MODELS OF MĀORI EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: BEYOND THE "CLASS" AND "ETHNICITY" DEBATE

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ABSTRACT *The gap between the educational achievements of Māori and non-Māori continues to be a matter of concern for policymakers and everyone concerned with social inequality in New Zealand. Data from the Progress at School Project are analysed in the context of the debate about the roles of social class and ethnicity in causal models of relative underachievement.*

INTRODUCTION

The relatively poor educational attainment of Māori students is of major concern to everyone concerned with social equity in New Zealand (Tapine & Waiti, 1997; Te Puni Korkiri, 1997; Webber, 1996). To some extent, the ability of the educational system to bring about tangible changes in the existing state of affairs – to "close the gaps" - depends on having a correct theory about causes. Māori students continue to leave school with lower levels of achievement than pakeha students, and this disparity is perceived as a form of inequality never far from the consciousness of policy-makers in education (Chapple, Jefferies & Walker, 1997). But Māori are also a largely working-class community, and the question of whether the attainments of Māori students are generally characteristic of those with that class location is frequently encountered. The issues are, in fact, more complex than they might at first appear and require some familiarity with statistical procedures, a willingness to set aside political and cultural biases, and more than a little tolerance for conceptual analysis.

The most influential theory, which insists that differences between Māori and pakeha achievement constitute evidence both of the failure of the educational system and of its institutional racism, may have little to offer but the straightforward appeal of tautology. What empirical research is available suggests, in fact, that the effective variables contributing to differential attainment between social groups are not uniquely associated with ethnic origin. Chapple (2000), in a widely cited paper, argues, for example, that the Māori and New Zealand European populations cannot easily be distinguished with respect to hourly income and labour market participation when class-related factors, mainly education, are taken into account. The hotly contested debate may, in fact, be one of those noted for generating more heat than light. This realist and radical approach to the study of social differences in education recognises the integrity of the distinct levels of structure, disposition and practice in a comprehensive sociological model. It is ever necessary to work to overcome the unhelpful dualities (qualitative *versus* quantitative, historical *versus* evidence-based, critical *versus* positivist, and so on), that continue to hinder conventional thinking in social sciences. Critical theory can assist this process of theoretical and practical reconceptualisation (Bourdieu, 2000).

The Progress at School Project (Harker, 2000) studied the attainments of 5,400 students (including 1,015 Māori) throughout their secondary education. The research is able to draw on one of the largest samples of Māori students ever generated for the purposes of educational research. There is every reason, therefore, to grasp the opportunity presented to study the causes of relative educational success and failure in this ethnic population. Two standard techniques exist to investigate the complex relationships between the relevant variables in this field. The most commonly employed, regression analysis, is regarded also as the most powerful, but the interpretation of statistical models can be troublesome even for specialists and is all but closed to non-specialists. In this respect, tabular models have the advantage of a more elementary structure and, in addition, often demonstrate the effective relationships between crucial variables more clearly than regression models (Boudon, 1982). In the following analyses, both techniques are used to model the structure of group differences in educational attainment. Table 1 presents the essential relationships between school attainment, social class, and prior ability for Māori and pakeha secondary school students. Table 2 reports the results of regression analysis to compare actual and predicted attainments. Ability scores and social class are used to predict School Certificate English attainment in order to examine systematic variation between actual and predicted scores. As both methods describe relationships within the same data, the interpretations they offer are obviously complementary. Table 3 examines the association between literate resources and social class in both populations. The discussion places the findings reported in the context of the debate about class, cognitive ability, and cultural practices, with specific reference to educational policy.

