

**Like I wasn't there, I didn't exist':
The invisible students in New
Zealand today**

by

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**If we are to create new models of pedagogy and intellectual work and become architects of our own education, then we cannot simply repair the structures that have been handed down to us.
(Kelly, R.D., 2001, p.xiii; cited in Sheets, R.H. 2001)**

Introduction

This paper is within the advocacy research paradigm. The purpose of this paper is to explore the recent literature on racism in education both from the New Zealand research and that conducted internationally and by listening to the voices of students alienated from mainstream schools determine to what extent racism plays a part in their disaffection. It is a response to critiques of our work from scholars in the field of poverty and class research who doubted the influence of racism as a factor in the education of Pacific peoples and other minorities. The paper gives the background to the study and then identifies three themes which relate directly to racism: the hegemony of the dominant group in society (power); the mismatch of the cultures of Pacific students and the culture of schools' pedagogy and structures; and the attitude of pakeha New Zealanders to the cultures of minority peoples.

We are aware all the time of Sheets' warning (2000:19 cited in Brandon, 2003) that we are 'culturally disadvantaged, experientially limited, and often linguistically deficient in both preparing and teaching the nation's recipients of this knowledge and service – children of color'.

Background

In 2002 we presented a paper, *'One size fits few'¹: The Case Study of a School that has Defied the Constraints of a European Education system for Pacific Students*. The paper followed the struggle of Clover Park Middle School's attempt to become an architect of a new education system for Pacific young people. The school had become aware of the inadequacy of the structures handed down to minority young people in New Zealand schools and more tragically the failure of expensive 'repairs' to the mainstream white dominated system. Many of these costly 'repairs' to the system were in effect well-meaning

¹ Ohanian, S., (1999). One size fits few. Portsmouth, N.H.:Heinemann.

projects and programmes designed by well-meaning researchers, educationalists and bureaucrats.

Our paper critiqued the current solutions to the so-called 'lack of achievement amongst young Pacific people. To us they seemed to be colonial in attitude as they benefited the non-Pacific bureaucracy more than the students. In fact it could be said that this made use of the students' failure – what Graham Smith would call commodification. The reaction to this paper from our Maori colleagues and the majority of our Pakeha colleagues was favourable but some of our eminent colleagues critiqued the value of research into racism in education. They asserted that poverty and class were the reasons for the appalling statistics on educational outcomes for Maori and Pacific students in New Zealand. We would agree in the power of both these forces at play in our society but we still believe that there is a fundamental racism in education.

Although statistical data for Maori achievement in New Zealand certainly does not tell the full story there would still seem to be little cause for complacency and congratulations about the educational realities for Maori in recently released Ministry data:

Figure 1: Maori involvement in Education, July 2000

Therefore 96.7 percent of all Maori students are educated in mainstream schools. Although Maori make up only 20.1 percent of all the students in our schools, the

Percentage of all students enrolled at a school in New Zealand who are Maori	20.1
Percentage of these students who were involved in Maori medium education ²	18.0
Percentage of these students who were involved in Kura Kaupapa Maori ³ ,	3.3

following statistics show the disproportionate number of Maori students for whom the system

is not working:

² defined as using Maori as the medium for instruction for more than twelve percent of the time – a minimum of three hours per week.

³ Total immersion Maori language schools set up initially by parents who were concerned that their children's knowledge and use of Maori language and competency in the culture would be lost if they went to an English-medium school. There are now 59 Kura Kaupapa Maori nationally.

Figure 2: Alienation of Maori students 1999/2000

Percentage of all stand-downs and suspensions in 2000	41
Percentage of those students who left school with no formal qualifications in 1999	36
Percentage of all students who dropped out of school in Year 9 in 1999	33.8
Percentage of all students who dropped out of school in Year 10 in 1999.	38.7

(Source: Ministry of Education. Education Statistics of New Zealand for 2000)

Following the presentation in 2002 we have read widely in the well-established literature in this area. We turned to the respected research in the area both in New Zealand (Bishop and Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2003; MacFarlane 2003, Johnston, 1999; Smith, 1999; Milne, 2000, Neville-Tisdall, Milne and Treanor, 2000) and internationally (Cummins, 2001; Tate, 2003; Hall, 1997; Ohanian, 1999; Pollock, 2001; Scheurich, 2000; Schlesinger, 1991; Sheets, 2003; Singham, 2001;) to name a few). And published in respected journals, for example; *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Educational Researcher*, *Harvard Educational Review*, *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies*, and *Qualitative Studies in Education*.

