Sue Dockett
Wilfried Griebel
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Families and Transition to School

Springer

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 21

Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is, essentially a Western view of childhood, preschool education and school education.

It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
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The series covers theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series also covers a broad range of countries, including majority poor countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies, will also be examined. However, the focus is critical and international (not Western-centric).

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Families and Transition to School

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Contents

Contributors

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Cheryl (Jane) Anderson is a proud Kamilaroi woman. Presently Jane works as an Aboriginal Project Officer for the Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) in Sydney, Australia. Jane has been supporting her local community in this role for over ten years and continues to develop her understanding of the diversity and complexity of issues facing Aboriginal individuals and families and to pursue her long-standing interest in Aboriginal health. Her role has varied over that time with Jane being instrumental in participant recruitment, administration, home visiting and community liaison work along with data collection across three longitudinal studies, including Gudaga Goes to School. Jane lives with her partner and their two children. She has resided in the local area for over 30 years. Her local knowledge and dedication to her community make her an invaluable asset to the Gudaga studies. Jane, a member of the Board of Directors of Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation (an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service provider), takes her responsibilities very seriously. She successfully juggles her ongoing community commitments with family responsibilities while always finding time to support her children's sporting endeavours.

Johanna Backhaus was originally educated as a primary school teacher and certified in intercultural pedagogy. She is currently a research assistant in the Institute for Primary School Education, University of Cologne, Germany. Johanna started her academic career in a North Rhine-Westphalia-funded research project at the University of Münster. In 2010 she started working in the education ministry-funded research project "WirKt" at the University of Cologne. Her main research area is early childhood education with a special focus on the transition from early childhood centres to school. In 2011 she received a fellowship at the "Research and Study Program on Education in Early Childhood", founded by Robert Bosch Foundation, which enabled – among various other opportunities – a research stay at the College of Education, University of Otago, and several visits to early childhood centres and a primary school in New Zealand. She is currently finishing her doctoral project, which deals with pedagogical documentation in the transition from early childhood centres to primary school.

Nathalie Bigras is professor in the Department of Didactics at the University of Quebec in Montreal where she has worked since completing her PhD in psychology in 2001. Her research focuses on the effects of early childhood educational quality on children's development. She also investigates predictors of quality, in particular in programme evaluation of initial training in ECE college programmes and aspects of professional training which sustain quality in home childcare. She is the scientific director of the Educational Quality in Early Educational Contexts (childcare and kindergarten) research group, a multidisciplinary and multi-university group supported by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et culture.

Andrea Bogatz was educated as an educationalist and certified in pedagogy and is currently a research assistant in the Institute for Primary School Education, University of Cologne, Germany. She started her career as an educational assistant in several areas of social pedagogy. She continued her academic work in a research project at the University of Cologne. This project "WirKt" is funded by the education ministry. Her main research area is early childhood education and the transition from early childhood centres to school. In her doctoral project, she focuses on the collaboration between early childhood centres and primary schools during the phase of transition. In 2012, Andrea received a fellowship at the "Research and Study Program on Education in Early Childhood" from the Robert Bosch Foundation.

Elizabeth Comino is an associate professor, Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity, UNSW, Australia, and is the founding research leader for the Gudaga Research Program. She has an overarching interest in research methods including cohort studies, record linkage and inequalities in health and is interested in understanding access to primary health care, disparities in health care and interventions to reduce inequalities.

Graham Daniel is a lecturer in educational psychology and child development at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia. He has a background in primary

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Katey De Gioia has recently taken a position as the early childhood teacher programme manager for Goodstart Early Learning NSW and ACT. Prior to this she was a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She lectured in both undergraduate and postgraduate professional experience units where pre-service teachers are placed across prior-to-school and school settings. Katey's research interests include transition into prior-to-school and school settings, working in partnership with families from immigrant and refugee backgrounds and engaging with practitioner enquiry to create educational change. In her spare time, Katey likes to bake desserts.

Sue Dockett is professor in early childhood education at Charles Sturt University, Albury, Australia. Sue has researched in the area of educational transitions for many years. She continues this focus with current projects exploring pedagogies of educational transition, continuity and change at times of educational transition, curriculum connections and strategies to support positive transitions. Other areas of research interest include children's play and mathematics.

Majdah Dogan née Tahan, was educated as a primary and secondary teacher and finished her first state examination at the University of Cologne in 2013. She was educated in German, English, mathematics and theology. Majdah is currently a research assistant in the Institute for Primary School Education, University of Cologne, Germany. In 2011, Majdah received a full scholarship from the Cusanuswerk Studienförderung. She completed several internships as part of training, most notably at an American International School in Tucson, Arizona. Majdah loves teaching and early education. In her final state examination, she investigated the process of transitioning from kindergarten to the primary school among immigrant children, drawing on her own personal experience. Shortly after her graduation, she started to work as a research associate in the project WirKt, a project in which she has been involved since 2011 as a student assistant, during which she obtained valuable insight and experience in research methodology. In order to complete her teacher training in Germany, Majdah is currently completing her traineeship in a primary school.