STATISTICAL MODELS OF ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS

The key variables in the analysis of social differences in educational performance are social class, ethnic groups (where relevant), prior ability, and school attainment. Table 1 allows these relationships to be examined: it reports Sixth Form and Bursary attainment within ability quintiles by social class in both ethnic populations. The data show the primary and secondary effects are those of social class on ability and attainment. In Boudon's (1971) terms, the variance attributed to prior attainment demonstrates a primary effect of class socialisation, and that which remains when ability is controlled demonstrates a secondary effect. Table 1 enables the primary effects of social class on secondary attainment to be examined and compared between ethnic groups. There are major differences in the ethnic distribution of ability. Among pakeha students, 26.4% are found in the highest quintile, but only 9.2% of Māori. Correspondingly, 27.4% of all Māori are in the lowest quintile compared with 12.4% of pakeha. The secondary effects of social class on School Certificate attainment are relatively minor in comparison with those of the Year 9 ability scores. In fact, the influence of social class on attainment within ability bands is stronger for pakeha than Māori students. It will be noted of pakeha students, for example, that 67.2% of those from non-manual backgrounds attain bursary, but only 42.5% of those from low-skilled and non-employed backgrounds. A secondary effect of this kind can be detected for pakeha in each ability quintile and at both levels of attainment. The data for Māori students, however, show no convincing trend in this respect. The absence of a secondary effect for Māori may be due to the relatively small sample, or it may be a substantive finding reflecting equity provision for this group. With this partial

exception, however, these data do not indicate a different pattern of attainment associated with ethnic origin.

Table 1: School Attainment by Social Class and Ability

	Māori			Pakeha		
	N.	Sixth Form	Bursary	N.	Sixth Form	Bursary
Ability Quintile						
High						
N-Man.	58	72.4	58.6	628	82.8	67.2
Skilled	8	75.0	12.5	80	79.1	59.7
Other	27	70.4	63.0	54	67.7	42.5
High Av.						
N-Man.	48	75.0	41.7	484	75.2	50.6
Skilled	41	68.3	26.8	175	74.3	42.3
Other	62	75.0	27.4	147	63.3	34.0
Average						
N-Man.	67	53.7	12.0	346	66.2	35.0
Skilled	47	51.1	14.9	151	76.2	30.5
Other	108	53.7	12.0	185	62.7	16.8
Low Av.						
N-Man.	62	53.2	4.8	256	56.3	18.0
Skilled	54	50.0	7.4	146	54.1	12.3
Other	155	40.6	8.9	170	46.5	10.6
Low						
N-Man.	46	34.8	13.0	138	51.4	10.9
Skilled	43	41.9	2.3	100	32.0	4.0
Other	189	34.9	1.1	179	29.6	5.0

Note: Ability quintile is based on Year 9 PAT and TOSCA scores (Reid et al., 1981; Reid & Elley, 1991). "Sixth Form" indicates completion of Year 12. "Bursary" includes any level of attainment in the national university bursary examination. Social class is based on the Elley-Irving socio-economic index of occupations: "N-Man" [non-manual] includes E-I categories 1-3; "Skilled" is E-I category 4; and "Other" includes the lower skilled E-I categories 5 and 6 with beneficiaries (Elley & Irving, 1985).

The next question is whether there are differences in the patterns of progress and decline at secondary school associated with prior ability and ethnic origin. There are a number of technical difficulties to be faced in the statistical modelling of educational progress between two assessment points. The regression method adopted in this study is robust and has the advantage of including students at all levels of prior ability (McCall, Beach & Lau, 2000).

Table 2: Progress and Decline at Secondary School

	Ability Quintile									
Relative Change	High		High Av		Average		Low Av		Low	
	Ma[1]	Pa[2]	Ma[1]	Pa[2]	Ma[1]	Pa[2]	Ma[1]	Pa[2]	Ma[1]	Pa[2]
High Plus	13.4	16.1	13.4	16.1	13.6	15.6	8.8	17.7	16.0	17.0
Mod. Plus	12.2	13.5	8.7	18.4	13.6	16.6	19.4	16.3	15.1	16.5
None	32.9	41.0	46.5	37.3	40.3	43.6	34.4	40.6	38.7	33.5
Mod. Neg.	17.1	13.7	15.0	13.6	16.9	12.1	15.6	10.6	11.3	14.3
High Neg.	24.4	15.7	16.5	14.6	15.6	12.1	21.9	14.8	18.9	18.7
N.	82	802	127	700	154	598	160	406	182	106
	100	100	100.1	100	100	100	100.1	100	100	100