Proportion of 2001 School Leavers by Highest Attainment and Ethnicity

	Maori	Pacific	Asian	European/Pakeha	All Students
University Bursary	4.0	4.7	42.2	21.2	18.4
Entrance Qualification	3.4	5.1	11.3	8.7	7.6
Higher School Certificate	8.4	14.3	11.8	11.1	10.9
Sixth Form Certificate*	24.8	30.6	19.4	27.5	26.7
School Certificate**	25.9	20.6	7.3	19.0	19.4
No Qualification***	33.4	24.8	8.0	12.4	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Sixth Form Certificate in one or subjects irrespective of grade awarded or 12 or more credits at National Certificate Level 2
 ** School Certificate in one or more subjects irrespective of grade awarded or 12 or more credits at National Certificate Level 1
 *** includes those with less than 12 credits at Level 1

(Ministry of Education, 2001)

In the 2002 paper we traced the failure of traditional systems of education both internationally and New Zealand to address the inherent power structures that had a 'deficit' approach to minority students. We explored the research of prominent Maori and Samoan scholars (Paskale and Yaw, 1998, Tapine and Waiti 1997, Bishop and Glynn, 1999; Macfarlane, Smith). Johnston (1999) contribution to this debate is that the current educational system is '*Maori-friendly*' and not '*Maori-centred*'. The first term implies that power is neither surrendered nor shared but rather begrudgingly bestowed. The second term show that Maori education should be the focus of education and owned by the Maori community. The reluctance of the bureaucracy and neighbouring secondary schools to recognize the need for this change is explained by Tate (2003, 125) who observes 'most remedies of past discrimination are implemented when they converge with the interest of the white majority'.

We challenged the research that attributed blame for the relative academic failure of Pacific students on 'family conditions, language and poverty rather than on negative expectations, inappropriate curriculum or inadequate teacher training' (Cummins: 650). We suggested minority centred strategies in both international and New Zealand research.

Finally we traced the history of Clover Park Middle School as it gradually replaced the alienating traditional system of education. Beginning with new structures (Whanau structures where students are taught by teachers of their own ethnicity and language) pedagogy (integrated curriculum and negotiated curriculum) and values (cultural validation). The Te Poho⁴ initiative in 2001 was implemented to provide 'capacity building' in Maori parents to support students, and conversely, in the staff of the bilingual Whanau the school to support Maori parents and students. The emphasis was on reciprocal relationships focusing on dialogue and interaction with the parents therefore avoiding the European 'rules of the game'.

The use of Appreciative Inquiry meant that the school worked from a perspective that valued parents' views and promised to act on these rather than working from the deficit assumptions most Maori parents experience. The next year involved visiting every parent in the school, telephoning the home twice and the result was homework centre, mentoring by older siblings, and providing courses for parents. Parents and past-students offered servers as helpers and mentors.

Then the paper addressed the changes in 2002 and these have continued into 2003. Past students returned to help the school host the secondary schools

⁴ Te Poho was a taniwha who nurtured and fed the local, Ngai Tai, people.

Maori cultural competition in 2001. They were, to the schools dismay, no longer in secondary schools. They had become alienated and in their disaffection some had turned to minor crime or drugs. Their parents pleaded with the school to take them back and they did. There was violent antagonism from neighbouring secondary schools and the Ministry of Education accusing the school of creating separatism, emphasizing culture at the expense of achievement. The school was seen as illegally challenging the status quo, failing to provide the children with schools to accommodate to the dominant culture of secondary schools, creating separatism in their language units, emphasising culture at the expense of achievement and worst of all breaking the rules of the system!

A visit to the Minister of Education only resulted in confirming that the students be assigned to secondary schools – the ones that had left in complete disillusionment. Two hui, the first with the Ministry of Education and one in 2003 with Maori MPs. The first produced no measurable outcomes for the students but did create awareness of the passion of the students for an education that they and their parents owned. Students who did not want to return to their secondary schools, teachers, the Board of Trustees, parents and the community pleaded with the Ministry of Education officials to allow the students to stay in their Whanau or school. The hakas performed by the students were:

spine tingling, hair rising on the back of your neck stuff - I've never witnessed a haka like it. Everyone in the whare (except the senior Ministry officials) was not just crying - they were sobbing. The kids took their haka right up in front of them - it was a real challenge, girls screaming defiance, boys so angry but so, so powerful - then our Year 13 girl gave him the letters from every student and told him she wanted him to read every word.

