Chapter Eight: The Briefcase

In the previous chapter the kete was used metaphorically to explore the ways in which the participants wove and continue to weave their self ascribed Maori identity. This chapter is centred on the educational experiences of participants, as students, in educational contexts. The discussion is informed by the metaphoric use of the briefcase. The briefcase, like the kete, is also distinguishable as a cultural repository bringing with it attendant images of class and gender. As noted previously typically briefcases have security mechanisms in the form of buckles, latches, and combination locks that work in tandem to produce a formidable decoding challenge for those unfamiliar with their structural foundations. The metaphor is thus used to represent the multifarious ways in which institutional networks engage and cisengage to create interlocking structural and ideological forces that serve to potentially 'lock out' children who reside outside the institutional norm.

As argued in chapter six, networks operate at a number of levels. The establishment of networks extends beyond a connection to people to include interpretative commonalities and shared meanings derived from the ways in which discursive practice is linked to 'knowledge codes' (Boykin and Toms 1985; Harker and McConnchie 1985) and supported in institutional structures and processes. Networks are thus interpreted to include shared meanings, preferred processes, and normalised values and beliefs from which appropriate forms of encounter are derived.

The briefcase marks a cultural boundary in which societal norms and values are typically depicted in universalistic terms. However, a number of writers (Boykin and Toms 1985; Walker 1990; Banks 1994; Smith, G., 1997)) argue that schools carry heavy ideological overtones, having traditionally served to promote ideas and outcomes consistent with dominant Anglo Saxon cultural standards. Nevertheless, in spite of cultural bias, liberal principles such as meritocracy continue to promote institutions as neutral contexts as though they provide educational opportunities
equally accessible to all. Attaining school credentials requires students outside the norm to decode the multifarious ways in which dominant hegemonic discourse must be accommodated in order to reveal the filed, life chances contained within.

Understanding the participants’ school experiences as students, as argued in chapter three, is important for three reasons.

i) The exclusionary social forces that pervade society at large do not commence during workforce participation.

ii) They are evident in schools as microcosms of the societies in which they are embedded.

iii) Thus, it could be reasonably argued that the development of strategies used during workforce participation originate from participants learning to manage life in the multiple, complex, and contradictory worlds they negotiate in their youth.

In other words, they must learn to negotiate effectively what Boykin (1986) calls the triple quandary in order to attain the credentials that allow them entry into the profession.

The chapter commences with an overview of the women’s reflections of primary and high school experiences, which indicate some of the strategies that they employed to decode the systems that confronted them. While strategies will be specifically addressed in the next chapter, the narratives highlight the developmental challenges these women faced, as they learned how to participate in conflicting and contradictory social systems (Stanton-Salazar 1997). Their early reflections reveal that they were not immune to the inhibitory hegemonic forces (Gramsci 1971); addressed in cultural and social reproduction theories (Bourdieu 1977).

The discussion of patu in chapter six illustrated the links and connections that need to be decoded. Many of the necessary connections and links to significant institutional
agents and resources are obscured within discourse that centralises individualism. Locating individualism as a central tenet of school based success ignores the extensive networks that privileged children take for granted. Children from the dominant group have access to a number of significant institutional mentors and advocates grounded in the multiple sites where for them cultural support and affirmation resides. It is found in discursive practice disseminated through curricula, pedagogy, informational networks, structures and processes - none of which are either advanced or engaged with individually. For the women in this study however, not having automatic access to institutional networks makes education an individual competition in what is ultimately a team sport.

**Primary school experiences**

The participants entry into educational institutions occurred over a forty year period. One woman commencing school in the 1940's, one in the 1950's, four in the 1960's and two in the 1970's. Table 7.1 overviews the various types of primary schools attended showing that the majority of participants attended small rural schools in communities with both high and low Maori populations. Six of the eight women experienced at least one change in school during primary education.

**Figure 7.1**

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**Notes:** P.1 Completed Frm. 1-2 at District High School considered here with primary school experiences.

**Key:** P = Participant
The following discussion draws together those reflecting firstly on Native school experience, and is followed by Board/General stream primary schools experiences.

Native Schools

Of the eight women, five talked about Native schools. Native schools were established in 1860s and serviced the majority of the Maori school aged population until increased urbanisation in the 1940s (Walker 1990). Three participants clearly identified the schools they attended as Native. Only one of these participants attended the same school throughout primary education, the other two women had experience of both Board and Native schools. A fourth participant qualified her reflections of the school she attended with: it was almost a native school, indicating that it had probably been a Native school that had changed status prior to their final amalgamation in 1969. The fifth woman who made mention of Native schools identified a number of small rural schools located in Maori communities in which both her parents taught, but was unsure of their status. While attendance at Native schools generally drew positive comments based on proximity to cultural resources and sustained contact with extended whanau, the multiplicity of contradictions between home and school remained a central component of some narratives.

For one participant the difference between a large city school and a Native school helped cement memories of a situation where much of her first experience of school

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1 Openshaw, Lee and Lee (1993) maintain that differences in curriculum content had historically created tensions between Maori communities and the state. Hence at the time of transition from centralised government to regional board of education control there was evidence of both support and resistance to the changed status by Maori. During the time frame in which the majority of participants attended primary, of the 157 Native Schools in existence in 1956 only 59 (37.6%) had transferred to board control prior to 1969. Demographic changes saw seven schools close altogether due to falling rolls; thirty two consolidated into another school; one changed status from primary to secondary and nineteen changed as a result of mutual agreement (ibid). As Maori communities were required to negotiate with state agencies for the establishment of such schools it seems likely that they would have been familiar with due process had they chosen to transfer prior to legislative measures that required transition, no such desire, in spite of claims by the then Director of Education, A. E. Campbell's statement (1962 cited in Openshaw, Lee and Lee 1994) to the contrary that, "greater interest in transition" was evident, little movement occurred by mutual agreement within the time frame.
was marked by incidents of *running away, running home* to eventually *moving home* after the death of a *kuia*.

What stood out I guess it was that I attended a native school but prior to that I first went to a mainstream Pakeha school ... until my grandmother died and then we went back home, home, my mother went back to look after her father. But what was significant I guess for me at five years of age, was this fear of school. I guess you'd call it being culturally safe. It was a predominantly Pakeha city school, and what I remember from those years was not wanting to be at school and going home. So I'd run away, I'd run back home, I'd go back home, I'd walk off back home. ... that was the first thing I just wasn't comfortable there, I didn't like school (participant, individual interview).

*Home and home/home* In this dialogue there is a distinction between home of the physical structure in an urban context in which the participant's nuclear family resided, and *home/home* home as the deeper connection to extended whanau and connected geographical location in which whanau history was embedded.

I think I might have been about seven, or there abouts when we went back home and I attended the Native school ..., and the change happened for me there, I s'pose I felt comfortable because I was now back amongst cousins and relations, whanau which was the difference ... the difference in the native schools, was there was an emphasis on our culture. ... the parents, the whanau - definitely that. And because of the fact that most of the school were Maori comes lots of other things, you immediately have an instant affinity, you're just the same as everybody else in a way, it normal (participant, individual interview).

The sense of *culture* in schools indicates a familiarity with school not evident in her earlier experience. The network of whanau and cultural peers provides a context where being Maori is the norm, recognising *you're just the same*. Further qualifying the statement with *in a way* does not homogenise the group; rather it suggests that in other ways the group could be diverse. Diversity was later expressed in terms of varying interests and aspirations.

The second participant also talked about her experiences in a Native school in terms of supporting a positive self esteem and the security offered within a stable, decipherable environment, where *confidence* developed *amongst culturally similar kids*.

One of the major influences on reflection is that I went to a primary school that was a Native school, a full primary and the majority of children there were Maori, so I went from new entrants, what would then have been called primers, right through the first eight years of education with basically, the same kids. They very rarely changed, it was a momentous occasion if it changed. I also would have been considered a high performer, ... So I actually had a good feeling about myself. I had a big ego, on reflection, and a very good self esteem - a major milestone would be when it came to deciding what high school I went to ... (participant, individual interview).
In contrast the ways in which our culture provided the focus for the first two participants was not a view consistently expressed by all Native school attendees.

For one participant in particular, her experience of two Native schools and one board school provided one consistent implicit message; the ultimate goal in school was to get to that European stage.

... in my early primary school years I went to a Native school it was - I would say ninety eight percent Maori for the majority, their first language was Maori so my sister and I stuck out like a sore thumb because we were first language English speakers and although our teachers were Maori ... I always felt that there was a type of barrier to learning ... we were moulded into the Janet and John type books - I can honestly say I never enjoyed those books or the illustrations because we didn't know anyone that was blonde, that even had a white horse - we had horses but they didn't look the same ... So you had teachers who were teaching this idealised curriculum with those hidden messages about what was seen as nice and acceptable - and they weren't us. Even as a young child I can remember I was always aware of this and I was confused really because we had a brown face teaching us about something that was ... (contrary to what we did at home) pictures and illustrations and stories that weren't us. I knew that, I think, mainly because we had our mother who used to always point out those Pakeha pictures, and our father who used to always say to us "you're beautiful with dark skin" ... and all those sort of things. That's what I can remember most about it. ... it was the way in which we were taught that stood out in my mind. The hidden messages that what we were like at home was never good enough (participant, individual interview).

