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MANA TU

Senior Maori Students Discuss Success at Secondary School

Edna Tait

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION AT
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1995

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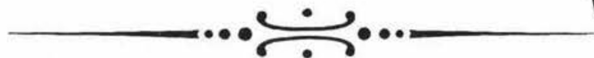
Haere mai e Te Ariki, whakatapua tenei Pukapuk (Taonga), araiatu i konei nga whakawainga katoa hatana, a tonoa mai ou ahere hei tiaki i a matou i rung i te rangimarie manakitia hoki matou katoa, kia tika a ta matou noho ki tou aroaro, a, ki mua hoki i a mato tamariki. Tiakina matou katoa, arahina kia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

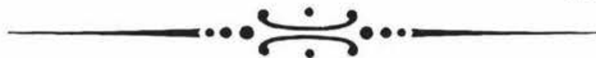
Hone Dunn
Kaumatua
Tikipunga High Sch
Whanau Support



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

Hone Dunn
Kaumatua

Tikipunga High Sch
Whanau Support



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The staff of Massey University library were always very helpful; their search for information and their prompt provision of appropriate resources have been greatly appreciated.

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School Auditorium

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

I first became interested in Maori students' success at secondary school in 1983 when I began my Principalship of Tikipunga High School. It was clear from a study of external examination passes that Maori students were not achieving as well as their non-Maori peer group and yet they were achieving highly in many other areas of their lives. The literature available at that time showed that low achievement rates in external examinations was a national, not a local, problem and it offered complex and sometimes conflicting advice to schools as to how the gap could be closed. Since then ongoing research and increased efforts on the part of schools have made little difference to the differing achievement rates. At Tikipunga High School major changes to curriculum delivery and guidance systems, in particular, tried to counteract what the research suggested were causes (peer pressure, family background, teacher attitudes, a mismatch between Maori learning styles and the teaching styles of their teachers, the problems of high truancy, suspension and expulsion rates and low retention patterns) but still the achievement gap remained. What else could be done? A fresh look at the research was required.

The research to which we had access seemed rather negative in its focus or, where it was positive as in the Mitchell study of 1988, the students sampled were so atypical that the research results were of limited value for me as a Principal. What was needed for state secondary schools such as Tikipunga High School, I thought, was a study which was applicable to the majority of Maori students, and so not based on exclusivist samples such as students with high external examination passes or those studying te reo. As well, if an inclusive group of Maori students were invited to discuss achievement in school, it might be valuable to work with senior students who, according to the evidence, had returned to school with apparently limited chances of success. The initial question,

therefore, was not why do Maori students fail and leave school early but why do so many return to the sixth and seventh forms at all? The focus was on achievement which was important to the students rather than achievement identified as important by researchers. Further, my years of teaching confirmed Alison Jones' view that students have 'learned' to try to give to teachers what they believe are the 'right' answers (1991; 121-144) and I wondered what students might say if they were able to discuss achievement on their own. I thought that such a focus might also provide a glimpse of the ways in which students' perceptions of achievement are formed: perhaps their group interaction would show a Maori student sub-culture which did not value success in external examinations. A study of the language used to discuss school achievement was, therefore, going to be a part of the research task and this initial thinking became more focussed once the study began.

This then is the background to what became a year's work looking at senior secondary Maori students' perceptions of success. What follows is a report on that year, but before the report proceeds, an explanation of how it is organised is necessary.

The Organisation of the Report

An extended metaphor provides the unifying theme of this report. The search for knowledge is often compared with a journey to a new place, with the traveller meeting challenges and difficulties on the way and then struggling to understand the language and culture of the destination. So I have felt during this study. But the neat match between the analogy and my study could be dismissed as an insufficient reason to present the report as I have done: some other support might be requested. I point, therefore, to the focus of the study. A report on a year's work with a group of Maori students should both complement their journey into life beyond school and compliment their culture as tangata whenua of New Zealand. For support, therefore, I appeal to the practice in Maori culture of informing by analogy, of speaking in word pictures which are strong in allusion and rich in layers of meaning. This report cannot match the oratory of the kaumatua but it borrows the use of metaphor

from their speaking style because it is appropriate to do so; by way of koha for this borrowing I offer the respect which such imitation indicates.

And so the metaphor begins. The journey is through the protocol of a welcome to Tikipunga High School and its destination is a hui conducted by some of the students of the school. It might be claimed that on a marae these students would be busy with work behind the scenes and if they had participated in the hui it would have been as listening-learners and not the speaking-teachers of this study. The observation is fair and the response has to be by analogy again: if schools are turangawaewae for anyone, it is for students, and as seniors these students may claim 'elder' status and speaking rights. Further, there was a hope that the students would gain from their participation in the hui and so their learning rights were not forgotten. Another concern might be that the journey analogy fails to include the contributions of the traveller. Manuhiri, after all, participate in welcome and hui in important ways and cannot be excluded from the journey metaphor. Again the response is by analogy: as the guide, the one who has already explored the route and visited the destination, I carry the responsibility of representing the manuhiri to the best of my ability. Such a stance, of course, invites accusations of whakahihi or arrogance, but it is with a real sense of whakaiti, a consciousness of my shortcomings, that I invite the reader-traveller to share the spirit if not the inadequacies of my representation. This stance also highlights my position as researcher: I cannot be a neutral observer and I am not an unbiased guide. I therefore, at the start of this journey indicate that I am aware of this aspect of my work and to meet potential challenges I describe, as appropriate, views and decisions which have contributed to the study. In this way my biases are given a visibility which I hope will be useful.

As guide, therefore, I begin with information about the school to which we are going and the people we shall meet there. In this Introduction the context of the learning environment of the students and the students generally are described, as factually as possible, because such basic knowledge is essential for this report-jounrey.

In Chapter one we meet the challenge or taki which signals the start of the welcome for honoured visitors. Originally the taki was used to find out if visitors came in peace and that sense is contained in this taki also. But its main purpose is to lay down the research problem and to indicate the challenges contained within it.

Chapter two provides a justification of the study. In this chapter the karanga identifies the tangata whenua and invites visitors to approach the school and to share in the mourning of the people. So the chapter gives three major reasons for the study, recognises a different sadness for Maori in each of those reasons and also demonstrates the process which decided the particular context of, and participants in, the study.

The powhiri usually overlaps the karanga but for clarity is described separately in Chapter three. In the powhiri the haka of welcome symbolically draws the visitors onto the marae itself. In this report-journey the haka helps visitors negotiate the conceptual difficulties of the study so that they may approach the rest of the visit with more understanding.

Chapter four contains the whaikorero or speeches of welcome and the establishment of links between visitors and hosts. In this chapter those links are sought through a literature review. The Tai Tokerau custom of paeke or hosts speaking one after another is followed and, following a single tauparapara or introduction, the tangata whenua greet their visitors; the literature of New Zealand is covered in this section. Then follows the thoughts of the manuhiri and in this section of the literature review, relevant work from outside New Zealand is discussed. The chapter concludes with a symbolic waiata of support in the form of a review of advice on research about Maori.

Chapter five concludes the formal welcome: the hongi and the provision of food and drink close the gap between hosts and visitors. In this chapter an explanation of the design and methodology of the study represents the sharing of the breath of life and the food

of life: it concludes the journey and marks the beginning of the hui.

The hui takes some time and in this report it is presented in eight chapters. In Chapter six we learn about the students who are our hosts. In Chapter seven they talk about achievement and in Chapter eight the first issues of the study emerge. In Chapter nine the students reflect on their ideas and in Chapter ten their sub-culture is considered. In Chapters eleven and twelve we try to find some patterns in the students' discussions and finally, in Chapter thirteen a thesis is suggested. These chapters try to reflect the open discussions of a hui and the search for consensus; the basic take, to find a way to help the participants, is not forgotten.

The visit finishes with poroporoaki, the speeches of farewell, and in Chapter fourteen the conclusions are symbolic of the expressions of goodwill and thanks. And so, with suggestions for future visits, the report-journey ends.

With this description of the organisation of the report I now return to the starting point of the study and the journey begins.

Tikipunga High School : the Turangawaewae of the Participants

A marae complex does not exist in the abstract. If history and people are evacuated from its description then its essence goes and so also, with a school. This description provides a basic introduction to Tikipunga High School so that the background of researcher and student participants is understood before the journey begins. The destination is not any high school but the particular one called Tikipunga and its special features need to be set alongside the pre-existing concepts of 'high school' of intending travellers. This early positioning in the reader's frame of reference, also avoids intrusive explanations further on.

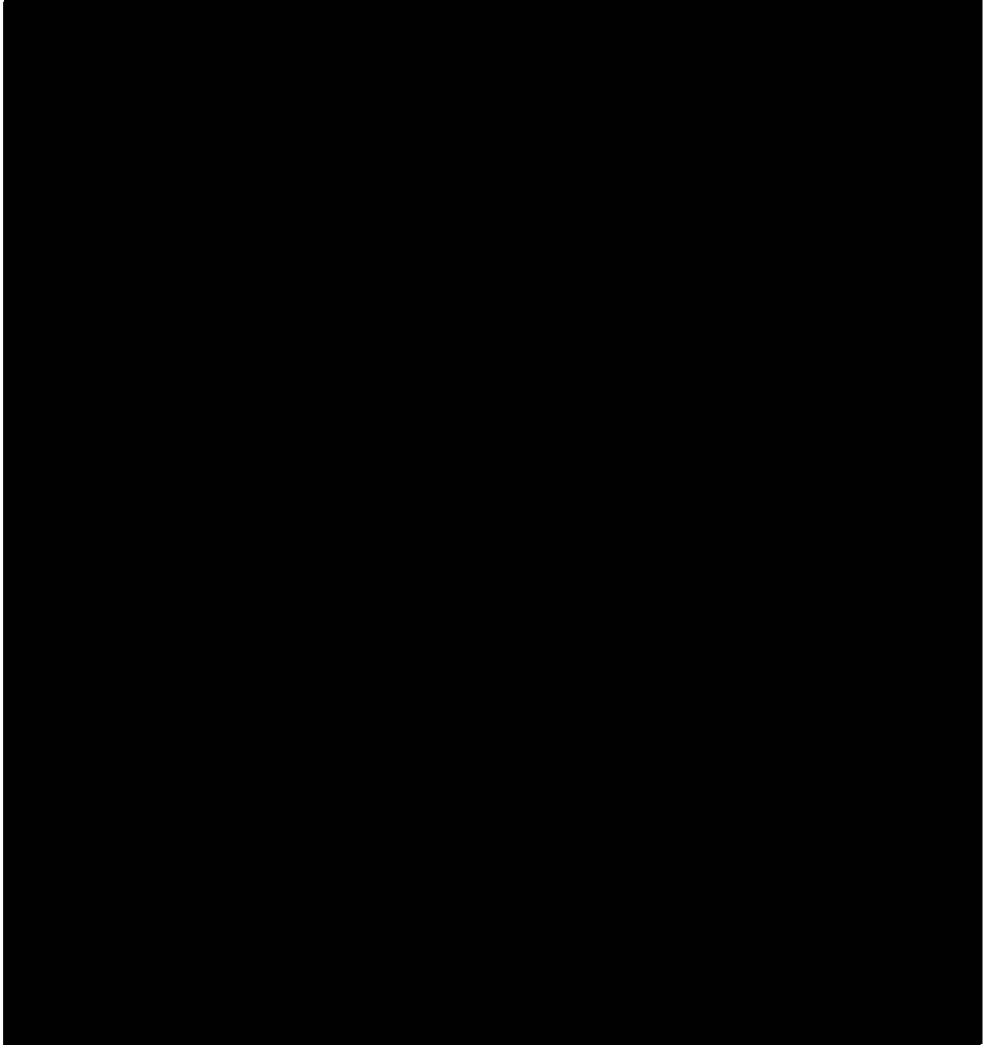
Tikipunga High School opened in 1971 on the north-eastern boundary of Whangarei city. It was one of the first S68 designs and is built on one level with rooms clustered around courtyards. It sits in

attractive grounds with mature trees spaced among the buildings and providing the boundaries of the well-cared for playing fields. School facilities include many extras; a fitness centre, a cafeteria with seating capacity for 150, a vehicle maintenance garage, facilities for students with special learning needs, specialist rooms for music, pottery and photography, a media suite, a horticulture block, three computer rooms and a modern and well-equipped auditorium are some of the facilities which impress visitors. The school was one of four selected by the Ministry of Education to be a 'lighthouse' technology school in 1993 and given a grant of $400,000.00 with which to develop technology programmes in and for the curriculum. As a consequence, the library has become a major information centre, giving staff and students access to national and international data bases and communication systems. Other technology additions have been to music, English and special needs, and planning for 1995 includes an extensive graphics and design project.

The community

The school's families fall into three main groups. Some come to the school as an alternative to the more traditional schools in the city. These families emphasise the innovative approach of the Board of Trustees and staff. Others (the majority) come because it is their neighbourhood school and they see no reason to send their children elsewhere. The third group of families come, they say, for the school's non-violence policy and its modular curriculum delivery system. Adults in the day and evening classes come because they want further qualifications or because they want to extend work or leisure interests and the school offers appropriate opportunities to do so.

The school community includes a strong Maori presence and the school has worked closely with elders to develop the school's wairua and kawa. A very active Whanau Team provides support with curriculum, guidance and cultural activities.



Open Multi-Level Art : Photography

The Board of Trustees has a history of cordial and close working relationships with the staff which come, we believe, because the Board has for many years distinguished between its leadership role in policy setting and the staff's management role in the implementation of the directions set. Maori membership of the Board has not matched the percentage of Maori students in the school but Maori members' participation has always been strong. Board members are in the school frequently in a supportive role and they have always taken a special interest in students who appear to be at risk in the education system.

The Parent Teacher Association is equally supportive and has matched its moral support of school activities with high financial contributions. Parent Teacher Association support includes assistance with reading, dance supervision, travelling with students on out-of-class trips and provision of the annual prize for dux. Mini buses, a kiln, a student radio station, library books and computers are some of the more substantial donations to the school.

The students

The school is co-educational and bi-ethnic and offers teaching from form one to seven and for some polytechnic tertiary courses. Apart from the usual secondary students, there are also full and part-time adult students, students with physical and intellectual disabilities and junior students learning in a bi-lingual unit. The school shares with a neighbouring secondary school a strong community evening education programme. Because of rapid roll increase a few years ago the school has Enrolment Procedures which describe access in geographical terms. There are, however, out-of-zone students attending from other parts of the city and there is, as well, a strong urban-rural mix in the school.

In 1994 the roll of 752 was approximately 48% Maori and 52% non-Maori, the latter being almost totally New Zealanders with European ancestry. There were no fee paying students and the few who were not New Zealanders by birth come to the school on student exchange programmes. Girls made up just over 50% of the student body.

The interesting historical feature of this profile is that the Maori to non-Maori ratio has changed since 1983 when only a third of the students were Maori. The change has come with roll growth and the addition of forms one and two and not the withdrawal of non-Maori students.

The students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but over 70% of their families are dependent on some form of benefit. The Ministry of Education has classified the school as decile 2 in its need for equity funding. The majority of families are settled in the area and so all the children in the family pass through the school. Recently some of the students sent from difficult situations in Auckland to live with other family members in Whangarei have also come to the school. As well, each year a group of students join us in the senior school from other local schools and the Board of Trustees also accepts a number of indefinitely suspended or expelled students for second chance schooling.

The range of student abilities is wide. In the school's Sinclair Centre students with disabilities learn to read and write while senior classes' successes include some scholarship passes in the University Bursary examination. The modular studies system of delivering the curriculum is a noteworthy feature of the school's approach to achievement and it is a multi-level learning system which enables students to work at their learning level rather than their age level. It is based on six-weekly learning semesters: students take five or six modules in each semester, and are assessed for achievement at the end of each module. The title sixth former, therefore, indicates a fourth year at secondary school rather than (necessarily) a student entered for Sixth Form Certificate. While the majority of students follow "standard" school careers, a number work at lower or higher levels in some or all subjects. Academic achievement, therefore, is much more diverse than in a regular curriculum delivery system and is as much the responsibility of students as the teachers. This may account for high post school academic achievement by students which includes, in recent years, a first year foreign language prize at Auckland University, a Massey University Scholar in veterinary science, an Auckland University Senior Scholar in architecture,

a physiology research award at Otago university, a Ph. D. scholarship at Auckland and Sword of Honour, the de Lange trophy and the Bamber Schmidt trophy in the Air Force graduating class of 1994. The majority of these students are non-Maori.

But student abilities also bring other high level achievements. The annual report of the school lists extracurricular honours gained by students at the Whangarei, Northland and New Zealand level and each year the list lengthens with names and expands in activities. In 1993 nine pages recognised achievement in athletics (field, track and paraplegics), basketball, cricket, cross country, cycling, drumming, golf, hockey, indoor cricket, culture group performances, music (piano and country and western singing), netball, rugby, rugby league, soccer, softball, speeches, swimming, table tennis, touch rugby, volleyball and barefoot water skiing. In this list New Zealand honours were gained in athletics, girls' hockey, girls' netball, singing, softball, table tennis, volleyball and water skiing. The previous year's list of eight national honours included outrigger canoeing, squash and board riding while the 1994 list included athletics, BMX racing, golf, gymnastics, softball, squash, table tennis, Thai boxing, volleyball and barefoot water skiing. In the recent past a captain of the New Zealand secondary school rugby team, a North Auckland secondary schools' second xv vice captain and a vice captain of the New Zealand junior women's volleyball team have come from the school. Post school achievement in sport includes canoeing and women's hockey but if employment arising from extracurricular interests is included then a rugby league contract, a major sculpture contract and acceptance as one of the first two 'weaponman' women in the New Zealand navy should be added. Maori students dominate in these achievements.

The teachers

In 1994 there were 56 teachers at the school. Two were foundation members, two were beginning teachers (and ex-students) and, at a time of concern about the aging of the profession, 41% were under forty years of age. Five were Maori, two teaching te reo. Of the remainder the majority were Pakeha. (This is the time to note that

I use the term Pakeha in the same positive sense as Alison Jones (1991;34): the title New Zealander is too geographical and too broad for either of our studies but Pakeha indicates culture and identity which are established in relation to Maori and is, therefore, a more useful term.) The teachers are trained and well qualified in their teaching areas and they are known nationally for their innovative and persistent efforts to help students. Their leadership of the modular studies system of curriculum delivery has been described in the New Zealand Qualifications Authority booklet 'The Tikipunga Experience' (1992) and was featured in Gordon Dryden's television series 'Where To Now?' (1991) and the subsequent national seminars of 1992. A large number of teachers and other educators from overseas as well as from within New Zealand have visited the school to learn about the way it works.

Philosophy, policies and procedures

The philosophy of the school is summarised in the monogram which was designed in 1983. The motto Tukua o Punga is taken from the original name of the area and translates as Set Your Traps or Lay Your Foundations. This goal is echoed by three baskets in the body of the monogram which represent the three baskets of traditional Maori knowledge and which set three objectives for students : a sense of self worth (te kete-uruuru-tau), a concern for others (te kete-uruuru-matua) and a desire to continue learning (te kete-uruuru-rangi). From these objectives comes the overall approach of the school which is usually summarised as the non-violence policy. This looks for a safe and supportive learning environment for students in which they can develop their independence, accept challenges and learn about responsible risk-taking; 'having a go' is emphasized and making mistakes is acceptable. Courtesy, cooperation and consideration are encouraged and the celebration of achievements is a constant feature of school assemblies and notices. This approach is another of the aspects of the school which has been given positive national coverage (a 60 Minutes television feature in term one 1994) and is being adopted by other schools.

From this basic philosophy, the Board of Trustees has developed more than 80 policies which set particular directions for the school. The emphasis in each is on communication, consultation, human rights and responsibilities, and, as far as possible, all policies are complimentary to avoid contradictory or conflicting visions. At the beginning of this study five policies appeared to be particularly important (The Treaty of Waitangi, Taha Maori, Te Reo Maori, Bicultural Development and Whanau Support) and a number of others were also going to be relevant (Affirming Diversity, Equity, Celebration, Innovation and Risk-Taking) but as the study progressed other policies became significant (such as Facilities and Teacher Performance Appraisal).

Matching each of the Board's policies are statements of school procedures which describe how the policy is to be implemented. The Whanau Support policy, for example, has procedural statements which describe the team's roles in the school, their liaison methods, decision-making responsibilities and support function. These procedures are, with the policies, reviewed and adjusted regularly in an effort to improve what the school does for its students. A consequence of this practice of ongoing critical reflection is that change is a feature of school life and while it has brought improvements it has also brought concerns, chief of which has been an awareness that practices have not always kept up with adjustments to procedures.

Effectiveness

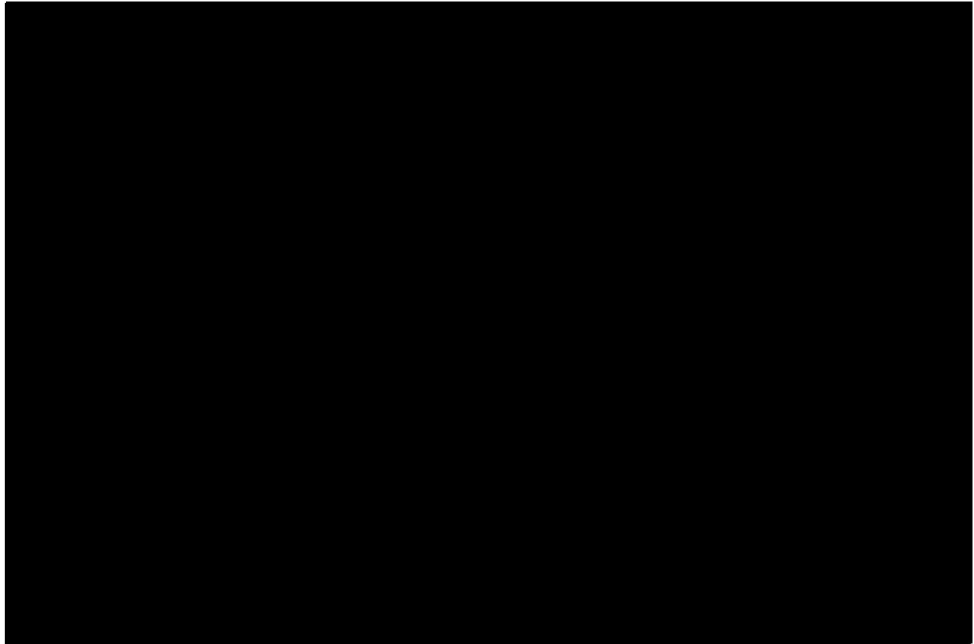
In October 1993 the Education Review Office spent a fortnight in the school conducting an effectiveness review. Their task was to determine whether the school was making a difference to the lives of its students, whether, in other words, it was an effective school. The report was highly complimentary and praised, amongst other things, the school's culture of respecting students' individuality, of encouraging learning, and of commitment to equity, particularly in terms of trying to close the achievement gap between middle class students and those whose learning was affected by class, gender or ethnicity. The report praised the school's curriculum delivery,

its teaching methods, its management system, its clear direction, its non violence policy and the students' high self esteeem. It concluded that, given our school population, we were making a difference to our students' lives. The local newspaper said that our 'alternative approach to education (had) received glowing commendations' (Northern Advocate; 6 December 1993) and described some of the school's identified achievements. Once again the school received requests from other schools for information about our way of working with students. And yet my concern for the Maori students remained.

Conclusion

From this general introduction to the context of the study it might be thought that the school is very special, that all of the students are working purposefully and achieving highly, that we have all the answers. It is important to note here at the start of the journey, that the commentaries above are generalisations and that generalisations are language techniques of utility rather than accuracy. The school is perhaps a little more innovative than some and has perhaps more student successes than some but equally its critics say (sometimes to me) that it has no discipline (often 'because it has no uniform'), that its examination results are poor, that it is too 'pro Maori', that it is 'anti Maori', that it is too 'liberal'. We in the staffroom, with colleagues in all other schools, worry about student absenteeism, work not done, inappropriate behaviour and post school destinations. We share all teachers' concerns about how to reach and help our students and we frequently disagree, from a wide range of philosophies, about what we should be doing. As a school we may be different in some ways but we are very typical in most. This then is the context in which our senior Maori students discuss school achievement.

And now we are ready for the welcome to begin.



Bilingual Unit

CHAPTER ONE

TE TAKI : THE CHALLENGE : WHAT IS THE RESEARCH PROBLEM?

Ko wai ra, Ko wai ra; who are these people?
He taua, he taua; it's people to be challenged!

Introduction

The rather aggressive actions of the taki are the start of this journey. Presented without words the challenge nonetheless speaks of the strength of the people we are to visit, and seeks to discover our intentions. In this chapter we 'read' the movements of the taiaha as it is brandished before us and then we respond by picking up the twigs from Tane, remembering as we do, his great feat in separating Tanginui from Papatuanuku to give us sky and earth. Our take, or reason for visiting, is encouraged by his achievement, and so we commence the welcome which, in another sense of taki, is the beginning of the 'speech' of this study.

There are three basic defence positions for the taiaha and so there are three parts to this study. Each part examines, from a different perspective, the sub-culture of the senior Maori students of Tikipunga High School. Some of these students are high achievers academically, some are high achievers in their extracurricular fields and all are achievers in that they are still at school when so many of their peers have left. The three perspectives of the study try to discover why they have stayed at school and what they hope to take with them.

At the start of the study it was tempting to presume a socio-economic or class answer to the questions in the previous papagraph. But, while not dismissing that as a possible explanation for the students' success or failure, I was aware that the majority of our students, Maori and Pakeha, came from homes which were very similar in socio-economic class and yet the Pakeha students as a generalisation, achieved more highly. The task, therefore,

was to explore the possibility that these senior Maori students had attitudes and values which were different from senior Pakeha students and which might explain both their partial success and their lower achievement rates.

The first part of the study, therefore, (Chapters seven and eight) aims to describe the dominant topics or themes of school, to suggest their connections with achievement and to hypothesize the source of those themes.

The second part (Chapters nine and ten) aims to identify the dominating attitudes and values of the sub-cultural themes within the general senior student context, to describe links and differences and to suggest reasons for any differences.

The final part (Chapters eleven and twelve) look for evidence that the differences described in the second part of the study are present not only in their themes of school but also in their language use. This part of the study aims to describe how the sub-culture verbally reproduces its perceptions of school, and to suggest reasons for the way it operates.

The study, therefore, had three challenges of describing school themes, identifying attitudes and values in the dominant themes and suggesting how those attitudes and values are produced and reproduced. Running through the study, however, was a fourth challenge and in terms of the analogy with which this chapter began, this challenge represents the Warrior who brandishes the taiaha.

Because of the focus of this study (Maori students' success at school) and because I chose to work in my own school, I hoped that the process, as well the product, of the year's work would be useful for the student-participants and - through me - the school. This challenge, therefore, required an ongoing review of the methodology and focussed particularly on ethical concerns and the concept empowerment.

I describe now the theoretical base of each of the challenges.

Part One : An Account of Social Order : Acculturation

I expected, before I began the study, that the students' themes might reflect problems with school. They were still participating and had some successes but they seemed to be underachieving. A possible explanation, therefore, might be that they were not comfortable in school and the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu offered an account of 'acculturation' which would explain this problem.

Bourdieu (1974) argues that schools maintain social divisions in society : the way they are organised, the content of their curriculum, their teaching style and assessment practices, their overall cultures, all contribute to the reproduction of social stratification. He says that children receive from their families what he calls cultural capital or "attitudes and aptitudes" which includes values and language use (ibid;39) and this cultural capital is internalised as disposition or 'habitus' which he defines as "the internalization of the objective future" and which is influenced by the constraints which may appear to be in that future (ibid;34). He says : "cultural capital and ethos (the attitude to the objective future) combine to determine behaviour in school and attitude to school," and they produce "the differential principle of elimination operating for children of different social classes" (ibid;35). By this means 'habitus' links the structure of the school (and its culture) and the practice of the individual (and family culture).

When lower class children reach school their cultural capital is different from that of the school which reflects the dominant middle class values, and their handicaps in schools are cumulative, says Bourdieu : their views of possible objectives lead to work-restricting subject choices, lower success levels and earlier elimination (ibid;35-36). Further, the school in treating all students as equals adds to this problem and "social adavantages or disadvantages (are) gradually ... transformed into educational advantages and disadvantages" (ibid;36).

It should be noted that Bourdieu is not talking of individuals but

rather of culture-linked groups. The students who are exceptions (are 'acculturated' and succeed) make no difference to the continuance of the class divisions : that some students "escape the collective fate of their class - - - gives credence to the myth of the school as a liberating force among those who have been eliminated" (ibid;42). In essence, therefore, the cultural capital of lower class children is not valued in the middle class school 'habitus' and so they are disadvantaged and this disadvantage is heightened by the coincidence of school and middle class students' cultural capital.

I wondered if this explanation applied to our students.

<u>The challenge : is it possible to describe students' perceptions (of success) from their accounts of their school experiences?</u>

To explain the qualifications gap as a culture gap I needed to know what the students' culture looked like. Was it possible, for example, that Maori students did not include academic credentials in what they counted as school success? If so, what did count for success and what would the students say about how they hoped to gain that success?

The Ministry of Education says in <u>Maori in Education :</u>

> Statistical indicators are unable to measure structural and institional barriers which hinder Maori educational participation and achievement. Nor can statistics provide insight into the qualitative experiences or self-images which Maori acquire through participation in education in New Zealand. Yet it may well be an understanding of these experiences which offers insight into the ways in which Maori people can be encouraged and supported to participate fully in the education process. For this reason ... statistical trends ... need to be considered alongside other research which takes a more qualitative approach to Maori educational issues (1993;23).

This statement has a number of problems in it (the assumptions

about barriers, that Maori are in some way deficient and need to be 'encouraged', 'supported', and it is 'the', not 'an', education process in which they are to participate) but if we leave those concerns for the moment, we can still agree that there may well be aspects of the education system which, in spite of the stated intentions of 'Tomorrow's Schools' reorganisation, work against Maori students.

Implicit in this extract from Maori in Education is the presumption that it is the Pakeha culture's practice of measuring success by examination passes which does not recognise the kinds of achievements Maori culture might value. That presumption contains two difficulties. The first is that we might be tempted to argue (although the Ministry does not suggest this) that the solution is to stop the counting and find qualitative ways of recognising when learning has occurred. But quantitative measuring does what it says it does : it measures examination participation and achievement and without it we might be unaware that Maori students are not doing as well with examinations as Pakeha students. That response, of course, is a perspective to which Maori might say 'Who cares?' That some, at least, do not say this is suggested by the participation of Maori students in examinations and this brings us to the second difficulty : Why do some succeed in a system which generates their statistics of failure?

From these difficulties we conclude that we need to know more about the students' school experiences and this brings us to the question of group interaction and so to group culture. Is there a cultural explanation for Maori students' school experiences and if so which culture is operating? Is it their Maori culture which is denied or under-valued by the Pakeha school system? Is it a cultural double jeopardy of Maori and economic class which, separately and together, hinder them in schools whose curriculum, assessment, processes and procedures have been established by middle class Pakeha? Or is it a culture of youth which may include elements of the broader cultures but which has its chief explanation in the school context rather than families' ethnic and economic histories? Since this study had time constraints, it was the latter possibility which was picked up as the first part of the research problem.

While official records provide useful quantitative data they do not help us with knowledge of the experiences of Maori students at school. The task, therefore, is to provide descriptions of the students' school lives : do the students, as a group, say similar things about their participation and achievement in school which might suggest contextual/cultural explanations for success?

Part Two : An Account of Construction and Reconstruction : Game Playing

The second part of the study was influenced by what appears to me to be a difficulty with Bourdieu's account of social order. He accounts for the continuation of classes but does not allow for resistance as individuals try to, and do, achieve (upwards) social mobility. I was, therefore, interested in theories of agency in which individuals' intentions were given some emphasis. Raymond Boudon, another French sociologist, offered a useful perspective, one in which an account of the rational intentions of people explains the maintenance of classes and which might also explain how some individuals change their social and economic status.

Boudon observes that "sociologists used to think that increased school attendance would boost social mobility" (1982;16) and he notes that although people stay longer at school, yet social inequities remain unchanged. He offers, accordingly, an explanation for this phenomenon in which the concept of freedom is a central element: "If one cannot specify the degree of freedom that social agents, taking structural constraints into account, enjoy in any given situation, one is left with profoundly unsatisfactory sociological theories" (ibid;7). He begins, therefore, by rejecting the notion of homo sociologicus as "a creature always moved by social forces exterior to him" (ibid;7) and, he claims, "undesirable social states do not necessarily result from the capacity of a dominant group to impose its whims and interest on dominated groups" (ibid;45). Thus a theory using the power of social structures as the determinant of people's actions makes those actions intelligible, he says, but not determined. As well, he claims that a value theory which places students' school decisions inside a class explanation of how education

is perceived, is incomplete and a culture theory in which class determines learning capabilities may be useful but not sufficient, to explain students' school decisions.

> Classes do assuredly have different value systems and socialisation can indeed cause behaviours ill-adapted to the interests of the acting subject to appear, but an explanatory scheme that reduces an action to the effects of socialisation should always be treated very warily (ibid;195).

Boudon claims that social change comes from more than one source but that those sources are of lesser importance than the individual whose actions should be considered as causes and not effects of social mobility (ibid;9).

His theory, therefore, has as its core the individual's actions and their cumulative social consequences. Thus, he says, sociological theory can discover patterns of social behaviour, and social philosophy can explain people's perceptions of these patterns, but what is needed for each is an explanation of the mechanism by which the patterns, and the perceptions of those patterns, are produced.

The mechanism he offers he calls the operation of 'perverse effects' and he defines this as : "there is a perverse effect when two (or more) individuals, in pursuing a given objective, generate an unintended state of affairs which may be undesirable from the point of view of both or one of them" (ibid;14).

Boudon demonstrates the operation of perverse effects using a game analogy, in which people are positioned as competitors for economic, social or psychological reward. "Failure and frustration are normal components of social life", he says. "In spite of this perverse effects endure, for, before the game starts, everyone stands to gain from it" and so it is in no-one's interests to oppose the game, at least before the game begins (ibid;77).

In this account Boudon's focus is on the social consequences of the acculturation of individual intentions. For example, if all students aimed for and passed the University Bursary Examination, employers

and tertiary educational institutions would fill their vacancies with those holding the highest marks and all other students would be relegated to lesser, or no, work or study and so become a lower class. However, students understand the competitive nature of the real world, evaluate their chances and select goals which they believe are attainable and suitable for people like them. While many select lower goals (and ensure the maintenance of social classes) some stay in the game and hope to win. The information all use for their analysis comes from family and school experiences, says Boudon, but it is their intentional actions which produce or constrain social opportunity and mobility.

How, then, might this account help us to explain the qualifications record of Maori students?

The challenge : is it possible to identify attitudes and values in the students' sub-culture which might reflect the exercise of agency in game-playing?

Boudon is aware that some contexts place greater constraints on individuals than others and he distinguishes between constraints which determine action and those which encourage action (ibid;200-201). If perverse effects are "the essence of ... institutions" (ibid;77) as Boudon says, and if the school is an important institution for students' social mobility, then given the statistics of failure, it might be important to identify some, at least, the game of the students' and why they are playing. Why do some drop out of the qualifications game early, others reach the semifinals and a few play on to its conclusion?

Boudon claims that the responsibility for achievement and post-school social positions is primarily with the student. Individual decision-making interacts with the education and economic systems and family aspirations in a way which 'satisfies' the social class of the family, even if the satisfaction level is quite low (ibid;191). If that is so we need to know how the students as intentional actors perceive their satisfaction levels and in Boudon's terms, what they think 'determines' or 'encourages' their achievements. From Boudon, therefore, came an interest in the intended actions of the students and this led to this second part of the research task: from the

description of the students' perceptions of school achievement is it possible to identify in a Maori youth sub-culture attitudes and values which may produce game-playing with low (or non-credentialist) achievementsatisfaction levels? Boudon's theory was also used as a checking device in Part One and Part Three of the study.

Part Three : An Account of Challenge and Compromise : Language Use

I was aware That Boudon's emphasis of the agency of students would appear as 'obvious' to many teachers : everything we do presumes their intentional action - or inaction. However, this 'commonsense' is challenged by some sociologists. Nash, for example, says :

> It seems necessary to conclude that Boudon's liberal-conservatism, his politically motivated distaste for 'expensive' theories of cultural domination, and his scientism, have produced an unsound sociology fundamentally limited in its explanatory range (1986;129).

Nash argues that Boudon offers not a general theory about "rational, individual, cost-benefit motivated actions" but an account of "the generative mechanism of the secondary effects of class stratification" (ibid;135).

I wondered, therefore, if the attitudes and values of the students might originate in family-class experiences and might then be reproduced by sub-cultural experiences in school. This took me to a consideration of the norms of those practices, specifically in the practice of language, which might determine or encourage actions and so might promote or reduce the possibility of perverse effects. Language use was selected as an important social mechanism, as the link between the individual and the community and as a social activity likely to reflect subjectivities which were shared or challenged. This approach was also prompted, in part, by the English socio-linguist Basil Bernstein. He provides an account of language acquisition and use which I thought might be useful for this study. His theory, he cautions, is sociological and does not account for

individual differences except on a more-or-less basis; further, what he describes is only a part of a consideration of culture and communication, and is only a part of an explanation of how the psychic becomes social but nonetheless, it is "imperative that sociologists recognise in their analyses the fact that man speaks" (1971;137).

Drawing on Durkheim and Marx, Bernstein suggests that the socialisation procedures of different classes affect language acquisition:

> It would be a little naive to believe that differences in knowledge, differences in the sense of the possible, combined with invidious isolation, rooted in different material well-being, would not affect the forms of control and innovation in the socialising procedures of different social classes. I .. argue that the deep structure of communication is affected (ibid;175).

He describes two general codes of 'habitual' speech, one 'elaborated' and one 'restricted', which he says result from different socialisation. Elaborated codes are 'formal' with authority based on high causal and analytic concepts, on the expression of subjective intentions and on references which are universalistic and not context-dependent; meanings are made explicit. From this code the child gains a strong sense of autonomy but may have a weaker sense of social identity. Restricted codes are 'public' with authority based on social relationships rather than reasoned principles and so this code is strong in descriptive concepts, in metaphor and in references which are particularistic and context-dependent. The silences will have a variety of meanings and there will be unspoken assumptions not available to outsiders, and contextual implications not open to those who have not shared the history of the relationships. Meanings are implicit and symbols are social not individual. From this code the child gains a strong sense of social identity but less of autonomy (ibid;42-59).

His general thesis is that habitual communication will reflect a deep structure of one or other of his codes. In this way, says Bernstein:

> Individuals come to learn their social roles through the process of communication. A social role ... is a constellation of shared, learned meanings through which individuals are able to enter stable, consistent and publicly recognised forms of interaction with others. A social role can then be considered as a complex coding activity controlling both the creation and organisation of specific meanings and the conditions for their transmission and reception (ibid;144-5).

The four critical social roles, says Bernstein, are those learned in the family, the age group, the school and the workplace, with the family setting off the developmental sequence. As they grow all the children use restricted codes, if not in the family then through an age group, and most children learn to understand elaborated codes; but not all children are able to use elaborated codes because they have not had access to the (individualistic) role system which evokes its use. Thus when these children reach school, with its elaborated code of communication, they experience difficulties which are both generally-class-cultural and specifically-class-linguistic. The ability to switch codes controls the ability to switch roles, says Bernstein (ibid;129) and so "the problem would seem to be to preserve public language usage but also to create for the individual the possibility of utilizing a formal language" (ibid;54).

<u>The challenge : are there sub-cultural perceptions which are reflected and reproduced, in the students' language, and if so, how does this happen?</u>

The final question is well symbolised by the face and large tongue carved on the end of the taiaha. If we are to learn anything about a culture not our own we have to find a way of understanding its shared "system of meanings which individuals use to make sense of their world" (Harker and McConnochie; 1985;23), central to which are the "symbolic meanings which individuals use to interpret the world, producing a unique view of reality" (ibid;23).

One way of entering the world of the students is through their 'language'. But our time frame denies us access to all that 'language' means and so we are restricted to language in the simpler sense

of verbal communication.

The world of school is a world of talk and as the students interact with their teachers, the non-Maori students and each other, their talk is considerable : we might expect, accordingly, to find verbal symbols which reflect and contribute to the students' perceptions of the world of school. The task, therefore, is to examine the sub-culture to try to understand how it works, how the shared perceptions are produced. In essence, we are looking for subjectivities and power relationships which do or do not promote individual or group interests and we may be able to describe contextual links which constraint or contribute to these aspects of the sub-culture. Further, if we examine the students' speech in terms of social roles we may find roles which constrain or encourage achievement. This is not to carry out any kind of detailed word usage analysis, but rather to look for general signs of class-specific perceptions and the boundaries those perceptions may imply. The students' language may reflect subjectivities which limit or promote their exercise of (school) power, that is, their access to school success.

Part Four : An Account of Empowerment : Conscientization

I acknowledged from the beginning of the study, a basic difficulty with the research problem : how can we study a negative issue in a positive way? The response has to be in the form of a good intention : the focus of the study will be positive, not only by asking the students to think about success but also by aiming to help them understand more about what is happening in their school lives.

In my preliminary reading for the study, and from three different sources, I found the concept of empowerment. Advocates of critical ethnography emphasised participant empowerment (Chapter three), Maori academics called for research which had practical benefits for Maori (Chapter four), and finally the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire argued that 'conscientization' was possible.

Empowerment, therefore, by positioning the students as subjects rather than objects of this study, and by trying to help them understand how to achieve more highly, was the goal of this part

of the year's work. This might, however, suggest a top-down approach in which 'the teacher knows best', selects the answers she wants and then justifies her 'help' with those answers. By way of a denial of such an approach I turn to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire to provide an explanation of this intention.

Freire calls for an end to the oppression of people, an oppression which he locates in the class system and which, he claims, is maintained by the dominant group's control over education. What is needed to liberate the oppressed, he says, is a different kind of education, not the 'banking' system whereby the oppressors fill the oppressed with what they think should be known, but rather a problem posing system in which teacher and students produce what he calls 'generative themes'. Generative themes, he says, the most fundamental of which is 'domination', have an historical/cultural context, have an oppositional reality for being human (so for domination it is liberation) and they contain and are contained in 'limit-situations', by which the oppressors are served and the oppressed are curbed (1972;74). If no theme emerges in the problem-posing exercise then there is the theme of silence which "suggests a structure of muteness in the face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations" (ibid;78).

But knowledge of themes is not enough, says Freire. What is needed is both reflection and action, or praxis, if the oppressed are to be liberated. This requires an education system in which both students and teacher explore the themes through dialogue to develop their critical consciousness. Freire argues that :

> only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education (ibid;65).

He continues by describing this kind of education as the practice of freedom, providing it is creative and not "a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another" (ibid;62). Thematic investigation, he says, is "a common striving towards awareness of reality and self, thus making it a starting point for the educational

process or for cultural action of a liberating kind" (ibid;70). "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (ibid;68). The essence of what Freire suggests is that through critical thinking or 'conscientization', people are able to "emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled" (ibid;81).

The challenge : is it possible to empower the students with the approach of this study?

Freire provides, therefore, the theoretical base for this research task: if we invite the students to discuss success will they produce generative themes with oppositional reality, limit-situations and a cultural/historical context; and will it be possible through dialogue to empower them to "transcend their limit-situations to discover that there lies beyond these situations - and in contradiction to them - an untested feasibility" (ibid;74)? Freire warns that the purpose is not just to empower so that the oppressed may, in time, become the new oppressors. True removal of oppression requires that the oppressors share their knowledge and are themselves liberated through critical thinking. This has relevance for the study also : I participate as co-researcher with the students, who become subjects not objects of the research, and the methodology must accordingly encourage the liberation of the researcher as well as the students.

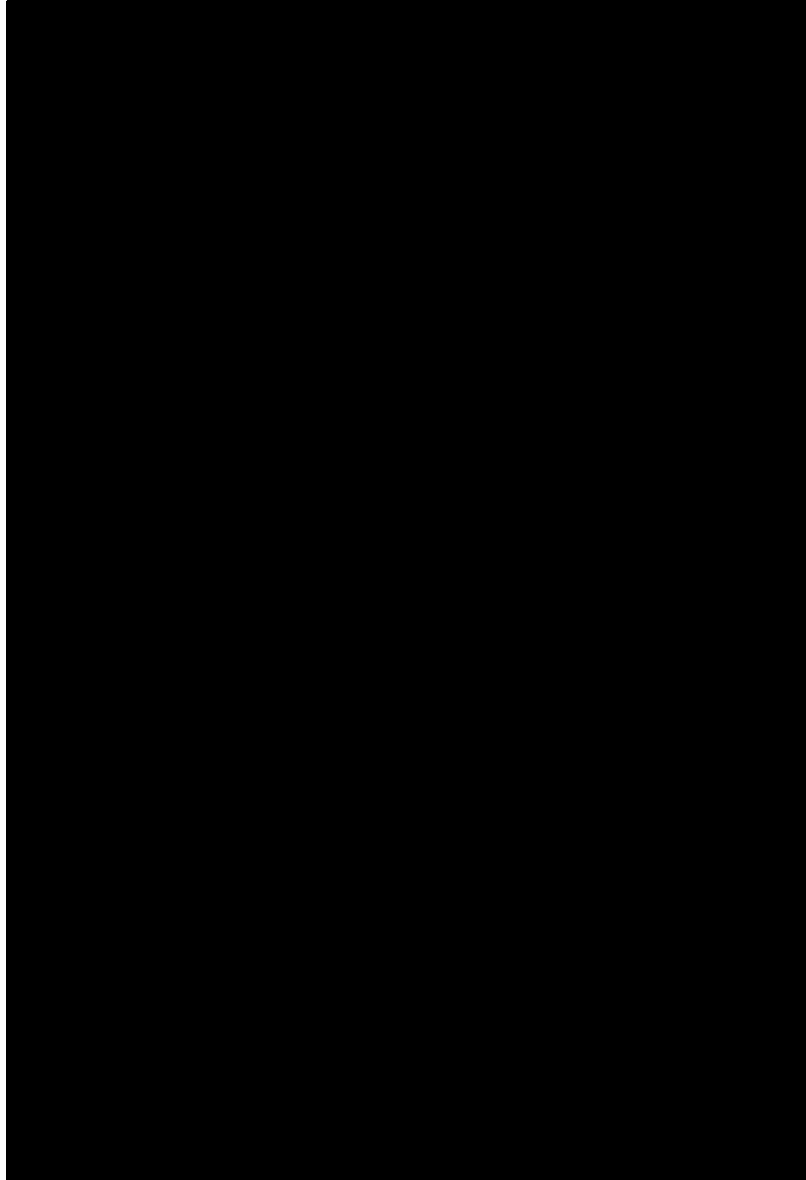
Conclusion

The taiaha is now still, its head pointing towards us. Silently we pick up the twig, as a sign of the good intentions of our visit and to show that we are ready to begin the study.

The three challenges have been presented and may be summarised as a study of a students' sub-culture and its language. The context of school and post-school opportunities 'frames' the three challenges and also links them with the fourth task : is it possible to help the

students with the process of the study? The aim throughout is to be as positive as possible.

Who are approaching. He taua, he taua!



Level Five Art : Painting

CHAPTER TWO

NGA KARANGA : JUSTIFICATION : WHY IS THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IMPORTANT?

Haere mai e te manuhiri tuarangi, haere mai, haere mai, haere mai; welcome to visitors from afar, welcome.

Introduction

As manuhiri approach the marae it is the words of the karanga which greet them. The women call the welcome, they invite the visitors to approach the wharehui and they acknowledge the dead whose life forces are represented in all the men and women participating in the welcome. Although the voices in the karanga often overlap they are separated in this chapter and each voice reflects a different pouritanga. Collectively and symbolically they call everyone to move towards a better understanding of Maori students in the school system. In responding to that call the researcher's task is to decide where to begin and so the voices are presented in a form of "progressive focussing" (Parlett and Hamilton 1972;15), to demonstrate the dialectic approach which reduced the boundaries of possible areas of investigation to the particular site and participants selected.

The Voice of Social Justice

In international law there is an obligation on the State to make education effective (Hastings 1988;37). To meet this imperative we need to know what "effective education" means generally and what it means for Maori students in particular. There is a growing amount of literature to guide us. The difficulty is that the picture of an effective school varies greatly and reflects not only different epistemological, sociological and educational paradigms but also changes in political stances. The suggestions range from long lists of behaviours or characteristics of staff and students, through lists of processes and procedures, lists of teaching, management and leadership goals, lists of student achievements, to more

deep-reaching definitions of school climate and culture, school-community partnership, innovation-focus, skills-for-work preparation and equity issues. Maori leaders have called for practices which promote and support te reo, tikanga and taha Maori; they have stressed the importance of the wairua of the school and, increasingly, effective education for some Maori has meant kura kaupapa Maori. To meet our legal obligation, therefore, schools must - apparently - choose from a number of competing descriptions of an effective school, none of which is definitive and none of which contains prescriptive methodologies for successful action. Given this indeterminancy, schools might be excused if it were shown that they are failing to provide effective education for Maori (or non-Maori) students.

Education for what?

It is possible, of course, that we can demonstrate that schools are meeting their legal obligation when we ask the question "effective education for what?" This question places outcomes for students, rather than processes for schools, as the chief criterion for evaluating effective education and so it takes schools beyond the legal requirement of providing students with equal access to, and opportunity in, whatever schooling is offered. The question shifts the effective education discussion from a concern about legalities to a concern about ethics. What **ought** the outcome for Maori students be? The answer proposed in this study is equity in what Weber calls 'life chances'; that is, on leaving school Maori students should have the same chances as non-Maori to share in the rights, responsibilities and resources of their society. An effective education, therefore, might be concerned - at least - with passing on to students the knowledge, skills and credentials which will give them life chances equal to those of non-Maori students. For Maori students this would mean an education which went beyond basketweaving and watercress cooking (Irwin; 1992) and even beyond te reo mastery if such an approach left them economically and socially vulnerable. The answer, then, to the question 'What ought the school outcomes for (Maori) students be?' is that social justice should be apparent in these outcomes.

The record of Maori students' achievements in school

So how are schools performing? Is there social justice for Maori students in their post- school lives? Are they gaining the knowledge, skills and credentials which enable them to move on to further education or employment and so to equal life chances with non-Maori students? For too many Maori we can make no such claim. An overview of their school and post-school outcomes demonstrates very unjust life chances. A look first at school achievement shows that although Maori students' participation and attainment rates in senior secondary school have improved considerably, they are not gaining the credentials they need. If we use achievement in external examinations as an accepted national method for access to post school opportunities (and at this time there are few accepted alternatives) and if we use non-Maori students' achievement rates in those examinations for comparative purposes we find :

> Maori school leavers are three times as likely as their non-Maori peers to leave school with no formal qualifications; Non-Maori school leavers are around three times as likely as Maori school leavers to have attained a seventh form award; Maori who undergo formal assessment tend to be assessed in fewer papers than other students; Maori candidates in School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate are awarded a disproportionate number of low grades (Ministry of Education; 1993, 56-57).

The record of Maori students' post-school achievements

Even with this bleak picture, the answer to "effective education for what?" might still demonstrate a system which has equitable outcomes for Maori students if a positive description of post-school outcomes is possible. After all, a lack of credentials does not necessarily mean that skills and knowledge for social justice in adult life have not been learned. But as the analysis continues:

> Young Maori continue to face greater risk of exiting the school

> system early with few or no formal qualifications. These young people are extremely limited in their access to further education and training. The reduction in employment opportunities for early school leavers, or for those who do not gain access to post-secondary or vocational training, means that these young people now bear the brunt of under-employment, unemployment, and economic deprivation, and must face the possibility of remaining locked in a continued cycle of disadvantage through every stage of their lives (Ministry of Education; 1993;58).

And the cycle of disadvantage includes, for too many Maori, poorer health, more violence, higher imprisonment rates, earlier deaths ..... than non-Maori; in quantity and quality their life styles suggest few life chances and little social justice.

Who do we 'blame'?

Schools might (and do) claim that effective education for equitable life chances for Maori students is hindered by factors out of schools' control. Such a response allows appeals to gender, ethnicity, family culture and class as explanations of ineffective education for social justice. It is possible to find support in research literature for this appeal. Harker, for example, claims that :

> Many, perhaps most, of the determinants of occupational status, success and privilege in society lie outside the child and are only marginally accessible to the school (1985;177).

He suggests a cultural explanation for school failure. Schools reflect the dominant (non-Maori) middle class, culture and are able to pass on knowledge and credentials best to those whose culture is closest to that of the schools. Thus, many Maori students are disadvantaged by the gap between the cultures of their family and the school.

From a different perspective Lauder (1985) and Nash (1993) indicate other (potential) disadvantages which come with family. In a study of fathers' occupations and children's scholastic abilities, external examination passes and first post-school destinations Lauder found

New Zealand evidence of the causal relationship established in overseas research between family class and unequal life chances. He says :

> it is a mistake to view the problem of failure solely in terms of race" and "the roots of inequality lie not within the individual, nor within the education system itself, but in the economic system and the classes it generates (1985;5-7).

Nash, in another major study of families and school-age children, and working from a theory that the family is the key transmitter of social differences begins with the expectation that :

> family resources of one kind or another are largely responsible for the differences in educational performance and access to education apparent between social groups in New Zealand (1993;2-3).

He concludes his study with :

> Maori children under-achieve when compared with non-Maori children because of significant differences in the cultural predominantly literary - resources possessed by their families (ibid;199).

Can schools make a difference?

From these and similar studies it might be concluded, therefore, that there is little schools can do to help their Maori students; there may well be more powerful determinants of students' life chances. But such a stance overlooks a common theme in all the research: it is not a social or moral imperative that family or anything else should determine life chances and if the cycle of disadvantage is to be broken then schools ought to contribute what they can to the task. Schools, however, would claim that they are already doing what they can to help Maori students achieve socially-just life chances. They would describe their efforts with biculturalism, with guidance, with the provision of credentials and they would ask what else they should do. The question is a genuine one: schools do not

consciously work for unequal life chances for any of their students. An answer is needed .... and to try to find one we should take a closer look at schooling. So the first karanga ends by calling us to approach the school, to acknowledge the pouritanga of social justice and to identify ourselves as manuhiri who are searching diligently for answers.

The Voice of Achievement

Previous studies have examined Maori students' failure in the secondary school system: the impact of cultural alienation, structural racism, the examination system, exclusivist content in learning materials and teaching styles, the loss of individual and iwi self-esteem and inadequate family support are some of the suggested reasons. To match this New Zealand work there is also considerable overseas research on school failure.

Theories of student failure

A useful guide to the wide range of literature is Nash's exploration (1993;14-15) of Flude's classification of theories explaining socially differentiated academic attainment. The first set of explanations follows a deficit theory which focusses on family, home and student characteristics and the perceived inadequacies in each or all. Home-school culture mismatch, restricted language skills and inappropriate parenting are deficit theory explanations of failure. The second set of explanations are teacher inadequacy theories which emphasise teachers' failure to meet the learning needs of students; such characteristics as racist attitudes and exclusivist practices, it is argued, create student negativity and so failure. Then there are the school resource theories which claim that schools need more money, people, time to enable them to reduce student failure rates. Finally, there are the theories of oppression which site the cause of failure in the structural conditions of society, particularly in terms of the acquisition of resources and power by the students' families.

The complexities in and among the theories in Flude's classification

can be demonstrated by some particular theoretical explanations of failure relevant to schools. For example, Bernstein's work with the framing and the classification of knowledge and the implications for school learning structures (1971) suggests that students' failure may be because of a mismatch between their styles of learning and the schools' styles of transmitting knowledge. Benton argued in 1987 that a major obstacle for Maori students' participation in senior secondary school is the School Certificate examination, while Simon has worked on teachers' attitudes towards, and in, Maori students' schooling and suggests that there are links between these attitudes and Maori students' negative responses towards school (1986).

These and other themes suggest different causes of failure, all have been subjected to criticisms and all have influenced policies for, and practices in, schools. Of course, they are not necessarily incompatible as Nash (1993) explains, and they share two assumptions which are important for this study.

