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CHAPTER 3

The value of practitioners being with children and parents together

Chapter overview

There is increasing international interest in practitioner-supported activities with parents and children together such as 'Supported Playgroups' in Australia and 'Stay and Plays' in England. These groups often have a dual-focused on early childhood education and/or parent support and more and more form part of government policy and models of integrated service provision internationally (Evangelou et al., 2007; Jackson, 2010; Needham, 2011; Parents as Partners in Early Learning, 2007). Dual-focused groups are facilitated by early childhood educators or other professional staff, with the main differences being related to the perceived purpose of the group. In this chapter we examine the ideological underpinnings of groups such as these and draw attention to the value and practical application of these types of service provision models. The importance of working together with families before their children start in formal early childhood settings such as pre-school or nursery is highlighted, and we examine the benefits and challenges of working in this way. There is also a particular focus on parent and child well-being using the concepts of free encounter and parent peer support (Jackson, 2010; Vandenbroek, 2009).

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Stakeholders' perspectives

Central to effectively delivering dual-focused groups for parents and their children is the need to identify the motivations and purposes of the participating stakeholders: children, parents, practitioners, managers and funders. Building on Vygotsky's theory of how we learn socially through participating in activities with others, sociocultural research and analysis gives us further understanding about this type of work. It helps us understand how activities have developed over time and have evolved rules and tools to help make them work. We explore rules and tools in more detail in subsequent chapters but for the time being we concentrate on purpose.

Purpose is what motivates us to do something. One dimension of socio-cultural analysis is to explore the 'why' of people participating in activities with others. This sounds straightforward, but we often join in with activities when we are not quite sure what it is we are doing. People join a crowd to see what is going on; children join in household chores and might insist on taking hold of a broom to sweep the floor. They see that this activity involves moving the brush around, but they do not necessarily understand the adult's purpose is to collect dust into a pan and put it in the bin. With this in mind, if we are able to extend and share our understandings of purpose and participation, we are more likely to deliver effective dual-focused activities for parents and their children.

To put the above into a research context, when we are selecting settings or participants to study, preliminary exploration of people's objectives and aims is important. We need to check our understandings of what it is we are investigating and why. As researchers it is important to be open to the possibility that we may have labelled things incorrectly by mistaking one thing for another, thereby mixing two groups together. Or we may have seen things as separate when they are bound together, or failed to see that something has distinct and separate aspects. Consider the following two statements by group leaders:

> *Statement 1*
> This group is good in that parents are used to the routine and they do sit with their children and join in. Sometimes it is difficult to do this. We have talked about putting cushions out to encourage the parent to get down to the children's level. (Practitioner interview)
>
> *Statement 2*
> We are not involved in advising or educating, but the group does provide an environment for parents to share ideas about children's development. We predominantly encourage free play–encouraging children to play with their peers and not to be reliant on adult intervention to provide stimulation. (Practitioner questionnaire)

These contrasting statements from different group leaders illustrates a

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tension between parents and practitioners that commonly arises when the stated purpose of the group is to promote 'better interaction in play' but parents see the group as an opportunity to promote the growing independence of their children. These comments also reflect how different working practices can exist between people, even within the same group location.

By taking time to check the purpose of activities such as dual-focused groups (supporting parents and children) we are more likely to avoid what philosophers refer to as a 'category error'. Through exploration of stakeholders purposes we are able to focus on the intent behind parents and practitioners coming together to support children. We urge those working in such situations and researching into these environments that support children's early learning to critically examine the motivations of those participating by asking what it is they are aiming to achieve. In this chapter we compare the motives of some of the different stakeholders who have a say in what takes place in different activities involving parents. We wish to show how different motives may give rise to tensions between those participating in partnerships between professionals and parents.

Governments' purposes: evidence of the importance of parents and the home learning environment

Many governments around the world have demonstrated an increasing commitment to parent partnerships in early education in the past 20 years. In England, the New Labour government (2007–10) committed millions of pounds to develop Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs). This increasing commitment to supporting and working with parents was premised on emerging research on the impact that early education and parents have on children's later achievements, combined with the political capital of being seen to do something to support families and reduce child poverty (Needham, 2007)

Research data collected in the USA as part of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) sampled the children of 12,686 women every two years from 1986 (Guo and Mullan-Harris, 2000). The data indicated that the most significant factor in predicting later achievement was 'cognitive stimulation in the home' which related to the availability of books, magazines, mother reading to child, record or tape player being available and being taken on museum visits. This relates very closely to longitudinal research in the UK on a cohort of more than 2,000 children studied as part of the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) (Sammons et al., 2007) that identified parental qualifications and the home learning

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environment (HLE) as far stronger influences on attainment than gender, socio-economic status, English as an additional language or free school meals. The EPPE study concluded that what parents do is more important than who they are (Sammons et al., 2002).