The staffing of Native schools by Maori teachers exacerbated contradictions for this participant who had difficulty of meshing the differences evident between Maori teachers in the classroom and the community of which she was a part. Many Maori teachers according to policy had either themselves been apprenticed - under qualified staff into replicating assimilative practices - or removed from Maori communities themselves to be educated in the ways of 'the European'. Smith (L, 1986) maintains that Maori teachers as successful products of the system were equally subject to 'operating from similarly deficit indexes' (p. 2) as Non-Maori staff. The prevailing view of Maori deviancy was embedded within the frameworks that defined professional competency. Maori and Non-Maori staff were taught the same eurocentric curricula, expected to emulate the same eurocentric pedagogical practice and assess according to the same eurocentric parameters. Keri Kaa, reflecting on her school experience,
maintains that Maori teachers were, "... trained in that mould, worse than Pakeha teachers" (cited in Selby 1995, p. 1).

The participant’s mother, identifying the Pakeha pictures was the same woman (in the previous chapter) who had consciously pushed English as a first language. Mum became a critical buffer between home and school. If anything smacked of racism mum would march straight up there and sort it out. In one instance challenging a teacher in front of the class to recognise that these kids are not uncivilised. Although English was seen to be particularly important to mum, it is evident that it was not to be accomplished at the detriment of being Maori. Making distinctions between pictures that privileged Pakeha lifestyles combined with her insistence that the children would speak English suggests that Maori English speakers would look and behave differently to what was pictorially represented by European characters with English text. While this woman’s mother wanted opportunities for her children, these were to be achieved in terms of ‘adding to’ rather than at the ‘cost of’ her sense of Maoriness. The participant goes on to enumerate further distinctions between staff and community:

... our community had a different way of dressing, your good wear was totally different to what the teachers would wear, they had those straight skirts and those twin sets and even their hair was done differently. It was like there was no acceptance of the fact that they had beautiful curly hair and you didn’t need to iron it - because that’s what they used to do. They used to iron it and wear a lot of make up when they were in fact beautiful without it. They were sort of buying into all those sorts of things and their lunches, that’s what I remember most - their lunches - even their Kai they adapted to Pakeha ways ... the teachers you’d see them with their sandwiches and yet we blinking well knew at home, you know, they weren’t into having sandwiches with those sorts of fillings (participant, individual interview).

Observing staff in social situations within the community provided insight into the chameleon like existence of Maori teachers. How teachers behaved, what they ate and how they dressed in either context indicated what stock of cultural capital was being drawn upon and the student expectations that would be set. The notion of difference and cultural capital, expressed by five of the participants, centred on graphic descriptions of kai. Some of these descriptions were comparative in nature, including not only the type of kai but also etiquette: manners, whether it was shared or
not, what it was wrapped in, and even the value of their kai in the market place. I didn't have much bargaining power with a peanut butter sandwich with last nights news on it. Dad's response was it would improve my literacy skills.

For the same participant, noted above, moving to a second Native school provided insight into dilemmas of a different type centred on levels of English competency.

... they were all my cousin there. When we're talking Pakeha terms they were either my first, second, or third cousins. That(s) where my mother was born and brought up. ... it was almost a one hundred percent Maori roll ... and our teachers were Pakehas. I actually enjoyed that school. I particularly enjoyed that school because there were only about twenty pupils and they used to do that 'Maori thing', but they'd bring in somebody to do weaving, and of course they'd bring in our Aunty ... now this is my mum's first cousin, they were always very close. Now if they had known anything about our community they would not have chosen Aunty ... because (if they were aware of the community politics they would have chosen someone else) the teachers chose Aunty because she could speak English fluently and she had all the airs and graces of somebody who I suppose Pakehas would say you know was a 'well civilised Maori'. ... so she used to come in for those Maori lessons ... actually that highlighted to me that the teachers really didn't know much about us ...

... we (my sister and I) were sort of differentiated from the rest of the kids .... we were (singled out by) one of the teachers remarking how well spoken my sister and I were ... 'it's most unusual because these little Maori girls they actually speak differently to other Maori children, what lovely high voices like our European children' - mum thought that was great - I thought it was insulting - and our voices were a little bit higher pitched than the rest of our cousins so this teacher used to teach us to play the piano... all those sort of things they persevered with her and I in learning to read and tell the time more than with the other children. I actually think now, when I look back on it, they thought that, oh you know, 'these children are more likely to get to that Pakeha stage'. They're more educable because of those mannerisms that we had (participant, individual interview).

Stanton-Salazar (1997) suggest, institutional agents can be at the same time potentially 'life altering and problematic' (p. 163) making sustained mentorship difficult to establish and maintain. The hegemonic evaluation and recruitment processes, identified by the participant, by which teaching staff evaluate and select Maori students for sponsorship largely entails teacher perceptions of the student's ability, and possible willingness, to adopt the cultural capital and standards of the dominant group. The power of the teacher lies in their ability to give or withhold knowledge, to contextualise it and decide how to best assess it. Stanton-Salazar (1997) maintains that the power of institutional agents also comes from their ability to situate youth within resource rich social networks by persevering and "actively manipulating the social and institutional forces that determine who shall 'make it' and who shall not" (p. 164). A further problematic in this context, is that sponsorship detrimentally
differentiates the participant from cousins who provide this woman with other forms of cultural support. Teacher’s lack of awareness of local politics also undermines their authority - even when consequent choices were superficially made in favour of the participant. The biggest undermining factor was that being singled out by staff meant differentiated treatment by cousins. Although school was enjoyed at this location it was not without contradiction and hard won acceptance, found at times as a result of physical altercations, as this woman fought with her cousins to counter the distance and distrust between peers caused by selective (individualising) promotion practices used by staff.

... they tagged me as being snooty ... but that didn’t last long because I’d stand up and fight whereas my brother and sister, they withdrew (participant, individual interview).

Participants exposed to general stream education had mixed reactions to their primary school experiences. Some of the women recognised that marginalising processes based primarily on ethnicity could combine with other factors, such as class and gender, to further complicate experiences. This same women in her third school reflects that:

... it wasn’t so much a division of race it was a division of class in that particular school because you had the farmers and they were quite wealthy and then you had all the mill children who were very poor. In this mill community there were majority of Maori but also a lot of Pakeha so you had that poor brown, poor white syndrome and then you had the better off white community ...

... within that particular community as far as being a pupil was concerned, I did notice that with the teacher there was more done for the farming community than there was for the mill children because the farming community were the people, you know, when you had working bees and you had school committees it was always them that were there and the only mill person of course was my mother, she was on all the committees (participant, individual interview).

Where institutional links to the participant are not overtly obvious, mum’s participation forms a sustaining connection between the two contexts. Mum’s frequent intervention and presence on school committees particularly in Board schools provided a critical bridging mechanism, maintaining a physical presence in unfamiliar territory. Her further willingness to challenged both ideological assumptions and structures that were seen to be detrimental to the participant’s advancement provided a reliable cross-boundary link that was frequently called upon.
Our mother used to teach us table manners and she went down there to complain, being a very vocal woman, that teachers shouldn't treat us like that we're not uncivilised. So after that we never ever got taught about table manners and good lunches and things like that (participant, individual interview).

The ability of significant whanau members, particularly women in many of the narratives, to provide scaffolds between home (the kete) and school (the briefcase) by holding and claiming space in organisational forums increased access to networks in schools not automatically extended to other poor Maori or poor Pakeha children.

While all three participants focused on the commonality of whakapapa amongst students, proximity to Marae, influences of kuia and koroua, and significant geographical features as important factors contributing to their sense of security - other variables were contradictory. Variances in teacher expectations, implicit messages transmitted through the hidden curriculum (embedded in core values and beliefs held by staff), and the number of ways in which curricula content could be arranged and taught, often made it difficult to make generalisations based on the type of school attended.

Cultural replacement underpinning school process and structures indicated by the third participant, were by and large perpetuated by both Maori and Non-Maori staff. The contradiction for this particular participant involved interaction with Maori teachers that contributed to school based confusion through contrary dress codes, behaviour and expectations. Contrary ideological notions of what constituted good or appropriate behaviour, detectable by students, in the distribution of rewards and punishment and endorsed in curricula material, added to learning experiences that often offered no hooks to hang things on. Furthermore the cogent, latent messages communicated to students about deficiencies and deviancy from institutional norms juxtaposed against community lifestyles introduced a range of negative connotations related to difference. Promoting ideological assumptions about the supremacy of institutional discourse served to obstruct the development of positive sustaining networks with institutional
agents. This was the case particularly for the third participant, even in instances when staff afforded her extra attention based on the belief she was most likely to replicate institutional behaviours and mannerisms.