Note: Relative change between Year 9 ability score and School Certificate English given in percentages. The scale is: "High Plus", > 1.0; "Mod[erate] Plus", < 0.5 and > -0.5; None, ± 0.5; "Mod. Neg[ative]", < -0.5 and > -I.0; and "High Neg.", > -1.0. The ability quintile was calculated from Year 9 PAT and TOSCA scores.
[1] = Maori
[2] = Pakeha

The analysis of relative progress reported in Table 2 enables the difference between actual and expected School Certificate attainment to be compared for Māori and New Zealand European students. The residuals from a regression of School Certificate English marks on ability scores and social class show, for example, that 13.4% of Māori students in the highest ability quintile demonstrated a relative gain of at least one standard deviation in School Certificate English (the highest gain, of 1.8 standard deviation, was from an ability score of 1.21 to a School Certificate mark of 87); 12.2% gained at least 0.5 standard deviations; 32.9% maintained their relative position; and 17.1% declined by at least 0.5 standard deviations, and 24.4 declined by one standard deviation or more (the most spectacular by –2.1 standard deviations, from -1.0 to an English mark of 14). The proportions of students demonstrating relative change on two sets of scores is given by the nature of statistical regression - about 16% of scores will show a movement of plus or minus one standard deviation – but which students they will

be is certainly not a matter of chance. There is only a weak difference in the pattern of Māori and pakeha students in respect of their relative progress or decline at secondary school. The proportion of high ability students who decline sharply appears to be greater than expected, but the numbers in this group are relatively small, and it is not clear that the similar deviation observed in low average students is sufficient to establish a significant overall trend. There is actually a more spectacular difference to be observed in SC English between the relative performance of boys and girls than between ethnic groups: for example, 22.2% of high ability boys decline by at least one standard deviation compared with 9.5% of girls.

The evidence presented indicates, therefore, that upper school attainment reflects prior ability and that progress and decline at this stage is not significantly associated with ethnic origin. A further question remains to be addressed: what is the relationship between social class, ethnic group, and literate resources? Table 1 indicates, *inter alia*, that a greater proportion of pakeha students within each broad social class category are included in the higher ability quintiles. Whereas, for example, 57.2% of pakeha students are from non-manual families, and that 33.9% of these are in the first ability quintile, the respective figures for Māori are but 27.7% and 20.6%. "Non-manual" is, of course, a broad category (imposed by the relatively small number of professional Māori families), and the proportions of higher professional, lower professional, and service workers within each ethnic group are not identical. Indeed, even within the categories of the full Elley-Irving socio-economic scale significant differences associated with ethic group exist. There is a particularly large difference, for example, between the ability scores of Māori and pakeha students from the upper professional category. This partly reflects the tendency for pakeha to hold the highest positions: where pakeha occupations are predominantly secondary school teachers, administrative civil servants and senior business executives with a high proportion of scientists, doctors, dentists, and lawyers, Māori occupations tend to be predominantly secondary school teachers, primary school principals, and executives within Māori organisations. Many of these latter, in particular, have very low educational qualifications. Although the proportion of workers with postgraduate qualifications is considerable in both groups (European 59% and Māori 46%) there is a telling difference in the proportion of those without qualifications, which is just 11% in the European group and 37% in the Māori group. Social class and educational qualification act in these models as indicator variables for the presence of literate socialisation processes within families.

The relationship between literate resources, social class, and ethnic origin is of critical importance and merits a closer examination. Information about literate resources and practices was obtained by questionnaires to students and to a sample of parents. The responses were factor-analysed to create an index to explore the within-class distribution of "cultural capital". Table 3 presents the essential findings.