Parents then spoke just as eloquently - voices shaking with emotion saying what it meant to them to have their child back in education, doing homework at night, knowing they were learning, hurrying off to school in the morning because 'Whaea told them they couldn't be late'. grandmothers, kaumatua all challenged the Ministry of Education. (email from Ann Milne to Mollie Neville-Tisdall, March 12, 2002).

In 2003 no permanent arrangement was arranged for the 15 or so young people who would rather study at Clover Park within their own cultural environment than form a ghetto in a secondary school or roam the streets jobless, aimless and alienated from society. Students were allowed to stay at the school on a one year basis but no resources of any kind allocated to the school to support them. They were given permission to study NCEA at the school through access to just three papers through the Correspondence School. To access these papers they had to be officially classified as 'alienated' students. Clover Park has facilitated two further subjects with the help of one sympathetic secondary school – again with no staffing or funding.

Despite these continual discouragements and appalling disruptions to the education of senior students, the twelve remaining students have all passed the 80 credits required for NCEA Level 1. The students in Year 12 have almost completed all required Level 2 credits and the two young men in Year 13 have completed all Level 2 requirements. One boy has sat Bursary Maori and the two Year 13 students who will leave the class this year have applied for entry into teacher training. Clover Park has achieved a retention rate of almost 70% of these Maori students at this senior level – against a national retention rate for Maori of 25% at Year 12 level. The school as a whole won the 2003 Goodman Fielder Composite School of the Year.

Methodology

This case study was conducted using naturalistic inquiry, which studies the culture of an institution within its context over a period of time (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry uses qualitative, ethnographic methodology. The sources of data included observation, documentation and focus interviews with groups of four to five students. This was conducted within the appreciative inquiry paradigm. Milne quotes Elliot (1999):

Appreciative inquiry starts from a fundamentally different – and more positive point. It is designed to help local people identify their achievements. This process can be very empowering for people who have always considered themselves poor and disadvantaged.

The key data collection innovation of appreciative inquiry is the collection of people's '*stories of something at its best*', (Bushe, 1998).

The difference between traditional approaches to organisational change and Appreciative Inquiry can be seen in this table:

Figure 3: Traditional Process versus Appreciative Inquiry

TRADITIONAL PROCESSES	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
Define the problem Fix what's broken Focus on decay What problem are you having?	Search for solutions that already exist Amplify what's working Focus on life-giving forces What is working well around here?

Hammond (1998)

The Research Site

Clover Park Middle School

Clover Park Middle School is in the lowest decile⁵ or socio-economic area in the country. Although it has had official status as a four-year (Years 7 to 10) middle school since 1995, the move to retain students longer than the traditional two intermediate years began in the Maori bilingual unit in 1990. This initiative was strongly driven by parents who sought continuity of the language and learning environment developed in the school.

Early changes to the structure of the school addressed the need for students to study in their home language and culture. This move gave rise to attacks that this was a form of apartheid. The school was divided into four areas or units that are multi levelled, multi aged and vertically grouped from years 7 to 10. Of the four areas one is rooted in Maori values, one in Samoan beliefs the other two are labelled 'general' but one takes in predominantly Tongan and the other most of the Cook Island and Asian students. Students elect which area they will join. The whole purpose is one of cultural validation: to build self- confidence, self esteem and a positive identity within students grossly disadvantaged within New Zealand society.

There is an integrated and holistic curriculum and an emphasis on the importance of adult, student interaction. Most importantly, home language and cultural practice (whanaungatanga) is the basis for administration, for assessment, pedagogy, and curriculum development and implementation.

Clover Park Middle School has received excellent reports from the Ministry of Education's audit office and received favourable attention from the media, for example, the programme *60 Minutes*. The school's role in helping the students to understand their own cultures and languages and hold their heads high has had a positive effect on student attitudes to learning.

Students are supported to extend their mother tongue as well as become proficient in English and great effort is expended to employ teachers and community members who are fluent in the students' languages. This is a remarkable shift from the endless English as a Second Language classes that most schools promote.

It was clear however from very early in the change process that simply changing the language of instruction was not enough and ...

⁵ New Zealand schools are ranked from 1-10 on the basis of the socio-economic background of the parents. Decile one is the lowest and decile ten the highest.

had little positive effect on the achievement outcomes or self-esteem of our Maori students and we were fairly sure this was because the school's overriding philosophy, organisation and structure still followed the monocultural norm (Milne, 2000:4).