Wendy Goff is a lecturer from the University of Southern Queensland. Her current research interests include adult interaction and the implications of this interaction for children's learning, supporting mathematics learning across and between different contexts and the transition to school. Wendy shares her life with her four children, Lisa, Bradley, Joshua and Jacob, and their cat Yaya Touré.

Rebekah Grace is a senior researcher and vice chancellor's innovation fellow in the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University. Rebekah has published within the disability, education, health and psychology fields. Her research is always focused on understanding and addressing the service and support needs of vulnerable children and their families. In recent years, much of her work has been conducted in partnership with Aboriginal communities. Rebekah also has a keen interest in understanding children's perspectives and how to meaningfully engage children and young people in decision making and policy debate. Life beyond her research is greatly enriched by a love of music and parenting her two teenage boys.

Wilfried Griebel is a senior researcher at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) in Munich, Germany. Together with Renate Niesel, his main work has been transition research and development of the IFP transition model for educational transitions and its implementation in national and international early childhood education programmes. He co-constructed an EU curriculum "Transition and Multilingualism" for children and parents with migrant backgrounds entering the school system. Building on that, research on refugee and asylum-seeking children and their families in several European countries is his current interest.

Petra Hanke after teacher training for primary and secondary schools, received her PhD at the University of Leipzig in the field of didactics of teaching German. Within the scope of habilitation, she carried out a long-term study on the effects of several didactical principles of linguistical ways of learning how to read and write. Petra Hanke has taught at several universities in Germany. After her postdoctoral qualification, she worked at the University in Vechta before she became a professor at the University in Münster. Since 2010, Petra Hanke has been a professor at the University of Cologne in the Institute for Primary School Education.

Linda J. Harrison is professor of early childhood education and associate dean of research for the Faculty of Arts and Education, Charles Sturt University, Australia. Linda's research and writing focuses on very young children's experiences of childcare/early education; transitions; child socio-emotional, cognitive and speech--language development; processes within services that underpin the provision of high-quality education and care; and new methodologies for researching these issues. She contributed to the design of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children for the Australian Government Department of Social Services and draws on this very large dataset in much of her work.

Catherine Kaplun is a research fellow working at the Translational Research and Social Innovation (TReSI) group based at the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, Sydney, Australia. Her initial work with children and families in early childhood settings and primary schools developed her passion for research in the area of transition to school, particularly focusing on children's experiences. Her honours research focused on a child with specific language impairment and feelings about school, social interactions and adjustment to school. Her doctorate extended

on the experiences of transition to school for families and children and developed a greater awareness of issues of equity in health and education from a human rights perspective through her research work in disadvantaged communities. Cathy was involved in a longitudinal research study focusing on the health, development and education of Australian urban Aboriginal children and their families at UNSW. She is continuing her research work at the interface of health and education with an emphasis on translational research in her present role at TReSI. Personally Cathy is kept busy with an active and evolving household consisting of her husband and four children (and friends) and the menagerie of entertaining animals: Cody (labradoodle), Nala (Korat) and Chips and Chops (rabbits) along with various native Australian animals and birds that also call their bushland dwelling home.

Lynn Kemp currently is professor of nursing at University of Western Sydney, conducting nursing and community health research. Prior to that appointment, Lynn was associate professor and director of CHETRE, a research centre that is part of the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity, University of New South Wales; Population Health, South Western Sydney Local Health District; and the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research. Lynn holds an appointment as a visiting senior research fellow, Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, King's College London, and is a member of the English National Nursing Research Unit Advisory Group. Lynn has developed a significant programme of community-based children and young people's research that includes world and Australian-first intervention studies funded by major national grants (Miller Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MECSH) study, the Bulundidi Gudaga trial, the right@home randomised trial, the Volunteer Family Connect trial and the Football United trial). Lynn now leads an international programme of translational research, studying the implementation of these effective interventions at population scale worldwide. Lynn is actively engaged with the development of early childhood and primary health-care services and policy. She is a member of the Program Advisory Committee of Good Beginnings Australia and was an invited expert participant at the Good Beginnings Australia Board of Directors strategic planning meeting in 2014 and an invited speaker at the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies in 2014. Recognised as an international expert in primary health care for children, Lynn has given invited keynote presentations in many venues in Australia and overseas.

Anna Kienig is assistant professor in developmental psychology and early childhood education within the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Bialystok, Poland. She teaches in a range of subjects including child development, preschool curriculum, learning and teaching and professional practice and has ongoing research interests in the fields of early childhood education, social development and transitions in the early years. Anna is widely published in both Polish and English, with her latest edited book (with Kay Margetts) entitled *International Perspectives on Transition to School: Reconceptualising Beliefs, Policy and Practice*.

Jenny Knight has spent the past ten years as senior research fellow at UNSW, Australia, working on the Gudaga suite of research studies. This unique opportunity to connect with the families in the local Aboriginal community of south-west Sydney motivated her to return to study, and she is now working towards a BPsy(Hons) degree at Macquarie University. She and her husband are founders of REECH Cambodia, a not-for-profit that resources, educates and equips agencies working with disadvantaged and disabled children, teenagers and young adults in Cambodia. She shares life with her husband James Smith, their son Elliott and two mad schnauzers.

