these parents wanted their children do well at school they were not consistent in their efforts. Occasional outbursts of parents simply alienated their children from studies even more. For example when Mr Morgan used coercive techniques to ask Ben to do his homework the latter closed his door and pretended to study but the parents found him asleep in his bed with his book lying on his chest.

Resistance to school work

Resistance as an assertion was common among Clint, Glenn and Ben. Physical aggressiveness (e.g., Glenn and Clint), and vandalism (e.g., Glenn)

were common acts of resistance. Routinely, Ben, Glenn and Clint created resistance in class. Alienation from learning, a rejection of curriculum, misbehaviour in class, and criticism of knowledge and values transmitted by the school were their common behavioural features. Their misbehaviour stemmed from their diverging views of schooling, lack of interest in schoolwork, and their interest in sports and leisure oriented life style of their parents. Their lack of interest in schoolwork conflicted with the demand for work by teachers that widened the gap between the two. For Clint and Glenn (coming from lower class families) the gap was two-fold: the gap between the school's emphasis on academic knowledge and their own adolescent culture, and that between working class norms and values the dominant values of middle class society.

Anglo-Australian students tended to disobey school rules and developed negative attitudes towards school and teachers. Tagged with negative labels they sought out the company of their sport and leisure activity oriented peers which acted as multipliers to encourage them to break school rules, disrupt lessons, give cheeks to teachers and fail to hand over homework. With their anti-social behaviour Glenn, Clint and Ben were rejected by their normal peers that had a negative impact on their adjustment, academic success and self-esteem. In my class Ben and Glenn acted as "ring leaders". Coming from a middle class family Ben's resistance appeared as taking on working class styles.

The lack-lustre performance in studies and strong orientation in sports of the Anglo-Australians may be attributed to parenting style, lack of social capital, and parents' own interest in sports and leisure activities. While Confucian values were evident in the Chinese-Australian families, the Protestant work ethic was missing in the Anglo-Australians and such values had permeated to their daily routine family interactions. Anglo-Australian parents were satisfied with average academic performance but demanded excellence in sports. The amount of time Anglo-Australian students spent on socialising with their friends, doing part time work and playing sports, competed with the time spent on studies. With low expectations in studies, a negative or indifferent attitude toward school, Anglo-Australian students made little effort and challenged the authority of their teachers who demanded compliance. Consequently, the gap between their performance and ability

Table 2: Parental Expectations

Student	Expected Score	Satisfied with
Chris	75	70
Clint	70	70
Glenn	60	70
Ben	70	80

steadily widened. "I don't care.... School sux.... My teachers can suck eggs", were statements frequently expressed by Glenn, Ben and Clint. In short, *Anglo-Australian parents failed their children and by not trying hard their children disadvantaged themselves.*

School Experiences

These Anglo-Australian had negative orientations towards school who labelled the Chinese-Australians as "squares", "nerds", "smacks" or "geeks" "who buried their heads in books and did not know how to kick a footy". Glenn and Clint were non-conformist sports heroes in their adaptations to school. When Glenn started high school in Year 8 he was identified as a student with problems in literacy and numeracy. Ben and Clint were average students but their performance deteriorated as they progressed though the high school. Glenn and Clint acted sort of 'ring leaders' and challenged teachers' authority. Quite often they tended to use vulgarities, foul speech, rough manners and deliberate disregard of the niceties in class. Teachers also had formed their opinions about them. "If there is a noise in the class, Ben and Glenn are the centre of it. Kick Glenn out and there is peace in the class".

Eventually, not only did Ben, Glenn and Clint become disillusioned and 'give up' but also learnt to blame the system for their failures. They learnt to 'resist' the authority of teachers and 'acted tough'. In unison, they claimed that teachers used heavy-handed discipline and handed out degrading and sadistic punishments. About one of his teachers Glenn complained, "My teacher swore at me.... He picks on me while the whole class is talking.... He cannot control the class.... One day he started yelling at me but when I yelled at him he sent me out".

With their negative orientations toward school and teachers they tended to resist or reject the values of the school. Quite often, during lesson time they tended to pass time by fantasising about the clever manoeuvres of their favourite sports, 'mucking about' or 'having a laugh' with their mates. Most of the time, during recess and lunch time they tended to spend their time in school oval, and the gym playing sports. They were unwilling to work within the guidelines suggested by their teachers and tended to stay at school in Year 11 and 12 because "there are no bloody jobs". Resentment,

bitterness and frustration felt by them were evident in their comments: School sux...My maths teacher can suck eggs and drop dead"-Glenn. "I am treated unfairly... If I talk to my mates my teacher goes berserk"-Ben. With their negative orientations they were identified with Willis's "lads" (1977), "non-conformist delinquents" (Hargreaves, 1967), "Aussie male Chauvinists" (Walker, 1988) and "mach lads" (Mac An Ghail, 1994).

On their part, teachers did not trust them. For instance, a senior teacher would allow Glenn to observe rather than experiment in science laboratory because "I don't trust that shit to handle the scientific apparatus as he has already broken some equipment."