Every respondent in the Clover Park questionnaires – the bulk of the data – mentioned their passionate belief in the validation of each culture represented in the school:

The school therefore functions as an extension of the home.

Cultural validation underpins the values of our school. I have never heard blatantly disparaging remarks about our students in this school as I have at other schools – like “so and so is ‘so thick’, dumber than dumb” – our students are genuinely treated as individuals whose backgrounds are respected (Neville-Tisdall, Milne and Treanor, 2001b).

New learning is ‘built on students’ prior experiences and staff attempt ‘to eliminate the ‘mismatch’ between home & school and validating students’ cultural beliefs and values in all aspects of school practice and programme’. They recognise that the poverty can create barriers but they ‘do a huge number of things in the area of pastoral care, to ‘balance the books”.

A key aspect of the school is the sense of genuine affection between staff, staff and students and within the student cohort. The whole culture in the school can be summed up by one of the staff, *‘We are a whanau now – not many Islands competing for space!’*

Hegemony: ‘They just wanted their way and no one else’s way’

There is a deep antipathy to acknowledging that schools tend to reflect the power structure of the society and that these power relations are directly relevant educational outcomes (Cummins, 2001: 650).

There is a sense ‘then what’ when studying the literature on education for Pacific New Zealanders. It is expressed eloquently by Mason Durie (2003:5):

The distinguishing characteristic is not necessarily material hardship, or risk laden life-styles, or lack of motivation, or unsympathetic school environments or impaired access to education, to a grater or lesser degree all New Zealanders face those hurdles – but the essential difference is that Maori live at the interface between te ao Maori (the Maori world) and the wider global society (tea o whanui). This does not mean socio-economic factors are unimportant but it does imply that of the many determinants of educational success, the factor that is uniquely relevant to Maori, is the way in which Maori world views and the world views of wider society, impact on each other.

Also in 2003, Bishop draws our attention to the failure of New Zealanders to recognise:

This pattern of power imbalance is one of dominance and subordination and has developed as the result of the heritage of colonial dominance in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a colonial history that was formalized in 1840 when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between representatives of the British crown and some 512 Maori leaders. . . In this understanding it is the patterns of dominance and subordination and their related classroom interaction patterns that perpetuate non-participation of many your Maori people in the benefits that the education system has to offer (Bishop 2003:221-222).

Hegemony is embedded in the language we use and the practices we reinforce in education. Lee (2003:3-5) in her article *'Why We Need to Re-Think Race and Ethnicity in Educational Research'*, points out that current terminology like inner city and at-risk carry assumptions that place students in a less powerful position. In her critique of current research she notes that when white children live in poverty then they are classified as white whereas the terms 'inner city' and 'at risk' are saved as code words for non-whites.

Marx & Pennington (2003), Thompson (2003) and Bergerson (2003) all critical race theorists, note that in the United States nearly 90 percent of teachers are white whereas 50 percent of the children are '*people of color*'. The effect of this is powerful in the classroom and in teacher training. Our Maori and Pacific colleagues could quite rightly challenge the ability to conduct research on racism when being White is a 'highly privileged social construction and not a neutral racial category (Marx & Pennington, 2003:91). However, the sheer number of us teaching and leading in education necessitates that we understand our position and take responsibility for our colleagues to understand as well.

Searing research by Thompson, called *'Tiffany, friend of color: White investments in antiracism'* (2003:7-29) challenges us to recognize when being a Good White involves what she calls 'redemption fantasies' and to interrogate the ways in which we can be given credit for being antiracist and be feeding off the racism we ostensibly deplore. It is sad but true that 'most remedies of past discrimination are implemented only when they converge with the interests of the white majority' (Tate, 2003:12). Bergerson (2003) introduces a concept that one of the authors who lived in Asia for many years can understand very well. He suggests that Whiteness, for example is the ability to not be aware of one's race, 'A white person can walk in a white neighborhood and no one questions her presence there' (53). For 11 years from the time Lee Kuan Yew stamped on the photo of the Queen of England in 1959, one of the researchers was acutely aware of my race as she walked around wet markets, night markets and even the local church in which I was a committed member.

Tate (2003:124) goes as far as to say that in the United States (and I would add in New Zealand) history is a history of 'White is human'.

