Chapter Ten

Conclusion: Looking Back, Moving Forward.

The introduction to this thesis identified three aims. They were:

• to record both student and work based experiences of six Maori women who held positions of responsibility as educators in general stream, bilingual and total immersion programmes in the primary sector;

• to identify the strategies used by the participants to negotiate institutional terrains in order to sustain their self ascribed identity and attain educational success; and

• to investigate correlations between student strategies used by the women to attain school based credentials and the strategies they employed as teachers to negotiate their work based contexts.

The thesis has investigated the experiences of eight successful Maori women who held positions of responsibility in the primary sector. It has theorised that beneath the homogenising titles of principal and senior teacher, were educational experiences that set these women as Maori women, apart from their colleagues. The thesis has shown that the pathways to success were not simple; nor could success be taken for granted based on principles of meritocracy. The women's pathways through school were often tortuous taking them through convoluted highways and byways, potentially denying them the credentials that would allow them entry into teaching.

The thesis has argued that discrepancies between the liberal notions of free public education (based on egalitarian and meritocratic principles) juxtaposed with the educational realities experienced by the participants, identifies the problematic - situated across multifarious sites and within multifaceted issues.
It is paradoxical that these women, as part of a larger group of Maori 'who make it', are often used to defend the meritocratic myth of schools. The group are aware they are used as examples of the systems 'neutrality', providing the living 'proof' that Maori can and do succeed. This, however, ignores or fails to ask about the costs that lie in the wake of their attaining credentials. Rather than negotiating educationally neutral terrains, these women are driven, at least in part, by their own grit and determination to negate negative experiences. This group is motivated to succeed in spite of subliminal messages that see them less than equal in institutional contexts.

Although the thesis investigated the three aims - 'to record', 'to identify' and 'to investigate' at different levels (theoretical and practical) and in different contexts (schooling, educational and personal), as identified in chapter five, this research has some limitations. The number of participants involved in this research were, for example, members of a rare population, because the number of Maori women educators in educational administration is small. Therefore no generalisations are claimed. This position is clearly identified and firmly held by the participants themselves, who were strongly resistant to the fact that they might be cast as holding 'the' Maori voice. Nevertheless, important issues are raised by this research and themes have been identified that warrant further consideration.

Chapter one acknowledged the participants self ascribed identity by foregrounding the way in which women are represented within Pre-Colonial Maori archives. The ways in which female characters are represented in those archives across cosmological narratives, in narratives of lore and in a number of tribal narratives suggest that rather than the participants' and their current leadership roles being atypical, culturally inappropriate and somehow deviating from the norm, they are competently diverse and normal.
The cosmological narratives interlocated female and male elements together representing both as necessary, active constituents of a whole that engaged in complimentary relations rather than as superordinate and subordinate dichotomies. Narratives of lore positioned women as authoritative with the power to change the destiny of humanity. They were further identified as bearers of knowledge and the imparters of technology often enabling male counterparts to achieve feats often (in the western archive) solely attributed to men. Tribal narratives indicated that women were not solely the appendages of men; women in their own right, provided channels through which access to all the social, political and economic rights within their respective tribal groups could be claimed. Across a number of iwi narratives, women are immortalised as respected leaders, as fearless and compassionate community members, admired for their bravery, remembered for their intellect and noted for displaying self determination. They have been imaged as powerful allies whose support and counsel was often solicited. The analysis in Chapter one therefore drew out how Maori women have an archive of knowledge that both centralises and normalises the participation of women in a number of diverse roles across numerous domains.

