Visible pedagogic work: parenting, private tutoring and educational advantage in Australia

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Abstract
This article explores parents' employment of private tutoring services for their primary school children in Sydney, Australia's largest city. Using Bernstein's theories of invisible and visible pedagogies, we look, through the eyes of a small group of middle-class Chinese-background interviewees, at the tensions between certain pedagogic forms associated with private tutoring and schooling in contemporary contexts of educational competition. We show how some parents are openly seeking more explicit, visible forms of instruction through the employment of private tutoring, to compensate for the perceived 'invisible', pedagogically progressive approach of Australian primary schooling. We argue that these parents' enlistment of supplementary tutoring is a considered approach to their identification of a mismatch between (apparently) relaxed, child-centred classroom practices, and the demands of the more traditional examinations that regulate entry points to desired educational sites such as academically selective high schools and prestigious universities. Our findings show how paid tutoring is a contemporary *pedagogic* strategy for securing educational advantages, not just a 'cultural' practice prevalent among certain migrant communities, as it is often characterised. We suggest an analytic focus on pedagogy can help connect issues of class, culture and competition in research on home-school relationships, offering a productive way for the field to respond to the tensions these issues engender.

Keywords: Private tutoring, pedagogic work, visible pedagogy, parenting, primary education, competition

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Introduction

The strategic use by parents of commercial tutoring colleges or paid private tutors to secure a competitive schooling advantage for their already academically competent children is a significant and controversial, yet under researched, feature of the urban educational landscape in Australia. In the city of Sydney, the setting for this study, commercial tutoring has become increasingly visible. Many suburban shopping centres have franchises or branches of coaching businesses, with crowds of schoolchildren coming and going before and after school and on weekends. One of the best known is James An, named for its founder who, according to the company's website, moved to Sydney from South Korea as a teenager in the 1970s, trained as a high school mathematics teacher and founded the first of forty James An colleges in 1986 (http://jamesancollege.com/sub01_02.htm). "Coaching colleges, once regarded as places to send struggling students", claims the website, became "places where bright students honed their study skills and exam techniques". Many school teachers, senior high school and university students work as children's tutors in private houses to the same ends, often advertising their services by word of mouth.

There is a paucity of reliable, detailed data on the scale and growth of the private tutoring industry in Australia, especially quantitative data, but it is evident from the available information that it is an industry on the rise. A decade ago Kenny & Faunce (2004) counted *Yellow Pages* telephone book listings to estimate that the number of commercial coaching colleges in Sydney had risen from 60 in 1989 to 222 in 2002. A *Yellow Pages* web search for 'coaching colleges', under the subcategory 'tuition-educational' in Greater Sydney conducted in 2014 by the authors of this paper yielded 910 results. Despite the establishment of a (Sydney-based) peak body in 2005, and attempts to promote the accreditation and voluntary regulation of tutors and tutoring businesses (http://ata.edu.au/), the diversity and private nature of the industry makes it difficult to measure with any confidence. What is clear is that increasing numbers of parents are making decisions to spend sometimes considerable amounts of money to supplement their children's schooling. This is an international phenomenon, and at its most intense in a number of East Asian countries (Aurini et al 2013, Bray 2006).

That this form of education is diverse and still very much under construction is reflected in its variety of names. In Australia it is commonly referred to as "tutoring" or "coaching". The international research literature broadly agrees on the term "supplementary education" or more poetically, "shadow education" (for example Bray 1999). The form of supplementary education or private tutoring that we look at in this article is the extra coaching in examinable, academic subjects that is provided to students outside school hours on an opt-in basis in exchange for remuneration and quite separate from anything either provided or endorsed by the school. We do not address remedial education for students with diagnosed learning difficulties, or special skill tutoring for "extras" such as learning a musical instrument, or the cultural "Saturday schools" that provide community language and heritage enrichment for non-English background children. We are specifically interested in the engagement by parents of private or commercial tutoring services for the academic support of already academically competent children.

Despite the emergence of an international literature on supplementary education since the turn of the twenty-first century (Aurini et al. 2013, Bray 2010), the research in Australia, as we have mentioned, remains sparse (cf. Forsey 2013), and there are many aspects yet to be thoroughly explored. These include the academic efficacy of tutoring, the dimensions of coaching as a for-profit industry and the employment conditions for tutors under its various arrangements. Our research for this paper addresses the pedagogic work of parents vis a vis private tutoring. Reporting on an interview study conducted in 2013 with six parents of primary school aged children, our paper analyses paid tutoring as a contemporary parenting strategy, examining participants' accounts of why they engaged tutors, and relatedly, their views about their parenting responsibilities and the educational needs of their children. We situate our discussions in relation to the middle-class [1] Chinese-migrant backgrounds of the parents in our study, describing how these six parents theorised their relationships with their children's tutors and schoolteachers, and how they represented their parental-educational plans, experiences, hopes and aspirations.