**Board/General Schools**

Two participants had parents and other whanau members as teachers. Both expressed high levels of satisfaction with primary school experiences. The status of the schools they attended, as previously stated, was uncertain. One participant qualified her reflections with *it was almost a Native School* while the other participants parents having taught primarily in small, rural Maori communities marked by images, such as, *the kuia with a moko living down the road* in remote locations also indicated the possibility that some may have been designated native. This participant having grown up in school houses next to the schools in which her parents worked, the other having spent time in Aunty’s class during holidays, equipped them with a sense of familiarity with, and access to, knowledge of school structures and processes. Familiarity with institutional expectations eased their induction into school based networks that include significant mentors and advocates with whom they had a sustained, meaningful relationship. For one, the succession of schools created *a blur of happy times in small rural predominantly Maori communities*. For the second, she remained in the same locality throughout her schooling, staying for a time with her grandparents while her family moved when dad secured a Principalship.

The latter participant had little contact with teachers who were not her parents and no contact with Non-Maori staff prior to boarding school.

\[I \text{ don’t have a lot of memories of actual school but I can remember there being quite happy times ... Because my parents were teachers we moved around a lot to different schools and dad got headmaster’s jobs at various places (participant, individual interview).}\]

Two other participants talked about being the only Maori families attending rural schools. For the first woman attempts to decode implicit messages at school provided
vague feelings of difference that remained unarticulated at the time, which caused confusion and uncertainty.

I think I was a bit confused, I remember primary school because we were the only Maori family. We were brought up on a dairy farm and the majority of the community were farmers of some sort. I distinctly recall being the only Maori family attending this school. It was a two teacher school but even then at a young age I didn’t know why but I always felt ... like somebody had something against us, and it was because of the colour of our skin - but it took me years to work out that, that was the reason... It was funny because we’d do well at something and then you’d feel the pressures of everyone else trying to beat you or making sure that they did succeed. And I used to wonder why and it wasn’t till later in life I realised that that’s what was happening to me even though I didn’t really realise it at the time.

... I know what it did for me and my sisters especially, is that we strove to succeed and we strove to be the best there at school and at the end of the day, we were getting prizes and merit awards ... but then there were times when the teacher used to drop us out of the tennis team because he’d put his son in and we knew that we were better than his son and always wondered how come - just little things like that happening. ... but we were very competitive in all aspects, sporting, schooling, very competitive... My brother is the oldest but he didn’t have the same drive that we did - I don’t know if he felt that way, I didn’t even bother to ask my sisters if they felt the same way but we definitely all followed the same line (participant, individual interview).

Five of the women identified sport as a significant connective coupling to institutional sponsors, cultural peers and further school based opportunities. Sport also provided further avenues in which to excel, opportunities to travel and to get out of school and communities. Of equal importance, sport provided an avenue through which links could be sustained, particularly in high schools where streaming separated participants from their Maori peers. Playing sport was not however without its contradiction: it fed stereotypes of what Maori were supposed to be good at while also being used as the ultimate control mechanism; being stood down or sidelined often built resentment and highlighted inequities when justification was not given.

Being the only Maori at school in rural communities suggests that at least for some Maori, whanau experiences of rural ‘pepper potting’ (Walker 1990, p. 198 ) meant automatic access to cultural resources could not be assumed. In such instances, school experiences of vague discomfort were endorsed in the communities in which they were located.

The other kids were okay it was more the adults ... like I could go to a friend’s house and the parents would be saying sh sh sh and you feel it, you don’t understand because of your age what’s going on but, you know there’s definitely something there - why they’re whispering about you or maybe they don’t want you to stay overnight. It wasn’t everyone in the community but there were just certain people (participant, individual interview).
In contrast, another participant cited common farming experiences, and the fact that they were all *just a bunch of farmers*, as the foundation of positive community relations.

... lots of friends, small community and everyone just talks to each other and they just sort of live like one big happy family. All they talked about was how many cows you've got, how may cows have calved ... all that sort of stuff, and that was just farming life (participant, individual interview).

In relation to school this participant maintains,

... life was life, you didn't really think about how it was, it was just what happened. Primary was about sports ... Education wasn't a very big thing, well you know, you didn’t think of education as 'being education' ... although I do remember hating having to start kapahaka songs. ...

In spite of citing harmonious relations in the community not all school experiences were seen to have the same effect on this woman as her non-Maori peers. In this instance, school was seen to be the site where difference was first defined.

I do remember being about standard three and they did a study on Mori-oris and how they were the first indigenous people of New Zealand and how Maoris just came along and attacked them ... I just thought oh my god that’s me, I’m a Maori, that must be me. ... I suppose it was when I figured out - oh my god I’m different. I’m not the same as everybody else in my class. ... and I think just finding out that you were a murderer once upon a time, or your ancestors were murderers, and not doing the same for the Pakeha kids in the school. We didn’t study that way but that’s how I felt ... you know ... not particularly me being cast as something, but it was the little bells in my head just went off the hook. That’s me, I’m a Maori aren’t I? And I suppose that was the first realisation of gawd, I’m dark skinned, you’re not. ... I’m going to go home and look in the mirror (participant, individual interview).

Maori content in curricula fossilised in time and European content depicted as evolving and dynamic, provides false dichotomies of static Maori knowledge juxtaposed with developing European knowledge bases. The non-critical approach to curricula ignores the differential and distancing effects content has on diverse student groups. The hidden message of Maori as barbaric and uncivilised embedded in the overt curriculum is personalised with *that's me, I'm Maori aren't I*, implicitly challenging her to internalise externally imposed views of deviancy. The scenario provides a number of choices for the participant i) acceptance of a lesser status as deviant; ii) disconnecting or submerging identity with the attendant psychological acquiescence to dominant hegemonic views and sense of shame; or iii) disengaging from the system. The problematic lies not in an isolated incident of difference but in the
potentially disconnecting effects from institutional agents and networks that become characterised by distance and distrust (Fine 1991). Onwurah (1997), an African woman film maker, provides a typology of her school experiences commencing with, a scrubbing phase, physically attempting to divest herself of colour, then apologising or psychologically acquiescing to dominant notions of difference, and finally fighting for her skin colour as one of the only black family schooled in a white British community. Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988 and Banks 1994) also argue that moving from the position of shame to one of struggle and resistance is common amongst ethnic and linguistic minority groups.

For the third participant, long bus journeys marked the boundaries between home and school. Both the physical and ideological distance was clearly defined by vivid memories of just walking. I can remember just walking and walking and walking to the bus stop and then the bus trip to school. Though fatigue featured highly in her reflections of her first school, I don’t think I did anything anyway I just sat there in a stupor, moving to another rural community with a higher Maori population alludes to dimensions of what is taken and what was given back in school.

... another very similar sized school - different community though, I mean went from a rural white rural farming community to (a place) where we had Pakeha farmers but it was also right in the middle of a rural town which had a high number of Maori coastal workers. So you had your fishermen and then you had your shearers and your labourers and your farmers and so it had a very transient sort of a population. They moved in and out ... School was o.k. I was very sport minded because sport got you out of the community.

... I was expelled on the on my last day of form two though. ... A teacher went too far in and one of the things she said to a friend, singling her out because she wouldn’t normally say anything, she wouldn’t defend herself so, I think, the teacher used her as a target but was talking to all of us really. Well anyway, I jumped in and of course one thing led to another... I actually got really angry and I overdid it I mean as a form two I overdid it. I had to go into the Principal’s office and talk to her and then they rang up my parents and - I got a huge hiding from dad and a whack from my mother and then mum told me I had to apologise and that I had to sort it out ... I did, for my mother’s sake. But in the apology I told her I’m only apologising because my parents are making me not because I wanted to ... the principal heard, it was on the last day of school and he expelled me.

Criticism couched in terms of cultural characteristics is difficult to cope with. Where reprimands for being late, for example, require better time management, phrases such as she’s operating on Maori time suggest the problem lies in being Maori and becomes the focus of change (not so easily nor desirably accomplished from the
child's point of view). Where the important links with institutional agents are missing the support mechanisms developed between peers are fiercely defended, placing this participant at odds with the system. The dilemma is that the very thing the institution sees as problematic - talking back - increases her status, *mana amongst mates*.