First assumption : if we study Maori students, we study causes of failure

Maori students' failure rates are a matter of concern and need to be addressed and it is doubtful that anyone would deny the merit of a search for ways to improve students' school attainment but, (to borrow from Boudon), there may be a perverse effect of the focus on failure. When such studies are published they often receive high media and educational attention and the central concept of failure is reconfirmed as the way things are, as 'commonsense'. The problem with this is that although the generalisation of failure, like all generalisations, reflects the gap, for example, between Maori and non-Maori students in such measurements as examination results, truancy rates, suspensions and post-school outcomes, it does not apply to all Maori students. The generalisation denies the success many Maori students are achieving. By burying them in statistics or citing them as examples of exception which confirm the generalisation, it has the force of a self-fulfilling prophecy: Maori students (and their families) might - or do - accept failure as the school norm for people like them and perform appropriately.

This problem by itself is a minor matter which affirmative school action in a deficit theory approach might counter. A more important issue remains and is found in the second, shared, assumption.

Second assumption : if causes of failure are reduced, students' school achievement will improve

This assumption is that if the causes of failure can be identified then student attainment can be improved. It may well be that the literature of student failure will, in time, agree upon a theoretical explanation of failure which will suggest an interventionist methodology for schools. Perhaps, as Nash suggests

> It might be argued that economic and political structures give rise to social classes; that these classes produce distinctive cultures which reflect their social and economic position; that children brought up within these cultures develop to a different degree the cognitive skills important to the successful acquisition of school knowledge; that the institutional and pedagogic regime of the school system is such that initial differences in intellectual performance are largely reproduced; and that structural constraints have their causal effect through these process mechanisms (1993;15).

Such an explanation might suggest that schools have a role in breaking the cycle, if their 'regime' could be altered. But this implies that the causes of failure are the same as the reasons for success. Does it follow that school practices to negate the causes of failure are (or would be) the same as those to be followed to promote achievement? The question may appear to be semantic but its intention reflects the concern expressed in the Introduction : the students in this study are 'successful' by the Ministry of Education's standards (Chapter six) but not as successful as their Pakeha peers. Could it be that some school practices, such as encouraging participation in examinations, enable the students to gain some credentials and so avoid 'failure' but something else is needed to

promote full achievement comparable with Pakeha students of the same abilities?

Further, what answers might be found if an assumption of success was the starting point of study? This stance would, for many educationalists, seem to fly in the face of the evidence, for Maori students at least. But what if we challenged the current 'commonsense' about Maori school failure with some 'commonsense' about success and the ways it is achieved?

And so this second voice of the karanga mourns the failure emphasis in research and invites us to move forward with success and achievement as the focus of our thinking.

The Voice of Learner Perceptions

This voice takes us from a justification of the knowledge the study will try to gain, to a justification of the empowerment goal of the methodology.

The difficulty with some research in the field is that it positions people (in this study the students) as passive recipients of all that happens in their lives. In the 1970s Garfinkel's ethnomethodological critique of conventional sociology challenged this assumption by arguing that emphasis should be placed on the way individuals perceive and reconstruct their world. This approach has, in its turn, been challenged by poststructuralists, such as Berger and Luckman (1967) who argue for a dialectical process of interaction between social structures (such as class), and agency (the apparently-independent contributions of the individual). Critical ethnographers, drawing on neo-Marxist and feminist social theories have developed this view in their research. Willis (1977), for example, described the boys in his study as actively recognising and resisting the structural conditions of their schooling.

Traditional practices

Given this debate on social structure and individual agency or

response, it is interesting to note that traditional Maori schooling practices placed the responsibility for learning with the student and only a few and very special students who showed appropriate attributes were taught the sacred and leadership knowledge (Metge;1976;22). The structural context of the marae provided the learning situation and individual construction of achievement in that context was expected. A study of Maori students' success in schools, therefore, could well draw on this tradition and link with current ethnographic theory to consider both the context of Maori students' learning and what they do in it.

Apparent agency

This places the study in an ideology which allows for challenges and compromises by the students and suggests, at least, that they are in some way able to influence their achievements at school. This view is supported by Hammersley and Woods who say :

> There can be little doubt that pupils' own interpretations of school processes represent a crucial link in the educational chain. Unless we understand how pupils respond to different forms of pedagogy and school organisation and why they respond in the ways that they do, our efforts to increase effectiveness, or to change the impact, of schooling will stand little chance of success (1984; 3).

Alison Jones notes :

> ... when you are in a classroom with real acting, choosing, thinking students, it seems impossible to argue that they are just living out the ideas, routines and practices which are the product of the powerful economic structures which exist outside the school (and) it is easy to forget that students (and teachers) do not only receive ideas/attitudes and practices, they also interpret, produce and sometimes reject them (1991; 63).

From a different perspective Smith suggests active and even deliberate 'agency' when he describes 'withdrawal' by students:

> Within the existing schooling crisis, Maori resistance can be gauged through disproportionate levels of pupil absenteeism, truancy, early school leaving, disruptive school behaviour, underachievement, and at times overt cultural expression (1992;103).

This last phrase appears to be explained as:

> 'Withdrawal' is a culturally appropriate strategy to be taken by Maori, particularly when considered within the cultural framework of mana (dignity), whakaiti (humility) and whakama (embarrassment) (1992;103).

False consciousness

The problem with an emphasis on the 'agency' of students, however, is that it may understate or overlook the influences which produce that 'agency'. The role of ideology in hegemony will be discussed more fully in Chapter three but it appears in this voice. If, as it is argued, dominant groups in society win the consent of subordinated groups to that dominance through an ideological control of social institutions such as schools, then students may believe that they are acting freely when they are actually reflecting a hegemonic 'false consciousness'. As Jones comments :

> When people believe that patterns of school success and failure are due primarily to individual abilities, the reality of power relationships within a society - particularly within its educational institutions - is concealed (1991;146).

The problem, says Jones, is that most people do not understand the operation of ideology on commonly held views about how society works and so they do not recognise "the processes of domination and subordination in which they participate" (ibid;146). Schools, for example, offer credentials which all students want because they promise social and economic rewards, schools win students' willing participation in school work because it looks equally accessible for

all, but schools also facilitate middle class access to those credentials and so "unintentionally maintain class privilege and power" (ibid; 143). As an example, Jones in describing what counts as knowledge and how to get it, argues that schools produce and reinforce learning styles which work against some students :

> These lessons reproduce and produce those working class Pacific Islands students' beliefs (already re/produced in the family) that it is the teacher's knowledge and words which must be directly assimilated. This .leads to ... neat but often meaningless notes (ibid; 126).

Because the concept of ideology allows for resistance, students may appear to be exercising agency when they are not. Codd et al (1985) explore this problem further. Schools are described as sites of hegemonic struggles. They should distribute success independently of state and family structures but they do not and the power of those structures is contained in the school's organisation, curriculum content and teaching styles and assessment procedures. Students respond to the 'opportunities' they are given and which they see as 'realistic and attainable' but since most Maori students are from working class families and the schools have been established by the Pakeha middle class, their agency is limited. What happens, is that :

> Although the choices are produced within the consciousness of individuals it is crucial to realise that those choices are specifically cultural, as young people create sub-cultural patterns of behaviour in response to, and in rejection of, their statistical fate (Codd et al,1985; 13-15).

Further :

> Human agency, mediated by culture, creates the structures that must be treated as the causal factors in sociological forms of explanation. Human agency is structured not determined. All structures are dominating in the sense that they exist as realities to which individuals must address their attention (ibid; 18).

Perceptual Empowerment

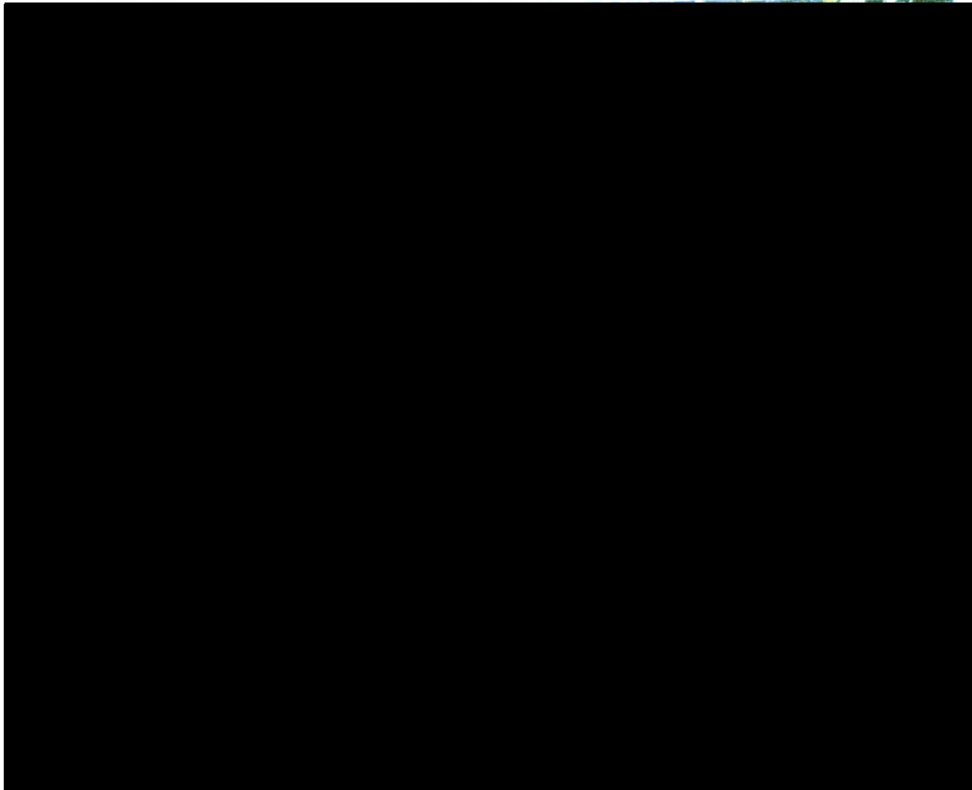
From this analysis we might conclude that the students in this study will be acting less as their own agents and more as carriers of social understandings not their own. What might happen, therefore, if the students were helped to understand this positioning of their agency? Would it be possible as Freire says it is through dialogue (1972;104) to extend the students' empirical knowledge of reality to a knowledge of the causes of reality? If students were able to "speak the word" and, "by naming it", transform their world (ibid; 61), what difference might there be, in their school at least?

The starting point has to be with the students and their perceptions. In their generation of themes about success they may learn new ways to exert their agency in the school or elsewhere, while we, aware of the problematic nature of ideology, might watch for hegemonic coercion, consent and challenge in those themes and in any 'new' perceptions the students - and we - may appear to have gained. The mourning in this third voice of the karanga is that, in spite of everything we do, students' individual agency may remain limited and limiting.

Conclusion

The calls of welcome have brought us onto the marae, and by identifying three concerns for Maori students, have progressively focussed our attention on what is to be studied and how we might help the students in the study. The lack of social justice, the lack of emphasis on achievement and the limited work with the students themselves are all pouritanga identified by the karanga. This study, therefore, will try to respond to these concerns by its search for knowledge, and with a student-centred methodology, a positive focus and a supportive examination of the students' understanding of their schooling.

No reira, piki mai, kake mai, whakato mai; Therefore, come up, climb up and settle here.



Level Six Information Technology : a class learns computing skills.

CHAPTER THREE

TE HAKA : THE CONCEPTUAL BASES OF THE STUDY : WHICH IDEAS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE STUDY'S DIRECTION?

Hei runga, hei raro, hi ha! Toia mai te waka, ki te urunga te waka;
From above and below haul! Pull the canoe to the visiting place.

Introduction

It is possible that manuhiri may be a little apprehensive as they respond to the karanga and begin to move towards the meeting house. Every wharehui has its own ancestors and history and even where these are known there will still be nuances and perceptions to be learned. The welcoming haka symbolically draws us on to the marae and in this report/journey it introduces us to the conceptual bases of the study to help visitors understand the progress of the hui.

To explain the key concepts in this study has been very difficult. Expert and experienced researchers debate meanings, theoretical bases, methodologies, reporting . . . . For a beginner, therefore, the task was daunting. I have attempted it in a way which takes time but which may help those in our school and whanau who are unfamiliar with sociology and so provide us all with a safe arrival onto the marae.

Ethnography

The first concept of the study is that of critical ethnography. Anderson defines ethnography as "the research technique of direct observation of human activity and interaction in an ongoing and naturalistic setting" (1990;148); critical ethnography goes beyond this approach to involve those being studied in the research process. A brief review of the background to ethnography should make the difference clearer.

Origins of interpretive research

Ethnography sits in the interpretive paradigm which has been

criticised by researchers who promote the 'scientific' approach and seek general laws justified by formal empirical logic, rather than the dialectic explanation and context-tied conclusions of interpretive research. The essence of the problem is the question 'what can be regarded as (certain) knowledge and how is it discovered?' Early crude empiricism placed the researcher as separate from what was being researched (reality-out-there) and bridged the gap by reliance on observation and logic which was justified by experience (in methodology and literature). But the truth-guarantee of this approach was challenged by those who described what they said were key 'interpretive' features in the apparently logical process: in 1963, for example, Nobel Laureate Peter Medawar published 'Is the scientific paper a fraud?' and argued that the scientific process is presented as a much more orderly, precise activity than it really is. In social research a broad interpretivist movement developed which looked for meanings rather than laws and which moved from quantitive to qualitative data and from logico-deductive proof to descriptive-interpretive judgement. The epistemology which informs this approach places emphasis on human perceptions of, and contributions to, understanding the world and stresses the shared and often context-related nature of public knowledge. This view of knowledge enables a wide variety of research techniques to be used, as appropriate to the focus of the study, including the anthropologist's technique of ethnography.

Ethnography in practice

The main feature of ethnography, therefore, is that as qualitative research its aim is not experimental, as might be done in a laboratory, nor is it to analyse a range of documents or events, although some of this kind of quantitive research may be included in the methodology. Instead, ethnography is concerned with patterns of behaviour and their meaning and so its aim is to discover and describe those patterns. This means that ethnography is very concerned with the context of behaviour and thus its focus is on the culture of the group; this requires what ethnographers call 'participant observation' of the behaviour in its context. This observation is 'open' (is known to the group) and its purpose is to

socialise the observer into the group's culture so that final descriptions may be as full and accurate as possible. Because the task of socialisation is to learn about the context, research questions are likely to be broad to begin with and become more focussed as the study progresses and this is sometimes called 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss;1967) in that theory emerges from the data as it is collected rather than providing the starting point for the study.

The final report of an ethnographic study contains a description of relevant concepts and literature, and its specific methodological stages and activities, as in deductive research, but its report of results is in the form of a narrative of the study. The report describes the way in which the researcher entered the context, gathered information and the way in which questions emerged and researcher perceptions were checked; in these 'thick descriptions' as they have been termed, a form of validity is offered.

From ethnography to critical ethnography

But today there is a third approach which has its origins in interpretive inquiry, but denies the interpretivists' claims that they are able to be objective; it emphasises the need for the inclusion of historical and ideological context, and for the values of the researcher to be displayed as part of the methodology. The 'choice' often posed within interpretive inquiry, of either social structures or human agency as the more significant source of social meaning, has been taken up and a possible dialectical relationship is proposed as an alternative explanation. This 'critical theory' has a concern that interpretive social research is content just to "illuminate" (Carr et al 1983;135) and, with feminist and neo-Marxist theory, believes that social injustices can be changed if the sources of domination are revealed. This view has led to the development of critical social theory and within it 'critical ethnography', a new form of ethnography, in which the participants' perceptions of their context are not only to be described : by involving them in thinking about their lives the researcher works for their emancipation from false or oppressive knowledge.

Critical ethnography is sometimes called 'action research' or reflection–in-action and sites the participants as co-researchers in the search for 'false consciousness' and their subsequent empowerment. This approach also alters the concept of 'grounded theory' as it is generally understood. Within 'ethnography' the general view of 'grounded theory' was of it operating as a process of research for the 'observer' but not as a part of the practice of those in the context; in a school context, for example, teachers' behaviours were not included in its meaning. Altrichter and Posch, however, claim that a distrust of the practitioner's ability to carry out research in the manner of a disinterested sociologist is unwarranted :

> There are certainly some differences with regard to the concrete forms of reflection between professional researchers and teachers but - - - these differences are gradual rather than dichotomous ones. Thus, we think that what is good for practice is good for research (1989;30).

'Grounded theory', therefore, changes and in this study the technique of critical ethnography is more inclusive of the 'Principal' in the total research process.

There are challenges to the critical theory approach, and these challenges contain difficulties for the use of critical ethnography in research. The nature of the criticism and a possible answer are described later in this chapter, in the discussion of 'discourse', but for the moment we can rest at this point.

Critical ethnography in this study

This study, therefore, in a small way, uses the technique of critical ethnography, with a preconception that social knowledge is created by the inter-relationship of the power of social structures (such as the family) and the actions of the individual : that individuals' social knowledge may be determined by the operation of ideology (thus making perceptions of social reality structural in essence) is a strong reason for trying the strategy of reflection-in-action. I describe my use of critical ethnography as 'small' because it was

the students' school world into which I had to be socialised, not the broader context of the school, and because I was not confident that 'empowerment' was possible in a time frame of less than one year. The practice of critical reflexivity, however, was extensive.

Critical reflexivity

It is important at this point to describe "the most critical issue facing critical ethnographers today" (Gary Anderson; 1989;254), the issue of critical reflexivity. Because of the concern for trustworthy research, and without the 'security' which a framework such as logical empiricism provides, critical ethnography must include and display the practice of self-reflection on five different aspects of the research, says Anderson:

> Reflexivity in critical ethnography ... involves a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' commonsense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study (ibid;254-255).

To meet these criteria I had to try to describe my thinking in each stage of the study. For this reason, a commentary follows each stage of the work with the students.

Further, Delamont says of the same issue that because there is no way in which the researcher can place herself outside of the study, the researcher must not "waste time trying to eliminate 'investigator effects'; instead she should concentrate on understanding those effects" (1992;8). As well, the researcher must recognise that the knowledge she has is the best she has, liable to error and so of necessity subject to her ongoing and systematic enquiry. In this study I record the effects of the research not only on and for the students but also on me. This seems appropriate in terms of both critical ethnography and Friere's call for the conscientisation of researched and researcher. It also seems an appropriate check for any unforseen consequences of the kind that Boudon describes.

Because this study is what Anderson calls 'focussed research' (1990;150) in that there is an identified problem with some prior research already done, the reflexivity of this study had to include that work as well. For this reason the literature survey of Chapter four is as broad as was possible in the time frame of the study. Each time a question arose from the data the literature was checked for confirmation, doubt or denial.

For this study, therefore, the technique of critical reflexivity had a double intention : to think about students' ideas on success and to try to promote their empowerment. As well, the practice of critical reflexivity I hoped would promote the trust-worthiness of the study.

Case Study

The second major concept of this research is case study.

It is a simple matter to say that case study is not a research methodology but to say what it is, is more difficult. Anderson gives a definition which is a useful starting point :

> Case study is an empirical enquiry that (a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which (c) multiple sources of evidence are used (1990;158).

Anderson continues, however, by noting that his definition is historical rather than practical: for example, "there are ... case studies which evaluate," he says, even though the aim of most case studies is to describe and interpret rather than measure and predict (ibid;157). Case studies may begin with a formal hypothesis but are more likely to have their origins in an issue about which there is insufficient knowledge and for methodology this means that "the problem defines the method" (Parlett;1972;13).

The origins of case study research

A brief history of case study helps with an understanding of what it can mean. This history probably begins with the Cambridge conference in 1975 at which the two related definitions of "the study of an instance in action" and a "bounded system" were agreed upon (Adelman et al;1976;7). The methodology was "eclectic, although techniques and procedures in common use include observation ... interview ... audio-visual recording, field note-taking, document collection ... and discussing the accuracy of an account with those observed" (Adelman et al; 1976;8). The reports were to offer "surrogate experience" and their truths were to be guaranteed by the readers' "shock of recognition" or "verstehen" (Kemmis;1980;128); generalisation was to be naturalistic not formalistic (ibid;9).

From these early 'definitions' there has followed considerable debate about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of case study, and much of the debate reflects the concerns expressed about ethnography and the interpretive paradigm generally. The reasons for the debate are also the same: the view of science held by advocates and opponents seems to determine a favourable or antagonistic response to case study approach - except that Atkinson and Delamont who describe themselves as "committed practitioners of interpretive research methods, particularly ethnography" (1985;26), attack case study as lacking theory, being seriously deficient in metholology, lacking in formal analysis and misguided in its emphasis on the nature of reporting. Their analysis confirms the complications of case study definition.

Working in the interpretive paradigm, defenders of the case study approach, such as Kemmis (1980), make the claim that their approach is a social and cultural process, with truth claims limited to the conditions of the study: justification comes through reasonable and rational processes which are demonstrated by explicit and dialectic explanation, in accessible language, to reach the open and tacit knowledge of the reader. In the same way, Elliott, citing Altrichter's interpretation of validity as the relationship between interpretation,

data and reality, says validity has to be demonstrated by the researcher, not the methodology (1991;218). The chief difficulty with all of this is that the case study approach, in seeking authenticity, has often called itself a methodology as a response to the issue of validity.

Case study in this study

For this research, therefore, because of the difficulties of definition and authenticity, the term case study is used simply to signal that this study has specific context and participants and that the relationship between the school context and the students' success patterns is unclear. The term also signals that the interpretive work of each stage is limited to retrospective, and will not offer predictive, generalisations. The critical ethnography of the study operates within this meaning of case study.

Culture

Some approaches

The third term used in this study is that of culture and Joan Metge offers a useful introduction to the concept : it is the "system of symbols and meanings in terms of which a particular group of people make sense of their world, communicate with each other and plan and live their lives ... It (is) useful to describe culture as a language' consisting of 'words' ... and rules for putting these 'words' together in patterns which 'say something', that is convey meaning between 'speakers' and 'hearers'" (1967;45). Burtonwood develops these ideas and alerts us to the complexities of the interpretation of culture, whether in sociological theory or for the practice of social research. He begins with three broad views: the holistic view which stresses the shared perceptions within social groups, the hegemonic dimension in which it is claimed that the values and behaviours of a dominant group are imposed on a subordinate group, and the pluralist approach which notes that within any society there is a multiplicity of different value systems (1986;2). Burtonwood also draws our attention to the anthroplogical view of culture in which knowledge

is patterned and shared, is transmitted to the next generation and has the possibility of modification during that process; in this concept language and culture have an important relationship. Culture, therefore, can be described in terms of language habits which label and define or 'produce' and 'reproduce' the real world for its users.

Difficulties with cultural knowledge

Burtonwood's distinctions help us to appreciate the competing theoretical demands of the sociology of order (social structures produce the individual and so meanings of reality reside in the group), the sociology of control (the agency of the individual is such that meanings of reality must be ascribed to the individual) and a sociology of challenge and compromise in which individuals are neither passive recipients of culture nor freely acting (culturally) autonomous beings. He also helps with a recognition of the difficulties of determining how to 'know' a culture : are only those who have grown up in it able to describe it, and as critics of this view note, if so whose account do we accept? Or are we able to learn ways of 'reading' cultures not our own?

From this discussion it can be seen that the concept of culture is complex and its use as a research tool is equally difficult. For example, some studies of working class or ethnic ultures have produced cultural deficit theories which have not only 'blamed the victim' but also promoted a kind of middle class cultural imperialism. Other studies have promoted the strengths of non-dominant cultures but at the risk of denying them access to change and, at least, improvement to their economic subordination. And, of relevance to this study, some sub-cultural studies of young people have raised hopes of interventionist school strategies such as separate classes, schools and curriculum which may actually and perversely maintain their marginalised social positions.

In spite of these and other difficulties, educational sociologists have been able to describe (in terms of this study) student sub-cultures even if they are "short-term ... arising at a particular historical moment then fading, disappearing or becoming so widely diffused

they lose their distinctiveness" (Burtonwood;1986;13).

A cultural network

One way of examining culture has come from the field of educational administration and has relevance for this study. It is not a challenge to the usual approaches to, and definitions of, culture but rather it offers a new way of thinking about it.

The approach talks of (organisational) culture as 'conceptual glue' (Marsh;1985;69) or 'webs of significance' (Owens;1987;182) or 'the nervous system' (Beardsmore;1985;67). Wayne Edwards suggests that culture provides "the crucial foundations", it binds people together and it "is often implicit, rarely described or written down and is often sub-conscious" (1991;2). Deal describes it as that which "fuses individual identity with collective destiny" and provides "stability, certainty and predictability" (1987;6-7). Culture in this approach includes assumptions ('What we think is true') values ('What we think is important') and norms ('How we do things around here') (Owens;ibid;165,166) and is reflected in verbal and non-verbal behaviour, artefacts and the contextual environment. It is transmitted, maintained and changed by what are called cultural networks and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and sanctions. The approach, therefore, is compatible with other descriptions of culture. The research methodology, however, draws on the concept of a cultural network in which key social roles (variously described as heroes, demons, spies, gossips, high priests, storytellers and more) confirm, with different behaviours, the values and norms of the group. Rewards and sanctions similarly operate within, and inform, the culture.

Culture in this study

Because the concept (and use) of culture in research is not straightforward this study draws on more than one approach. It draws on the anthropological view described earlier, particularly in the study of the students' language, and it draws on the concept of a cultural network to try to understand the operation and effects of the students' views. There was no presumption that the students'

discussions would reflect any particular kind of culture but there was an expectation that some form of shared views would emerge and there was a hope that these views might indicate reasons for school achievement.

Discourse

Throughout this and preceding chapters there have been references to the role of language and it is necessary now to describe what is meant by these references.

The use of language as a research tool in this study arose from my thinking about theoretical challenges to critical theory. The existence of these challenges was signalled in the explanation of ethnography and is now described. Critical theory has been attacked as being an abstract 'high culture', having no connection with the real world, often logically meaningless, unable to be tested against an external measure and, therefore, unable to provide knowledge of the real world or an analysis of real social structures (Craib;1992; 223).

A possible response to these criticisms may be found in language and its use. If the technique of discourse analysis, for example, were able to link what is and what ought to be, then critical theorists might respond with a claim that in the practice of communication they are able to provide knowledge of both real and ideal worlds.

Communication

Interest in the phenomenon of communication is high : whether as **talk** which is "a highly complex, problematic activity, rich in contradictory and bizarre meanings and frequently fraught with difficulties and confusion" (Walker and Adelman in Mishler; 1979;7) or as **speech** which is an individual act and "to some extent unique - - - and cannot, therefore, be the object of a science" (Craib; 1992;136) or as **language** which is "the underlying structure or logic behind speech" (ibid). Studies of **communication** have also taken a broader view and semiotics, for example, includes a study, not

so much of the spoken word but more of the 'narrative' of cultural products (such as symbols, icons, myths) which are a part of a semiotic communication paradigm. Sociolinguistic interest in the science of language has tended to focus on the rules, (syntax and semantics) behind the speech act, while sociologistic interest has been more in "the centrality of pragmatics, the social functions of language in communicating intent and meaning and in persuading others to behave in desired ways" (Bates in Mishler, 1979;12). Others, such as Bernstein, have studied the process and consequences of language acquisition.

If communication has social significance, and our experience of the real world suggests it has, then it will have 'laws' which govern its use. These laws may be about 'meaning', such as the conditions necessary for the 'meaning' response, and proponents of this approach argue that if we look for context-free laws then we are able to see people as users of language rules rather than governed by them. So language variations are not denials of a law of meaning but rather communication accomplishments in a reflexivity of meaning and context. This approach also offers a response to the problem that meaning is never certain and yet we still believe, as we take part in it, that the meaning of language is ordered. The answer is that **language use** is ordered. Labov's work, for example, asserts that language use is ordered by "an unconscious, invariant character and (is) compelling and obligatory" (Mishler; 1979;73). These context free laws are context-grounded but apply only to similar contexts, that is the contextual influence is made explicit. The difficulty with this approach is that it has the potential to evacuate the impact of social structures from the 'law'; it is also likely to result in very fragmented and so unhelpful predictions about communication.

Discourse assumptions may provide order for language use

Another approach offers a potential - if incomplete - way forward and its focus is on the concept of discourse. Central to the study of discourse is an acceptance that language use is ordered, not by syntax and semantics, nor by similarity of context, but by people's common assumptions about meanings. In education, for example,

the discourse of schooling has assumed, at one time, that academic knowledge was not needed (for work) by most students, (and so primary schooling was sufficient), but at another, that all students needed a basic education (and so needed a common or core curriculum up to the leaving age of 15). The importance of literacy and numeracy has been an assumption of most discourses of schooling while today the belief that skills acquisition will improve paid employment acquisition has become one of the accepted meanings of the discourse of Tomorrow's Schools. Discourses, therefore, can be similar, complimentary or contradictory, in time, between groups and about the same or different topics.

If discourse assumptions provide order for language use, then there is the possibility that discourse operates like, or as a part of, ideology; it may, therefore, offer or prevent social possibilities and thus contribute to power-holding or powerlessness. This possibility is affirmed by the French sociologist, Michel Foucault who argues that "knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others - - A discourse embodies knowledge (or rather what it defines as knowledge) and therefore embodies power" (Craib; 1992;186). The concept of discourse at this point picks up an ethical aspect and so connects with the empowering focus of critical theory: theory should go beyond explanations of outcomes, to a consideration of whether they should be allowed to happen at all. A study of discourses, therefore, may show effects which (dis)empower people and in this way ethical categories of what ought to be, meet rational categories of what is.

Discourse analysis in the study

This explanation, of course, still allows powerful ideologies to appear as 'ideal' and so while discourse assumptions about meaning may provide order for language use they do not necessarily provide an answer to the criticisms made of critical theory. True knowledge of the world and its social structures may still escape us and so our apparent 'empowerment' may still be called false consciousness unless we accept Habermas's claim that the act of speech is

communicative competence which presumes the speech norms of rational, and true knowledge are present, but that these assumptions can be questioned and when they are it is in the context of discourse. It is in discourse, not the speech act, that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed. Thus, says Habermas, discussion links the real and ideal; it joins truth and social justice by seeking a rational consensus. If this were not so, there would be no point in discussion (Carr and Kemmis;1983;93).

I considered Habermas's explanation as I analysed the discourse of the students in this study as will be shown in Chapter twelve.

My discourse analysis is limited to the language use of the students. This focus Jacob calls 'cognitive' or 'new ethnography' and she describes its key assumptions, as they apply to this study, as : "culture is central to understanding human beings", "each bounded group of individuals has a unique system for perceiving and organising the worlds about them", and "most of the cultural knowledge of a group is reflected in its language" (1987;22-3). The task, therefore, was to "encourage informants to speak in the same way they would talk to others in their cultural scene" (Spradley, cited by Jacob; ibid;24) and the goal, in a cyclical process of starting with a broad problem and narrowing down, was "to find answers to the questions and to discover new questions" (ibid;24). The interpretation in this study, however, was not as formal as Jacob describes; it was descriptive, first of themes, then of usage rather than of semantic relationships. I examined the students' discourse for the (re)construction of knowledge as Habermas theorises and for the consequential subjectivities of power or powerlessness which Foucault describes.

I anticipated that from the students' language would come themes of perceptions of school success and what (they said) promoted it; their language use might also suggest sources of those perceptions and the ways their subjectivities were maintained. Language was also the mechanism for potential empowerment of the students as they examined their discourse during the study. In this way critical and cognitive ethnography were joined in what was a very challenging study.

Hegemony and Ideology

The previous discussions have focussed on concepts important for the methodology of this study. The final description is of two concepts, hegemony and ideology, which are also important for the theoretical explanation. They are presented together because they work together.

Hegemony

Hegemony, is now used to mean the domination by one group of people over another through political (coercive) and ideological (consensus) means, the latter being especially important in capitalist societies. But hegemonic structures and practices are able to be contested. Hegemony is not just a matter of compliance; because it "is all about meaning and how people understand the world, it can refer to a range of ideas which either maintain power relations or challenge them" (Jones; 1991;164). This allows for counter-hegemony or resistance, because of life experiences and by means of critique. Change, therefore, is always possible and thus hegemony is never complete.

Hegemony may also be described in terms of gender, class or race: for example, in her analysis of Hegemony, Social Class and Women's Education, Arnot considers the complexities of analysing class and male hegemony and concludes:

> in neither the dominant nor the dominated gender codes do women escape from their inferior and subordinate positions (1982;85).

Ranganui Walker describes racial hegemony :

> 'Because Maori people have been subjected to political, economic and cultural domination by taha Pakeha since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi they are positioned at the bottom of the socio-economic status system of New Zealand society (1985;79).

The term hegemony, therefore, is an important concept in any study which is with, and for, Maori teenagers.

But this does not explain how hegemony actually works. The explanation is that it works through ideological discourse.

Ideology

The term ideology is best defined as "a system of thought that cannot be demonstrated to be true and which has the effect of maintaining relations of domination and exploitation" (Codd et al; 1985;16). It can also mean, more simply, any "politically contested idea" (ibid). The essence of the term ideology is that it is about the dominant way of thinking and behaving; it is about what we believe is the 'natural' or 'commonsense' way of living and it operates through the discourses of such social structures as family, work and schools. In this pervasive way it maintains the dominant group's status by presenting their way of life as desirable, attainable and right. Because it operates this way it is logically possible for individuals to 'read' ideological discourse and, by their agency, deflect or avoid its impact. Thus counter-hegemony - or in Habermas's description, the reconstruction of knowledge - is theoretically possible. That this can actually be done (by praxis), is Freire's vision and that a study of ideology operating in the students' sub-cultural discourse will empower their resistance, is my vision.

Researcher's Assumptions

So we come to a final comment in this description of the key concepts of the study : the background and other relevant information about the researcher.

First, as a practitioner-researcher in education I was well socialised in the discourse of schools and I came to a possible discourse of youth, and in particular the discourse of a Maori students' sub-culture, with thirty years of bi-ethnic teaching experience. However, I had only childhood (and rural) lived bi-ethnic experience and I assumed, therefore, that some learning about the language

use of a Maori students' cultural discourse would be necessary.

Second, because of my teaching experience I had a starting assumption (as a generalisation) that Maori students did not value school academic success. I suspected the reason for this was that either they were not fooled by the rhetoric that hard work brings achievement or that they had a view that they could not succeed and so did not try. I also guessed that the ideology in operation had class as its core and that ethnicity was a contributing rather than a primary factor in their (hegemonic) academic subordination.

I have a particular interest in the inter-relationship of culture and language and I anticipated that the whole area of the language work of the study was going to be both interesting and complex. Language would give me entry to the students' ideas (their perceptions of success), their language usage might reflect language as a symbol and an instrument of a sub-culture, (and so suggest ideological factors operating in their discourse of school) and as a tool, language offered access to the critical ethnography and emancipatory goal of the study. I had no expectation for this latter aim : its possibilities were challenging but I wondered if its practice might have been too late, given the age of the students. I expected to become clearer about language, its uses and effects as the study progressed.

The hope for the study was that it would be more than just a report of a process: the aim was a report (product) which would possibly help others contemplating similar journeys.

Finally, I began the study with the belief that schools should make a difference to students' post school choices; otherwise there is no ideal of human potential and or of social progress to which teachers can strive. I also began the study with the assumption that defensible or not - academic success has a strong voice in the discourse of schooling.

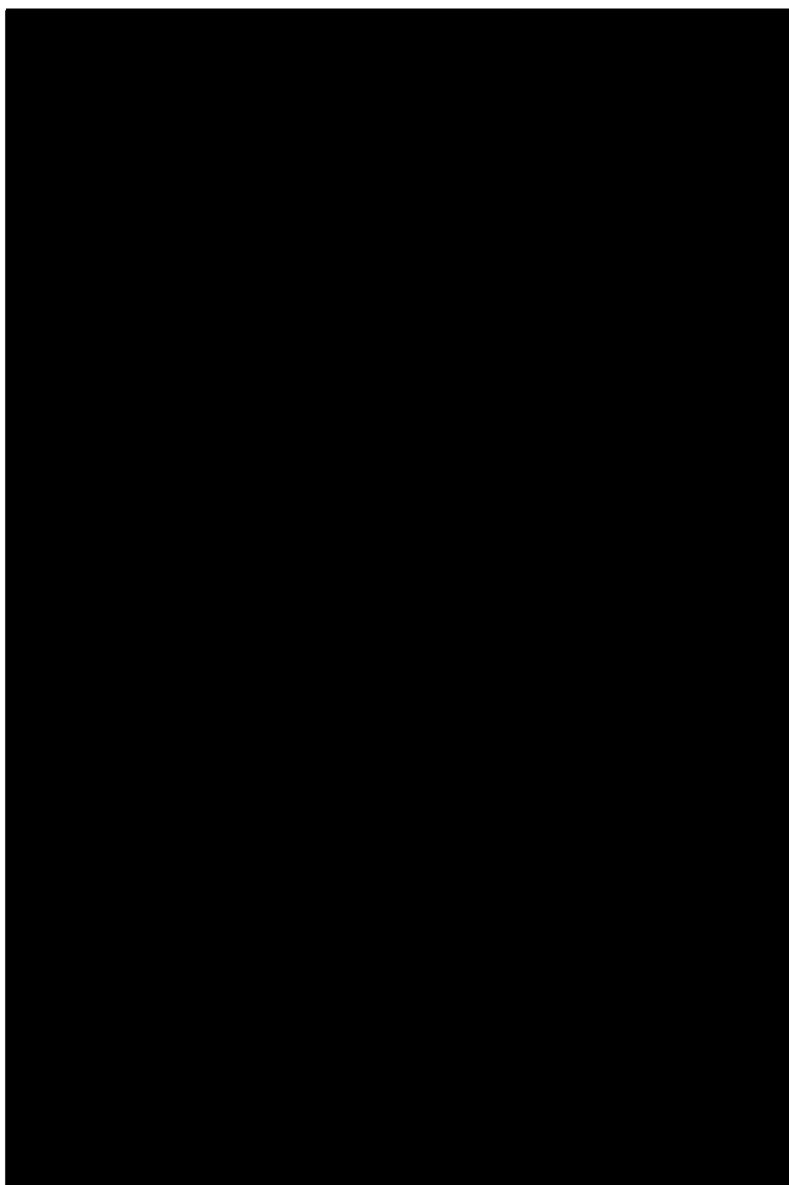
The theory which contributed to my expectations has been described in part, in previous chapters and Chapter four will complete the description of the theoretical base of the study.

Conclusion

This concludes the explanation of the conceptual bases of the study. In a critical theory approach I hoped to use the technique of critical ethnography in a case study of senior Maori students. I anticipated that gaining knowledge of the students' sub-culture (and its sources) would be complex and so I chose to encourage the students to be their own ethnographers, to confirm or deny my first ideas and to help them gain more from school. I also examined the cultural network to help me understand how they reproduced their sub-cultural perceptions of school and life and to complete the study, my discourse analysis looked for contradictions and ambiguities in the construction and contestation of knowledge in the sub-culture.

Finally, the empowerment focus, which distinguishes critical ethnography from ethnography and which is theoretically possible in the description of counter hegemony, was to be checked against the concept and effects of hegemony.

E tata runga, e roa raro; prepare for what is ahead.



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CHAPTER FOUR

TE WHAIKORERO : LITERATURE REVIEW : WHO HAS WRITTEN ABOUT STUDENTS AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES?

Ko tahi te kowhau e kuhu ana te miro ma te miro pango me te miro whero; irrespective of the race, creed, culture of those who are gathered here, all are created equal.

Introduction

The speeches of welcome establish the identity of, and suggest links between, tangata whenua and manuhiri; in this chapter identity and links are offered through a literature review.

Each of the two sections of this review begins with students' voices and then the review presents explanations which helped my thinking about this study :

1. social structuring, hegemony and culture,
2,3. agency, counter-hegemony and language and
4. empowerment.

Some speakers addressed all three concerns but for clarity are 'positioned' by the dominant view in their voice. The hosts speak first, kaumatua following the tauiwi or Pakeha speakers. With the indulgence of our whanau we break custom with the inclusion of women's voices.

New Zealand Speakers

Accounts of social order : structures

Richard Harker begins this part of the whaikorero with three concepts which, he suggests, explain how social control is exercised by education. First, society is stratified by the status given to written knowledge and the amount of high status knowledge gained and used by individuals. Second, this stratification is legitimized by the (impartial) awarding of knowledge qualifications, with an ideology of 'natural giftedness 'confirming' the rightness of the

process. This leads on to the third concept, that of the allocation of status to students within the school which has cumulative implications for gaining qualifications and for later achievement and employment possibilities.

Given that the dominant social group defines what knowledge is worthwhile, how it is to be recognised and how students have access to that knowledge, it is logical that children from groups whose cultures are not represented in the school should experience difficulties. "It is this cultural barrier which Bourdieu sees as the fundamental cause of the perpetuation of social divisions" says Harker (1985;141).

The problem of culture Harker pursues with another paper in which he calls for a cultural interaction which recognises differences in educational needs of both minority and majority students: the majority students should be culturally challenged and the minority students should be culturally linked with the school. He proposes a model for bicultural education which has necessary knowledge as its base, to protect equity for life chances, but which uses a variety of learning contexts including marae.

> If we are to be concerned with social equity we must get beyond culture in order for pupils to be able to reflect on their own culture - both majority and minority (1989;5).

A similar approach comes from Neil Burtonwood.

> Once the question of power in society comes into the analysis, the equation between diversity and equality looks doubtful; and once attention turns from lifestyles to life chances, pluralism (of culture) ... is exposed as ... hegemony (Burtonwood; 1986;148).

He offers a Popperian approach to culture. We should not 'box' students into 'local' culture but, recognising that nothing is certain, we should require students to go beyond culture (1986;140). "No culture has the right to be protected," says Burtonwood.

> Attributing rights to culture is an act of reification. Education must go beyond the transmission of culture so as to allow pupils to explore all kinds of cultural possibilities. While common sense demands that initially a degree of security in the form of a cultural base be given to each child, the ultimate goal of an educational process must be autonomy and - - - this includes autonomy with respect to 'roots' as well (ibid;160).

The goal, says Burtonwood, is a Popperian 'open' society, with a dynamic view of culture in which conformity and certainty are replaced by opportunity to think and to doubt.

However, Graham Smith had a different concern about culture. He argued, in 1986, that the promotion and development of taha Maori in schools did not help Maori students. Instead, he said, it primarily entrenched the dominant Pakeha needs and interests, it was only indirectly concerned with Maori needs and interests and in its process it was acculturating Maori culture. "It is more about the education of the Pakeha than about the education of the Maori" (1986;13).

His reasons for these claims included: that taha Maori was 'allowed' by the dominant Pakeha education policymakers and school leaders; that Maori were already bicultural to a significant degree, that few Maori leaders had been involved in determining what form taha Maori school practices should take and so preservation of Maori culture had not been a focus. He saw the need for more Maori control over decision-making and specifically rejected the model of the 'unique bicultural New Zealander' because it would be assimilatory in practice, if only because of the Pakeha population size and 'gatekeeping practices' such as institutionalised racism. Six years later he took these ideas further: he advocated alternative Maori schooling and attacked those ideologies operating in the state education system which promoted Pakeha interests and demeaned or denied Maori interests. These ideologies, he summarised as 'the superiority of Pakeha knowledge and cultural norms' and the 'liberating potential of Pakeha knowledge and learning' (1992;92).

Until these ideologies were effectively controlled he said, the educational experiences of most Maori students would be of inequality. Consequently, he argued, kura kaupapa Maori "provide meaningful and viable interventions" (ibid;102).

A broader view of the problem has been taken by some speakers who argue that if Maori students' achievements are to improve, radical change is needed. Richard Bates, for example, attacks what he calls the New Cult of Efficiency. He claims that the basis of social organisation has altered from people rights to property rights. In education, the ideology governing the change reflects, and constructs, parents' concerns for their children's futures and these concerns are easily transformed into beliefs that inadequate schooling will deny their children property rights. A consequence has been the emergence of efficiency as the school goal and a standardisation of data "which denies structural and cultural relationships" (1990;50). The result, he says, is the destruction of any sense of the cultural basis of either local communities or the wider educational community. What we must do is challenge the politics of selfishness evident in current educational reform by recognising the ideology at work and resisting it in research and in educational practice (ibid;40). If we do not, we cannot defend the hope we have in the relationship between education and social development.

John Codd continues these accounts with a reminder that the hegemony of the elites is not a deliberate strategy (1985;117). Codd says that the political discourse of the state uses 'culture' in schooling in the restructured sense of bi or multicultural. The effect of this is to deflect attention from the broader sense of culture and so it avoids a critique of the effects of that broader concept and, particularly, it hides the school's role in the production of meanings and consciousness. The school, says Codd, is a cultural artefact, in that it is a construct of social meanings generally and its inhabitants particularly. It offers an ideal as opposed to a 'real' cultural vision and the 'ideal' vision can vary. The different 'ideals' are reflected in different discourses of education and Codd identifies four major ideals as the technocratic, the personalistic, the reproductive and the transformative. It is the last of these 'ideals'

or images which sees the school as a major force for cultural change. The transformative image also makes clear the contradiction which is hidden or ignored in the other three : if schooling is for the individual and for community development how do we act if their interests conflict? Thus the tension between (individual) diversity and (community) consensus, says Codd, is also about social reality and political discourse. We need, in a country where most schools are state controlled, a discourse which operates at the real cultural level and which will make possible a real transformation.

With Codd's identification of a basic cultural problem for schools, we close by returning to Roy Nash's study of the link between family resources and inequality in education (Chapter two) but a little more is needed now. As Nash stressed, he did not work from a cultural deficit theory but from one which recognises the economic aspect of Bourdieu's 'cultural capital'. This approach allows the metaphor of 'investing in education' to avoid Bourdieu's cultural 'iron cage' and so allows for explanations of individual success and failure. The study argues that "given the resources they have, working class families, on the whole cannot compete with the superior resources of middle class families" (1993;36). Of particular value for this study is Nash's view that while the terms 'culture' and 'sub-culture' may usefully "describe particular clusters of social practice - which clearly influence the way people live their lives - - - " yet "social processes, phenomena and events must be explained in terms of the material structures of relationships" (ibid;199). This offers a useful perspective for the hui to come.

Comment

In this section speakers have suggested that (Maori) students with cultural experience different from that required by schools will be disadvantaged. Some speakers have said that schools, either by the way they organise and assess knowledge, award status, ignore or emphasize taha and te reo Maori, create achievement difficulties for students. Others have called for change, either with separate Maori schools or for schooling which maintains Maori children's cultural base but which gives them the culture necessary for school

achievement. The complexities of such an ideal transformative function, however, are identified by the last three speakers who have stressed the economic base of social relationships and so alerted us to a powerful structuring in real life.

Peter Ramsay, amongst other writers, was concerned in 1985 about the hegemonic power of those in control of "the modes of economic reproduction" (ibid;116) and only four years later the discourse of effective schools seemed to reflect that hegemony. In the Tomorrow's Schools publicity the language suggested more local control, more local power and so a 'cultural freedom' of sorts. In reality, the discourse is market-force driven and conservative in its freedoms; it demands a fifth cultural 'ideal' which can only be called bureaucratic. Its move from a focus on students' learning to an emphasis on administration, gives an image which is presented as just and empowering but which in practice reifies administration. The culture of this schooling is the culture of efficiency and it reproduces (openly) the hegemony of capital which Nash and Bates identify and which must be recognised, as Codd stresses. How can Maori students achieve in schools in which 'effective' means efficient, and in which culture means only Maori culture?

Accounts of construction and reconstruction : the context of school

The voices which follow describe possibilities : strategies or practices which might be important influences in Maori students' (re)construction of perceptions of achievement. In this section the focus is on the complexities of the school context.

For example, Walter Hirsh and Raymond Scott (1988) published a collection of essays on ethnicity and equity in New Zealand education and a number of the contributors described programmes they had established with the aim of 'Getting it Right'. Very few of the programmes, however, were in secondary schools and even fewer contained feedback from the students in those programmes; the strategies (most of which had a te reo or taha Maori focus) are interesting but not informative if we want the students' perspectives. Indeed, as one who contributed to that book, I now recognise my

(and others') top down perspective and student-distant approach.

Later, in a report for the Ministry of Education, Walter Hirsh examined more directly issues and factors relating to Maori achievement and although he noted "there are no simple or immediate solutions to the issue of Maori educational under-achievement" (1990;7), he was able to describe more than 30 contributing concerns in five broad categories. These were : (1) empowerment, achievement and curriculum (2) language issues (3) teachers (4) good schools and (5) 'other'. He also draws attention to the complexity in schools of such issues as taha Maori, language acquisition and teacher attitudes, and he warns against any reliance on generalist descriptions of the factors of a good school. Of particular interest in his report is first, the stress on empowerment, second, the theme that it is important that Maori take a lead in determining what constitutes achievement in education and, third, the section on racism (ibid;29,39). Racism is a concern for other writers and I noted Hirsh's view that "racism has been at the very root of the condition of Maori people today" (ibid;95). Nevertheless, he is (perhaps overly) positive: "people are increasingly motivated by issues of human rights - " (ibid;79) and the practice of affirmative action will help " to make equal opportunities a reality instead of a stated ideal" (ibid;81).

From this kind of general approach we turn to explorations of single issues. Peter Ranby, for example, back in 1979, looked at the question of the self-esteem of Maori secondary students and noted:

> If the relationship between high achievement and high self-concept is thought to be causal, in either direction, then other factors intervene, to a greater extent among Maori pupils than among Pakeha pupils, and the depression of Maori self-concept and academic status is the result of those intervening influences (1979;64).

A possible intervening influence might be teachers, and the view that teachers' expectations of their students contribute to their school success or failure is one which has attracted researchers'

attention. In 1983, Alison St. George studied 90 nine-year olds and argued that while teachers did have lower expectations of Polynesian students, there was no overt discrimination in teacher-student class interaction. Instead, she said, the negative expectations "led to them being treated similarly to others expected to be of low ability and helped to maintain the status quo of lower achievement" (ibid;48). But one of her recommendations is rather curious. She suggests that Maori and Pacific Islands students should receive attribution training so that they learn to attribute failure "to lack of effort, rather than lack of ability, (to) improve persistence and self-esteem" (ibid;57).

Judith Simon pursued a similar interest in teacher expectations and concluded:

> regardless of good intentions (Pakeha views of Maori children) can operate against the interests of Maori children. - - Although such teachers may feel kindly and caring - - - they often convey to them messages that Maoriness is less-significant, less important, less valuable, less real, than 'Pakeha-ness' (1984;133).

Her research suggests that some of the 'caring' attitudes which hurt Maori students include treating all children as the same, believing that Maori programmes lead to separatism, and claiming that ethnic differences are not important. She points to "an abundance of research which shows that - - - teachers' expectations can and do become self-fulfilling prophecies" (ibid;134).

Richard Benton in a submission to Royal Commission on Social Policy argued that a major obstacle to Maori participation in higher secondary school was School Certificate and he cited Adams:

> to succeed in the individualistically competitive secondary system, Maori children would 'perforce become party to a cultural value that is basically antithetical to the survival of Maori culture (1987;4).

Benton affirms that most Maori children want to pass School Certificate but "the system requires victims - - to ensure the success of the chosen" (ibid;53) and while the examination assessment system has changed since his study, the results have not : Maori are still behind Pakeha in achievement. Benton also notes the flow-on of School Certificate grades into Sixth Form Certificate grades and, with the lower grades going yet again to Maori students, the accumulative effect, he says, is that fewer go to university, fewer gain employment. As he argues, "individual effort" and "proven performance" are meaningless notions for too many Maori students (ibid;56).

Benton was invited to consider the educational and administrative implications of the Matawaia Declaration which came from a meeting in Tai Tokerau of Maori teachers and members of the community. In commenting on language and teaching he says :

> Education through the medium of Maori is essential for Maori-speaking children and highly desirable for other children, provided that whatever linguistic knowledge they have is respected and built on, and that education, not just language learning remains at the heart of what goes on in school (1988;24).

Drawing on the concepts of 'necessary' and 'arbitary' culture which he has borrowed from Harker and Nash, Benton argues that it is the 'arbitary' or home culture of many children which distances them from the school's 'necessary' culture which all students must acquire if they are to succeed academically.

Comment

From these voices I noted that teachers are an important variable in schools and that programmes of affirmative action to counter discrimination or racism, might help Maori students achieve. If schools are to exercise 'agency' it seems it will be a very complex process.

In the opening speeches, however, the students' views 'spoke' of their participation in school and these voices suggested they believed they were influencing what happened to them : conformity in their sub-culture, the rejection of, or search for achievement, a belief in the power of work and motivation, were some forms of agency which they identified. The literature, therefore, encouraged me to keep listening to the students.

Accounts of challenge and compromise : the students

There are few studies of Maori students' views on secondary school achievement. The Hilary and John Mitchell profile (1988) of forty Maori students with high School Certificate marks in English and Mathematics is one of the few. They noted the significance of peer pressure and the importance of conformity in the students' culture; issues of teacher expectations, family attitudes to school achievement and racism were also explored. However, although their students are revealed as special I wondered how typical they were of their Maori peers and the Mitchells rightly suggest that more research is needed into Maori students' attitudes to school achievement.

The existence of student sub-cultures in New Zealand has also been described by Sue Middleton who in an explanation of girls' education and cultural reproduction, identifies sub-cultures amongst girls, the boundaries being the school stream :

> (The) 'intellectual' girls sub-culture was based on a virginal model of female sexuality" .... and "commercial and other 'lower stream' girls were often perceived by academic girls (whether it was true or not) as more sexually active (1985;86).

In Tai Tokerau, Jim Marshall and Michael Peters examined by questionnaire the perceptions of 489 Maori fifth formers on various aspects of their school participation and retention; their study was, therefore, more inclusive of both the 'contented' and the 'disillusioned' Maori student voice. They found evidence 'for the application of a concept of institutional racism' (1989;vi) and, to

meet the political purpose of the study (how to encourage Maori students to stay at school longer), they offered a range of recommendations for change in school practices. They argued that the "students do not yet, en masse, subscribe to an oppositional and separationist youth culture as do many young members of ethnic groups in both American and European cities" but that this "reservoir of positive goodwill and optimism" could not be sustained without a major restructuring of schools and their practices" (ibid;5).

There is much in their report about students' perceptions which is of interest, but when the research was returned to its contributing schools it was criticized; I was one who put my criticism in writing, and the criticism is relevant to this study. The major concern many Principals expressed was that some of the interpretations seemed to ignore the evidence of the data. One example will indicate the problem. Recommendation 2a called for an increase in the number, type, scope of, and access to, Maori language programmes. It was based, the researchers said, on the students' expressed preference for learning te reo had it been possible. The data, however, showed that every school offered te reo from, at least, form three to form five, that in almost every school the numbers taking te reo dropped off dramatically after form three and the reasons the students gave for not taking Maori had little to do with school exclusionary practices: 52 dismissed School Certificate te reo as too hard or of no interest, 27 preferred other subjects, 10 had value clashes with te reo and only 7 regretted not taking it. All the other 193 who responded to the question studied te reo.

It seemed to some of us that the interpretation might have been better focussed on the students' rejection of the chance to learn their language when most, in answer to a different question, said it was important; the consequential recommendation for schools might have been quite different. In general, while the students in the report speak clearly of personal and family pain, their accounts are submerged in an overly strong instrumental perception of the role of the school in their lack of achievement. The report is nonetheless useful for this study particularly in terms of the students' responses.

A third recent study of students' perceptions of school achievement is that of Alison Jones (1991). Her work has been identified already (Introduction, Chapter two) but an overview now is relevant. Jones examined a low stream fifth form group of girls whose families were from the Pacific Islands. She compared their school perceptions and experiences with those of a high stream fifth form class of mostly Pakeha girls, in the same girls' school. Differences were notable and Jones identifies the classroom interactions of teachers and the lower stream girls as a form of symbolic violence. She says it was unknowing on the part of the teachers and participatory on the part of the students but the effect of these unequal classroom experiences reduced the lower stream girls' chances to gain qualifications. Further, their belief that brains and motivation were what brought achievement meant that they saw failure as their fault and "the girls can justifiably believe that the organisation and operation of the school and the job market are 'fair'" (ibid;155). Jones did not consider ability in her study but she found a "cohesiveness and collectivity" (1991;104) in the sub-culture of the 5 Mason Pacific Islands girls she studies and says in comparing them with the higher streamed 5 Simmonds and mostly Pakeha class :

> Overall .... the 5 Simmonds girls approached school, and learning in the classrooms in particular, with a sense of involvement not evident in the 5 Mason classrooms (ibid;170).

My study is different in that it is based in a co-ed and a non-streamed school and all Maori students in two year levels are included. Jones' study, however, will provide another useful reference document.

In a wider study than Jones conducted, Roy Nash has analysed student aspirations and post-school destinations and he found :

> a student sub-culture that stands in plain opposition to the social values of the schools ... can be recognised and may affect many students as they translate aspirations into actual destinations (1993;170).