We focused our study on parents with primary school children due to the growth of tutoring services catering specifically to younger students. However, our interests in private tutoring at the primary school level, and especially among Chinese-migrant families, also emerges from our reading of contemporary public debates associated with private tutoring, discussed below. Private tutoring is seen as particularly controversial in terms of its possible repressive effects on childhood wellbeing (e.g Broinowski 2015, Pung 2013, Chua 2011, Dierkes 2013).

Linked to private tutoring, as we also elaborate below, is the 'ethnicization' of academic achievement to particular 'Asian' communities in Australia (Watkins and Noble 2013). There is a prevalence of 'cultural' explanations for academic success, locally and globally, not least of which is 'tiger parenting' as a form of intensive parenting among 'Asian' families (e.g. Chua 2011, Broinowski 2015, Vialle, 2013). That private tutoring and intensive 'tiger' parenting have been positioned as so controversial in recent media commentary points to the perceived threat they make on what ought to be considered 'good' education in Australia (e.g. Broinowski 2015). While our study is small – drawing on in-depth interviews with just six Chinese-migrant parents – we put forward a focused analysis that responds to the complexity of the private tutoring 'controversy' in Australia. It is not our intention to make generalisations about Chinese-migrant parenting, but rather, we ask what these parents' responses to primary schooling, and their perspectives on private tutoring, can tell us about the tensions within 'good' education in the contemporary school system.

In this paper we show how parents were openly seeking more explicit forms of instruction for their children through the employment of private tutoring. The notion of 'visibility' is central to our analysis in two related ways. Firstly, we found that this element of the 'pedagogic work' of the parents in our study was visible; unconcealed and explicitly oriented towards preparing children for competitive school examination success, rather than what might be seen as broader or more general learning or academic development. Here we refer to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) concept of 'pedagogic work' to signify

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[1] As explained below, we have identified our participants as 'middle class' by the traditional markers of occupation, income and education while noting that their migrant positionality distinguishes them within this analytic category. For an extended discussion of the historical relationship between the middle classes and schooling in Australia, see Campbell et al (2009) pp. 15-35.

how the principles of a cultural arbitrary that are seen as worthy of reproduction are relayed and inculcated by an authority (e.g. parents and schools) to produce particular dispositions.[2] The visibility of the parents' pedagogic work in our study is significant because it challenges, by its explicitness, more coded, less openly competitive forms of middle-class "concerted cultivation" (Lareau 2003/2013). We explore the visibility of the pedagogic work of the parents in our study with respect to their negotiation of Australian schooling expectations from their financially well-resourced but culturally non-dominant positions.

The second and related way that the notion of 'visibility' is significant to our analysis is with respect to parents' desires for 'visible pedagogies' in the education of their children. We draw here on Bernstein's (1975, 1996) theories of visible and invisible pedagogies to analyse social control in the relay of knowledge. Invisible pedagogy refers to modes of instruction in which the selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation of knowledge are made implicit through weak framing – or controls – in the pedagogic relationship. Invisible pedagogies tend to privilege enquiry-based cross-curricular activities, flexible timetabling, multiple modes of assessment with implicit or fluid criteria for evaluation, and democratic social relations in classrooms. In an invisible pedagogy, learning is a tacit, invisible act and its progression in not facilitated by explicit public control (Bernstein 1975). In contrast, visible pedagogies emphasise strong framing, or explicit controls, over the relay of knowledge. Visible pedagogies are characterised by strong boundaries between subject areas, single modes of assessment with explicit and rigid criteria for evaluation, and overt hierarchies between teacher-student relationships.

Primary education reform in New South Wales has pulled between visible and invisible pedagogic modes. Australia has a long history of reliance on high stakes examinations and conservative curriculum and pedagogy, especially in secondary schooling (W. Connell 1993, R. Connell et al 1982). Nevertheless some progressive, "child centred" pedagogical and curricular reforms propelled by loose alliances of school teachers, bureaucrats and academics in the 1970s and 1980s saw a general downplaying of formal assessment, ranking and examinations in primary schools (Hughes and Brock 2008, Campbell and Proctor 2014). Progressive teaching method and curricula have been, since the 1970s, associated with inclusivity and multiculturalism, as opposed to beliefs about canonical curricula content, or the transmission of "facts".[3] Australian primary school curriculum and policy documents and classrooms retain a progressive flavour even today, somewhat at odds with the imposition of national mass literacy and numeracy testing regimes in the twenty-first century, and the intensification of academic competition