Although this participant often saw herself *standing there and taking it*, tolerance levels when exceeded, created contexts where, like other participants, she would not back down. Believing derogatory comments to be unjust and unwarrantedly directed at a child less likely to respond creates the motivation to intercede. Support in such situations is difficult, particularly where power differentials between institutional structures and students are immense and parental discomfort with the system placed some women in situations where they were expected to *sort it out*. The lack of significant links to people in positions of power in school seriously restricts institutional tolerance and advocacy for groups othered by the system (Boykin 1986). This in turn increases reliance on peers for acceptance and support. However, when unprepared to acquiesce to the powers of the institution, the situation quickly escalates to a point where the positive underlying intent of action is lost and the observable outcome results in expulsion.

In spite of resisting aspects of school the participant saw herself not only as a *fairly outgoing kid so I adapted well to any social situation that came along* but also a *conformist*, doing what was required at school.

> I basically was a conformist in the school system, I did what I needed to do to get through, to make life bearable and that was about it ... I think I was naturally able to cover the curriculum quite easily. I can remember in standard four having to do form two maths and all that sort of stuff ... but generally, I used to do exactly what I needed to get through and no more, then I'd be out. - like the teacher would say you have to do a page of such and such for a story I'd do my page and that's it. ... so I worked out at a really early stage what I needed to do to survive and then no more ... I would say none of the stuff really interested me to any great depth - none of it was relevant to me or anything I did really (participant, individual interview).

The inability of teachers and the system to provide clear links between curriculum relevant to Maori children, acted as a disincentive for her to do anything more than what was minimally required - the participant recognised her own ability to do more,
but there was little motivation. The participant, along with one other, suggested that their work ethic at school was a consequence of teacher expectations (see Simon 1986). One maintained that she realised, particularly in secondary but also evident in primary school that if you were Maori *half pie was ka pai*; meaning that, with no view of excellence offered or expected of Maori children half an effort fulfilled school expectations of Maori. Stanton-Salazar (1997) identifies two factors that problematise opportunities for acquiring consistent and routine access to institutional knowledge. The first relates to students’ receptivity, based on whether it is perceived to be meaningful and relevant to the student's experiences and their anticipated life chances. The second is situated in the structural dependence 'upon non familial institutional agents and school based networks for the acquisition of institutional discourses' (p 164-165). Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush (1995) argues that dependence on institutional relationships, however, is highly problematic, primarily because relations between minority children and institutional agents is often 'characterised by distance and distrust' (p. 159).

Three participants made reference to obscure shifting parameters by which work was judged - leaving these woman to attribute success to luck rather than making any connection between what they did and feed back given. Harker (1990) suggests that cultural capital criteria is often invisible, unarticulated and fluid allowing those in positions of power to move the parameters of acceptability in school and employment based contexts. Shifting parameters vacillate between assessment of curricula content, style, language codes, and mannerisms to maintain divisions between those who reflect the cultural capital endorsed by school and those who do not.

I can remember scoring well on tests, one of my mates, she was a Pakeha girl and used to score really high in everything she did, any projects and all sorts of things because they always gave her really high marks for trying and I used to think why the hell would I bust my guts out to try ... when I know they’d give her A1 for effort, and she would deserve it, but it wasn't the same for me, that's what I used to think, nah it's not worth it ... it's no use me busting my guts if I'm not going to get any recognition for it, so I didn't (participant, individual interview).
This participant also reiterates comments from other participants about institutional funds of knowledge as a structure and a process of exclusion.

(Teachers) used to talk about stories and things that I wouldn’t have a clue about - even though we were a rural family they’d talk about horse riding and going hunting with foxes and hounds and stuff like that and I mean we never did that we had no access to horses whatsoever and when people went hunting no one I knew wore those riding outfits or had pig dogs that even remotely resembled hounds, so even though we’d nod and pretend that we knew what they were talking about we hadn’t a clue. I mean our rural lifestyle was going and picking spuds and for hours on end turning the potato fields over so my uncle could come along and put them in the bags and things like that ... (participant, individual interview).

In summary, primary experiences varied across sites although some common threads are evident. Of the four women who expressed the greatest satisfaction with primary school, two had parents who were teachers and the other two attended Native schools. The remaining four participants spoke of school as *school being school*, it was a place where you learnt to *take the good with the bad*. For the latter group school experiences were interspersed with episodes of uncertainty and confusion regarding their status and place in the syste. This negated primary school being seen as an overall rewarding experience.

Factors across the whole group that facilitated the establishment of links with school included:

- Significant whanau members who had a visible role in school although one participant (attending a native school) indicated promotion of whanau members by school staff (for instrumental purposes) showed lack of awareness of community politics particularly when community members who best reflected European mannersms and behaviours were chosen to teach Maori crafts.
- Whanau members who were either teachers or had been successful in schools.
- Whanau links amongst peers.
• Close proximity to cultural resources and wider whanau networks in and out of school.
• Opportunities to excel that did not negate values and beliefs such as sport.

Other factors made it difficult to integrate oneself into institutional networks.
• Exclusive curricula content that either ignored Maori altogether or conversely presented Maori as deviant as in history or social studies.
• Subliminal messages of secondary status manifest in the values and beliefs of staff members and parents of non-Maori peers.
• Recognition that half pie was ka pai; little recognition of excellence for Maori therefore not challenged to excel or offered extension.
• Selective mentorship occurring in ways that singled out participants from cultural peers in ways that evoked ridicule from peers.

For some the challenge to their cultural identity commenced early in their educational experiences. For others, primary school provided secure places of acceptance that did not prepare them for the contradictions they would face at secondary school.

Secondary school

This section explores the issues and experiences of secondary schooling. Figure 7.2 provides an overview of the types of secondary institutions attended. Significantly, five of the eight participants were 'boarders', with three of the five entering Maori Girls Boarding schools. Six of the women spent either all, or, the majority of secondary school in single sexed educational environments. Half of these women experienced a change of school during critical stages in their senior years, that is, either during fifth, sixth or seven form. These years are critical as the successful completion of each is dependant on external examinations that either expand or limit career choice. New environments exacerbate the need to establish solid institutional links that are time consuming in their establishment and difficult to maintain.
Figure 7.2

Secondary School Experiences

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Key: P = Participant

Secondary school experiences are discussed according to the type of school attended. For those that attended more than one school their experiences are considered with the type of school in which they spent the most time.

Maori Girls Boarding Schools

Although they were physically separated from whanau the women attending Maori Boarding Schools, expressed greater satisfaction with schooling than either single sex day schools, co-educational or solely church based boarding schools. Maori Boarding Schools were also church based. Although two of the participants attending these schools were affiliated to the same religious denomination as those who attended a solely church based school, experiences were polarised. The difference suggested was not based on any particular religious denomination affecting experiences, but rather based on links to whanau and a context in which being Maori was 'normalised'. In addition, many Maori boarding schools boasted a history of attracting the creme of Maori society. They were perceived by the majority of participants (both those who did and those who did not attend) to offer distinct advantages to those who were educated in these contexts. This was the case even in instances where participants recognised there were no obvious differences with regard to curriculum options, timetabling or external examinations which were seen to
be constant across sites. In Maori boarding schools the sense of familiarity and 
anticipated acceptance was developed prior to entering high school through extended 
whanau connections. The women prior to attending were exposed to the favourable 
ways in which Maori communities viewed the schools and the graduates who came 
from them.

For three participants, separation from whanau, the size of schools, and the 
relocation to urban centres provided the most common adjustment issues marking 
their transition from primary to secondary schools.

As I mentioned my aunt (the newly appointed as matron) was there so that helped me 
adjust, she was a good back up support because we were new, she was new we were all 
new at the same time, and I had a few cousins in there and good friendships developed ... 
forming friendships helped cope, and doing the school work. And also being part of all the 
sports teams. ... but you know the teachers - they weren’t all Maori staff, there were Non-
Maori staff there and they were really good because they saw what kind of person you were 
- I guess they could see what different ones had to offer and they’d encourage you to 
foister that. So that was good because I remember my teachers were really encouraging. If 
you wanted to do this or do that they encouraged you to (participant, individual interview).

Staff willing and able to encourage and foster participants provided messages about 
ability that were not predicated on a chameleon like existence; compatibility of being 
Maori and being capable were socially accepted norms. Further to this, teachers’ 
delivery styles, and the implicit values and beliefs regarding the abilities of students 
provided an environment conducive to success unattached to the same cost to self 
experienced by those outside such contexts.

A participant who attended a different Maori Girls’ school, coped with the transition 
which meant separation from parents who had provided most of her primary school 
education. But she also spoke of initial apprehension. This was overcome by the 
development of extensive, ongoing relationships.