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Elizabeth Murray is associate head of school in the School of Teacher Education and lecturer in early childhood and primary education in the Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University. She has a research background in children's transition and adjustment to school as well as parent-teacher partnerships and collaboration across the preschool-school transition. Her research focuses on children's emotional well-being and coping strategies; the classroom support that teachers provide for children's adjustment and learning; and the extent to which learning readiness, prior-to-school experiences and child and family characteristics influence children's literacy and numeracy achievement in the first year of primary school. Elizabeth's recent research has drawn on data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children to examine student-teacher relationships and self-concept in early schooling, as well as patterns of parent-teacher communication across the transition to school.

Bob Perry is recently retired from paid university work; emeritus professor at Charles Sturt University, Albury-Wodonga, Australia; and director of Peridot Education Pty Ltd. Bob's current research interests include powerful mathematics ideas in preschool and the first years of school; ethical tensions in researching with children; transition to school, with particular emphasis on starting school within families with complex support needs; preschool education in remote Indigenous communities; and evaluation of educational programmes. Bob shares life with his partner, Sue Dockett, and their son, Will.

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Susanne Rogers is a retired educator who worked as an early years educator, project manager and educator coach with prior-to-school and school-based educators. She has recently completed doctoral studies in the transition to school of children and families living in complex circumstances and the establishment of family-educator partnerships during this period.

Marc Schulz has been a professor of sociology of early childhood and family at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences since 2015. He has been dedicating his

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Andrea Schuster is a researcher at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) in Munich, Germany. Andrea started as an early childhood educator and is qualified in management of educational institutions and then in transition research. Since 2014, Andrea has been working in a municipal point of reference for parents seeking advice on institutions of early childhood education as well as a researcher in the IFP. Her areas of expertise and research interests are linguistic education and literacy, quality of interaction and educational transitions in early childhood.

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Cen Wang is a research fellow at the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE), Charles Sturt University. She obtained her PhD in educational psychology from Ball State University, USA. Dr. Wang's research focuses on children's academic and socio-emotional adjustment and identifies personal and contextual factors that influence children's learning, motivation and socio-emotional wellbeing. She also has expertise in advanced quantitative analysis, especially in analysing longitudinal data using structural equation modelling and latent growth curve modelling.

Natasha West is a proud Wiradjuri woman from Gilgandra (Dubbo) NSW. Her Aboriginality is very important to her and has been the catalyst for her pursuing a career in Aboriginal health. Natasha is currently working as an Aboriginal Project Officer for CHETRE in Sydney. Her current role consists of collecting data at 6 monthly intervals across three longitudinal studies including Gudaga Goes to School. Natasha has completed her Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Aboriginal Health Worker). Natasha worked previously for four years as an Aboriginal Health Worker for Sydney South West Area Health Services on Bulundidi Gudaga. While in this role she enjoyed being able to support the community she lived and worked in. Natasha and two of her children are participants of the Gudaga and Bulundidi Gudaga projects, allowing Natasha to develop a unique understanding of the Gudaga projects from the perspective of a parent, health worker and researcher. These valuable insights have made her

transitions into each new role easier. Personally Natasha has a love and talent for Aboriginal art and has been involved in several art projects in her community. Both Natasha and her husband have a hectic schedule raising their four children and have found a happy balance between work, home life and their sporting commitments.

Karen Wickett lectures on the BA and has master's in early childhood studies programmes, at Plymouth University, England. Originally she qualified as an NNEB and later trained as an early years teacher. Between 2003 and 2012, she worked in a Sure Start Local Programme/Children's Centre (SSCC). During 2008 and 2012, she worked part-time in the SSCC and part-time at Plymouth University. Her aim was to narrow the divide between practice and theory and the community which she worked and higher education. In 2012 she embarked on her professional doctorate in education (EdD) and successfully completed her thesis and passed her viva in 2016. Her doctorate research explored parents, ECEC practitioners and teachers' beliefs and relationships as they prepared and supported children during the transition to school. Her other research interests include outdoor learning and creativity in the early years.

Jenny Wilder has a PhD in psychology and is an associate professor in special education at the Department of Special Education at Stockholm University in Sweden and also at Mälardalen University in Sweden. Jenny's current research interests include the interaction and participation of children with severe disabilities and educational transitions of children with intellectual disabilities. Jenny shares life with her husband, Per; her two daughters, Ebba and Cornelia; and her dog, Allis.

Andreas Wildgruber is a senior researcher at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research (IFP) in Munich, Germany. His work focuses on research and professional training on early educational transitions and pedagogy in out-of-school educational settings. Andreas' further research interests include classroom quality, especially the quality of teachers' educational observations/assessments and interactions with children. Recent work was on emphasising intra-day variations, drawing attention especially to free play and meal situations.

Chapter 1
Transition to School: A Family Affair

Sue Dockett, Wilfried Griebel, and Bob Perry

1.1 Introduction

Transition is an elusive concept. Within the English language, we use the term *transition* to describe the passage from one state or stage to another – whether it be for individuals, organisations or systems – across fields as diverse as education, music, science, economics and politics. Transition in all of these areas involves the notion of change. In educational contexts, transition generally refers to the movement of children from one stage of education to another. Examples include the transition to school, transition from primary to secondary school, and the transition from school to work or tertiary study.