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[2] Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) make a distinction between primary and secondary pedagogy work. Primary pedagogic work is 'without any antecedent' (42); that which is 'accomplished in the earliest years of life' (43). Secondary pedagogic work is any pedagogic work that comes after, such as schooling. Bourdieu and Passeron claim 'the success of all school education, and more generally of all secondary pedagogic work, depends fundamentally on the education previously accomplished in the earliest years of life' (43). Our mobilisation of the concept of pedagogic work in this paper does not imply such a sequential delineation, as this does not adequately capture the *multiple and ongoing* forms of pedagogic work (which we later discuss in relation to Bernstein's (2001) 'totally pedagogised society'). See also Moore's (2013) Bernsteinian critique of Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of reproduction.

[3] The treatment of 'knowledge' in progressive education continues to be debated across the political left and right. We note here both the recent work by Michael Young and his colleagues (2014) which challenges progressive curricular ideals based on social constructionist notions of knowledge, as well as the recent conservative Coalition government Review of the Australian Curriculum led by Donnelly and Wiltshire (2014) that makes reference to Young's work to support a cultural restorationist approach to canonical knowledge.

including ranking and streaming at the secondary school level (see, for example, Snyder 2008, on "progressive" pedagogies, national debates and literacy teaching).

The pulls between visible and invisible pedagogies in New South Wales primary schooling must also be understood in relation to shifts in the secondary school sector and labour market. The NSW academically selective public high school system began to be dismantled during the 1960s and 1970s in favour of a less hierarchical comprehensive school system, but was reinvigorated and expanded during the 1980s and 1990s (Campbell and Sherington 2013, Sherington and Hughes 2012). The competitiveness of the matriculation examination in New South Wales, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) has intensified from the 1970s, at least at the top end of academic achievement, with increased competition for entry into high status professional university courses such as law and medicine, and also with the decline in well-paid jobs that can be accessed directly from school without a higher education credential (see Mackinnon and Proctor 2013, Campbell and Proctor 2014)[4].

While there is a cultural ethos of progressive education in Australian primary schooling, the current prominence of national and international testing, and the downward pressure of high stakes high school examination regimes have produced what Bernstein called an 'embedded' pedagogy; where ideals of invisible pedagogic modes are embedded into visible structuring practices, namely the explicit and strongly framed evaluation of student performance. The question this raises is to what extent invisible pedagogy, through its tacit rules and weaker controls, can provide students access to the visible criteria rules they are evaluated by, especially if they wish to access selective public high schools or prestigious university courses. We argue it is this very tension of an embedded pedagogy that the parents in our study were recognising and responding to. In this sense, private tutoring was a *pedagogic* strategy, employed to negotiate the perceived tensions between multiple pedagogic modes; the visible pedagogic instruction of private tutoring compensates for the weak framing of primary schooling in the face of a strongly framed evaluative system. By foregrounding pedagogy in our analysis, we aim to connect and contribute to what might be seen as more obvious explanatory frameworks for these parents' take-up of private tutoring: neoliberal competition, Chinese culture, and middle-classness.

Competition, culture, and class: reviewing 'explanatory frameworks' for parents' employment of private tutoring

Supplementary academic coaching is widespread in parts of China and East Asia, flourishing under circumstances in which there is a hierarchy of status amongst schools

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[4] Bernstein's (1996/2000) theories on competence and performance pedagogies can be brought to this discussion of the structuring of the NSW school system. Schooling was increasingly oriented towards a performance model, structured by external controls for the evaluation of knowledge to produce 'differences between' (stratifications) of social groups. Broadly speaking, a performance model 'places emphasis upon a specific output of the acquirer, upon a particular text the acquirer is expected to construct and upon the specialised skills necessary to the production of this specific output, text or product' (2000, p. 44). This is in contrast to a competence model and its investment in 'similar to' relations in which 'differences between acquirers are not subject to stratification but can be viewed as complementary contributions to the actualisation of a common potential' (p. 50). As we discuss, a cultural ethos of invisible pedagogy at the primary school level is being negotiated, not without tension, through a performance model oriented towards explicit controls and stratifications.

and universities, and an imbalance of educational supply and demand (Aurini et al 2013, Bray & Lykins 2012, Kwok 2010). In Australia, the growth of the private tutoring industry can be understood as a response to intensified competition in schooling, and its attendant parental anxiety. It is well-rehearsed in the literature that neoliberal reforms in education over the last three decades, both in Australia and internationally, have promoted educational competition through, for example, a focus on standardisation and measurement in schooling systems and processes and the reframing of parents as educational consumers (Loughland and Sriprakash, 2014; Gorur 2013, Campbell et al 2009, Proctor et al 2015).