P. ... the boarding school that I went to only had a hundred and twenty girls but I still found 
it overwhelmed me, it was the biggest school I’d ever been to. ... The biggest support for 
me, was that I had cousins who started at the same time, so there were a couple of the girls 
that I knew and then as the years went on an another couple of cousins started and then 
my sister came so it wasn’t so bad after that. I tried to get involved in sport and in cultural 
things as much as I could and really enjoyed them and I s’pose at that level I was pretty 
mediocre, pretty average. I mean there were outstanding sportswomen and outstanding 
performers. I mean the Maori Boarding schools were sort of attracting the cream of Maori 
society then ... But - yeah it was just a difficult time. I found that I got on well with my
teachers and I had some excellent role models, excellent teachers not so much the principal and those ones who were in those management positions but my English teacher who I still love and still keep in contact with, my maths teacher who I just loved. These women were Pakeha - probably my first Pakeha teachers that I had and they were just wonderful people, they were wonderful women.

I. What was wonderful about them?

P. I think they brought a freshness to my life. They said, oh okay, life has given you this plate, what about having a look at this plate here and what about having a look here and what do you see, can you turn around and have a look at this, what is it saying - can you criticise it, whereas before I think I was handed a plate and accepted it. I thought oh yeah okay that's how things are, I'll just accept that, whereas I think these women challenged our thinking and said hold on, do you have to take this as it is? ... I think they made us look at things quite differently and if you ask a lot of girls who went through boarding school with me at that same time, they would have the same feeling for the same teachers (participant, individual interview).

While adjustment difficulties were expressed, the ability to embed oneself in networks that incorporated whanau, peers, knowledge codes, and staff as mentors and role models provide the foundation for overcoming initial apprehension. The forms of knowledge intimated extends beyond academic, task specific and technical funds of knowledge to what Stanton-Salazar (1997) identifies as access to institutionally sanctioned discourses, problem solving knowledge and network development knowledge. Institutional discourses incorporate the acceptable ways of using language and communicating in such contexts. Problem solving knowledge connects to funds of knowledge that provide keys to solving school related problems and making decisions that help reach either personal or collective goals. Finally knowledge leading to skilful network behaviour in institutional contexts creates links that integrate students in supportive adult and peer networks, providing access to extended curricula knowledge, bureaucratic and informational channels that connect with further opportunities external to the institution.

The requirement for all students to participate in cultural activities provided the scope to recognise that expertise was contingent on more than just being Maori. Being part of the group didn’t blind participants to individual skills held by peers. Rather, it inspired an appreciation of attendant skills, diverse abilities and work ethic. Learning was seen to be exciting when given the opportunity to establish links with institutional
knowledge codes based on analytic and critical skills rather than being handed a plate and accept(ing) it.

Nevertheless, the constant need to renegotiate access to previously acquired funds of knowledge and new ones creates a two step forward and one step back tumble lock effect where combinations fall in and out of place. Proactive attempts to access 'knowledge of labour and education markets' (Stanton-Salaza, 1997, p 164) are hindered by agents that act as gatekeepers by denying the participant the career information sought. Hence confidence developed by staff with whom the participant had sustained contact did not prevent perceptions of Maori, external to her supportive environment, from encroaching on her educational experience.

I. How did teaching as a career option come about?

P: There were a group of us who bandied the idea around I think and made joking remarks, "oh yeah we could become teachers", but I don't think we meant it and think part of it was that we didn't think we were good enough for the profession. We had these wonderful role models but we saw them sort of way up here and we were down here. I think the turning point for me came when I went for an interview with a careers person... somebody came and visited. There were two of us who went in and we said, "we'd like to look at a career possibly in physiotherapy" and the person said, "well you have to be quite bright for that", and that struck me and it's still here, still in my head. I still carry it around with me and I can remember being shocked at somebody telling me that, "you have to be quite bright". The words were harmless enough, but the way he said it implied we weren't or couldn't be and so after that you know the bandying around of becoming teachers sort of became - I'll show them. I sort of thought maybe the teaching thing isn't such a laugh, .. eight of us got (U.E.) sitting and so we thought maybe that teaching wasn't such a pie in the sky thought (participant, individual interview).

Though the girls were given one view of themselves at school they were not completely free from wider societal perceptions of themselves, or, of their abilities as Maori. In spite of the number of supportive role models in positions of authority, the infrequent negative messages served to undermine confidence. Hyper-sensitivity to tone and body language added meaning to comments you have to be quite bright for that. The internal conflict caused by significant institutional agents denying access to career information based on preconceived notions of Maori capabilities makes problematic the participant's need to integrate being Maori and holding professional aspirations. Even though the comment provided the motivation to show him,
physiotherapy was not pursued as a career choice. Career choice became instead, a matter of looking at options where there was security in numbers.

The third woman's experience of a Maori Girls Boarding School and an urban co-educational school amplifies the issue of vulnerability raised by the previous participant. The two sites provide contrasting views of her as a Maori. Third form through to sixth form spent in a Maori girls' boarding school with older sisters, provided an institutional culture that was decipherable. In this context stereotypical identity markers (based on singing ability that had been part of primary school experience) were not an issue. As with the previous participant, this woman also recognised that commonality also embraced diversity.

The first impressions was yuk! Of course being moved from home but I had sisters who were already there anyway so it was like follow the line, all the senior kids knew me, ... so they all looked after you really well. When I look back on going to secondary school, I really loved it really, once I settled in ... when you look back on it, it's really neat, because I suppose it was different that everyone all thought the same, we liked the same sort of things, lived in the same sort of homes. ... and of course they never asked me to start any Kapahaka songs - the competition was too great and some of the girls did it so beautifully (participant, individual interview).

However general stream education during seventh form presented a different scenario, reducing diversity to superficial stereotypes.

P. I remember being in seventh form hating every minute of it. Being the only Maori, and bunking, disgustedly bunking lots, that's all I remember about seventh form, hated it ... I did seventh form Maori by correspondence and I taught the fifth and sixth form Maori correspondence classes which was probably the only thing that kept me turning up.

I. What was it that you disliked?

P. I hated not being in a place that I was used to I think, when I look back on it, you know, it wasn't a bad school, or anything like that. I hated the cottiness of the girls and being the only Maori and being obviously knowing. It really stuck in my mind, I'm the only Maori in seventh form - probably because I'd just come from (a Maori Girls Boarding school) ... another thing I remember is when we had our English exam, getting top marks and being told, "oh you must have cheated". I thought to myself - no I didn't cheat, I didn't cheat, I just enjoyed that. "Oh no you must have cheated". You know, and from then on I just stopped. Just stopped working.

I. Where did the comment come from?

P. It was from another student ... I just didn't feel that I had anyone that I could talk to about it... and every break I had or every free period, I would just go home or hit the beach or go shopping anything, anything just to get out of school (participant, individual interview).
Countering stereotypical assumptions about being Maori and intellectual capacity became an ongoing struggle once back in general stream. Being *dumb - less knowing* might have provided more acceptance, whereas being academically capable created problems for herself, her peers, and a system which chose to challenge the individual not fitting the stereotype rather than the ideological assumptions and institutional structures which perpetuate them.

I. What would have made it better for you then?

**P.** ... probably having a mate, a real friend someone you take home, someone you'd go out with on weekends. Although in saying that there were a bunch of girls that I used to hang out with, I mean they were really nice but they just... weren't into the same things I was into at that age... my dad said if you stay you can have the car so he gave it to me...

I. How did you find the staff?

**P.** Oh the staff, you know at secondary how you have a home room teacher, he was just awesome, absolutely awesome and I could tell him, "I don't want to come to class", he'd say, "why not", "cos they're white and I don't want to go there". He used to say, "oh yep, yeah that's true". He said, "just go have a good time, that's all your seventh form's about, is just having a good time".

I. Was he Maori?

**P.** No

I. So how did he deal with "they're all white"?

**P.** Well I didn't know how else to say it then really. I mean everything was just dumb then, Chemistry was dumb, people were dumb - you know -and he just used to laugh, laugh at me and say "yeah I know what you mean", and "yes I can understand where you're coming from" and I would think yeah man I hate going to chemistry, it's so boring in there, no one has any fun in chemistry like we used to. So he said, "just don't go, just so long as you have a good time this year... make that your aim for the entire year that you're going to enjoy yourself. Just do it", so he stood up for me heaps. Because I was living in town with my aunt when school would supposedly start and hit the beach, come back by three... (participant, individual interview).