Finally, Hirsh reports the existence of a Maori sub-culture, in terms of its visibility in peer pressure, which seems to appear in the 12-15 years of age group :

> Here the students who were (succeeding by) failing applied pressure to those who were pursuing successes (by succeeding) within the system (1990;69).

These, then, are the major recent New Zealand studies which give prominence to students' views on achievement.

Accounts of empowerment

This study had the hope that the methodology might empower the student participants and the literature which supported this small attempt was considerable.

It is appropriate to begin with the Treaty of Waitangi. The second article gives to Maori "te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga or ratou taonga katoa" or the unqualified dominion (full chieftanship) over their lands, villages and all treasures". Since children are taonga we should have knowledge of what rangatiratanga might mean for Maori students in school. What would a guiding principle say about helping them?

A possible answer comes from John Patterson who describes a basic philosophy which he says can be found in an exploration of Maori values. He calls it a philosophy of survival, which, in the sense of living in, and in harmony with, the world, is made up of two elements, respect and balance. Respect requires that we recognise the mauri or life force of all with which we work, whether material or immaterial, and we should try to add our own mauri to it. Thus, whether we are preparing a meal or teaching children we should work to enhance the value of what we start with otherwise there is no justification for altering the original form. This concept of respect applies to all human activity and so provides a high ideal for living. Logically, it also applies to what we might consider 'bad' materials, such as disease, and this brings us to the second element,

that of of balance. Respect for mauri means that when something goes wrong our task is to restore, or balance, the natural state of life. Thus when "evil things and people start to prevail we are not required by the principle of respect to leave them alone" but rather act "to counter-balance the effects of these forces" (1992;39). This philosophy is, in essence, an ideal of treating 'materials' as ends, not means and its relevance to the promise of the second article of the Treaty of Waitangi can be seen : students as taonga should receive 'respect' and 'balance' for empowerment.

Also talking of power, Pat Hohepa (1978) considered the question of equality and argued that the 'one people' concept provided a social goal of conformity, not equality. He noted that in a democratic vote Pakeha could out-vote Maori, that uniform laws did not necessarily create equality and, anyway, majority views were not necessarily enlightened views. What was needed for true equality was cultural diversity and to gain this Maori advice had to be sought and followed. This would happen only, he said, when Maori had a power - as opposed to an intellectual - base.

The idea of power was picked up by the Runanga Matua in preparing for "Tomorrow's Schools" changes.

> As a relatively powerless group, Maori people know that if they are not present at the centre they will not be heard locally. They also know that in order to effect change they must convince the majority group that the only real source of power in education - - - is the gap between what is and what might be (1987;7).

Powerlessness was also a theme in submissions to Royal Commission on Social Policy. In his commentary on it, Wally Penetito noted that the definition of reality in New Zealand was a top-down process in which the natural order of things was determined by the dominant non-Maori perspective. He identifies structural violence (the way in which people are deprived) as a needed research focus and calls for help for Maori people "to define their own reality, thus overcoming their relative powerlessness" (1988;96). For social

justice, what was needed was equity (the maintenance of cultural identity) and equality (the basis of integration). To achieve this the Treaty of Waitangi had to be used "to provide the base-line of principles for analysing past relationships, for defining present relationships and for shaping future relationships" (ibid;110). The partnership offered by the Treaty would come through dialogue or "an equal sharing of energy" (ibid;110).

Penetito pursued the idea of power - or lack of it - in another report in which he described the elements of "authentic education". He applied his concern to Maori school principals but it has equal application to students.

> Wherever Maori are in the education system one concept which readily comes to mind, when thinking about who and where they are and how they are, is the concept of mokemoke, of being alone, of being in social isolation or as the saying goes: 'ma te mokemoke ia e mate' (being isolated she dies) (1993;7).

For Penetito, taha Maori in schools was not a solution for mokemoke:

> the major beneficiaries of taha Maori right now are Pakeha kids. It's not a major benefit for Maori pupils. It's too minimal and doesn't develop enough Maoriness (1986;69).

He sees the problem as :

> If you are a Maori student in a school, the more you achieve the more you are separated from your Maori peers. If you don't achieve, you get to keep your mates but then you can't get a job (1988;93).

Other Maori writers have also returned to the Treaty of Waitangi and its promise of partnership. Ranginui Walker (1985) in an exploration of the Pakeha cultural domination of taha Maori in schools identifies major difficulties for Maori students in School Certificate, teachers' attitudes and too little Maori involvement in policy-setting, particularly. His call is for a praxis which will

"generate the political will to proceed with the humanizing task of liberating taha Maori" (ibid;79). He notes that in an era of declining rolls, schools will have to meet clients' 'needs' if they are to survive and while attitudinal change is difficult, its eventual happening will create the Treaty of Waitangi partnership of taha Maori and Pakeha.

Ngahere Hopa says : "The promises in the Treaty of Waitangi of equality in education as in all human rights are undeniable" (1988;40) and to achieve this equality he calls for two paths forward: empowerment of the people and contiguity between education and its community. He says of Maori students :

> it is not that they do not work hard or are unfamiliar with competition; the difference lies in the orientation of these values to a communal endeavour (1988;47).

All writers are agreed that education is important. "Education is the key to the future : through education attitudes can be changed and minority groups can obtain equality with the rest of the community" says Hiwi Tauroa in "Race Against Time" (1982;52). He notes the credentialist focus of schooling and calls for "a balance between education to earn a living and education to live" (ibid;53).

Comment

None of these writers is optimistic about the future. They speak of structural constraints, of the dominance of Pakeha perspectives, of negative school experiences and all call for a partnership between Maori and Pakeha to improve education for Maori students. The common focus is power-holding and the importance of education in the empowerment of Maori is stressed. These are voices which must be heard and appropriately, they conclude the tangata whenua contributions.

Manuhiri : Speakers from Other Countries

An account of social order : structures

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) are often described as providing the first major attack on the myth that education is the path to social mobility. In opposition to the myth they presented a detailed analysis of capitalism as they saw it operating in the United States of America. They claim :

> The struggle between working people and capital in the economy has its counterpart in educational conflict. On the one hand, employers and other social elites have sought to use the schools for the reproduction of profitable types of worker consciousness and behaviour through a correspondence between social relationships of education and those of economic life. On the other hand parents, students, worker organisations, blacks, ethnic minorities, women and others have sought to use schools for their own objectives : material security, culture, a more just distribution of economic reward, and a path of personal development conducive not to profits but to a fuller, happier life (ibid;10).

Amongst the things Bowles and Gintis attack are the ideology of meritocracy which legitimates inequality, albeit in a symbolic form and the replication in schools of the relationships of dominance and subordination in economic life. "The experience of schooling and not merely the context of formal learning, is central to (the) process (of producing an amenable and fragmented labour force)" (ibid;125).

They call for a social revolution which is based on "a spirit of socialist consciousness around the goals of economic democracy" (ibid;283). Without this the old power relationships will merely reappear in new forms. "Band-aid remedies of liberal educational reform" (ibid;288) are not enough for personal liberation and political enlightenment. Their analysis of economic structuralism is complex but the message is clear : any partial approach to removing social inequality such as through school reform will not bring change. More radical moves are necessary. This account of social structuring is deterministic but its focus will provide another perspective for

the hui.

An account of construction and reconstruction : the context of school

The importance of finding ways to close the cultural gap in schools is emphasized by James Banks. He offers individual and community reasons:

> It is in the best interest of a political democracy to protect the rights of all citizens to maintain allegiances to their ethnic groups. Research has demonstrated that individuals are quite capable of maintaining allegiance both to their ethnic group and to the nation state. Emerging social science research also indicates that individuals have a need for basic group identities, even in highly modernised societies (1988;27).

To achieve multi-cultural competencies Banks focuses on the school and all its students.

> Multi-ethnic education includes, but is much more comprehensive than, ethnic studies or curriculum reform related to ethnicity. (It) is concerned with - - - students from all ethnic groups - - (ibid;33).

He provides a theoretical framework for assessing levels of cross-cultural functioning and then offers a 'total school environment' model to achieve what is essentially a transformation of school culture.

Comment

Neither of the last two voices offers schools any hope in the search for ways to help disadvantaged students. Bowles and Gintis are clear : school reform on its own is not enough while Banks' focus on culture and school reform places seemingly impossible responsibilities on schools. Further, he takes no account of the effects of the discourses of class or work, for example, which may be more powerful determinants of students' achievements and school

processes. The challenge of this study, therefore, is complicated: how do we describe students' success when the literature offers such diverse views?

Accounts of challenge and compromise : the students

In 'The school that I'd like" 1,000 students in England describe what they like about school and a strong picture of a student sub-culture emerges in which teachers, buildings, curriculum, examinations, uniforms and more, are symbols of a shared view that schooling is a fairly negative experience. The existence of this sub-culture is highlighted by the seventeen year old who wrote :

> The fact is that a school contains two societies - that of the pupils and that of the teachers (Blishen;1969;136).

This sub-culture, however, is generalised; the voices of the black and the working class students, in particular, are anonymous and so while the book provides an interesting starting point, other studies which have focussed on particular groups of students are possibly more relevant to this study. Such an example, and from the same decade, is the Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden account (1962) of Huddersfield working class students going through the grammar school system to become middle class citizens. They found a variety of symbolic resistances by the group (including not buying the school magazine) and noted :

> It was odd to hear these consistent incidents in which children - often quite shy children - had taken a painful stand against the school over something which must have looked quite trivial to the teachers . (And): Often there was the sense of two strange worlds finding themselves side by side, yet neither fully aware of the other's sheer difference (1962;126).

The sub-culture Jackson and Marsden found included non-school friendships, clubs and gangs, and it was not a sub-culture which was totally anti-school. School had its attractions but "it was only a part of life and often an alien part at that" (ibid;128).

In contrast, Willis in 'Learning to Labour' (1977) found a student 'culture of resistence' in which the boys opposed much of what their school promoted. Willis theorised that their sub-culture was predominantly a product of their rejection of school values and authority, and he explained their culture with the notions of 'penetration' and 'limitation' (ibid;119). This can be described as a complex and inter-related process in which cultural knowledge (or 'impulses') enable a class understanding or 'penetration' of the conditions of existence but this understanding can also be blocked or limited by other effects so that penetration is actually only partial penetration. These concepts of penetration and limitation allow for an exercise of agency and explain how "an unfree condition (can) be entered freely" (ibid;120). Willis's research is particularly relevant for this study because his explanation of the effects of sub-culture may contribute to our understanding of student perceptions of school.

David Woods studied 'Lowfield' a secondary modern co-educational school which served a rural area of the Midlands. He was particularly interested in the question 'What do people do in school and what do they do to each other?' and so his focus was on student and staff perceptions of, and strategies in, school life. Like Willis, he was more concerned with the non-academic students, like Willis he found similar perspectives among those students and, like Willis, he found student resistance and adaptations. Many of Woods' students shared with Willis's boys a desire 'to leave school at the earliest opportunity" (1979;88) and both groups emphasised laughter as an important feature of school life. Willis's and Woods' non-academic students generally shared similar perspectives of school, teachers and the curriculum.

Willis, however, focussed on the students' experiences of learning to labour while Woods pursued similarities in student and teacher responses to the institution of the school : "The reluctant school child is joined by the reluctant teacher" (1979;256) he says. Students and teachers separately, are individuals enjoying the fun of the playground or staffroom, but when they come together "they break up into splinters" (ibid;256). Divisions exist within 'self' and

'consciousness' for both students and teachers, Woods says, and this affects the students' learning outcomes. He concludes with a question which reminds us of Codd's concern with individual and community development : are schools simply about certification and so should operate as a form of social control with no concern for individual and private lives or do they have a wider purpose in terms of 'education for life' and so should be providing alternatives to the dominant emphasis on community and public life? Woods claims that preparation for work is important but so is personal enrichment in the technocratic society to 'counter-balance' its worst effects - - - and preserve humanity' (ibid;259).

In another ethnographic study, M. Fuller, (1984) looked at a small group of black girls in a London comprehensive and found a sub-culture which was strongly committed to achievement as a strategy of the students for control over their present and future lives. They were 'good' students in that they did their classwork but were not 'good' in terms of classroom behaviour. The theme of 'fun' was strong in their discussion. They valued their own, rather than others', opinions of themselves and their sense of identity came not from their peer group but from their efforts to achieve. Appropriately, they admired teachers who, they believed, had achieved as people. Fuller challenges the implication in Willis' work that there is a "necessary equation of academic striving and success with conformity" (1984;86). This study also raised questions about a correlation between teacher expectations and student failure or success, because the girls placed no significance on their teachers' views. Further, the view that schools are sites of opposing values, with failure synonomous with rejection of those values, was also questioned. In general, this study suggests that student sub-cultures are perhaps much more context - and people - specific than (some) reasearch suggests.

A. Pollard in an analysis of 'goodies, jokers and gangs' in the (primary) classroom offers a similar perspective. He argues that students have three major interests : 'self' with its social and biographical origins, peer group membership and learning. These interrelate to provide coping strategies for the two social systems of a classroom

: the school's system as represented by teachers and theirs as represented by their peers. Managing and maintaining 'self' included the coping strategies of laughter, (which was not necessarily opposed to the school) and avoidance of the stress which was inherent in the teacher's power and the evaluative nature of schooling, or the introduction of stress to relieve boredom. 'Self' maintenance also included the protection of personal dignity. These self-interest strategies, Pollard claimed, are supported and defended by peer group membership and the group also provided group coping strategies in the learning situation. In time, the interaction of learning, achievement (or not) and 'self' accumulate into a clear identity of 'failure' or 'success'. "The three major child interests of self, peer group membership and learning, whatever their relative prominence or nature for each type of group, are mutually interrelated in the way they affect coping" (1984;253). This study adds the concept of 'self management' to our thinking about student success and failure.

V. Furlong also looked at students' interaction, in a class of fourth year girls considered to be of low ability and difficult to manage. The starting point was the 'usual' description of peer group interaction as a sub-culture of norms, expressed through the power of the group and followed by all in the group, with the norms verifying the group and restricting student's agency. But this view, said Furlong, is inadequate because it misses individual interpretations of norms as they interact: "there is no consistent culture for a group of pupils. Norms and values relate to specific definitions of the situations and to typical interaction sets, rather than to a particular group of friends" (1984;150). Thus social situations facilitate rather than produce action. In this study students' reasons for behaviour - good and bad - focused on the teacher : 'boring', strict and soft teachers and the amount of learning 'achieved' all counted. Laughter was important and bunking was a possible response. But the key to the students' culture was that the definition of the situation, and how to respond to it, were a matter of continual negotiation. Students' views of school varied enormously and their interaction in the school could not be described as sub-culture based.

Furlong's study, however, is criticised in another report. M. Hammersley and G. Turner (1984) noted the heavy stress on deviant students in research but argue that the oppositional concept of conformity is problematic and, at the least, simplistic. There is no consistent 'middle class' culture nor students to match. They say, for example, that students may conform to school practices for future employment purposes rather than because they accept school values. As well, any analysis should include the school's resistances to, and accommodation of, student responses, and analysis should include students' access to or rejection of other students' sub-culture(s). Further, analysis should include students' adaptations to institutions where they are treated differently from, for example, at home. Hammersley and Turner noted that Furlong's work does not account for students' knowledge (perspectives) about school or society which will influence their school responses. They offer, instead, a different approach which includes students' behaviour in, and their stated understandings of, school and they balance these with explanations of student behaviourial patterns in terms of the structures of school and society. Thus social class and school status come into the description of students' responses to school.

Student's perceptions of teachers is a common thread and H. Gannaway (1984) looked at this more closely. He found a version of the 'ideal' teacher : one who keeps order, has a laugh and understands students. Stories about some teachers were told and retold to become myths and reflected two extremes : the one who did not ever gain class control and left and the wild shouter who carried on. Other criteria of a good teacher included one whose lessons were not boring, the usefulness of the subject for exams or jobs and the amount of writing done. Of particular interest in this study is the analysis of 'boring', in the sense of students' personal enjoyment, and it resulted from a lack of understanding, or a dislike of writing or dislike of the school. This study noted also the students' views on 'hard work' in school and in the world of work: school work is compulsory and unpaid while 'real' work is voluntary and effort is rewarded - and immediately.

Comment

From the ethnographic studies just described there emerged some common - if complex - student responses to school : fun, boring, bunking, friends and teachers were all important considerations for the students. It seemed as if their sub-cultures had an element of rejection in common. The focus of the negativity might be the school or other students but its existence suggests shared perceptions of reality in which the sub-culture exerted , or resisted, the values of the perceived dominant group. How any sub-culture works, therefore, in (re)producing perceptions is a matter of importance, especially if those perceptions while providing the benefits of community for the group have the effect of working against their long or short term (individual) interests. In a study such as this, with its focus on success, an understanding of the way the subculture operates could show positive aspects of peer pressure or it might show compromises with, or capitulations to, the particular school context in which the students' work.

Calls for Empowerment : Research Intentions and Process

And so the speeches of welcome come to a close. But speeches are supported by waiata and in this report the tradition is symbolised by a discussion of some views about research with, and for, Maori in education.

Kathy Irwin said, in her review of Maori education in 1991:

> 'We need to identify success in Maori education at this time, as much as if not more than we need to identify failure. We have had the 'bad news' for years, indeed there is a whole educational industry which has grown around it' (1992;77).

The call for a different focus in research is not new. In 1980 He Huarahi called for more research on success rather than on failure and called for urgent research into successful methods of teaching reading to Maori pupils (ibid;46). A year later the conference on Priorities in Multi-cultural Education Research identified the need

for practical rather than theoretical outcomes, for community development and, especially, for the research to be done by Maori themselves.

Aroha Durie (1992) has also expressed concerns about Maori research: she comments on 'hit and run' techniques and negative and misused research findings. Her response is in the form of six principles for research in a Maori context and she stresses community development.

The idea of empowerment is reinforced by Walter Hirsh who says

> The design, conduct and 'ownership' of research into ethnic issues is a critical issue" and he cites a leader in Maori education who said "I don't mind who studies a topic like this providing it leads to changes for the betterment of our people (1990;5).

Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn warn us that "much of the research into the Maori way of life has been devised to answer research questions that have benefitted the researcher and the non-Maori academic community - - (with) little benefit - - to Maori people themselves" (1992;126). Maori history, knowledge and images as a people have all been harmed, they say. Writing from the perspective of critical social scientists, they argue that they do not advocate that non-Maori should not research Maori issues, but rather that they should be "better informed, better prepared and 'cross-culturally competent' (ibid;129). This latter concept includes positive sensitivities to Maori knowledge, values and practices and the sharing of power between researcher and researched. Bishop and Glynn write from the perspective of the researcher-stranger, the outsider who enters the context and must first be socialised, and they emphasize the need for socialisation into the Maori half of the bicultural context. In this way research is more likely to empower Maori and empowerment should be a key goal. They suggest that action research is possible for this emancipatory research.

The important ethical implications of research conducted within a Maori community are discussed by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. She

offers guidelines for tauiwi (non-Maori) researchers which are a good summary of all of the views expressed above. While her concern is with policy motivated research she offers principles which apply to this study also. The first and over-riding principle is that of responsibility to the participants; their rights, interests and sensitivities must be acknowledged and protected. The aims and possible outcomes and uses must be explained and consent gained, before the study begins; the right of the people to control information and to remain anonymous are basic, and, she says, the findings must be made public. She also asks for researcher-honesty with findings, for sensitivity and respect for the research participants and for researchers to recognise the trust placed in them by the people.

As she says

> (research) is about power (and) the risk of mismanagement or manipulation of either the information, or the informants, may occur - - - only a code of ethics, scrupulously observed, can prevent this (1991;13).

This provides a fitting conclusion for the waiata and for the whaikorero generally.

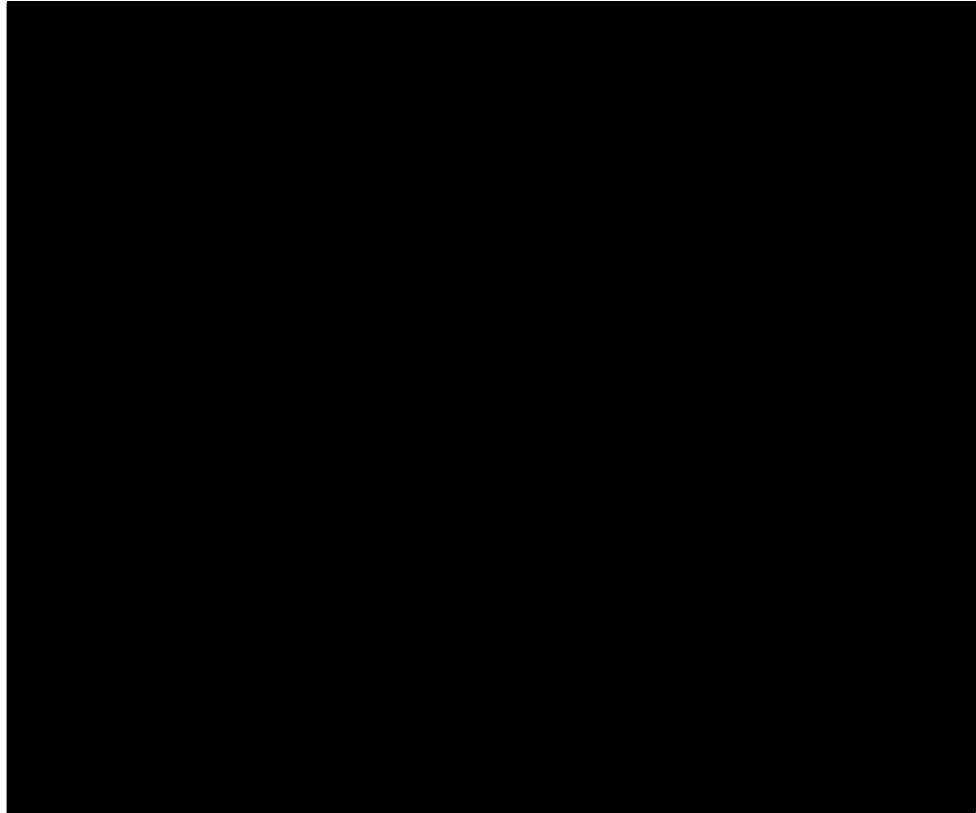
Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature which is directly concerned with Maori students' achievements, or which offers possible explanations for their school experiences. These ideas will be useful guides in the hui which is ahead.

The chapter has also given voice to Maori concerns about research and the voice is clear: as we now join the students, therefore, we will try to meet Maori wishes by being positive in focus, by using a philosophically appropriate research process and by working for practical and useful results for the students and their communities.

Tohua nga whakatipuranga ke te inu; te puna o te Matauranga kia hora ai to whakaruruhau o te ora ki runga i te iwi. Kia kaha, kia toa, kia manawanui. Nurture the young and teach them to drink

from the fountain of knowledge for with them lies your protection, your strength and the destiny of all people. Be strong, be brave, be resolute.



Fitness Centre

CHAPTER FIVE

TE HONGI ME TE KAI : RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: HOW WAS THE STUDY CARRIED OUT?

Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri; Your food basket and my food basket will satisfy the guest.

Introduction

With the speeches over, there comes the final parts of the welcome, the hongi and refreshments. This sharing of the essentials of life (breath and food) physically and symbolically unites visitors and hosts and, importantly, lifts the tapu of the welcome. In a similar way, the mystery and (academic) sanctity of the preceding explanations are removed with an explanation, or sharing, of the essentials of this case study : the design provides the breath and the methodology the food.

The Design in General

The main feature of the research design of this study lies in its reversal of the usual top-down approach to research with Maori students. In this study the students worked collaboratively in a problem-solving mode and I acted more as a facilitator of the discussions than as controller of the direction or content.

A second feature of the study is that it was in a school I knew well: as principal-researcher/facilitator I worked with students I knew and who knew me. I hoped that this would assist the study.

A third feature is that I acknowledge the complexities and sensitivities of reaseach involving Maori and young people, including the potential problems of negative stereotyping, undervaluing knowledge and skills and oversimplifying results (Bishop and Glyn, 1992). Accordingly, I tried to be responsive to Maori concerns about reasearch and so the study has a positive focus on reasons for success rather than the usual negative focus on causes of failure.

Finally, this study included all Maori students who stayed at the school beyond form five and so gave a voice to those who had not succeeded academically as well as those who had (in contrast to the 1988 Mitchell study). The aim was to listen to students who according to national statistics had returned to senior classes with limited chances of academic success and it aimed to be interactive and empowering in its design, methodology and conclusions.

A final point should be made about the design and methodology. The literature review had suggested possible academic and practical uses of the study for education in New Zealand but an extra possible usage emerged during the year. As researcher, I was an 'insider' in terms of the school context but I was also an 'insider' in that I would have to live with the processes and consequences of the research; in the year of the study I found that as an insider-Principal -researcher there were many pressures and few safety zones and the year's work was much more difficult than I had anticipated. A secondary effect of the study, therefore, has been the documenting of the experience of a secondary school principal carrying out school-based research and this may be useful for other Principals contemplating research in their own schools.

The Methodology

A case study approach was used in this study because it was appropriate for the research focus and because it was anticipated that the study would contribute to existing theory rather than generate it. The study recognised the importance of context in the Maori students' "bounded system" (Stake in Adelman; 1978; 140) and, with cognitive·anthropology had a basic assumption that groups share a unique culture with patterns for behaviour which are reflected in language (Jacob;1987; 22-27). The ethnography was limited to understanding just the students' school world and the case study was limited in the same way. The final chapter of this study indicates what could have been included in a major study.

The research methodology was emergent and appropriate to the phase of the research; the practice of reflection-in-action as formulated by Schon (in Altrichter:1993) helped with the methodology adjustments. There were three phases in the study:

Phase One : Unobtrusive Research

The collection of school and student background data was unobtrusive research and with the organisation for the case study formed the first phase.

Selection of Site

The site of this study was selected for a number of reasons. In 1993 when the project was being planned I identified three reasons for selecting Tikipunga High School. First, the school had a large number of Maori students for whom I was responsible. Second, I thought that it would be more practical to work with students who were physically close rather than in another school. Third, because the students and I had known each other for some time I hoped that familiarity would make some of the organisational difficulties with the research more manageable.

Having decided to carry out the study in the school in which I worked, I then consulted a number of groups who had particular responsibilities and interests in the school. I began by discussing the proposal with the school's Board of Trustees and I said that I thought the study would be beneficial, not only to me, but also to the school. The Board of Trustees responded warmly to the idea.

I also discussed the research idea with the leaders of the school's Whanau Support group, seeking their views on the question of the school as a site of research, the senior Maori students as participants and, generally on the kind of research I was considering. The Whanau Support leaders were not only enthusiastic but offered their ongoing assistance, if it was needed, once the research was started.

In 1994, in preparation for the submission of the formal thesis proposal to the university I took the proposal back to the Board and was given formal approval for the use of the school as a site and formal approval to work with the students I had nominated. The Board of Trustees also endorsed the research in a practical way by giving me secretarial assistance. Whanau Support had had a change of leadership for 1994 but the new leaders were as supportive as the previous group, and agreed to the school and the students as the focus for the research. They were very helpful throughout the year, advising on cultural aspects especially. I made a commitment to give regular feedback to both the Whanu team and the Board, while maintaining the confidentiality of the individual students. The meeting of this commitment took the form of verbal reports at Board of Trustees and Whanau Support meetings.

The Parent Teacher Association was not approached initially but during 1994 also received regular verbal reports and was very supportive throughout the study.

Selection of Students

I had originally intended to work only with the form seven students. This view was changed for two reasons. Given that numbers of Maori students leave school nationally and certainly at this school at the end of the sixth form I decided to include form six as well as form seven students because I guessed that there might be different perceptions of success at the two form levels. Secondly, I decided to include form six students because I had a hope that by reflecting on their reasons for being at school the sixth formers might be encouraged to stay on and seek further qualifications as a result of the research. The second reason reflects the view outlined in Chapter two that in order to have access to further education or employment, students need the academic qualifications provided by secondary schools.

Participants, therefore, were all Maori students in forms six and seven in 1994 at Tikipunga High School. These students will be described in detail in Chapter six.

Data Collection

In this first prepatory phase, I collected background information on school policies and practices relevant to the study and I gathered all the data on the successes of the students in the study. This data included not only external examination results but also sporting, cultural and community achievement. The organisation of this information continued during Phase Two and, in all, took four months to collect and collate. The analysis is presented in the Introduction and Chapter six.

Phase Two : Students as Ethnographers

The students' generation of themes in a case study approach sited them as their own ethnographers and had the dual focus of the collection of their views and their empowerment. It was hoped, in terms of Habermas' claim (in Carr and Kemmis; 1983) that valid knowledge would emerge in free, open and uninterrupted debate. This phase also drew on Freire's methodology as previously described, in which it was hoped, the students would explore their 'thematics' and deepen their critical awareness of an ownership over reality (1972).

By the time the phase of students-as-ethnographers began towards the end of term one, some students had left the school. Others left during term two and so the students who formed the core throughout the study numbered fifty eight. No student declined participation. In April and May the students working on their own, in groups of three to six, taped their discussions of the three initial research questions, "What do you want from school?". "What helps you to achieve it?", "What does not help you to achieve it?". Most of the groups sat around a table in my office, and one or two groups sat around a table in the Deputy Principal's office. They were told they could have as much time as they needed or wanted. Almost all groups took an hour and three groups returned at later times to add more to their tapes. The groups were left on their own and could stop and start the tape recorder as they chose. After some initial selfconsciousness the students seemed to have forgotten the

tape recorder : only one group part way through this first stage of their research stopped the tape and it appears, given the length of the conversation overall of this group, that it was stopped for a short, rather than a lengthy, period of time.

By the start of the May holidays all groups had completed taping and the first few tapes had been transcribed. By early June transcribing had been completed and I was able to listen to the students' conversation while following the typed script. Most of June was used to identify the chief themes which came through all of the student conversations and to identify new areas to be discussed in the second stage of the students' work. Through this stage a group of students, some sixth and some seventh form, became very enthused with the process and asked if they could use it themselves with the fifth formers who, they said, should also be involved. I agreed to help them and we decided that the time between mid term break and the August school holidays would be when they could extend the study into the fifth form.

The second stage of this research phase began in July and ran into August. The 'themes' of the discussions (Appendix 3) were returned to the students for consideration There were some methodological differences in this stage. First, the groups' membership was different from the first stage because we were in a new semester and students' timetables were different. As well, for the reasons given in Chapter nine, I chose to participate in the second stage even though I knew that my participation might alter the discussions. I also chose to follow up ideas with some students individually, as a cross-check.

Third, I was able to build in a check of my thinking in stage one and two which I had not expected. It happened that in term two a teacher investigating retention rates in senior school surveyed a group of senior Maori students and his results were very useful for this study, particularly as a check of themes and of a senior students' wider sub-culture (Appendix 4).

I predetermined the key areas I wished to know about :

- confirmation (or not) of the themes I had identified

- the students' thoughts on family, peer groups and racism
- what school could do to help them succeed (at anything)?
- pictures of their school culture, if any, in and out of class
- sources of their perceptions of school

But, although I covered these areas I quickly found that the students wanted to ask me questions and wanted to share other ideas and so trusting to a view that this might help them I participated more fully than I had anticipated. All of these discussions were audio-taped and transcribed as they were completed.

Through this stage the students were busy with their "followup". They independently drafted a set of questions (Appendix 5) which I arranged to have typed and distributed to all students in form five. This was done in August and collated by the students at the start of Term three (our students have always been slow to hand in forms!)

Phase Three : Interpretation and Conclusions

By the time the August holidays began I had two kinds of student-created data : the general themes of their first-stage discussions and the more focussed responses to those themes from the second stage. I also had considerable data about the school and the success-histories of the students. The task of this last phase, therefore, was to bring it all together in a coherent form so that the draft report could be presented to students, Board of Trustees and Whanau Support for final checking.

The analysis of the results sits in the Interpretivist paradign. After the first stage of the students' discussions I identified 'themes' of school, after the second stage I tried to understand the themes in terms of primary sources and I concluded the interpretative work with a search of the students' language for the subjectivities and power relationships. The focus of the discourse analysis was suggested by Foucault's work and endorsed by Bakhtin's "Language is not neutral ... It is .... overpopulated with the intentions of others" (1981;294).

The August holidays and part of term three were used for the drafting and in mid-term three the appropriate sections of the report were distributed. Copies went to the Board of Trustees, Whanau Support, some staff members and most importantly, to the student participants. From the different groups' responses alterations were made and the final report of this journey was completed in November.

The academic nature of the study meant that parts of it were taken on trust by all who read it (Chapters one - five especially), but staff, the Board of Trustees and the Whanau 'recognised' the students' conversations and 'confirmed' the possibility of my conclusions. The students found the concept of uncertainty as 'commonsense' and their final contribution to the study was to select six representatives who helped me make up the tape recording which accompanies this report.

The final report is in both written and audio form, the audio report being more appropriate for the people who "owned" the study, that is the students and their whanau.

Challenges in the Methodology

The study had four major research challenges : the issues of validity and ethics, the possibilities of unforseen consequences, and an unhistorical analysis in the reporting.

Validity is a part of the question of reliability and for this study was particularly difficult because the study not only sat in the interpretive paradigm and, using non-statistical data, aimed to understand a social problem, but also drew upon critical ethnography and aimed to help participants. The focus on context in both tasks of language-illumination and power-provision, made the research for validity complex, given that "the context-stripping methods of our traditional model of science (are not) appropriate to the study of context-dependent phenomena" (Mishler; 1979;17). To explain my response to this challenge, I summarise the forms of validity which I have tried to meet.

First, I have tried to provide internal validity (Anderson,1990;163-4) by which those not able to observe the case for themselves can follow the 'chain of evidence' to its conclusion. This is more than simply story-telling and Kemmis (1980; 101 on) argues that to demonstrate validity the 'language game' of the report should reveal the dialectical nature of the study; it should show the tacit understandings of the researcher and the researched, so that the cognitive and cultural processes of the study are open to the reader's judgement. Lather (1986; 271) terms this 'construct validity' which is 'a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preconceptions affect the research' and warns against 'theoretical imposition' on 'the experiences of people in their daily lives' (1986; 271). In this study self-conscious and ongoing reflexivity have been attempted.

Second, I have attempted the strategy of respondent validation (Delamont, 1992;158-60) The participants returned to their own data twice, the first time to consider their themes and the second time to examine their responses as I had interpreted them. I involved the students a great deal because, as Delamont suggests, I did believe that the students owned the data and because, which she does not suggest, I hoped the process would be useful for them. The problem with respondent validity, however, is clearly identified by Lather (1986; 271) : "The possibility of encountering false consciousness ... creates a limit on the usefulness of 'member checks' in establishing the trustworthiness of data". This is not a denial of trust in the participants and in their ability to reason, which Freire says we must have if authentic praxis is to occur (1972; 41) but it did alert me to a need for caution. Respondent validity would be a necessary but not sufficient measure and something more was required.

Lather, amongst others, offered that something more and describes my third response to the challenge of validity:

> 'Triangulation is critical in establishing data-trustworthiness.... (and it should) include multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes. The researcher must consciously utilize designs that allow counter-patterns as well as convergence if data are to be credible (1986; 270).

As an interpretive researcher I was able to do this from a stance of both 'in' and 'of' the context: school documents, national and school statistics, student records, school events, all provided , and formed part of the cross-checking of, data. Then, as the study went on, I also had access to another study in the school which involved senior students and which looked at retention (this was a form of 'investigator triangulation' as described in Mathison, 1988;14). Triangulation of method included participating in the students' discussions of their themes in groups and with individuals, and checking back to teachers and the Whanau Support team for their perspectives. Theoretical checking, as is shown in Chapter four was done with New Zealand and overseas work. I did not expect that triangulation would eliminate all bias but rather, as Mathison argues, that it would provide "evidence whether convergent, inconsistent or contradictory - such that the researcher can construct good explanations of the social phenomena from which they arise" (ibid; 15).

Fourth, I was particularly challenged by the question of validity in critical ethnography. Lather writes :

> ... given the emancipatory intent of praxis-oriented research, I propose the less well-known notion of catalytic validity (which) represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energises participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire (1973) terms conscientization (1986;272).

Lather's catalytic validity looks only one way, in the direction of the researched, and yet if Freire is right, it should also look in the direction of the researcher. Freire claims that :

> Teachers and students ... co-intent on reality, are both Subjects not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge (ibid: 44).

A true catalytic validity, therefore would, in the Freirean sense, require the empowerment of both students and the Principal (in this case). I have pursued this goal, although with an expectation that it would be very difficult to reach.

Finally, when I thought about external validity (Anderson, 1990;137), I was helped by Stenhouse who says :

> there is an interpretive, rather than theoretical style of explanation of human action, that it can at times use ambiguity as a spur to speculation and that its generalisations will contain the qualifier 'often' or 'probably' ... not 'other things being equal'. Thus their soundness may be the subject of discussion or discourse but their refutation will be by informed judgement and not by proof (1982; 270-1).

I have tried to qualify my conclusions appropriately.

Ethical Concerns Questions of an ethical nature persisted throughout the study. I present these in some detail because they changed during the study and because my experience might be of use to someone conducting similar research in the future.

Snook (1981) identifies three aspects of research which require particular ethical attention : the point of the study, the procedures and possible uses after its completion. The point of research, he says, must be for worthwhile knowledge, or what he calls 'an over-riding good', otherwise people are used and become 'things'. This means that a concern for rights is important and especially for young people. Research processes, must also form a part of our ethical attention. Ethical codes are hard to meet with adults and even more so with (in this case) students and so Snook suggests some checks : does the desired information have to come from the students? will the research process hurt their learning? is there any invasion of their privacy? Finally, Snook warns against possible misuse of the research after completion, in spite of every care that might be taken with the report. To meet all of these points I took particular care in getting started.

To begin I addressed the principles of ethical conduct in research which Snook identified, that is the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, sensitivity to participants' special (Maori) interests, guarding against harm to the participants and truth-telling. As well as the student participants, I included in my preparation the Board of Trustees and the Whanau Support team, each of whom I believed had rights to be met. With each group I explained the purpose of the study, why it was students who were to supply the data, its possible benefits to me, the school and the students. I explained the general design and the possible methodology and I described the level of participation I expected each group to have in the study. I also explained the students' rights which included the right not to participate at all, the right to withdraw at any stage, the right to an explanation of any aspect of the study at any time and the right to expect an appropriate response to any concern any student might have during the study. I hoped that these rights would protect the students' learning and cultural interests and their privacy. I promised confidentiality for students, regular general reports to the Board and the Whanau Support team and assured everyone that I would present a truthful and positive report. With the students I gave these explanations in small groups ; my experience as a teacher suggested that to try to meet the principle of informed consent with the whole body of students would be difficult and, as it turned out, it was better because students were able to question more easily in their small groups. And so I gained not only consent but the support I have already described in this chapter.

My next concern was prompted by Altricher's 'ethical quality criteria' which require the research first, to be compatible with the educational aims of the study and second, to build on the democratic and cooperative relationships of the participants (1993; 44-5). As the study I was planning had the educational aims of both describing perceptions and empowering the owners of those perceptions, I had to check that my methodology was not only technically suitable for those aims but also appropriate for the school's way of working and for the students' culture. Further, if democracy and cooperation

were to count I had to ensure that my methodology was conducive to such relationships not only among the participants but also between them and me. It all seemed straight forward at first. I was comfortable that the basic approach of the study, that of student discussion, was in keeping with Maori traditions of hui and consensus-seeking, I expected that the focus on success would in itself foster the desired working relationships and I believed that the study had the ethical advantage of being open to scrutiny throughout its course: staff and the students would certainly monitor its progress in their own ways, such is the nature of a school, and I was certain that if any contradictions or conflicts arose I would be told. All I had to do if a concern arose was to adjust the methodology to realign it with Altricher's criteria.

Finally, I considered the ethical dimensions of reporting on the study. I recognised that first it had to be understood by a variety of audiences and this determined not only a written but also a taped report, the spoken report being more culturally appropriate for the owners of the information. This then raised a concern about different content in each and was resolved only after discussion with the students, Whanau Support and Board members. Conscious also of what might happen to the report(s), I planned even more cross-checking by building in another reference group, the senior management team of teachers in the school. My particular concern was that the reports should not hurt the school, the students or Maori generally. At first I believed I could hide us all behind psuedonyms but this quickly proved impossible. The students' discussions and the context description made us easily identifiable even to people not closely involved in education. I was aware that this identification was further assisted by my name and position and so began an ethical concern that persisted throughout the study: should I establish a useless pretence about the site or be honest and identify the school from the beginning? To this was added a desire by some of the students that their first names, at least, be included. Conscious of my responsibility to protect them yet recognising the cultural demands in hui of being seen to be heard, I worried about confidentiality throughout the year.

At the start, however, I thought I was aware of all possible ethical considerations and began the study with an easy mind. It did not last long. As I listened to the tapes of the students' first discussions I realised I had a new ethical problem : they talked of teachers by name and not always positively. As a researcher I was interested but as the Principal I was worried. I ought to follow up this information, checking the truth of described incidents and, if necessary, confronting the teachers concerned. But to do so violated confidentiality and yet to do nothing allowed some of the incidents to be repeated. And it was just as ethically difficult when discussion was positive: I wanted to "reward" those teachers. In the end I remained the researcher, hoping that I would find a different way to work with the teachers. But this concern was followed by another and is described well by Burgess. He worked and researched in an English comprehensive school and has described the ethical problem of secrecy. We may think we are conducting open research, he says, but all research is secret in some ways and to some degree (1985; 144). I found this to be so. I was very quickly the holder of secrets: those of students' views of staff and when I did discreetly cross-check, sometimes those of staff views of students. And when I went to Whanau Support meetings I held students' views of them which I could not share. Unlike Burgess I was not ever forced to lie to protect a secret but I was often forced into silence in each of the groups with whom I had contact. Burgess identified a sense of loyalty as one of his guiding ethical considerations (1985; 155) and I had to do the same, but in giving it to the study's participants, I worried that there might come a point of conflict when loyalty to the school generally, or to staff, might become a greater good. The situation did not arise and I do not know what I would have done if it had.

By the end of the year I was conscious of the richness of ethical meaning in Snook's :

> to care about children is in part to want to understand them and to understand them may help our caring (1981; 14).

This now seems to me, at the end of my year's study, a first principle of school-based research : ethical considerations are deep-reaching,

they intensify and change but are so inextricably linked to our wish to help students that we cannot predetermine what they are likely to be. And so I have discovered that reflection-in-action is as necessary in matters of ethics as it is in the research process.

Unforseen Consequences Unforseen circumstances are always possible in any research and Boudon says that the most significant perverse effects are bad (1982:5). In a study such as this they needed special care. The ethical issues I have already described covered this challenge (in part) but not totally. An example will illustrate this point. I had intended that the student discussions would take place in their homeroom time so that friends could work together and so that no teaching/learning time was taken. But in both terms one and two this proved impossible as so many other activities (such as interform competitions) took place in that period. To ask students to withdraw from those activities would certainly have affected their morale and probably have hurt their, or their class, achievements. And so I had to reconsider appropriate times for the discussions. Since most of the students were following a full programme of modules, this was not easy. I did not want students to lose class time and - ironically - have a study on school achievement hurt their successes in external awards, but nor did I want to use lunch hours which are often taken with sports and other practices; too many travelled by bus for me to use the time at the end of the day. The resolution came from students themselves : those with "free" periods used them (about a third) and all of the others selected class time which they could make up or in which they had already been assessed. It was a compromise, rather than a solution and it was the best we could manage. But this compromise had another effect : friendship groups were impossible to arrange for all the participants. Although most of the students knew each other, their groups were random rather than self-selected. What difference this may have made to the discussions is difficult to judge but not a lot, I think, and certainly it was better than the other possible consequences.

There was, as well, a consequence of the study which I had not anticipated and by the time I noticed it, there was little I could

do. We are told that in ethnographic studies we should recognise that our intervention in the context may affect the context and the participants. I noted that the students began to chat to me informally around the school more than usual (and especially those I did not teach); I noted the thanks which came with each of the stages of the students' involvement; I heard from the school gossip that the students new to us were surprised that I was asking for their views; but I did not hear the changes in me until well into the study.

As the year progressed and the number of secrets grew and loyalty to the students increased, I found it more and more difficult to remain detached. In the second stage of the students' discussions, when I was also a participant, I felt quite emotionally involved in their lives and I wanted to take up their pains and passions as my own. I knew that I could not do this and I felt trapped by a research dilemma. Was this emotional involvement a necessary part of a Frierean liberation of the oppressor and therefore not to be resisted? or was I falling out of the researchers' role by becoming too close to the participants?

As Wolcott says :

> An ethnographer walks a fine line. With too much distance and perspective, one is labelled aloof, remote, insensitive, superficial; with too much familiarity, empathy and identification, one is suspected of having 'gone native'. Successful ethnographers resolve that tension between involvement and detachment .... ; others go home early (1988; 189).

I declared in the Introduction that I was not an unbiased guide and I repeat that warning here. To be a Principal-researcher is very difficult.

Unhistorical analysis The final theoretical challenge lay in the nature of my report. It would have been very easy to present the students' perceptions as if created by and frozen in the school context. But

such a portrayal would have been more photographic than ethnographic and would have falsely isolated the students in time. The problem was, therefore, to give a sense of history for a school context and for a large number of students but not so much that it dominated the study. For the school I hoped that a full description to begin with would help to convey some contextual history and I hoped that that description would reach the 'tacit' knowledge about schools (Kemmis 1980; 127) which all readers would have.

For the students I anticipated that at least a part of the challenge would be met in the interpretation of their discussions. The evaluation of the way the students made sense of their school-success world was expected to reveal a present that was the result of the struggles of the past (Gramsci; 1971) and because the study aimed to empower, I also hoped to help students understand the historical genesis of their perceptions. Then, when I considered this idea fully I realized that my own preconceptions should be included, to indicate what I was bringing to the students, and I decided to include those which seemed relevant also.

History is more than the past, it is also the future, and the final aspect of the challenge was to try to provide some worthwhile knowledge which would contribute to the future. This in itself is problematic because we hope that a study such as this will not be necessary in the future.

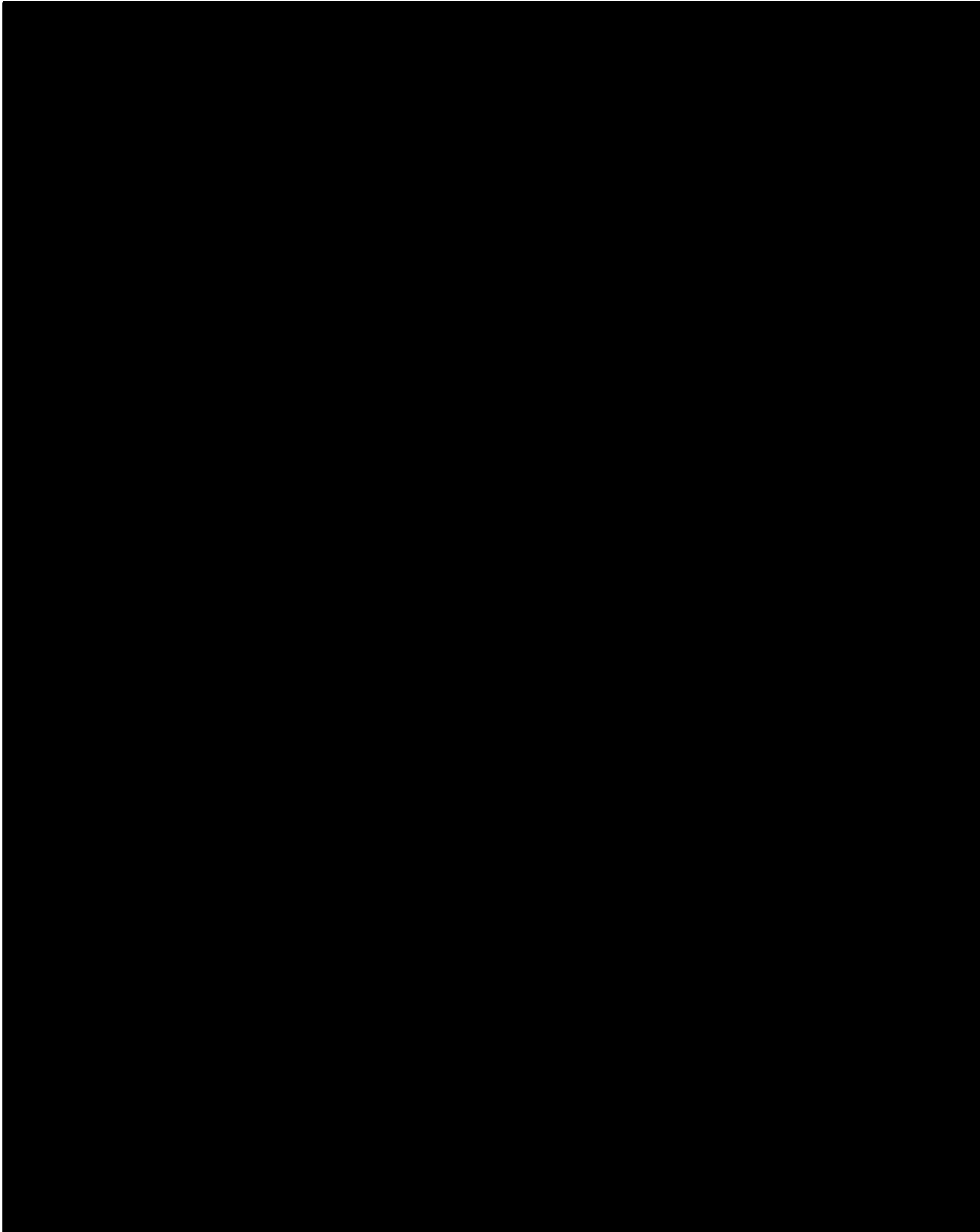
In time the Truths of this study may no longer be relevant : of interest to historians perhaps but not necessarily to social scientists.

Conclusion

This was a most challenging study. The design required me to learn different skills according to the phase I was working in : the statistical research imposed one kind of discipline, the case study another and the interpretation a third. But the greatest challenge came with the writing. In the preparation of this final report I have discarded much which I thought was important or valuable, much which I thought was interesting. I have probably omitted that which

experienced researchers would have included. I suggest some of these areas in my concluding chapter. I have, for example, deleted in this chapter some two pages exploring - for me - the interesting debate about validity. I have also discarded much from the literature review and hardest of all to delete were those passages where I wrote too much as Principal and too little as researcher. Whatever its faults, however, the study has been a genuine attempt to learn with, and to help, our students. The students and I, therefore, offer the hui which follows and hope it contributes, in the words of one student, "food for thought".

Kei takahia a Tahu : do not insult Tahu, the ancestor of food : kindly accept our hospitality.



Level Six Food Technology : Cooking

CHAPTER SIX

TE HUI : SETTLING IN : WHO ARE THE STUDENTS?

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toirua; let us keep close together, not far apart.

Introduction

With the welcome completed the hui is now able to start. We have already learned a great deal in preparation for this meeting but some specific information about the students will be useful. As we take our places in the wharehui we can meet them as a group and as individuals.

The Student Participants at School and at Home

Establishing some introductory pictures of the student participants was difficult because they do not fit easily into generalisations; it was in this early stage of data analysis that I first became aware of the problem of generalisation. Where possible I present broad pictures but as will be seen even these are tentative. A very brief summary of non Maori examination results are provided in Appendix 1 to indicate the qualifications gap which concerns me.

Retention

At the beginning of the study there were 86 Maori students in forms six and seven. To determine retention rates I used this figure because they were all in school on the 1st of March when the Ministry of Education collects the figures on which their statistics are based.

Table 1: Retention Rates of 1994 Maori Sixth and Seventh Formers

	FORM 6				FORM 7			
	1991 Intake	1994 Roll	Retention %	National % *	1990 Intake	1994 Roll	Retention %	National % *
Male	35	23	65.7	58.1	40	11	27.5	31.3
Female	48	35	72.9	54.8	44	17	38.8	31.3
Total	83	58	69.8	56.5	84	28	33.8	31.3

* Ministry of Education Figures: 1993

Table 1 shows the rates for the students and two features need comment. First, these rates are only apparent rates because the figures include all students in each form level and not just those who began with us in the years shown. For example, of the 1990 intake of 84 students only 15 were still in school in form seven, giving a different retention rate of 23.6%. Second, although the retention rates for both forms six and seven are above the national averages there are significant differences in favour of the girls at both levels. While this study does not focus on gender differences it is worth noting that the same imbalance exists with the school's senior non-Maori students. Explanations for this difference belong to another study but for the purposes of this introduction the figures alert us to a numerically stronger voice from the girls.

Of the 58 students who were the chief participants, the ages ranged from 16 to 19, the youngest being a girl who had skipped form six to take a full University Bursary course, and the oldest a young man who had come up from Auckland for second chance schooling. But age was one of the few statistical factors they had in common.

Home backgrounds

Their domestic arrangements varied considerably. Twenty-two lived in two parent families, 17 lived with a mother or a father, two lived with a parent and a step-parent, six lived with one or both grandparent(s), three lived with aunts, three lived with a sister and five were boarding with non-family members. The income base of each of these students also varied : eight students were in two-income families, 16 were in one-income families and 34 were in homes in which no income was earned. If a two-parent, two- income family is necessary today for a student's social and economic stability only seven of the 58 students could be counted. If white collar, as opposed to manual, work is an indicator of likely post-school destinations then only 18 students might hope to move into tertiary education or middle class occupations. The full list of occupations is given in Appendix 2. The best generalisation possible from these figures is one that suggests that the student-participants were on the whole from working class families with limited economic resources.

School Certificate

The achievements which the students brought with them into 1994 were equally varied. If we look first at their School Certificate successes and compare them with their Maori peers who did not return to school, some interesting points can be made.

Entries

Table 2: School Certificate Entries 1992

No of papers	All Entries		Entries of students who returned to Form 6		Entries of students who did not go on to Form 6	
No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries
1	22	22	5	5	17	17
2	10	20	5	10	5	10
3	14	42	5	15	9	27
4	17	68	8	32	9	36
5	14	70	9	45	5	25
6	2	12	2	12	0	0
TOTAL	79	234	34	119	45	115

Table 3: School Certificate Entries 1993

No of papers	All Entries		Entries of students who returned to Form 6		Entries of students who did not go on to Form 6	
No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries
1	12	12	2	2	10	10
2	13	26	8	16	5	10
3	13	39	11	33	2	6
4	16	64	13	52	3	12
5	16	80	14	70	2	10
6	2	12	2	12	-	-
TOTAL	72	233	50	185	22	48

From a general glance at the figures, it would appear that the students have not helped their academic chances by the few papers taken (in 1992 an average of 2.9 and in 1993 an average of 3.2). But this is a misleading figure because, as can be seen, in both years almost half of the students took a full School Certificate course of four or more papers (in 1992, 33 of 79 and in 1993, 34 of 72). As well, if the single entries are examined it can be seen that most of those students did not go on to form 6 : they were almost all adults or students in forms four, six and seven pursuing special interest achievements. The removal of the single entry figures lifts the average entry rate from 2.9 to 3.7 for 1992 and from 3.2 to 3.6 for 1993, thus taking both years to an average which is almost a full School Certificate course. It should also be noted that those who did not go on to form 6 after 1992 made up two thirds of the three or fewer entries (31 of 46) and they were almost half of the group who did not go on to form 6 after 1993 (17 of 38). The explanation again lies in the number of non-fifth form entries.

Of numbers of entries in School Certificate, the Ministry of Education reports that Maori students "tend to sit fewer papers than their peers" (1993;49), citing 11% sitting less than three and only 49% sitting five or six papers in 1990. By these percentages our students appear to be doing less well than their own national average. But our figures need to be seen in the context of a full modular curriculum in which students have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to pursue learning at levels different from the year in which they are placed. An example will illustrate this point. In her fifth form year Maraina entered four School Certificate subjects so she counted 'positively' in National statistics as a full year three candidate, and 'negatively' as entering only four papers. But Maraina had already passed two papers as a form four student and as a fifth former she also gained two high Sixth Form Certificate grades. She will not count in the year four Sixth Form Certificate national results because she was only year three.

Maraina is not the only student working this way; the national statistics will treat Lena as a four year student with 'only' four Sixth Form Certificate papers, but she, with a number of other students,

is also taking two papers, through the school, from the Auckland Institute of Technology. Other Maori students similarly work above their year and, of course, some reach backwards, to build up achievements: Serena in form seven is taking two School Certificate papers and four Sixth Form Certificate papers and statistics will hide her efforts to build up achievement by reporting her as a four-paper Sixth Form Certificate entry, or worse, a non-entrant in University Bursary. Wade, in form six, will certainly be counted as a fourth year Sixth Form Certificate entry of 'only' four papers, but we know that he is also re-taking two School Certificate papers to lift the grades he gained last year. Comparisons with national averages, therefore, are not always useful for these students because their school careers are very individual.