It is not only with English that variation in the understanding and use of the term transition is to be found. While terms such as *övergång* (Swedish), *übergang* (German), *pārejas* (Latvian), *transição* (Portugese), *transizione* (Italian) and *прелазак* (Serbian), translate to the English term *transition*, some of our colleagues note that these terms fall short of capturing the complex processes that together constitute transition experiences in education. For example, the Polish term *przejscie* translates as 'passage', though the term *adaptacja* (adaptation) is sometimes used to describe children's transition to school, even though it tends to refer to a one-way, rather than a reciprocal, process.

We highlight these variations as a way of foregrounding diverse approaches towards, and interpretations of, transition. With chapter authors drawn from several different countries and different language backgrounds, we appreciate the different

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voices and nuances used in describing the experiences of transitions. As educators, we hope this exploration can contribute to further transitions research in other contexts.

Several points can be drawn from the linguistic exercise of exploring the term *transition*, its translations and the significance of the term *transition to school*. The first is that the term often is used to refer to movement – the passage – from prior-to-school experiences to school. This sense conveys one-way, sequential movement from one stage or setting to another, often accompanied by expectations that children must adapt to the new educational environment. Secondly, the term is used widely in English-based publications, but much may be lost in translation – both by using the English term and by failing to acknowledge other terms that may provide a more nuanced perspective of educational transitions. An example of the latter is the Swedish term, *övergång*. When used as a noun, *övergång* refers to a zone or overlapping arena, an intersection with only one direction. However, when used as a verb, the term implies a back-and-forth process (Helena Ackesjö, personal communication). A similar focus comes from the Australian Aboriginal term 'fire-stick period':

> We not only use the term 'transition' which can imply a one-way journey towards something better, but also the term 'fire-stick' period (an Aboriginal term for a stick that is kept alight to ensure the availability of fire). This highlights the way in which culture is not something to be left behind, but is an integral part of lives...[Children] need to adjust to an extra range and layer of experiences, demands and expectations…the 'fire-stick' period equates with the time needed for [children and families] to learn how to navigate between their home and school cultures. (Clancy et al. 2001, p. 57)

Much of the research literature related to educational transitions emphasises the element of change – be it change of context, environment, experiences, expectations, roles, identities, and/or status – for those involved. Indeed, many of the chapters in this book draw on a range of theoretical perspectives to highlight the element of change and its centrality to educational transitions.

However, educational transition is not only characterised by change: there are also elements of continuity, as referenced by the 'fire-stick' period and the notion of overlapping contexts. Further, it is not only children who experience both continuity and change at times of educational transition. While recognising the importance of change, in this chapter we emphasise educational transitions as times of both continuity and change. From this position we explore the importance of families within educational transitions, particularly the transition to school. We do this on the basis that families provide one of the consistent contexts for children as they – and those around them – experience the transition to school.

1.2 Defining Transition

The concept of transition appears in and across many theoretical frameworks. Current perspectives draw on anthropological (Turner 1969; van Gennep 1960), sociocultural (Elder 1998; Rogoff 2003), ecological (Bronfenbrenner and Morris

2006; Weisner 1984), as well as psychological (Cowan 1991; Zittoun 2008) traditions and tenets. Each of these frameworks is utilised in the reports of research in this book.

What then do we mean by transition? Broadly, we define transition as times when 'individuals change their role in their community's structure' (Rogoff 2003, p. 150). This definition locates transitions within social and cultural contexts and highlights the interactions of individuals and institutions as sources of potential support and tension. Transitions impact on the individual and their social contexts (Beach 1999). Role changes often occur as a result of specific events – such as starting school – but also involve 'subtle, complex processes of 'becoming somebody'' (Ecclestone et al. 2010, p. 7). Integral to transitions are changes to identity, agency, role and status – a change in the 'sense of self' (Beach 1999, p. 114). When children start school, they construct their identity as school students, adopt the markers of a school student (such as the uniform and school bag), experience a change in their agency as new factors influence their actions and choices, and participate in the institutional context of school. At the same time as they construct a school identity, children retain their home identity – moving regularly between home and school identities. Families, too, undergo transitions as children start school. Parents experience a role change as they become parents of a school student; the requirements and expectations of schools often result in changes to their agency, influencing choices and actions about what can or should be done in particular circumstances. Their status within the community or educational groups may change as they respond to changed roles and expectations.

1.3 Transition in Context

Major life events provide the impetus for people to change their sense of who they are and where they belong in the world. Transitions can be times of risk, uncertainty and anxiety; they can also be times of excitement and pleasure, as well as times of mixed, sometimes conflicting, emotions. Educational transitions – particularly the transition to school – have become a feature of policy attention in many countries around the world. Primarily, the focus has been on efforts to manage or ease transition experiences (see for example, Jindal-Snape 2010; Laverick and Jalongo 2011; Perry et al. 2014). This attention is tied to broader policy agendas, such as moves to increase educational participation, promote educational outcomes and respond to concerns about educational disadvantage and exclusion. The target groups for many transition policy initiatives are those described as vulnerable or disadvantaged. For example, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (2009) has argued for increased attention to the transition to school as a strategy to improve 'educational, employment, health and wellbeing outcomes' (p. 4), 'reduce inequalities in outcomes between groups of children' (p. 6) and disrupt cycles of social and economic disadvantage.