Table 3: Observed and Predicted SC English and Literate Resources

		Literate Resources ("Cultural Capital")							
		Māori				Pakeha			
Social class		Low	N	High	N.	Low	N	High	N
Professional									
	obs	47.0	19	57.4	29	56.2	106	64.7	324
	pred	*50.2*	*30*	*57.9*	*31*	*55.1*	*123*	*61.6*	*352*
Intermediate									
	obs	50.5	36	53.1	23	55.6	248	60.0	254
	pred	*50.2*	*41*	*54.5*	*28*	*54.8*	*279*	*59.1*	*275*
Skilled									
	obs	49.1	38	58.9	8	54.0	170	55.7	121
	pred	*48.5*	*50*	*50.0*	*12*	*53.6*	*197*	*56.3*	*128*
Low Skilled									
	obs	48.7	42	45.2	20	53.0	135	55.0	66
	pred	*47.1*	*67*	*52.9*	*23*	*51.9*	*171*	*54.1*	*81*
Non-working									
	obs	45.6	21	44.2	5	50.4	42	51.6	19
	pred	*46.7*	*35*	*44.5*	*8*	*50.1*	*56*	*52.6*	*23*

Note: An unrotated factor score derived from four items obtained from parent and student questionnaire responses was used to construct an index of literate capital. It includes an index of cultural activities with parents (loading 0.63), number of books owned by students (0.58), parental reading (0.61), and parent qualifications (0.64). Scores on this index were divided at the mean to give a crude indicator of "cultural capital". Mean School Certificate English marks are shown for each social class and ethnic category with the mark predicted by regression analysis adjusting for Year 9 ability test scores.

Although an index of "cultural capital" of this sort is almost intolerably crude, these data do hint at a material variability in family resources that sustain effective practices of literate socialisation. There is an association, not surprisingly, between social class and literate capital: 71.4% of professional families were in the upper levels of the literate capital index, as against 25.4% of those from the non-working category. The comparison of observed and predicted School Certificate English results is particularly interesting. Students in the upper level of the literate

resources index might be expected to gain higher School Certificate marks than predicted by their ability score, and those with lower scores to gain lower marks, but this pattern is not observed. It will be noted, however, that the average English mark of students with high levels of literate capital is almost always greater than those with low levels, and it is possible that the direct potential of literate family resources to shape ability scores is more or less fully realised by entry to secondary school. There is, however, an important point to make. Regression analysis depends on the presence of scores to regress, and it is evident from Table 3 that the retention rate to School Certificate is far from perfect. In fact, there is a systematic variation associated with literate resources, social class, and ethnic origin in the proportion of students attempting the examination. The apparent retention rates for Māori (and pakeha) students are, for those in the upper and lower levels of the literate resource index respectively, 83.3% (91.3%) and 25.4% (84.9%). It is clear that retention rates are better for pakeha than Māori, but the figures would have to be adjusted for prior ability in order to make a sound comparison, and the issue at stake in this argument is the significance of *within class differences in literate resources* in both populations.

The "is it class or ethnicity?" question is more easily posed than answered. In the empiricist tradition of evidence-based research it is assumed that scales of socio-economic status and ethnic classification can be treated as measures and employed, subject to the technicist criteria of validity and reliability, in the statistical analysis of variance. In this procedure, ability, social class, and similar social variables, are regarded as prior to ethnic origin, and analyses usually show that most of the observed difference between the educational performance of ethnic groups can be accounted for by environmental variables (Fergusson, Lloyd and Harwood, 1991; Swann Report, 1985). This technique applied to the Progress at School data reduces the apparent Māori and pakeha Year 9 test scores difference by 0.32 standard deviations: from 8.1 IQ-type points to 3.3. It is then a matter of definition that the remaining variance is due to ethnic group. This nominalist and anti-realist interpretation, however, requires the assumption that social class and other variables are not affected by systematic measurement error, and that assumption is false. There is good evidence, in fact, that literate family resources and practices are *not* distributed equally by ethnicity within social class categories. It has already been noted that the ethnic distribution of occupations within socio-economic categories is not the same. The Progress at School data show, moreover, that literate resources are also dissimilar. pakeha students of skilled manual origin are likely to possess more books than Māori students from this class (the figures are, respectively, 0-5 books, 14.0% and 24.3%), and their parents have a higher level of education (those with no educational qualifications number, respectively, 37.7% and 50.5%). As a result of this systematic within-class difference, some of the variance unexplained by social class is attributed to ethnicity, although the actual reason, family resources and practices, is the same. In one sense, this pattern might be regarded as an effect of ethnicity (or even racism) because it indicates that the literate resources and practices normally associated with social class are not possessed by Māori and European families to the same extent. However, in another sense it is family resources of a certain kind - which should be recognised on theoretical grounds as class resources - which are effective in the determination of educational attainment. These aspects of the argument, essentially conceptual and perhaps political, are not open to resolution by empirical research.