A significant effect of Chinese-Australians converging to top-notch subjects and Anglo-Australians gravitating mostly to non-TEE subjects was that the former got more experienced teachers and they were put in classes which constituted self-motivated and university-bound students. By comparison, Glenn, Ben and Clint with low calibre and "vegie" subjects were assigned to less experienced teachers who held lower expectations of them. At school, Glenn was enrolled in remedial and focus classes for three years. In Year 11 and 12 he studied non-TEE subjects and ended up getting a job serving food at a fast food stall, confirming Willis's oft-quoted statement: "learning to labour". When these students achieved low grades they enrolled in the classes of students who lacked self-motivation. Enrolled in such classes they tended to select friends who were not interested in pursuing tertiary studies but were very keen on sports and leisure activities. With their negative values they took "the values of academics and turned them upside down and formed an example of negative polarity" (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 162). They committed themselves minimally to schoolwork. Their estranged relationship with teachers had strengthened their anti-school behaviour and low performance. In a way, they perceived their interactions with teachers as an 'us' and 'them' situation. Sitting next to the canteen at recess and lunchtime Glenn had adopted a typical gang behaviour. Studying non-TEE subjects, they "tended to percolate downwards in the processes of academic and behavioural differentiation (Ball, 1981).

It appears that classification and evaluation of students is socially constructed in daily interaction of children with their parents and teachers. I

posit advantage and disadvantage starts at home and is reinforced by school. On their part, students develop their attitude towards school and authority as a consequence of their interaction and interrelationship with parents, teachers and peers.

The ethnographic account of the life of students described in this paper has provided evidence in support of resistance theory (behavioural patterns of Anglo-Australian students) as well as Asian high achieving syndrome (Chinese-Australian students). There are striking differences in the ways Chinese and Anglos approach their schoolwork. Teachers make higher evaluations and give greater pedagogic commitment to those students whose academic and social behaviour is closest to the classroom standards and rules set by them. Some of the most common behavioural signals teachers expect to see pupils engage in are quiet social interactions, ask questions, participate in class activities, be obedient, respect their authority, use standard English when speaking, accept personal responsibility for their actions, perform the given tasks and harmoniously interact with others in classroom. Chinese, more than Anglos, meet most of the above criteria.

Self-deprivation syndrome

There is a striking discontinuity between home and school of Anglo-Australian students. Socialised one way out of school and another way in school, they were not predisposed to school tasks that they perceived to be pointless and boring. Anglo-Australian parents are failing in their responsibilities to their children in an academic arena, but quite supportive of their children's interest in sports activities. Even high status family like the Morgans were unable to provide social and cultural capital needed for Ben's education. Sporadic, piecemeal and inconsistent familial efforts contributed to their children's lack-lustre academic success. Ben's is a typical case. In 1995 he enrolled in Year 11. He had selected six TEE subjects which demanded a lot of homework. Although he had increased the amount of time in doing homework, his commitment to sports and part time work remained unaltered. When he found it hard to cope with the TEE subjects, mainly because of lack of effort, his parents did not provide any extra help such as a home tutor. Clint and Chris also had dropped some TEE subjects and opted TAFE subjects. Happy with Clint's decision Mr Morrison said, "This is the way to go. You don't have to kill yourself. You study what you enjoy".

The catch phrase in these families was "You choose what interests you most". Lack of efforts on the part these students was summed up by Clint when he said, "It is against my religion to work on Friday". The Morgans would have been quite satisfied if Ben had studied TAFE subjects. They let Ben follow his own interest in activities like doing part time work and playing organised sports. For one reason or the other, in both Anglo-Australian families parents were unable to provide adequate social capital for cognitive stimulation. Social networking, common in Chinese-Australian families, was almost absent among Anglo-Australians. With low education the Morrisons could get jobs easily and access to middle class material possessions, while retaining their sports and leisure activities life style. With high parental involvement in such activities their children tended to pursue a similar life style.

Anglo-Australian parents encouraged their children to enjoy the attractions of the teenage period, such as playing sports and having a friend of the opposite sex. With low parental expectations, their children tended to follow career paths which were in demand in the Australian context and which did not require high level of study commitment. The attitude of Ben, Glenn and Clint towards schoolwork kept on deteriorating as they moved in higher grades. It appears that education does not play as central a role in the Anglo-Australian conception as it does for Chinese-Australian parents. It is this belief, I submit, which explains why Anglo-Australian parents are satisfied with the mediocre performance of their children. The life style of Anglo-Australian parents seems to have a great deal to do with the lack-lustre performance of their children. These parents believe in the virtues of part time work and early social independence. Mrs Morrison's advice to her fifteen year old son, Glenn, captures the psyche of other Anglo-Australian parents: "If you don't try now to find a part time job you won't get one later." This stands in sharp contrast to Mr Cheong's (Chinese-Australian) alarmed question: "How can the Australians ask their fifteen year olds to look for part time jobs? What are parents for?" (Malik, 2000, p.244).