Range of grades

If we look at the range of grades gained in School Certificate, regardless of year level or adult status of the entrants, we find a different picture emerges.

Table 4: Pass Grades gained in School Certificate
(One or more subjects over 50%)

	ALL MAORI STUDENTS		STUDENTS WHO RETURNED TO SCHOOL		STUDENTS WHO DID NOT GO ON TO FORM 6	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
1992 Passes	46/79	58 2	23/34	67 6	23/45	51 1
No 1992 Passes *	33/79	41 7	11/34	32 3	22/45	48 8
1993 Passes	46/72	63 8	38/50	76	8/22	36 3
No 1993 Passes *	26/72	36 1	12/50	24	14/22	63 6

* (In some analyses by the Ministry of Education these would be counted as a qualification)

The Ministry says that "the bulk" of School Certificate grades awarded to Maori students in 1990 fell between the 'C' and 'D' range (ibid;50). These are grades which ranged from very low marks to

just over 50%, or mostly 'fail' grades. As Table 4 suggests, the bulk of our students are achieving 'pass' grades, if we use 50% as a cut-off point and count the number of students who gained one or more 'passes'. Approximately 60% of the students in both years had such a qualification. An even higher percentage have gained a qualification (94% in 1992 and 87.9% in 1993) if we use the Ministry system of counting all grades when determining the highest qualification of school leavers (ibid;45). (The 1994 leaflet 'Education in New Zealand' reports that a School Certificate award was the highest qualification gained by 24% of Maori school leavers in 1992).

The problem of generalizing grades

Any analysis of School Certificate results is complex and one difficulty with the Ministry's analysis is that it does not show how the students collected the grades. For example, did only a few students gain all the high grades and most students gain no 'passes' (with possible consequences for movement into sixth form) or did most students gain one or two of the 'passes' (with different consequences for retention and higher qualifications)? As Table 4 indicates, the distribution of our 'passes' is quite wide, with more than half of the students gaining at least one 'pass' in each of the years shown.

But the way the students collected their grades is even more complex than these generalisations suggest. For example, most of those who did not go on to form six had a high rate of success in the papers they entered. In 1992, of the 23 with passes, 9 'passed' all, and another 4 gained all but one of the papers that they had entered. In 1993, 5 of the 8 with 'passes' gained all that they had entered, including one student with a five out of five achievement. In contrast, the 'stayers' had a lower 'pass' rate. In 1992, only 11 of the 38 gained half or more of what they entered, although one student gained six out of six. In 1993, only 16 of the 50 gained half or more, but two gained six out of six.

However, even these figures bury some interesting results: the girl who gained four passes in the seventies and missed a fifth by 9 marks; the boy with three passes in the sixties and two in the

thirties; the girl who entered five School Certificate subjects and one in Sixth Form Certificate and whose results included an 82, three 69s and a 1 in Sixth Form Certificate... and yes she passed the other two School Certificate subjects as well with scores in the 50s.

Subjects entered

The third area of the students' School Certificate history to be considered is that of the subjects they chose to enter. The Ministry of Education says that "The issue of subject selection is critical. At the secondary level, young people who opt out of core-subject areas, in particular English, mathematics and science, effectively close the door to a whole range of ... options" (ibid;58-9). Our students choices are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: School Certificate Subject Choices

	1992 79 Students: 234 entries	1993 72 Students: 233 entries
English	54	55
Mathematics	41	40
Art	34	25
Te Reo Maori	22	27
Science	21	26
Accounting	15	14
Economic Studies	7	6
Typing	13	-
Workshop	3	9
Technical Drawing	3	3
Home Economics	8	2
Clothing	-	3
History	-	6
Geography	8	4
Horticulture	-	4
Japanese	3	6
French	2	2
Spanish	-	1
TOTAL	234	233

The numbers in Table 5 might suggest that some of our student are indeed reducing their senior and post-school opportunities b opting out of core subjects. Again, the caution already given applie here: the non-fifth form students' entries are included in these figure and they distort the results. Instead Table 5 confirms what th Ministry says of fifth form Maori students: English, mathemati

and science are in the top group chosen and the inclusion of art and te reo in that group reflects the school's teaching strengths and school emphasis. In all the other choices, the selection of commercial subjects is strong and maintains good post-fifth form options, as do the technical subjects. The small numbers in the remaining subjects reflect student individual interests and strengths, and all of these subjects can either be continued in senior school or, such as horticulture, they help with employment opportunities. The smallness of these latter numbers also reflects the broad learning base most of our students have at the fifth form level; they keep their options open at least until the School Certificate results arrive.

Sixth Form Certificate

At this point we move to the 1993 Sixth Form Certificate results. Again all students who entered this award are included in the figures, whether fourth year, adult or from other year levels because this was the group who 'competed' for the tightly controlled range of grades we were allowed to distribute. This analysis is briefer than that for School Certificate because the patterns of study are similar to those for the School Certificate years.

Entries

Table 6: Sixth Form Certificate Entries 1993

	All Entries		Entries of students who returned to school		Entries of students who did not go on to Form 7	
No of Papers	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries	No of students	No of Entries
1	6	6	2	2	4	4
2	12	24	3	6	9	18
3	6	18	4	12	2	6
4	11	44	4	16	7	28
5	5	25	2	10	3	15
6	4	24	3	18	1	6
TOTAL	**44**	**141**	**18**	**64**	**26**	**77**

Table 6 shows the number of entries made by 44 students, 29 of whom had sat School Certificate in 1992. The average entry is 3.2 but as in School Certificate this is a distorted picture because of the way in which the school's multi-level learning system works: almost half of the students took a 'full' course of four or more papers and this is in line with the Ministry's figure of 48.1% (ibid;49). However, the low number of entries by full-course 'stayers' is a concern even though they used the rest of their time to study in other subjects or levels. The spread of these entries across subject choices is shown in Table 7.

Subject choices

Table 7: Sixth Form Certificate 1993 Subject Choices
(44 Students: 141 entries)

Subject	Entries
English	31
Te Reo Maori	7
French	1
Japanese	2
Mathematics	12
Biology	7
Physics	5
Chemstry	1
Art	11
History of Art	2
History	4
Geography	6
Computer Studies	4
Typing	5
Economics	1
Accounting	3
Technical Drawing	1
Design Technology	1
Home Economics Human Developn	3
Home Economics Textiles	1
Physical Education	7
Drama	4
Social Sciences	7
General Studies	8
Life Skills	7
TOTAL	**141**

Of note in these figures is a concern, also expressed by the Ministry, that very few students maintained their mathematics and science studies (ibid;50). There was also a major drop off in the other most popular fifth form subjects of English, te reo and art. This is explained, in part, by the decreased numbers and, in part, by the appeal of the content of the 'new' areas of learning which are eligible for Sixth Form Certificate grades. The final set of figures shows how the grades were distributed amongst the 44 students.

Grade distribution

Table 8: Sixth Form Certificate 1993 Grades
Forty Four Students; (141 entries)

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Number of Students gaining the grade	1	4	12	20	28	33	17	23	3
Number of students with 5 or higher			65						
Number of students with 6 or less								76	
18 Students who returned to Form 7	1	2	10	12	9	15	5	10	0
26 Students who did not go on to Form 7	0	2	2	8	19	18	12	13	3

It can be seen that 141 awards were received by the students. The distribution matched that reported by the Ministry, peaking at grade 6 and with slightly more than half of the students receiving 6 or lower (ibid;51). It can be seen that it was those who did not go to form seven who received more of the middle and lower grades; of those who stayed on for form seven, 16 of the 18 had at least one subject with a 5 or higher grade. However, two other points should be made about the students who did not go on to form seven. First, almost half of those students took away awards in four or more subjects and secondly, even for those who had received the low grades, all Sixth Form Certificate awards were an improvement on their School Certificate results. If we were to use the Ministry's system of counting all grades as a qualification (ibid;45) then 89.7% (44 out of 49 students) of the 1993 Sixth Form year qualified, or

40.4% of the 1990 third form intake (34 out of 84). Either way the figures compare well with the national picture in which, of the leavers in 1991, only 23% had a Sixth Form Certificate award (ibid;45).

Generalisations Are Difficult

Form seven academic record

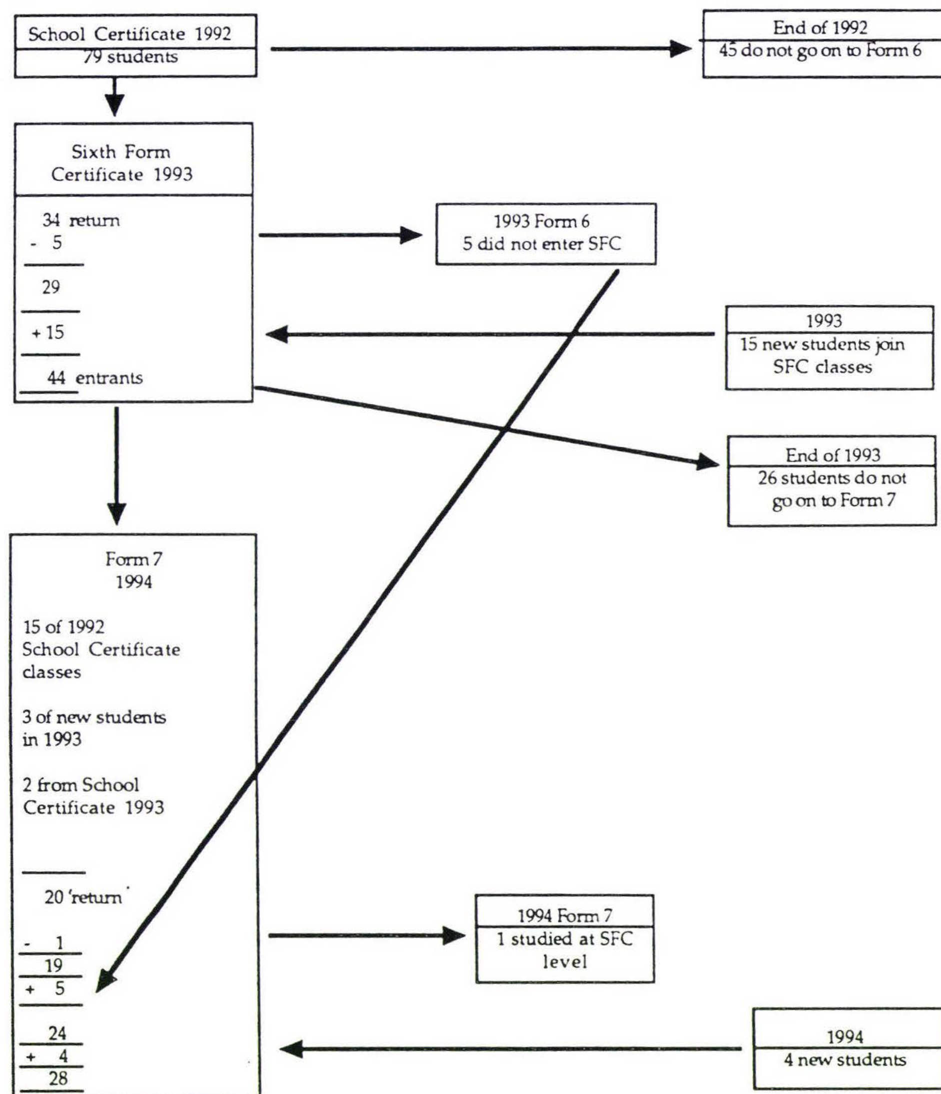
Table 9: Overview of 1994 Seventh Form All Academic Achievements (28 Maori students)

Students by Number and Category	1992 School Certificate passes over 50% with number of subjects entered	1993 Sixth Form Certificate grade 5 and higher with number of subjects entered
10 with S C and S F C awards	3/4, 4/5, 2/5, 1/4, 1/6, 1/4, 2/4 1/4, 6/6, 1/4 • • S.C 1993: 0/1	6/6, 4/6, 1/4, 1/4, 1/3, 5/6 2/3, 1/4, 3/5, 1/3 •
2 from form five	S C 1992 2/2 and S C 1993 4/4 S C 1993 . 3/5	2/2 1/1
4 S C only and low S F C	1/4, 4/4, 1/2 0/4 [S C 93 1/2]	0/3 0/2, 0/1, 0/2
2 new in Form 6 in 1993		3/5, 2/4
1 S F C only	0/2	1/4
3 S C only	1/5, 1/5, 1/2	Did not enter
2 with no awards	0/3, 0/3	Did not enter
4 new in 1994		

Table 9 provides a summary of all achievements by number of 'passes' and number of entries of the 1994 Maori seventh formers. From this it can be seen that these students have been persistent in their efforts to achieve, that a number have had few rewards for their efforts and that five in particular have academic records of a very high standard. Table 9 also demonstrates the complex nature of any generalisations about student achievements.

Movement through the senior school

Figure 1: Student movement through school
Form Seven 1994: 28 Maori Students



To complete this achievement picture, and by way of an example of the varied ways in which students move through the school, the seventh form Maori students' senior school paths are indicated in Figure 1. Of the original group of 79 students who sat School Certificate in 1992 only 20 came on into form seven in 1994, 15 through Sixth Form Certificate and five around it. Again, the complexities of generalisations about senior students are apparent in this Figure.

General Comment

This brings us to an overview of the academic achievements which the student participants brought with them into 1994. In the sixth form 76% had one or more School Certificate passes over 50% (including new students into this level) and in the seventh form the figure was 67.8%. This latter figure included the School Certificate results of the five students who had completed a fourth year at school but had not entered Sixth Form Certificate, and it included those who joined the seventh form at the beginning of the year. All of the seventh formers who had entered Sixth Form Certificate in 1993 also had those awards, with 15 of the students holding one or more subjects at a five or higher grade. The national comparison is interesting. In 1991 47% of that year's Maori school leavers held School Certificate or Sixth Form Certificate (Education in New Zealand 1994). If our 1990 intake were to be analysed as 'leavers' at the start of 1994, then 54.7% (46 out of 84) would hold one or more 'passes' in School Certificate. If we add in the three students who had no School Certificate passes but joined those who did by gaining a 5 or higher in a Sixth Form Certificate subject, the rate is 49 out of 84 or 58.3%. The successful students have done well.

If there is any generalisation possible about the students' achievements, as described in this introduction, it is that results in national awards do not seem to match students' decisions to leave or stay at school. As the data suggest, students who stayed on for form seven after Sixth Form Certificate had generally higher success rates than those who did not stay on, while the converse generally applied at the School Certificate level. But this generalisation applies more to students with the middle range of results than to all students and has to be balanced by the numbers of students working out of their year level. As with other generalisations in this summary, it is tentative.

Other Achievements

The 86 students who began the year brought more than just academic achievements with them. A brief summary of our current senior

Maori students' last two years indicates the range and level of their extracurricular achievements and although it cannot include all activities, it outlines the full lives many students have.

In 1993 Whangarei representation was won by two girls in netball, one girl in swimming, another girl in dance and two boys in Rhee Tae Kwon Do. Northland representative level was reached by six girls in netball, a boy in rugby, two girls in soccer, a boy in rugby league, a girl and two boys in touch rugby. At the New Zealand level we had a girl in hockey, a singer who came fifth in the New Zealander Entertainer of the Year competition, a junior squash champion and a girl in the Under 19 squad for volleyball. Almost all members of the boys' and girls' volleyball teams were Maori and they (as usual) won a place in the New Zealand top eight competition. Three of the students were finalists in different codes in the Northland secondary schools' sportspeople of the year awards. Large numbers of the students were in the schools' variety concert and won all but two of the awards. A number were in the school's Mana Tu senior cultural group and four held leadership positions in it as well. Mana Tu won all Northland competitions in Term 3 1993. This group of students also provided the student representative onto the Board of Trustees, the student representative to Whanau Support and the leader of the Student Council.

In 1994 the students' successes included a Northland Under 18 basketball representative, a Northland Under 21 hockey representative, two members of the national volleyball squad, the winner of the Intermediate Section of the New Zealand Country Music Invitation competition, four girls selected as Whangarei Under 19 netball representatives and as Tai Tokerau South junior representatives, one member of the trial squad for the Women's A softball team, the North Island Under 21 Squash champion and a member of the National Juniors' squash team.

Team successes, with most members Maori, included both boys' and girls' senior basketball teams winning their Northland competitions, the girls' hockey team winning their August holidays regional tournament, the senior girls' netball team winning three

Northland titles and both volleyball teams winners of the Northland competition.

The students in the study also included the Head Girl prefect, the Deputy Head boy, the male Sports Captain, the Head of Student Council, other prefects, the student representative on the Board of Trustees and all the leaders of the Mana Tu culture group.

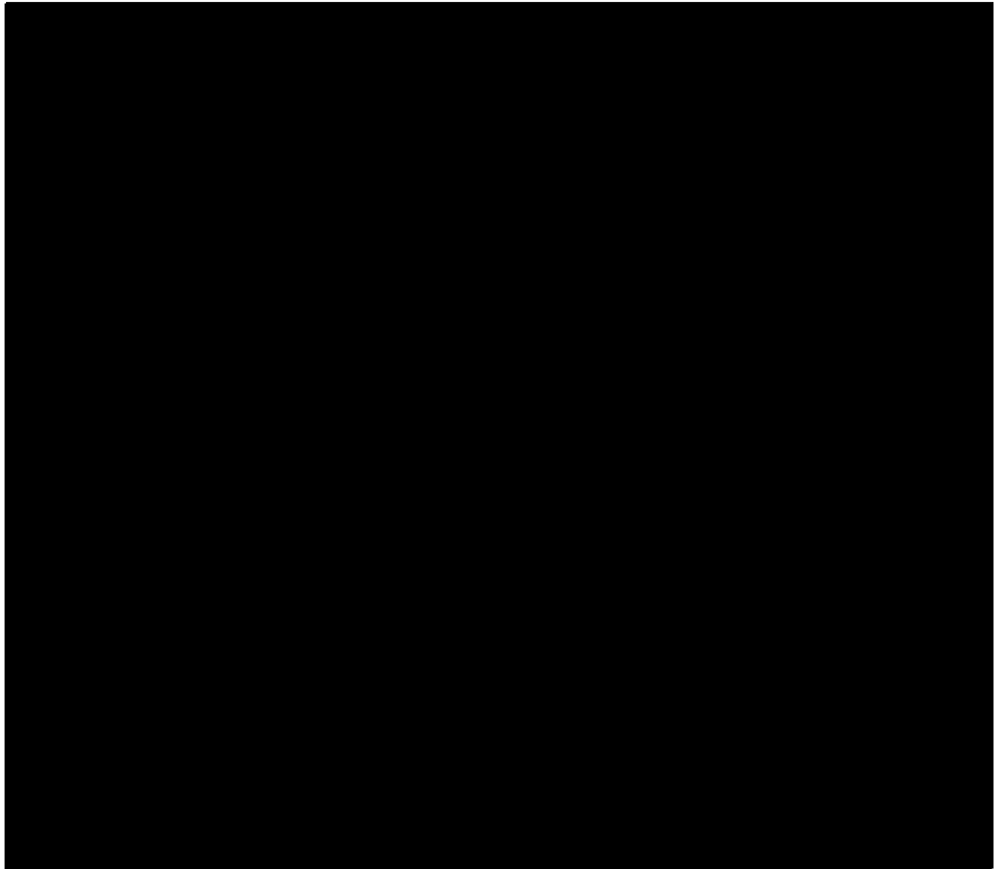
This completes the introduction to the student participants and their achievements. It might suggest that they are compliant and conscientious members of the school body and so, perhaps, atypical of their Maori peer group who amongst other things, have the highest percentage of school suspensions and expulsions per ethnic group (Casey; 1994;271-72). The students in this study record 14 suspensions during their school life and two of the senior school leavers described above were expelled in 1994; as their conversations will suggest, they include a good cross section of teenagers.

Conclusion

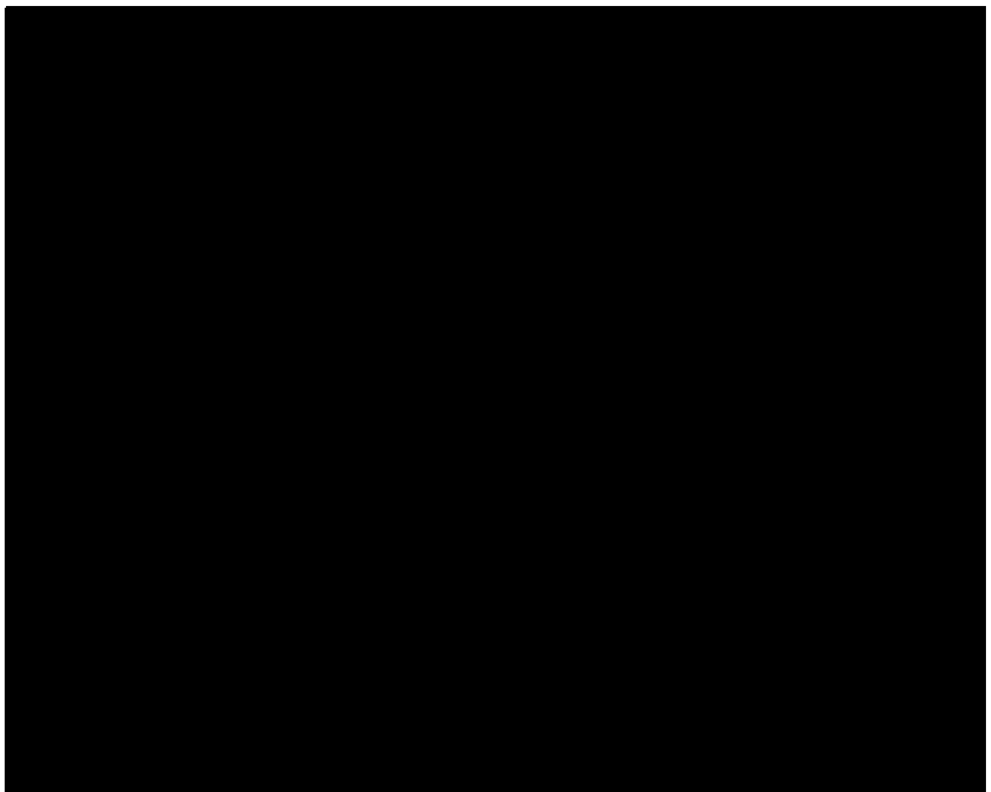
During the course of the study 28 students left school, 13 of them seventh formers. Almost all went to some form of tertiary study (12 to polytechnic and other training courses) or to permanent employment (forestry, industrial sewing, shopwork, a legal office) or to schools in Auckland. One was awarded a prestigious scholarship for tourism training in Christchurch, one gained a place in the navy, another in the army. One became a house mother in place of her mother, four others simply stopped coming. Almost all of the students who left contributed to the first part of the discussions about success and many contributed to the second part. The 58 who were still in school in term three provided the 'validation' of my interpretation of their views.

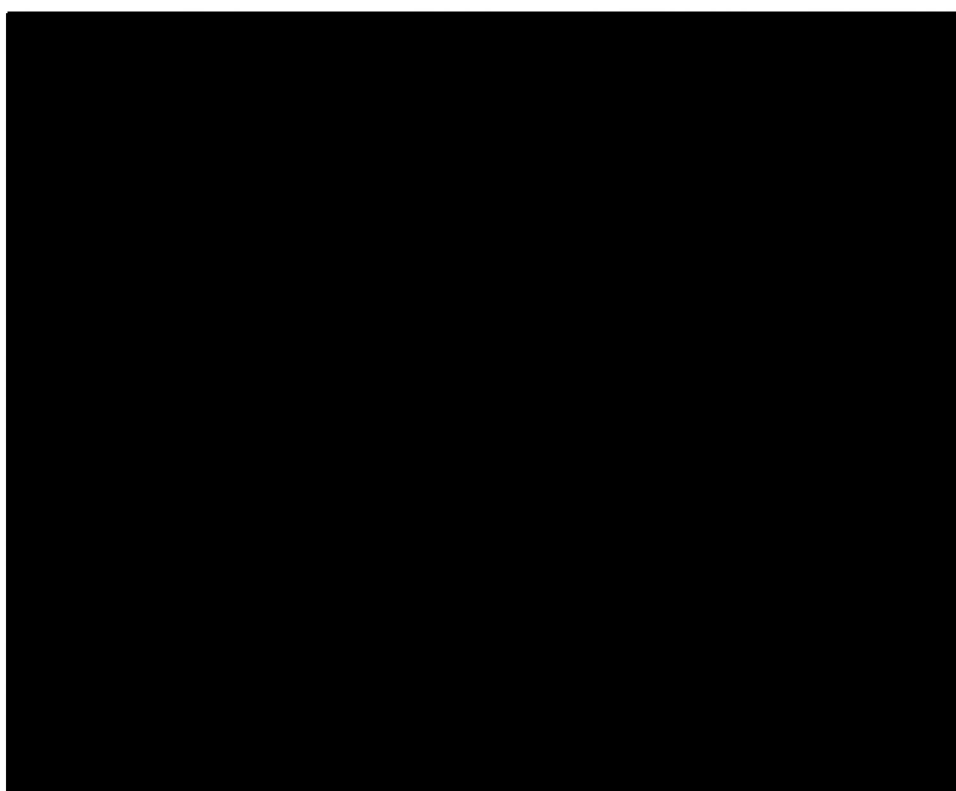
And so now we are ready for the hui to begin.

E noho e hoa ma; please be seated friends.



Cafeteria





Level Six Biotechnology : one student examines pond water for organisms and another determines water clarity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TE HUI : THE TALKING BEGINS : WHAT DO THE STUDENTS SAY ABOUT SUCCESS?

Mauri tu, mauri ora; mauri noho, mauri mate : The essence for success (in life) is to be alert.

Introduction

It may seem to some visitors that the formal welcome is rather time-consuming. The Pakeha practice is to deal with greetings briefly and to move on to the business as quickly as possible. The advantage of a formal Maori welcome, however, is that it allows time for people to learn about each other, to 'settle in' and for this study that has been both necessary and appropriate.

Entering the Context

And yet as I picked up the first tape I was not 'settled in'. I was actually rather uncomfortable. Following Freire and Habermas I had invited the students to generate their own themes, in a free and democratic way, so that they were in charge of their own research and it was my decision not to participate in their discussions. Instead I had been eagerly anticipating listening to what they would say in answer to the questions: What do you want from school? What helps you achieve or not achieve your school goals? But that was before I picked up the first tape. So why did I feel uncomfortable? The first tape began :

Amy	What question will we do first?
	The easiest one and we'll do the harder ones for later. Ah -
Briar	Okay, talk. (Giggles)
Amy	What do you think the school is doing to help us?
Briar	Teaching us, -
Lena	Oh - - teaching us, giving us an education - (Laughter)
Amy	Sounds real professional - - - (Laughter)

Briar	What's your name again?
Lena	Lena.
Briar	I thought it was Gina.
Amy	What's the school doing for us?
Briar	It helps you in heaps of ways really, you just have to put your mind to it - - (Laughter)
Amy	No - true but -
Lena	True.
Amy	No, in - - like, you know how we have to wear clothes and I reckon that's not very good - - -

Then followed a discussion of why the school has no uniform. As I listened to the rest of their tape I began to relax a little. The talk was familiar, their views were clear - although not a lot of time was actually spent on my questions. The second tape began.

Sonya	There's just too much work to do - - do you reckon?
Clifton	Yeah - - teachers put a lot of pressure on to you.
Sonya	We have to do all these things and they're all at real short times and you get heaps of assignments all at once.
Roimata	Yeah, towards the end of the year - -
Sonya	I reckon it's hard.
Roimata	- - - of each semester.
Clifton	Yeah, I think that teachers <u>are</u> putting a lot of pressure on to us.
Sonya	They are.
Clifton	Sometimes they don't really give a shit.
Roimata	And they try and tell us to do sports and stuff, then when we say we've got homework they say we should be able to do our homework as well. And we've got our sports and we're too tired to do work after that.
Clifton	They don't think about the students.
Sonya	Yeah.

This was the start of a long and intense discussion about teachers - and the start of my education. By the time I had heard all of the tapes I knew why I had been uncomfortable. One student said :

"There's a lot of things they don't tell Mrs Tait", 'they' meaning staff and students and 'lot of things' meaning 'bad' things. She was right, as the tapes informed me and I was uncomfortable, I realised, because I was responding to the students' discussions in the 'wrong' way. I was entering the students' world as Principal rather than as researcher. This meant that I was invading their privacy because as 'Principal' I was actually eavesdropping. And yet to enter their world as a researcher only, was impossible. No matter what else I did, I was the Principal and even in the complex interaction of theory and practice I could not hide from that responsibility. Further, as Principal-researcher I was already socialised into, at least, the school context, and the frame of reference I took to the students' discussions included specific knowledge of them as individuals. I was not able to 'unlearn' any of this knowledge nor put aside my 'Principalness'.

If I had anticipated this difficulty, and for peace of mind, I might have chosen to work with students in another school. But such a decision would have denied my school the energy, and the benefits of this study. The possible gains were too good to pass to another school. So, at the end of the day when all researchers go home asking 'What does this mean?' I went home asking as well, 'What should I do?'.

Entry, therefore, to the students' world was not easy. I make the point not only to restate the caution given in the Introduction that I am not a neutral observer, but also to draw attention to potential complexities when theory and practice meet in the school situation. In this report the ghost of practice haunts the theory persistently.

What then did the students say about school success? I had guessed that I might hear a few things which I would not like (the work of Willis and Jones had prepared me, in part, for that) but I was not prepared for the range and degree of criticism. Nor was I prepared for the laughter and jokes, the rapid shifts from topic to topic, the affirmation the students gave each other, the gossip, the intensity of feeling about some issues, the language use and more. Every group interacted differently, with voices and topics weaving in and

out of each others in a variety of styles, but by the end of the taping the students had given me a clear - and not very comfortable picture of school as they saw it.

In what follows I try to make sense of what at times were complex layers of voices and meanings. The answers to my two questions were interwoven through each other but I discuss them separately for clarity.

Perceptions about Achievement

The dominant achievement the students wanted was what they called 'education' and for most this was tightly linked to what they hoped to do when they left school.

Philip	What do you want out of school?
Mark	I want an education that I can get myself a job.
Teresa	And qualifications that's one thing.
Philip	Yeah, yeah, education is also important too.
Teresa	You want a job, eh?
Gina	Well what do you want to be when you leave school?
Philip	I want to be someone - - -
Gina	Who?
Philip	Myself.

And in a different group Jack said : "I want enough grades to get me into a good job" - not any job, but a good one, was the goal.

Some groups were specific about the qualifications they wanted and the purpose of those qualifications.

Clay	What are you here for Faith?
Faith	To get Bursary.
Mere	Is that all?
Faith	Yep, 285 marks will get me into law.
Mere	Well - - - do you want to have Bursary?
Ben	If you never get a job - -
Mere	I want - -

Faith	Well, at least I'm qualified.
Ben	Yeah.
Mere	I want qualifications - -
Faith	What for?
Clay	Aw - I want to get into the Police Force -
Mere	You want to get into the Police? D'you think it will be just as easy as - - you know - - when you leave school and just go into the Police Force?
Clay	No, it's a lot harder. Heaps harder.
Ben	What are you here for Mere?
Mere	The same - - to get qualifications.
Faith	For?
Mere	The new technology (laughs). No. I want computing.
Clay	AIT stuff.
Mere	What about you Ben?
Ben	Qualifications.
Mere	What for?
Ben	Go to tech. next year.

Some students saw qualifications as a form of security, saying "I just want some qualifications to get a job instead of going on the dole" or "I don't want to be a bum" or "I don't want to be a dropout" or "I don't want to end up on the streets".

Not all students saw qualifications as an unproblematic path to work:

Marlene	There's nothing out there. Other students our age have got to realise that. That they haven't got a job waiting for them. They are waiting for a job that may never be there.

One group pursued this idea:

Clay	I just hated school - needed to get out and so I left and then like - -
Faith	You hit the real world and it was hard so you came back - -
Clay	Yeah. No, the real world's not hard - -

Ben		But you weren't up to the real world?

Clay		I guess, like, yeah, that's right. And like I want to get - - - I needed other qualifications so that's why I came back.

In every one of the fourteen groups the message seemed to be clear. 'Education' was wanted and almost every student gave a work-related or further education reason for wanting certificates or qualifications.

The term 'education', however, was not always clear. One group pushed one of the participants to be specific:

Faith		Ben, what are you at school for?

Ben		Education , man.

Mere		What for?

Ben		To learn.

Clay		To learn what though?

Ben		Schooling.

In some groups education meant to 'increase skills' and in others to 'increase knowledge':

Anya		What I hope to get out of this school is more knowledge and - - -

Kiri		More than you've got now.

Anya		- - - want to learn heaps more before I leave here.

For two groups it meant more "sex education - - so many girls have gotten pregnant" and "they don't know how to use condoms properly". In some groups 'education' was all-encompassing. "I want the best of everything," one male student said, and in another group, a girl summarised the discussion with : "We want the best of everything - qualifications, sports, culture groups, spend heaps of time with the teachers".

Back in Clay's group they were still trying :

Clay		Are you staying at school to play sport or be with your mates or really to learn and get an education?

Ben	All those things together.
Faith	Yeah, I mean you're not just here to get an education, like you've got a social life.

From another group the idea of sport was pursued:

John	Sports keeps a lot of people at school.
Quinnan	Yeah.
Jean	Volleyball kept me here.

But even with these views all students agreed that qualifications counted.

It seemed that my initial premise that Maori students did not value academic qualifications was wrong. Their words and the sincerity in their voices convinced me. So why were they not achieving as well as their Pakeha peers?

This question takes us to the second level of the discussions, that of the students' themes about schooling.

Perceptions of What Helps or Hinders School Achievement

One of the most gripping aspects of listening to the students' discussions was hearing their views about school. In every group, the same topics and the same perceptions of those topics, emerged.

Teachers

The theme which generated the most discussion was teachers. As they talked about teachers specifically and generally, the students shared experiences and opinions and laughter, anger and pain.

Heni	And some of the teachers in the school, they don't really --- they have a funny way of teaching.
Mana	Yeah.
Alan	They only get across to some students.

Heni	Only some people get it.
Mana	And, yeah, they go 'Do you get it?', a couple say 'Yeah', then they just carry on for the next - - -
Heni	And then if you don't understand they will blame you for not listening or something.
Maraina	Yeah.
Mana	They don't take time out to listen.

The same group, much later, had moved on to specific concerns about teachers.

Mana	Teachers don't give you enough support and really just put you down.
Heni	A lot of put-downs have dramatic effects.
Alan	Yeah, it sorta makes you believe you can't do it.
Heni	Like, I recall numerous times when (teacher's name) - -
Alan	Don't be shy, come out with it - - (teacher's name).
Heni	It's so hard to admit it - - (Laughter from the group)
Alan	It's alright, Heni - - we share the same problem.
Heni	I feel - - in confidence, - - but -
Mana	Take your time (laughs at himself)
Heni	Yes - - I recall being called a 'Dizzy Cow' and I'd got major problems with my life, you know -

The incident was two years old but the pain was still fresh: the school context maintained the memory.

The picture of teachers was clear : they did not express themselves properly, were "nosey" and spread students' personal stories around the school, were "not strict enough" or were too strict, just wrote on the board, did not explain how work was to be done, treated students "like kids", "put students down", hid behind their authority, and were not fair in setting too many assignments. The most cynical perception was expressed by the group laughter which followed : "Teachers should want their students to pass". For many students teaching was a matter of: "Get in class, sit on your arse and write! Yeah, like that's fun!" Writing and fun were perceived as classroom opposites.

However, as Freire suggests, an oppositional reality about teachers also came clear. The ideal teacher would "sit down and work with us", have a sense of humour, listen to the students, be fair, explain work set, "find out the pace of the students instead of going at her pace" and spend "heaps of time with individuals". The ideal teacher would also "encourage you, which is good. Like they say 'I'm sure you can do it if you just give it a bit of time", and "Whenever you've got questions they should be there to answer them". As Faith and Clay noted : "Teachers have to adapt - - - they have to suit you" and "It comes down to respect".

In every group, students named teachers who were "choice", "cool", "fairly approachable", "try to do their job really well" or "have got quite a good relationship with the students". As some students said "I like all my teachers - my teachers are all good" and "It suits me I think". One group concluded :

Ray	Teachers are good -
Moana	Some of them?
Ray	No, most of them are good.
Moana	Yeah.

That the learning possibilities contained in the perceptions of the ideal teacher could be restricted by their own roles in the classroom, the students also understood.

Clifton	(Teachers) take it out on the students - yeah.
Roimata	It's not just the teachers - - like I've noticed a lot of students do that and take it out on the teachers. I do anyway.
Sonya	The teachers, they're not there to handle our crap, they're just here to get paid to teach us.

For some students the (Freirean) limit-situations of school could be found in the different rewards staff and students received.

Clifton	- - but they're getting paid to just take stuff out on us. See, we're not getting paid - - -

Sonya We're getting an education.

It made sense, therefore, to form a partnership: "You have to help those sort of (bad) teachers out - just think of the situation teachers are in".

Generally, students were precise in their praise or criticism of particular teachers (and with a notable degree of consensus) and yet reached for broader descriptions of "good teaching". In their perceptions personality traits were frequently linked with teaching skills, and often negatively; a strong sense of student tolerance, for the sake of qualifications and post-school opportunities, came through all discussions.

Boredom and motivation

Of almost equal importance was the theme of boredom, and its oppositional reality appeared to be motivation. The limit-situations of this theme included teachers specifically and generally and 'the school' in the sense of 'this school'. So Paul said "School is boring 'cause there's nothing to do", meaning our school, not schools in general, and it was actually lunchtime which was the problem.

Bernice When we come to school we get bored.
Lani Yeah.
Bernice We need stuff to do at lunchtimes.
Paul School is boring 'cause there's nothing to do.

The meaning of boredom, however, went beyond "nothing to do" to include the idea of "not interesting" as in "classes should be more interesting" and they "can't be boring, or we just won't turn up".

This idea of 'withdrawal' as a response to boredom was pursued by a number of groups and was both promoted and rejected. Lilian said " - - nowadays people just, um, they can't be bothered staying at school so they drop out and go on courses, eh? Everybody does, man" and in another group Lena commented :

> I used to bunk heaps last year 'cause I wasn't interested in my work - - - you give them a real dumby assignment of work to do, they won't do it - and then they know not to turn up to class the next day. Know what they're doing!

A reverse work reason was also given by Chris in another group : "I'm going to bunk tomorrow or the next day and just do my assignment" (and he did!).

A different view came from Philip's group.

Philip	Bunkers - - who cares about them?
Mark	But they're the ones losing out, eh?
Philip	They're the ones who make our school look bad - - bunking - - that's truancy. But that's bunking within the school.
Gina	Well, if you're bunking in school - how come? Why come to school if you're just going to bunk? Stay at home and bunk.
Mark	Yeah, right on.

So bunking and boredom had links and neither were totally accepted as appropriate student responses. As one student argued "Like, there's stuff to do but everybody doesn't get interested". Another group put it this way :

Faith	Well, you can't have everything sweet as.
Mere	Being your way.
Faith	You've got to accept that some teachers just don't - but you can't always have a real - - - with your teacher, I mean 'cause you're going to get some old boring ones.

The oppositional reality to boredom, that of motivation, was discussed very fully.

Alan	Like it's our responsibility, if we want to fail school. And it's not like we are under anyone else's influence, like we can make up our own minds.
Mana	I mean like they should still - - - they shouldn't really worry about us.

In another group John explained : "It's sort of like taking your own responsibility, and like you've got to manage your time. It's really up to you. And that's what they are doing".

But motivation was not simply a matter for the students alone.

Faith	Well, I mean, if no-one's going to work, then why should the teachers then? You know?
Clay	Well, that's what they get paid for.
Mere	They get paid to teach you to learn, even if you don't want to learn.
Faith	So the teachers have to motivate the students.
Clay	Okay then, that's cool. So the teachers are half way the problem, is it?
Faith	So the teachers have to motivate. Yeah. That's pretty basic.
Clay	No the teachers can't motivate the kids if the kids don't - -
Faith	It's just the attitude of the people - - everyone's attitude.

A similar view came from other groups ; 'he' in this conversation meaning 'students in general':

Gina	If he doesn't work, why bother with him?
Philip	You should ask him to do something else. It's his choice.
Gina	It's like telling the baby to hoover the house. Hoover - - -
Mark	Well, if he's not going to work - why is he at school?
Philip	Why does he bother coming to classes?

Two other groups were clear - and tougher : "If someone - - - and you're willing to work - - - I reckon they should be kicked out. No questions asked," and there is no point in chasing "kids who are going to fart around".

Overall, it was agreed that "students have to be committed, eh man?" but that "You can't just work on your own motivation, you need more help," and support from the teachers. And a number of groups spoke of their enthusiasm and high grades in junior school and concluded "in the fifth form you start slacking off".

One of this study's most intense stories belongs to this theme.

Mana	When (teacher's name) was my (subject) teacher he said I was a 'loser' and I'd never make it in the world and I'd never pass S.C. (subject) and I proved to him and I passed S.C. (subject).
Maraina	Yes, but sometimes you can overcome it.
Alan	A lot of times, you know.
Mana	I had to dig down below and pull that strength out - - - really go for gold and try to make it. 'Cause when a teacher puts you down - - - you really take it to heart, you know.

The concepts of boredom and motivation in the students' view, linked or distanced them from teachers and school, and so achievement. As one girl said, wistfully, "I just wanna learn, you know. I just wanna good life".

<u>Some other students</u>

A third strong theme, and one which was perhaps the most context-dependent was what might be called 'Students Different From Us'. Adult students and Sinclair Centre students were discussed by some groups and students in forms one and two were discussed by all groups.

Adults were accepted with good humour.

Mark	And how about these adult students coming here? What do you reckon about that?
Gina	I reckon - aw, it's okay - it's good having them here - we can learn a bit off them.

Teresa But they're too brainy - ask all the questions in class.
Philip If they're so brainy they wouldn't have come back.
Group Yeah.
Mark They'll be out there with a good job, but - - -
Teresa - - - she answers all our questions and nobody else ever gets to answer. (Laughter) Like she's not dumb. (Laughter)
Philip Well, when you're 25 you come back too.
Teresa No, it's alright. (Laughter)

The Sinclair Centre students were also accepted.

Heni I think a good thing is how they have the Sinclair Unit in the school. They get the chance to be around normal people, sort of thing.
Maraina And, like it makes us aware of other people, aware of people's disabilities and stuff.
Heni I mean it's quite good. They can be annoying sometimes, but.
Mana Yeah, sometimes they can, eh? You just got to expect that from them.
Heni Yeah, but like it makes you aware of other people and differences and that.

Students, whether adults or with disabilities, were seen to benefit from being in the school and they provided few difficulties for other students. The oppositional reality was that by their presence they contributed to 'normal' students' learning. Their relatively small numbers balanced their high visibility and so reassured students that their participation in school life held no 'limit-situations' for them.

But it was different with forms one and two. Almost every group had a complaint about them. Whether it was about their eating habits, "They need more healthier food. These form one and two kids, they need nutrition and stuff. Instead they're eating lollies, lollies, pies. They should have more healthier food" or about their behaviour, there was a general concern. A typical overview can

be seen in this exchange:

Maraina	They should get rid of those form one and twos, 'cause I reckon they are like bad influences.
Alan	And there is a lack of room.
Maraina	And it's mainly the form one and twos that get into trouble.
Mana	They are the ones that are doing all the things wrong.
Maraina	And they give us a bad name.
Group	Yeah.

Another group shared the view and with much laughter thought of ways to control the "little children" (different lunchtimes, a uniform, their own classrooms and play areas) but they saw limitations in their ideas: "We can't ask for anything like that". All agreed although no reasons were offered.

Two of the best stories came from the discussions about form one and two and both referred to a problem in term one with the juniors.

Roimata	Have you seen those fellas on the roof around the back? There's heaps, man. Far - they bloomin' make me mad. You tell them to get off and they don't listen. Got no ears. And by the time you geta teacher - Oh! They're gone.
Sonya	At interval there was this fella on the roof, and I go 'Get off that roof' and I was sitting on the field and there was - - - and I said 'Get off the roof' and he goes 'Fuck you!' I was mad. I went - ho! Miss Smith was around there but she left and we go 'Miss Smith, there's someone - ' and far in - they were all running away.
Roimata	Yeah. Form one and twos - they're really smart.

A similar story about the same problem, came from John in another group : "Like if I caught a kid and they said 'You're not a prefect or you're not a teacher' and I said, 'Oh yeah - I can get one - ' Like as soon as the teacher came, that was it. They were doomed." (Group laughter).

But, as with all themes, there was another view.

Mark	But I reckon it's good having them here 'cause being so young you have to learn to get along with them and it prepares you for adulthood when you get your own kiddies - you have to put up with them.
Group	Yeah.
Gina	And it's different when they are not in your family.
Teresa	If they are not in your family - like out of the family - and it makes them more mature. Yeah, if they are around other people - -
Mark	- - - and you have to learn to accept them.
Philip	They're going to come back again any way!
Mark	But I reckon it's good, because to mix with the younger fella - - -

Forms one and two, while arousing strong feelings amongst the groups could be seen in a similar way to adult and Sinclair Centre students : they were both benefitting from the school and contributing to other students' learning.

Curriculum perceptions

The content of the students' learning, the modular organisation of the curriculum and the assessment system, all formed a fourth theme. The focus of this theme was not on achievement in school, however, but rather how it was affecting enjoyment of school and what it would contribute to post school lives. General perceptions included, "Education is being pushed on us too hard," "Last year was hard but this year is worse" and "You do untold things you never use".

Quality of school life was seen in a variety of ways, including

Sri	Why is it we don't have study periods now?
Cam	We do.
Sri	We don't.

Cam	I'm in one -
Sri	I don't see why we don't, just do the subjects we enjoy.
Nathan	What?
Cam	Well, you know, that's all up to that Lockwood Smith fellow, eh?
Group	Yeah.
Sri	What we should do are the subjects we enjoy - - -
Nathan	That's not the way it goes though.

Modular, internal assessment was also debated.

Sonya	I reckon that, you know how we get assessed, you don't have to sit exams - - - I reckon that's cool.
Clifton	I don't.
Roimata	I reckon I would rather have an exam, 'cause you've got to try all the way through, like if you fail one module in English you fail your certificate.

The group then discussed the advantages of sitting an examination after "mucking around all year" and then "going hard out studying and you might pass", at which they all laughed, and echoed "might".

A general consensus of the school's modular system of curriculum delivery came through.

Anya	I like the way that the modular system is - all the terms have been made - 'cause it's a lot easier - you're not learning one thing every year for that year.
Kiri	Like the third form.
Marlene	You get a choice of what you want to do. And that's the best way to learn, I reckon.

The content and range of modules, however, was strongly criticised for being too restrictive. Group after group agreed that more choice was needed, more practical modules in life skills were what they wanted and their examples included catering, waitressing, welding and sport. The list is interesting not only because of its content but also because all of the examples listed are taught in the school.

One other concern the students had was of module clashes and this problem I return to later.

The theme of 'curriculum', therefore, reflected perceptions of constraints and possibilities but in general was a theme which aroused laughter rather than anger. One group in particular had fun contemplating the possibility of a module in escorting.

Out of class activities

The final theme, and the one I had anticipated, dealt with sports, camps, class trips, all those out-of-class activities in which the school's Maori students excel. I had not, however, anticipated the dissatisfaction. In every group there were concerns. The gymnasium was too small, too hard to get into for practices, the cross country competition was "budget", meaning not interesting ("if you don't get any fun you're not getting anything out of it"), there were too few outdoor education camps ("They are important 'cause you bond with people you don't really get along with" and "it brings the quiet ones right up") and more sports exchanges and class trips were wanted. One group proposed extra class trips as a reward for those who worked and most groups complained that there were not enough activities at lunchtime, suggesting films and organised games as possibilities.

Dominant in this theme were the discussions about sport. Topics ranged from uniforms : "I reckon the boys' basketball uniform is better than the girls - - - The boys have got orange mesh with black strips down the side," to the first rugby game, "It's not worth having a game if no-one is watching" and "And they need support". Sports funding issues made some groups angry. As Lilian put it :

> Ngaire, she complained to me that 'Why you basketballers always get everything!' And we don't. It's cause we got off our butts and did some fundraising. And we deserve what we got. I think that maybe, it's just them, they won't get off their butt and do some fundraising.

As always, humour was intertwined with the criticism. It was both gentle and mocking. The boys in one group, who spoke with pleasure of representing the school in the approaching rugby game, were told by the girls that they would "be wasted" but they laughed as they said it. And in another group :

Sri	Do you reckon they should make sport compulsory?
Cam	Yeah - - every girl should play rugby.
Sri	and later -
Cam	and the guys should play basketball
Sri	- - netball -

This group ended this conversation by contemplating Sumo wrestling as a more interesting interform competition.

There was also dissatisfaction with the social side of school life: the school radio station should be playing "all sorts of music", and "it all boils down to more socials, more involvement". The students' annual ball was discussed in detail. At the time of these first discussions the senior school was fiercely divided over the theme of 'Neptune's Kingdom' which the prefects had proposed. "I reckon they should get some opinions of other students too - that would help", said one sixth former. "It's so childish," said another student, "Come as crabs and crayfish - - and flippers". Some of the sixths 'planned' how they would run the ball as seventh formers : "Man, we should have a real cool ball next year -- change it and make it different". Naturally, the prefects in the groups did not have the same concerns.

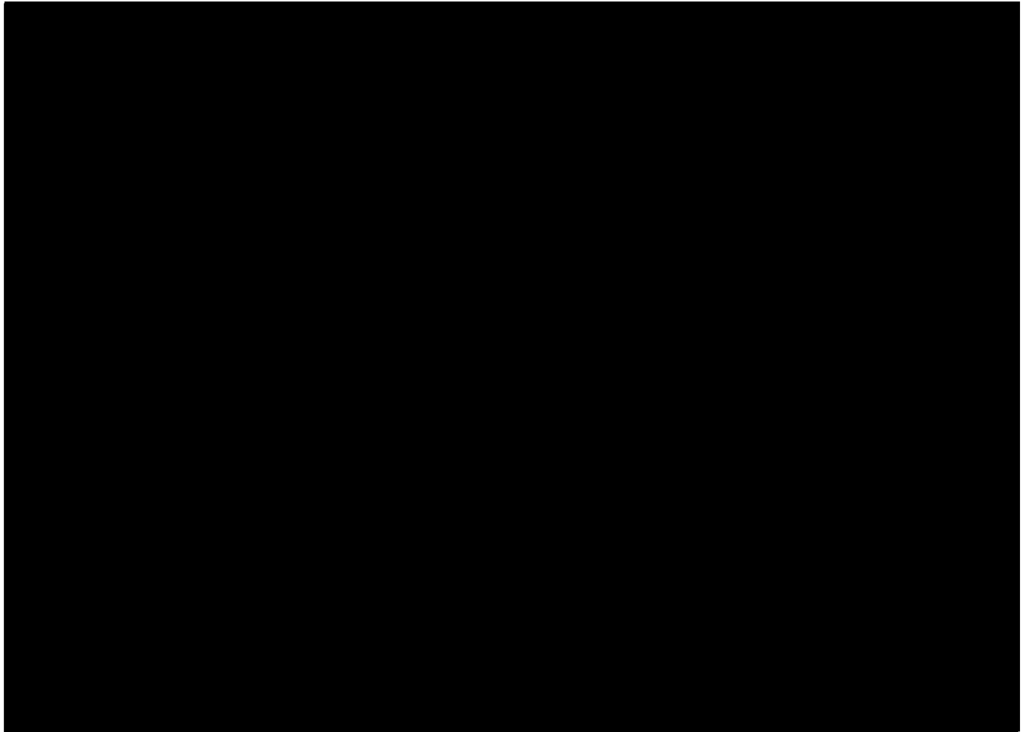
Through many of the discussions about the school's out-of-class activities there ran references to students' own out-of-school interests. Nightclubs in the city, regional and national sports' teams, the crash and death of an overseas Grand Prix driver - - - and more, were discussed with interest. A taste of one part of non-school life was given in a description of going to the previous year's after-ball party by limousine : "He just picked us up and we just cruised down and had a big feed and a bottle of wine and shit, then he picked us up from there and took us home, and took us back to Tana's."

School out-of-class activities were clearly important as sources of discontent, in contrast with the students' non-school lives, but they saw potential in them for interest and fun. Again the focus of this theme moved between the school's responsibilities and the students' contributing roles.

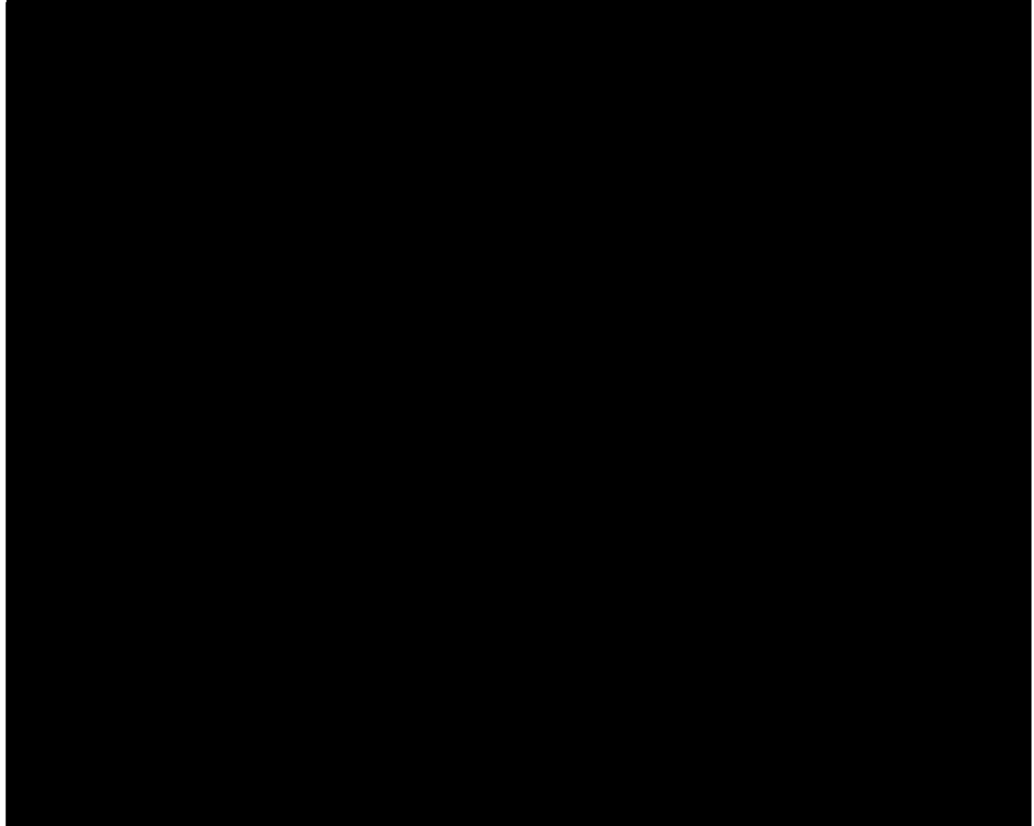
Conclusion

It seemed that the first stage of the methodology of this study had been successful. The students talked, as Freire and Habermas had suggested they should, in a free and open manner. They had generated a rich data base for the study and they had clearly answered its first question : do senior Maori secondary school students want academic qualifications? Yes, they do. They had also indicated equally clearly those aspects of life which they believed helped and did not help them achieve those qualifications. My first task, therefore, was to try to understand what they had told me. This I do in the next chapter.

Ko ia kahore nei tapu, te kitea e kore; s/he who does not seek will not find.



Level Five Music : Keyboard



Adult Students : mother and daughter with the Minister of Education

CHAPTER EIGHT

TE HUI : COMMENT : THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

Na te waewae i kimi; searching feet . . .

Introduction

From the tapes it was clear that the students wanted to achieve in school and that they were particularly interested in the constraints and possibilities of teaching, boredom and motivation, students who were 'different', the curriculum and out of class activities. In each of the themes the school was criticised and in each the students reflected (equally critically), on their own roles and responses. It was beginning to appear that life as a senior Maori student was generally not 'fun' even though, for most, it still has a purpose. The interpretation, at the end of this first stage of the students' discussion, therefore, had the goal of trying to understand the significance of the themes.

