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# MANATU

## Senior Maori Students Discuss Success at Secondary School

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A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
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### ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the views of senior Maori students who had varying academic achievements and yet, in comparison with Pakeha students in the same school and from similar socio-economic backgrounds, had fewer school qualifications. The study was prompted by three theories about school achievement : Pierre's Bourdieu's account (1974) of acculturation, Raymond Boudon's account (1982) of rational decision-making, or game playing, and Basil Bernstein's account (1971) of language, its acquisition and implications for success in school. The challenge of the thesis was to identify themes which dominated students' perceptions of achievement and to suggest ways in which those perceptions were produced and reproduced.

The methodology of the thesis aimed to encourage students to talk freely, to produce ideas about achievement and then reconsider them in different ways. To support the students' 'ethnography' the methodology of the thesis also aimed to help the participants. The concept of empowerment was suggested by Maori writers, by Paulo Freire (1972) and by the intention of critical ethnography itself.

The thesis concluded that the defining attitude of the sub-culture was an uncertainty of achieving the success the students wanted. This uncertainty was identified in the students' themes of school and in their language use, and the students themselves reproduced to it in their communication network. The participants' successes could be explained as partial acculturation; family-class and school experiences had established sub-cultural expectations of failure which seemed to prevent full acculturation. In a sub-cultural counterhegemony students challenged their cultural constraints but their strategies could not overcome the effects of the hegemony of capitalism. In this way the thesis gives an account of the interaction of culture, agency and language use in the production and reproduction of the attitudes and values of the students.

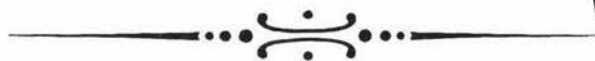
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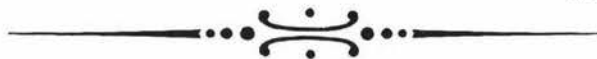
*Haere mai e Te Ariki, whakatapua tenei Pukapuka (Taonga), araiatu i konei nga whakawainga katoa i hatana, a tonoa mai ou ahere hei tiaki i a matou i runga i te rangimarie manakitia hoki matou katoa, kia tika a ta matou noho ki tou aroaro, a, ki mua hoki i a matou tamariki. Tiakina matou katoa, arahina kia tae ai ki te rangi ki reira noho tahi ai mo ake tonu atu.*

Hone Dunn  
Kaumatua  
Tikipunga High School  
Whanau Support



*Come o Lord, bless this Book (Treasure), ward off all that is evil and harmful, send your Angels to watch over us and to protect us in peace. Bless us that we may fulfil our duties and responsibilities as parents, according to your will, for the good of our children you have given us. Look after us Lord, so that one day we may all be with you in our heavenly home.*

Hone Dunn  
Kaumatua  
Tikipunga High School  
Whanau Support



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## C O N T E N T S

Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
List of Tables and Figures	x
List of Photographs	xi
Introduction	2
Chapter One : <b>Te Taki : The Challenge : What is the Research Problem?</b>	16
Introduction	16
An Account of Social Order	18
An Account of Construction and Reconstruction	21
An Account of Challenge and Compromise	24
An Account of Empowerment	27
Conclusion	29
Chapter two : <b>Nga Karanga : Justification : Why is the Research Problem Important?</b>	32
Introduction	32
The Voice of Social Justice	32
The Voice of Achievement	37
The Voice of Learner Perceptions	40
Conclusion	44
Chapter three : <b>Te Haka : The Conceptual Bases of the Study : Which Ideas are important for the Study's Direction?</b>	46
Introduction	46
Ethnography	46
Case Study	51
Culture	53
Discourse	56
Hegemony and Ideology	60
Conclusion	63

<b>Chapter four :</b>	<b>Te Whaikorero : Literature Review : Who has</b>	
	<b>Written about Students and School Experiences?</b>	<b>65</b>
	Introduction	65
	New Zealand Speakers	65
	Accounts of social order	65
	Accounts of construction and reconstruction	70
	Accounts of challenge and compromise	74
	Accounts of empowerment	77
	Speakers from Other Countries	80
	An account of social order	80
	An account of construction and reconstruction	82
	Accounts of challenge and compromise	83
	Calls for empowerment	88
	Conclusion	90
 <b>Chapter five :</b>	 <b>Te Hongi me te Kai : Research Design and</b>	
	<b>Methodology : How was the Study Carried Out?</b>	<b>93</b>
	Introduction	93
	The Design in General	93
	The Methodology	94
	Unobtrusive Research	95
	Participants as ethnographers	97
	Interpretive research	99
	Challenges in Methodology	100
	Validity	100
	Ethical concerns	103
	Unforeseen consequences	107
	Unhistorical analysis	108
	Conclusion	109
 <b>Chapter six :</b>	 <b>Te Hui : Setting In : Who are the Students?</b>	<b>112</b>
	Introduction	112
	The Student Participants at School and at Home	112
	School Certificate	114
	Sixth Form Certificate	119
	Generalisations are Difficult	122
	Other Achievements	124
	Conclusion	126