These commitments assume that educational transitions will be problematic for some groups of children and their families and that, unless addressed, such difficulties

will be perpetuated in cycles of intergenerational disadvantage. As a consequence, policy documents tend to focus on transitions as problematic and identify specific groups in need of support (Dockett 2014; Perry 2014). Further, they emphasise the potentially negative aspects of transition, rather than the opportunities generated by new and different experiences and the possibilities of creative risk (Biesta 2006; Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group 2011). As several chapters in this book attest, it is important to critique the universality of these assumptions and to question expectations around the transition to school and the ways in which children and families manage this. In recognising the strengths of particular individuals, families, and communities, the chapters in this book move away from the deficit perspectives that drive many approaches to transition policy and instead highlight the strengths of refugee and immigrant parents (Chap. 3); parents of children with special needs (Chap. 4), and families described as 'vulnerable' or living in low socio-economic circumstances (Chaps. 5, 6, 13, 14, and 16).

1.4　Exploring Transition

In providing an overview of the chapters in the book, we explore conceptualisations of educational transition and the ways in which these are utilised by chapter authors. We follow this overview with examination of the ways in which families position themselves, or are positioned, as children make the transition to school. In concluding, we highlight the integral involvement of families in the transition to school.

Several elements contribute to conceptualisations of educational transition. These include a focus on some form of movement, identification of events that mark transition and recognition of the processes that constitute transition. Each of these is underpinned by a range of theoretical perspectives.

1.4.1　Transition as Movement

Movement is an explicit element of many educational transitions as individuals physically move between contexts, such as between an early childhood setting and school, from primary to secondary school, or from one grade to the next. Some educational transitions (sometimes described as 'transfers') are expected to occur only once and reflect the expected progression of life experiences. In this sense, the transition to school – signified by the first day of school – tends to be an age-related experience that occurs only once in a lifetime, reflecting the definition of transition as a 'passage'. Life-course theory (Elder 1998) posits such transitions as key points, associated with changes in the roles, status and identities of individuals. From this perspective, transitions are considered sequential, one-way, vertical movements. In the case of educational transitions, it is expected that transition to preschool is

followed by transition to school, transition to middle school or secondary school, transition to university or work and so on.

The timing of vertical transitions varies in different social, cultural, economic and political contexts. As chapter authors report, the age at which children start school varies, with children in Germany, Poland and Sweden typically starting school at a later age than children in England, Canada and Australia. This has implications for both the nature of experiences and the expectations associated with that transition. For example, Chap. 12 reports the strong focus on children's academic readiness for school within England as children start school at age 4, and the pressure this generates for families to ensure that their children are "ready" for school. While the Swedish parents involved in Ackesjö's study (Chap. 10) also referred to elements of school readiness as their children made the move from preschool to the preschool class, both emotional and academic attitudes were highlighted.

In contrast to vertical transitions, horizontal transitions such as the daily movements between home and school, or transitions between school and school age care, occur on a regular basis and serve to connect different spheres of interaction and influence (Kagan 1991; Lam and Pollard 2006). While much of the international research focus on educational transitions addresses vertical transitions – for example, starting school – and the significance of this for later educational engagement (Dunlop and Fabian 2007; Perry et al. 2014; Pianta and Cox 1999), there is growing attention to the horizontal transitions experienced by children and the adults who support them (Hughes et al. 2010; Johansson 2007; Petriwskyj et al. 2005).

Horizontal transitions occur as people are simultaneously members of more than one community of practice, conceptualised by Wenger (1998) as groups of individuals participating in a communal activity, and constructing a shared identity through contributing to and experiencing the practices of that community. Moving between communities of practice requires recognition and crossing of the boundaries that separate these. In a "communities of practice" framework, transition occurs not only for the individual as they establish new identities and come to understand the new context, but also for the community itself, as new members influence practices. The same phenomenon is reported for families (Chaps. 2 and 15), as they make adjustments to their practices in response to children starting school; as parents navigate the perceived border between preschool and the preschool class in Sweden (Chap. 10); and as parents of children with intellectual disabilities work to provide a bridge between home and school environments to assist in the border crossing experiences (Chap. 4). These chapters also illustrate the ways in which horizontal and vertical transitions can occur concurrently and influence each other.

1.4.2   Events That Mark Transition

Vertical transitions may feature specific events which themselves are marked by special rites. In many instances, transition to school programs both mark the move to school and consist of events signified by special rites. In Australia, such events

include visits to the new school, purchase of the school uniform, meeting the principal and classroom teacher, and a tour of the school.

The first day of school is one event marked by special rites. Though it constitutes only one part of the transition process, the first day of school is marked by rites that hold both individual and social significance. For example, as part of the ceremonial start to school, German school starters are presented with *Schultüte*, a cone filled with sweets and/or school supplies before engaging in celebrations with family. New school students in Russia participate in *The Day of Knowledge*, the official start of the new school year, characterised by the exchange of flowers and balloons (Gessen 2012). In Australia, family traditions often include multiple photographs of the new school student in their new uniform.