A similar longitudinal study of children's progress through the education system in New Zealand (Biddulph et al., 2003: 140) drew similar conclusions, suggesting that a family's influence on the child's educational achievement is not as clearly predicted by parents' socio-economic status as by family practices: 'Family processes which encourage positive interactions with others, and also provide a range of quality experiences and activities within and beyond the home enhance children's achievement. The influences of home processes are particularly evident in children's achievement in mathematics and literacy'.

As more government-funded activities with parents began, smaller more qualitative and detailed studies were published which examined projects that worked with families in more depth. These also highlighted how much some families benefited from advice and support particularly in regard to the amount and quality of parent–child interactions (Weinberger et al., 2005).

Galboda-Liyanage et al. (2003) reported that their sample of 21 mothers, on average, classified and quantified their joint activity with their children as 'play' 15 minutes, 'educational' 21 minutes and 'other' seven minutes on a particular day of study. These studies offer an insight into the variations in how mothers perceived they spent their time with their children.

In Australia, 'soft entry' activities such as supported playgroups are funded by the government within a prevention and early intervention policy framework. The aim is to increase opportunities for young children to engage in early childhood learning opportunities and to support parents through increased access to social support and other community networks. According to the New South Wales (NSW)[1] Department of Community Services (2009b), the aim of prevention and early intervention strategies is to positively influence children's, parents' or families' behaviours in order to reduce the risk or ameliorate the effects of unfavourable social or physical environments. The goal of these strategies is to effect change so that protective factors outweigh risk factors and build resilience. It is argued that preventative programmes and interventions that offer social support to parents and quality learning environments to children, such as supported playgroups, are protective for families.

Thus for many governments the purpose of offering funding for promoting shared learning activity is about helping children to make a good start educationally and in particular about reducing inequality. That is, their intent is to help children from disadvantaged homes succeed by addressing challenging circumstances early, thus saving money in the long term.

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This might be considered a worthy aim but may give rise to problems because while parents are likely to share the purpose of wanting their child to make a good start in life, they are unlikely to want to be labelled or treated like failing parents. Labelling communities and the people that live within them as at risk or vulnerable is problematic and is the subject of a growing body of literature that critiques the prevailing prevention discourse (Carrington, 2002; France and Utting, 2005; Murray, 2004; Vandenbroeck et al., 2009b). However, while government funding continues to flow to early intervention and prevention activities, it is incumbent on those that implement them to explore and understand the meanings of these groups in the lives of those who participate in them (Jackson, 2010).

Key idea: a deficit model of parents support

The evidence from larger-scale studies related to the lasting impact of the home learning environment has clearly been instrumental in garnering political interest in parental support. However, there is a danger when developing parenting interventions that some parents will be viewed as deficient in relation to interacting with children. A deficit model (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003), similar to a medical model, labels a group as inherently deficient in some way compared with other groups. These models are rightly considered problematic when they fail to question whether the deficit is with the individual or with the situation that they are expected to fit into: 'society generates certain definitions of what the normal individual should be like, and those who fail to meet these definitions may become stigmatised' (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003: 374).

Deficit models are also problematic in that they often present convenient labels that when applied to individuals lead to prejudiced stereotyped packages of support being offered. Further, deficit models often attribute problems to a single factor and ignore a range of other related contributing issues.

Nutbrown et al. (2005) identified the issue of deficit in regard to family literacy, suggesting that the term 'deficit approach' is not helpful because people need to recognise and acknowledge an area where they need to learn. 'Problems arise if differences (e.g. in literacy practices) are uncritically viewed as deficits, if deficits are imputed to learners without their assent, if deficits are exaggerated or if deficits are seen as all that learners have (i.e. their cultural strengths are devalued)' Nutbrown et al., 2005: 27).