How does this issue of power relate to our young disaffected students at Clover Park who are struggling to stay at the school and not be sent to secondary schools? In the following section they describe the way they have resisted power and taken it for themselves.

One of the major power confrontations was in their meeting with the Ministry of Education in order to persuade officials that they could stay at Clover Park. They describe how:

At the beginning the Ministry said it was sweet, yeah go do it. But then as it started getting closer to the end all these excuses started coming out and procrastinating. And my Dad said 'What happened? Where did it go wrong? How come you changed your mind?' (Student M3).

In their eyes it *'was just stink – like they were taking our education away from us. Like they wanted it their way and not our way. They didn't want to hear us, they just wanted their way and no one else's way'*. Quite rightly they believed:

It was stupid really; Its only 14 kids, its not like its destroying anything, its only 14 kids. They tried to exaggerate it and say that we might want to start a high school and stuff like that (Student M2). T

These young people were politically astute. When they wrote to the Prime Minister *'We got one letter back, from Trevor Mallard but (interrupted and finished by another) It was a joke. That was a joke'*. I asked if he said anything much. Student M3 replied *'Just thank you for the letter. I will have a closer look'* and his friend added *'Yeah I'll just chuck this on here for now'*. They are perceptive as the TV show *Yes, Minister*.

They describe the whole process of trying to attend Clover Park instead of other schools as a *'hassle'* and *'mucking us around'*. They were proud that they told the man from the Ministry that they were not *'going anywhere and were not in a hurry to give up'*. The only redeeming factor in their confrontation with the grey suits of the Ministry was:

Support, we had heaps of supporters.
Yeah, we had heaps of supporters. And it was only like a five minute job ringing people up and getting them there. If we had days or something I betcha we could have filled the whole whare with people.

Their supporters were the whole school, the teachers and community. Their feelings now as a result of the meeting are *'So much rage against them', 'Not*

letting us stay with the Whanau. Trying to take us away'. Further anger is addressed at those who:

Think that this school is a bad school, but its not. Its just rumours, they need to come out and check for themselves (Student F).

All they want is to stay in their Whanau with the friends they know and the teachers and principal who understand them, share their culture and respect them. One parent describes her experience with the secondary schools as disempowering:

At his last school I was involved but I was involved because I had to be. In fact there were punishments for the kids if you didn't attend meetings . . . And it was sort of like involvement by numbers, they would often talk about we've got 85 percent of our parents who turn up at our meetings and things like that (Woman 2).

For us who are white it is hard to recognize this power as applying to us personally. Surely we are not racist; we are good whites (Thompson, 2003:9). However, we need to examine our own practices. Am I Mollie Neville-Tisdall, for example, as a university lecturer, using the work of my Maori and Samoan colleagues to further my research? Thompson implies that this is navel gazing and that we should be allies not helpers. Allies 'speak up against systems of oppression' and challenge 'other whites to do the same'. Above all we should treat our colleagues work with respect and not use it like 'dipping into a box of chocolates'! This leads to the next theme – the attitude of whites to the culture of ethnic minorities.

Attitude to Ethnic Minorities: I wasn't there. I didn't exist'

It was once again the work of Durie that alerted me to the theory behind this theme in the students' responses:

In public eyes Maori beliefs were largely interpreted as superstitious barriers to progress and in defiance of logic, science and economic sense. (Durie, 2003:9).

and:

There remains a high level of ignorance about Maori world views and a fallacious assumption that they are inconsistent with progress and economic growth (13).

The themes of indifference, ridicule and ignorance and inertia that are found in the work of seminal Maori and Samoan researchers are found in international literature as well. Orellana and Bowman point out that 'in contrast to the prevailing assumptions that African-American English or popular youth culture limits opportunities to learn' in effect 'cultural modeling views both as resources and strength'. In the work of Orellana, & Bowman, 2003; Milne, 2003; Tate,

2003; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; and Laubscher & Powell, there are themes in common.

Firstly there is an assumption that there is one culture for all the people of the same ethnicity. This is of course a damaging assumption and leads to racist stereotyping. Gutierrez & Rogoff (2003) point out that it is fallacious to ascribe 'traits' to certain ethnic groups and suggest 'it is not an all-or-non static' culture. Laubscher & Powell (2003:211) basing their theory on Anzaldua, 1987 and Giroux, 1992, believe that 'people do not construct singular notions of identity and self from ethnicity, but that class, gender, and a multicultural social environment complicate identity'. Laubscher & Powell sum up:

In this view a Chinese American person can assert her identity as an American, volunteer to serve in the armed forces in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attack, celebrate the Chinese New Year, speak to her children in Mandarin, be a practicing pagan, buy turkey from Wal-Mart with clipped coupons, and serve that turkey with spring rolls at Thanksgiving (211).