Assistance From Other School Studies

Because I was uncertain about my analyses of the students' discussions I went back to the literature for guidance. The theme of 'teachers' came through significantly, and in various ways, in New Zealand research carried out by Marshall, (1989) Jones, (1991) Mitchell, (1988) St. George, (1983) Simon, (1984). It also appeared in the work of overseas studies by Fuller, (1984) Furlong, (1984) Willis, (1977). The themes of 'boring' and 'curriculum' appeared in the same and other literature : Hirsh, (1990) Smith, (1986) Pollard, (1984) Hammersley and Turner (1984). Similarly, out-of-class activities were identified as an important theme by students in these studies. Further, the survey of Tai Tokerau Maori fifth form students confirmed my findings : the majority wanted qualifications, they wanted to avoid the dole (Marshall;1989). I seemed to be in step with the research. But the theme of 'students different from us', was missing - - - was that significant or not? And then I realised

that three dominant themes in the literature had not emerged in my analysis. Where were the themes of 'family', 'peer pressure' and 'racism'? Had I missed them? I went back to the tapes again.

Themes Revisited

Family

I found 'family' tied closely to perceptions about school, in three groups :

Briar	(of teachers) They think they're so superior.
Amy	Really, they're like your parents.
Lena	Just another person, eh.
Amy	Get enough moans at home. (Laughter)

Later in the same group :

Briar	They (teachers) should go around our place and see what the atmosphere is like.
Amy	Yeah. They don't understand. If you tell them, you're shamed - - - 'cause sometimes people have got shameful things to say and they don't want to say them - -

The second reference was linked to suspended students.

Mana	They've got no goals in life -
Maraina	and yeah, their parents don't, like, put much emphasis on coming to school.
Heni	Like a lot of it does have to do with families and that.
Maraina	Yeah. If your family are positive, attitude and stuff, the kids will - -
Mana	If your parents really care about you and stuff, like support you and push you on the way - - -

The third reference was to students who do not work in class.

Philip	Well, you see that's the thing. They come to school, not to work, but just to get away from home. Doesn't that tell you something about their background?
Teresa	No, I don't think so.
Philip	But again, it gives you the impression that there's something wrong at home _ - -
Gina	The family background has a lot to do with the way they are at school.

I also found 'family' in what I have defined as 'sharing' time. In most tapes students exchanged stories about people in their lives : brothers, sisters, neightbours, parents, friends. They talked of fights next door, fathers in and out of prison, parents living somewhere else, boyfriends and girlfriends won and lost, people in trouble, lucky people and happy people. This 'sharing' time placed 'family' as a negative rather than a positive factor in their lives but 'family' emerges as - at least - an incidental rather than a significant theme. In a way this reflected the high number of our senior students who no longer lived with parents.

The work by Lauder (1985) and Nash (1993) on the effects of family on school achievement, suggests very strongly that family is important. If students' post-school outcomes are 'structured' by their father's occupations or the literary resources of the home, we might expect to hear at least whispers of this in their discussions. Only one comment reflected such a structuring : Ray wanted to be a truck driver because his father and his brothers were truck drivers and it is a moot point whether this comment supports Lauder or whether it reflects Boudon's claim of class 'preferences'.

However, the family could be exerting influences of which the students were unaware, such as language acquisition (which is considered further on) and it would, perhaps, be unusual for students to be aware of this or other such family influences in their lives. Of chief interest, therefore, at the end of this first stage, was the realtive absence of 'family' as a topic of interest for the students.

I clearly needed to follow 'family' into the second stage of the study.

Peers

The theme of 'peer group' I also found. It was partly buried in the 'sharing' time and it was hinted at in the discussions on suspensions, students who are different and life-out-of-school. The students identified three groups amongst their peers. The first group were friends who were important for fun (such as the after-ball party) and as 'reliable' witnesses to incidents in and out of school (such as classroom 'putdowns', the juniors on the roof). The second group were identified as 'different' and seen either as temporary nuisances (forms one and two) or acceptable (adults and disabled students), but their differences seemed to deny them significance in the students' lives. The final group were the students who were seen to be deserving of scorn or punishment, (because of bunking or for receiving suspensions). The influence of this group seemed to be as 'awful examples', not to be copied, but deserving of some compassion or a second chance (with the implication of 'becoming like us'). Where, therefore, was the peer pressure not to succeed? Had the students escaped it or grown past it? Was it, as the Marshall survey (1989) suggested, not a negative but a positive factor in the students' school lives? I needed to find out more, in the second stage of the study, about the students' perception of the influence of their peer group.

Racism

Conscious that from the Tai Tokerau survey of Maori fifth formers, Marshall had identified (school) institutional racism as a problem, I had listened carefully for references to discrimination, bias or racism. There was no indication of such a perception. This seemed unusual, given that Tauroa (1982), Walker (1985) Irwin (1992), describe it as important and Hirsh in 1990 saw it as the "very root of the condition of Maori people". Ranby (1979) argued that if self-esteem and high achievement has a causal relationship, either way, then other variables affect Maori students' confidence and school

achievement. One of those possible variables could be racism, (for this study's purpose), at the school level. In the whaikorero of this report-journey (Chapter four) Maori leaders called for empowerment particularly in policy-setting for the education of Maori students and there is a strong plea in their speeches for a Maori-Pakeha partnership. Such a partnership is impossible if there is racism in schools and it may not be possible if to be a Maori student is to feel powerless even if there is no perception of (institutional) racism. Why had racism not emerged as a theme in the discussions? It seemed important to pursue this idea also, into the second stage of the study.

First Thoughts on Students' Attitudes and Values : Social Order?

At the end of the first stage there seemed to be two ways to explore the themes for reasons for the inequality in these students' rates of acquisition of qualifications, when their discussions showed that they very clearly valued them. I could hypothesise, with Boudon (1982), 'game playing' in which achievement rates were the result of their decision-making, or I could pursue the concept of acculturation and, with Bourdieu, focus on the gap between the cultures of the students and the school. I considered both explanations.

The students are playing the game?

Through all the discussions there were hints that these students were playing the (Boudon) 'game'. The groups who thought about suspension, for example, were condemnatory of the students concerned.

"Why do you get suspended?" "Cause you're an arsehole".

John	We've got kids that can get away - -
Quinnan	They test the system.

The suspension of a senior student just prior to the discussions was accepted as proper because he had been trusted by staff and had

not met that trust. The idea that students should 'play the game' however, did not mean that if 'they messed up' they should not have another chance at school and expulsion was rejected because "it gets rid of the problem for the school but it just takes the problem to somewhere else".

There was also a sense of 'winning' in 'the game' which possibly answered Jones' question, "Why are these students' so cheerful most of the time?" (1991;60).

Anya	Well, I've got this from school - -
Marlene	I've gotten a better teaching ability. I've been able to understand more as time goes on and I've been able to handle the teachers more.
Anya	Yeah 'cause we've actually grown up more and faster.
Kiri	I guess this school has done to me - it's given me discipline, you know, self-discipline and respect.
Anya	- and more mature
Kiri	Yeah
Anya	Makes me definitely more mature.

It seemed, therefore, that the students did not see school as a totally negative experience of restrictions and problems. School might be rule-governed and hard but it also promised possibilities of success : they chose to stay at school because it was a game all could play.

A problem

With this explanation it was possible to understand why the students had gained qualifications - but not why they had fewer than their Pakeha peers. To answer this question and by applying Boudon further, I could say that the students' academic goals were modified during their time in senior school by their perceptions of what was best for them when they left school. They would recognise that many other students were pursuing the same goals as they were, they would rationalize their chances of success, accept that some qualifications were better than none and participate in senior school

appropriately. The result would be that even with some qualifications they were still not equal academically with Pakeha students. Such an explanation would be acknowledged as a possibility by (our) teachers who often mourn the apparent reluctance of some Maori students to pursue academic goals higher than those they have set. However, the explanation begs the question of our Pakeha students who have similar family-class backgrounds (Introduction) and similar work aspirations (Appendix 4). Why do they not respond to the game of qualifications with the same cost-benefit analysis of Maori students? I had a problem. Could it be, in the 'game' of school qualifications, that Maori inequality came not from the students' agency or rational (decision-making) actions but from some other source?

A cultural capital gap?

While the application of Boudon's theory to senior school inequality required me to think about the student's agency, Bourdieu's explanation (1974) of the role of schools in the reproduction of cultural and social stratification took me to the students' families. If Maori students acquire from their family culture cognitive and behaviourial 'capital' which is different from that necessary for school success, then, unless they gain the necessary 'habitus' by their agency or the school's intervention, they will not achieve. The concept of a culture gap between school and student seemed a possible explanation, until I thought about the discussions of this first stage. These students had returned to school, they had gained some qualifications and even in their most negative discussions, they gave me no sense of a rejection of school. Amongst their criticisms the students spoke positively of good teachers, the advantages of modular studies and more. In one group, after a lengthy sharing of complaints the students agreed with John who said "You must admit this school has a lot to offer, really". In another group there was similar satisfaction :

Lilian	They asked me what school I go to. I said - 'aw, Tiki High' and they said 'What's it like?' and I said 'Cool'. But it is a good school.

Ray		Yeah, I like it. I've liked it since I got here, and it's been the bestest school I've ever gone to! How's that for English? (Laughter)

Was it possible that our students were acculturated into the school's value systems? They all had some qualifications, many had status as prefects, sports, music and tikanga Maori leaders. Acculturation might explain the gaining of qualifications (and might offer schools a way to help student's improve their chances of economic and social equality as adults). Acculturation might also explain why the students seemed so different from those in the majority of the studies I had read. Unlike other student research participants these students were 'achievers' and unlike Willis's boys for example, they were hoping to learn for a better world of labour.

A problem

I had a problem with this reasoning : it did not account for the qualifications gap between Maori and Pakeha students. I then wondered if partial acculturation was a reasonable explanation. The students' discussions suggested that this was a possibility. They described the school as boring and not always helpful (a culture gap?) but they believed that their self-motivation would help them to succeed in it (acculturation?). They wanted help with their motivation, notably fun and better teaching, (a culture gap?) but they stressed their willing participation in the school to achieve qualifications (acculturation?). They had some qualifications (acculturation?) but not at the same rates as Pakeha students (a culture gap?).

A concept of partial acculturation seemed to be helpful but I needed to be able to explain why the process was not complete. I wondered, as I had with Boudon's account, if there was something else influencing these students or if there were any practicable school responses which would close the culture gap.

A possible way forward

At the end of the first stage of the students' discussion I was not

able to describe, with any certainty, their school attitudes and values either in terms of 'game playing' or 'acculturation'. I was becoming more confident, however, that any explanation of senior Maori students' acquisition of qualifications needed to include accounts of both their agency and the structuring influence of family, at least. In the second stage of discussions, with its focus on the students' sub-culture, I planned to follow up the possibility that family socialization influenced agency and that sub-cultural attitudes and values would reflect that influence.

Reviewing the Conduct of the Study

Critical ethnography in practice

When I began the search for 'themes' I was conscious that my familiarity with both the participants and the context of the school might produce an over-confidence when I entered the discussions and so result in my overlooking or over-stressing some aspect of the students' views. But, because I was not present during the first discussions and had only voices to convey meaning, I needed my close knowledge of the context - and at times, the students - to guide me. I decided, therefore, that I needed a 'rule' to determine 'themes'. The one I chose was that the topic had to be discussed in every group but not necessarily in the same way or from the same perspective. With this rule the initial five themes were identified but as it turned out they would have emerged without the rule : the topics dominated all discussions. This suggested to me that students could be their own 'ethnographers', given the opportunity and an initial focus.

My three questions were broad, open-ended and did not contain in their wording any hints to the students about 'desired' answers. However, with my position as Principal and the school as the site of the discussions, the students may have seen 'the school' as the desired focus of their answers. For that reason, as well as the study's literature base, I chose to follow racism through the rest of the discussions and I had reviewed the tapes for the themes of family and peer group pressure. At the conclusion the the search however,

I could not be certain that what I had called 'shared time' was not also a theme. I chose not to pursue it, partly because of the intimate content of much of it and partly because my knowledge of participants and context reassured me that this was a form of 'time out' for the students : chatting with friends seemed to be for them a part of the exercise of 'thinking about ourselves'.

In a sense my comments on these first discussions begin to sound like the unhelpful 'high culture; of which critical ethnography is accused. For that reason this commentary - and the study - has used a wide literature base for guidance and tries to demonstrate the process and results of reflection-in-action by participants and researcher.

Empowerment

The method of working with the students was prompted by Freire's vision (1972) of a problem-posing process in which oppressors and oppressed are empowered through conscientisation so that together they are able to intervene in the realities of (school) life. I had tried to avoid what Freire calls 'banking' (or imposing ideas) by not participating in the discussions and at the end of the first stage I wondered if any 'conscientisation' was developing. Had I actually heard the start of a Frierean dialogue which would empower the students to see new school possibilities? Or was it possible, in spite of all the talk, that the students had not produced 'generative' themes at all, and instead, I had listened to a noisy 'theme of silence' which, according to Freire indicated 'muteness in the face of the overwhelming force' of the position they believed they were in.

Anya said, in her group : "You don't think about these things until someone asks you". I was pleased to be the person who had started her thinking, but it seemed in the students' discussions that they still perceived the world beyond school as 'out there' (Faith called this "The real world") and not something they could change. There was a sense of 'that's how it is' through all the conversations about the future. Ideas about school carried the same sense. Whether it was ideas about what they ought to be allowed to study ("That's

not the way it goes though") or dealing with forms one and two students ("We can't ask for anything like that") or even complaining about the prefects, the students identified themselves as not a part of whoever or whatever made the rules. There appeared to be no 'conscientisation' of any of the students with a Freirean sense of their 'ability to intervene in reality".

I did sense, however, that the students had seen something of Freire's 'oppositional realities' in their themes (especially of teachers) and that some had improved their understanding of school practices. Just when I was feeling discouraged with the study's progress, Clay and a group of his friends came to suggest that where "we should be working is in the fifth form. That's where the problems start. where it gets really boring". He had a list of questions which he said we should give the fifth form and then we should discuss the answers with them. My intention in the study had been to try to empower the student participants - had I actually started the process? For a Principal-researcher it was an exciting moment and in term two the fifth form became a focus of some of the students' thinking. That story will be indicated briefly in the following chapter because it made a contribution to, and was a consequence of, this study.

Of my 'conscientisation', I was a little more confident. I was surprised by the depth of feeling in, and the honesty of, the students' discussions but it was these exact qualities which gave me knowledge of their school world that I had not anticipated. I was encouraged to hope that in the second stage we might identify aspects of the school which should be altered if students were to be helped to gain qualifications.

Ethical Concerns

By the time I had listened to all the tapes I had resolved one ethical concern and was faced with a new one. As already indicated, I knew when I began the study that it would be almost impossible to disguise the school to protect it and the students. But at the end of the first stage I knew that I had to 'hide' the students. Their open, often

extremely intimate comments required all the confidentiality I could provide. And so I renamed all 86, in ways which I hope have obscured their identity. But even with this renaming I recognised a new problem. Although they had psuedonyms some students could still be identified by their stories. The choice was either to omit some of the most relevant anecdotes and comments, or to select judiciously and hope that time and tolerance would provide the student protection I sought.

In the end, the hypothesis which emerged in the second stage could be demonstrated without the inclusion of most of the sensitive contributions and so I have omitted many relevant comments by the students. I suspect that an 'outsider' researcher would have done the same, even if the study is less rich in "thick descriptions" as a consequence.

Conclusion

A final coment is necessary. I wondered how 'real' the taped conversations had been. Although the content and tone seemed genuine and I could 'read' the language easily because of years of teaching, it seemed necessary to see if my ghost as Principal, influenced the conversations. This proved to be an interesting test. In a number of groups I was referred to as if I would never hear the tapes and one of those comments has already been noted (I am not told everything). My teaching ability ("Cool - she works with individuals"), my overseas work ("She's always busy"), my role in helping to select prefects ("kids with influence with her") were other such comments. In other groups the fact that I would hear the tapes was referred to, but in passing.

Ben	It's too noisy around here.
Clay	No, this is okay - just carry on. Mrs Tait just wants a fair idea.

or :

Wade	Do you like (teacher's name)?
	(Silence)

Wade	It's only Mrs Tait that hears this.
Nathan	No I don't.

A third group of references brought me into the actual discussion. In a conversation about lunchtimes, one student said "They should have more games at lunchtime - did you get that one, Mrs Tait?" Another group told me of a person they believed was stealing food from the cafeteria and in another a grumbling student was identified, with laughter, as "that was (name)!"

I was 'handed' the tapes by a number of the groups as they finished talking. Some ran out of tape saying "Ho, the tape's almost finished" or "Look how much tape we've used" or "We've had a pretty good talk, you know. It's 11 o'clock. We'll finish it here, eh? But others spoke directly to me. Alan spoke for his group : "That's us signing of - - ". On another tape they concluded :

Anya	Now we'll tautoka you by saying haere ra.
Marlene	Ka kite.
Kiri	'Bye
Anya	Tena koe.
All three	(Singing) See ya, see ya later - - 'cause we'll be back again.

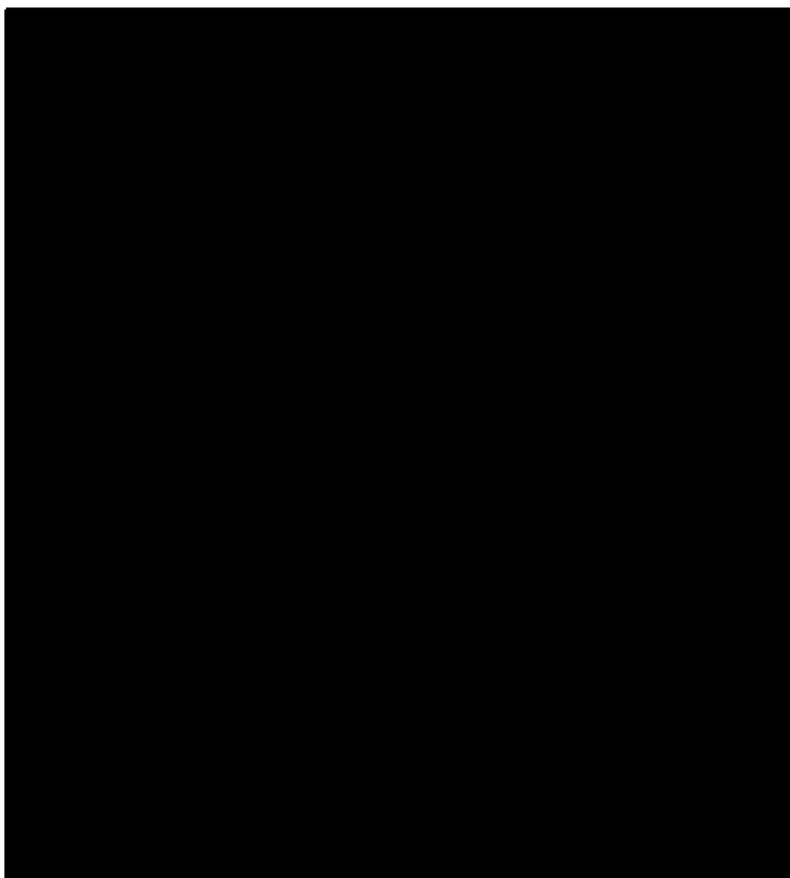
Ray spoke for a third group :

> Well, that's the end of our talk, Mrs Tait. I hope you find some of our material in this tape very worthwhile. I hope it, you know, if you know what I mean, and we'll probably see ya tomorrow - or when we finish this tape. Okay? Ka kite ano. Kia ora.

My ghost, it seemed, like all ghosts, came and went but for most of the time I did not exist. Principal-researchers, after all, are not so important in students' lives that they could influence those students' 'private' conversations.

And so we move to the next stage of the hui : will a closer study of the students' perceptions of school indicate sub-cultural attitudes and values which suggest reasons for school achievement? I joined their ethnographic work as a full participant, hoping to share in their 'critical thinking' and still hoping to help them.

Ka wia tonutia e koe, ka roa tonu te ara; ka kore koe e uiui, ka poto te ara; the more questions asked, the longer the journey seems; the fewer questions asked, the shorter the journey.



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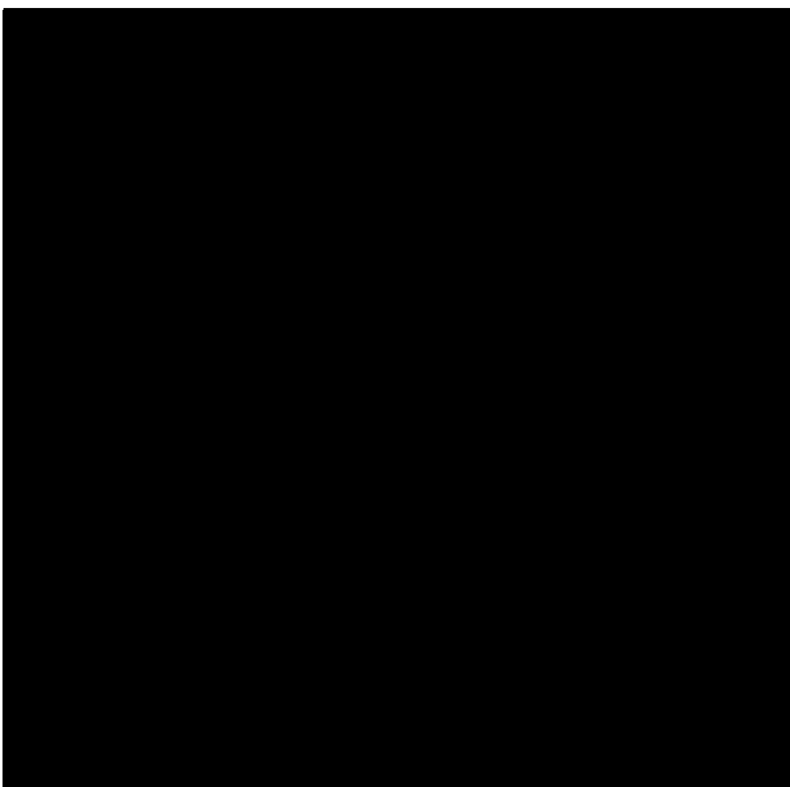
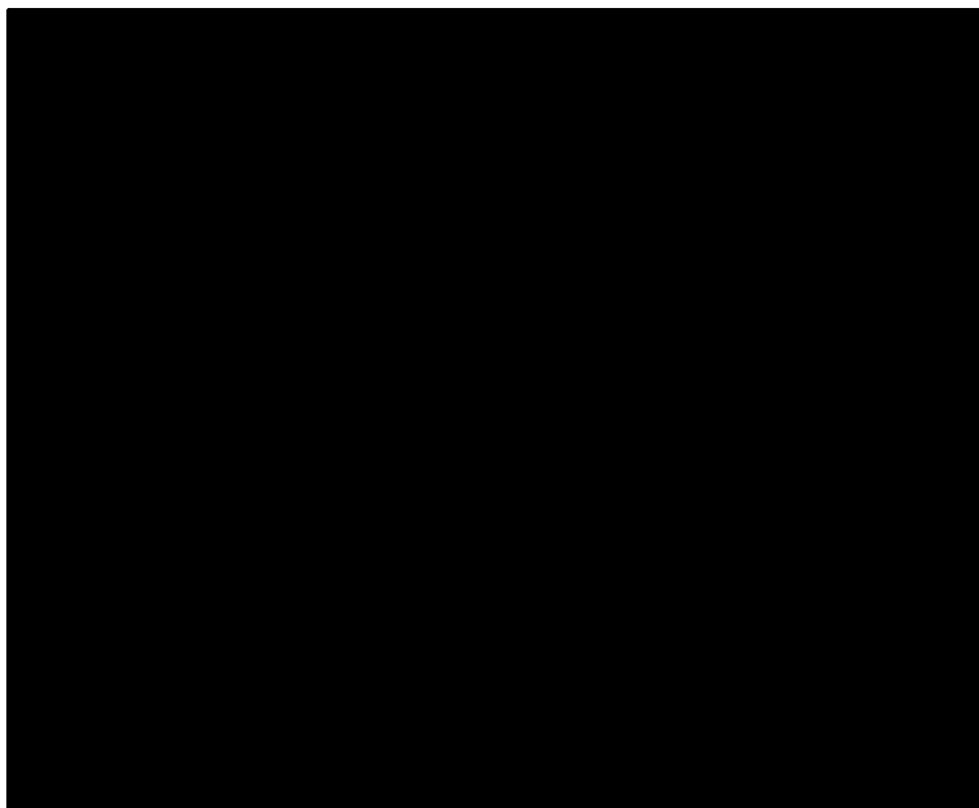




Level One Information Technology : Keyboarding

CHAPTER NINE

TE HUI : THE TALKING CONTINUES : IS THERE A STUDENT CULTURE HERE?

He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga ngakau e kore e kitea.
The corners of a house can be seen but not the corners of a heart.

Introduction

If, as is suggested in the two previous chapters, it is correct to claim that the students in the study wanted academic success, then we need to continue to ask why they, as a group, will probably leave school with fewer qualifications than their Pakeha peers. The exploration of the students' attitudes and values in this second stage is based on an hypothesis that there might be some kind of structural influences operating, perhaps through a student sub-culture, which constrain the students' agency in the pursuit of academic achievement. Whatever is happening in the classroom does not seem to affect their extracurricular successes as Chapter six shows, and this suggests controls or messages which have particular and not general application.

Entering the Context Again

The second stage of the study was difficult to start. Term two is always very busy : senior students have heavy academic and sporting demands on their time, they have the annual ball to organize (even if they 'hate' the theme) and more are selected as prefects and so accept extra responsibilities in the school. For this Principal-researcher it was also difficult : the 'unobtrusive' research of Chapter six, the constant reading for understanding and direction, and the start of the writing had to take place behind the responsibilities of the school. But somehow, we came together, in groups again, in my office with the tape-recorder running. The numbers had dropped as I have already explained but more than fifty students participated in this stage. I sat in the new groups, put my questions, shared in the school gossip and tried to contribute

something useful to the conversation. It was informative, occasionally painful, and often very entertaining. Our senior students are regularly complimented by visitors on their social maturity and it was a valuable experience to share time with them in this new way.

I had considered inviting some groups to continue talking on their own but I changed my mind. First, if Freire is right I had to be a participant for my own 'conscientization'. Second, the students suggested that such an exercise was unlikely to produce anything different or new, and they thought my participation might be useful for them. Finally, members of the whanau team felt that they did not want students to 'miss out' on working with me.

I began with follow-up questions about themes, both theirs and 'mine' (of 'family' and 'peers'). Group after group confirmed two of the themes ('teachers' and 'boredom') which the first stage of the research had generated but their other themes ('curriculum', 'extracurricular' and 'other students') were discarded as not important for gaining qualifications and in their place came 'family' and 'friends'. With these themes I was beginning to understand the school world of the students and a picture of life as a senior Maori student emerged a little more clearly. It was not quite as grim as I had thought but from a Principal's perspective it was not encouraging either. Holding fast to the role of researcher was difficult in this stage. The students were generous with their comments and their trust and in every group I shared pain and laughter. I suspect that I frequently slipped out of role, either as Principal or as researcher. I found that I too, as the students had done on their own, wandered with them off the topic: we discussed an All Black test, suicide, an incident in town, overseas travel, contraception and AIDS and more, in a variety of 'shared time' conversations.

The Themes Revisited

Boredom

The first theme I checked was that of boredom. The students were

clear : boredom could mean 'uninteresting' or 'predictable' or 'nothing to do' or 'too hard'. It was an individual experience and had the effect of isolating the students, thus reminding us of Penetito's concern about 'mokemoke' or the social isolation of Maori in the school situation (Chapter four). But it was also an experience which all students had in common, even the most successful. Its oppositional reality, however, was not motivation as I had first thought, but 'fun'. If school life was boring then 'fun' was an important oppositional or balancing feature of it.

Fun

Mere	School's not supposed to be that much fun but it can be more fun.
Kathi	School should be more fun.

'Fun' could come from teachers, the cafeteria, sport, out-of-class activities, even the state of the toilets and especially from friends.

The students told me stories of fun with obvious enjoyment; this story is typical and 'they' means 'other students' :

Pita	We used to write these - um - love letters.
Nathan	Love letters. (Laughter)
Pita	We used to just put a message in them, a smart message. (Laughter)
E.T.	To the teachers?
Nathan	Nah - we dropped them in the caf. (Laughter).
Sheridan	And they all used to pick them up - - and they all used to gather around - - (Laughter)
Paul	We're thinking of putting money down - - glue if - -
Pita	Just to see what people would do, eh - -
Sheridan	Five cents - - kick it and walk away. (Laughter)
Nathan	Ten cents - - they'll, ah kick it away. (Laughter)
E.T.	Fifty cents?
Paul	They'll pick it up straight away - - try - - (Laughter)
E.T.	A dollar?
Pita	They'll get a chisel and - - somehow rip it off. (Laughter)

Friends reduced individual mokemoke, because they shared fun and so provided support in school life, and they were especially important for the boredom-coping devise of laughter. Other students might bunk or drop out as a withdrawal strategy but these students escaped through humour, at their own or others' expense. So Boudon's 'game' became a little clearer. School was boring but there were two rules for success : fun was preferable but if it was missing then self-motivation was necessary.

Sri	I like to be motivated to come to school - -
Heni	Things that make you want to come to school - -
Sri	Like good things, like, ah, doing some things with your friends and that - - -
Kiri	Or being rewarded - - 'cos we talked about it before, eh? Like things that kept us at school - - -
Sri	Mostly things that get - - -
Heni	Pretty boring - - four years.
Kiri	Like there's nothing else.
Heni	Four years or something - - -
Sri	That's what discourages - - some students leave school - -
Heni	At least here you got friends.
Kiri	If you leave school now there's like nothing for you.

In another group, it was agreed that students who had problems were not able to find motivation.

Pita	A lot of them are really scared to talk - but I'm not really scared to talk now - - I didn't talk, man, gone long ago, but there are heaps, heaps of them at school now - -
Sheridan	Most of them turn to drugs and alcohol - -
Pani	Yeah, ways - -

Motivation, at times, seemed to be a matter of staying at school: "You gotta keep on coming back, keep coming back if you wanna get anywhere" said one student and in another group Walter saw his greatest achievement as :

Walter	Just being here.
Fiona	Are you passing?
Walter	No, but I'm still at school. (Laughter)
Rameka	Surviving - - just making it here.

Another student's story of an in-class incident affirmed the role given to motivation in the first stage of this study : if it was missing, then failure was the student's fault.

Pita	This morning - - I said to the teacher - - I'm just gonna get some lunch - - and I went down the road and got some lunch - - come back - - (Laughter) I know it's wrong (Laughter) but I - - hungry.
E.T.	Will this affect your grades?
Pita	Yeah but - - it's my fault.

It seemed, therefore, that boredom and fun, with self-motivation as a kind of safety net, were important opposites for gaining qualifications.

Teachers

Teachers' relationships with students were described as very important. If teachers were perceived as not understanding or not helping or being unfair, the students' response was annoyance, anger, resentment - and often no work. Teachers who were "well organised", could "have a laugh", "worked with individuals", "related to us" and "listened", were perceived as good teachers. "If you're a good teacher you'll get good students", said Paul.

In all groups there was praise for teachers. Sri said that there were "Heaps more good teachers than bad ones" and Moana, talking of one teacher said, "Good teacher kinda makes you wanna go to class more. Mrs - I used to live for those periods". Of another teacher, Ray said, "Like, he talks our language". Paul even saw a method in the 'put downs' of students by teachers : "Cunning - says you won't make it to get kids to prove them wrong". In one group, a

student noted that "The teacher creates a good working environment" and decided her teachers were mostly okay. Most teachers in the school were regarded as "pretty choice", but negative experiences kept emerging in the students' conversations.

A group talking of 'bad' experiences said :

Tai — Actually, it makes you feel you're not, you're really not worth much.

E.T. — How does it affect your work?

Tai — You just sit there - you won't do no work.

In another group :

Mana — Cause when a teacher puts you down - - you really take it to heart, you know.

Melanie — Like, they've been there and you must think, you know, 'Am I like that?'

Mana — And you think they know 'cause they're the experts and they know whether someone's going to fail or not and you really take that to heart and you sort of become a loser because you are emotionally affected by it.

In one group we had 'finished', I had said my thanks and the group was starting to leave when a chance comment about the next lesson brought about another exchange of unhappy moments with teachers. I was beginning to doubt my idea of 'partial acculturation' except that even with their concerns there was a kind of resigned acceptance by the students that these teachers had to be tolerated for their own sake and because of the students' own upbringing :

Sri — Like we come in, we respect our teachers - - I know that we should respect our elders but sometimes I think that they should respect us as well - - we're working hard, they're working hard, we're both working hard, so we deserve respect.

Kiri — I understand that they get stressed out.

And in another group :

Jaymin Respect for your elders - we've been brought up like that - - -

Reuben I think of - wouldn't like to see them lose their job really.

Teachers, however, could also motivate students. As Bernice said: "You feel really good about yourself when they praise you - gives you confidence". Another girl said :

Shontelle My grades at (Girls' School) - - I was getting nowhere - - came here - - actually got more motivated - - teachers here easier to talk to - - give you more time.

Mere - - and more boys. (Laughter)

And students could motivate teachers it seems :

Sheridan Oh, it's, it's really hard to motivate yourself.

Paul Is it, is it the teacher's job to motivate pupils or is pupils have to motivate themselves?

Sheridan I think it works both ways - - - if the teacher doesn't help motivate you in some way, then why bother?

Ben And if you don't motivate yourself then you need someone to try and help you.

Pita Sometimes - - - the students can motivate teachers - - like I do with Mrs (name). When she throws a wobbly in class - - and I say 'Come on, Miss, you can do it and she says 'Ah, yeah, might as well - - ' (Laughter)

Themes of Curriculum, Extracurricular Activities, Other Students

When I checked the remaining three themes with the students' their responses indicated that the themes were shared perceptions of school life but they were dismissed as not really important in the quest for qualifications. Kiri probably summarised this view best when she said " They don't motivate you - - help - they're just a bonus".

If (partial) acculturation is reflected in students' acceptance of curriculum delivery, then these students appeared to be very comfortable. One of the groups, when thinking about the possible benefits of more subjects to choose from decided against the suggestions being made until I asked about sex education.

Cam	Sex education? Sex? Yeah I could increase my skills in that! (Laughter)

And that finished the curriculum discussion.

It was in these discussions that an apparently new theme of facilities emerged. Visions of extensions to the gymnasium (a mezzanine floor) and, in particular, complaints about the toilets and the cafeteria were the major topics in this theme. All of the groups complained about the toilets : stories included the smell, toilet paper on the floor, flooding - - and if I had not known otherwise, I would have imagined toilet conditions of the most unhygenic kind. But as with teachers, it was the negative experiences which were remembered; toilet incidents were treated with both disgust and laughter.

Cam	Like you hang on to it - - -
Jack	Sooner shoot off down the Falls (Laughter) - - pull a quick one in the bush. (Laughter)
Chris	What about ah - - those fellas - - piddling on the rolls?
Cam	Doing it for fun - - or real bad aims. (Laughter)
Maria	Tagging - - (Laughter)
Cam	Like cats - - spraying. (Laughter)

One group enjoyed the thought that teachers might be causing problems in the toilets :

Tai	The toilets were flooded - - -
Rameka	Yeah - - and Mr Ray was in there when I came in - -
Tai	Are you saying - ? (Laughter)
Rameka	Nah - - I'm not saying he - - - (Laughter)

The cafeteria was equally important. Our cafeteria seats a hundred, serves hot and cold food, wins a Heartbeat award each year and is always busy, either with students eating or studying, but there were two major complaints and the first was about the food : its sameness, no chips in term one (but praise for the 'great sandwich days) and a desire for a wider range of choices. The other complaint concerned the use of the cafeteria for study and the 'little kids' interfering :

Sri	I got really angry at them, one stage in this semester, 'cause there were heaps of us studying in the cafeteria - - - ah, formtime I think it was, on Tuesdays, and like there was heaps of us and then they all just came in - - -
Heni	Yeah, all came in and started yelling.
Sri	They eventually pushed us all out and we were studying in there 'cause we had exams that week.

But facilities also were discounted as important for success. The dismissal of these themes made the final objective of the study (to help the students) a lot more obscure and difficult. The school could have responded quickly to concerns about curriculum or extracurricular activities, or to form one and two or even buildings. But none of these 'quick-fix' solutions was permitted by the students. I was left with only 'boredom'/'fun' and 'teachers' as clues for school success.

Family

From the students' 'themes' we went to those I had generated and I began with family. I was unsure how to propose this theme as I was conscious that many students had had difficult home lives and some were no longer living with a birth parent. The question, therefore, was kept simple :

E.T.	How important is family in helping you to achieve qualifications?

The question brought a rush of responses, some happy and some so personal and painful that I cannot include them. The range, however, is indicated in these discussions :

Mere	(quoting her mother) 'Don't wanta be like me - - I dropped out when I was fifth form'.
Rene	You just wanna do it for them.
Mere	Yeah, that's why I'm still at school.
Bernice	My mum and dad have always been supportive.
Shontelle	Yeah, my aunt - - the same - - - I just thought it was normal to keep coming to school.

In other groups Marlene said of her family "They're really strict on education" and John described the support his father and brother were giving him, the father wanting "a better life for me". Another student said, "My family is really good - 'cos like they want me to be a lawyer too - think I'll be good at it".

Other groups had stories of how the family's lack of example had influenced them. "No-one else in the family got into sixth form". "I've got lots of cousins and stuff and they've, I mean, they've got alright lives but I want better" and "I'm the first to go to Polytech". "I'm the only one going this way - Look back at my brothers and that, they haven't got any good qualifications and that and just look at them - - " or "My cousins - - like you've seen him, drop out of school, doing nothing, hanging round the mall," and "I look at all my other cousins up north - - they're all bums" and perhaps as a summary :

Clifton :	If you see relations, like sorta mucking around, doing nothing at home
Mark	Yeah, sorta growing up and sorta seeing them doing nothing and wasting their life, just sitting at home.
Clifton	Yeah - you wanna do something, be someone.

One girl described a difficulty with studying at home which others recognised :

Sometimes I sit at the table and start doing my work and Dad'll tell me to go down to my room 'cos - - - and do it 'cos they don't like books spread on the kitchen - - - table but down in my room, like there's not enough room 'cos I've only got my bed and it's really soft and I can't work there so I just pack my stuff and don't do anything.

But self-motivation appeared in this theme also.

Jack	You decide your own future.
Chris	Yeah, family just sorta support you

When family is difficult, another group said :

Lani	I reckon it's up to you, eh? If you think about it, like, if you, like, want to prove them wrong - -
Bernice	If you say you're gonna make something of yourself, you gotta - - -
Paul	Or you just give in to them.

In another group :

Jaymin	(of his mother) She's there to tell me to do the stuff 'cause like sometimes I lose the motivation.
Reuben	It's just yourself I reckon - - you have to think - - depends on what you want to do in the future - - if you want to muck around and that - -

Another group looked beyond school :

Serena	I don't wanna rely on my mum and dad all my life.
Group	Yeah, yeah.
Serena	But I won't be living with them all my life (Laughter) ah - hopefully, when I leave - - if I leave school, I'll leave home as well - - - get out on my own.

In a different group, John concluded that "Kids don't really need

parents that much - after sixteen or seventeen".

Three views are evident in these responses. Either it helped to have parental encouragement or negative family examples were an incentive to do better. (It would seem that when these students had to, they chose to place school success ahead of family - and some had certainly practised 'withdrawal' from family rather than from school.) But, in their views of family, the necessity for self-motivation emerged again : family either helped or did not help but in the end, as Anya said, "it really comes down to us".

Friends

Given these perceptions of school and family, I wondered where my theme of peers fitted in students' school lives. The students were very clear. Students 'different from us' (Chapter seven) were discarded in this second stage as not significant influences on school achievement. But peers were important and fell into two kinds. Either they were friends, helping with and sharing in school and out-of-school life or they were 'others' and regarded with scorn for 'dropping out' or 'messing around'.

On the positive side, friends encouraged each other to stay at school: Mere said "My friends are all coming back next year". Or they were referred to with pleasure, as Shontelle noted : "Now - too much friends". Sometimes they were of indirect help for success : Jenny said, "They aren't really important for school but very good for time out". Overall, they counted, as John said : "Yeah, hang onto the bros - - " or as Jason said, "Like your friends will still support you, whatever, if you need something, they'll sort of encourage you, sort of thing".

Older students/friends also provided encouragement. Karlene, talking of the school's practice of using past students as speakers at the end-of-year senior awards night, said : "I wanna set a good example, like, um, if I do good, I'd like - - come back to school or something and talk about what I've done 'cos even - - when I hear people like that - - that kinda makes me wanna keep going sort of - - ".

Past 'friends' were described derogatorily : "Henry thinks being cool is more important than education" and "Most of my friends have left school but I don't want to be a drop-out".

The idea of peer group negative pressure was raised only once and it was to do with money : Sri said "I was having trouble part way through this year - - 'cause um, people that I was with outside the school had money but - ah - and I had some but not enough, kind of, and, um, I was just so close to leaving".

Friends, generally, like family, either helped or did not help with success at school but were important in the students' lives. A final story in one group brought 'family' and 'friends' together and touched memories in all who were present :

Nathan	If your family is bad to you, you go to friends - -
Pita	Usually, some people talk to their animals - - sounds pretty corny, but - you got no friends to turn to, got no, um, family - - like, they just turn to their cat - - and sometimes animals can sense it - - or I reckon it does , 'cos sometimes it happens with me - - like when I burst out crying the cat will just come -
E.T.	To cuddle?
Pita	Yeah - - everytime I cry I know the cat's gonna be there - -
Paul	Yeah, I like cats.
Ben	Yeah, they're easy to handle (Group momentarily silent - -)

Attitudes and Values of the Sub-culture

If schools are to help Maori students have equitable life chances with their Pakeha peers it makes sense that we should start with equitable school chances and students' perceptions of school may offer a way forward. Bernstein, in talking of the context of learning, says, "If the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first

be in the consciousness of the teacher" (1970;120). While we might question the desired goal, the starting point of his claim is useful for this study : what did these perceptions suggest about the students' sub-culture? From this second stage of discussions I identified some possible sub-cultural attitudes and values relevant to school success.

Clear academic goals

The school world seemed to be a world of oppositional experiences for these students. Classes were interesting and fun, or they were boring; there were times of receiving help from teachers or of being 'put down' by them. The work was seen as hard, with at times, too many assignments so that meeting deadlines worried the students and they described long hours doing homework, in between sports practices, clubs and meals. But they persevered because they all had post-school goals which for most was further study or training and some had already thought about alternatives if their first choice was not achieved. I worked with Jenny on her own and she, for example, was hoping to win a place in a nursing course but if that did not happen she was going to 'take art at Polytech'. Although the students had many stories of fun and 'time out', in this world, the task, very clearly, and often anxiously stated, was to get good grades in the qualifications being pursued, whether it was School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate or University Bursary. Chris probably summarised this view best, "I want good grades, man. I don't care about anything else".

Self-reliance and motivation

For academic success, self-confidence and motivation were sometimes linked :

Pita	Like it sorta gives me more confidence for sorta higher exams.
Nathan	Low grades sorta discourage you.
Pita	I'd feel better doing bursary if - - -
Sheridan	You really want - - -
Pita	I'd feel more confident doing bursary if I'd scored pretty

high in sixth form.

Nathan If you, like, if you do a certain sixth form - - - you want to pass it the first time instead of doing it again, sort of thing - - don't wanta fail.

In both stages of the discussions the students stressed their own agency in the quest for qualifications. It seemed commonsense to them that they should have the chief responsibility for academic success : for many their family had provided so many experiences which they perceived as unhelpful that they cited their own confidence, tolerance, maturity and, especially motivation as the main reasons for school success.

Support Doubted

The students' comments on teachers and families indicated that they wanted and valued their help in gaining academic success. The references to negative incidents with teachers and to unhelpful family experiences suggested, however, a lack of certainty that they would gain that support. This perception seemed to reinforce their view that they had to rely on their own efforts and motivation for school achievement. It also seemed to endorse the importance of school friends who balanced, with fun, the potential isolation of working for qualifications on one's own.

Fun

The picture of school life was generally but not completely, one of difficulties. Noticeable was the negativity that ran through all the discussions. Whether they were talking of family contributions, peers or teachers, the students' first and perhaps dominant perceptions were negative. The theme of boredom was especially strong. Completing this rather solemn picture of the sub-culture however, were the equally strong perceptions of fun, achieved and desired, and the importance of friends in contributing to and sharing that fun. One of the dominant features of the first two stages of this study was the laughter, laughter at jokes, shared memories, themselves. A student community was more visible in their

understanding of fun than in any other of the perceptions they shared with me.

A Maori Student Sub-Culture or a Wider Senior Student Sub-Culture?

It seemed I had found a sub-culture which could be identified by its sense of purpose, its belief in agency, its uncertainty about support and its desire for fun. I decided, however, to check these ideas with the results of another survey conducted in the school with all (Maori and Pakeha) senior students (Appendix 4). The similarity of responses was striking. The same desire for achievement, the same themes and especially the theme of boredom, emerged. I had a problem. The Maori students' sub-culture I thought I had found was apparently shared by Pakeha students whose numerical majority in forms six and seven dominated the results. My study and the separate school survey, together strongly suggested a wider subculture of senior students and so offered no help with the search for reasons for the Maori students' (lower) rates of school success. I turned to the literature on student sub-cultures, and to our Whanau Support group, for help.

Overseas studies

In 'The School that I'd Like' a girl wrote : "Youths from twelve to eighteen years of age are the most rawly aware, most dissatisfied and most rebellious age group in society" (Blishen;1969;162). While the first two comments applied to our students the last did not : it was not rebellion against, but acceptance, or tolerance, of the schooling process, which seemed to be a strong and shared value of our students. Further, although both the English and New Zealand students complained about the same aspects of school life (teachers, buildings, curriculum, in particular) there were important differences. The English students, for example, faulted the examination system, "this almighty God" (ibid;117) :

> At the moment we seem to be working merely for the sake of examinations," (ibid;115) and "I'm beginning to doubt the usefulness of any exam system (ibid;117).

Where were the parallel complaints from our students or at least the Maori students? The English students also sought personal growth as suggested in this poem:

> School for us serves a purpose we well know
> We are not here to pass exams (you look surprised)
> but to learn to develop and respect ourselves
> by personal achievement . (ibid;34)

In contrast, most of the Maori students believed they were achieving this personal growth. Was it the 25 year gap between the two studies, or differences in the school systems then and now, or something else which accounted for the different perspectives? I was no further on with support for either a wider youth sub-culture or a more restricted Maori students' sub-culture.

I checked other ethnographies I had read. Our students, like those in the studies of Jackson and Marsden (1962), Lacey (1986), and Ball (1986), were not anti-school, they did not reject school as Willis' boys (1977) did. The source of school understandings in all of these studies, however, was described as working class meanings of reality and while this was one idea I could pursue, I knew it would apply to most of our students rather than just the Maori participants in this study.

The literature suggested time at secondary school made a difference (Jackson and Marsden;1962), and that after the third year it is the wider youth culture which is important. The two independent studies in our school in 1994 suggested support for that view, but, again, if students share the same sub-culture that made it even more difficult to suggest reasons for different rates of Maori and Pakeha students' school success.

Other overseas studies provided some specific confirmations of a youth sub-culture. Fun, laughter, boredom, the importance of 'self', the role (although not necessarily importance) of the teacher, and friends, all emerged as features of school life in Fuller (1984),

Pollard (1984), Furlong (1984), Hammersley and Turner (1984) Gannaway (1984), Willis (1977), Blishen (1969), Woods (1979) and Jackson and Marsden (1962). But even with the different emphases given to these features by the researchers, they all applied to both Maori and Pakeha in Tikipunga, and so gave me no help.

New Zealand studies

The New Zealand literature was equally difficult. The 'symbolic violence' of the classrooms as variously described by Jones (1991), St. George (1983), Simon (1984) and others, might have been a possibility except that the Pakeha students in the survey referred to earlier in this chapter, reported the same experiences with teachers as the Maori students. This was not surprising given the similarities in the students' working class backgrounds. The concept of symbolic violence, therefore, appeared to be not a useful tool with which to explore our Maori and Pakeha differences of achievement.

Other New Zealand research offered conflicting views : Marshall and Peters (1989) found no 'oppositional and separationist youth culture' while the Mitchells (1988) suggested a sub-culture in which conformity was important; I found conformity in both Maori and Pakeha student views but there were degrees of conformity and I was conscious of Woods' view that it was useful only as "an umbrella term for a group of styles (of behaviour)" (1979;73). What about different sub-cultural attitudes to competition? Benton (1987) suggested that competition is not a Maori cultural value but Hopa (1988) denied this saying instead, that the focus is communal, not individual. 'Competition' as an idea, however, I would continue to think about in the next stage of the study. It was evident that while the literature talked at length of a youth sub-culture there was no clear path to finding or describing a particular one for Maori students.

Whanau Support

I asked our Whanau Support group for their views. They decided

that the important feature of the students in my study was that they gained strength from being Maori, that they had a firm (Maori) cultural base which supported their work in school. This was interesting. I had chosen not to pursue this form of culture when I began the study but perhaps I was wrong to do so. Perhaps, the Maori culture of the students was, after all, the key to their sub-culture and to school success or failure? I had watched for any perceptions of racism in the first stage of discussions and asked follow-up questions in the second stage. I now reviewed the data, looking for influences of Maori culture.

A New Sub-cultural Theme?

Maori culture : students' first comments

In the first stage students' references to anything Maori were few and very mixed and all are now quoted. In this first discussion, 'culture' means 'the Maori culture group' :

Ray I reckon the school does heaps for culture and that.
Moana Yeah.
Ray Real choice as
(Pause)
Ray But feels like that since we get - - - the school is doing everything for us and everyone doesn't like us 'cause this school is just helping us and not anyone else.

Another group said :
Cam Well, I don't reckon they should have a bilingual unit - that's all.
Wade Yeah - - - I reckon the bilingual unit is a good idea but - -
Sri They pay too much attention on Maori culture and Maoritanga.
Cam Yeah
Sri But whereas -
Cam Yeah - - but it is sort of one-sided.

A third group, talking of peers, said "I reckon this school gets too many people that think they're tough Maori girls" and a fourth group said :

Maria	I reckon what this school is offering is not for Maoris.
John	Yeah, but why aren't they going to school?
Maria	I reckon they're not really motivated like they can get real far.

Maori culture : second stage views

For the second stage I had checked the number learning te reo (21) and participating in the senior culture group (8), and I asked follow-up questions (to see if being Maori was a theme of, or a clue to, the sub-culture). The responses varied and all are given.

Jayson	Like I asked Dad of all the things that I thought he'd know - - - when I needed help from school - - was about Maori and his background and I asked and he couldn't tell me who his grandparents were.
Lani	That's like my family - - we can't trace back - -
Paul	- - traces back to - - when we got here (Laughter)
Bernice	We got a big book, a big thick - - on it, on everything.

Talking about the 'fun' of a particular teacher a group told me :

Jack	Oh, we're Maoris and we sort of know those sort of things.
Chris	Yeah
E.T.	Only Maori?
Jack	Yeah, we crack those sort of jokes ourselves.

Of school they said :

Maraina	I think it's there.
Reuben	Yeah, pretty mellow.
E.T.	Mellow?
Reuben	Pretty relaxed.

This was supported by some : "It's good, it's a part of our school".

But another group said of our practice of things Maori "It takes up too much time" and in a third group : "It's not important for work but my family like it".

And, for the future, being Maori seemed to be put aside:

Sonya	Maori people kinda get downgraded - they haven't got as much qualifications and stuff -
Gina	I don't wanna be like those statistics.

What surprised me even more, was the view of Pakeha held by one group :

Bernice	I reckon they have it rougher than what we do.
E.T.	Really?
Bernice	Because, like, 'cause, um, like a friend of mine was telling me of a friend - - (and there followed a story of trouble which led to the young Pakeha committing suicide).
Shontelle	With Pakehas they sort of hide it - -
Anya	If they're having problems at home, they sort of hide it - - they don't talk about - -
Rene	Not like Maoris - - out in the open - - (Laughter).

I suggested to every group and to individual students that knowledge of, and skills and confidence in, their Maori language was important. For most students this was a good idea but not for them at this time.

Jaymin	I dropped it 'cos my grandfather reckoned it wouldn't do anything - - really - - wouldn't get you anywhere.
Faith	But if you have a desire for your people you have to be able to speak to them
Maraina	I was gonna do it for School C. but I thought, ah no I'd do something more academic - - and then thought in sixth form I'd go back and do it but - - I looked at other choices.

Jaymin	In the future I thought Japanese would be more important than Maori.
Faith	Oh, no.
Jaymin	That's what my grandfather told me to take - Japanese.

My search for a Maori sub-culture had produced a mixture of reactions, too mixed to help me. All that seemed clear was that for these students their Maori cultural base might be sound (as the Whanau suggested) but for the majority it was their future economic base which was of greater concern.

A Sub-cultural Theme of Money

My search for signs of a sub-culture had produced only signs of a general youth culture up to this point. However, by exploring perceptions of Maori culture I discovered a new emphasis in the discussions. The objective of gaining employment in the future (which I had noted) was actually about money, and this I had missed. Through both stages of this study discussions about school and the future returned again and again to money : the lack of it, getting work to gain it, having enough to go on to further study and, above all, earning money for a good life in the future.

Money in the future

Clear perceptions of the future were few but when they came they were on a grand scale and involved money.

Ray	I want to be a pilot.
Moana	A pilot? Are you taking maths and physics and ah - -
Ray	Yeah, I'm taking all the things you need to be a pilot. (Laughter)
Moana	True? Give us a look at your timetable.
Ray	Computers - - I'm gonna buy a spaceship. (Laughter)
Lilian	By then it will be run by computers. (Laughter)

Heni said to her group :

> I want to further my education so that I can get a better job. Just like - - - I want to work in a company or something and gradually work my way up so I get to the very top - (laughs) and earn my first million by 25. I might employ you guys.

The future, generally, was about money. This emphasis on money appeared only in the discussions of these students and not in the other survey of all senior students. Further, money as an object of students' thinking did not appear in such a strong way, with the exception of Willis's boys, in any of the literature I had read - perhaps this was, after all, the key to understanding a Maori students' sub-cultural response to school success.

If it was, how did the goal of money influence school success?

The 'money' of school

Money in the future seemed to be linked with school rewards in the present. In the first stage of discussions students had talked of class trips as rewards for students who worked, they regretted the non-issuing of commendation certificates to seniors who worked, they compared their school work 'reward' of education with that of teachers who are paid. One girl had said "I seem to work for nothing". In this second stage Sonya said, "Sometimes I wonder why we're here, because we haven't been acknowledged for how long we've been here - like we've been here for ages".

The students came back to commendation certificates as rewards:

Tai	You get rewarded
Sonya	Like if you're going hard in one subject you've got certificates to put in your C.V.
Tai	Makes you work harder.
Walter	Sometimes you work hard out and don't even get commended.
Sonya	It keeps you going, eh? Like makes you say you've, I've accomplished something.
Walter	I can put this in my C.V. - I'll work hard next time.

Prefects also appeared to be a part of the reward system in the students' perceptions. In the first stage prefects were frequently criticized for "not organising anything", for being "lazy and up themselves". Cam said, "Really I think that our prefects should get their stuff together" and another student asked disgruntedly, "What do the prefects do for us?" But at the same time the students agreed "I just want to be a prefect" and discussed how they would act if they were selected. I had thought in the first stage that being a prefect was an agreed school achievement or a symbol of success. But in the discussions in the second stage I changed my mind. It was a reward to be earned. Lilian expressed a common view : "You gotta do something to say that you've earned to be a prefect".

It seemed, therefore, that the students' had a clear sub-cultural perception : if you worked you were 'paid'. In the school situation it could be with rewards (such as commendation certificates and Prefects' badges), in life beyond school it would be with money (and perhaps status, as in owning a spaceship or heading a company).

At the end of the second stage of the study I seemed to be progressing but I needed to check my theory. If the sub-culture I thought I saw did exist, how could I confirm that money was the over-riding symbol of that sub-culture? More importantly, what had I missed which might negate such a view? I decided to check with some of the senior students who had left school during the year. They confirmed money ("I got sick of - - like not doing things" and "Well, yeah, but I get paid on the course") as an important aspect in their thinking. But they also talked of being 'sick of school', of boredom. Some saw their jobs as a chance to get started on what they really wanted to do.