In Australia Biddulph et al. (2003) identify difference theory as an alternative to a deficit approach. This theory accepts the need to address the issue but does not locate the problem within the child or family. Rather it seeks to identify how institutionalised systems need to take more account of cultural heritage interacting with dominant discourses (Biddulph et al., 2003).

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Bruner (2006) suggested that any deficit is not within the child or culture per se but that culture becomes part of the identity of the child very quickly. A potential deficit is created where the learning culture of schooling is not made equally accessible and transparent to those from different home-learning cultures. If educational outcomes such as the early acquisition of literacy and numeracy concepts remain as cornerstone targets for young children, and the means of acquiring these are controlled by books and styles of communication more suited to white middle-class children, then other sections of society will continue to be disadvantaged (Bruner 2006). Evidence shows that to sustain parent and child participation it is important that professionals avoid creating a sense of deficit within the contexts in which they work with families (Parents as Partners in Early Learning, 2007; Weinberger et al., 2005; Whalley and the Pen Green Team, 2007).

Recommended further reading

Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J. and Biddulph, C. (2003) *The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement in New Zealand*: Best Evidence Synthesis.

A moral and rights-based approach

In this book we are focusing on arguments that assert the rights of children and their parents to respect, dignity and equal opportunity to participate in society. We argue for a culture of parent partnerships based on a universal right to education in the broadest sense. We argue for education as the process that enables individuals' continued access to learning and personal development.

We believe that support for parents should, wherever possible, be framed in an egalitarian model because it is not just knowledge that is important but also the nature of the learning process. The learning process should promote positive attitudes to living and learning. It should promote learning as joyful, communal and playful, motivated by a desire to learn. In the remainder of this chapter we examine some of the evidence that illustrates not just that programmes of this sort are effective but why this might be so.

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Professionals' purposes: cultures of practice in different countries – examples of supportive parent partnerships

There are many similarities between international service provision models in which parents and children participate jointly examples of which include the Australian supported playgroup (Jackson, 2010), parent and toddler groups (Needham, 2011), Room to Play (Evangelou et al., 2006) and the Family Room (Whalley et al., 2007) in the UK; child and parent meeting places in Belgium (Vandenbroeck et al., 2009), Italy (Musatti et al., 2009) and France (Service Petite Enfance, 2008); and the Norwegian Åpen Barnehage (open kindergarten) drop-in centres (Alvestad, 2009). All of these provide services for young children and parents together, and are led by early childhood educators or other professional staff. While there are also more parenting-focused courses such as the Webster Stratton Programme and the Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) 'The Incredible Years' (Needham and Jackson, 2014), the following provides a discussion of dual-focused models that offer published and accessible evaluations of their approaches to working with parents and children jointly.

Australia

Supported playgroup provision in Australia is widespread and is outcomes focused.

The model offers parents opportunities to meet and share their experiences, and offers children opportunities to play, learn and socialise. Supported playgroups are facilitated by early childhood teachers, community workers or allied health professionals with the aim of:

- stimulating children's development through quality early childhood experiences;
- increasing parental knowledge related to child development, early childhood learning and positive guidance skills;
- facilitating social networks;
- providing access to information and resources; and
- providing opportunities for the identification of developmental problems and referral to appropriate services

The model is based substantially on evidence that emphasises that programmes that reduce parental social isolation through increased social support and provide children with stimulating play environments, promote children's positive developmental outcomes (Department of

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Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009a, 2009b;). Further, at the time of Jackson's (2010) study implementation of supported playgroups was set within a political context in which the child protection system was being reformed in NSW (Wood, 2008). With extensive examination across the continuum of preventative, secondary and tertiary interventions, there is now a greater emphasis on universal strategies that provide preventative, family-focused support for vulnerable children and families (Higgins and Katz, 2008; Holzer et al., 2006; Wood, 2008). These strategies include the implementation of preventative models that reduce risk factors for neglect and maltreatment of children. Supported playgroups are considered one such model.

England

Parent and toddler groups such as Room to Play are widespread in England. An evaluative study conducted on Room to Play identifies similar benefits for parents and children to those found in the Australian evaluations, although there is a particular focus on prescribed curriculum content (Evangelou et al., 2006).

