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**RECONSTITUTING MULTICULTURAL
EDUCATION: A CRITICAL
PEDAGOGY AT WORK.**

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education at Massey University.*

STEPHEN ANDREW MAY.

1992.

To Jim Laughton, whom I never met, but would have liked to:

He pokeke uenuku i tu ai.

Against a dark cloud the rainbow stands out brightly.

Abstract

In the debates surrounding minority education, the demise of the previous policies of assimilation and integration has led, in their stead, to an advocacy for multicultural education. The promotion of multicultural education has been heralded as the means by which 'cultural pluralism' in schools can be fostered and the educational performance of minority children improved. It is argued here, however, that the rhetoric of cultural pluralism - most often associated with multicultural education - is not sufficient to change the position of minority groups within education. Indeed, it may serve simply to reinforce the disadvantages that such groups face. Rather, what is required of multicultural education, if it is to make a difference for minority children, is that it be guided by an 'informing theory' which links it to wider processes of social and cultural reproduction. When multicultural education is framed in this way - with an understanding of the wider reproductive processes that contribute to the structural disadvantaging of minority groups within schooling - it becomes clear that what is necessary in schools is *significant structural reform at school level*; that cultural pluralism needs to be tied to structural pluralism.

In the following account, Richmond Road Primary School in Auckland, New Zealand will be discussed, using the approach of critical ethnography, as an example of a school which has embarked on such structural reform. By reconstituting school organisation, along with the traditional school 'message systems' (curriculum, pedagogy and assessment) that serve to disadvantage minority groups, Richmond Road demonstrates how an informed theory of multicultural education can be successfully realised *in practice* for the benefit of minority children.

Acknowledgements

Theses, I suppose, can vary in interest - both for those who read them, and for those who write them. While I cannot guarantee the outcome of the former, I can say that I have personally found the subject of this thesis - Richmond Road School, and particularly, Jim Laughton's role within it - both fascinating and significant. I hope the reader might find this also (at least to some degree), despite the limitations of my account.

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Glossary of Maori Terms¹

hangi -	traditional feast; literally, earth oven.
hui -	meeting.
kaiarahi reo -	Maori language assistant; literally, language <i>leader</i> .
kaiwhakahaere -	coordinator; director.
karakia -	prayer; chant. [In Maori protocol, a karakia always opens a formal meeting].
Te Kohanga Reo -	Maori language pre-school; literally, language nest.
mana -	power; influence.
Maori -	ordinary; indigenous people
mauri -	life force; the beginning; life principle.
Pakeha -	not Maori; European.
Ritimana -	[a transliteration of] 'Richmond'.
ropu -	group.
taha Maori -	things Maori; literally, the Maori side.
tangata whenua -	Maori; the local people.
tangi -	funeral; literally, to cry; weep; mourn.
tapu -	sacred; forbidden.
Tawhirimatea -	God of the winds and the storms.
tuakana-teina -	older sibling - younger sibling; literally, older brother - younger brother.
whakatauki -	proverb.
whanau -	family.

* Unlike English, Maori nouns do not take the plural 's', although in popular New Zealand usage (as reflected in some of the interview transcripts) the 's' is sometimes added.

** Maori words are not differentiated in the following text.

¹ Literal translations are taken from Ryan (1989).