Framing transition to school as a significant life event has prompted several researchers to draw on van Gennep's (1960) anthropological reports of 'rites of passage' and associated rituals. His structural model of transition rites included three phases: the preliminal, where the individual separates from their present status; the liminal, in-between phase, where the individual is between states; and the post-liminal phase where the new status is incorporated. Using a rites of passage framework, starting school involves children separating from prior-to-school experiences, waiting to start school (often during the summer holidays), and then joining a school community (Ackesjö 2013; Garpelin 2014). The various rites inherent in the transition process act as a social markers – recognising the movement of individuals from one status to another.

The liminal phase – described by Turner (1969, p. 95) as a time of being "betwixt and between" – aligns with the notion of a bridge between contexts (Huser et al. 2016; Lam and Pollard 2006), and the processes of border crossing associated with transitions. While researchers have questioned the nature of children's experiences *on the bridge* as they wait to start school (Garpelin 2014), and examined children's learning journeys across borders (Peters 2014), the research reported in this book also considers the bridging experiences of families and their negotiations of border crossing. Chapter 10 describes the potential of borders as both barriers and meeting places – with the latter notion explored in Chap. 14's use of the Cultural Interface (Nakata 2002) framework to conceptualise the spaces where people come together. Considering transitions as processes of border crossing generates opportunities to consider the movement involved in vertical transitions (such as when children start school) as well as the web of horizontal transitions navigated by children and their families as they move between the linked contexts that characterise their lives.

The notion of rites marking change also featured in the work of Bourdieu (1991), who addressed the social function of rituals as well as the boundaries identified and crossed during transitions. In describing institutional rites, Bourdieu emphasised their separating function as they marked a fundamental division in social order, delineating those to whom the rites pertained from those to whom they were inaccessible. Bourdieu described the process of investiture, whereby the individual adopted a changed representation of him/herself and the behaviours that accompanied that changed representation. As a result of investiture, others also changed their representation of the individual and the ways they behaved towards them. When

considering transition to school, markers such as school uniform, school bag, and homework signify to children, and those around them, that they have become members of an institution. There are also marked changes for parents, as they adopt new roles and behaviours associated with being the parent of a school child and respond to the changed expectations of themselves and others.

The changes in status, identities and roles that accompany transitions are also a feature of life-course theory (Elder 1998). While recognising that individuals make a range of transitions throughout life, life-course theory highlights the importance of linked lives and social ties. Individual lives are interdependent, linked by social contexts and shared relationships. This is particularly relevant when considering the role of families within transition, as an individual transition often has implications for the experiences and relationships of others within the family. Recognition of life course perspectives generates opportunities to explore not only the experiences of children as they make the transition to school, but also the experiences of other family members. For example, Chap. 2 notes that change is stimulated for parents at times of educational transition, just as it provokes change for children, and Chap. 8 explores the role of grandparents and transition to school.

1.4.3 Processes of Transition

1.4.3.1 Proximal Processes

Life course theory links transitions with social context and social history. While history is created by the actions and interactions of individuals and groups, historical conditions – including family history – also influence children's experiences (Elder 1998). Chapter 8 examines one set of contributors to family history, reporting the influence of grandparents sharing their educational experiences. The positive reciprocal interactions between grandparents and grandchildren outlined in this chapter are framed as proximal processes – interactions that "occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time" (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006, p. 797), which contribute to family capital – a form of social capital characterised by access to intergenerational knowledge (Coleman 1988). Family capital is entwined with habitus (Bourdieu 1997), as family stories, traditions and expectations shape a set of dispositions that support particular practices and guide decision-making within families. Decisions related to educational transitions – such as school choice – are influenced by family habitus (Chaps. 6 and 9).

Attention to proximal processes and recognition of the importance of historical time connect life-course theory with bioecological approaches to the study of educational transitions. Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006) emphasises the importance of social and cultural contexts and the significance of patterns of interaction (proximal processes) among and between those involved in different contexts, over time. The best known element of bioecological theory relates to the identification of nested systems – microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems

and macrosystems – and the temporal element of transitions, reflected in reference to the chronosystem. Alongside these systems, bioecological theory emphasises the role of proximal processes and their interaction with the characteristics of individuals, including their experiences, resources, temperament and motivation, as well as their agency. Taken together, the elements of person (P) characteristics, proximal processes (P), contexts (C) and time (T), combine to form the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006), which provides the theoretical grounding for several chapters in this book: Chap. 3 examines the microsystems of family and schools and the potential mismatch between these as children from refugee and/or immigrant backgrounds make the transition to school; Chap. 11 identifies gender as a demand characteristic of individuals and explores the link between gender and expectations as children start school; Chap. 8 emphasises the contribution of grandparents to proximal processes; and Chap. 16 uses the PPCT model to analyse communication, information sharing and relationship-building between family members and educators across the transition to school.