The problem of money

I went back to some of the students still at school and asked "Is money an important consideration in thinking about the future?" Jaymin said, of how students think about gaining money in the future,

: "If parents - - - on the dole - - they've got it sussed".

Another group said :

Wade	Money? When you go to school, you got no money, so just go, so leave school and just go on a course to get cash.
Ray	Yeah, that's what most people do now, just to get a loan or something.
Wade	Now you can, now you can, like, go for loans, eh?
E.T.	Yes.
Wade	Three grand at Polytech.
Ray	If you do good and get a job and pay back a certain amount -
Wade	It's pretty good - - it starts you off.

These students have money in the future 'sussed' as well. Another group confirmed the importance of money in a different way.

Pita	School is kinda, safe, you know. But - - after, you have to look after yourself - - it's hard - - it might not - -
Cam	I reckon - - - I don't know - - ah, money will - -
Pita	Like, look after family - -
Faith	You've gotta have it - -

I asked the staff : some felt that it was so important that senior students in secondary school should be given an allowance to "keep them off those dead-end Access courses".

Others said, "But all of our seniors want money" and the teacher who had surveyed all the senior students said, "Pakeha students didn't stress money because I didn't ask about it." I seemed to be making no progress.

A Way Forward

And then the group of students who had suggested that we should be working with the fifth form ('about boredom', they said) held

their meeting with all fifth form (Maori and Pakeha) students, in the cafeteria. I listened - and learned. They talked about boredom, putting up with it for the sake of qualifications, the necessity of qualifications for jobs. "There's jobs out there - - - and money but you need qualifications, skills - and experience". They talked of the danger of "dropping out", warned against "ending up on the street", urged the fifth form students to "hang in". Then Pita spoke. He told the fifths that they had to set goals for school and for when they left, and that they had to work for those goals. He was passionate and he finished by saying "You have to have a dream, you must follow that dream, you must believe in it". The fifth formers applauded spontaneously. The half hour ended with two of the seniors playing and singing a song they had written for the meeting. It was called 'The Onion Song' and it was about "breaking the cycle of life". It had two verses each of which asked "Why do I cry?" The message was clear : don't let anything spoil your life.

Why was this meeting important for me? Every student who spoke came from a family in which assault, alcoholism or imprisonment had been a reality of family life. These students' histories are known to many of their peers and in that meeting their courage and sincerity were recognized. If they could dream, all could dream. And for me Pita's "You must believe" suggested a new view of the sub-culture: all the other attitudes and values seemed to be influenced by a sense that they might not achieve their goals - in school or beyond it.

A Theme of Uncertainty

Doubts about achievement

These and many other students in the study had a dream of the future but they did not quite believe in it - their expectation of achieving it was low. The goals for the future I had heard but I had missed the students' **uncertainty** about achieving them. The emphasis on **money** was as a symbol in the future : it would be a **sign of achievement** rather than (or as well as) a **goal in itself** and it had hidden what might be the real defining feature of the students' sub-

culture : an unspoken doubt that they could achieve anything. This view of their sub-culture would make sense of the need for fun at school: it was compensation for a perceived inability to succeed. It would make sense of the importance of friends: they shared the fun and the doubts. It would make sense of the emphasis on motivation: they doubted their abilities and the support they might receive and so stressed their part in whatever happened. It would also make sense of the striving by this group for qualifications, trying 'to break the cycle of life', and equally, it would explain the gap between their achievement rates and those of their Pakeha peers who shared the same socio-economic backgrounds and, it seemed, the same wider youth culture. In this hypotheses the Maori students were uncertain about succeeding, the Pakeha students expected to succeed.

Confident expectations for some

But perhaps Pakeha students also doubted their achievements in the future? "No," said the staff I asked. "Most have family experiences which have created a confident expectation of achievement." Most? So there could be Pakeha exceptions? I checked school records. Yes, there were : a strong similarity between negative family experiences and low achievement rates emerged for some Pakeha students. Were there Maori exceptions? Again, yes, there were some. The highest Maori achievers appeared to have what might be called 'successful' families.

Family background a source of this uncertainty

I checked with some of the Maori students. They confirmed their earlier statements about family. I heard of the girl whose father was imprisoned just before she sat School Certificate, the girl who was beaten seriously by her father, the boy who was assaulted. And when I reviewed the first two stages of the students' discussions I found more. There seemed to be a high number of family experiences which could produce - at least - doubts about achievement. It is not surprising that the Maori value of withdrawal Smith (1992) describes is practised. Leave school to leave home

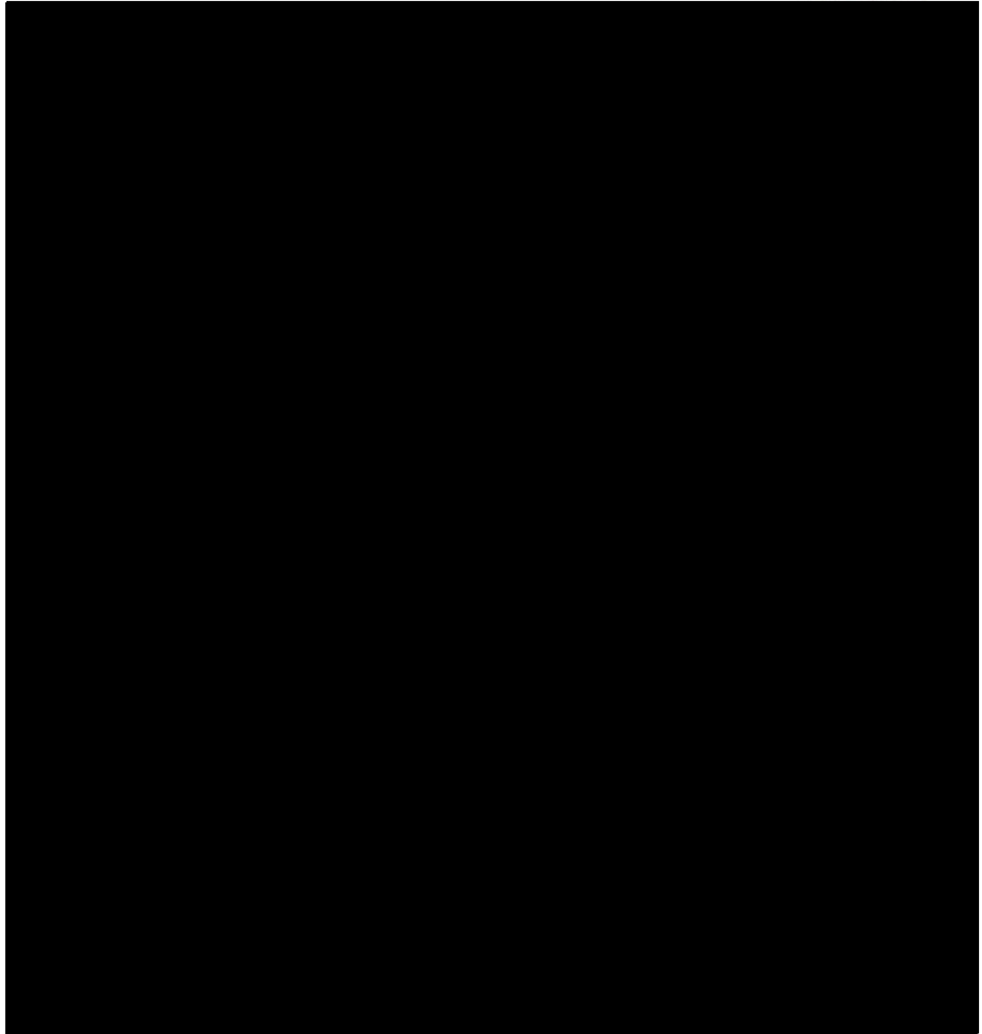
is a commonsense approach to physical and emotional pain. But that was an extreme response. Some of the students in this study had 'withdrawn' from home but were still at school and reaching for qualifications, even though their sub-culture seemed, to me, to be defined by a lack of certainty of success. And so I decided, tentatively, that I had an answer to the question of this stage of the study: family experiences produced 'knowledge' of failure which in the students' sub-culture was produced as a sense of uncertainty about success.

Conclusion

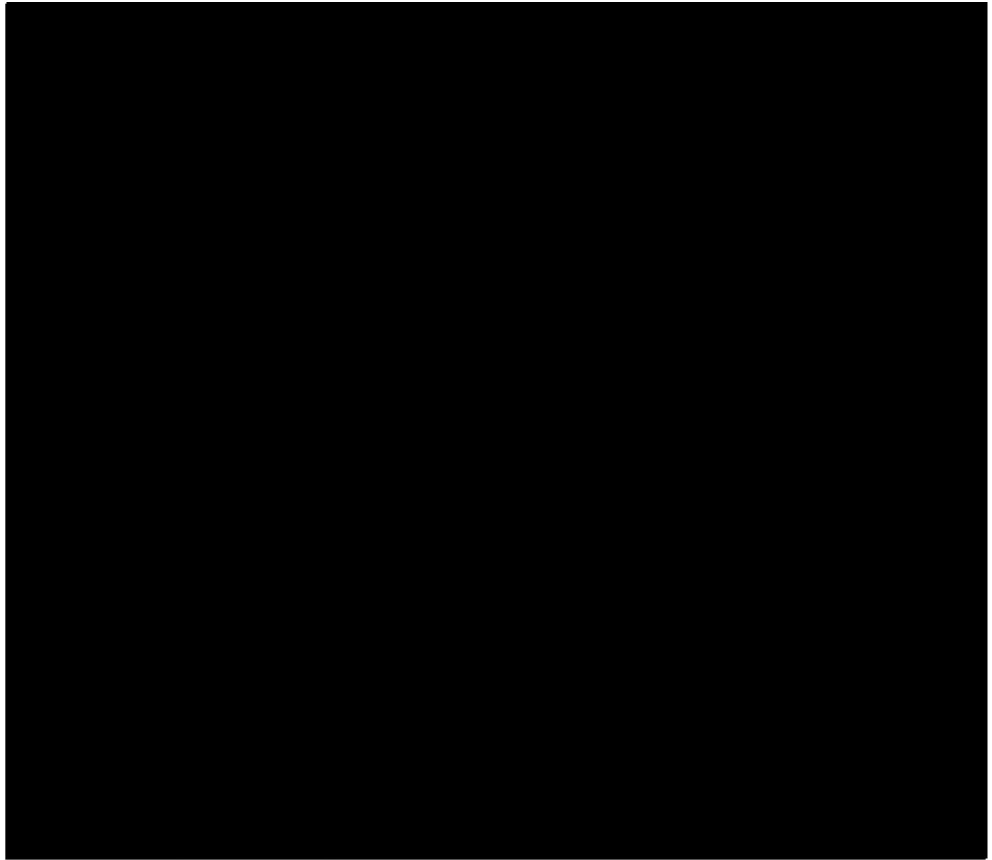
What I have written will not surprise teachers. It is 'commonsense' in schools that family background is important for achievement but this study was beginning to suggest that another look at family was necessary. Did family background provide (or negate) an expectation of success? Was this instead of (or as well as) Bourdieu's 'cultural capital' (1974) or Boudon's 'game playing' (1982)? But it is also 'commonsense' in schools that 'the right friends' are important. If so, did the wider student culture influence the Maori students' sub-culture in ways which were different from, or similar to, the effects of their family culture? To answer these questions I had to try to hypothesize the place of a student sub-culture of uncertainty in the contexts of both a wider student culture and in their family culture.

This I attempt in the commentary of the next chapter.

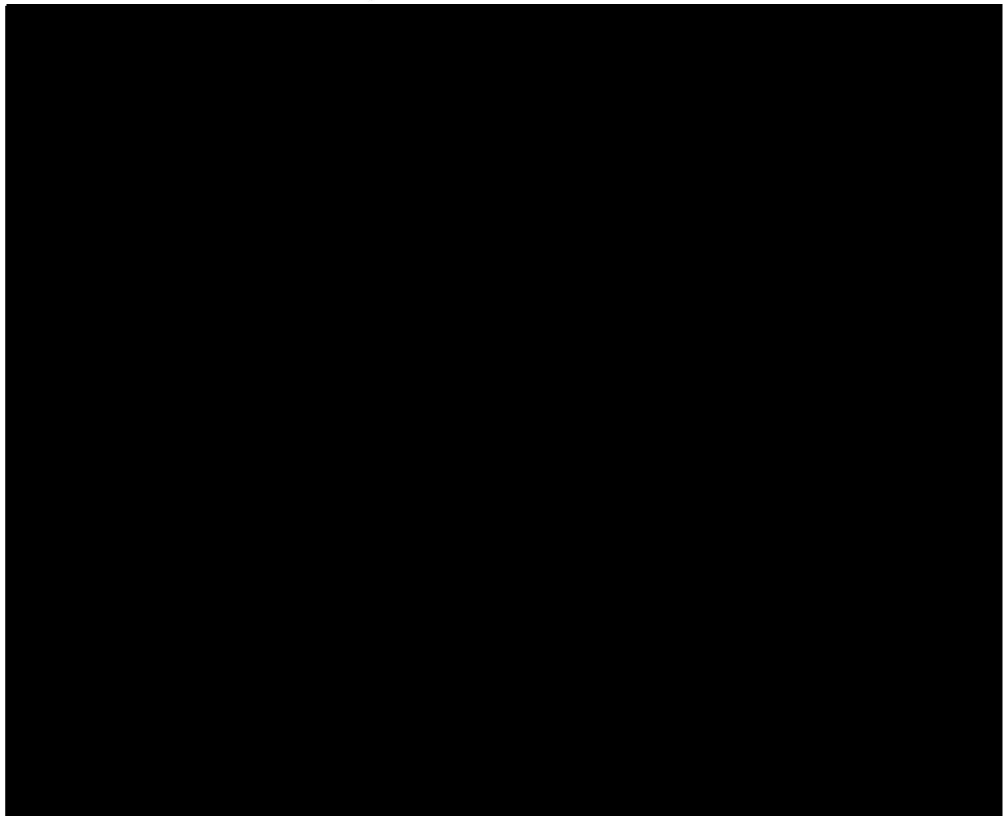
Kaua e hoki i te waewae tutuki, e apa ano hei te upoko pakaru; do not turn back because the feet stumble, but only when the head is broken.



Extra-curricular : Drama Reading



Open Multi-Level Life Skill : Vehicle Maintenance



Other studies of sub-cultures placed emphasis on the school context specifically. In New Zealand Middleton (1985) and Jones (1991) identified sub-cultures amongst girls according to their academic stream, while in London Fuller's (1984) black girls were identified by their commitment to achievement. Pollard (1984) pursued the concept of student agency by arguing that it was the development of 'self' and its interaction with the sub-culture which produced 'coping' strategies for learning as did Furlong (1984) who denied the operation of a consistent student sub-culture and stressed instead that student norms and values were related to school situations not to particular friends.

This last study was criticised by Hammersley and Turner (1984) who move this summary from descriptions of agency in sub-cultures to a structuralist account of the knowledge of school and society which students bring to their learning. Given this range of approaches I chose to look for ways in which 'my' students might link with the wider senior students' sub-culture, for possible social or economic structuring of Maori students' perceptions and for an account of agency which might account for the differences between the Maori students and the students in most of the literature who were reluctant, unsuccessful or antagonistic.

A Wider Senior Students' Culture

From this study and the survey of senior students in 1994 (Appendix 4), I extracted four key and interconnected features of a wider student culture. They are described first and then the operation of the Maori students' sub-culture within the wider culture is suggested.

A belief in their agency

First, the students shared a perception that they were free agents in determining their lives. As Codd et al (1985) suggest, the students thought that they were responding as autonomous individuals to what the school offered in the present and what life promised in the future. The perception of 'agency' appeared to them to be

confirmed by the wider learning and behavioural opportunities in senior school, by the number of students living (independently) away from home and by the expansion of their social life, in and out of school.

The symbol of this shared meaning appeared to be that of 'bunking'. The question of remaining in class or absenting oneself, whether for 'boredom' or 'catching up' reasons, appeared to be the ultimate 'acceptable' exercise of free will in the school system. Some of the students in the study talked of bunking as juniors but not doing so any more, others scorned it, but all saw it as a freely made decision about school and post-school opportunities.

An acceptance of school

Second, there was a shared acceptance of school values. Although criticisms of many aspects of school were numerous these seemed to be the criticisms of willing participants in the system rather than reluctant students opposing it. The intent seemed to be to improve and benefit more from the school, rather than reject it. There many references to not wanting 'to get kicked out' and buildings, extracurricular activities were a part of the list of things to improve. There were many references by the Maori and Pakeha students to the need to keep up with or complete, or even understand work set by teachers, which suggested that they accepted the link between work and success. Many of the students made reference to specific policies, such as the Maori students' acknowledgement that the school's non-violence policy protected the form one and two students from being hit when they annoyed senior students.

This acceptance of school values suggested 'acculturation'; the current ideology in educational discourse of 'stay in the system for achievement' seemed to be well-established. The challenges to middle class pakeha school values were minimal : even resistances such as 'bunking' or 'not working' were referenced to (and devalued against) school values of being in class and striving to gain success or to avoid failure. Willis's boys may have rejected school but these

students did not.

The symbol of this shared understanding was contextually-specific: the form one and two students tumbled in and out of stories about facilities, studying, senior students' status and more, and the unanimity of the Maori and Pakeha views, that school life would be better if they went, was clear. But if that objective for improvement had not been present, another would have replaced it, I believe. For example, when I first joined the school the equivalent symbol was certainly that of abolishing school uniform. This feature has a similarity to the 'symbolic resistances' Jackson and Marsden (1962) found in their study, although the Tikipunga students appear to be even less anti-school than the Huddersfield students.

A desire for qualifications

A third feature was the shared desire to succeed. As has already been shown, all the Maori students said that they were very anxious to gain qualifications and in the senior school survey their Pakeha peers agreed. Success for almost every student meant an external examination award and the students were willing to tolerate all sorts of perceived discomfits to achieve those awards. Even though they complained of 'boredom' and worried about teachers and the pressures of work, both Maori and Pakeha saw these as experiences to be lived through, or (in some cases) survived. The numerous references to passing and failing, provide a clue to the symbolism of 'good grades'. Their acquisition was seen as a guarantee for success or protection against failure.

A desire to succeed

A fourth feature was the focus on the future, on post school opportunities, whether in work or in further study. The majority of students in senior school were looking to the future, and there was a sense of the temporary nature of school. Thus boredom, in the sense of predictability, was the way things were and had to be tolerated because not lasting. Conversely, it could be relieved by

fun, in and out of the classroom, or it could be balanced by an interesting non-school life. But the future was what counted and its symbol was money. Money was not only what could be earned from work, it was also what might help or hinder post-school opportunities in further study or training. Both the Pakeha and Maori students in a Bursary class I was teaching during the latter part of this study, chased every scholarship and financial offer that was possible. Their concerns about the costs of living away from home and the cost of further study were no doubt shared by many other senior students in all provincial centres around the country. For most of the Tikipunga students, family economic resources are limited and in the matter of money, when they leave school they are 'on their own'. Money earned in future work therefore, was a symbol of success, a symbol of having 'made it' by one's own efforts. With this focus on money, students according to their interests and abilities, surveyed the future.

The culture confirmed

All of the values of this wider student sub-culture were confirmed for the students in two ways. Their own 'success' implied a rightness of their views, (and the lack of success of those who had dropped out reinforced these views) and the school's 'reward' of higher status and more freedom, confirmed them. Thus school was made sense of: they willingly participated in it because it was the path to the future, even though they understood that the examination system, was competitive in intent, exclusivist in organisation and stratifying by consequence. The 'game' of examinations, as they saw it, was important and had to be played.

A (Maori) Students' Sub-culture of Uncertainty

It is at this point, I suggest, that we may be able to pause and identify - at last - a difference between (some or most) Maori and (some or most) Pakeha senior students' perceptions, a difference which is important for school and post-school achievement. I return now to the concept of uncertainty and I offer first a tentative explanation of what it might 'mean'.

Motivation symbolises uncertainty

I suggest that the entrance to a sub-culture of uncertainty is the students' understanding of motivation. For those in the study it appeared to mean more than self-encouragement or self-direction and had a strong complementary sense of 'failure'. Whenever it was discussed the students used motivation to mean 'not to fail' rather than 'to succeed'. Motivation, for example, enabled the students to avoid the failure of family or friends, it kept them in school and working in spite of the failure they saw as inherent in boredom. Mana's motivation in passing his School Certificate subject was to prove that he was not a failure; teachers were to motivate students even if "they don't want to learn". Before Pita's speech to the fifth form I had understood 'motivation' in my way, that is, a way to achieve school and post-school success. But the Maori students had signalled a different understanding of motivation: motivation was necessary in the game of achievement because they might fail. And so 'motivation' meant and became a verbal symbol of uncertainty.

Uncertainty in the wider student culture

If we look at the themes which I have suggested indicate a wider student culture (boredom, teachers, family and friends) (Chapter nine), then uncertainty for the Maori students meant that the themes were discussed more as causes of failure, while for Pakeha they were more likely to be described as difficulties on the way to success.

If we apply the concept of uncertainty to the four key values of the wider student culture identified at the start of this chapter, its effects can be explained : it required a belief in their own agency (to prevent failure), it reinforced the need to accept and/or improve 'school' (so that at the least something, such as 'education' was gained), it allowed for the dreams of qualifications and later 'a good job' (to avoid being 'bums' or 'dropouts'). Thus, uncertainty maintained participation in the wider senior students' culture but (possibly) worked against the achievement effects of that wider

culture. The game seemed to be less about winning and more about not losing.

From the application of uncertainty to both the students' themes and to the implied wider student culture, I suggest we begin to see a different sub-culture, one which might apply, to (more) Maori rather than Pakeha students and which might explain different rates of success. To borrow from David Woods' concept (1979), 'the divided school' at the student level was about different perceptions of (un)certainty of achievement.

The Sources of a Sense of Uncertainty

Of course, this hypothesis needs to answer the question : "What is the origin of this sense of uncertainty?" An explanation of how it is reproduced and a methodology for research are also required and are discussed in the next chapters but I turn now to proposing two sources of this shared uncertainty and I begin with the economic base of the family.

Family resources

As teachers we 'see' so often the negative effects of limited family income or of family unemployment, on our students and, because of this experience, I theorise that a sense of uncertainty originates in those families whose economic base is restricted. I suggest that, as well as language (Bernstein 1971) and literacy resources (Nash 1993), the family's provision of material resources (for housing, food, clothes, school and leisure) contributes to the learning experiences of children. When the material resources are limited there are consequential family experiences, chief of which, I suggest, is a lack of power over one's life. This lack of power is 'learned' by children as they share bedrooms, clothes and food and 'hear' adult concerns about work and money. The family's restricted economic base, I suggest therefore, is the start of a sense of uncertainty. The students' discussions in both the first and second stages of this study reflected a high interest in gaining employment, earning money, wanting a good life, all with the clear sense of achieving a future

different from, or better than, their family experiences, which some explicitly rejected. "I don't want to end up on the streets" they said, and this could have been a slogan for these working class students' inheritance of early - and often continuing - family experiences of powerlessness.

School experiences

Family experiences of powerlessness, however, are not, on their own, a sufficient explanation for the source of uncertainty. I suggest, with Pollard (1984) that the sense of 'self' which begins in the family is also developed by interrelationships with others. In terms of this study, the influence of teachers and peers is important (and, for these students, the influence of the wider senior stduents' sub-culture is probably considerable). This influence may contribute to the sense of powerlessness (with the teacher's style of classroom management, or another student's verbal or physical aggression) or may modify it (by a teacher helping the child to succeed or by a friend's support with coping in class). These experiences, I suggest, are cumulative and, with other important variables for school success, such as ability and the practice and perception of gender and ethnic roles and status, students develop the sense of self. By the time - and if - students reach senior high school, the sense of selfpower will have been confirmed, denied or doubted many times. For these students, partly because of their family and school histories, partly because of their desire to succeed and especially because they stressed that help from teachers and friends was necessary for school achievement, I believe that they doubt - or are uncertain of - their power to succeed. They have had some experiences of self power (they have gained some qualifications, they are still at school, some have left home) but they have not had others which could have brought a stronger sense of self as powerful (more school successes, more help from family). "It would give me more confidence," many of them said, and this might be the students' slogan for their sense of uncertainty in school.

This hypothesis of school experiences is not intended to suggest that the sense of uncertainty was similar for all students in the

study. Clay, Cam, Maraina and Faith, for example, were very certain about school, for different reasons, while others, such as Pita, were very uncertain. As well, I do not claim that all aspects of school life were faced uncertainly : as Chapter six and the discussions show, these students were much more certain in their extracurricular lives. But, in the classroom, as teachers experience daily, there is a difference between "I can't do this!" and "How do you do this?" and the difference, I believe, is explained by the students' sense of self, certain or uncertain.

Maori resources and experiences

It was at this point in the study that I examined the concept of ethnic experiences in a hypothesis that family and school experiences provide 'knowledge' of power(lessness). That more Maori than Pakeha are in the lowest income-earning groups, or are unemployed, would position more Maori children than Pakeha, in economically vulnerable homes.

As well, the ongoing political struggles of Maori, beginning with Pakeha colonisation and continuing through economic (land) loss and cultural (language) loss, must also give Maori students 'knowledge' of loss of power.

Further, the 'evidence' of media reports (that failure is a 'norm' for Maori), would also contribute to students' uncertainty about school achievement. When Maria said (Chapter nine) "I reckon they're not really motivated like they can get, real far"," not only was she suggesting that Maori students doubt they can achieve, but perhaps she was also reflecting a sense of ethnic powerlessness.

In this examination of the students' sub-culture it was interesting that the Maori values system of respect and balance which Patterson describes were evident. If the dominant shared meaning of the students' sub-culture was that of uncertainty then they balanced it with 'coping' beliefs. They believed that family and teachers might and should help them in the game of achievement and if they did they were respected. The examples of 'failed' friends and family

were rejected because the students balanced them (negatively) against the game of gaining qualifications for a future reality which was 'out there' and waiting to be earned. School was accepted as the path to that future and so had to be played, perhaps not to achieve but certainly to avoid failure. They understood that to drop out was to lose and they respected those who 'hung in'. They balanced their sense of powerlessness by sharing their perceptions with each other and so gained strength from the sub-culture even though its essence was of uncertainty.

Thus we are reminded that we should not put aside factors of Maori birth and socialisation totally. While most of the students chose to reject te reo and/or their families, (Chapter nine) their biography lingers in such matters as 'respect for teachers' and 'because we respect our elders' (Chapter nine). We must recognise, therefore, the probability that to be Maori is in itself an extra factor in the development of 'self' as uncertainty. The elders in Chapter four stressed Maori powerlessness and their voices should be regarded. As well, their views have contributed to the students' understandings of self and so have given good reason for their belief in self-motivation.

To be a Maori student, I conclude, could be another reason for being uncertain.

New Thoughts on Students' Attitudes and Values : Construction and Reconstruction

When I reviewed the first stage of the study (Chapter eight) I applied the concepts of game playing and acculturation to the students' themes of school. Neither helped me to explain the academic achievement gap between Maori and Pakeha students and I concluded that I needed to know more about the source of the sub-cultural attitudes and values. From this second stage of the students' discussions I have theorized that although the students' shared a general senior student culture in which attitudes to school were generally positive and school achievement was valued. Maori students were uncertain of success. The sources of that uncertainty I have suggested above are family socialisation and school experiences.

A theoretical account of the production of the sub-cultures' perceptions is now proposed.

How family socialisation and agency might together influence achievement

For this account I returned to the accounts of Boudon and Bourdieu with the view that family socialisation was more important than Boudon suggests but that the students' agency might nonetheless enable some of them to avoid the potential determinism in Bourdieu's explanation of economic and social reproduction.

Partial Acculturation

Bourdieu provides the starting point. His claim, (1974) that attitudes and aptitudes, which include values and language use, determine behaviour and achievement in school, and that the degree of success is according to the match between student (family) and school culture, is helpful for my study. I have hypothesised the partial acculturation of the students and it seems to make sense to them and me.

The literature also provides support for this idea. Nash (1993), for example, identifies social processes as originating in the material structures of relationships and draws on Bourdieu's concept of the inappropriate cultural capital for academic learning of some students, to suggest a structural explanation of student failure in schools. Nash's focus on the effects of the material (literary) resources of working class families on their children's school achievement encourages me to suggest that families rich in literary (and other) resources are more likely to develop in their children a sense of the self-power necessary for acculturation and achievement. An hypothesis of partial acculturation is possible in this account. Further, a structuralist account which includes the operation of hegemony reinforces the possibility.

The Hegemony of Capitalism

Partial acculturation is possible if working class family socialisation

is modified when the students are old enough to 'hear' the discourse of work. The ideology of capitalism suggests that hard work will bring rewards, that a lack of success is one's own fault (which is 'proven' by those who, against the norm succeed) and that the rewards of hard work are attainable by all. This discourse allows the students to 'know' that they must play the education game to gain rewards, because the message sounds like commonsense; so they all aim - at the start - to do well. However, attitudes and values - and abilities - contain schooling constraints or freedoms : some individuals may 'escape' their working class cultural destiny but the majority do not.

Although these students seemed to understand class, particularly in their comments on family attitudes they could not be expected to understand that the ideology which maintains the economic class divisions also produces their socially-derived (limited) chances of, and uncertainty about, success. Nor could they understand, as it is argued, that schools are part of the ideology and that by promoting the concept of meritocracy, providing experiences in subordination and domination, they confirm the 'normalcy' of work and class divisions and so maintain the hegemony of capitalism.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that schools contribute directly to the reproduction of suitable, amenable workers for the capitalist system and, claim therefore, that schools in their present form cannot provide students with a path for improved social status. Thus the students are captured both by their belief in the schooling process and by their inability to withstand its effects.

The hegemony of capitalism is such that they not only do not challenge it but are both reinforcing it (by their success as exceptions in Maori statistics of achievement) and confirming it as the natural order of the world 'out there' (with fewer qualifications than Pakeha and by their uncertainty of actually succeeding). As seniors they have become at least partially acculturated into the school : they are willing to invest time and lack of money now, for an objective future of perceived greater rewards, and to achieve those rewards they criticise aspects of their school lives which, in their uncertainty,

they believe will cause them to fail. The degree of their 'self-power' may help - in part - but, logically, partial acculturation will produce partial success.

It is probable that even if students were able to move beyond their 'partial penetration' or 'limited rationality' and challenge the school game, the hegemony of capitalism would still constrain many of them. Harker, for example, (1985) faults schools for their role in social control, because students gain (or fail to gain) status in the school according to the amount of high status knowledge and corresponding qualifications they acquire, and because the cumulative consequences of that process affect achievement. He argues, with Bourdieu, that the dominant groups in society determine 'worthwhile' school knowledge, how it is achieved and by whom and in doing so maintain the hegemony of capitalism. Unlike Bowles and Gintis, who deny that school reform has any chance of bringing about change, Harker calls for bicultural education and, with Banks (1988) looks for cross cultural schooling to improve students' chances of social equity. In the next two chapters, however, I suggest that this may not be of any real help to students in their quest for qualifications, if they are operating in a sub-culture of uncertainty.

But the students are not merely passive recipients of family and school cultural messages about work. They are also exercising an agency, albeit, partial, and so this analysis moves from the literature of social structural explanations to the literature of agency and counter-hegemony.

Agency

A structural analysis is 'useful' but not sufficient and Boudon's emphasis (1982) on the significance of the secondary effects of agency is useful for this study. I offer an explanation which requires family socialisation but allows agency. I have suggested that the starting point is the students' early family-class experiences which establish a sense of 'self' either powerful or powerless but that the ideology of capitalism can modify this sense. When the students enter the formal learning situation the game of qualifications appears

to be open to all. But as it continues, the family 'grounding' affects school achievement and by the time secondary school is reached, although most students know what winning the game means (qualifications for work) for many the game has become very complicated. The variables already indicated will be affecting academic achievement and the students' 'roles' as intentional actors will become increasingly varied. For those students' in the sub-culture of uncertainty, the role is not to fail, and this frequently requires coping with what is perceived as necessary but unpleasant. Thus as Boudon's 'intentional actors' they seek fun and variety; the sub-culture confirms, and is regularly reconstituted by, this shared response, and in the classroom this may have the perverse effect of making school even more unpleasant - and less rewarding. If maintained it has the consequence of students settling for what Boudon calls 'preferences' rather than their 'best interests'. Like ethnographers, students seem to have three choices : either to maintain a balance between school work and fun, or to 'go home' (leave or be required to leave) or to 'go native' and submerge themselves in a commitment to schooling.

In this account, therefore, the problem of boredom and the conscious strategy of fun to balance it, are part of Boudon's 'limited rationality'. It is rather like Willis's concept of 'partial penetration': the students believe that they are in freely-choosing roles but that belief perversely locks them into 'unfree' roles - and too often, limited achievement.

While family socialisation has started the school achievement story, the variable of teachers can make an important difference to its development. Pita, for example, believed that the support he received from one of his teachers helped him stay at school. Many of the students made references to teachers who helped them 'understand things'. So the teacher 'contract' connects with student 'role' to establish 'constraints' on student agency which Boudon says may either determine or encourage action. Thus teachers may counsel individual students and so determine achievement, or they may respond to 'coping' behaviour which is unacceptable in a classroom and (perhaps in the way the students describe) ignore

those involved, thus encouraging lack of achievement. In this way teachers contribute to the (un)certainty of students and their achievements, every day, as they play out their teaching contracts. This account appears to be supported by other studies, such as those carried out by Woods (1979) and Jones (1991) in which classroom interactions are described fully.

A Counter Hegemony

As has already been suggested, social structures such as family and school are powerful forces in the lives of individuals but with Jones (1991) and Hammersley and Woods (1984) and from my 'grounded' experience of schools, I have suggested that the concept of students as social agents, is only a partial explanation of what is happening. As Woods says of his Lowfield students, "Not only were they not taken in by the rhetoric, many pupils were not even convinced that they had fallen down on the school's criteria" (1979;251). The counterculture he described is produced, he says, by the context of the school and by the important feature of individual choice.

I identified a form of counter hegemony operating with the students in the study. They were already more successful than many of their Maori and Pakeha peers, their rejection (sometimes) of family and friends, in order to increase achievement, and their ability, in Freire's terms, to see albeit uncertainly, some future possibilities for themselves which were better than those available to their family or some peers, suggested a counter hegemony at work. Further, their belief in their 'agency' has been documented. They insisted that they were responsible for their school success. That they were also conscious of social divisions beyond school was also made evident. They were - perhaps particularly - aware of class. In one group a boy noted that "Most of us were brought up in the same kind of environment", and in another group Clay said " Our school is pretty - like in the poor zone".

In a third group a comment about a teacher developed as :

Tai (teacher) talks to you in a real - - - in a real arrogant sort of way - -

E.T. To Maori students only?

Tai - - - to lower class people

E.T. Lower class people?

Tai Yeah, not on her level.

Shontelle (talking about another school) in a fourth group said :

"(School X) isn't our sort of school - most of them are rich - - 60 -70% would be higher class. Like 'cos when we were down there last year it was, like, 'Spot the Maoris'".

The concept of ideology allows for resistance and while the students in this study may have accepted the ideology of 'work for rewards' they were resisting (perhaps partially) some other ideological messages, particularly that of 'Maori deficiencies'. As Gina said "I don't wanna be like those statistics". The resistance, as has been shown, (Chapter nine) against their own (ethnic) culture came even from those who aspired to be lawyers to to do social work 'to help my people', as Tai said. Consequently, numbers of these students may continue to chase rewards beyond school, and with hard work, may succeed; but perversely, by their 'agency', they may reinforce the hegemonies of Pakeha and capitalism by becoming a member of the dominant middle class of the future. The result will be as Bourdieu describes : others (Maori and Pakeha) who do not succeed will take those successful students' places in the working class and while individuals will have won social status the class system itself will remain unchanged.

Context contributes to and constrains counter-hegemony

The context is of course important. These students had experienced provincial urban life and while they had escaped some of the pressures of large cities they were practised in the possibilities and pleasures of modern adult living. Further, in their school they were not numerically a minority group and even in senior school they were still so numerous as not to know everyone Maori. The school policies and practices are supportive of Maori students (perhaps too visibly supportive according to some of the Maori

students) and the curriculum organisation allows for and encourages multi-level learning to help students accumulate achievements; their wide use of this curriculum organisation is indicated in Chapter six. The school culture with its emphasis on the celebration of success, on 'having a go' and on school as 'a safe place in which to make mistakes' probably also contributed to these students' sense of self-power.

But the counter-hegemony I describe is limited and by the students' uncertainty. Perversely, the school may contribute to that sense of uncertainty by not giving the students all the support they said they needed. A kind of double jeopardy may operate in the Tikipunga context : the more we develop a culture of student independence the more the majority of our working class students may need our support in achieving it if they are to avoid or even to recognise the potential perverse effects of their powerlessness. Thus when I began the study I anticipated the contextual importance of such school policies as Affirming Diversity, and Equity, and all the policies to do with the Treaty of Waitangi, te reo and taha Maori. By the end, however, I was more concerned about policies and practices to do with teacher development and performance.

Bourdieu and Boudon meet

It seemed by the end of this second stage that the effects of socialisation are important : although the students claimed agency they also acknowledged the roles (negative and positive) of family, friends and teachers in their lives; further, their shared sub-cultural concerns about failure are inexplicable simply as "agency' since these are 'successful' Maori students. The successes they have achieved appear to come from an acceptance of the school's values and the wider educational discourse of work for qualifications for a good future. In this respect they are partially acculturated (or empowered to a greater or lesser degree) as 'middle class' in the school and their status as senior students rewards their partial acculturation. Boudon, however, is helpful with his concept of 'game'. The students are keen players but their uncertainty undermines

their counterhegemony : their fear of failure at school perversely confirms the ideology of capitalism even as it encourages them to 'beat' what Gina called "those statistics".

Reviewing the Conduct of the Study

Another look at Critical Ethnography

In this second stage I was a full participant in the hui but I tried to limit my interventions so that the students could do most of the talking. Where I could I tried to suggest other ways of thinking which might be useful : I corrected misbeliefs, confirmed accurate statements or questions and generally tried to follow a basic self-imposed guideline of listening to learn and speaking to help. It was not easy as the first part of Chapter nine describes. My knowledge of the students grew and I suspect that theirs of me did also, but whether the result was important for students' success I could not tell.

For this stage I had to have 'rules' which would guide my selection of what I could include and what I should discount. I decided that if any group denied any of the 'themes' from the first stage (theirs or mine) I would indicate the difference of opinion. However, some themes were dropped by all groups, others were balanced evenly and in the end it was very easy to decide what to include or omit. I also decided that if a new 'theme' emerged in the discussions it had to be present explicitly in two or more of the group's comments before I would include it and then only after re-checking with other groups. In this way the idea of 'money' emerged from my questions on racism and is called a 'theme' in the comments which follow.

Critical ethnography is difficult and Lather's 'catalytic validity' at this second stage seemed unlikely. There were no signs of 'conscientisation' or empowerment. Only fifteen of the Maori seventh form entered the University Bursary examination, three in five subjects, the others in one or two subjects. Freire's pedagogy was interesting theoretically, but I was not confident that I was making any difference to the students' lives by the end of the second stage

of the study. This possibility I had recognised when I began (Chapter one) but it was discouraging, nonetheless. I was, however, much closer to our Whanau Support group and I regarded that as a continuation of my 'conscientisation'. As well, by the end of term two I had developed a very close working relationship with a number of the students, a relationship which, without this study, would not have happened, and their casual conversations helped me greatly with the study itself. The senior Maori students' school world is very complex and I appreciated their efforts to empower me. If critical ethnography must defend itself against the charge of not being able to provide knowledge of the real world (Chapter three) then my experience, at this point, was one of increasing acculturation in the students' world.

Ethical Concerns

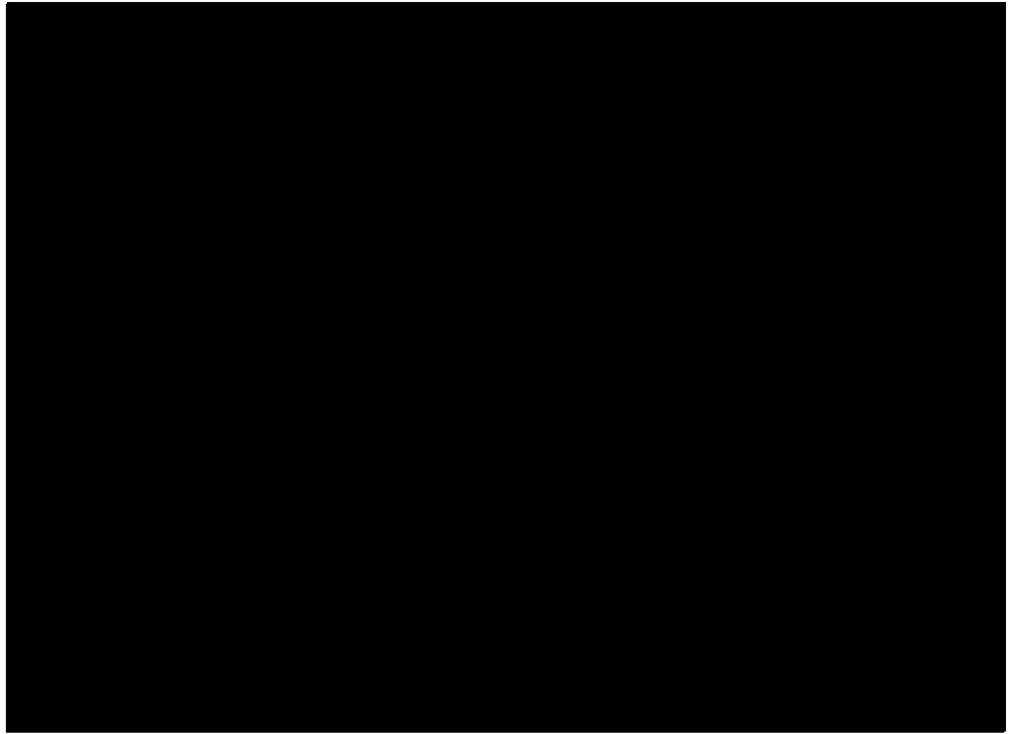
It was in this second stage of the study that the question of protecting the school's identity became a concern again. The way the research had developed meant that I - perhaps - had put the school in a vulnerable position. In the New Zealand context of competition for students, it was possible that my good intentions might help the students but hurt the school. I was concerned that I knew the identity of the school in which Alison Jones had worked, even though it was 'disguised' and I was conscious that even with a focus on success, much of my data might be used negatively. I was also under some pressure to 'go public' with the results as I discussed the study with different groups, seeking confirmation or denial; they often urged media exposure to 'spread the word', as one person suggested. Their support was encouraging but as a Principal-researcher I had misgivings. If there was any value in the study it would be of short term academic interest but any hurt to the school could be long term. This concern was not resolved in this stage and I return to it in Chapter twelve; it shadowed my thinking and writing, however, and possibly softened my choice of student comments and the suggestions I make about them. The students' concern about failure was matched by my concern about the future.

Conclusion

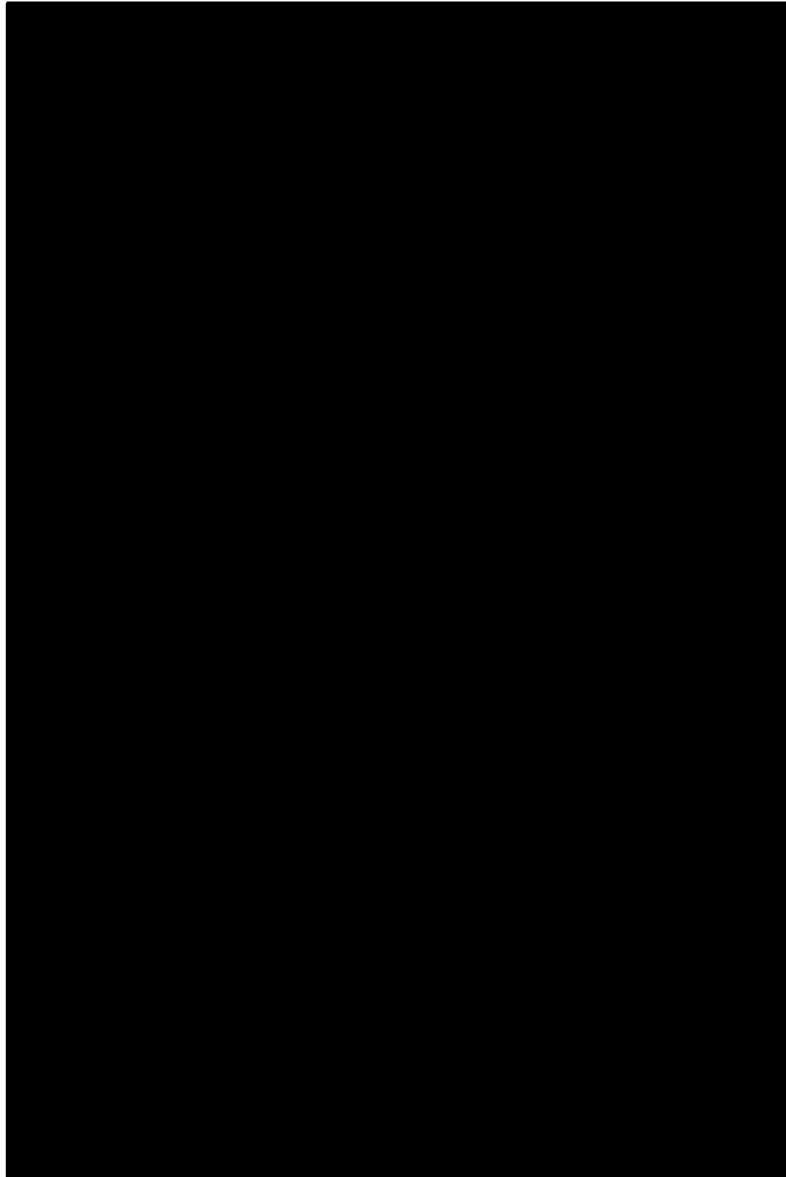
An hypothesis that (un)certainty is the essence of the students' sub-culture appears to move this study from sociology to psychology. But while that move would be interesting, the social intent in the hypothesis is consistent with the second research challenge of this study : is there a Maori students' sub-culture? The hypothesis suggests that there is (in this school) such a sub-culture. In the wider youth culture of senior students, there is a sub-culture in which perceptions of school have their origins in family, class, and school experiences and because of their family economic and social history, more Maori than Pakeha students share in that sub-culture of uncertainty. The sub-culture, I have suggested, reflects the inter-action of socialisation and agency under the basic structural hegemony of capitalism.

The last stage of the hui will take us even closer to the students' uncertainty. Their words have told us of success, confidence and motivation but their sub-cultural discourse I suggest has been dominated by an assumption of powerlessness. In the next chapter this suggestion will become more focussed with an examination of language use and, particularly, the ways language might reproduce a sense of uncertainty in the sub-culture. If language indicates and contributes to students' powerlessness, then we may have found a practical way to help these students achieve more highly in the examination game.

He manga wai koia kia kore e whitikia; it is a big river that cannot be crossed.



Open Multi-Level Design Technology : processing bone for carved pendants.



Open Multi-Level Craft : Pottery

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TE HUI : THE TALKING CONTINUES : WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE STUDENTS' LANGUAGE USE?

E tu e noho, ma te iwi koe e ue; whether a leader stands or sits, the people will indicate their support.

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was suggested that senior Maori secondary school students share a wider culture with other senior secondary students in Tikipunga High School. It was suggested that this wider culture has four defining perceptions : that of a sense of agency, an acceptance of school values, a focus on qualifications and a focus on work for money in the future. It was further suggested that to this wider culture should be added a significant feature, that of a sense of uncertainty, which identifies a more specific senior Maori students' sub-culture. The general claim in the previous chapter was that this sense of uncertainty had its origins in family socialisation and school experiences and that to be Maori might in itself increase the perception of powerlessness contained in the sense of uncertainty. The structuring effect of the ideology of capitalism was proposed as the source of the family and school experiences which gave the students their knowledge about learning, and the possibility of the exercise of agency in a limited counter-hegemony was explored.

This chapter moves from thinking about the students' sub-culture as it is reflected in their discussions to looking more closely at the students' language use in order to gain a better understanding of that sub-culture.

From the beginning of this study it appeared that language use would be important, and it has been. It provided access to the students' views on success, it provided 'themes' about school and it suggested a senior Maori students' sub-culture. By looking now at the language use itself I suggest we might come closer to understanding how the sense of uncertainty is reproduced by the students.

Entering the Context for the Last Time

In one way, this third stage was the easiest to begin. By the time term three started, the students and I had spent quite a lot of time together, I was more comfortable with the role-conflicts of researcher and Principal and I was beginning to see some possible answers to my study's questions. But this was also the hardest stage and for two reasons. First, it could easily have taken me into a 'deficit model' explanation, even of these successful students and this would have totally negated the intentions of the study. Second, much of the work of this stage took me away from the students' ideas to the more difficult task of trying to understand them and then trying to check my interpretations. This was the point when as a researcher it would have been easier for me to 'go home' : term three is a very busy time for a Principal-teacher. But the students kept popping in to ask, encouragingly, "How's it going, Miss?" and the Whanau Support team and the Board members expressed keen interest in the emerging hypothesis - and so I kept going. The context of language use, therefore, was entered with difficulty but with support from the hui which continued around me.

Reflections of Uncertainty

I began by checking my view that uncertainty was the essence of the sub-culture. Did language use deny or confirm that idea? It seemed that language use did reflect a sub-culture of uncertainty. Some examples will illustrate this point.

Student One	If they want socials - - - good socials - - - if they want to make money and - - - they should make - - -
Student Two	Actually, I reckon - - - they should make, like - - - -
Student Three	Make it compulsory to have a student I.D.

This conversation is actually about having good socials which also make money; one way is to encourage more people to come with

identification which shows that they belong to the school. The senior students run the socials and realise (probably more than the teachers) that too many outsiders talk their way in and at the student rate, when they should not be present or they should be charged a higher price. Contextual knowledge makes this apparently illogical conversation clear. We might list reflections of uncertainty in this group as :

(a) the use of 'they' to mean 'the organisers of socials',

(b) the repeated attempts to verbalise the ideas;

(c) the necessary cooperative effort using the word 'make' to express finally the essence of the conversation (make students have I.D.s to help make good socials make money);

(d) the self-confirmation by the student (I reckon) balanced by the almost immediate use of 'like' which in this sub-cultural language use seems to mean 'I'm not sure, I'm still thinking'; it also acts as a linkword back to the group.

Another example will further illustrate the point :

Student One	You see I like Mr (teacher's name) - - - and that - - - and like, I go 'He's real cool', then I see Mrs (teacher's name) and 'cause I don't like her - it's like - - - person to person sort of thing - I think, 'Aw, I hate her'. You know?
Student Two	You don't listen and stuff.
Student Three	Yeah. You don't like her so you don't listen.
Student Two	Yeah, that's the hard part.
Group	Yeah, yeah.

In this exchange the students are separately reinforcing the group perceptions of two teachers and they are contributing to group subjectivities about teachers as uncertain help for learning. The uncertainties reflected here are :

(a) The use of 'you' by Students Two and Three to mean 'I' or 'we'. 'You' is other-facing and so 'safe'.

(b) Student One's opening statement has a clear individual causal understanding but it closes with an appeal for support 'You know?'

(c) The same student's use of 'and that' (which in the sub-culture seems to mean 'and others like' or 'more' of whatever is being talked about) with the addition of 'and like' so that the four words signal hesitancy which is reconfirmed further on with the safe vagueness of 'sort of thing'.

(d) Student Two echoes Student One's vagueness with another sub-cultural usage 'and stuff' (which is similar in meaning to 'and that').

(e) Student Two is particularly careful with the endorsement she offers : 'that's the hard part' may refer to not liking a teacher or to not listening in class or even to an awareness of the consequences of not listening. The group agrees, however, so her contribution is successful.

I offer a further example :

Student One	(Talking of why students fail) It's true - - - Most cases they deserve it - - -
Student Two	Like they've got the brains but - - -
Student One	Yeah - - - we stuffed it something bad - - - that was the worst thing, eh?

In this exchange the students are in agreement so we might expect certainty in their conversation. However, uncertainty is maintained by

(a) The use of 'they' to mean 'we'. 'They' is a safe way to start the conversation when others' views are not known.

(b) 'Like' with its sense of 'I am thinking' helps to soften the categorical nature of what follows and the hesitancy in 'like' is reinforced by 'but' and then silence.

(c) Student One reverts to 'we' after Student Two's contribution but nonetheless seeks support with 'eh?'

(d) Cooperation is evident again : failure is our fault ('deserve it') because we could have succeeded ('got the brains') but we did not work ('we stuffed it').

If a similar analysis of students' language use were carried out on

the excerpts given in previous chapters, it would reveal the same kinds of uncertainties. But to demonstrate reflections of uncertainty in the language is not enough. What is the source of this kind of language use?

The Source of Uncertainty in Language Use

Bernstein's theory (1971) of the effect of class on the acquisition and development of language is helpful. When that theory is applied to the students' language use in this study it suggests that in part, some use an elaborated code, with some causal links and some universal, rather than particular, references. But, overall, for most the code is restricted, with high contextual references, high metaphorical usage, high implicit meanings and many understood silences. It is communal rather than individual language and it is public not formal usage. Further, the usage reflects, for most students, 'positional' family socialisation in which status is given, not achieved, so that roles and relationships are communal rather than individualistic. There has been, however, the exercise and development of personal autonomy for some students through 'person-centred' family socialisation and their language reflects the open communication system of such families. The language use of the highest achievers in the group, such as Faith and Maraina, certainly suggests person-centred socialisation.

Because the students in this study are successful in comparison with many of their Maori, and some Pakeha, peers, the existence of both restricted and elaborated codes is understandable. But, for the majority, language use can be traced back through the deep structure of a restricted code to their working class positional families. From this source has come their sub-culture and its constraints, especially in terms of their sense of 'self', and what is possible for people like them. The students' words may talk of the need for autonomy but their language use reflects a socialisation which, for most, has actually restricted the development of that autonomy. An understanding of the need for autonomy has come from family experiences of powerlessness against 'the world out there' as suggested in the previous chapter, but the same source has produced

the sense and language of powerlessness. In essence, therefore, I suggest that working class family experiences transmit a restricted code which at school has emerged as a sub-culture high in concepts of powerlessness. Language usage appears to reflect family-class culture.

Given this explanation, we need to know how, at the secondary school level, the sub-culture maintains its sense of powerlessness. The school uses and teaches a formal and elaborated code, and these students seem to accept the school's values, so why has the school message of individual power not been more fully internalised? I start with a presumption that the sub-culture is self-informing and I suggest that one way of demonstrating this is by describing some influential social roles of some of the participants in the sub-culture.

Management of the Sub-Culture

To describe the operation of the sub-culture I turn to the concept of a cultural network described in Chapter three and I suggest that this network reinforces and so maintains the basic assumptions, values and norms of the sub-culture. To begin I need to outline the 'meaning' of those sub-cultural perceptions before demonstrating the social roles which maintain them.

The underlying assumptions in this group seemed to be that 'life is hard and nothing is certain', 'failure for people like us is to be expected', 'support by others is good but it is up to me and it's my fault if I fail'. As John said (Chapter seven) : "It's really up to you" ('you' meaning 'us').

At the second level, and informed by the basic assumptions, are the group's values, chief of which appeared to be openess, intimacy, sharing and tolerance. The laughter, the sharing of 'put downs' by teachers and the discussions about 'bad' family experiences in the shared time, all seemed to display these values.

The third level, the behaviourial norms, reflected this cultural core of assumptions and values and they appeared as 'We put up with

school', 'We balance its demands with fun', 'We help each other' and 'We survive'. Jason expressed the general view (Chapter nine): "Friends will still support you, whatever". It is at the level of norms that the maintenance of the sub-culture begins and by examining verbal norms in the cultural network, we can see Foucault's 'knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others'. Further, this approach provides a methodology (which in the last chapter I foreshadowed) for examining my hypothesis of sub-cultural uncertainty.

The cultural network in operation

The methodology of this analysis asks who talks, how and about what, as a norm, in the cultural network? With our students I found six different kinds of knowledge-managers and each appeared to exercise a different kind of power in promoting the shared sense of uncertainty.