Australian schoolchildren sit whole cohort examinations in reading, writing, numeracy and spelling, grammar and punctuation under the National Assessment Program (NAPLAN) at regular intervals through primary and junior high school. Consolidated grades for each school (not for each child) are published and compared annually on a website created by the Federal Government for the purpose (http://www.myschool.edu.au). Additionally, Australia has one of the highest proportion of (publicly-subsidised) private schools internationally, a circumstance that makes it a nation with a relatively high level of school marketisation (Mussett 2012, Campbell et al 2009). Within this marketised, competitive system, New South Wales and its largest city in particular is marked out by a more hierarchical public system of education than the other Australian states by virtue of the provision of a network of academically-selective schools and classes. Entry to "opportunity classes" in senior primary school and academically-selective high schools is hotly contested. The terminal examination for secondary school students in New South Wales, the Higher School Certificate (HSC), is similarly competitive, regulating entry to the most prestigious university courses. We argue here that these "high stakes decision points" (Watson, 2008, 5-6) frame the participation of primary school aged children in private tutoring in Sydney.

As we have explained earlier, there is no reliable hard data about the numbers of students accessing supplementary coaching, let alone their demographic profiles. No institution collects this data and it is hard to imagine how they could if they wanted to, in such an unregulated commercial space. Yet it is undeniable that the academic coaching phenomenon is popularly associated with first and second generation Chinese background migrants, and, particularly in Sydney, their relative (and well documented) success at winning places at academically-selective public schools (e.g. Broinowski 2015, Mannix 2014, Pung 2013,Tovey 2013, Watkins and Noble 2013, Campbell et al 2009). Some research has attributed the academic success of Chinese students (both in China and among diasporic communities) to the long history of scholastic examinations in China, first underpinned by Confucianism and later adapted to suit post Cultural Revolution Communism (e.g. Wu and Singh 2004). More recent scholarship has been less persuaded by the usefulness of such explanations, arguing that it is too easy to oversimplify Confucianism, and fall into cultural essentialism (Archer and Francis, 2007, Wong et al 2012, Mu 2014).

Watkins and Noble (2013) argue that essentialised views about the influence of ethnicity on schooling in Australia comprise part of a contemporary 'ethnicization of educational achievement' (p.17). In a Sydney-based study of ethnicity and 'learning dispositions' they documented a collection of views expressed by some of their primary-school teacher participants about Chinese academic success and the apparent use of private tutoring to achieve it. Some teachers believed that children who were academically coached were

missing out on a 'proper childhood', and that coaching colleges were targeting test performance rather than deeper conceptual learning. Such opinions, argue Watkins and Noble, are both untested and emerge from essentialist western understandings of schooling and childhood (see also Broinowksi 2015, Pung 2013 and Campbell et al 2009 for other accounts both of the 'ethnicization' of achievement and of debates about the supposed repressiveness of supplementary coaching). Others have documented debates about whether the employment of tutors to assist with the selective schools entry test is either responsible parenting practice, or a form of cheating (eg Broinowski 2015, Campbell et al 2009). Entry to a selective school, runs one line of argument, should purely be on the basis of 'natural' ability, rather than 'drilling' or 'cramming' (e. g. Broinowski 2015).

As well as identifying as Chinese background, the parents in our study were middle-class. Middle-class parents in Australia and elsewhere have long been practical education strategists for their children, not least because most middle class occupations are accessible only to those with advanced educational credentials and certificates (Campbell et al 2009, Campbell and Proctor 2014, Ball 2003, Reay 1998, Lareau 2003/2013, Connell et al 1982). The feature that distinguishes private tutoring from other forms of middle class pedagogic work is its explicit instrumentality and systematisation and the transfer of money for the kinds of homework support that that might otherwise have been given by parents and other kin and community. Below, we introduce the parents who participated in our study and begin to explore the nature of their pedagogic work.

Parents and their pedagogic work

Six Chinese-Australian parents were interviewed, each of whom had a primary school child engaged in paid academic tutoring (see Table 1). Participants were interviewed in their choice of English or Mandarin, with translation provided by one of the authors of this paper (Hu). Interviews explored parents' educational histories, their reasons for enlisting tutors, and their perspectives on their children's schooling[5]. All participants were employed in middle class occupations and reported household incomes in the highest income quintile, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics categorisation. All had been educated overseas, as had their spouses, and had migrated to Australia as adults. Five out of six participants had been educated in China or South East Asia. One participant identified herself as ethnically Chinese but was brought up in Fiji.