The findings of these three statistical models of attainment and progress may now be summarised: prior ability, associated with social class and ethnic group,

accounts substantially for the observed differences in school attainment between these categories. This statement raises, however, the vexed question of the status accorded to ability scores and their interpretation.

THE PROBLEM OF INTELLIGENCE AND "ABILITY"

The importance of IQ or ability tests in multivariate models of class differences in attainment is evident in every well-designed study of access to education. The best predictor of educational attainment in any subject is a test of attainment in that subject at an earlier time. Tests of cognitive ability, designed as a matter of validity to provide the highest possible correlation with attainment in academic subjects, are also good predictors of school success. Indeed, scores from IQ-type tests usually account for about 40% of the variance in academic attainment, by far the largest proportion that can be allocated. This is why IQ theory remains so influential despite the barrage of criticism directed at its foundations: it appears to explain the largest proportion of the variance in academic attainment. The problem is that the interpretation of multivariate research findings depends not so much on theory, and certainly not on IQ theory, but on the fact that scores on attainment tests broadly related to performance at school at one time almost always correlate with scores on similar tests at a later time. It will be useful to consider the current state of the art in this area. The task has been made easier by a review prepared with the authority of the American Psychological Association in response to public interest in intelligence stimulated by *The Bell Curve* (Murray & Herrnstein, 1994). Those familiar with the history of intelligence theory will recognise in the overview provided by Neisser et al. (1996) a remarkably cautious statement of "knowns and unknowns":

(i) individual variation in genetic endowment contributes substantially to intellectual differences,
(ii) environmental factors contribute to individual differences in intelligence (and may be wholly responsible for group differences),
(iii) differences in nutrition, including at the pre-natal stage, affect intellectual development,
(iv) neural information processing speeds are likely, although the mechanisms are obscure, to be involved in intellectual differences,
(v) mean IQ test scores are rising due to environmental reasons not fully understood,
(vi) mean IQ scores of United States African-Americans are rising in comparison with whites,
(vii) IQ tests do not sample the full range of intelligent behaviour, and
(viii) the link between intelligence and learning is highly mediated by other influences.

The popular argument that intelligence is a social construction, and hence need not be treated as a causal property of individuals, fails to address the issues at stake. It is one thing to dismiss standard IQ theory as incoherent (it *is* incoherent), but it is quite another to believe that individual differences in developed cognitive skills are irrelevant to the production of educational inequality. The problem is this: even if every proposition of standard IQ theory is false it would not matter as far as the development of effective cognitive skills in socially variable early childhood environments is concerned. The Ptolemaic theory of heavenly crystal

spheres proved to be absurdly wrong, but observations and methods of calculation within that framework did enable the apparent movement of the planets to be predicted to the practical satisfaction of mariners and others for many centuries. It similarly may not matter, for certain purposes and in certain respects, that IQ theory is wrong. If the neural structures that do our thinking at that level develop differentially, with more or less permanent effect, as a result of the environments in which children are raised, that will be "theory" enough to give assessments of developed cognitive skill a role in the explanation of social variation in access to education. In other words, it is likely that some differences in test performance and schoolwork are due to differences in relevant brain properties. The effect of class background on intellectual development, almost certainly generated by the processes of linguistic and cognitive socialisation, is evident in these data. To be brought up in a middle-class family adds about half a standard deviation to one's score on a test that, notwithstanding all the criticism that can justly be directed at IQ theory, assesses, in large part, those linguistic and cognitive abilities that contribute to success at school (Bernstein,1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