In contrast, Chapter two tracked the evolution of research on leadership in the western archive. A critical overview of influential empirical studies and later critique in the literature reveals that much is still yet to be discovered about the nature of leadership as a socially constructed phenomena. This remains the case even for white, middle class men who have historically constituted the focus of inquiry. Women within this archive are by and large invisible. When present they appear deficient and incapable in terms of gendered attributes and characteristics. White feminist critique situate the problematic within androcentric and patriarchal hegemony, perpetuating male centred norms. Centring the socio-historic 'norms' that are culture bound and gender specific as though they were universally applicable is particularly problematic when they then become the yardstick by which subsequent groups are measured. The outcome is a
set of gate keeping mechanisms that act in exclusionary ways to discount women's participation in many leadership roles.

Chapter two further investigated critique from black feminists who situated the problematic within the discursive practice of racism drawing links to androcentricity and class issues that were seen as secondary complicating factors. As the argument suggested, many women of colour must first contend with their difference as deviance not in terms of gender but in terms of ideas about race and how the stereotypical assumptions about the ethnic group to which they belong are played out in institutional contexts. Analyses derived from mana wahine discourse while informed by both previous analytic positions, further critiques the diametrically opposed positions of individualism and collectivism. Sustaining mana wahine is equally contingent on sustaining mana tane, mana whanau, mana whenua, mana Maori. The position of Maori women is thus grounded in a particular set of historical, socio-political circumstances that provides a legacy of deviancy and deficiency derived in part from the very institutions in which the participants in this study work. As educators they work in institutions that have historically had a vested interest in perpetuating particular notions of difference that serves potentially to deny participation at any level in the professions, prior to considering any possibility of attaining positions of responsibility.

Chapter three investigated the literature that combined, 'Maori, and 'student', in educational contexts elucidating the existence of 'glass ceilings' occurring at school. This body of knowledge indicates that the experiences of Maori in general, and Maori girls in particular is detrimentally different to their non-Maori peers. The literature is presented as a typology that tracks the development of six stages of research that has emerged in western discourse. The typology includes the types of questions asked, the approaches taken and ensuing outcomes, commencing with the statistical documentation of Maori as a distinct group in education. That first stage indicates significant disparities between Maori and non-Maori in terms of access, retention rates
and educational outcomes. The second stage provided a focus on Maori as disadvantaged and subordinate as a way of explaining previously noted discrepancies between Maori and Pakeha. The majority of these studies resulted in cultural deficit views of Maori and the development of remedial programmes. In stage three a search for successful Maori students was instigated, supporting claims of institutional neutrality and success based on egalitarian and meritocratic principles that sustained the status quo. The fourth stage marked the commencement of research studying Maori on their own terms. In contrast to stages two and three, research identified critical institutional factors acting in culturally biased and exclusionary ways as providing the previously indicated glass ceilings thus denying many the necessary institutional rewards that allow access into professional career tracks. Stage five emerged as Maori academics positioned themselves as a challenge to theory, advancing analyses of existing theories and theorising how they might change in order to incorporate Maori positions. The most recent addition to the literature, at stage six, incorporates the work of those engaged in transformation of theory developed from kaupapa Maori and Maori centred approaches to education.

Chapter four, as the first of two methodological chapters, considered theoretical issues around the development of Maori research approaches. It was argued in the chapter that the philosophical and methodological orientation of the researcher in relation to the researched, impacted significantly on the research process. The position adopted by the researcher not only influenced what was perceived to be a worthwhile site of study, but also affected the choice of methodological approach used and subsequently the types of research outcomes achieved. Chapter five trackec the stages through which the research progressed. The discussion documented the impact of the pilot study contributing to the abandonment of a formalised schedule of questioning and the adoption of an open ended dialogic exchange between the participant and the researcher. The three types of interviews: individual, paired and group focus were
enacted cognisant of the participants identity, providing the motivation to enact the ethical principles of mana, mauri, mahitahi and maramatanga.