Four of the parents sent their children to a tutoring centre or college while two employed private tutors (university students) who came to their homes for lessons. The parents identified reading, mathematics and general ability as the areas tutored at the centres. These are also the areas examined in the NSW selective high schools entrance examination. One of the tutoring centres focused on simulated practice tests in the months prior to the selective high schools examination. The private tutors who conducted lessons at home for Kim's and Lisa's children were both asked to focus specifically on English.

Table 1: Parent Background Information (all names pseudonymous).

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[5] Ethical approval for the research was gained from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

Parent Name[1]	Gender	English first language?	School grade of primary school child in private tutoring (and usual age of that grade in NSW)	Type of Tutoring	Schooling System
Cass	F	No	4 (9 years)	Tutoring Centre	Government
Kim	F	No	3 (8 years)	University student	Government
Ivy	F	No	5 (10 years)	Tutoring Centre	Non-government
Tim	M	No	6 (11 years)	Tutoring Centre	Government
Sally	F	No	4	Tutoring Centre	Non-government
Lisa	F	Yes	5	University student	Government

Each of these parents was a committed pedagogic worker for their children.[6] Each described how they had a central role in ensuring the future success for their children: by setting them firmly on the path to high academic achievement at school followed by university study and from there to a professional or managerial career. As Sally explained, "You [parents] should concentrate on her study, you should be [able to] get her a good future." To conduct their pedagogic work, the parents were engaged researchers; they investigated different schools, sourced targeted educational materials (workbooks, practice papers), discussed educational practices, systems and strategies with their networks of local and international friends/family, and actively monitored and helped with homework. Parents also described how they were actively engaged in providing extra-curricular opportunities for their children, such as sports lessons and music classes; a less visible form of 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau 2003/2013). As we explore, the employment of private tutoring, too, was a feature of their pedagogic work.

With a focus on the future, many parents spoke about childhood as being a time of 'investment'. As Sally went on to describe:

> at childhood - it's more like parents have to guide, and if they miss this kind of chance, this time if they didn't study well, it will definitely affect her future, because she lose everything almost… you study well, you get better chance and you get more knowledge and then, kind of like, you can succeed with competing opportunities. I feel like early education is very important.

Sally's concerns about 'missing a chance' and 'losing everything' are reflective of how all the parents we interviewed perceived early education as being crucially important. The high stakes of primary education were used to underscore the importance of their pedagogic work.

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[6] Although our sample was small it did conform to other studies of educational parenting in that all respondents reported that the bulk of the pedagogic work was done by mothers rather than fathers (e.g. Reay 1998, Brantlinger 2003, Aitchison 2010).

Indeed some parents in our study suggested that private tutoring in the context of competitive schooling was shifting what 'good' parental pedagogic work entailed. For example, the seeming ubiquity of private tutoring led Cass to feel she has 'no choice' but to send her daughter to coaching:

> She's (Cass's daughter) is in H Primary School you know and the more competition, studying competition in that school so I got more pressure. Yeah and many parents tell me: 'you should be concentrate on her study and, you should be get her a good future'… I think that her personality is more important than her score. But you know… *I no choice, I no choice!* Because almost all students their parents take them to tutoring! If I don't take her to the tutoring, maybe her... the result is not very good, maybe just in the low level, just in the middle...

Without private tutoring, the risk according to Cass is that her daughter might only perform at a 'low level', or 'just in the middle' in comparison to others. The 'pressure' she feels to send her child to private tutoring reflects new norms of middle class parental pedagogic work in an age of educational competition

Some parents like Cass openly expressed how their activities to support their children educationally were driven by a degree of anxiety about the future, but most described their insistence on close supervision of academic work in terms of needing to be alert and informed about their children's educational progress. For example, each parent used the language of comparative ranking to describe their child's achievements or potential, as Ivy describes:

> Last year [my son] went to the intensive English centre at the school. That was helping him from bottom to the middle. Now this year we are thinking to put him from the middle a little bit push for the top.

Furthermore, each parent described their knowledge of – and responses to – the various mechanisms of academic sorting and selection in the schooling system. (Entrance to academically-selective schooling was an explicit goal of our interviewees and three of the six parents have an older child who had already gained entry to selective high-school). In this sense, part of parents' pedagogic work was to stay closely informed about their child's progress as well as about opportunities for securing educational advantages. As we discuss below, this kind of information-seeking and tracking was a significant driver behind parents' employment of private tutoring. We examine how the visibility of private tutoring offered information, explicitness and structure desired by parents to more effectively conduct their pedagogic work.