THE PROBLEM OF CLASS CULTURES

The conceptualisation of working-class sub-cultures, particularly as they influence responses to schooling, is a bitterly contested area. At the level of structure it is necessary to identify the effective properties involved in the generation of socialised dispositions; at the level of disposition it is necessary to engage with psychology to recognise the cognitive and affectual schemes that generate action within established practices; and at the level of practice it is necessary to delineate, through anthropological techniques, the contours of more or less socially recognised ways of accomplishing individual and collective tasks. The struggle to understand the causal links between forms of class-cultural action has taken the debate from the early concepts of "lower-class behaviour", through the "culture of poverty thesis", to the structural "problematic" of working-class culture. American sociologists, drawing on a curious amalgam of Pavlovian stimulus response psychology and Freudian psychoanalysis, developed in the 1930s a model of lower-class behaviour characterised by lack of impulse control and a corresponding inability to defer gratification. Such responses were regarded as adapted to the social conditions of poverty - for there was no advantage in self-restraint in an environment that provided few opportunities to profit by it and no sense in planning when the future was unpredictable - and deeply ingrained through family and community socialisation practices. The emerging "culture of poverty" theory gained its definitive explication in the work of Oscar Lewis (1964). As a result of global transformation - colonisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation - masses of people, sometimes entire populations, have been forced to live in conditions of abject and permanent poverty. The culture of poverty, as a "a design for living", was defined by its structural material resources, its characteristic psychological traits, and its typical behavioural patterns. The poor showed, "a strong present-time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification and plan for the future, a sense of resignation and fatalism based upon the realities of their different life situations, a belief in male superiority . . . a corresponding martyr complex among women and, finally, a high tolerance for psychopathological pathology of all sorts" (Lewis, 1964: xxvii). As a "way of life, remarkably stable and persistent, passed down from generation to

generation along family lines" (Ibid. xxiv), this sub-culture structured the lives of millions. The more conventional culture of poverty thesis was decisively rejected in the 1970s, if not earlier, as a deficit theory that effectively blamed the victims for a lack of resources and opportunities they were structurally denied. A version with acceptable radical credentials was, however, to retain some authority. Fanon (1967), writing in the context of the 1950s French-Algerian conflict, declared that distinctive mental states and associated behaviour prevalent in the Algerian population, the despair, self-hatred, and internally directed violence, so evident to a psychiatrist, were a cultural response, not to poverty, but to colonial oppression. It is still possible in New Zealand to detect the reverberations of this influential thesis.

In this context the study of working-class culture was also given a new "problematic". Class position is essentially determined by an economic relationship. Capitalism imposes a definitive and antagonistic relationship between those who possess productive resources and those who do not and who, therefore, must sell their labour-power in the market. As working-class people experience exploitation at the site of economic production they produce a distinctive culture of resistance containing within it the possibility both for organised solidarity and anarchic disruption of a largely symbolic form. Willis's (1978) account of how working-class "lads" living within these forms gained little or nothing from their education, as they chose to celebrate the practices of their own class culture and resist that of the school, remains the most widely known of an entire genre of work with this theme. These approaches to working-class culture and educational attainment are marked by important theoretical differences. They share, however, a broad agreement that children raised in working-class families acquire habituated cognitive and non-cognitive schemes - given expression in linguistic practices - that orient them towards the particular rather than the universal, the concrete rather than the abstract, the practical rather than the theoretical, and so on. This is probably the essential core of all the labour that that has been expended on the study of working-class cultural forms and practices in relation to education.