Chapter seven : <b>Te Hui : The Talking Begins : What do the Students</b>	
<b>say about Success?</b>	129
Introduction	129
Entering the Context	129
Perceptions of Achievement	132
Perceptions of What Helps or Hinders School	
Achievement	135
Conclusion	148
 Chapter eight : <b>Te Hui : Comment : The Students' Perceptions</b>	
<b>of School</b>	151
Introduction	151
Assistance From Other Studies	151
Themes Revisited	152
First Thoughts on Students' Attitudes and Values:	
Social Order?	155
Reviewing the Conduct of the Study	159
Conclusion	162
 Chapter nine : <b>Te Hui : The Talking Continues : Is there a Student</b>	
<b>Culture here?</b>	167
Introduction	167
Entering the Context Again	167
The Themes Revisited	168
Attitudes and Values of the Sub-Culture	179
A Maori Student Sub-culture or a Wider Senior	
Student Sub-Culture?	182
A New Sub-Cultural Theme?	185
A Sub-Cultural Theme of Money	188
A Way Forward	191
A Theme of Uncertainty	192
Conclusion	194



Chapter ten :	<b>Te Hui : Comment : The Students' Sub-Culture.</b>	197
	Introduction	197
	A Wider Senior Students' Culture	198
	A (Maori) Students' Sub-Culture of Uncertainty	201
	The Sources of a Sense of Uncertainty	203
	New Thoughts on Students' Attitudes and Values:	
	Construction and Reconstruction	206
	Reviewing The Conduct of the Study	214
	Conclusion	216
Chapter eleven :	<b>Te Hui : The Talking Continues : What can We</b>	
	<b>Learn from the Students' Language Use?</b>	219
	Introduction	219
	Entering the Context for the Last Time	220
	Reflections of Uncertainty	220
	The Source of Uncertainty in Language Use	223
	Management of the Sub-Culture	224
	A Counter-Hegemony of Knowledge-Power	236
	Conclusion	240
Chapter twelve :	<b>Te Hui : The Talking Concludes.</b>	244
	Introduction	244
	The Context Redefined	244
	Language Use as Challenge and Compromise	245
	Final Thoughts on Students' Attitudes and	
	Values	255
	Reviewing the Conduct of the Study	260
	Conclusion	262
Chapter thirteen :	<b>Te Hui : Comment : A Thesis</b>	265
	Introduction	265
	An Account of Social Order : A Concept of a	
	Structuring Ideology and its Production	
	of Partial Acculturation	267
	An Account of Construction and Reconstruction:	
	A Concept of Cultural Domination	272

An Account of Challenge and Compromise : A Concept of Cultural Information, Resourcing and Reproduced in, Decision -Making	279
A Synthesis	284
An Account of Empowerment	287
Conclusion	290
Chapter fourteen : <b>Te Poroporoaki : Farewells : Conclusion</b>	292
Introduction	292
Limitations of the Study	292
Future Research	295
Conclusion	297
Appendices	299
Bibliography	309

### LIST OF TABLES

1.	Retention Rates	112
2.	School Certificate Entries 1992	114
3.	School Certificate Entries 1993	114
4.	'Pass' Grades in School Certificate 1992, 1993	116
5.	School Certificate Subject Choices 1992, 1993	118
6.	Sixth Form Certificate Entries 1993	119
7.	Sixth Form Certificate Subject Choices 1993	120
8.	Sixth Form Certificate Grades 1993	121
9.	Seventh Form, 1994, Academic Achievements Overview	122

### FIGURES

1.	Student Movement from School Certificate 1992	123
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# LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

School Auditorium	1
Open Multi-Level Art : Photography	8
Bilingual Unit	15
Level Five Art : Painting	31
Level Six Information Technology	45
Information Technology : Library	64
Fitness Centre	92
Level Six Food Technology	111
Cafeteria	127
Level Six Biotechnology	128
Level Five Music	149
Adult Students	150
Sinclair Centre Technology	165
Level One Information Technology	166
Extra Curricular : Drama	195
Open Multi-Level Life Skill : Vehicle Maintenance	196
Open Multi-Level Design Technology	217
Open Multi-Level Craft	218
Extra Curricular : Radio Station	242
Level Six Metalcraft : Welding	243
Language Laboratory	263
Level Five Horticulture	264
Level Six - Biotechnology	291