In relation to groups that involve parents learning with their children, there are a number of organisations in the UK that have led in developing thinking about the delivery of such shared learning groups. Pen Green, Thomas Coram and the Peers Early Education Partnership are examples where children's centres' own experience of provision has developed into training programmes and literature on working with parents (Evangelou et al., 2007; Pugh, 2002; Whalley and the Pen Green Team, 2007). These organisations have developed models where practitioners, parents and children stay together in sessions and are encouraged to share experiences and learn from each other. It is interesting to note that these organisations often focus relationship development around understanding the child's cognitive as well as social and emotional development, which was identified as being lacking in the organisation of some of the groups in an evaluation of children's centres in England (Anning et al., 2005). We have also drawn attention to the use of co-researching with parents, which is a feature of practice at Pen Green in Chapter 2.

This chapter has already drawn extensively from the limited literature related to working jointly alongside parents. The Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) is also one of the few programmes which has published a systematic evaluation of its impact on a community. The PEEP potentially offers scope for each of the categories derived from Epstein's model: parents as students in a lecture scenario, learning through osmosis in a play scenario, as understudies participating in professionally led

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activities, as partners in joint activity and as managers of a play scenario consulting professionals.

In the PEEP parents retain primary responsibility, practitioners receive some training and guidance and the programme draws on the ORIM framework (Nutbrown et al., 2005). This framework encourages parents to reflect on how everyday occurrences provide 'opportunities' to:

- develop key activities;
- recognise and celebrate children's achievements;
- interact, support, endorse and challenge; and
- model activities for children.

The PEEP project pays particular attention to pre-reading skills around story and rhyme sharing, but suggests applying the ORIM framework to a wider variety of activities supporting language and learning. The PEEP began with a cluster of groups in Oxford and offered the two core elements of group time and home visiting. These were split into Early PEEP age groups (0–2s) and Foundation PEEP for children aged 3 and 4 (Evangelou et al., 2007; PEEP, 2008). The PEEP's group sessions included Circle Time, Talking Time (discussion among parents), Story Time, Book Sharing, Borrowing Time and suggestions for games and activities to do at home.

Evaluations of the core PEEP groups (Evangelou et al., 2007) demonstrated that the PEEP programme made significant impacts on the rating of adult child interactions and on a range of literacy skills. Evangelou et al. (2007) also identify an effect on a wider community space including those not attending sessions, suggesting the importance of outreach work, influence through pre-schools, schools and word of mouth. PEEP has been delivering training to groups involved in working with parents and young children since 2004 (PEEP, 2008).

The 'Share a learning' project run by ContinYou and funded by Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) was originally focused on schools offering activities for parents to try at home with their children. This project was extended to foundation stage classes in 2002 and was positively evaluated (Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum, 2004) with regard to the provision of quality materials for use at home to support learning. The evaluation suggested that children benefited greatly from being part of Share. Because the materials were good, children had fun, enhanced their learning and added to their play repertoire. 'Parents saw that Share had a positive impact on their children's basic and social skills, and on their disposition to learn' (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004: 12). The report recommended more training for staff and the development of models that include children, parents and practitioners together in order

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to develop greater awareness of the style of conducting activities with children.

Professionals delivering dual-focused groups are faced with making difficult decisions on the balance of approaches to adopt: how much guidance to offer, how to offer guidance, whether to concentrate on supporting the parent or the child. The importance of offering support for parents' self-esteem, emotional well-being and bonding with their children are clearly important and connected issues (Jackson, 2006). The following chapters in this book will examine ways of addressing these various issues in more detail.

Parents' purposes

As we have already outlined, it is important to identify what parents are looking for when they bring their child to a shared learning group. Failing to recognise these purposes will lead to communication difficulties and a low take-up of the service offered. In the final section of this chapter we illustrate a parent's perspective.

Attendance at shared learning or dual-focused groups is entirely voluntary for most families, although some might be encouraged or compelled to attend by other professionals such as social workers. Grimshaw and Maguire (1998) identified that half of the parents they surveyed wanted to access a parenting programme before their child reached the age of three, although they also identified that parents needed programmes to be relevant to their own children and that parents adapted and modified what they received to their fit own perceived needs (Grimshaw and Maguire, 1998). The following exemplar vignette offers one parent's perspective on what attending a group with their child meant to them.