THE PROBLEM FOR PRACTICE

Two principal mechanisms drive the underachievement of working-class students as a class. The most important, in most countries where competent social research is carried out, is the distribution, as a result of class variations in early childhood socialisation practices, of those specialised forms of cognitive functioning demanded by the educational system. It is always important to recognise that the effective communicative practices, which must range from bodily contact to bedtime stories, have a continuous distribution. IQ-test scores are not simply high in the middle-class and low in the working-class - the correlation is actually only moderate - but significantly higher in the upper professional than the lower professional class. These scores are relatively stable (Silva & Stanton, 1996), and they test the same general cognitive operations involved in schoolwork. It is not consistent with a realist conception of scientific knowledge to deny the significance of these relationships. The second major cause of poor educational attainment is the existence of a loosely related cluster of practices adopted, predominantly by working-class students, from a repertoire within their class and ethnic communities. The implications of all this for practice must be discussed.

Suppose some students perform better than others because they work harder; that they work harder because they aspire to certain forms of professional and technical labour; and that they hold these aspirations largely as a consequence of being raised in class-located families. The analysis points to the necessity for a model that incorporates – in the reverse the order – the levels of structure, disposition, and practice. Transforming cultural practices can only be effective if people are able to learn new goals and new ways of achieving them. This is necessarily a process that requires internal critique. The school has a particularly difficult task: on the one hand it must avoid a "culture of poverty" thesis in its crude forms, and on the other it must facilitate, or at least not inhibit, the processes of cultural change its students are engaged in. A Māori sixth form student, one of many interviewed in our studies, provides an illustration of rethinking by young people. Arohia struggled to explain the difference between the educational practices of her own parents and those she wanted to adopt for herself. She protests at one point, under the strain of reflecting on practice in abstract concepts, that she did not think about these issues, but it would be disingenuous to accept this comment at face value. This young woman had a child of her own, six-months-old and cared for by her mother while she was at school, and these questions of practice engaged her directly. Arohia could see that her parents were keen for her to do well, ambitious for her and the family, but that they held those ambitions against the grain of their own better assessment of reality. There is a suspicion of bad faith in the relationship between parents and their children in this whole area as unrealistic expectations are maintained. The frustration experienced by the students begins to tell and Arohia struggled to express her thoughts. It was difficult for her to do this, of course, there was the respect and loyalty she owed to her parents, but at the same time her developing sense of other strategies of parental support for education needed to be voiced:

> But still it's sort of hard to listen to your parents when they're not really doing it themselves? When they haven't done it themselves? Because, I mean, they're not practising what they preach. They just, you know, they're more like hypocrites, telling you what to do when they do it. Or by telling you what not to do when they do it themselves, or telling you what to do, when they do it. [. . .]
> *So do you find you don't sort of respect the advice they're giving you?*
> Nah! Oh, I dunno. Not really, because, 'cus, you know, 'cus they don't do it themselves. So you can't really respect someone for telling you to do something when they do it themselves. [. . .] Because, sometimes, like – sometimes, like, you're told you can do - you can do something, from your parents, but in reality they know you can't do it. Like - I don't know - 'cus they know your personality and stuff, and they know, they know how you work at home and, and how much you're devoted - you devote yourself to study - and things like that? When they tell you that you could do it if you wanted to – Oh! I don't know, I haven't, I never think about it! [. . .] Like how they say that want you to - how they say that they want you to make something really big out of yourself! [. . .] But they don't really help you to do it? I reckon that's true. Like, they'll say that, you know, they want me to have a education, they want me to have this, and this, and this – they - but they don't always help you to get those things? [. . .] 'Cus, like, they leave it up to you to get?
> *How could they help you?*

> Mm. I think talking to them a lot more! [*laughs*] [. . .] By talking to them a lot more and, you know, finding out what your kids do at school: not just like, "How was your day?" "Fine" - that's it! It's like, get more into what, what they're doing in class and stuff, and things like that.