An alternative reading of this awesome staff member is offered here. The participant's story tells of sought after acceptance and understanding in an ideologically hostile environment. A second reading could reasonable question the professional ethic of the staff member's action. On the one hand he is well liked but maintains his popularity at the cost of his professional role and the potential life chances of this participant. His non-judgemental stance over the participant's choice of words earns him loyalty from the student while never seriously challenging the status quo.
Trinh Minh-ha (1990) maintains that language is not simply a tool that we use; it is a force that uses us as its instrument. The instrumental way in which language uses the participant limits her to articulating issues of racism - in what could be considered - a racist manner. Nevertheless, either the staff member's inability or unwillingness to interrogate his own complicity in maintaining the status quo clearly leaves the student on the margin. Furthermore, based on the assumption that seventh form home room teachers are normally senior staff members, one needs to further question the support of a potentially powerful advocate. Choosing to condone, even suggest truancy as an option does not nurture student potential nor does it require any member of staff to look at the institutional barriers alluded to by the participant. To the contrary, such a course of action becomes the means through which responsibility is abdicated. Standing up for the participant heaps would have more accurately required his advocacy in order to address inhibitive institutional forces at work. Furthermore, while condoning the participant's desire to opt out bears no personal cost for the staff member, for the participant, the loss of Bursary has both short and potentially long term implications. In the short term truancy negates the high regard whanau have for education. In the long term this action has financial consequences in post compulsory education. It is highly unlikely that whanau members who so strongly advocated education would have agreed with the guidance given by this institutional agent. Successful completion of general stream education was never considered a 'sure thing', as the somewhat fatalistic comment well let's see how long before they kick me out dad, shows - irrespective of indicators that show potential.

**General Stream**

One of the Native school graduates commenced secondary school in the 1950's, a period when access to secondary schools outside of boarding situations was in its infancy. In 1955, 3.1 percent of Maori attained school certificate and 1.0 percent
attained University entrance. By 1960 the figures had changed to 3.3 and 1.4 percent respectively (Openshaw, Lee and Lee 1993:74). With the establishment of Native District High Schools commencing in 1941, Metge (1976) notes of this decade, due to access, only one in three Maori progressed to high school. The participant reflects,

I felt comfortable in the earlier forms, though when it came to the fifth and sixth ... again, that feeling of being culturally unsafe, you know you were on your own because the majority of Maori never achieved past the fifth form. ... classes were streamed in those days, and there were very few Maoris in the upper levels of high school. I think there were only about three of us in the sixth form so that whole feeling came upon you again about being out on your own ... but that didn't stop one from continuing to achieve, I mean, I think I have to owe it basically to my parents where I am today because for them education was very important and they were always there pushing us as well as supporting us and you know I can remember both my parents going to work just to give us an education (participant, individual interview).

Education was commonly viewed amongst the group as a means of improving life changes. Extended educational opportunity was not seen to be the sole prerogative of males within whanau; rather access was primarily dependant upon proximity of schools and financial circumstances. Many participants spoke of whanau sacrifices being made in order to provide children with educational opportunities. Women within whanau were cited as being central figures making critical decisions about future pathways and actively initiating processes in an attempt to ensure aspirations for their children would be achieved. One such whanau mentor spent her time writing to a school's Board of governors to gain exemption from zoning regulations to have her daughter admitted into a single sex school in preference to a newly opened co-educational high school in the local area.

A significant factor for those who attended general stream High schools (whether co-educational or girls schools) identified streaming as problematic. Being placed in high streams, particularly for the two Native school graduates meant the first physical separation from their cultural peers. Separation from Maori peers increased their sense of vulnerability in new contexts, marking distinct changes in the ways the women acted and how they perceived themselves.

Mum proceeded to write to the ... High School Board of Governors, stating her opposition basically, to what co-education could do for her daughter and so she wanted a zoning exemption and she wanted me to go to Girls High School, and the board of governors, decided to approve this. So I started High School and, I guess I was filled with
apprehension really because I knew that this school took in students from the local intermediates who, as far as I was concerned at that point in time, coming from a full primary, just about all Maori, that they were different beings. The only thing that I liked about it was that there were still people around me that I knew that went there like my cousins. ... it was like a cattle yard, that was my perception of coming from a small school ...

If you think about I'd spent eight years with the same group of kids, lucky if it was two hundred kids in total, when you're a kid two hundred is a lot of kids, you know that's almost a city but, then you find out everything is relative. So day one was pulling up on this crowded high school bus with all sorts of different kids going to different high schools and then you're all hurled into this huge hall and you know, now that I look back on it, it had tradition stamped all over it, particular traditions that I wasn't used to ... (participant, individual interview).

The growing body of literature on school culture, commonly encapsulating 'the way things are done around here' (Bower 1966 cited in Bolman and Deal 1991: 268), provides a level of security to those who understand the encoded and often implicit rules. In contrast, the participant in this section identifies how institutional culture can equally act as a marginalising mechanism; the subliminal values and beliefs create a climate in which vague, hard to define discomfort develops.

... I sat there, and I was quite happy until about half way through when I realised I was one of a very few number of Maori students left in this huge hall and all these Maori kids just kept going out and I thought, why isn't anyone calling my name. I had really, at that time, not a hell of a lot of knowledge about streaming and those categories of classes and how it would impact on me as a Maori person. I certainly didn't think I was going to be left alone in a class of thirty odd and I'd be the only Maori.

So they all went out and then there I was the only Maori student in this 3 professional A classroom. And I knew because it happens all the time, in the calling out of your name, you hearing it being totally sort of bastardised ... most Pakeha teachers at the time weren't too sensitive about making an effort to pronounce names. So that was another major challenge just working out if it was you they were talking about, and then when I actually got to be standing in this class of thirty five I went to the person calling out the names and I said, “I think you've made a mistake here”. The person looks at me and says “What's your name” and I said “My name is...” and the person says “Yes, (name) of ... school (date). We haven't made a mistake”.

I said “Well, I think you have, I mean look at this class” I thought, I am the only brown person in it - this is what I thought but I didn't say that. She said “No, we've got the results of your tests and you should be in 3 professional A”. I said, “Well what do I have to do to get out of it, cos I don't like it”. On reflection the person was probably quite understanding because she said “Well, tell you what, you can come and talk to me about it and we'll see if you're feeling the same way but I haven’t made a mistake”.

So I went into that classroom and they were nice polite kids. I mean they couldn't help it that they weren't Maori for goodness sake ... and they were actually quite sensitive but I still felt totally displaced and alienated and I certainly didn't participate at the level that I do now when I wander in culturally different forums. Obviously I didn't have the confidence or the knowledge at the time to be able to do that so it was in many ways it was very restrictive and in many ways I found myself almost wanting to apologise for being Maori. Even though there was no outward display by the other students, in fact they'd say it’s really good that I was there, but I certainly felt awkward.

I remember a social studies teacher in fourth form talking about what our parents did, so you know, by the time it gets to me - I mean we've talked about the lawyer's kid and the doctor's kids and the shop owner's kid and the mayor's daughter - and then I thought oh god, you know, my mum works in the clothing factory and my dad works in the bloody ministry of
works, so I hated the position I was put in terms of you know, for a moment there, doubting my parents upbringing and credibility and their self worth as human beings and I look on that now and I think how could you do that? That was almost criminal but that's certainly what a system does to you. So when it got to me they said, "well what does your father do", well, the teacher was like "what's his job?"
I didn't want to talk about it, and I think she realised by the time it got to me that the probability that my parents would be self employed, professional, or skilled had probably struck her as being remote so, I said, "Well, actually, my mum works in a clothing factory, my dad works for the ministry of works and they are the two most intelligent people that I've probably met" you know, in all of my fourteen years being on this earth.
I look back on that and take comfort in the fact that at least I had the courage to say that but I hated it because I kept doubting my worth as a Maori person and my parents, you know. I had to really work at countering it. They weren't intentionally ostracising me, I mean, you know, prize giving came around and I got prizes for French and everything else, but I still hated that period of my life because of the impact it had on me (participant, individual interview).

School culture manifests itself as both product and process. As a product, the accumulated wisdom of school is apparent in the traditions and the ways things have are 'traditionally' done which becomes a principle of credibility. An example provided by this women involved symbols; the trophies of achievement that accentuated for her a sense of individuality with the heroines of the past typifying for new students what they should strive to emulate. Culture as a process is the act o' inculcating new members into the core values and beliefs. The reproductive process privileges the ideological assumptions that underlie school structures, causing participants to question and doubt self. They underpin rituals such as the initial assembly cited in the dialogue, clearly marking who has a voice and the value placed on names and those who bear them. The particular traditions I wasn't used to, remained by and large obscured by the implicit or hidden curriculum; that which is rarely planned but nevertheless learnt by those in the institution. Thus, even when success was experienced, its significance is diminished by the psychological cost of having to acquiesce to institutional norms. Similar experiences of simultaneous resistance and accommodation are apparent in the dialogue shared by the two women attending Catholic Boarding Schools and the whanau members who mentored them.

Although many of the adult women directing participants' choices didn't themselves have the opportunity to attend secondary school, they sought to understand many of the systems subtleties. These women took little for granted questioning the
consequences of streaming and subject choice to ascertain the impact it would have on future educational and career opportunities of their children.

... in the boarding side there were three Maori pupils and in my class there was only two, and of course they streamed you, you either did general stream or the professional stream. ... the difference that was spelt out to my mother was that one was typing and the other one was languages - French - my mother couldn't see the use of French but she didn't want typing either because that indicated secretaries and that sort of thing so I went into the professional stream (participant, individual interview).