The fashion now is to say that the days of affirmative action and continuing support for minority people are over. However Tate (2003:126) cites Newuharth (2000), who was the founder of USA Today, in saying that even today white males form 96 million of the population and females and minority males 178 million. He suggests that we must 'make a noise':

What my fellow white males need to realize is that if we axe affirmative action we may find our mothers, daughters, sisters, sweethearts, wives and widows among the victims. As they were before 1964.

Students often talked about indifference to, and ridicule and ignorance of their culture. Sometimes they were unaware of the implication of what they were saying, at other times they knew exactly what was happening to them.

Indifference

Coming from a middle school that used integrated and negotiated curriculum and was based on four multi lingual, multilevel Whanau education where they had been leaders and mentors treated with respect the change to a typical secondary school system was quite literally a culture shock.

They found themselves and their culture became invisible. It was obvious that they felt '*scary*' and '*angry*'. Their reaction was to try and get attention by misbehaving but even then the teachers tended to ignore them. Tawhiri says '*I wasn't there, I didn't exist*'. Another male student describes sitting right through two periods of Maths class '*and not open up my book. Just sit at the back and talk, talk with my mates, and not open up my book. Just talk all day*'.

They felt that teachers talked to the front of the class and those they liked but *'they talked to us on different levels. They just chucked it down at us'* and again *'that's what I was saying before – how the good kids they liked, and they didn't really like the rest of the class and they just concentrated on those people and we got worse'*. They realized that it was *'kinda stupid to do this'* as *'How are they going to do well and no ones helping them and they just got worse and worse. .then people drop out. The other fellas are still down the road'*.

Becoming angrier they say *'Yeah, they just don't care. There's no consequences. They just say here's the homework, write up on the board and leave it at that.* They describe having to face the wall, watching the teachers only teach the first two rows, and worst of all teachers not knowing their names... They surmised that in their minds teachers call them *'Tall Maori boy'* or *'Short Maori boy. He's got attitude and a big mouth'* or *'just another criminal, another statistic'*. They felt that the teachers had a *'lack of respect'* in the way they looked at them. They could be absent but no one checked up on them. Yet at the same time they recognized they were *'hell-raisers'*. My only question is *'Why did these students flourish in a 'whanau' environment only to become 'hell raisers' when they left?*

They agreed that for some of them no teachers liked them and most were afraid of them but one of two remember a teacher who did respect them. One young man found he couldn't fit in because *'they don't have any Maori or Whanau based things'* yet he is perceptive when he says *'they think their way of running things is the best 'We're right not yours'*. In contrast at Clover Park *'it is like we're all a Whanau, like we all know each other, we're all close'*.

A final story illustrates a common attitude towards Maori and Pacific students. One young woman tells the story of being *'kicked out of my real class and got moved to this class across the road'*. Her friends joined in telling the story. *'In the Whare'* they laugh, then *'In that funky class across the road'*. The class was for:

Bad people. That's where you go to choose if you wanted to go to class and what class you want to go to. They just treat you like you're an 'IT'. Buy your lunch, take you home, buy your uniform for you.

She laughed deprecatingly but it was not funny. One of the researchers thought of Clover Park which the young woman had left where she had been dux and a shining model to the younger students. The researcher thought of how mischievous pakeha children are treated in North Shore and other high decile schools and felt very sad.

In contrast Clover Park is different *'Here is like we're all a Whanau, like we all know each other, we're like close'* and the parents are happy now *'He's just been touched by an angel'* instead of indifferent to the school.

Mismatch of Cultures: 'Teachers can be teachers and also Whanau at the same time'.

Prominent Samoan researcher Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) believes there is a 'serious mismatch between the cultural capital of home and that of the school as one of the principle reasons for the high failure rate of Pacific children in the classrooms of New Zealand schools' (cited in Milne 2003:12) – it is what Milne refers to as cultural discontinuity (p. 18). In a previous paper (Neville-Tisdall & Milne, 2002) we have listed the many suggestions from New Zealand and international researchers for changing this imbalance of cultural capital.