The Teacher

The first kind of knowledge was held by students whom I suggest fulfill a social role which I have called Teacher. (I note here that the titles are mine, not the students'. When asked, they offered only one different term : Gossip instead of Messenger, but accepted my more kindly term). Teachers have inner or extra knowledge which they share and in doing so they gain status and take a leadership role with their knowledge-power. At the same time their knowledge subtly undermines the knowledge-power of their 'students'. The effect is to reconfirm the assumptions of failure when life is hard and to reproduce the value of sharing. Some examples of Teachers reproducing the sub-culture have already been seen : when Nathan and Cam discussed Dr Lockwood Smith and the way things are in schools and when Wade talked of student loans, they were confirming assumptions about life and their chances of controlling it. Some further examples will demonstrate the role and influence of Teachers.

Student One Do you reckon - does everyone in the seventh form

	get to be a prefect?
Student Two	No
Student Three	They have a - they choose again half-way through.
Student One	Do the teachers choose them or do the students choose them?
Student Three	Teachers only - the teachers choose them.
Student One	Eh? Oh man!

In this conversation we see the role of 'Teacher' at work. Student Three, in spite of the anacoluthons, is quite authoritative about the knowledge he is passing on. He is wrong, but the impact of his 'knowledge' on Student One is clear: Student One now has another uncertainty (about being chosen as a prefect) in his life. This exchange also confirms 'Prefect' as a cultural reward and the perceived sanction operating is that of teacher selection; this further undermines the sense of power to earn the reward - and reconfirms teachers as uncertain supporters!

Another example illustrates a Teacher at work :

Student One	(talking about sitting the theory paper for a driver's licence) What you have to do is when you make your booking you got to pay $33 - - You take $33 and you book it and when you go down you take an extra $15 because if you fail on the spot 'cause they'll tell you straight in front of everybody, whoever's there.
Student Two	What's the $15 for?
Student One	Just to give to them so you can do another one straight away.
Student Three	And what if you don't pass that one?
Student Two	Well, you're pretty stupid, aren't you?
Student One	Three different sheets. A B C - - - all in the same room.
Student Three	But you get different papers?
Student One	Like three different sets of papers - - Do one sheet and you fail, they'll probably give you another sheet instead of the same one.

Student Two Yeah.

Student Three Which means you fail twice if you fail three times - - -

Student Two They'll be rich after a while - - -

Student One I reckon.

Student Three And we'll be poor - - -
(Laughter)

This is a special exchange. Here the role of Teacher is carried out most successfully : a sense of preparation for failure is well-established (as Student Three says 'You fail twice if you fail three times'), its connection with money is confirmed ('we'll be poor') and it is all their fault ('you're pretty stupid') when it happens. The basic assumption operating here is 'I might fail' and a norm being practised is that of friends helping each other to avoid that failure, because the sub-culture values friends' support. There is a cultural 'reward' in this conversation also with the laughter which balances the idea of being poor. If life is about failure and poverty then fun is an important counter-balance - and perversely, it reinforces the failure assumption by disguising its impact.

The Clown

A second kind of knowledge-power exercised in the sub-cultural network was in the social role of Clown. In the description of the sub-culture, fun has been identified as important and in most groups there was usually one person, at least, who had a facility for generating laughter. Previous examples of this include the quick responses of people such as Cam (more skills in sex), Mere (more boys here) and Philip (When you're 25 you can come back too); Pita's group talking of the love letters they left in the cafeteria and Cam expanding on the reasons someone was urinating on the toilet rolls, are further examples. Some of the anecdotes told also involved the Clown role, as this example shows :

Student One (talking of student misbehaviour) I mean that's just as bad as running through the corridors.

Student Two Yeah, bowling teachers over. (Laughter)

Student One	Yeah, like he was chasing me and I was running through and my long handle, my handle got caught on the door handle by the music and I saw Miss (name) and I went 'Oh! What was that?' and my bag got ripped in half! (Laughter)

In this exchange Student One, as Clown, balanced a school structural constraint (no running in corridors) with a story against himself which demonstrated a sense of how students lose (my bag got ripped in half) if (some) constraints are ignored. But he softens his point with the manner of telling his story: the language of speed is strong (running, chasing, running, caught, ripped) and the presence of a teacher-witness neatly underlines his 'fault' in running and connects his experience with the 'real' world. Student Two had made this connection early : 'bowling teachers' over' was his perception of the problem of running in corridors.

The Clowns create and recreate the sub-culture by balancing its sense of boredom with the sense of fun which laughter generates and reflects.

Student One	Do you reckon they should leave the gym open?
Student Two	Jim, who's he? (Laughter)

Laughter also counteracts pain, as it did with Heni's story of being called 'a dizzy cow' and it could reflect dilemmas facing senior students today :

Student One	The problem is - if you don't go to school - get no money
Student Two	If - - - go to school - - - got no money! (Group laughter)

This very brief exchange is fun, a neat playing with words, but the Clown reflects and confirms a real concern in the sub-culture. If students want money - that is, achievement in adult lives - they must stay at school; they said this in many ways all through the

study. But, as Student Two notes, going to school was not a guarantee of achieving, either. The group laughter which followed her quick response confirmed both the Clown's 'joke' and the 'truth' of it. Laughter was a cultural 'reward' and greatly valued but with its power to provide a sense of community it reinforced an understanding of individual isolation and powerlessness.

The Storyteller

The third social role is that of Storyteller. These students were often, although not always, the initiators of conversation topics and were frequently rewarded with others' stories. The stories maintained dominant understandings and reflected the cultural core in powerful ways: they provided historical and current examples of why life is difficult and unfair. Roimata's and Sonya's stories of the form one and two students on the roof is a good example of a current re-creation of powerlessness. Another is Pita's description of the value (to him) of a cat. The following story was of an incident four years old but the vigour of its telling underlined the perception that in this difficult world school should be safe and is not.

Student — Well, I reckon - - - I - - they should do something about the security of the school. 'Cause there was these - ah - two guys, two Black Power, Powers, came up to the school and beat this little dude up. Dion Murray - - when he was in the third form - - remember these fellas came up to school looking for. Grant and Dion was walking down the field and they thought - - - or no it wasn't Grant - they were looking for someone - - - and they ran over to him and they gave Dion a hiding down on the field and they were smashing his head on those poles down there. Wasted man. And then they saw the fella they were looking for and they took after him and they left Dion. Dion got a hiding and went - - - while Grant was there.

The story suggests a sub-cultural rejection of violence and this is confirmed by a conversation in another group where two Teachers reinforced the school's non-violence policy.

Student One	Why do you think there's no fights?
Student Two	You don't want to get suspended.
Student One	Which means the non-violence policy is getting stronger.
Student Three	- - and it's working. Yeah.
Student Two	Which means if it can work for that it can work for others.
Student Four	Yeah, but that's only one part of the non violence policy. Like form one and twos - - - they don't get bashed up by older people which is good.
Student Two	'Cause they're protecting them from their own age.

In this discussion the cultural sanction (suspension) is balanced with a cultural reward (protection) and with the Storyteller of the previous example these Teachers suggest a student vulnerability and the necessity for school to be safe. Stories of powerlessness were frequently visual and often high in emotional impact. Pita and his cat was one of the strongest but Student One in the following account held his audience with no interruptions.

Student One	(talking of an outdoor education camp in the fourth form) We went there and it was, like, saying it was raining and there was fog everywhere and we all just - - it was freaky - - there was this cave and we all, me, Tana and - - - snorkelling over to it and, like, the water was - - the waves, like, the cave was sucking us in, sucked in with the waves - - - everybody was screaming.
Student Two	Scarey. I remember, we did a hike and (laughter) - - all got lost - - - and the bus missed them and me and Jason (laughter) - - and went back to Jason's place and we played pool waiting for the bus to stop outside. Yeah, and about four people got lost and everyone just took off (laughter).

Student One's story is strong : 'raining' and the alliteration of 'fog', and 'freaky' define the scene; the cave is positioned with the boys' snorkelling towards it; the water becomes waves; the cave is personified and is 'sucking' them in and finally the sequence of the onomatopoeiac 'sucking', 'sucked', 'screaming' provides the climax. No mention was made of how the boys escaped. The ability to tell a story with this kind of language use is not always present in Storytellers but, as Student Two's response shows, stories are important in the cultural network. Student Two rewards the drama of Student One's story with the norm of laughter and reaches out to the value of sharing. The genuine powerlessness of the first story is answered with another, but one in which fun (playing pool) lightens the moment.

The Protester

A fourth social role is that of Protester. Most students grumbled about something but Protesters gained their power through detail, through knowledge which went beyond generalities. There are many examples in the previous chapters : Sri and the form one and two students who upset her study, Mana and his School Certificate effort, Serena's worry about studying at home. The following extract shows the detail a Protester is able to produce and its implied oppositional ideal is not only clear but reaffirms the sub-cultural assumption that (school) life is indeed difficult.

Student One	Like, man, the teachers should be more clear.
Student Two	Yeah, they should, but we also need teachers who are going to sit down and work with us instead of saying 'Here this is what you're doing' and I don't know what to do.
Group	Yeah. Yeah.

In this statement the Protester reflects the students' view of teachers at the front of the room ('This is what you're doing') with the ideal (sit down and work with us) and this reaffirms students' uncertainty (I don't know what to do). The group rewards the protest (yeah, yeah), and confirms their shared powerlessness.

Sometimes the Protester role was linked with another role :

Student Like they call prefects' meeting and like interested seventh formers can go there now - - - they've added that now - - - it took them all this time to think about that. Like they knew straight away that they couldn't do it without our help.

Here Protester and Teacher ('They've added that now') come together in one voice. The prefects' decision to enlarge the Ball workforce is presented in value terms as overdue commonsense ('They knew they couldn't do it without our help') but it actually reached out to cultural reward, the fun of preparing for the ball, and so reinforced the value of sharing : fun should be open to all seventh formers. This student also reproduced the sense that (some) prefects had not earned the status ('it took them all this time to think about that').

Protesters could also confirm the sense of self as independent, in charge of what happened in life and therefore responsible for their failures. There are many examples of this in the preceding chapters and Pita's story of leaving class to buy lunch is a good example.

The Messenger

A fifth social role emerged (especially) in what I have called 'sharing time' and the students exercising power in this way I have called Messengers. These students were able to describe personal relationships in terms of status and intimacy and were frequently able to provide other relevant details of people's personal history for the increased knowledge of the students in their group. In this way they not only gained status in their group but, by the kind of information they shared, they established views about those people in the minds of the listeners. Most of these stories have been omitted from this study because they rightfully belong to people who are not participants but Messengers frequently underlined the strong community sense in this sub-culture for the students. One example will, perhaps, illustrate this role.

Student	We should have a bigger Common Room for studying. But (teacher's name), - - - the one who was in town - ah y'know - with Miss (teacher's name) - - like, he's got no say, like - but - - - reckons we'd only trash it - - - need more money - reckons we don't deserve it.

In this statement, the links between studying ('a bigger Common Room'), money to help it ('need more money') and failure ('We don't deserve it') are clear and are strengthened with the inclusion of information about two teachers.

Messengers were clear about social status and in the school context they reinforced the perception of the lowly status of forms one and two (who kept stepping out of line), the high status of 'Prefect' and 'Teacher', (some of whom were not living up to the ideal inherent in their position) and even the status of suburbs where students lived:

Student One	People say to me "Where do you live?' and I say TO - - -'You don't look TO' - - - so that's good'.
Student Two	That's what they used to say to me, eh. And then they go 'Oh, Where did you come from?' and I say 'TO' and they go 'Ho'.

In this exchange TO is a suburb of the city which is generally regarded as 'poor'. The Messenger is Student One and she draws a positive response from Student Two. Here the students confirm each other's desire not to be associated with the suburb and so maintain the understanding that it is an undesirable part of the city to live in. Since a high number of our students come from TO this perception - at least - weakens self-pride.

Messengers' knowledge about, and definitions of, status confirmed the 'rightness' of a world in which status was ranked and natural. It was interesting that in these discussions the parallels between school and family rankings were close, as Amy's comment about teachers shows (they're just like your parents). In this way,

Messengers appeared to provide the conceptual links between school and out-of-school lives and gave the students cultural reward because of their formal status as senior students: they were not 'failures'.

The Valuer

A final use of knowledge-power could be seen in the social role of 'Valuer'. These students frequently provided the oppositional views in discussions and were usually, with their 'knowledge' of balance, the students who reflected the major cultural sanction, that of a fear of failure, at work. The effects of not working in class, of dropping out of school, of having no goals, were all referenced to achieving or not achieving. Valuers also provided reasons for some aspects of school life (such as students who are different) and in doing so were contributing to new understandings in the cultural network. As a Principal-researcher I was interested in the Valuers' contributions to the group's view of some of the school practices. Amy's and Marlene's positive evaluation of the modular curriculum and Sonya's satisfaction with internal assessment, are examples and suggest that school acculturation is also, in part, an effect of the operation of the sub-cultural network. Lilian and Ray's satisfaction with the school (the bestest) was echoed in another group :

Student One	Wherever I go, like, I get sort of recognised 'n go to Tiki.
Student Two	Yeah - - - I do.
Student Three	For what though?
Student One	Anything.

The Valuers rewarded the group with assessments such as these and reconfirmed students' sense of agency : they have chosen to stay on in a 'good' school and this accounts for their successes. Life may be hard but they are winning.

Other Roles

The literature suggests other social roles but those I have described

appear to be the key ones for this group. There were, for example, no real heroines or heroes (Deal;1987) and this did not surprise me since this was a sub-culture high in uncertainty. Further, although from time to time, most students played the 'High Priest' role of reinforcing the core of the culture with the sub-cultural slogan 'It's up to us', the focus was on avoiding failure rather than gaining success. There must also be some Mythmakers : although I found none during the study an example of their power occurred during the second stage. The staff reported that many students believed that there had been a high rate of clashes of choices of modules and that many students had not received the modules they had requested for that year. This particular concern was widely accepted amongst the students and they were so convinced that they raised the issue with their two senior school deans who were also convinced. The deans carried out a full comparison of the students' requests with their actual timetables and found, to their surprise, that nearly every student had received what she or he had requested. The story of curriculum restrictions had started with one or two students, had in the retelling become a myth of school life - and, so helped to reproduce 'failure' as a real possibility.

The cultural network : a methodology for analysis and for change

The six social roles I have described show how the sub-culture might be maintained, but this is not a claim that the sub-culture is static. Instead, the identification of social roles can also suggest the way that assumptions, values and norms in the sub-culture change because of the (verbal) cultural network. The description of a cultural network also suggests a way to help the students, at least at the sub-cultural level : give the Teachers correct and more information about school life; provide more experiences of school fun and promote the Clowns to real Heroes and Heroines; reduce those school practices which sustain the Protesters and transform them into High Priests and Priestesses; and so we could continue on through the roles in the network. If language use both reflects and is an instrument of, a sub-culture then it seems logical that language use could provide a methodology for change in sub-cultural perceptions.

The existence of a cultural network however, not only offers a systematic method to reach and change more students' disempowering perceptions of school but it also offers a way to judge the success of the strategy : who talks, how and about what, are useful indicators of students' perceptions of themselves as achievers or failures. In this lies a different school study but one which I suspect would be very helpful for the school and its students.

It was at this point that I had a new question : If the sub-culture was self-informing and reproducing a sense of uncertainty about achievement at least through influential social (verbal) roles of some of its members, then why did these students escape its worst school effects? Why were they still in school, some of them gaining very high qualifications? While partial acculturation as suggested in previous chapters explained school success in part, it did not account for success within a sub-culture which expected to fail. What else was happening?

I have already suggested a counter-hegemony at work (Chapter ten) and I now wondered if the cultural network was producing a message which contributed to a sense of (collective) agency.

A Counter Hegemony of Knowledge-Power

If there was one thing which the cultural network leaders had in common, it was that they all gained status with their contributions. They each exercised different knowledge-powers but the effect of their collective activity in the sub-culture was an affirmation of the value of individual knowledge-power. The group rewarded this individuality with laughter, matching responses, or disgreement, but always with attention. It seemed, as I considered the effect of the cultural network on the sub-culture, that its voices were producing a new message in the students' discourse and that it was one which said not only 'Look at me' but also 'Look at what I can do'. If this were so then the sub-culture's understanding of powerlessness was being contested and a possible explanation for these students' differing successes was that the challenge was working at least for some of them. This would suggest a sub-culture

in the process of change and it would reinforce the students' desire to achieve and not "be like those (Maori) statistics". Chapter twelve pursues this idea.

A problem : generalisation

A message of individual power, however, has to speak over the voice of capitalism which, I have suggested, has talked the students into participating willingly in the school game and has also restricted their chances of succeeding in it. A further problem is that capitalism is a clever debater and has pre-empted a student sub-cultural challenge with its own stress on individual achievement. In words which are democratic and commonsense it affirms the students' right to succeed - or to fail. But, 'It's up to us' is not just a sub-cultural slogan, it is also a myth : there is a secret rule operating in the debate and it can be found in the practice of generalisation, or what might be described as the imperative that we manage our lives be grouping its components and summarizing their meanings. As George Eliot says :

> "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of the roar which lies on the other side of silence". (Middlemarch;1872).

So, the practice of generalisation is everywhere. Governments establish policy with it, managers determine procedures by it, advertisers sell goods by it and in schools, with the national curriculum framework, and national unit standards determining our school approach, we teach by it. The effect of the practice of generalisation is to bury individual experience within group experience and while that may be, as I suggested in the Introduction, a device of utility, it actually hides the complexities of 'real' life.

Generalisation in practice

In the school the operation of generalisation can be demonstrated. The students face a room full of 'teacher' but teachers face a room full of 'class'. The students perceive their contractual relationship

with the teacher as one-to-one, ('I like Miss x') but the teacher actually has a one-to-many contract. ('I've got the fifths now' or 'I'm off to science'). The effect is that although the students expect to be perceived equally, individually and separately in the class the teacher actually sees them equally, individually but collectively as a class. The perceptions are different : the students may have an individual response-expectation but the teacher has a generalised management-reality. Generalisation also works in reverse : it allows students to manage their understandings about the class called 'teachers' (they should listen to us).

In this way generalisation hides individual 'realities' and operates as a strategy to balance the real and ideal in a school or any other institution. Thus it maintains order in the world of work and I suspect, in positional families. But its effect is to hide a powerful secret which can be summarised as : **exceptions do not prove the rule, they are the rule.** Generalization focuses us on the many, not the few and so our understanding of reality is distorted; instead we should focus on the exceptions because, as in classrooms, the real rule is not that most will fail but that only a few will succeed. The ideology of capitalism and of its schools suggests that in a room full of individual students everyone has the freedom to achieve. The secret rule actually says in a room full of (school and family) 'class' only a few will succeed. The ideology appears democratic and individually focussed but actually prevents a focus on the reality of the few exceptions. Thus, when we suggest that the achievement of a few Maori students confirms generalisations about most Maori students' failure we focus, like the teacher, on the class. Perhaps this is why we also look for causes of failure rather than reasons for success. Why do these students 'succeed'?

A cultural network response to generalisation

The way to avoid the anonymity which generalisation about 'class' brings is by being different. So I come to understand counter-hegemony in the cultural network : Teachers and Clowns and Storytellers and the other network communicators, have already

escaped 'failure by generalisation' because, even as they reproduce the cultural core of a sense of uncertainty, their roles 'speak' of power, of being different, of status. It seems to be, and at the same time, a kind of negative and positive peer pressure.

This claim about status and power seems to be denied by the generally held view (in some educational circles) that Maori students do not like to stand out and that they try to prevent this happening amongst their peers. In this group of students, however, this did not seem to be happening. Perhaps they had grown past negative peer pressure in terms of individual status, or there was conformity in the kinds of status achieved. The students themselves believed that status was good providing it was not for 'being in trouble', or it did not hurt their friends.

This second qualification provided me with another view of the complexities in the operation of the cultural network: the school also generalises and the network responds appropriately. For example, the school encourages multilevel learning, its ceremonies celebrate achievement in and out of the classroom, its teachers worry about their students' progress; it has been called an effective school and given high media coverage for a number of its initiatives for students. All of these things should promote high student endeavour for academic achievement. But the school's generalised cultural message, visible in policies and procedures, is about non-violence, cooperation and consideration of others and so the voice of the school carries a mixed message : a part of it says 'work hard to achieve' which for examinations translates as 'compete', but another, and stronger part, says 'life is about getting on with people' which translates as 'don't compete'. The effect could be that for many of the students, the two strands of the school discourse make sense in sport, drama, music, in all those extracurricular activities in which they do so well. But in the classroom the strands unwind. The necessary drive for good grades is somehow lost in the school's emphasis on good relationships. Further, in working class socialization, says Bernstein, the 'we' is placed before the 'I' and so when the school's and the families' practices of community come together the voice of competition, which is essentially egocentric,

is submerged. As one student said, "Too much competition just drowns the kids out".

This analysis would help me re-explain the cultural network : the status of the Teachers, Clowns and other leaders is not achieved by competition but by social cooperation. This view of a counter hegemony as a process of providing status in an otherwise - and generally - unpromising world, could also explain the sub-cultural sense of uncertainty again : the mixed message of the school has to be managed somehow and the cultural network responds with a fear of failure (because the school stresses achievement) but balances it with social status in the network (because the school stresses cooperation). It is not surprising, perhaps, that the counter hegemony is confused.

I could add, of course, that the school contributes to the problem of generalisation. We 'know' that many of our students cannot gain high achievements, whether in school or post-school life and yet we urge them to play the game as if all could. That we are ourselves participants in a bigger game and should challenge its rules more than we do, is not apparent, or perhaps even relevant, for the students but it is another aspect of the problems in our message to students, which some at least noted : "There's nothing out there", said Marlene (Chapter seven), in perhaps the most fearful generalisation of all.

I suggest, therefore, that the school seems to be confirming the students' uncertainty with its own contributions to the cultural network : we are the Articulator of education and we have a powerful social role in that network.

Conclusion

Foucault claims that language is full of the intentions of others and this study of the students' language use suggests that he is right.

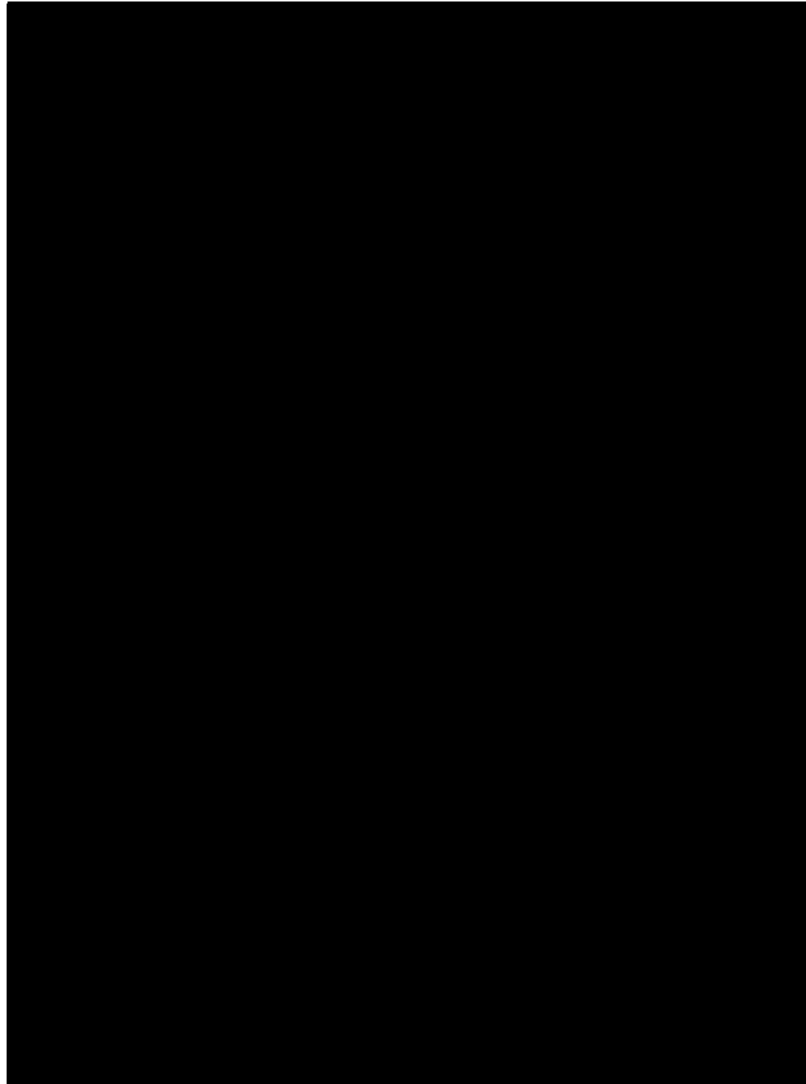
I began this chapter with a check on a sense of uncertainty in the sub-culture and then suggested family-class and language acquisition

as a source of the perception of uncertainty. I extended the check to the students' (spoken) cultural network and identified verbal social roles which reproduced perceptions of powerlessness.

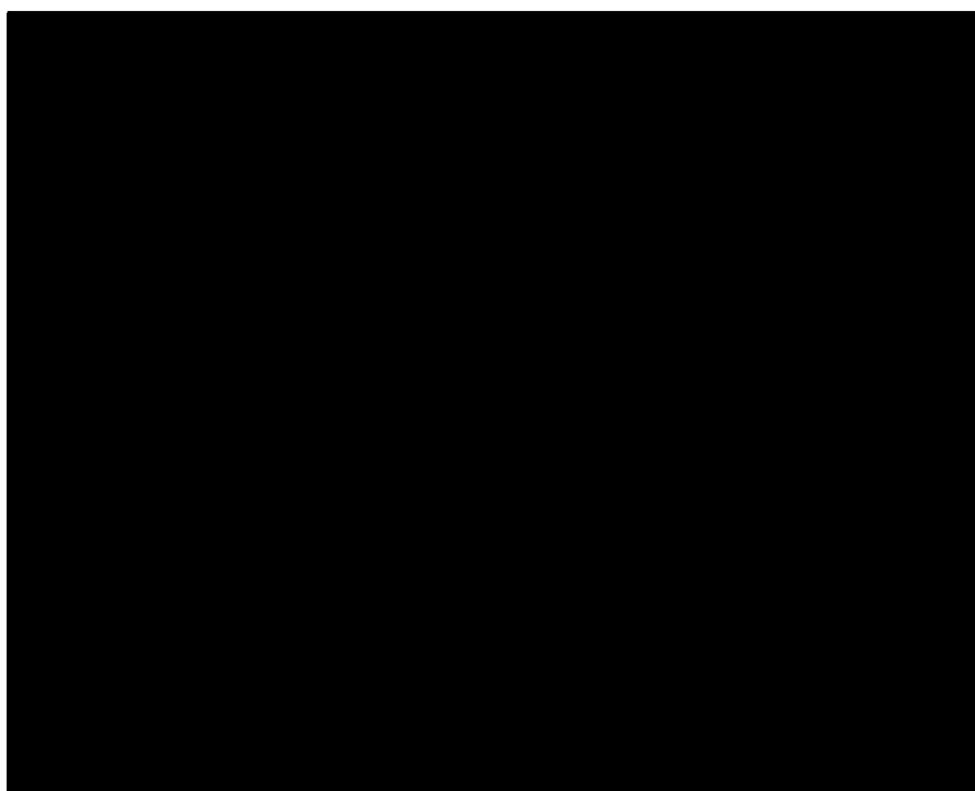
These roles indicated that the students were themselves reproducing the sense of uncertainty and that they were also reaffirming some basic attitudes and values in the sub-culture, notably the importance of fun, money and achievement and the belief that achievement had to be earned. The operation of the cultural network also provided status for some students and this appeared to be a form of counterhegemony, if only against the hegemony of generalisation. Finally, I have suggested that this counter-hegemony is possibly undermined - in part - by the mixed voice of the school-context in which the cultural network operates. In this way, it is possible to claim that the students' language use reflects the 'intentions' of family and school and the sub-culture reproduces the attitudes and values which inform those intentions through the norms of its cultural network. The 'power' in the cultural network is limited by both the source and the context of its language use.

In the next chapter I re-examine the sub-culture's language use looking more closely at the way in which the cultural network works.

Ka to he ra, ka rere ha ra; no sooner is one day over than another begins.



Extra Curricular Communication Technology : the students' radio station equipment.



Level Six Metalcraft : Welding

CHAPTER TWELVE

TE HUI : THE TALKING CONCLUDES : THE STUDENTS' DISCOURSE RE-CONSIDERED

Me he manu au e kakapa; trepidation is like the fluttering of a bird.

Introduction

The discussion of the students' language use in the last chapter was directed at the third question of this study : are there subjectivities and power-relationships in the students' sub-culture which influence their school successes? The answer I have suggested, is yes, and that response really should have been the conclusion of my work. But in looking at language use and in trying to present the students positively, I kept returning to the idea of sub-cultural messages. I had found ways to explain a core assumption of uncertainty and possible sources and I had found a possible mechanism for the reproduction of the core uncertainty. The students' initial themes (Chapter seven) told me what they spoke of, the key themes (Chapter nine) indicated where (their school sub-culture), the cultural network (Chapter eleven) suggested who managed sub-cultural knowledge - but I needed to know how it all worked. I chose, therefore, to stay on in the context of language use and re-examine it as discourse which is both constructed and challenged by the students.

I do so, however, with some nervousness; I am very conscious that in this final view of the students' language use, I might be over-analysing intentions. The students have confirmed the analysis but - -

The Context Redefined

The students' language use was very effective in verbal communication as all the previous discussions show. Students understood each other's stated and implied messages well and were able to respond appropriately. Further, the language use was rich in imagery (such as describing the form one and two students as

'got no ears'), powerful in eliciting emotional as well as rational responses (such as the response to Pita's cat story) and forceful in expressing feelings (such as the power of the alliteration in 'they bloomin' make me mad'). The students were also able to verbalise cause and effect as many of the exchanges demonstrate, they were able to initiate their own questioning of some 'fixed' constraints in their lives (such as outdoor education) and they were able to consider opposing ideas and reach conclusions (such as thinking about other students). It seemed, therefore, that the students were well accommodated by their language use. Although their language appeared to reflect a sub-cultural uncertainty and a cultural network maintained the 'knowledge' of uncertainty, yet this uncertainty was balanced in school with the achieved status of its leaders.

These ideas, however, might suggest a consistency in the discourse which I would not claim. I conclude , therefore, with a look at the context in a different way to give examples of the construction and contestation of knowledge, by the students, to demonstrate, I hope, the lively nature of the sub-culture.

Language Use as Challenge and Compromise

I begin this analysis by looking at some of the students' communications which are, in intent and effect, 'safe' or non-contestable.

When language use is a social accomplishment it does not always matter that it is the 'problematic activity' Walker and Adelman (Chapter three) describe. It is accompanied by all the other meanings of the context and, if it is not understood, it can be clarified. In the following example it was understood :

Student — Like, Miss (name) - - she said, 'cause I can't do my work and I handed in this letter and that I'd have to redo the whole thing 'cause I didn't have this piece out of the paper saying that I had done it or something. And I had to come here and she said 'I still want the work done!! Like this. Real

	agro!
Group	Yeah - - Yeah.

This student was unhappy and the group understood that, not so much because of the content of her statement but because she was fluent, self-focused, displeased. Her summary of the incident ('Real agro') was recognised as a norm of student relationships with that teacher and endorsed by the group. The statement is complex : the teacher's voice (underlined) is intertwined with the student's, the student did not actually understand what was required of her ('or something') and the use of 'this' ('letter' and 'piece') for 'a' weaves a sense of immediacy into an event of the past. As a verbal communication tool, this language use is rich in imagery, clear in intent, successful in its impact : it was an acceptable statement, high in uncertainty from the start ('I can't do my work') and not challenged. Instead it constructs perceptions of the teacher, of wasted (and unfair) effort (redo the work) and gives the student status as Protester.

Another example illustrates the point in a different way :

Student One	(talking of another school) And like the seventh formers can go down to the shops at lunchtime and stuff.
Student Two	Mmm. They have to be careful - - - like their students just going out at lunchtimes 'cause they are closer to town whereas we aren't. We've really only got, like, those shops to go to.

Again the language use is successful and draws assent from Student Two ('Mmm'). Neither student clarified why going to the shops by students was a problem : they did not have to because they shared and agreed with that perception and it needed no verbalisation. The norm providing assent here is if students aren't 'careful' they may get into trouble and 'get kicked out' which the sub-culture does not want. I suggest 'knowledge' construction here includes the value of being in school and Student Two's status as Teacher or, possibly, Messenger.

The next example will illustrate another aspect of non-contested language use :

Student One	Are you doing fifth form subjects?
Student Two	Yeah - - - 'cause, like, last year I just bummed out at T.O. and didn't think shit about school I'm trying to come to school now - - - keeping out of trouble.
Student Three	It's better - - - eh?

In this exchange Student Two is logical and clear in the reasons given for fifth form work and for staying at school. Her statement reflects language use which in spite of the precision of the expletives, is actually quite vague and has to be interpreted by those with personal knowledge : last year she bunked and had some trouble which she is trying to avoid this year by attending school. Fifth form study is actually irrelevant to her answer. This personal view is acceptable to the students, her implicit reference to motivation is understood in the sub-culture. Constructed here is knowledge of Student Two as Protester-turned-Valuer and of the importance of self-reliance.

This next discussion was about failure :

Student One	But, see, 'cause I don't hang around with them anymore. I'm changing. I used to be a real bitch - - - start to snap out of it - - - No good going round getting into crime.
Group	Yeah.

In this example, a Teacher explains a cause of failure ('them'), change is happening, ('start to snap out of it') and gives a reason for the change ('no good - - getting into crime'). What was interesting for me was the group's response. Whether their affirmation was of the girl's self-analysis ('I used to be a real bitch') or of her conclusion, we could expect that an effect might be to (re)establish the group's knowledge of the need to change to avoid the failure inherit in

'getting into crime'. There appears to be here a balancing of the real and ideal worlds with a discursive message that "it's up to us".

Another example suggests a similar message in the discourse :

Student One	(Talking of form one and two students' behaviour We used to do things like that - -
Student Two	Yeah - - - now - - - settled in - got rid of staunch - - more mature, eh?

Here the students, both Valuers, construct together the view that they are achieving because they have 'got rid of staunch' and the perception is reinforced with the 'reward' of being 'settled in' (because they are 'more mature'). However, the apparent confidence of Student Two is denied by his request for confirmation ('eh?'), and the absence of any identifiers such as 'we' or the more frequent 'you'. Assumptions about real and ideal are contained in 'We used to do things like that' (real world) and 'now - - - settled in' (ideal world).

The discourse analysis also suggested challenges were a part of its operation.

Student One	Yeah - I was asked to leave the library
Student Two	What were you doing?
Student One	Staying - study.
Student Two	But what were you doing when you were kicked out?
Student One	Study - -
Student Two	Nah - - - (Teacher's name) isn't like that

In this extract Student One, a Protester, was pursuing a 'grievance' which teachers would recognise ('I wasn't doing anything, Miss'). Student Two, however, is a Valuer, recognises the assumption at work and contests it with persistence, a re-worked question, and, finally, a denial. Student Two challenges not only a perception of a teacher but also a perception that students are always/often innocent victims. Similar challenges occurred in many of the

discussions, (for example, in Chapter seven, Clay's reasons for returning to school are contested) and they suggest that some reconstructions of the value-messages in the discourse are possible and happening.

A different form of knowledge-contestation is evident in the following discussion.

Student One	(Talking of staff-student relationships) You have to trust them.
Student Two	You don't have to trust them, they have to earn your trust.
Student Three	How you're gonna do that?
Student Two	Well, you have to earn it.
Student One	How you gonna do that?
Student Two	You trust them once.

This discussion is complicated with its language of uncertainty : 'you', 'your' and 'you're' means teachers, 'them' and 'they' mean students. The language use here, with its reversal of (directional) pronouns, is a safe, and a communal, speech technique, and one in which these students are very competent. Student One is a Protester and is helped by Student Three's question which she makes her own. Student Two, however, is a Teacher-Valuer : she claims that students have to earn teachers' trust and she emphasises the point with repetition. But the second challenge to her claim pushes her into knowledge-creation which actually undermines her position : students are allowed only one mistake ('You trust them once') and then, presumably, they are to be regarded always by the teachers as untrustworthy - the very problem Student One was protesting. The philosophical problem of moving from what is to what ought to be may not be a concern for these students but in their discussion, they are certainly exploring it as a reality in school life. As well, the exploration reproduces messages about uncertainty : trust, which allows only one mistake, is likely to be very difficult to keep.

Knowledge construction and contestation were often intertwined.

Student One	(Sees someone through a window) Who's that?
Student Two	(Name) He's a past student - - - brags about getting a hiding - - -
Student Three	- - a small one - - ends up with brains, providing you get enough money.
Group	Yeah, reckon -

Student Two is a Messenger and his 'knowledge' produces a quick, and negative, picture of the past student. Student Three, however, acting mostly as Teacher modifies the picture in a special way. First, he extends the negative picture of the past student by challenging the size of the hiding ('only a small one') and so he moves the focus of the conversation from 'hiding' to 'brag'. But, then he reconstructs the perception of the past student (who has paid employment and is well-regarded in his work place) by contributing some extra knowledge which connects the past student with 'brains' and 'money'. The way he says this is interesting : if 'brains' and 'money' are transposed the message of this Teacher is clear; the reversal of the nouns can be explained as a speed error reflecting thought order : brains come before money. Student Three really means that if 'you get enough money' you end up being regarded as having 'brains'. The message in this discourse is problematic : is behaviour less important than ability for achievement? or brains are needed to earn money? or if money is earned you 'achieve' brains?

The group affirms Student Three, however, and when I checked their understanding of the conversation later they recalled only that the past student was 'going okay'. Whatever the Teacher meant, the effect was (by challenge and then construction) a perception of achievement in adult life. If that particular past student could do it, perhaps they could also. In this way, I suggest, a sense of uncertainty can be modified in discourse.

The cooperative production of 'knowledge' was a norm of the sub-culture and the following extract shows the operation of claim and counter-claim.

Student One	- - with a slot machine - - you stick the money in - -

Student Three	That's gambling - - - it's restricted to under 18 now - - - like 17 and over.
Student Two	It's not gambling - - - it's playing pool - - - you're not playing for money.
Student Three	But how do you think the kids are going to get the money? - - by bashing up others - kids - to get the money.
Group	Oh, yeah.

The 'knowledge' produced in this exchange is clear ('if we have a pool table kids will bash up other kids') and the logic, in a students' sub-culture, is tidy. Students would have to pay to play pool (because that's how pool tables they know about are operated) but our students are poor and would steal the money; most teenagers steal from each other using physical force, therefore a pool table will bring violence into the school. The Valuer's contribution (Student Three) has been to counter the idea with a moral objection (that's gambling) and when that did not work, to use a second objection which has more relevance (bashing up other kids) for the sub-culture. The group finally agrees even though Student Two has attempted to defend the idea. The money message in this discussion is interesting and, again, collectively reproduced : money pays for pleasure (a pool table with a slot machine), money use may not be free (it's restricted), money has to be obtained (how - - - to get the money?) and money can be wrongly 'earned' (by bashing up others). If, as I have theorised, the students' discourse reflects and reproduces their sub-cultural assumptions, then this exchange appears to be doing both : gambling and bashing are not valued but the pool table issue is left unresolved, yet another school experience of uncertainty.

The next exchange is equally cooperative in its production of knowledge with claim and challenge :

Student One	Like, if you aim - - - S.C. - - - if you miss one day a week, it's, like, missing the whole year -
Student Two	Not - - - 'cause you do miss the whole year
Student One	Like, if you miss one day of school, it's like I've done two years of work, of school work.

Student Two	Yeah - that's true for heaps.

Student One, a Protester, establishes the problem : internal assessment for (most) School Certificate subjects requires regular attendance and if time is missed it jeopardises hopes of achievement ('missing the whole year'). His time reference ('one day a week') represents a lot of time over a year and so there is a 'real' construction in his statement. Student Two knows him, however, and points out that Student One has actually been away for most of the year. This challenge moves from the theoretical level ('You' in the opening statement meaning 'Students') to the personal and allows Student One to restate his point ('One day a week' becomes 'one day of school') but he accepts the personal rebuke ('I've done') as a way of continuing the claim that internal assessment can mean two year's of work, if the first year is hurt by (some) non-attendance. The 'ideal' is clear in this exchange (attend every day), the reality (some students do not come every day) is equally clear and Student Two finally accepts the point ('that's true for heaps'). Achievement, in this conversation, becomes a very uncertain possibility.

Contestation and construction of school 'knowledge' were often directly related to the 'real' world :

Student One	I think - - - it's better to push yourself along more than other people - - - ah, makes yourself feel better, in the long run - - -
Student Two	More - - - like, you have to push yourself if ya gonna make money - - - make it worthwhile to work
Group	Yeah, Right on, Yeah (Laughter)

The perception of the need for self-motivation is reconstructed by Student One, a Valuer, because it "makes yourself feel better" but Student Two makes explicit a sub-cultural value (money is the goal, and a sign of achievement) to challenge the reasons Student One gives and so 'work' in her statement can refer to school or adult life. The group confirm this view not only with 'Yeah' but with the reward of laughter which softens the 'knowledge' that self-motivation

is needed to achieve (money).

A similar construction of knowledge occurs in this conversation:

Student One	But with smoking - I reckon if your parents let you, you should be allowed to smoke at school.
Student Two	No, I don't reckon -
Student Three	No, it's not for school.
Student One	I reckon from sixth form up then you should be allowed, but in a way - - - I don't think so - - there's younger people here and it might encourage the younger ones to smoke.
Student Three	I reckon smoking is only for outdoor - - -
Student Two	Like off school property - like, that's the policy
Student One	They should have an area - - - a room - - - where you are allowed to smoke - - -
Student Two	That's Health Board regulations.
Student Three	It won't happen though -
Group	Yeah

Student One begins as a Protester ('You (meaning 'we')' should be allowed to smoke at school'), becomes a Valuer when her view is challenged (the 'No' from Students Two and Three produces the qualifications of the sixth form and younger people) then reverts to Protester when references to policy and outdoors suggest a new solution ('an area' for smoking). The 'knowledge' cooperatively produced results in a straight-forward message : students in the sixth form or higher, whose parents agree, should be allowed to smoke at school in a special area, thus complying with school policy and Health Board regulations and not offering a bad example to junior students.

The real and ideal worlds are, in this way, neatly linked but Student Three's conclusion ('It won't happen') after all the group's efforts to balance what they want against the perceived constraints in the school context, is accepted by the group. As teachers we would see value in this exploration of ideas but the students saw it as another example of school not listening to them.

The students also constructed, with claim and counter-claim, a sense of the necessity for care in preparing for the future.

Student One	'Cause I'm sorta a good League player - Winfield Cup - - - perhaps.
Student Two	But - if you don't quite make it - - you always gotta have something behind you.
Student Three	Kinda have options - - - if the sport doesn't work out properly - - you've still got your schoolwork, and that - - your job can come after that.
Student Two	If all goes well you can have it - - - both ways, like - - - but - -
Student One	Try to, eh - - but - - Winfield - - - doubt it. (Laughter)

In this exchange Students Two and Three both as Valuer-Teachers, construct a future in which a person who does not accomplish an ideal (playing sport for a living) is protected by the existence of 'something' or a 'job' which has been achieved by 'schoolwork'. Student Three agrees that 'both ways' is what he wants but retreats from the ideal in words and with his laughter. In this example it might be suggested that his peers were applying pressure on Student One not to try to achieve his goal. The students denied this, saying they were trying to help.

A single comment could often construct a perception of what was needed in school and in the future. One which challenged my thinking was :

Student One	X is a good prefect. He's alright - - - 'Cause he backs up everyone and - - - he disagrees even if he doesn't want to - -
Student Two	Yeah, that's good - - - be a good - - ah - - teacher.

The Valuer here is actually talking of the support the sub-culture hopes to receive and the prefect is perceived as providing it. The statement, however, is complex : support is perceived as language use ('he backs up' because he 'disagrees') and yet the whole concept

of support is expressed negatively : 'he disagrees even if he doesn't want to'. The 'ideal' in this perception seems to be that support should come when life is negative and Student Two's affirmation and reference to 'a good teacher' may link this idea not only to school support but to adults generally.

In this final example, oratory of a high order constructs a sub-cultural message of school which almost needs no comment.

Student	(Talking of too many assignments) That's a lot cause some people say 'Aw, can't be buggered doing that' - so if you do it at school, where you have to do it, you will do it - - - cause it's only gonna get harder and the books gonna get thicker and it's gonna get dearer.
Group	(Laughter)

A Teacher-Clown is at work here. Motivation is a problem ('can't be buggered') but it can be found ('if you do at school') and there is good reason for motivation ('it's only gonna get harder'). The power of this message is conveyed by the triple constructions of 'if you do it,' 'you have to do it' and 'you will do it' and reconfirmed, with a matching triple construction, by what might almost be a sub-cultural theme : 'it's only gonna get harder', 'gonna get thicker' and 'gonna get dearer'. With this appraisal the group laughs : there are no words of denial and laughter rewards the speaker and modifies the sense of powerlessness the speech has conveyed.

Final Thoughts on the Students' Attitudes and Values

When I first considered construction and contestation in the students' discourse, I wondered if what was really happening was copying. Copying had been identified as an important concept in some of the studies of sub-culture : Woods' students copied each other's work (1979;64-66) and Jones, for example, described copying as a teacher-management strategy of her students (1991;73-77). I wondered if copying was also safe (because it is a communal activity) and so it was more comfortable to copy each other's ideas in

discussion also. This concept of copying might explain the high degree of consensus and the frequent cooperative efforts to construct sub-cultural 'knowledge'. As well, however, copying would also be boring and so the security it might bring to the sub-culture was undermined by its sameness. The students of the literature's ethnographic studies sought fun and so did these students : perhaps their contestation of some views was really a reflection of the value of fun in which case I needed more than copying to explain the different kinds of discussions I had heard.

A second consideration was the use of language as a tool for learning. Jones argues (ibid;110) that talking helped students to explore ideas and assimilate new knowledge and Woods' boys liked teachers who would "explain if you don't understand it" (ibid;91). The Tikipunga students would agree, as their views on teachers demonstrate. The gaining of knowledge by talking is not restricted to the classroom, however, and I was comfortable with the idea that the students were exploring 'knowledge' in their discussions. This explanation allowed for the operation of many voices in the exchanges and it also allowed the students to practise 'community' and yet 'reject' or challenge aspects which they do not like.

A third possibility was that discussion was a game all students could play and win. In this explanation all students could participate with certainty : when their views, or others', were challenged, the result was not failure, but a different kind of 'knowledge', and so an achievement to which they had all contributed. Game-playing also allowed for challenges to, and the construction of, ideas and might explain participation in the broader game of school.

The concepts of copying, exploring and playing, therefore separately or collectively might explain why the students participated in verbal communication in the way they did. But an explanation of how the discourse messages are reproduced takes us beyond the students to the basic ordering of what is to be contested and what is accepted. If it is in discourse that ideologies are received, re-constructed and contested, then in the students' discourse we might be able to identify ideologically informed assumptions which provide order

to the language of their sub-culture.

The first discourse assumption, I suggest, is that 'failure is my fault'. There seemed to be a belief that if "I can't be buggered" then "it's gonna get harder" or "I'll be going round getting into crime". The ideology operating here is one which says if you work hard you will be successful. The voice is clear for the students and not challenged, but by accepting or 'copying' this message they are 'ordered' into a game of qualifications in which 'work hard' is only one of the rules; cultural capital, Bourdieu claims, is a more important one and that rule has not been explained to, and perhaps only partially learned by, these students.

A second discourse assumption seems to be that achievement is uncertain. "I can't do my work", or "I'm trying to come to school" or "I'm changing" and other similar comments, imply difficulties in the past and the present and the generalisation of "Miss one day - miss the whole year" is perceived as a reality for school achievement. The ideological message in this assumption is that in school and in the 'real' world the norm is that most people do not achieve (highly). The students, therefore, 'explored' ideas of success with proposals for 'something (else) behind you' and claims that it is necessary "to push yourself". Reference to earning (money and trust) also link this ideology of meritocracy back to the first ideology message about work. The students stay in the game - at least at school - because they have considered the alternatives and do not like them (it not only gets harder but also 'dearer'). Boudon's concept of 'intentional actors' appears to be relevant in the operation of this assumption.

The third assumption is that life is hard but has some compensations, notably fun and the support of others. Money continued to be a feature of conversations (implicitly, for spending at the shops, a reason for getting into trouble, and explicitly, for a pool table, and linked to brains and motivation). Money also links with fun and friends and suggests a third ideology at work : success has to be earned but everyone has equal access to a good life. This message is similar to the view that students should play a game for its own

pleasure (rather than to win it) or, as is explicit in the current discourse of schooling, that we should instill in students a love of learning (knowing that we cannot help them all gain qualifications?). It also has a suggestion of 'bread and circuses' or what Bowles and Gintis describe as the 'happier, fuller life' which some groups see as the school's chief purpose. The students are playing this game conscientiously, some after 'time out' and some with efforts to change ('got rid of staunch' or 'start to snap out of it') but the ordering effect of this message sidetracks them : fun at school does not necessarily produce the good life they seek as adults. In fact, too much fun, or 'coping' at school can hurt chances of success.

From this analysis of discourse assumptions I believed I could hypothesise that the cultural network was 'ordered' by its informing ideologies. I then re-examined these attitudes and values on a broader theoretical level.

Attitudes and values re-examined

A student sub-cultural discourse in which self-motivation is valued, achievement is doubted and fun is desired, is interesting - and, perhaps, contradictory. But if we apply a concept of partial acculturation to the sub-culture we can 'read' it as a possibility.

The students have heard the messages about work and success and by making them their own, they move towards acculturation. However, they have also heard the message of meritocracy (very few succeed) and to balance this they have constructed their readiness for the norm of failure, which they have perceived in the lives of people like them and so potential acculturation becomes (at least) partial; partial acculturation is then consolidated by the message that there is equity in the community of fun.

We can also apply the concept of agency to the discourse within an account of partial acculturation because partial acculturation would allow for the energy in the discourse; the students were active in their constructions and challenges, they produced language which was strong in imagery and impact and they participated freely in

the ebb and flow of the discussions. These suggestions of the exercise of agency (in Boudon's terms) could be described as responses to perceptions of real and ideal; the challenges and reconstructions balanced the (real) constraints of school and the (ideal) hopes for the future.

This account, however, has to recognise that there is also evidence of limits to the possible agency of the students. In almost all of their discussions their language use was other-facing and support-seeking. 'You' and 'they' to mean 'I', 'we', 'us', and 'like', 'eh' and other verbal requests for confirmation, were the norm, and they suggested uncertainty in 'self' as well as in the sub-culture. Boudon claims that the students' rational considerations are the chief reasons for choices about futures but in my analysis I could find support for agency of only a limited and limiting kind.

Finally, I am conscious that although I have argued that the sub-culture of uncertainty is not necessarily Maori and that it is more a sub-culture of class, yet in a way which I can not attempt to describe, there is one further theoretical point about language and discourse which must be made. In Maori the word paheke can mean failure, but when its ending is repeated it becomes pahekeheke and can mean uncertainty. There are also words, such as whakaiti and whakahihi (arrogance and humility) where a common stem links and complements oppositional meaning, as in this case with 'whaka' or 'in the direction of'. In this way I note the power of language as a reflection of a family culture of balance and I suggest that in the students' sub-culture of uncertainty, there is the spirit of 'Maoriness' which the students themselves may not see but which they have 'learned' from their elders. In this way I complete the analysis of how the cultural network works and the attitudes and values its operation reflects.

Bourdieu, Boudon and Bernstein meet

I conclude this section of the study with a possible synthesis of accounts of social order, construction and reconstruction and compromise and challenge.

I suggest that accounts of the effects of class (either as Bourdieu's cultural capital or language acquisition) provide us with a logical starting point for Bernstein's explanations of students' attitudes and values. I further suggest that the hegemony of capitalism is strong in family and educational discourse and consequently experiences in family and in schools provide students with perceptions of life. However, and to a greater or lesser degree, they do examine as Boudon's game playing suggests, their perceptions, and this may confirm or reconstruct basic attitudes and values. I suggest such examinations are identifiable in their language use and that it is in sub-cultural discourse we can identify some (limited) exercise of agency. The interaction of partial acculturation and constrained agency is reflected in and reproduced by, the social mechanism of (verbal) communication.

With this tentative hypothesis I conclude the analysis of the students' discussions.

Reviewing the Conduct of the Study

Validation and Empowerment

In this interpretive phase of the study I returned the completed study to the students for their final comments. I 'walked' each group through the whole document, spending most of the time on the discussions and my interpretations and I asked them for their comments, either to affirm, deny or question. I also invited them to tell me to exclude or include anything which they felt would produce a study which reflected their views more accurately. I was interested that many of the students did not recognise their own contributions and others had only generalized memories of some of the conversations. By the end of this checking only one conversation had been removed ('She shouldn't have said that, Miss - - - not true'). However, I recognise that had we all had more time, it is possible that other adjustments might have been made.

If critical ethnography seeks catalytic validity by the empowerment

of its participants then at the end of this third stage of the study I hesitate to make such a claim. I had hoped to help individual students when I began this study and by the end of the third stage there were small signs of success: 28 sixth form Maori students elected to take a full University Bursary course in 1995, 22 more than in 1994 and 4 elected to join a Form 8 which we established for 1995 to help students catch up on missed qualifications. But this change was small and it might also have been coincidental. The work the student-participants did with the fifth form was a direct result of the study, of course, and may provide its 'catalytic validity' in the future. Perhaps also in the future there may arise a discourse which links school and student perceptions of reality, and this might empower students - but there appeared to be few changes in students' school perceptions or responses at the end of this study. And so, I return to the owners of this study. In Chapter four the voices of many Maori leaders and writers spoke of their lack of power in the adult world and the Runanga Matua probably summarised it best as : "The gap between what is and what might be" (1987;7). This thought is clear, it seems to me, in the students' perceptions also.

If validity can be found in the empowerment of a Principal-researcher, however, then I tentatively affirm that critical ethnography can provide theoretical and practical social knowledge. The students' views, gathered and considered over eight months, have been invaluable and the methodology of encouraging them to be their own ethnographers has been both useful and productive. From the knowledge of theory and practice gained during the study will come school change. In the end, however, a true validation of the year's work will not come for some time : changes in school practices require changes in teachers and that is always a slow process.

Ethical Concerns

In this third stage I returned yet again to the problems of protecting the students and the school. I decided that I had probably done all I could to preserve student confidentiality and was comforted by

the discovery in the third stage that many of the students did not recognise their own contributions. The concern for the school, however, remained and in the end was left unresolved. The school ethnographic studies described in Chapter four suggest that there is, almost, a universal school culture, with complex and often contradictory messages and practices, with all teachers trying to help their students have good post-school lives and with all students responding in varying ways and with different degrees of success and failure. The Tikipunga story, I hope, is recognizable by its links with the generalities of school discourse and on the basis of those links I appeal to readers' rational judgement as a protection for our school.

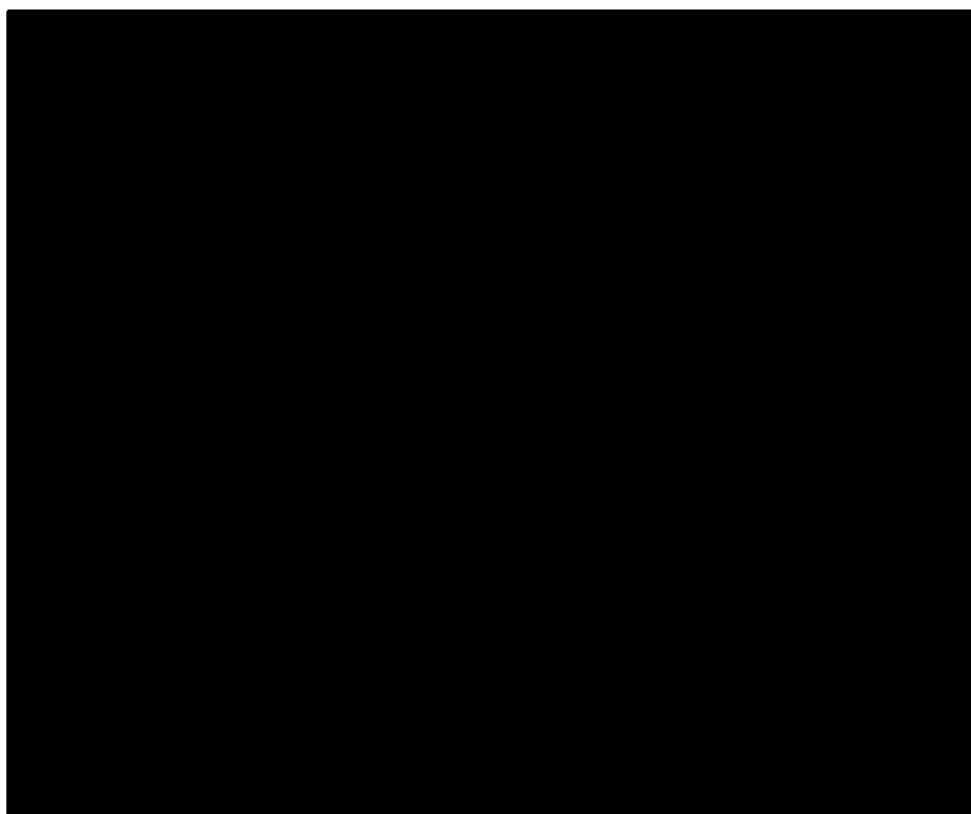
Conclusion

With this chapter the students' discussions conclude. I have suggested that in their language use we can see signs that the sub-cultural knowledge is not static but is in a constant process of confirmation, or challenge and reconstruction.