Changes in behaviour were commonly cited by all participants upon entry into high school. Responses to school and the various institutional cultures encountered ranged from being quiet and introverted to rebellious and confrontational. This participant notes the time of transition from one to the other.

I actually retreated from being quite open and gay in everything to being very quiet. I just wouldn't put my hand up, I wouldn't volunteer for anything and my marks were really very low and I actually felt that I wasn't good enough at that stage. The worst insult was when we went to the library and on the library door was a list of names and I can remember the title 'remedial readers', and I used to love going to the library but of course I couldn't access a lot of the books cos the books I was supposed to read were these remedial books. So our names were publicly displayed on the board and from then on instead of retreating into myself I then became very rebellious and I thought if they're not going to leave me alone I'll give them something to pay attention to ... I can remember acting up in the sewing class - I didn't like sewing it just was not in me and this teacher used to keep saying, "well you must be good at sewing" and now I know why I must have been good at sewing - I was supposed to have been really good at crafts too! I was kicked out of there and I was made to go into the art class and I absolutely loved it, couldn't draw for peanuts but the teacher was such a positive person. ... She had actually gone to the public library and brought back this book for me and she said, "you know you draw just like this artist" I just really loved going to that class. I knew that I wasn't a gifted artist ... (participant, individual interview).

The division of time and compartmentalisation of knowledge into discrete subject areas requires the decoding of teacher expectations and the negotiation of networks that change by the hour as participants move from one subject to the next.

the ones that I felt that really oppressed us were the nuns - it wasn't our lay teachers, we had a French teacher who I loved, initially we had this nun and I didn't actually mind her, she was really hard and she'd whack you with the rosary beads and the rulers and all those kind of things, she was a real henchman but I could accept her because it was fair across the board and she actually had a really kind heart - but then we got a French teacher who was French and she used to talk about their culture and I loved it, we had a science teacher who was a lay person and she took the time to make it meaningful she knew what some of us had missed out on and she came through ... but the nuns I couldn't tolerate them - they just treated the Maori students as if we were never good enough, there was always the but ... (participant, individual interview).

Positively, the disjointed and compartmentalised nature of high school curricula offers respite from continuous contact with institutional agents that hold deficit views of
Maori. The difficulty however then becomes one of accessing opportunities and sustainable relationships with people who control the distribution of valued institutional resources in a structure that is by design temporary and transient. As previously stated, the successful access to institutional networks is difficult for Maori students, particularly, in a climate where interaction between institutions and Maori youth are often characterised by social distance and distrust. Nevertheless, it is these very networks that need to be engaged as they become societies gatekeepers and distributive agents of occupational choices.

Being quiet was detrimental to self as it meant acceptance of remedial status, but rebellion also had consequences, the most meaningful of which was not expulsion from school but the disappointment expressed by parents.

I went home after being expelled I can remember mum being really cisheartened ... they (Mum and Dad) were so pissed off with me that Mum just said "well we're not spending any more money on you, you can just go on correspondence." I stayed on correspondence two years ... when I got a couple of UE subjects mum asked me what I wanted to do ... and I just said "I'd like to go back to school" and that was fine by my parents. They would have sent us to school for the rest of our lives as long as we wanted to go to school (participant, individual interview).

Boykin suggests that children who come to view the educational context as hostile to their own interests and integrity may either:

i) "decide that what they should do is not what the teacher thinks should be done";

ii) "act in such a way that they will not do what the teacher wants"; and

iii) "display what they can do in ways that are not in accordance with what the teacher prescribes" (Boykin 1986, p79).

Boykin further suggests that such action maybe coherent and understandable to the child, but is rarely decoded by the teacher. Often teachers working from monocultural precepts are oblivious to the possibility that other worthwhile but diametrically opposed values maybe competing with the ones they wish to inculcate.
The second participant attending a Catholic School, identified peers as an important part of the inculturation process that accentuate the different values within the cultural contexts of school and home.

I can remember my mother was ropeable because now all of a sudden six weeks out I had been balled out of a place at (a Maori Girls Boarding School) ... so she applied for anywhere and everywhere ... I had to go to boarding school it was that or correspondence. ... looking back at it, it probably was the best thing that could have happened actually in a lot of ways ... for a couple of reasons ... I was forced into a small exclusive Pakeha school so I had to compete against all of them to be able to even be seen and I did - I did well academically. ...there were only three Maori in the whole boarding school and I think when the day pupils came in we might have had about six or seven. That was from third form to seventh form. A lot of the girls were from rich families and it gave me my first dose of institutional racism. I also had to sort of deal with going home and them saying, "oh geez you talk like you've got a plum in your mouth - you're going to this Pakeha snooty school", then going back to school and I was the odd one out - the Maori from a poor Maori background - the country bumpkin who spoke like a hick. ... For the third and fourth form, I played it pretty close - I just sat there and listened and sort of figured out the power plays that happened and what I needed to do and where I needed to go and by about fifth and sixth form I did exactly what I wanted to do. I mean I did all the right things I flew through school C, I did the bare minimum to get UE accredited and I played sport because it was another way of getting out (participant, individual interview).

The ideological and structural differences that were so clearly separated in primary school by long bus journeys blur in the boarding context locating the participant at the edge of both cultural boundaries in a 'borderland' (Anzuldua 1987 cited in Jones 1998, p. 2) in which differences from both sides are accentuated. It is curious how learning to negotiate the dominant culture of power within the typical school environment - which proves to be alienating and symbolically violent (Bourdieu 1974) - is couched as the best thing that could have happened. Working against such forces requires extraordinary amounts of ambition, motivation and resilience particularly because those working in institutional contexts rarely recognise the part they play in perpetuating combination locks delineated by factors such as ethnicity, class or gender. Decoding the system necessitates play(ing) it pretty close in order to figure out the power plays.

Learning to run the gauntlet, deciding who to talk to, for what purpose and in what context as a means of eliciting support for instrumental purposes requires the establishment of links with advocates who are at times prepared to elasticise boundaries. Elasticised parameters of acceptable behaviour are often afforded
privileged children because the odd *muck up* does not interfere with the general perception of such children. However for children from minority groups, often stereotypically seen as deficient, *slip ups* become an endorsement of deviancy and delinquency as a cultural trait. Hence learning when to be vocal and when to be quiet and the participants tenacity to use negative experiences as the motivation to succeed, gives insight into the raft of key strategies required that extend beyond displaying technical or conceptual competence in curricula.

“I think I was well liked at college by the teachers because I used to converse with them regularly, certain teachers not all of them. There were no Maori teachers at all. One thing I did envy about my sister going to a Maori Girls’ College was the Maori contact that she had and stuff like that. But at the same time I knew that to get in and around this world I needed to have something else as well and I probably would have done really well too (at sisters school) but I think in this situation I was forced to do a lot better ... I'd look at the kids and I'd go, “Now you've got a lot over me ... but I can beat you academically”. And I did. “And I can beat you in the sporting field”. I think though that I mean when I look back on it, I know that's why I was doing it. If I'd have done it for me I think I would have done a lot better but that's what I did to survive really. I mean racism was rife, in fth and sixth form I can remember I'd had about six or seven stand up arguments with kids on racism in class. The teachers just let it go - let me do it. I was really surprised at actually how lenient they were. Looking back I think it was one of those things that if they had've come down too hard on me cos of the subjects being argued about, they would've been seen to be racists so they let it go, but I remember in the sixth form - I was a prefect, and this kid called me a “Maori Warden”. Well I saw red. (Returning from the movies, at) about half past ten at night and the whole boarding school was all quiet till we got home ... Well about two o'clock the next morning I got this tap on the shoulder. I looked up and there’s one of the head nuns there peering down at me, and there’s this poor kid who’s been crying ever since I chased her - apparently the sisters had heard what had happened and had the rest of the group up, while I was fast asleep. The rest of the boarding school were woken up and for about an hour had a talk on racism and what it means. Then they made this girl come and apologise to me at two o’clock in the morning. I had gone to bed and forgotten it. I’d done what I needed to do, expelled my energy and anger by running around after her and telling her what I thought. From that day onwards though I was sort of revered, none of them would say things around me or do things in front of me and that was fine by me. ... so from that day onwards they bent over backwards, over compensated really for the fact that racism was alive and well in a catholic school that preached good will to fellow man (sic)... (participant, individual interview).

**Summary**

In the main, educational institutions required strategic negotiation and decoding of ideological positions and structures working in tandem to create contexts where success based on meritocratic principles was never assured. Primarily this was the case because schools did not operate from a position of neutrality. The first experience of external institutions and how the values and beliefs store within the
contents of the kete were viewed from outside came by way of schools. These institutions did not generally provide the opportunity for cultural endorsement or the strengthening of identity. The formidable task of decoding funds of knowledge, and implicit networks was expected of children and adolescents, where the unequal distribution of power erred on the side of the already powerful.