Table 3 indicates the final scores and career aspirations of Anglo-Australian and Chinese-Australian children. With little difference in performance between them at the start of high school, we now see that they finished differently, indeed: Chinese-Australians had enrolled in university, Ben, Glenn and Clint did not

Summary and Conclusions

In general, the parents in these families had no set academic goals for their children; they had left up to their children to decide which subjects they would like to study; and encouraged them to pursue their sports interests. These boys spent a considerable portion of the after-school and weekend time in sports and part time work. Both activities are physically tiring and compete with their study time. Consequently, they spent minimal time on schoolwork. Parents' emphasis on their children's early social and economic independence, and encouragement in sports activities tended to make these children peer oriented. With low education or by following part time tertiary studies these families could get jobs easily and an access to middle class material possessions, while retaining their sports and leisure activities life style. Their children internalised parents' views that education was not crucial to their lives. Consequently, they were unwilling to extend the extra effort needed for success in studies and their attitude towards school kept on deteriorating as they progressed through high school. There was a striking discontinuity between home and school of these Anglo-Australian teenagers. Socialised one way out of school and another way in school, they were not predisposed to school tasks which they perceived to be pointless and boring.

To a considerable extent these boys were responsible for constructing their own realities. Routinely, they created resistance in class. Alienation from learning, rejection of curriculum, misbehaviour in class, and criticism of knowledge and values transmitted by the school were their common features of behaviour at school. Their misbehaviour stemmed from their diverging views of schooling, lack of interest in schoolwork, and their interest in the sports and leisure-oriented life style of their parents. Their lack of interest in

schoolwork conflicted with the demand for work by teachers which widened the gap between the two.

The case studies of sports heroes indicate that there is a strong linear relationship between negative attitudes to school and teachers, positive peer group orientation and poor academic performance. The salience of this relationship is also alluded to by Coleman (1961), Willis (1977), and Vuchichini (1992). Like Willis's lads sports romanticised the culture of the sports heroes. They labelled the academic as "squares" who would not know "how to kick a footy". In short, parents failed their children and by not trying hard these students disadvantaged themselves. My evidence indicates that *Anglo-Australian students, given more encouragement by parents might narrow the gap to reach their full potential in academic studies.*

It is feared that significant numbers of Anglo-Australians are at risk of becoming a new category, namely, the self-deprived, in the sense of individuals inhibiting their own life possibilities and career scenarios. The self-deprivation syndrome (Bullivant, 1987) is partly due to student's own attitudes towards education and their disinclination to work hard to achieve their goals. In essence they are influenced by a *shirk-work ethic*.

The behavioural patterns of sports heroes fits in the delinquents (Hargreaves, 1967) and represents "Aussie masculinity" (Walker, 1988) who stood up for themselves and their mates against the authority of teachers. Physical education teachers called them "sports heroes", vocational subjects teachers labelled them "good students", but other teachers at different times called them "shits", and "dead heads" who were "difficult to get on task". In upper school they selected non-TEE subjects which by their own definition were "vegie subjects because you don't have to do homework". Once the fear of exam was removed, they then found more time to fool around and tended to become increasingly exposed to their own subculture. Their teachers' expectations of them were low and their parents did not expect them to study hard. Such low expectations influenced the nature of interactions between these students and their teachers. Frequent clashes of sports heroes with their teachers lend ample support to this argument. With low academic orientation and high interest in sports and leisure activities, they tended to seek the company of low achieving peers and challenged the authority of their teachers. They committed themselves minimally to school requirements. They

Table 3: Academic Performance and Occupational Aspirations

Name	TEE/TAFE Score	Career Path/ Aspirations
Chris Marshall	195/510	No further studies
Clint Morrison	Completed TAFE course	No further studies
Glenn Morrison	Completed Yr. 12 TAFE subjects	No further studies
Ben Morgan	231/510	Could not enrol at university

had negative orientations towards teachers and school. With their negative values they took “the values of academics and turned them upside down” (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 162) and formed an example of negative polarity” (Cohen in Hargreaves, *ibid*). For them meeting their mates and playing sports was the “real life” in school. Studying non-TEE subjects, they “tended to percolate downwards in the processes of academic and behavioural differentiation (Ball, 1981). They had developed traits of behaviour which were not helpful to them to excel academically. They committed themselves minimally to schoolwork. Their estranged relationship with their teachers had strengthened their anti-school behaviour and low performance. In a way they perceived their interactions with teachers as an “us” and “them” situation. Sitting next to the canteen at recess and lunchtime Glenn had adapted typical gang behaviour. By their own choice sports heroes run the risk of ending up like Willis’s lads in the worst paid and most insecure jobs of all. In sum, a lack of social and cultural capital at home, plus an orientation towards peer group activities and parental leisure values developed in the 1950s and 1960s when education was not considered essential to the Australian “good life”, helped to perpetuate hostile attitudes to school and study.

On the basis of the evidence gathered from these three families and their children I posit that if Anglo-Australian parents keep on dwelling in the era of the 1950s and 1960s and do not change their laidback attitude about education, their children could eventually be under-privileged in their own country, a fear which has been expressed in a number of studies (Birrel and Seitz, 1986; Bullivant, 1987; and Mok and Paar, 1995). There is a fear in some sections of the Australian community that groups of older European stock are in danger of being supplanted in positions of influence by the sons and daughters of Asian immigrants.

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