Parents' desires for pedagogic visibility

The parents in our study expressed an overall satisfaction with their children's schooling, particularly its emphasis on 'creativity' and the breadth of an integrated curriculum, but they were concerned about a lack of rigour, homework, and examination practice. Private tutoring was seen as taking on a very specific compensatory role for the perceived 'invisibility' of the pedagogic work of Australian primary schools; it was a way for parents to provide explicit, visible, forms of instruction, in what many expressed as an effort to achieve 'balance' in their children's education. For example, as Tim explains:

I think the emphasis on the - the Australian education curriculum, the emphasis is a lot more on creativity and public speaking, and something else, but not the exam kind of environment. So yes, I'm not saying they are not good, rather they emphasise a different thing compared to Asian culture.

Similarly, Ivy describes Australian primary schooling as 'loose', with too many 'freedoms', which is suggestive of the weak framing (or controls) of invisible pedagogies. However, she cautions that this is not to sponsor a competitive system that is too strongly framed:

Personally, I think Australian schools are all good, and I don't want my children growing up with too much competition. The reason we wanted to go out of China was we just wanted to avoid the competition, there's too much in China, headache. But as we come here, the first three years, Peter was in the public school. […] They're very loose, whatever you do this, whatever you do that, they don't have like a - what kind of things - like there's too freedom, too many freedoms.

Bernstein's notion of pedagogic 'visibility' gives us a way to understand the 'cultural' negotiations being made by the Chinese-Australian parents in our study. Our interviews explored parents' own experiences of schooling in China, Fiji and Singapore in relation to their children's schooling in Australia. Many spoke about their experiences of exam-centred, textbook based modes of (visible) instruction which stood in contrast to Australian schooling with its progressive influence. So, while the parents we interviewed all spoke about the benefits and value of Australian primary school practices, they expressed the need for modes of instruction that were more easily recognisable to them. This pedagogic visibility was considered by the parents in our study as especially important to help them engage in the education of their children, to support the pedagogic work of the home.

For example, a particularly strong concern of all the parents we interviewed was the lack of homework given to primary school children. Homework was seen as important to consolidate and deepen knowledge and practice skills, but also to connect parents with what was happening in schools. Without this visible practice, parents expressed they were left out of their children's learning. For example, Kim explained how her daughter's teacher, 'doesn't believe in giving homework. […] So I really don't know what they're doing'. Sally had a similar assessment of her daughter's school,

Her school is quite a good school and I feel that the teacher is helping her but I don't know what she is studying. Just yeah, they are learning times tables or maybe they are learning whatever the universe, the planets or maybe this year they are learning national parks. That's all, just the general thing. I don't exactly know what she is studying.

In the absence of homework, parents felt that private tutoring was especially important. It not only offered the chance for their children to consolidate their knowledge in particular subject areas, but it also offered parents a more visible pedagogy with which they could more easily engage.

Of potential significance here is the explicit client-provider relationship established between parents and tutoring agencies, in which specific material – such as textbooks, workbooks, and practice tests – are designed and distributed in response to parents' desires (market needs) for more visible pedagogies. For example, Sally explained how, through the material and homework provided by the private tutoring company her

daughter attends, she feels much more connected to and involved in her daughter's learning:

> After I enrolled her to this tutoring centre I feel one good thing is they send home a lot of materials. Like mathematics, definitely I know okay, what her year, most likely what kind of questions or what kind of things they should learn. Then if she is having problems I could help her and then maybe buy some other books to give her more things to practice. That's one thing. That's a reason I feel like maybe I also need some guidance, what to help her. So, the tutoring centre is good because they send home a lot of materials and homework.

In this case, the tutoring centre is seen to offer a more visible instruction than schools as well as strongly framed material to support this instruction in the form of question booklets with answer sheets. Sally described how she was able to use this material to scaffold her daughter with her English vocabulary, reflecting 'it's kind of like my homework, most of the time I feel like it's my homework not her homework'. Here we see how tutoring centres are helping parents to conduct family pedagogic work, to variously enrich, expand on and compensate for the pedagogic work of schools.

Relatedly, private tutoring was also seen to provide parents with more detailed knowledge of their children's educational performance. This stemmed from a concern that evaluative feedback in primary schooling tended to be vague or even uniformly 'favourable'. In Bernstein's schema, the evaluation criteria of invisible pedagogies are implicit; weak controls in the pedagogic relationship mean assessments may take multiple forms, expectations and criteria are not always made explicit or specific to the learner (or parent), and evaluative hierarchies can be hidden. Parents in our study reflected that the assessment and feedback of student progress and performance in primary schools were weakly framed along these lines. For example, Tim reflects on the desire for 'pinpointed' advice on his child's learning, not as criticism, but as specificity for targeted improvement and growth:

> I notice that the teachers in Australia tend to give a favourable comment, regardless of whether you are on a high or low mark. So it doesn't quite help as much, because it - yeah, sometimes it just pinpoints that, yes, you need to pay attention to this. But I think they need to be more direct to the point, so what are the weaknesses, which are the points that you need to improve on. I think they don't touch on that a lot. Obviously this is potentially the culture here that they like to bring up the children rather than criticise the children, in that sense. […I want it to be] in a way that it pinpoints the children as to where the improvement is needed. To that extent it is not criticising, but rather it is helping the children to grow. That's important, I think, yeah.