In this chapter, particular attention was paid to the lack of school networks automatically accessible to Maori youth that makes educational success distinct from that of middle-class Pakeha children. A network analytic approach extends beyond a singular focus on 'role modelling' or 'cheerleading' influences of significant others (Stanton-Salazar 1997). The approach also looks at the inequitable transmission of tangible institutional resources and opportunities, and the difficulties in forming and sustaining significant links with all that is important in institutional settings (Boykin 1986; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995).

Institutions locked into ethnic additive approaches (Smith, G., 1986; Banks 1994) avoid in their careful construction the real issues of power that pervade all facets of the educative process. In general schools failed to provide the safe havens sought by a group of children who ultimately wanted what their Non-Maori peers took for granted; protection and endorsement of self by a system and authority figures in contexts that they were compelled to attend.

The group, though superficially seen as educational successes did not progress unscathed by either overt or covert messages about the subordinate status of being Maori in institutional contexts. Their reflections are interspersed with tangible episodes of expulsion; suspension; physical punishment in the form of strapping; remediation; bearing the brunt of cultural stereotypes and intangible ideologies that evoked confusion, anger, resentment and self doubt. The observable episodes often resulted in the dilemma of facing further physical punishment at home or guilt at the level of
disappointment caused parents as they coped with unrealised expectations held for their children. The intangibles encased in promoted institutional values and beliefs, created vague notions of discomfort, difficult to understand and articulate at the time of experience. The contradiction of advancing the 'one people myth' juxtaposed with curriculum that not only identified difference but also situated it outside the norm afforded Maori realities polarised from the rhetoric of meritocracy. Participants faced contradictions where vocality was seen as arrogance; silence as either surliness or acceptance; lack of direct gaze as insolence and defiance; different language codes as ignorance; achievement as cheating by Non-Maori and evidence of being a potato or mallow puff by Maori; challenges as irrationality; 'bucking the system' providing acceptance by Maori peers but suspension or expulsion from the institution.

Separation for this group occurs on at least two levels; physical and ideological. Physical separation for the majority involved schools distancing participants from whanau, involving the physical act of crossing boarders between home and school. Ideological separation required participants to either disengage or submerge what they perceived themselves to be. Ideological assumptions underpinning images fed back to them in curricula content and pedagogical practice reflected a system that often saw them contrarily to how they saw themselves. Walker (1996) maintains that, from its inception, education in New Zealand has been one of the primary sites of domination, resistance and struggle. Domination, struggle, resistance and accommodation are all aspects of experience evident in the dialogue shared. 

Domination by legislation was seen to shape the school site underpinning struggles against identity subjugation that attempted to create second class brown Europeans. Distinct power differentials between student and institution shaped the form and context in which many of these struggles took place. This required striking a balance between resistance to hegemonic forces that would have the group see themselves culturally deficient while accommodating the system, at least enough in order to be credentialed by it.
Native Schools at the primary level, and Maori Girls' Boarding Schools at secondary
drew the most positive reflections. The mere existence of these programmes may have
been more important than their specific content. In these contexts, in the main the
schools took the children seriously: responded thoughtfully to their behaviour,
believed in their potential achievements, and listened to what they had to say. A
further outcome appears to have been to give both children and parents the extra
confidence required in subsequent dealings with the education system. Five
participants, other than the two women with parents as teachers, were schooled in
either Native primary schools or in Maori Girls Boarding schools. These women
commonly experienced significant whanau support from women who intervened in
school processes, with: Mum was on all the committees; Mum wrote to the Board of
Governors; Aunty wrote my name on the application forms; They dragged me up there
by the horns, I owe a lot particularly to my mum. In comparison to general stream
education, Native schools and Maori boarding schools were perceived by both those
who did and those who did not attend such schools as positive places where aspects
of their Maori identity could be fostered. This was the general perception even for
those within the group who identified irreconcilable contradictions.

Success for this group is not a simple matter of learning competently or performing
technical skills. Rather success for othered groups requires the participation in the
rituals and ceremonies of institutions and their ability to decode often obscure
meanings, practices and processes that may challenge core values and beliefs.
Fundamentally, success becomes a matter of 'learning how to decode the system'
(Stanton-Salazar 1997 p 165). In order to fully access the socially constructed founts
of knowledge contained within the briefcase (and to use those founts productively for
instrumental purposes), this group is required to 'pick' the combination locks that
constitute the cultural logic of the dominant group - no matter how arbitrary it may be.
Decoding the system begins with identifying the right keys and making sense of the
cultural logic transmitted through discursive practice. It further entails knowing how to role play using the institutions 'identity kit' in order to be endorsed by its credentials. Ironically for those unfamiliar with the ideological underpinnings of such structure, success at school is dependant on the willingness to, at least, overtly don institutional norms that are more often than not advanced by implicit means. Furthermore, the problematic resides in the institutional belief that these channels are neutral and therefore equally applicable to all. The present positions these women hold as educators has been dependant on their tenacity to decode the system as students. Attaining entry criteria into teaching necessitates a decoding of 'institutional culture' (Chenmers 1984; Aronwitz and Giroux 1985; 1991) predicated on an understanding that holding a kete, when the institutional preference clearly indicates the contents of the briefcase, requires the group to develop coping mechanisms.

The discussion drew out some of the hidden costs lying beneath the statistical data that defines these women, by outcome, as educational successes. Rather than taking success for granted the narratives raise awkward questions about why and how - this group require different keys to unlock files that underpin school success. The group poses a serious challenge to the validity of understanding their educational experience in terms of meritocratic interpretation. The problematic for Maori youth is not only in decoding the right digits but also understanding the tendency of institutional factors to interlock while simultaneously remaining fluid. For many participants this provides the unnerving experience of constantly shifting boundaries where support from institutional networks at times appear rigid and inflexible while at other times fluid and hard to locate. Nevertheless access to institutional discourse is contingent upon developing relationships, relationships with institutional agents that are often characterised by 'distance and distrust' (Fine 1991).

What constitutes valid knowledge within the structures of time and division of subjects; how knowledge should be amassed and demonstrated leading to who is thus
deserving of its credentials has gained critical attention (Foucault 1972; Harker and McConnachie 1985; Boykin 1986; Fine 1991; Banks 1994; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995; Mead, L., 1996; Smith, G 1997; Stanton-Salazar 1997). What is unclear to those youth who are franchisees and disenfranchised, as they progress through the system, is the ways discursive formation and practice combine to create cultural boundaries and borderlands (Andulzua 1990; Minh-ha 1990) that privilege some groups and undermine others.

Institutionally sanctioned discourse (Boykin 1986; Stanton-Salazar 1995) devoid of conceptual development of discourse on racism, classism, assimilation, colonisation, hegemony, cultural capital, denied the group the power to conceptualise and articulate their confusion. Being denied the power of language created difficulties in attempting to name and define experience in contexts where you didn’t talk about those sorts of things. For one woman in particular, the problem of not having the linguistic tools occurred ironically a time when she was placed first in a seventh form English exam. At this time the only way of expressing what she experienced, saw, and thought was dumb, everything was just dumb then. These women recognise that the language they needed to explain their world came from outside of school and pre-service teacher training courses. The vocabulary to express what had previously been notions of difference, confusion and contradiction were engaged and solidified through language that provided the explanatory power to address their experience (hooks 1990; Fine 1991).

Though each of these women clearly articulate experiences of racism and classism, few explicitly address issues of gender. The primary organisational framework of such institutions was the promotion of one cultural stock of knowledge over another in which gendered divisions were of secondary importance. More often than not, the women felt that it was the brown face that institutions made assumptions about before any recognition of whether such bodies wore dresses or trousers. Further to this, given
that six of the eight participants spent the majority of their secondary schooling at single sex schools, no personal comparative points were drawn upon. Equally, experiences offered within the whanau for all but one, were not considered gendered. Even though the fathers were considered the 'breadwinners' the position of the women and the roles they were seen to play in the home balanced any differentials that might have otherwise been perceived. Providing an income was only one facet upon which authority or power was seen to manifest itself by this group. The fact that many of these women as children were not divorced from adult conversations deliberating choices for their whanau increased their understanding of the diverse roles their mothers, aunties and kuia played in deciding the direction that whanau would take. Such discussions traversed economic, cultural and political domains. The women's deliberations about where whanau lived, the type of work they sought, and the directive roles played in educational and career choices countered notions of women as submissive and docile. In fact many of them saw their fathers as 'soft touches', more easily swayed to their way of thinking, than the no nonsense approaches taken by female whanau members.

The women's experiences at school necessitated the development of coping mechanisms, many of which contribute to the pool of strategies drawn on at work. Strategies in general are discussed in the next chapter with particular attention paid to the ways silence is used as a strategic tool.