Chapter six utilised the principles of whakapapa to develop an analytic framework through which the women’s institutional experiences could be examined. Through the metaphoric use of patu, the role that relationships between Maori youth, institutional agents, structures and processes play in the wider context of attaining institutional credentials was considered. Utilising patu as the metaphoric vehicle lays claim to an integrative way of describing the experiences of the participants through a framework that examines interconnections in institutional contexts. Applying the descriptive framework and making the links transparent suggests that the attainment of school credentials are neither individually initiated, advanced or attained. Furthermore the ihi and wanawana of patu sometimes active, sometimes passive, carried across the border between the kete and the briefcase, supports and strengthens each participant’s tuara.

Chapter seven engaged with the ways in which the women characterise their self ascribed identity. The organisational schema for understanding the full symbolic significance of patu, (grounded in whakapapa) was replicated in the ways in which participants described themselves. Identity markers identified as significant to and by the group were embedded in a series of intersecting relationships forged with people, land and cultural resources. The metaphoric use of kete whiri characterised how each woman wove defining characteristics into the tension of each emerging pattern. Kete as a completed artefact was also characterised as a cultural repository in which defining attributes and characteristics could be held for future generations.

Chapters eight and nine provide insight into what types of inter-relationships exist between participants and two cultural repositories. These chapters addressed questions of the how and why kind. How and why participants needed to develop
strategies to negotiate institutional terrains that were not particularly sensitive to them as individuals, nor their aspirations, raised many issues in the research. For example issues of racism in its various forms provided the most commonly cited and pervasive factor with which the women had to contend. The complexity of racism is often contradictory in the ways it couches ‘other’ in both attractive and repellent terms (Young 1995; Howe 1997). Attractive as the exotic and compliant indigenous body (Churchill 1992; Howe 1997) provides a venerable school and national icon. For example the appeal of powhiri (welcoming ceremonies) performed by children and staff, otherwise displaced by the overarching structures of institutions, seductively marks for new comers that there is a place for Maori. These same bodies however, are repelled when they refuse to be complicit in their own subjugation. Attempts to acquire a piece of ‘the pie’ through liberal meritocratic principles requires the application of ‘effort’ on far broader fronts than mastery of curricula content alone. They must confront and contend with complying with assimilative ideologies that are culturally incongruent with their primary identity. The ensuing conflict places many at odds with a system because they dare to tarnish, through exposure (by challenging institutions) the fabric of a society that prides itself on egalitarianism and principles of meritocracy.

A number of consistent points were raised throughout the thesis.

In the introduction for example, I outlined how, crossing the borderlands (Jones 1998) and juggling the binaries of home and school and of racism, while also attempting to access the life chances schools represented, necessitated the development of coping strategies (Boykin 1986). The research has illustrated that for all eight Maori women those borderlands and binaries existed.

The women were required to attain credentials that provided the entry criteria to pre-service teacher training. However, as discussed in chapter three, the issue of coping with ‘glass ceilings’ evident in work based analyses of minority groups, was equally
evident in the student experiences of these women. One main divergence between the participants' experiences as students and their teaching experiences, is their relative difference in power. As adults the women may choose to remain in work based situations but as students, compulsion makes their presence not negotiable.

By looking at what the participants did do as students, and believed they should do in school, the research revealed an institutional influence that added to their motivation to succeed that was not otherwise found in the literature. They used negative situations to strengthen their resolve to succeed - seeing success as another form of resistance. For example by being silent, safe spaces were created in which contrary views and their oppositional forms of social critique could be safely held without evoking the antagonism of those in influential positions of power and with credentialling authority.