This imbalance or mismatch has many consequences as we observe in student responses later. Similar concerns are in the research written by or American colleagues' research. Nasir & Saxe (2003) in discussing emerging tensions and their management in the lives of minority students show that 'too often, minority students believe that they must choose between a positive ethnic identity and a strong academic identity (2003:13). Lee, Spencer & Harpalani (2003:9) find the same 'lack of understanding of cultural pathways' of African Americans as we find in New Zealand. They are concerned that people of predominantly European descent as the 'normative population against which other groups are compared'.

Bishop (2003) in his recent article *Kaupapa Maori messages for 'mainstream' education in Aotearoa/New Zealand* shows that Maori have a long tradition that encompasses powerful and successful educational practices. These include the whanau tradition which includes the whole family and community in the child's learning, the principles of sharing, and taking the paradigm of the whanau into the classroom.

These concepts, summarised in his words 'holistic, flexible and complex' (2003:226), are all embedded in the kaupapa of Clover Park Middle school. What disturbs Bishop (2003:235) is that non-Maori 'authoritative' voices are interpreting Maori myths for themselves and 'these myths are believed by Maori and non-Maori alike' – cultural superiority. It is therefore ironical as Macfarlane (2003:8) notes that 'On the other hand, little has been said about the under-representation of a real presence of Maori cultural principles and practices in mainstream classrooms and schools'.

It is fascinating to the authors of this study that many of these indicators, or as Bishop calls them, 'metaphors,' are close to the middle schooling paradigm.

They are rather crudely summarised here (Bishop, 2003) and we would urge people to read Bishop's lengthy scholarly article. They are:

- Participation by family, school and community – 'create contexts where to be Maori is to be normal' (p.223)
- Active learning – sharing of knowledge. It is ironical to note here that Clover Park students were chided by the Correspondence School for doing their work together. The pakeha interpretation would be 'cheating' (p.226)
- Whanau – a living metaphor rather than a machine metaphor
- Power sharing – 'Students achieve better when there is a close relationship between home and school' (p. 227)
- Story telling – teacher as skilled listener
- Power sharing – seen also in Bishop & Glynn (1999) and MacFarlane (2003:11) 'Power sharing is a necessary condition for relationship-based pedagogies'.
- Problem –Based Active Methodology where pupils are 'required to find out' 'spill out of the classrooms' (2003: 232)
- Curriculum Integration described by James Beane (1997:xi) the proponent of middle schooling as 'ongoing themes are drawn from life as it is being lived and experienced' (2003:233).

Again and again the student responses reveal that when they leave Clover Park School and enter a mainstream school their sense of normality is no longer regarded respected.

It's crap, Miss

Students who move from Clover Park to other schools miss every aspect of their culture. Even those who were put into a 'Kura' feel it isn't enough, *'Well, its sort of, it's like a Maori area but you only in there for a couple of subjects during the day'; 'Just one period of Te Reo and that's it'.*

It affected them so deeply that as one young man who chose the pseudonym Tawhiri said *'I turned to dope and just turned to the dark side early. Disrespected everybody. Got into about three fights a day. All because I was missing the Whanau back here at Clover Park'.* When asked what he missed he answered, *'You see, here at Clover Park my culture was put first'.*

Basically as one young man felt that the older students in high school made him feel like a little ant and *'they just make you feel uncomfortable'.*

'Culture comes first':' Magic's everywhere

However at his current school the same young man feels:

Doesn't matter what age they are. Cause at the end of the day what you them is, it's like you to help them in some way and everyone will just get along. Start building up a good relationship with every person in the school. However at Clover Park they had Maori for the whole school.

Instead of fear of the older students in a secondary school he feels *'safe'* and a young woman agreed, *'I have mates and teachers that they help me out and I feel better here'*. This safety inspires them to learn. The metaphors the students used a very powerful. *'Magic's everywhere'* one says. *'It's like walking to the front door of my home, it's basically my home. It's like coming home'*.

Some use spiritual metaphors about learning – *'Woke up one morning, 'I want to know today', started learning''*. When the teachers there encouraged and cajoled a young man who called himself 'Maui' said *'Snap out of it. Saw the light; saw God – 'Follow me''*. It is these high expectations from the principal they experience that encourage hard work and better behaviour because, *'Well they ask you if you want to tutor'* and *'She just expected everyone to pass and to do good. It was just, there was no thing about failing she just expected everyone to pass and do well'*. Students were expected to do well and take major responsibilities.