Case study: Liz, parent

It was June, winter had really set in and it was freezing cold. My sister said 'Come along to the playgroup, it's in the hall on Monday morning. It's great. There are lots of toys and there's morning tea.' I was hesitant to go because I didn't really feel like talking to anyone. I had just separated from my husband and I had moved my two young children from the city to be near my family.

I felt horrible, displaced, like being in a whirlwind. My whole world was upside down and I didn't know where to begin reforming my life. I was having a very hard time with my 22-month-old son who would not stop crying. He was not talking and was unable to communicate what was wrong. I didn't want to go to a playgroup and have others see how badly

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behaved my son was. I felt responsible for how he was turning out and felt like I was failing as a parent. I also had a 3-year-old daughter, however, who needed to play with other children, so I decided to go to playgroup.

I walked into the hall and felt at ease straight away. It was cheery and warm with puzzles, books, dolls houses, bikes, cars, blocks, slippery dips, painting and craft activities which were very inviting to children. There was also coffee, raisin toast and fruit which was very comforting for tired parents. I immediately felt welcomed by the women running the playgroup; I felt support but not threatened or judged. I could tell that the women were there to support me as a parent as much as they were there to support the children.

Every Monday I went to the playgroup to see people I now viewed as my friends. I felt the group kept me going throughout the week and I gained a lot of comfort from talking to other mothers and the staff. Slowly I started reaching out for help and telling others that I wasn't coping as a parent. As the weeks progressed my son was still crying a lot and unable to talk. He did not want to interact with others and was drawing away from me. I knew there was something wrong and I felt helpless.

One day at playgroup I saw an advertisement for early childhood developmental screening, so I discussed my concerns about my son with the facilitators. They arranged for a play-based assessment to be carried out with him during a playgroup session and I began to realise how useful this supported playgroup was to me. It had connected me with early childhood educators who had linked me to intervention specialists, speech and occupational therapists and other allied health professionals. I also had convenient access to a broad range of information and resources in one place.

I had found a great pathway where everyone linked up to provide the best service possible for my child. I did not have to do all of the running around to find the services; they were all talking to each other for the benefit of my child. Within a few months my son was formally diagnosed with high functioning autism and I realised that the playgroup had helped me receive support and access services easily when they were needed, not when it was too late.

This vignette was drawn directly from the transcript of a public talk that a mother gave about her experiences at an Australian playgroup. She gave permission for her story to be told as part of Jackson's (2010) research study and reiterated that joining the playgroup had been one of the best decisions she had ever made.

A major aim of the study from which this vignette is taken was to identify key attributes of effective supported playgroups that were successfully engaging families with young children (Jackson, 2010). Parent support emerged as a major component of all three groups with parents, facilitators and other stakeholders all reporting its significance. Importantly, the multifaceted nature of support in this context was evident

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throughout the data and eight categories emerged from the data analysis process which shed light on what research participants perceived and experienced as parent support: friendship and social network support; relational support; peer support; emotional support; parenting role support; information and resource support; 'circle of care' support and multidisciplinary support.

A similar in-depth study of 19 women in the UK explored the reasons why some women did not take up early interventions for their children (Barlow et al., 2004). The researchers outlined the following seven factors in the women's choices; they:

- did not agree with the professional who had referred them to the early intervention service;
- were not motivated by the way the service was presented;
- felt they had other more pressing needs;
- did not feel what was on offer was appropriate to their needs;
- did not feel comfortable sharing personal information with professionals; and
- felt they already had the support they needed from other formal or informal services.

The tensions identified by the women in this study may help to explain why in England there are many concerns about the take-up of early years services, particularly by families from disadvantaged groups with children aged under 3 years old. Smith et al. (2009) showed that although the take-up of free childcare places was high where information was carefully targeted, only 41 per cent of those surveyed used the other types of service offered by the delivery centres. This suggests that persuading many target families to participate in parent and toddler groups might be problematic, an issue which is developed further in the following sections.

The limited literature on parent and child shared provision suggests that this type of service is very popular with clients. From the perspective of existing users, the research also shows good levels of communication between parent and practitioner stakeholders. Following experience in peer consulting on the development of Sure Start services in Birmingham (UK) in the late 1990s, Wathall (2003) identified a number of parents that perceived the need for more parent and toddler provision. However, she also found a lack of information and awareness of what was actually available (Wathall, 2003). She writes that at the age of 37 as a first-time parent she found parenting very hard in terms of knowing what to do and coping physically and emotionally with her changed role and new isolation, despite attending an antenatal group and reading lots of information.