The women's tenacity in using negative institutional experiences as one of the primary catalysts to succeed became a way of narrating success as another form of resistance. How participants responded to negative messages about Maori in general provided a fuller understanding of what participants 'will or will not do', 'can or can not do' in schools than analyses that take for granted meritocratic principles operating. It is in the moments of time that negative experiences occur that the women (whose lives, self conscious critique, and even the source of their current convictions) pierce the fragile veneer of equal opportunity. In stark contrast to experiencing equal educational opportunities, their narratives highlight the presence of ideological and structural barriers that require strategic negotiation. The requirement to form positive links with institutional agents in schools was problematic particularly when community and national relationships were often characterised by distance and distrust. Nevertheless they were required to engage with curricula that situated them outside institutional norms, contending with ideological structural barriers that reinforced the marginal status of Maori in schools. For example, in some of the schools attended, the
ideological assumptions about the worth or utility of Maori as a language meant it was not offered as a subject choice. In others, outside of Maori Boarding schools, school structures such as timetabling, streaming and the clustering of subjects discounted those in academic classes from selecting Maori language as an option. Where languages such as French and German were accessible to academic students, Maori, clustered with Home economics, Biology and Woodwork, became structurally inaccessible and ideologically considered an incongruent option for academic students.

The ways in which the women contended with these types of issues provided a curious mix of accommodation and resistance as they confronted the ideological and structural organisation that permeated their schools. All the women have accommodated the system in some form in order to be credentialled by it. However, the should not(s), will not(s) and do not(s) expose the ripples of interruption, resistance and outright rebellion that lie in the wake of their success and remain clearly visible in their stories and experiences related throughout the thesis.

Fine (1991) suggested that minority children typically pay the price of the unwelcome guest, learning how 'temporary and probationary' (p. 194) their presence is considered. The level of suspension, expulsion, remediation and truancy amongst the participants highlights their status as indigenous women who become unwelcome guests in the learning house of the coloniser. Having the tenacity to utilise the effects of institutional ambivalence toward purging their educational aspirations manifests itself in the silent pledges I'll show you, explicitly made by six of the women.

The research examined the strategies used by these women in sites that continued to be filled with paradox and contradiction. Caught in the cusp of what is and what could be is the unnerving reality of these women's professional lives. Being reminded on a daily basis of what is through the experiences of our children being consigned to
rubbish heaps not of their own making situates the women in positions where they are as ethical and professional as you can be within a framework, always mindful that our kids can’t afford to wait, they’ve waited and endured particular types of education and institutionalisation for their entire school experience. This provides the impetus to work toward what could be.

The notion of coping at school as students rarely embraced the participants’ ability to engage in curricula content or display technical competencies. Many participants attained academic prizes, the value of which was diminished by accusations of cheating and feelings of uncertainty as to why they did not quite fit in institutional settings. Clearly their success was not attributable solely to their own personal desire to succeed.

Whanau, particularly the role played by women who held high educational aspirations for children, proved critical to success. Many of these women mentors, supported, cajoled, pushed and bullied participants to succeed. They acted as bridging mechanisms across the breach of school and home providing avenues through which access to crucial school based networks could be optimised. Where many incidents at school actively served to dissolve sustaining links with ideological underpinnings of schools, their structure and processes, the same resolve manifest in whanau role models was drawn upon, providing the participants with the tenacity to utilise negative institutional experiences as further motivation to succeed.

In sorting through the data, a typology emerged in relation to change that bears some resemblance to Smith’s (G., 1997) contextualisation of critical theory discussed in Chapter four. A significant component of this group’s praxis could also be understood within the whakapapa frame presented in Chapter six. This is marked by the common attempts of participants to increase their own awareness of the breadth and depth of issues and reintegrate what has otherwise been presented as disparate components
of the educative process. Making transparent the links and connections that exist between education for children and the ideological and operational focus of schools indicates the intent of praxis.

1) A stage of conscientisation - participants questioning taken for granted assumptions about the underlying principles of education. This was based on developing an understanding of what they were dealing with both in terms of their own childhood experiences of education and the experiences of students that they came in contact with on a daily basis.

2) Using the contradictions to identify institutional shortcomings and theorise change. This was about making the links between issues hitherto taught as disparate factors. Fractionating the constituent components of education and treating them as complete separate entities limited participants early in their careers to seeing issues as peculiarities to themselves, the school sites at which they taught, or curricula as separate parcels of knowledge, rather than the ideological underpinnings that flowed beneath them all.