'Asked to do things rather than being told'

The students were quite clear about their learning needs. *'If you don't want trouble get Maori teachers to teach Maori students'*. A young woman explained the relationship between teachers and students:

Yeah, we all get along. Teachers can be teachers, and also Whanau at the same time. They can teach us and be Whanau at eh same time. If we need help, we can just go to them. And they' help us. Other teachers at Secondary School, you need help and they just say 'Go away'.

In contrast they like working as a group, *'We sit down in one big group and work it all out together'*. Added to this the pedagogy is *'enjoyable'*, *'they make more fun to it. They put into similar, into like similar situations, like they relate it back to the Maori culture somehow'*. The result it *'All is one. Mahi Tahi: Work as one'*. It is so important to them that as Kingi said, *'I just feel happy again. Feel comfortable, everyone, just yeah. It feels awesome to be back'*.

'All the kisses from Nannies and everything'

The final aspect that the students find important in Clover Park is that it replicates their homes and community. Over many years students have recalled important moments of their lives that have been shared by the whole school in traditional Maori ceremonies. These have included deaths, successes, karakia every morning, and live-ins on their marae.

The students can all recall vividly many occasions when the school has supported them in tragic times of their life. One of the young women becomes eloquent in telling her story:

When my Grandfather passed away a few years ago I was in the Kapa Haka group and we were getting ready for a competition and um, my Mum come and got me and told the teachers cause we were at a live in and then a few hours later they turned up at my Aunt's house where my Grandfather was to help me with the loss of my Grandfather. So that was a good thing for me.

A young man recalls what happened when the son of two teachers died:

Last year or the year before a kid died and he wasn't part of the whole school and the parents and the teachers they brought him back to the Marae and with no one knowing him and stuff they all helped out just because Whanau and just because the parents were part of Whanau. Yeah, treated him as part of the Whanau.

He described to me *'All the kisses, all the kisses from the nannies and everything'* another added young man added *'All the love loves'* and yet another *'All the Whanau go to the Marae'* and finally *'The feed. The drink up!'*

The last story shows a side of life in Maori and Pacific life that only schools like this can even begin to understand – the network of interrelationships, the extended Whanau:

Student Oh yeah, that happened to my Cousin as well.

Oh right.

Student Cause my Uncle was an ex student here and my little cousin had passed away and Tupuranga came down to support what the Whanau was going through.

So this was your cousin?

Student My little cousin, I was only about 5 and my Uncle was attending this school

Oh right and who is it who died"

Student My little baby cousin

And that was his brother?

Student That was his nephew

His nephew. And what did the school do?

Student Yeah, they came down to my Uncle's house and just came and supported him, which you usually do at a funeral.

Conclusion

Imagine a school that puts into practice all the aspects of Maori (and indirectly many minority students in New Zealand) culture as described in Bishop's (2003) latest published research. Then imagine that young person going into a typical New Zealand secondary school. The bewilderment at not hearing his/her language spoken in the classroom, at his/her parents not having involvement in every aspect of the school, at changing classes all day and wandering lonely around the school. Of having to work alone in class and being accused of cheating if s/he asks and receives help. No adult who thinks s/he is a taonga and even when s/he misbehaves tells her/him off so s/he doesn't feel shame. Only the Kapa Haka group will bring some sense of belonging, pride and respect and even that is described at some schools as 'a joke' compared with the authenticity of the one s/he has come from. No tangi for family no live ins on the marae, no responsibility, no 'kisses from nannies'.

We asked the students what they wanted us to do with this paper.

Are you gonna take it to the Ministry of Education? Can you take it to Trevor Mallard? (Clover Park students).

They want their story heard and this is the only way that the researchers can do it. By telling their stories in lectures and conferences and in published papers. We have learnt that it is not sensible to discuss unpopular issues or try to change the status quo. Too many outspoken change makers have been discredited by cynics and bureaucrats for researchers to write and speak about this topic lightly.

The tragedy is that we should be able to dialogue and to innovate. Marx and Pennington (2003:94) claim that they adopted Freire's (1970/2000) 'notion of dialogue: that is we relied on **reciprocal conversations** infused with trust and respect'. We urge readers and listeners to consider the voices of the children and create another model of pedagogy and become architects of our own education in New Zealand for all our children. As they point out, 'we cannot simply repair the structures that have been handed down to us' (Kelly, R.D., 2001, p.xiii; cited in Sheets, R.H. 2001).

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