Similarly Anning et al. (2005) identified parents reporting that they valued practitioners who established positive, respectful relationships

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with them and their children. They valued services that provided opportunities for children to learn and socialise and services that enabled them to enjoy activities with their children. They preferred to access advice about parenting in a non-stigmatised setting and valued services giving them the chance to make friends. This enabled them to move on and set up their own networks of support.

Sure Start children's centre services in England have usually offered universal provision, that is, to anyone that wishes to access them, within a defined area. They are intended to be non-stigmatising services, therefore a range of parenting models are supported and this matches the type of provision many parents prefer (Anning et al., 2005). The models were intended to promote a positive self-image of parents as proactive and not reliant on professionals. The participation of a professional leader in such groups potentially offered greater scope to include vulnerable parents and to identify and support parenting needs in contrast to informal community-led groups. In practice, balancing different needs may sometimes be difficult to achieve and practitioners may have needed to juggle a range of parents' wishes for greater and lesser guidance (Wheeler and Connor, 2006).

Brooker (2002) compared teachers' and parents' perspectives on pedagogy as a group of children started in a school Reception class. She highlighted the differences between teacher's and some parent's attitudes to play in the curriculum. Brooker suggested that schools might do more to make their own pedagogic beliefs clear to parents and to find out more about parents' pedagogic beliefs. While Brooker's comments relate to induction into school, similar tensions between practitioners' and parents' perspectives are also visible in the writing of the Pen Green team. In relation to supporting parents in pre-school sessions Whalley and the Pen Green Team set out a model of effective pedagogical strategies:

> Staff at staff meetings extended their understanding of subtle intervention through discussion of Bruner's concept of 'scaffolding learning' (Bruner 1977), Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and Bruce's concept of 'match plus one' (Bruce, 1977). We shared the view with parents that an overzealous focus on teaching could inhibit the children's learning. What worked best for children was an approach that combined observation, subtle intervention and reflection. (Whalley and the Pen Green Team, 2007: 72)

Lareau (1997) presents a valuable insight into the nature of parent–school partnerships in the USA. Comparing two schools with contrasting middle-class and working-class catchment areas she draws attention to the comparatively less frequent and shorter spoken interactions between staff and parents in the working-class context. Lareau suggests that middle-

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class parents may have more flexibility and educational experience, enabling more comfortable connections with professional staff. Similarly, Reay (1998) also explored the differences in approach of 33 mothers from different social-class backgrounds supporting their children at two London primary schools. She pointed to a reciprocity between middle-class homes and primary schooling suggesting that the middle-class nature of schooling supports the cultural capital of middle-class homes to a greater extent than working-class homes and vice versa.

The three studies from Brooker, Lareau and Reay are helpful in identifying the space in which misalignments potentially occur between home and school cultures. These studies also alert us to the need to be inclusive in day-to-day practices. Dual-focused contexts are not necessarily the same as school situations because of the mixture of professionals facilitating the sessions. Therefore, class and role markers may be less in evidence in these contexts, particularly as services are targeted jointly at parents and children. The issue of bridging language and learning differences is an area where the study of dual-focused groups has potential to shine more light. The development of parent and child learning groups represents the type of activity identified by both Lareau and Brooker which might help to inform parents and practitioners about the type of expectations that they each have. Groups represent an important opportunity to learn more about expectations of parental partnership at a stage when educational subject knowledge is less important and when relationships might between parent and practitioner can be more equal.

Reflective activities: developing a working culture

This chapter explored some of the evidence available in the literature that shows that shared learning activities in early education can make a significant impact on children's lives. We have also suggested that realising these benefits might be difficult to attain in practice. Developing positive trusting relationships with parents and carers is the key to achieving this and requires us to examine our own attitudes and the ways in which we consciously and subconsciously present ourselves.

1. Identify a time when you felt that your intentions were misunderstood. How did your actions contribute to that misunderstanding. Can you remember how that felt?
2. What steps could your team take to present itself to parents and practitioners? How could your team reflect on the way it is perceived by parents?
3. Reflect on what Liz, in this chapter's vignette, gained from her contact with the parent and child group. Consider how you might have responded to her.

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Note

1. The state of New South Wales (NSW) is one of six states and two territories in Australia.

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