3) Change or praxis was about identifying and developing goals, working toward them in incremental steps and monitoring change - personal and institutional.

4) Monitoring change made many aware of the difficulties associated with effecting positive change as they identified hindrances, such as timetabling, collegial and community resistance and backlash.

The narratives more accurately reflect issues of cultural placement, displacement and replacement. Cultural placement was about learning the place of Maori in educational institutions, and how the women coped with that. Cultural displacement was about a Maori person who has been a minority all of her life who knows and has lived and has to come to rationalise and reconcile, the fact that her Maoriness wasn't considered an asset, and how they coped with that. And finally cultural replacement is about no-ones
land, about being located in particular school sites and feeling *totally displaced and alienated from her people and the very people that she needs to socialise with are also the people who alienate and displace her in a different way. But effecting the same result in this way,* and how they coped with that.

Some issues that need further investigation were raised by the research.

Firstly critical finding derived from the research is the experiences of this group of women, as students and as teachers, (played out at the micro level) is reflective of a far larger drama - not scripted by the participants, but certainly one in which they are caste as the antagonist and must play opposite to the protagonist role. The central tenet that reverberates across the sites is one of explicit and implicit power.

At the core of each level and site for both student and staff is the central issue of power. Power played out at the school level in the structuring of classroom practices, what constitutes core subjects and what is identified as extracurricular. The use of power is further evident in decisions made about whose cultural capital is recognised, resourced and rewarded. At a national level who participates in the development of curricula, who decides resource allocations and how such resources are to be distributed are seen to be crucial. Further to this, is the cost in terms of predefined parameters that accompanies the receipt of such support. At a deeper structural level again are the ideological assumptions that assume 'one people' means a mirror image of those who hold institutional power. An initial attempt has been made in this thesis to unravel some of the complexities by drawing on the network analytic approach advanced by Stanton-Salazar (1997) and developed through a whakapapa frame. A fuller understanding of the specifics of power and the interrelationships involved to make transparent the operation of power at these multiple levels needs to be developed.
Secondly this research focused on eight Maori women working in a publicly funded education system. It illustrated how many consciously brought their cultural identity into the workplace. As Maori women holding positions of responsibility they were all pro-active in the establishment, maintenance and development of educational initiatives that advanced ideological, structural and processual change in order to centralise Maori positions. This thesis has aimed to contribute to an understanding of their unique position. If indigenous women are to (re)claim their voice in public arena and the valuable contribution they make is to be fully recognised however research on a larger scale needs to be undertaken.

A further set of recommendations are made as a result of this research. First that preservice training needs to better reflect and prepare Maori for the nature of their roles that they are expected to fill by both their non-Maori peers and within many Maori communities. Secondly that professional development is required to support those already teaching that befits the nature of the transformation sought by this group. As previously identified by Puketapu (1993) gaps exist in the education of Maori teachers and administrators including socio-political, economic, historical and cultural antecedents to current tensions. Thirdly professional development needs to both recognise and facilitate the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and skills that support the complex role Maori administrators are expected to fulfil. Professional development at present does not reflect the broader influences that have operated to shape the educational experiences of either Maori students or teachers.

In concluding the thesis I leave the last word to the participants.

I have this most wonderful, incredible dream that one day all our children will enter into schools and be valued for what they bring and the strengths they have to contribute.
APPENDICES

1. Information Sheet

2. Consent Form

3. Follow up checklist
Bibliography


Bibliography


Karetu, T., (1990) The Clue to Identity, in New Zealand Geographic. 5.

Kawagley, O., (1997) "Traditional and Western Science- A Yupiak view". Keynote address at NAMSAT (National Association of Maori Mathematicians, Scientists And Technologists) conference Massey University. October.


Lakoff, G., and Johnson, M., (1980) Metaphors We Live By. UP Chicago: Chicago


Taylor, R., (1855) Te Ika a Maui. Werthein and McIntosh: London.