This is a direct criticism of the family experiences Arohia has known, and she expresses what might be a manifesto on the way she intends to bring up her own children, "get more into what they're doing in class and stuff, and things like that". Arohia will, as a result of her own education, have the personal resources to be able to do this. But unless this young woman does subscribe to some form of deficit theory (but this must be an unhelpful term to apply to the theory that cognitive abilities with a lasting character are developed in early childhood as the result of specialised socialisation routines), she may be that much less able to conceptualise and adopt new forms of practice. A school inhibited by fear of deficit theory will similarly have that much more difficulty in developing a programmes that will assist her personal and social development. Of course, it may not be possible to delineate the social structures definitively responsible for the dispositions and observed practices common to social groups: even to identify effective frames of mind and action poses difficulties that are not resolved without appropriate training and skill, but the effort may need to be made. It is hard to modify habituated ways of life, but it is evident that many cultural initiatives (even if given characteristic expression in a rhetorical discourse that misrepresents the structural origins of the practices it finds problematic) are aimed precisely at that task (Poata-Smith, 1996; Rata, 2000).

CONCLUSION

There must be teachers who suspect that the immediate effective cause of Māori educational underachievement is in large measure a deeply institutionalised Anglo-Māori working-class culture with destructive consequences for the aspirations and self-confidence of young people affected by it. The debate about class and ethnicity - easily given an inappropriate reification and relationship of contest by the positivist concepts of measurement adopted in quantitative research - takes an entirely different meaning in anthropological discussion. Webster (1998), for example, has correctly noted that the "lived culture" of most Māori families, a life of struggle common within the working-class, must be distinguished from the concept of culture as ideology that dominates the political and popular division of culture in New Zealand. The implications of all this need to be worked out: the greater our concept of reality, the more likely it is that the social practices at all sites that generate educational inequality can be interrupted through effective policies at the distinct levels of structure, disposition, and practice. There is no shortage of commentators, of course, able to give a reasonably accurate account of how Māori people have come to be a "brown proletariat" (Walker, 1990). The Marxian account of the making of the working-class, a process that everywhere necessarily included the alienation of land and the development of distinctive cultural patterns, has not been entirely forgotten. The problem of studying working-class cultures in sociology is fraught with difficulties: nevertheless, a decent self-restraint in the discussion of this area of social practice is one thing, and a collectively policed editorial censorship is another. In this context, Flynn (2000: 66), bluntly states, "[t]he emerging American liberal-left . . . regards as indecent questioning beliefs no sane person can hold". The same point,

only slightly more restrained, is made by Bourdieu (1999: 187), who warns that, [i]t is essential to checkmate explanations whose highly fantastic nature would be immediately apparent if they did not awaken the oldest phantasms of the Western tradition". All the fear and guilt of a racist and colonial past – a past ever in our present – should not be grounds sufficient to abandon a commonsense grasp of reality. Whether class or ethnicity is responsible for the underachievement of Māori students is an inherently political question and cannot be given a merely technical answer. If accounts that refer negatively to family practices and individual dispositions are banned as deficit theories, then nothing remains with causal efficacy but the school itself, and, as it is conventional in this field to regard evidence of difference as evidence of inequality, and evidence of inequality as evidence of system failure, a surprisingly attractive prefabricated critical theory is always available.

The hypothesis that Māori students as a whole underachieve in school basically because of the class-resource-based practices of their families (necessarily, of course, in a school system with a given constitution), is readily criticised as a deficit theory that ignores the relevance of Māori culture, and as an actual exemplification of the neglect with which Māori culture is treated by mainstream academic discourse (Jones, 1999; Mead, 1996). Nevertheless, that the bulk of the Māori population is located in the working-class, indeed, into the lower skilled fraction, and as a consequence of that has adopted, through processes of acculturation into specific class cultures, practices with a distinctive character is almost beyond dispute. The fact has hardly gone unnoticed by culturalist critics who, indeed, have made it a central plank in their narrative of colonisation and assimilation. Sociologists who work within a family resource framework, therefore, may be permitted in the interests of realism to investigate the "lived cultures" around them without prejudice to the homage due to the authoritatively defined traditional cultural practices - whatever they might be - of the *tangata whenua* of Aotearoa.

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