1.4.3.2 Routines as Processes

Proponents of ecocultural theory have been critical of the broad approach of bioecological theory, arguing that the proposed web of interconnections obscures, rather than clarifies, research investigations and analyses. They advocate the adoption of ecocultural theory, which combines ecological theory and cultural perspectives (Weisner 1984). This approach regards each family as occupying an ecological niche, defined as the 'larger sociocultural environment surrounding the child and family' (Bernheimer et al. 1990, p. 223). Ecocultural theory pays particular attention to daily routines as a means of families adjusting to, and changing, their ecological niche. As a framework, ecocultural theory has been used in studies of families with children with special needs to explore the accommodations made in order to build sustainable routines which balance the needs of all family members. Chapter 4 draws on ecocultural theory to explore the ways that families adjust, assimilate and accommodate their daily lives to meet new demands as their children start school.

1.4.3.3 Transformational Processes

Rather than defining transition by the events that mark them, Cowan (1991) has argued for an approach that recognises the qualitative shift in the view of the individual, or family, and the changes of roles and relationships that accompany this, as the essence of transition:

> For a life change to be designated as transitional, it must involve a qualitative shift from the inside looking out (how the individual understands and feels about the self and the world) and from the outside looking in (reorganisation of the individual's or family's level of personal competence, role arrangements, and relationships with significant others). Passing a life marker (e.g. entering school)…does not in itself signify that a transition has been completed. (p. 5)

The changes associated with life transitions can produce a period of instability, yet, according to Cowan (1991, p. 19), 'individuals and families do not become unrecognisable' as a result of transitions. Rather, transitions amplify processes already in motion. In other words, the additional stress that may be associated with times of transition can heighten particular patterns of action and interaction with families (Dockett et al. 2011). This perspective considers both the stress and the coping models of individuals and families as key factors in transition outcomes (Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

The transformation generated by transition also features in the work of Zittoun (2008), who conceptualises transition in terms of the processes that follow a particular rupture, or disruption. According to Zittoun, transition applies to the processes that follow change, rather than to the change itself. These processes generate new ways of being, operating and interacting to meet the changed demands of the new context. In generating this new 'sense of self' (Beach 1999, p. 114), Hviid and Zittoun (2008, p. 126) note that

> A transition process always requires leaving some old conduct, ways of thinking or of defining oneself. That process of leaving behind things, relations or aspects of oneself, the dying out or loss of interests, goes hand in hand or followed by a process of move towards a new form of acting, defining or sense-meaning.

During the transition to school, children experience changes in identity, status and expectations. So too do parents experience changes, as they position themselves, and are positioned, as parents of school students. Parents and children are required to make sense of the new school contexts and their roles and places within it. It is these sense-making processes – transformational processes – that characterise many of the explorations of transition reported in this book.

1.5   Families: More Than Context

Much transitions research explores these elements of movement, events and processes as children and their families start school. While the roles of families often are recognised, there remains a heightened focus on the individual transition experiences of children. The chapters in this book aim to move beyond consideration of family as context in the transition to school, exploring the dual roles of families as they provide a sense of continuity to support children but, at same time, undergo their own transition. The research reported in the chapters examines the interactions of families and contexts, regarding families as active participants in building the relationships that support children at times of transition, and drawing on their resources and experiences to guide interactions with schools. While each chapter outlines a range of challenges for families, the underlying theme of family strengths prevails. As a consequence, families are not positioned as deficient if their accessible capital does not match that normalised in much research concerning family-school engagement.

In the following section, we explore the research base that connects families and schools, with a particular focus on the transition to school. Much of this literature presents family involvement with schools – and transitions – as a straightforward process, dominated by the role of the family in preparing children for school and promoting the educational agenda of schools in home contexts. The discussion concludes with a second underlying theme of the chapters in this book: the recognition that family roles, responsibilities, expectations and relationships – as well as those of individuals – change at times of educational transition. Key to understanding the dual roles of families is the theoretical base developed by Griebel and Niesel (2009) that derives from studies of family developmental psychology. This framework prompts a nuanced consideration of families and educational transition, recognising the multi-faceted roles and functions of families at this time.

1.6 Families and Transition

The transition to school is a major event in the lives of children and families. As with other transitions, the transition to school occurs within and across social contexts. While a great deal of research attention has been directed towards the experiences of children as they make this transition (Corsaro and Molinari 2008; Dunlop and Fabian 2007; Perry et al. 2014), focus on the transitions experiences of families at this time is relatively sparse (Griebel and Niesel 2009). This is despite many studies investigating what families do *for* children as they start school, particularly in terms of preparing children and promoting children's school readiness (Holliday et al. 2014; Lau et al. 2011; Sheridan et al. 2010; Walker and MacPhee 2011), and evidence that the construct of school readiness involves not only elements related to children, but also derived from family and school contexts (Centre for Community Child Health 2008; Dockett and Perry 2009).

Family involvement in supporting children as they enter and engage with school has been identified as a critical element of educational success – so much so that promoting positive family engagement with schools has been hailed as a means to reduce educational achievement gaps between children from diverse backgrounds in several countries (Bull et al. 2008; Harris and Goodall 2007; Kendall et al. 2008; McWayne et al. 2013). Times of educational transition – such as the transition to school – can be pivotal in the establishment of positive home-school connections.