In contrast to schools, private tutoring was seen as offering explicit forms of assessments and exercises (tests, practice examinations, workbooks) which targeted highly bounded, or strongly differentiated, learning areas such as grammar, vocabulary, and specific functions in mathematics. The strong framing of this visible pedagogy allowed parents to access very specific knowledge about their children's learning progress which they felt was denied through the weakly framed instruction (perceived) in schools.

In employing private tutoring to compensate for the perceived limitations of invisible schooling practices, some parents expressed 'guilt'; highlighting the tensions between the pedagogic approaches of home, school, and tutoring services. Ivy, for example, said she

'felt guilty to let teachers know that we have children outside school tutoring', but did so in order to overcome the impasse between conflicting pedagogic expectations:

> because every time I tell the teachers that, [my son's] maths is not good enough and we want him to improve, can you recommend some place or some homework that can help [him], the teacher always said, he's good enough on this level, I think the homework we set is good enough for him. They said - they always say, he's good, he's good, it's okay for him, you can't push a baby who can't walk, you push to walk, they always say that.

Implicit in Ivy's recounting of the teachers' response, through their suggestion of 'pushing', is the ethnicised discourse of 'hothousing', 'pressure', and 'anxiety' produced in relation to the educational performance of 'Asian' children.

However, during our interviews, a somewhat different picture of pedagogic expectations emerged. Sally, for example, talked about the need for 'balance' between the apparent freedoms of invisible pedagogic modes in schools and a 'healthy' amount of study, which wasn't necessarily as much as her own experiences as a child in China:

> Yeah, homework you know, they [primary schools in Australia] don't want kids always studying. But, compared to the background I'm from, even when I was in primary school every night I had to sit there until maybe eight or nine and try to finish my homework. You know, a lot of homework. But, sometimes it's kind of a balance. Like no homework at all I don't feel like it would help kids study, but too much homework definitely won't help kids to be more healthy, have more time to play. I still feel you need to have some balance in between, they need something. But the school is not doing that.

Parents saw private tutoring as helping to achieve this pedagogic 'balance'; far from hothousing their children, private tutoring was seen as mitigating anxieties. For example, Tim spoke at length about how his daughter attends examination simulation classes because 'Australian school just doesn't have enough exam experience'. He sees such preparation as pragmatic, helping his daughter be more 'at ease' with forthcoming tests:

> I guess it actually reduced her anxiety as to where - what you will learn, how you will expect things to come, as well. So I think it is a good experience for to stand on her feet, to go on her own, and to obviously sit through the exams, understand how an exam looks like, because there is a limited time for her to do the work, so she can practice and time herself in terms of completing her stuff in time.

In exploring parents' rationales for private tutoring with respect to the notion of pedagogic work, we move away from culturalist explanations of private tutoring participation to thinking more closely about the kinds of knowledge, processes, and outcomes that are valued in the schooling system. What we see here is that parents' pedagogic expectations for their young children were shaped not only by their own experiences of schooling, but by their considered, strategic, and open responses to contemporary Australian education. Parents were all too aware of the importance placed on examinations in Australian schooling, whether the NAPLAN, the HSC, entrance to "opportunity classes", or selective schools placements. They identified a tension between these visible strongly framed evaluative mechanisms in education and the invisible pedagogic modes of primary schooling. The pedagogic work of these parents involved overcoming this tension through the visible pedagogies of private tutoring.

Connecting competition, class and culture through pedagogic work

Parents' desires for securing their children's academic success through private tutoring offers a window into the ways competition, class and culture intersect in the pedagogic work of families and schools. The pedagogic work of the parents in our study was visible and openly strategic in its mobilisation of strongly framed approaches of private tutoring. This stands in contrast to some ideals of contemporary western middle-class parenting that emphasise parents' pedagogic work as implicit and even resistant to visibility. For example, contemporary progressive parenting discourses sponsor weaker framings of parent-child relationships through tacit modes of disciplining, an emphasis on play, the 'nurturing' of the 'whole child', and a resistance to overt competition. The tension between these parental pedagogic norms and the strong framing of private tutoring explains, in part, the controversy of academic coaching for young children in Australia's public imaginary.