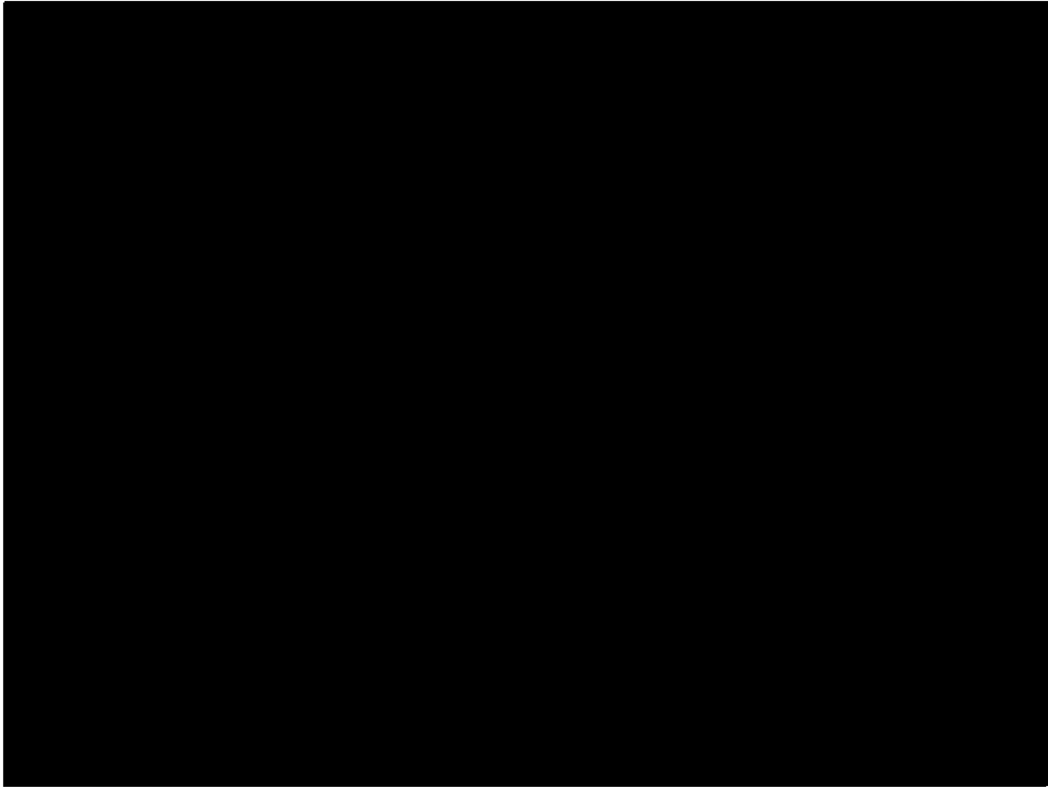
The discourse assumptions of the students, however, reflect powerful ideologies which are ordering the sub-culture's 'knowledge' and so also their participation in school. In this way I am able to explain how the sub-culture works and how it contributes to the students' (partial) successes.

The next chapter will offer a synthesis of all of the stages of, and hypotheses arising from, the students' discussions.

He ringa raupa : behold a chapped hand!



Language Laboratory



Level Five Horticulture

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TE HUI : THE THESIS

Ka tangi te titi, Ka tangi te kaka, Ka tangi hoki ko au; others have spoken and now so do I.

Introduction

The study began with my interest in Maori students' acquisition of school qualifications. I wondered if Maori students, as a group, achieved fewer qualifications than their Pakeha peers because they did not value them. Such a possibility produced a consequential question : if Maori students did not want qualifications, why did so many return to senior school? In this way the basic research area was established. I would explore Maori students' attitudes and values, with particular reference to school qualifications.

The research area, however, was very broad and accordingly I limited my study to what the form six and seven Maori students of Tikipunga High School said, in three stages of discussions. First, to try to gain an initial understanding of their attitudes and values I asked the students to discuss their school objectives and to describe what they thought might help them achieve those objectives. In their responses I found a high value on qualifications because they increased post-school chances, and I found a number of themes of school which indicated positive and negative attitudes to the process of gaining academic success.

Second, I asked the students to discuss the themes I had identified and to consider the significance of each one for qualifications acquisition. In their responses I identified a dominant sub-cultural attitude of uncertainty about success and a view that help in the schooling process from family, friends and teachers was valued. I hypothesised from their comments, and from my knowledge of their personal histories, that family experiences could be an initial source of the expectation of failure.

Finally, the students considered my interpretation of their responses from both stages of the discussions. I analysed the students' language use to see if the sub-culture itself influenced attitudes and values. I found a cultural network in which attitudes to failure and success were reflected, challenged and reproduced. In this third stage of their discussions the students considered the whole thesis and confirmed my impressions that they did value qualifications and had returned to senior school to gain them, that they did not expect to succeed but the support of the teachers, in particular, might help and that they valued some aspects of the school but wanted to change others to improve their chances of academic success. I completed the study by concluding that the students' attitudes and values suggested partial school acculturation, and that partial school acculturation might explain why these Maori students had returned to school, entered external examinations, gained some qualifications, but had, in general, a lower acquisition rate than their Pakeha peers. An explanatory mechanism for the maintenance of partial acculturation could be the operation of the students' subculture : it was strongly informed by their predominantly working class culture and it reproduced the dominant sense of uncertainty..

Accordingly, I concluded that partial acculturation was not enough to give these students equitable chances with their Pakeha peers in post-school lives : the ideology of capitalism stresses credentials acquisition but its hegemony allows success only to a few. Its voice in the students' sub-culture was very clear and no matter what they or their school did they could not overcome the effects of the hegemony of capitalism.

To complement the investigation of the students' attitudes and values, and as strand woven through it, I also examined the conduct of the study, particularly the aim of empowerment, a defining characteristic of critical ethnography. I wondered if the students could be helped to increase their academic successes by a process in which the Principal facilitated their thinking about attitudes to qualifications. I also wondered about the effects of the same process on a Principal-researcher. Accordingly, I watched for

changes which might be explained by the study's dominant methodology of siting students and Principal as co-researchers.

At the end of the study I decided that the process had made no apparent differences to the students' attitudes and values although there had been other interesting consequences. I did note, however, changes in my attitudes which if carried into school practices could produce more support of the kind the students had said they needed in order to gain qualifications. I concluded that the democratic and problem-solving approach of the study's methodology had benefitted me rather than the students and that while this did not necessarily negate such a process as a way of empowering students, I had not identified, with any certainty, a school mechanism to help Maori students gain school credentials at the same levels as Pakeha students. This conclusion seemed to be supported by the conclusion of the main part of the study : the operation of the students' sub-culture was a more significant influence on students' attitudes and values than any process I might adopt and the class cultural knowledge which informed the sub-culture was a more powerful determinant of school success than anything I could offer in a one-year time frame.

I now present the thesis in the framework of the challenges of the study.

Challenge : An Account of Social Order; The Students' Perceptions of School Success Suggest The Concept of a Structuring Ideology Which Produces Partial Acculturation.

In the current discourse about schools it is assumed that the longer students stay at school the better it will be for them : they will gain more qualifications and improve their post-school opportunities.

However, this does not happen for many students, and, in particular, for Maori students, who may stay longer but do not necessarily gain the qualifications required for equitable life chances. This study suggests that the first reason for the achievement gap in (Maori)

students' rates of school success may be provided by an account of the ideology of capitalism which structures the workplace and so 'orders' social and economic classes.

The market place requires knowledge and skills to enable it to function and it uses school qualifications as the first way of recognising the presence of that knowledge and those skills. The ideal in the capitalistic message is that of equal opportunity for all and the message is that everyone who works can gain or maintain economic and social rewards. As long as the acquisition of qualifications is believed to be 'open' to all, equal opportunity and credentials can be equated. The reality, however, is different. Qualifications are not gained by all and those whose qualifications - or lack of them - are 'inadequate' must find work in areas of low(er) status and reward or do not work at all. In this way the ideology of capitalism structures the workplace, produces the social and economic classes which typify its operation and so establishes social inequality.

The stratification of classes does not, in itself, explain the achievement gap which is the concern of this study. But the effect of stratification may begin the explanation. According to their class, families have different social and economic resources, different experiences, perceptions of, and language for, their experiences and consequently different practices for the socialisation of children (Bernstein, 1971; Nash, 1993). The product of this socialisation which Bourdieu (1974) calls cultural capital, may account for working class children's achievement difficulties : they bring cultural capital to school which is not valued by the dominant middle class habitus and the result is, generally, an achievement gap between their qualifications and those of middle class children.

Schools ought to be able to intervene in the process but in their policies and procedures they ignore the potential for conflict in an education process which reaches for both individual diversity and community consensus (Bowles and Gintis,1976; Codd,1985). For example, the selection of what is to be taught and how it is transmitted and assessed, is determined by the dominant groups

in society (Bourdieu, 1974; Harker, 1985; Smith, 1986) and reflects their needs. The current effect of this is that the organisation of the school has been reformed, in what Bates (1990) calls a cult of efficiency, and effective education has come to mean standardised and cost-efficient schooling; individual diversity is buried in a community 'consensus' that schools should be producing more qualified students. If schools promote cultural pluralism they may do so at the expense of students' achievement of credentials which the community requires and, in a schooling system in which cultural/structural relationships are left out of analyses of student's results, individual diversity becomes - at the least - problematic.

In essence, therefore, schools reflect the dominant culture and as the chief providers of first credentials they are significant political institutions : they reproduce and legitimate the hegemony of capitalism in a discourse of school which offers a very doubtful equation between diversity and equality (Burtonwood;1986; Smith;1992).

How then can I explain the school record of the students in this study? They had some qualifications but not as many as their Pakeha peers who, generally, came from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

The students wanted qualifications for a variety of reasons :

> I just want qualifications to get a job instead of going on the dole;
>
> I don't want to be a drop-out;
>
> I want to be someone.

Their perceptions of the real world appeared to have the same equation as the ideology of capitalism : qualifications equate with social and economic opportunity. They had, therefore, accepted school as the path to their social (upwards) mobility, even though "School was boring". With this compliance they confirmed the rightness of the ideology and even reflected it in their perceptions

of payment: "Teachers - get paid to teach us" and "We're not getting paid". Their ideological consent was also visible in their belief in the individual's responsibility for achievement

> It's really up to you,

and in their belief that those who do not work "should be kicked out".

The concept of hegemony, however, allows for a counter-hegemony. The students' responses suggested that they were resisting the effects of the hegemony of capitalism with the perception that "The family background has a lot to do with the way they (meaning 'we') are at school", with their desire to have better lives than their families had, and with their perceptions that they did not want to "get kicked out".

However, the students were not sure of their ability to beat "those statistics" :

> You can't just work on your own motivation, you need more help.

Teachers, ("should encourage you"), family ("if your parents really care about you") and friends ("for fun") were identified as potential partners in the struggle to escape into a "good life" and, in general, the school's curriculum delivery and assessment systems were seen as supporting rather than constraining their resistance. The students believed they were successful ("able to handle teachers more", "more mature") ; their successes were their reward for staying in school.

The ideology of capitalism, therefore, produced a desire to achieve and a desire for social mobility. The same ideology, however, had produced in their socialisation perceptions of powerlessness (they needed help from others) which undermined the resistance identified by their continued participation in a schooling process which they did not always enjoy.

In this way I concluded that the students might be partially acculturated. Their achievements reflected some internalisation of the school's culture and its informing ideology but the achievement gap reflected the constraints of their socialisation. If social justice for the individual is the purpose of schools then this school may have helped these students to achieve better lives than their peers who have dropped out but it has not been able to give them the same chances as their Pakeha peers whose habitus matches the school more closely than theirs does.

In an account of partial acculturation schooling is confirmed as democratic : if these working class students can 'succeed' then learning opportunities are equal - and so are opportunities for equality in the post-school world. However, the level of credentials required by the world of work will continue to rise and more qualified students will be seeking fewer opportunities. Communities need rules for social and economic life and society's acceptance of the order provided by the hegemony of capitalism will deny at least some of the students the mobility they seek: partial acculturation will not be enough for social equity. It is a myth that what is true in general (work hard and success will come) is also true in the particular and this myth will be reinforced by the students' partial acculturation.

Of course, the generalisations in this explanation hide individual experiences of (in)equality in school : for example, the cumulative effects of perceptions and practices of gender and ethnic roles, and of ability and disability, are some of the variables. Each is important but an explanation which begins with the ideology of capitalism allows for these additional constraining or empowering variables; my generalisation may be vulnerable to the charge of over-generalisation, but it tries to avoid the fragmentation which the pursuit of multi-variables would produce.

Second Challenge : An Account of Construction and Reconstruction : The Students' Sub-Culture Reflects Attitudes and Values Which Suggest a Concept of Cultural Domination

I have suggested that the hegemony of capitalism establishes family-class and school perceptions of, and experiences in, social and economic life. I have also suggested that the students both reflected and tried to resist the effects of the capitalist hegemony on their family experiences, at least.

I now extend that claim by examining more closely the students' construction and reconstruction of perceptions of success. The second reason for the students' achievement gap, I suggest, is that when family culture and the students' sub-culture meet in the context of the school, the intentions of the students are reconstructed by social constraints over which they have limited control. A focus on sub-cultural attitudes and values suggested that the students collectively were reinforcing the problematic importance of their individual goals when they are placed alongside the community's needs in the workplace.

A theory of agency, or of individuals as intentional social actors, would allow the possibility that the students could construct new perceptions of school success and life. This might suggest that the hegemonic processes of capitalism could be identified and that with ideological critique, they could be limited. In schooling for example, the constraints of education might be perceived as : only schools provide credentials for post-school opportunities, some credentials are harder to achieve than others, my chances of gaining the top ones are limited, therefore, my goal will be a lower one which is still better than my father/mother gained. In this way constraints might be analysed in a cost-benefit process and new perceptions of success-reality constructed. The problem with this 'game playing' as Boudon proposes it (1982) is not that there are unintended consequences of such decision-making when it becomes collective, but that his emphasis on individual intentions under-estimates the power of social structures, particularly the family and school to influence what appears to be a rational activity.

While students may appear to be exercising agency in their efforts to achieve school and social equality they are instead reconstructing perceptions of life which have been internalised from their family and educational biographies. For working class students, family economic and social resources, experiences and practices, have produced their concepts of and language about 'self' and 'people like us' which provide different perceptions of achievement (for example) than those held by middle class children. Their respective decision-making, consequently, is informed by different knowledge and a cost-benefit analysis is more likely to be a reconstruction of family culture than the rational activity Boudon describes.

Schooling experiences may moderate the effects of working class (Maori) family experiences but there is no definitive explanation of what might 'constrain' or 'determine' the degree of that moderation. Hirsh and Scott (1988) suggest that specific programmes for Maori students will improve achievement, and Hirsh (1990) later called for 'affirmative action' to make the ideal of equal opportunity a reality. Others have suggested that teacher expectations (St. George 1983, Simon 1984) the system of assessment (Benton 1987), the organisation and delivery of the curriculum (Bernstein 1977) may be constraints on working class (Maori) students' achievements. That schools contribute to students' perceptions, however, is not denied, even if the process is unclear and complex.

For some students, a sub-cultural resistance of what happens to people like them may emerge as counter-hegemony, may enable the construction of family working-class culture into middle class culture and some students may then 'escape'. For the majority, however, the 'new' culture is a reconstruction of the old : it may set up a sense of individual agency for a better life but it constrains possible achievement by the perceptual inheritance from family culture. In this way I suggest a cultural domination of students' attitudes and values in which the major source of perceptions of school and social achievement come from family experiences.

When I considered the students of this study an account of cultural

domination paradoxically explained their successes, their continued participation in school _and_ their achievement gap.

I summarise the sub-culture first and then suggest the operation of cultural domination.

The students' sub-culture had four dominant features. The first was a perception of boredom which could be relieved:

> School should be more fun

but if it was not, then self-motivation was important.

> You gotta keep on coming back, keep coming back if you wanna get anywhere.

The second perception was of teachers who helped :

> If you're a good teacher you'll get good students,

or did not help :

> They know whether someone's going to fail or not and - you sort of become a loser.

A third perception, of family, was evident in

> My mum and dad have always been supportive

and in

> (I was) sorta growing up and seeing them doing nothing and wasting their life.

The final perception was of friends :

> Like your friends will still support you, whatever

and

> (they are) very good for time out.

In this game of qualifications, it seemed that school was not easy but if there was support from family and teachers that helped; self-motivation was very important and friends provided balance with support and fun.

From these features I identified the chief attitudes and values of the sub-culture and they suggested the complexities of the students cost-benefit analysis.

They valued success :

> I want good grades, Man. I don't care about anything else.

They also feared failure :

> I don't wanta fail

they had doubts about support from those who should provide it,

> If the teacher doesn't help motivate you in some way, then why bother?

and

> (my family) don't like books spread on the kitchen - - - table - - - so I just pack my stuff and don't do anything.

They were also influenced by their peers :

> My friends are all coming back next year!

or

> Most of my friends have left school but I don't want to be

a drop-out.

The attitude to being Maori was less clear but could be summarised as :

(te reo) wouldn't get you anywhere

and

I don't wanna be like those statistics,

but also

Respect for your elders - - - we've been brought up like that - - -.

In their game-playing the achievement of money or 'reward' seemed to be important, both in the future

Earn my first million by 25,

and at school

I seem to work for nothing

or

(but with commendation certificates) You get rewarded.

and

You gotta do something to say that you've earned to be a prefect.

But through all of the sub-culture the major perception was that the students were uncertain that they could achieve or could break what two of them called "The Cycle of Life". All other values were referenced to this expectation of failure. Perhaps the slogan of

this expectation of failure was : (I) "want to prove them wrong", (family or teachers), with its alternative of "Or you just give in to them".

The source of this expectation I have suggested (Chapter nine) was family-class experiences which produced doubts about achievement.

Family culture, however, seemed to be modified by the interaction of the students' sub-culture in the wider senior students' culture. All senior students believed they were responsible for their own achievements, all valued school as the path to success, all wanted qualifications, all wanted to succeed : even though school was boring or unfair it was necessary for post-school opportunities. But while the Maori students sub-culture reflected these values they qualified them with the perception that they might fail.

The interaction of family and school culture may be reflected by two sub-cultural attitudes :

> I don't want to end up on the streets

could be the slogan of family experiences of powerlessness and

> It would give me more confidence

could be the slogan for perceptions of school success.

I suggest, therefore, that family experiences are the primary source of cultural domination and that the students' own sub-culture in the context of school provides a secondary source. Family socialisation and school experiences combine to produce a sub-cultural paradox. The students want qualifications, stay in school at some personal cost to gain them - but they expect to be unsuccessful. Chapter ten explains the way this arises and partial acculturation provides a summary. Partial acculturation allows for high individual goals in the game of qualifications but it also allows their 'partial' cultural 'knowledge' to constrain their achievement in reality. Partial acculturation explains the students'

belief that it is their fault if they fail and it also explains the strong sense of uncertainty in the sub-culture. Partial acculturation arises from family experiences mediated by school experiences but in this account family culture dominates : the students reconstruct it in school perceptions and it denies them full confidence in their goals for qualifications.

The students' perceptions, however, had a strong sense of agency in "It's up to me" to prevent failure. This construction of agency, however, was undermined by the sub-cultural uncertainty and when they tried to balance school life the dominant exercise of agency was that of having fun. The desire for fun appeared to make school seem less pleasant, less rewarding and so produced perceptions of learning which were unhelpful for success. Individual experiences of achievement, or of help from teachers, were buried in the sub-culture's "knowledge" of school, and the promise in capitalism of "work for rewards" (which was accepted by the students and reproduced in the school discourse) was undermined by the students' desire for fun. Fun and work together are not a 'norm' in the discourse of school as the path to success : the need for order in school is 'commonsense' to teachers trying to persuade students who are having fun to work! In this way the students' individual goals were submerged in the collective result of fun : some achievements were gained but not as many as were wanted. Ironically, this gap confirms that work, not fun, is needed for social and economic 'reward' as the ideology of capitalism says. In this way I suggest the sub-culture over-rides individual intentions by constructing perceptions of "agency" which constrain rather than determine achievement.

In summary, therefore, partial acculturation may allow the students some construction of a sense of agency (the 'bad' examples of family and friends were often cited as reasons for seeking school success) but this agency is limited. First, their perceptions of powerlessness from family experiences undermine their intentions; second the high value they place on qualifications locks them into a game in which the sub-culture's collective strategy of coping, with fun,

reinforces their uncertainties and undermines their agency, and finally, their continuing participation in the game has a contradictory duality : the students want to 'bank' their time and effort now for later rewards but also wanted to be 'paid' to do so. In this account, therefore, the subcultural response of fun-seeking is not so much the agency of intentional actors, as the practise of conformity in a sub-culture informed by the interaction of the family and school culture.

For most students the benefits of the community of the sub-culture were important (for support, for example) but those same benefits were also confirming their uncertainty or powerlessness. The problem, as the students' uncertainty suggests, is that a game which anyone can win does not mean a game that all can win. Therefore, a description of the attitudes and values of a student sub-culture appears to identify cultural domination (and its maintenance through hegemony and counter hegemony) and its limitations on winning in a game of qualifications.

Third Challenge : An Account of Challenge and Compromise : A Concept of Cultural Information, Resourcing and Reproduced in, Decision-Making.

This final account builds on the previous concepts of an initiating and pervasive ideology and a consequential cultural domination, and suggests a mechanism by which students reproduce that cultural domination and its informing ideology, to make it their own. The claim is that the students' language use not only reflects their cultural knowledge but that it also is the mechanism by which they reproduce the attitudes and values of that knowledge.

The information on which the students act has been produced, I have argued, from the complex interaction of family and school experiences. From these experiences come concepts of 'self' and concepts about 'people like us' and these concepts merge in the students' sub-culture. It is here we can see the effect of Bourdieu's cultural capital on Boudon's goal-directed intentional actors. I now suggest, that the way this happens, is through the students' language.

If we believe that we acquire our views of the world through the concepts we gain as we learn our language then we would accept a claim that language determines thought; this would explain different experiences of an (apparently) shared reality and it would imprison views of reality in the language of our culture (Burtonwood;1986;10). If we believe instead, that language is not as relativist as that explanation implies and that we can use language to gain or even produce new meanings of reality then we would look for an account which would suggest possibilities of escape from cultural linguistic entrapment.

Bernstein (1971) offers a way forward. He argues that children learn a language code from their family which, in habitual communication reflects a stronger or weaker sense of identity and community. The code of working class children, he claims, reflects a strong sense of community and the social roles which arise from that sense. This view directed me to the community of, and the social roles in, the students' sub-culture and to an examination of the intentions of, and power relationships in, the verbal network of the culture. I suggest (in Chapter eleven) that it is in this network that knowledge-managers re-present cultural information and by their language use and by the status their knowledge gives them, they manage the sub-culture's reproduction of its members' cultural knowledge. In this way individual goals are submerged in sub-cultural perceptions of ideal and real worlds.

The decision-making of the students appears to be a 'free' cost-benefit analysis of what is best for them but their language use suggests that family and school experiences inform their analysis to such an extent that their decision-making agency is a consequence of, rather than a contribution to, the stratification effects of capitalism.

In the cultural network the 'conformity' identified in the previous account reappears as two norms : either the students recognise and accept the 'knowledge' given by the network leaders or, by claim and counter-claim, they cooperatively reconstruct it to fit their

perceptions of school and life beyond it. This exercise of challenge and compromise suggests a sub-cultural ability to construct new 'knowledge' but its power is limited by its information sources in the school context. The students appear to resist the generalising effects of the ideology of capitalism, (in which community needs over-speak individual goals) by allowing status to individual knowledge managers in the cultural network, but they undermine this counterhegemony with their own reproduction of perceptual generalities. For example, I have argued (Chapter twelve) that the cultural network, in its efforts to balance concepts of real and ideal worlds, reproduces a sense of uncertainty. Whether they are copying, exploring or playing with ideas the students, in the cultural network, reconfirm the rewards of capitalism which have encouraged them to set high goals for school and beyond, and reconfirm the family and school experiences which have prepared them for failure.

Thus, from a close analysis of the students' language use I confirmed that the operation of ideology and cultural domination was reflected in, and reproduced by, the students' collective decision-making. The exercise of compromise and challenge recreated their perceptions of powerlessness and reconfirmed their partial acculturation. The school as the context of the operation of the network was also involved in the network's operation : its mixed messages of 'cooperate' and 'compete' contributed to the sense of uncertainty.

The literature reflects the complexities of decision-making in student sub-cultures and although I could find no account of a students' cultural network there were suggestions of their operation in some of the studies. While Marshall and Peters (1989) found no "oppositional youth culture" most other studies did and as a generalisation, the working class students rejected school more often, and more bitterly, than students of ability who were in, or aspiring to join, the middle class.

For example, Willis (1979) and Woods (1979) both suggest sub-cultural decision-making (with their concepts of "partial penetration' (Willis) and "reluctant school child" (Woods)), in which the shared cultural

knowledge produced decisions to leave the school game early.

Specifics of decision-making in a cultural network are also suggested by some studies. For example, the reproduction of 'rewards' is evident (Pollard, 1984; Furlong, 1984; Hammersley and Turner, 1984) and knowledge of teachers (Furlong 1984; Gannaway 1984, Fuller 1984). In all of these there are indications that it is a cultural network which is the mechanism which allows the students to produce shared perceptions of school and that they appear to be constructing new knowledge with challenge and compromise but instead they are reflecting and reproducing their family culture, as confirmed or mediated by the school culture.

When I considered the students in this study an account of challenge and compromise, in a communication network resourced by and re-producing cultural information, helped to re-explain the students' decision-making about qualifications and participation in school, and it helped to explain their achievement gap.

The network had two levels of operation. First, the students' use of language reflected uncertainty ('you' to mean 'I' or 'us', the support-seeking qualifiers of 'you know' and 'I reckon') and the non-specific references ('they' to specific people, or 'stuff' or 'like' to ideas); this language use was communal and understood and it indicated that family-class culture was a source of language use.

More powerful, however, was the contribution of the knowledge-managers in the cultural network. They not only reflected, but also (with the operation of challenge and compromise in the network) reinforced the perceptions which informed decisions. For example, Teachers shared their extra knowledge and confirmed failure as what happens to people like them : in the conversation about prefects the Teacher's knowledge that "Only - the teachers choose" enabled a student to decide that he would not be chosen.

Clowns rewarded groups with fun and balanced the sense of powerlessness:

> If you don't go to school - get no money
> Go to school - - got no money!.

Storytellers retold stories of vulnerability and reconfirmed perceptions of 'self' and 'community' as needing support. The story which began "They should do something about the security of the school" is typical.

Protesters identified problems and, like teachers were able to provide emphasis with details.

> (Teachers) should - - - sit down and work with us, instead of saying 'Here, this is what you're doing!

Messengers also had detailed information, but theirs was mostly about people. They not only identified and confirmed perceptions of status but also the "rightness" of stratification.

> You don't look (like someone from) TO - - so that's good.

Finally, Valuers balanced perceptions with different or extra comment and they (particularly) indicated the direction decisions should take. Some references were implicit:

> (Students) have to earn trust (or they may be kicked out).

Other references were a little more explicit :

> But how do you think the kids are going to get the money? - - - by bashing up others - - -

Some were quite clear :

> "You always gotta have something behind you".

The Knowledge-Managers of the sub-culture led the challenges or the compromises in the reproduction of the students' cultural

knowledge. Their status was achieved in the sub-culture because of their knowledge-power and because the sub-culture's decision-making was cooperative. If laughter was a dominant feature of the students' community (Chapter nine) then cooperation was the dominant practice of the discourse.

In this way, therefore, I offer the mechanism of a cultural network in the sub-culture's decision-making : it reinforced the value of qualifications if the students were to "beat those statistics", it provided the reason of "a good life" for being at school whether "to survive" or "to get 285" (in Bursary), even though "school should be more fun". At the same time, because it allowed, and was in fact frequently an exercise of challenge and compromise, it reproduced the sense of uncertainty and so maintained the partial acculturation which came from family-class and school cultural experiences. A cultural network in which shared decision-making reflects and reproduces cultural information may be an explanation for the students' lower achievement rates when compared with their Pakeha peers.

A synthesis of partial acculturation, cultural domination and decision-making.

I now bring the three accounts together.

I have suggested that the ideology of capitalism structures people into classes and so 'orders' their resources, practices and perceptions. These classes have differing cultures and for the working class a sense of powerlessness is an important cultural perception. Children are socialised by their family experiences, and their perceptions are then confirmed or modified by school experiences in which the ideology of capitalism is also operating. The students in this study were partially successful : they had some achievements and were still at school and this suggested family and school experiences which produced a partial acculturation. Their sub-culture reflected and reproduced their predominantly working-class cultural knowledge, with its sense of powerlessness but they had also accepted that qualifications were necessary for a good life and so they stayed

at school to gain them.

Consequently, I have argued, partial acculturation explains a limited counter-hegemony : the students were trying to resist what happens to people like them but the rewards offered by capitalism enticed them into the game of qualifications, in which their uncertainty (with its coping strategy of fun-seeking and its perceptions of needing help) undermined their sense of agency to win. This might suggest that the students are locked into the cycle of life which some of them identified in the Onion Song. That is not the claim. This account is a generalisation and obscures the mediation which some families and some teachers provide, and which enables some students to escape.

I conclude, therefore, that these students did want to succeed, that they had returned to school to gain qualifications for a good life as adults. They did not have the same achievment rate as their Pakeha peers of similar socio-economic backgrounds because (in general) their family experiences had produced partial acculturation, rather than the full or 'necessary' culture which school success requires.

An account of partial acculturation explains why the students had some successes and it may suggest what the bulk of their peers, who left school before form six, lacked : their rejection of school with their early departure might indicate even less acculturation. Thus Bourdieu's concept of acculturation is useful. Boudon, however, is also helpful : his claim that students are intentional actors directs us to look more closely at the way students construct their perceptions of the game of qualifications. This led me to conclude that for these students, their 'agency' was limited, and appeared to be instead, a reconstruction of their family and school experiences. I further concluded, however, that Boudon may be right about their opportunities even with some qualifications, in their adult lives. The work place requirements for more and more academic credentials creates a game in which their collective and improved rates of success perversely will still not win.

Finally, I conclude that the language use of the students reflects and reproduces their cultural knowledge, and prepares them for failure. Bernstein is helpful : family socialisation has produced the first perceptions of social and economic life which for these students have included the value of community and a sense of powerlessness. School experiences have contributed to these perceptions and, along with the voice of capitalism inherent in the discourse of education, have reconfirmed the perception of powerlessness and the importance of community to balance it. The community of the students' cultural network seems to offer the support the students want but it also reflects and reproduces their cultural knowledge and so constrains decision-making about school and achievement. Some students will escape this ordering of their school and adult lives but many will not. The hegemony of capitalism is such that it structures the knowledge of their sub-culture and so limits their intentions because their decision-making reproduces the constraints they hope to overcome.

Throughout this study I have identified the complexities of perceptions about real and ideal worlds and its implications for the provision of individual success, social justice and, as well, the maintenance of an ordered society. This study has suggested that the operating core of capitalism is competition (which implies a game of winners and losers) but the dominating feature of the students' sub-culture was cooperation. I have suggested throughout the study that to be Maori might be an accentuating cause of the sense of powerlessness. I wonder, therefore, if schools are to be transformative agents in the lives of students, (as Codd (1988), Harker (1989), Banks (1988) describe), and if competition is not culturally appropriate for (most) Maori students, how schools can acculturate them into the necessary culture for (academic) success except by a process which most Maori would describe as assimilation. If the ideal of social justice for Maori is to be possible schools need an answer to this question - and this study has not been able to find one.

Fourth Challenge : An Account of Empowerment

The Principal as Researcher

Throughout the study I observed my experiences as Principal-Researcher because I anticipated that apart from any other outcomes, the study might offer helpful experience for other Principals contemplating research in their own school. Accordingly, I summarise and record here the chief benefits and difficulties which this kind of research has given me, in the context of a secondary school.

In retrospect the year seems to have been filled with the students' voices. Even when we were not 'researching' formally, the students talked to me - in the grounds, in my classroom, in my office. Their language use and the views they shared with me became so familiar that at times I had to 'exit' from their context as a deliberate mental strategy to think about the data. But all that talk was exciting, entertaining and always informative : it is too easy as a Principal, to see students as 'school' and our work often removes us from students' daily school lives. This study gave me a sense of what it is like to be a senior student. Even if the students' perceptions are 'obscured' I am at least closer to them than I was. In the same way, my class work benefitted, if only because the students and I were able to refer to shared 'knowledge' about good teaching.

A second benefit of the study has been the motivation to read literature which I would not otherwise have done. As Principals we rarely make the time for a careful consideration of the educational research and theory which is available and so I found the wide reading that this study required both interesting and useful. It has contributed not only to my thinking about my research questions but also to ongoing reflections about the school and my work in it. This broader reading has been and will continue to be a major benefit - I can only hope for the motivation to maintain the practice.

I would also claim some empowerment as a consequence of the study

and it is empowerment which I can pass on to others, not only because I am a researcher but also because I am the Principal. The practical outcomes for this school will include, in 1995, a restructuring of the school's professional development programme for teachers and a new approach in our academic counselling programme. Both approaches will hope to help our students, Maori and Pakeha, whose social histories are constraining their chances of success. These are not quick-fix responses, they will not resolve the social constraints on students' success rates, and they will not be easy but I hope that they may help some students leave school with more credentials than they do at present.

The difficulties of the study for a Principal-researcher are equally interesting. The administrative demands of Principals today are much more extensive than before 1989 : the cult of efficiency has us firmly locked into our offices unless we flout its rules (which is sometimes possible) or we teach, as I do. Given the demands on our time, the extra demands of research have to be considered carefully. Time management became a significant feature of this study, not only because of my work but also because my 'free' times did not always match the students'. I was very fortunate to be working in a school where staff and students have a relaxed attitude to routine and where 'helping out' is a norm of staff as well as student behaviour.

The role conflicts I experienced in the first two stages of the study were also difficult. It was very hard to be neutral in either role and there were times when it was very difficult to keep my 'Principalness' submerged. It might have been easier had I established a more formal research relationship from the beginning, or used a written methodology (such as questionnaires) but I believe the data would not necessarily have been any richer.

Perhaps the most difficult problem was that of ethical concerns. Had I worked in another school these would have been similar but not as intense : my name would not have provided a signpost to the school. The practice of reflection-in-action is, I suggest, important

not only for methodology and validity but also for the ethics of researching in one's own school.

Finally, I record here the energy which is needed to conduct research and to run a school, simultaneously. As John Rangihou said ,

> every time you give of yourself you are starting to lose some of - - - the life force, which you have for yourself (1975;13).

This I affirm : the year can only be described as 'draining' as I tried to give of my 'life force' to the students and to the school..

I conclude with a final reference to the process of the study. I had hoped to help the students with a methodology in which the students and I reflected on their school lives. Freire said :

> To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming (1972;61).

Language, he claimed, must have the radical interaction of the dimensions of action and reflection if it is to be what he calls 'authentic'. "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis" (ibid;60).

I tried. During the year a number of the students' suggestions were taken up as separate activities : the reorganisation of the prefects' system so that in 1995 badges would be earned was one which we quickly organised. But overall I could see no real signs of student empowerment. Perhaps reflection-in-action is like Taha Maori in schools : it helps those who already have status or power rather than those who are oppressed. Or perhaps I just did it wrongly. Whatever the reason, I am reminded of Stenhouse's view, in commenting on the difficulties of researching in one's own institution:

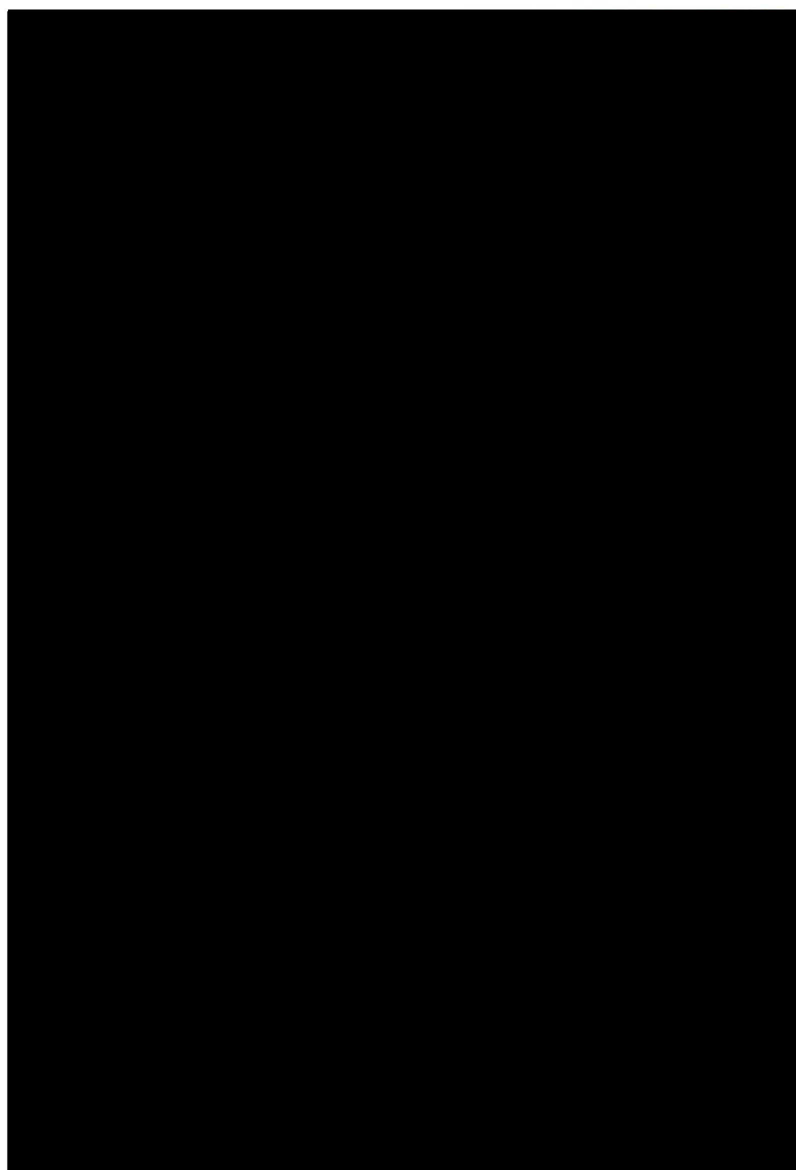
> Studies which open the process (of research) in a particular school to scrutiny do not merely put personal relations at risk - they shift the balance of power (1982;267).

Regretfully, I seem to be the major beneficiary of the shift in power of this study.

Conclusion

The year has been difficult and yet worthwhile. My knowledge of students as individuals and as members of a sub-culture of the school has grown considerably. In this chapter I have tried to explain the major perceptions I have gained from the year's work and I hope that this thesis-report does not read more definitively than I have intended. The uncertainty of the students' sub-culture should not be presented with any certainty. They are successful students in so many ways and I conclude with the hope that their post-school lives will turn their partial acculturation into the successful lives they each seek.

Mauria ko oku painga
Waiho ko oku wheru;
Highlight my strengths
Ignore my weaknesses.



Level Six Biotechnology

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TE POROPOROAKI : CONCLUSION

Kei te kamakama te tikanga ; it is right to be spirited and happy.

Introduction

The 'game' of education is important. The evidence is that school qualifications very often determine the kind of start students have in their post-school lives and so, if schools are to contribute to social justice, one test of their effectiveness might be the quantity and quality of qualifications their students take with them when they leave. If there is evidence that some students take away fewer qualifications than their ability and efforts deserve then schools should be - at the least - reflecting on their practices. Educators would deplore a schooling process which had examination passes as the only focus and this study does not propose a narrow academic focus for schools, but it does recognise that one part of the school's work is to help all students start adult life with useful credentials. This report-journey has tried to think about the problem of differing achievement in school and has, in Chapter thirteen, suggested theoretical and procedural issues which have emerged from a year's work with senior Maori students who have thought about school achievement, shared their hopes for the future and described ways in which this school could help them gain the qualifications they want and need.

I conclude the study with some comments which look backwards and others which look ahead.

Limitations of the Study

I acknowledge that there are many gaps in this study. To begin, I have presented only the students' views and the voices of their teachers are silent. Hammersley and Turner would fault this 'reliance on participant accounts' as unsatisfactory for both methodological and theoretical reasons (1984;169). In my defence I claim a lack

of time as a major constraint, and the empowerment intent of the study as another; a future study, however, with teachers' views included would be very interesting. Certainly studies of student-teacher interaction, such as some ethnographers provide, capture useful pictures of classroom and achievement dilemmas.

Second, except for the Whanau team's contributions to the study in general ways, the family views are missing. Nash's study of family resources and many of the ethnographies cited in Chapter four demonstrate the richness family perceptions provide to any study of students' understandings of realities.

Third, there were other views which would have added depth to the descriptions I provide of the study's participants, chief of which were those of the senior Pakeha students. They had a small voice, in absentia, through the separate senior student survey taken in 1994, but to include them fully might have diminished the Maori students' status in this study and, consequently, my hope that I might help them.

I would also have liked to have used this study's methodology with a group of same-age students who had left school early and without qualifications : in some ways their perceptions might be more relevant to views of success since school memories would be more distant and perhaps more 'real'.

In this study I chose not to examine the influence of Maori culture on school achievement although at times it whispered in the wings. In the literature of ethnic minorities there is evidence that family culture is an influential 'failure' variable in middle class schools but as I was trying to understand success, I thought a Maori culture approach might have detracted me from the focus of the study. As well, personal uncertainty in this area of knowledge, but detailed knowledge of the students' histories, suggested that a sub-culture focus might be more useful. Further, the results of the Mitchell study (1988) suggested that 'Maoriness' was neither a necessary nor sufficient explanation of those successful students' achievements. Accordingly I have referred to family Maori culture from time to time but I have not pursued this area of knowledge with any depth.

Questions of institutional racism and of classroom racist practices have not really been explored either. Such a study requires a more distant approach than I as Principal-researcher could offer. I suspect, however, that what schools and classrooms do, as much of this study's literature base suggests, is constrain the chances of working class rather than just Maori students and, at the same time schools and classrooms improve the opportunities of those who are (economically) more fortunate with their families' resources..

In Chapter one I noted the Ministry of Education's reference to the education process (for Maori students) and I return to that concept. I was aware throughout the study that what the students said might have been quite different had they been in a Kura Kaupapa Maori. Smith, (1992) in Chapter four, argues the merits of separate schooling as meaningful interventions in the current ideologies of school, and he may be right. But this study suggests that if separate schooling were to have any major influence on Maori students' achievements that does not provide us with a (teaching) methodology to help the majority of Maori students who are likely to remain in state schools. It would be helpful if as well as illuminating the oppressive structures he sees in state schools, Smith could offer a way to change them (or educate the oppressors, in Freire's terms). Further, while the kura may help the Maori students in many ways, the kura students will still have to be able to acquire credentials for opportunities in adult life. Kura may illiminate problems in the present system but they must face, with the state schools, the ideology of capitalism and that is unlikely to be defeated by separate schooling.

An obvious limitation of this study is the official position of the researcher. For example, I recognised from the beginning (Introduction) that the students might try to give me answers they thought I wanted. Further, interpretive research is always open to the charge that it lacks objectivity, and a Principal who researches in her own school is in a particularly vulnerable position. I have tried to alert readers of my 'partiality' in the audit trails of this study and I recognise that an outsider might have worked differently with the students and, perhaps, might have reached different

conclusions. I wonder, however, if my 'insider' status may have assisted the study : when I presented the results to the Board of Trustees, the Student Representative (and a participant in the study), told the Board that the students had spoken freely because they trusted me. Her comment suggested that as a Principal-researcher I was able, in a way that was not possible for an outside researcher, to provide a different kind of context for discussions : the students knew that I knew them and the school and so there was no point in their 'adjusting' information (as I have seen them do with outsiders, to protect the school), because I already 'knew'. When Wade said, "It's only Mrs Tait that hears this", (Chapter eight) he was perhaps reflecting the trust to which the Student Representative referred.
I hope I have not betrayed that trust.

Finally, I have not placed the ideas of this study in the context of the 'reformed' education system. My growing cynicism with the education system's constant changes and retreats, as responses to pressure from the country's economically privileged, would distort any work I might do in this area. It is time, however, for a full examination of what has happened to student achievements since 1989 taking into account important contributing variables such as the higher age to qualify for the unemployment benefit and a higher school leaving age. Such a study would usefully ask if there has been any change to what counts as worthwhile knowledge in schools, how it is attained or who gains it. Those of us who are in schools would suggest, amongst other answers, that there is now a broader range of non-academic, closed-opportunity, second-class forms of knowledge and that some students are not helped by the apparent credentials of 'Life Skills'.

Future Research

To the limitations of this study I now add some further research areas which have emerged during the year. The first, I suggest, could be a longitudinal study to monitor students' perceptions of secondary school from their time of entry to when they leave. The key questions about reasons for (any) changes might produce answers about school experiences which schools could address to improve students' leaving qualifications.

A second area for research is that of the experiences of successful and middle class students in schools. Much of the student-centred work has been with underachieving or dissident students and those studies portray only a part of the 'reality' of school life. A study of the interaction of dissident students with students who are benefitting from, or enjoying school, is an extension of this kind of enquiry. What does the general student sub-culture look like? What attitudes and values can be described and what influence do they have on school achievement?

A third area for future enquiry might be that of the students' cultural network. There is a growing number of such studies in educational administration but some with students could be interesting. Pollard's 'Goodies, jokers and gangs' is the closest study that I could find in this area. I suggest that a fuller understanding of the ways students produce their sub-culture(s) could be useful not only for theoretical knowledge but also for practical work in schools. An obvious extension of this area of work is in the field of semiotics : a close examination of all verbal and non-verbal voices in the students' lives might indicate messages which this study could not capture. For example, does our lack of period-by-period bells, or the absence of school uniform, make any difference to perceptions of school? What message is conveyed by our school's S68 design with its courtyards and gardens? Is our well-understood policy of non-violence really 'talking' to the students about a safe school or providing unreal expectations about 'life'? We need to know more about communication as it influences and is participated in, by students.

I note that the comparisons made in this study are between Maori and Pakeha achievement rates. This is surely a reflection of a dominant culture apporoach? We should be - and will soon be - including Asian achievement rates in our studies. What enables a senior student from Hong Kong or Malaysia to learn English and achieve scholarship grades in University Bursary in three years? Answers to that question may have real significance for all students, regardless of ethnicity, class and gender.

Finally, and perhaps most politically sensitive, we ought to know more about students' writing skills. If language use reflects, and contributes to, attitudes about school success we need to know how, or if, this affects writing. Does spoken language translate into written language directly or are there variables which intervene? Is it true that the general ability to write in complete and accurate sentences has declined, as schools are often told? What has the shift away from formal grammar in English teaching really meant for students' written skills? What influence will word-processing and technology generally, have on writing? What data can we produce to show the link between writing skills and examination passes? As long as written examinations are the means of gaining school credentials, we need to know much more about written language and who wins and loses because of it.

Conclusion

This report-journey is now completed. The participants in this study are to be praised for their honesty, their willingness to rethink their ideas and their continuing good humour throughout the year. As carefully as possible, I have tried to present their hui in a positive manner and with truthful reflections of their views. If I have not represented them well, the fault is mine, not theirs, because the speech and the story of this journey have been mine.

If we are to break the cycle in which underprivileged children become disadvantaged students and go on to become underprivileged adults, and if we are to replace it with the ideal of social justice, in which ability and effort and choice matter, then as educators we have to look for ways to assist students' life chances with better school chances. Effective schools within, or in spite of, the present 'cult of efficiency' should be about helping students understand the 'realities' they face and giving them powers to confront those realities.

In today's 'real world' the power of the economically privileged is all too evident in the discourse of schooling; schools may not be

able to change society but they ought to try to change under-achieving students' chances for social equity in that society. Of course, schools are not neutral providers of qualifications but the alternative (of work places and tertiary institutions providing their own entry examinations) is not necessarily a better option for working class students. It is, therefore, a heavy responsibility which an effective school accepts ; to try to empower all of its students to face the inequities of adult life is an enormous challenge. It is said :

> I teach, I touch the future.
> I learn, I am the future.

Perhaps, therefore, our motivation must come, not from theory, nor from pragmatics, but from Kiri, who said :

> I just wanna learn, I just wanna good life.

I conclude with a message to Kiri and all of the students in this study :

> Mana Tu : Stand Tall.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 : Non-Maori School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate Results 1992, 1993.

TIKIPUNGA HIGH SCHOOL

PASS RATES

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE 1992	EUROPEAN	
	MALE	113/176
	FEMALE	112/140
	225 passes for 316 entries (71.20%)	
SCHOOL CERTIFICATE 1993	EUROPEAN	
	MALE	128/195
	FEMALE	149/217
	274 passes for 412 entries (66.50%)	
SIX FORM CERTIFICATE 1993	EUROPEAN	
	MALE	59/109
	FEMALE	92/113
	151 passes for 222 entries (68.02%)	

APPENDIX 2 : Family Occupations of the Study's Participants

Area Manager

Baker

Barrister

Carpet Cleaner

Child Care Superviser

Coordinator of Support Agency

Community Health Worker

Farmer

Fisherman

Foreman

Foundry Work

Groundsman

Housemovers

Labourer

Minister of Religion

IHC Superviser

Nurse

Office Manager

Publican

Salesman

Secretary

Self Employed

Tanker Driver

Teacher

APPENDIX 3 : Students' Themes of School (a)

WHAT DO WE WANT FROM SCHOOL

WHILE WE ARE AT SCHOOL	FOR	WHEN WE LEAVE SCHOOL
Qualifications		
Bursary		to go to university
Sixth Form Certificate		- computers
School Certificate		- law
		- social sciences
		- management
		to go to a Polytechnic
		- catering
		- design
		- art
		- nursing
Education Generally		to be a legal executive
for maturity		to go into tourism
increase my skills		to join the police
increase my knowledge		to join the army
good grades		to be a social worker
sex education		to take a translation course
		to be a farmer
		to work with trucks
		to be a driver
		to go into business
		to be an All Black
		to be a Kiwi
Other :		Other :
sport		to get a job
to be a prefect		to be independent
for social life		don't want to go on the dole
to keep out of trouble		don't want to be a "bum"
		don't want to be a dropout

APPENDIX 3 : Students' Themes of School (b)

WHAT HELPS / DOESN'T HELP US SUCCEED

Not so important	Important	Very Important
CLASSWORK		**TEACHERS**
Modules	Motivation	- to learn
Regular Assessment	Commendation	- for support
	Certificates	
FACILITIES		
Buildings		
Equipment		
OUT OF CLASS ACTIVITIES		**FRIENDS**
Outdoor Education Camps		- for 'time out'
Class trips		- for support
Interform competitions		
Interschool exchanges		
OTHER STUDENTS		**FAMILY**
Sinclair Centre		- for support
Adults		- by 'bad example'
Form 1 & 2		

APPENDIX 4 : Separate Survey of Senior Students

STUDENT RETENTION SURVEY

As part of our Curriculum Review we are examining how well we are meeting the needs of our senior students. The first stage of this process is to gather data from the students as to their aspirations of, and experiences at, Tikipunga High. We intend to survey all students who have left school during 1994, all students who enroled in the Form 5-7 levels in the last [illegible] months, and a representative sample of those senior students who have spent all their secondary years at Tikipunga.

We would appreciate it greatly if you would fill in a questionnaire to enable us to effectively review our senior programmes and improve on them. All information will be kept totally confidential. Only Mr. who is conducting the survey will have access to the completed questionnaires and all information reported by him will be in terms of "A former student said .." or "Some students believe .." We would stress that your participation in our survey is entirely voluntary but sincerely hope that you will help us in our efforts to improve the quality of our school.

Under the provisions of the Privacy Act we are required to get your written permission to use any information given by you in any report we make of our findings from the survey. We would appreciate it therefore if you would sign the following disclaimer and return this letter with your completed questionnaire.

I agree that may use any information contained in the questionnaire I have completed for the purposes of investigating the retention of senior students at Tikipunga High School.

signed ________________________ date ____________

STUDENT RETENTION SURVEY
SUMMARY OF RETURNS

SCOPE

Questionnaires were ~~returned~~ completed by 50 pupils from the form 5-7 level. Of these 41 had only attended Tikipunga High School and 9 had entered from other secondary schools. Of these 9, 6 had attended other Whangarei schools and 3 entered from schools outside Whangarei. The gender ratio was 31 females and 19 males.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THS.

There were 10 different reasons given for coming to Tikipunga. Many respondents gave more than one reason. The most common reason given was proximity to home (24) followed by friends/relatives here (14), good reputation of the school (12), modules (8), mufti (7), social friendliness (5) co-educational nature (5), staff (2), exam passes (1) and woman principal (1).

WHAT DO THEY HOPE TO ACHIEVE AT TIKIPUNGA

Every one of the 50 students wanted to achieve success in exams. 13 also linked these qualifications with getting a job. Obtaining life skills was mentioned by 6 and the only other goals mentioned were gaining more confidence with technology (1), becoming Head Prefect (1), and getting into the N.Z.. Secondary Schools rugby team(1)

WHAT DO THEY FIND GOOD ABOUT THS

Again many students gave more than one response to this question. The friendliness and relaxed atmosphere was mentioned 23 times. Other commo mentioned items were modular studies/choice of subjects (16), the friendline of most teachers (15), the cafe (10), and mufti (9). Access to technology and ot facilities were given in 9 responses, the non-violence policy in 5 and sports activities in 4. The Maori culture was mentioned by 1 respondent.

WHAT DON'T THEY LIKE ABOUT THS.

The most mentioned item was the attitudes and ability of some teachers (17), followed by Form 1 &2's (13), toilets (8), lack of lunchtime activities (8), SSR (5

WHAT CLASSROOM PROGRAMMES WOULD THEY LIKE INTRODUCED.

Life Skills (8) - peer sexuality, anger management, study and communication skills, stress management

More foreign languages (7)

Crafts (4) - pottery, F6/7 metalwork and woodwork

Computer programming (3)

Legal studies (2)

Technology units (2)

F5 Art History

Creative writing

Self defence for girls

African studies

Outdoor education modules

WHAT OTHER PROGRAMMES WOULD THEY LIKE INTRODUCED

More school camps/trips (7)

School student newspaper (5)

More lunchtime activities (5)

Major drama production (3)

School choir (3)

Dance programme (2) Transition programmes (2) Upgrade school radio (2)

Bigger F6/7 common-room, TV in cafe, spacies, coke machine, lockers, m(

murals, vertical forms, school uniform, more basketball hoops.

APPENDIX 5 : Questions Devised by Senior Students to give to Form Five

CONFIDENTIAL

FORM 6 & 7 TALKING TO FORM 5

As seniors we are worried about the lack of motivation in Form Five. If you can give us your opinions we will try to help.

Why are you here at school? ....

....

What do you want out of school? (Qualifications etc.) ....

....

....

Is the school providing the resources ? ....

....

Is improvement needed ? ....

How : ....

....

....

....

Why : ....

....

....

....

In what ways : ....

....

....

....

Are the courses available that you need? ....

....

....

Are there problems concerning teachers :

Why : ....

....

Is there any way to improve motivation :..

....

....

....

Do you find school boring? If so, why? ....

....

....

....

What do you like about teachers? ....

....

....

....

Please return to this week.

He and a group of senior students will report the results early in term three.

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