1.6.1 Home-School Connections

A wide range of research supports the view that family contexts and resources influence children's preparedness for school, notably their school readiness skills (Holliday et al. 2014; Isaacs and Magnuson 2011). This extends throughout the school years as family participation has an impact on educational outcomes (Barnard 2004;

Henderson and Mapp 2002; Jeynes 2012). For example, the resources provided within the home (Kiernan and Mensah 2011), home routines that structure family interactions (Wildenger et al. 2008), home learning environments (Melhuish et al. 2008), language/s spoken within the home (Holliday et al. 2014), family income (Isaacs and Magnuson 2011), parental education (Davis-Kean 2005), and parental expectations (Jeynes 2012), have all been designated as influencing children's school readiness, their engagement in school and long-term educational outcomes.

These studies highlight the context of the family in children's educational experiences. Of particular importance are the resources that families draw upon to support the transition to school – their social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Families have varying levels of access to resources and activate capital in different ways. Families from marginalised groups, or those described as disadvantaged – such as families with low socio-economic resources, who speak a language other than the dominant one, who are migrants or refugees, or who experience a wide range of complex circumstances – generally are positioned as having limited capital, or capital which is not compatible with dominant social contexts, including school. Several of the chapters in this book challenge these positionings, arguing for recognition of the strengths families bring from diverse social and culture backgrounds (Chaps. 2 and 3); affirmation of the family as an educational environment in its own right (Chap. 7); validation of the funds of knowledge accrued by children and families in diverse circumstances (Chap. 12); acknowledgement of the contributions and commitments of families living in complex circumstances (Chaps. 5, 6, 13, and 16); and highlighting some of the possibilities for collaboration among families and educators when such strengths are acknowledged (Chaps. 4, 14 and 15).

Much of the research exploring contextual issues of family participation is concerned with improving educational outcomes by promoting home-school connections (Pomerantz and Moorman 2010). To this end, a number of models of family involvement has been developed. These include: Epstein's (1995, 2011) framework of six types of parent involvement – which range from parenting (helping families establish home environment to support children) through to collaborating with community (integrating community resources into educational programs); Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) emphasis on parental sense of efficacy and parent role construction; the enabling and empowering model outlined by Dunst et al. (1992); and the shared responsibility model of Rosenberg et al. (2009). The models of partnership and participation promoted by these different models vary (see Chaps. 5, 14, and 16). However, the consistent aim of such programs is to promote dispositions about the positive value of education (Edwards and Kutaka 2015). Sometimes, this extends to programs of parent education that prioritise the educational agenda of the school. While families may regard the establishment of relationships between home and school as part of their responsibility (Edwards and Kutaka 2015), focus only on what families can do for schools fails to recognise the family as a dynamic unit, itself undergoing changes as family members (parents and children) partake in diverse experiences. This is particularly the case during the transition to school, when adults have opportunities to build and strengthen relationships that support the ongoing educational engagement of children.

Throughout this book, chapter authors recognise the importance of the family contexts and histories and the ways that families shape, and are shaped by, both history and context, including family history. They also acknowledge that – in educational contexts – the predominant view of family involvement privileges the actions of the dominant social group (Lareau 2000). Hence, in the Western world, families who support academic learning through reading to their children, checking homework, having regular interactions with teachers, helping out in the school classroom, and participating in school functions are deemed to be involved in their children's education (Kimelberg 2014). Such "good parenting" is considered the basis for children's educational success (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). The corollary is that those parents who do not engage in these activities may be considered uninvolved, disinterested, or simply not "good" parents (Henderson et al. 2007), unable or unwilling to offer appropriately cognitively stimulating environments for their children (Quiocho and Daoud 2006). Notions of "good" parenting and the provision of supportive home environments are reviewed in explorations of school choice reported in Chaps. 6 and 9, and in discussion of the family as an educational environment (Chap. 7).

Families categorised as uninvolved often include those with economically, socially, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (Henderson et al. 2007). When educators perceive families as disinterested, they tend to make few attempts to build relationships, with interactions limited to addressing problems (Zarate 2007), or identify families as the source of problems and seek to provide parenting classes to improve their levels of engagement with schools (Daniel-White 2002).

Throughout the book, questions are asked about the meaning of terms such as parent involvement, parent engagement and parent partnerships, in the light of multiple interpretations and uses of the terms by different participants across a wide range of studies (Edwards and Kutaka 2015; Fan and Williams 2010; Sheridan and Kim 2015). While educational policy around the world emphasises partnerships with parents, what is meant by partnership remains open to interpretations which position parents and educators in different ways. The notion of partnership suggests "equality" of input and interaction, where both parents and educators are involved directly in decision-making and the actions that support this (Edwards and Kutaka 2015). Partnerships reflecting these features are unique – established between specific educators and families for the purpose of supporting specific children – and can be particularly powerful supports for all involved. Yet several examples provided by chapter authors indicate that not all partnerships are valued or positive, supporting existing research noting that such "equal" levels of participation are rarely achieved (Calabrese Barton et al. 2004; Lareau 2000). The notion of collaboration is posited as an alternative (Chaps. 2, 5, 7, 15, and 16), with a focus on meaningful and cooperative relationships between families and schools that reflect specific contexts and the strengths of those involved.

The research reported across the chapters recognises that parental participation – whatever the label – consists of more than *what* parents actually do as their children