All parents engage in pedagogic work, though to what extent it is recognised and valued depends on its distance from the cultural arbitrary imposed by the dominant group. Arguably, a dominant group is not educationally disadvantaged if it resists visible pedagogic work, because its cultural and social capital enable the weak framing of this work to maintain its productivity. But the stakes are higher for non-dominant groups – like the migrant families in our study – who are seeking to gain advantages in an education system that appears to be weakly framed but is strongly structured around examination performance in a competitive context. Even though parents' legitimisation of tightly framed pedagogies via private tutoring was sometimes tied to their own educational experiences in China/Singapore/Fiji, as well as to the contemporary experiences of tutoring among their international network of friends, their desire for visible pedagogies was not purely a matter of 'culture'. It was also a considered, strategic response to the structure and practices of education in Australia that are seen as being in direct tension.

The middle-class resources available to these parents enable them to pursue strategies like private tutoring as a way to ensure their pedagogic work is productive. Social class is significant in terms of understanding how educational advantage works in Australia's uneven, hierarchical and marketised education system. The well-resourced parents in our study were using private tutoring to compensate for something (visible instruction) that they perceived mainstream primary schooling was not providing, and this formed a part of their own pedagogic work. But what kinds of pedagogic work do families who cannot afford market 'solutions' engage in? How might schools recognise different forms of pedagogic work by families and help such work to be 'productive' in terms of the multiple agendas of contemporary Australian schooling?

A focus on pedagogy helps draw our attention to the social structuring of education, how it ought to take place, and who benefits from it. Progressive discourses in primary education have been broadly concerned with promoting 'inclusive' and 'democratic' educational practices through weaker controls of invisible pedagogies. This has been seen, in part, to recognise and promote the interests of cultural pluralism. What does it mean when the culturally diverse constituency that liberal progressive education was (once) meant to serve critiques invisible pedagogic practices and recognises its limitations for accessing strongly framed knowledge? The support for visible pedagogies via private tutoring arguably poses a dual threat: firstly to the productiveness of liberal, middle-class

pedagogic ideals in the contemporary competitive and performative environment of Australian schooling (how education ought to take place); and secondly, to patterns of middle-class educational success that are challenged by differentiated access to and support for private tutoring (who benefits from education). Through an ethnicised and at times explicitly racist discourse of the Asian Other, the controversy about private tutoring in Australian public commentary is an expression of these threats to the dominant culture.

While Bernstein's theories in the 1970s and 80s were useful for researchers, located mainly in the UK, to trace the class struggles over educational codes (cf. Power and Whitty, 2002), our analysis has shown the continued usefulness of his analytic lens to examine new class struggles over educational codes in contemporary Australia. The current era of 'parentocracy' (Brown 1990) – marked by neoliberal market reforms in education that benefit the middle classes – has also been marked by globalisation and migration, as well as the contemporary 'pedagogising of life' (Singh, 2002, 580). Bernstein refers to a 'totally pedagogised society' (Bernstein 2001) in which perpetual trainability and self-improvement are normalised projects (Bernstein, 2001. See also Bonal and Rambla, 2003). Arguably, middle-class families, through their on-going, concerted pedagogic work (whether visible or invisible) become regulative agents of the totally pedagogised society. Indeed, the totally pedagogised society is constituted through different pedagogic models, of which private tutoring is one, and one that is gaining increasing visibility if not uniform social legitimacy. The contemporary social context of competition, movement and difference, and the self-as-project has, in effect, diversified possible educational codes (how learning ought to take place) and created new struggles over the access to these codes (who benefits from them and through what means).

As Moore's (2013) recent analysis of Bernstein's theoretical project skilfully demonstrates, Bernstein was a theorist of *interruption*; concerned with 'the principles and possibilities of disordering and disruption, of the structuring of *change*' (37, original emphasis). Indeed, we contend that it is increasingly important to examine how pedagogy can structure social change, given its ubiquity in a 'totally pedagogised society', its diversity through multiple class and ethnic identities and histories, and its significance to a competitive, hierarchical and unequal education system. Our analysis of parents' rationales for private tutoring has provided insights into the differing ideas and practices of academic instruction that are valued across educational sites (the home, the school, and the private tutoring industry). With the rise of private tutoring in Australia and internationally we can no longer overlook its significance in shaping the educational experiences of a great number of children. As Bray (2010) notes, private tutoring is becoming much more visible; no longer in the 'shadows' so to speak. We suggest a focus on pedagogy – its forms, its controls, its sources, histories, and contingencies – can help connect issues of class, culture and competition. This compels a research agenda that examines how the priorities and practices of school education are being reconstituted through multiple forms of pedagogic work in sites beyond the classroom, not least the family and the private tutoring industry.

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[1] All names are pseudonyms