

Cultural reproduction and school achievement: A case for Kura Kaupapa Maori

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ABSTRACT

In the terminology of reproduction theory, educational (and hence social) success are awarded to those with 'cultural capital' - which Bourdieu (1973) understands as the means of appropriating that symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed - and the component of 'cultural capital' that has achieved a paramount importance in modern industrial societies is educational qualifications. There exist a great many analyses of 'class' based social systems which show that schools are not neutral 'arbiters' of natural 'talent', but 'classed' institutions that work to preserve social and economic hierarchies. Sociologists abandoned classical family deficit theory a couple of decades ago and the position we have outlined has become almost an orthodoxy. But, as Harker (1990:202-3) argues: "There is no qualitative advance in switching from a theory which blames everything on home background and culture, to a theory which blames everything on the school." The point is that we are dealing with an interaction effect between particular family cultures and a particular structure of schooling. We believe that the best way to investigate the interaction is, in the first instance, at the level of the families. In this paper we wish to address the issue of education and ethnic culture with reference to the development of Kura Kaupapa Maori schools. Our discussion is structured by an important conceptual distinction (the scholastic necessary and the cultural arbitrary) and presented within the context of an analysis of empirical data from a large scale survey conducted by the authors.

Introduction

In the terminology of reproduction theory, educational (and hence social) success are awarded to those with 'cultural capital' - which Bourdieu (1973) understands as the means of appropriating that symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed - and the component of 'cultural capital' that has achieved a paramount importance in modern industrial societies is educational qualifications. There exist a great many analyses of 'class' based social systems which show a clear and consistent relationship between class based family cultures and educational achievement. Everywhere, the highest achievements are made to pupils from families whose culture most closely resembles that of the educational system in which they are educated. There is every reason to believe that schools are not neutral 'arbiters' of natural 'talent', but 'classed' institutions that work to preserve social and economic hierarchies.¹ Sociologists abandoned classical family deficit theory a couple of decades ago and the position we have outlined has become almost an orthodoxy. But, as Harker (1990:202-3) argues:

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The point is that we are dealing with an interaction effect between particular family cultures and a particular structure of schooling. We believe that the best way to investigate the interaction is, in the first instance, at the level of the families. In this paper we wish to address the issue of education and ethnic culture with reference to the development of Kura Kaupapa Maori schools. Our discussion is structured by an important conceptual distinction (the scholastic necessary and the cultural arbitrary) and presented within the context of an analysis of empirical data from a large scale survey conducted by the authors. The support we give for the Kura Kaupapa Maori initiative is not, of course, in any sense derived from our statistical analyses (though our analysis supports the position we adopt), it is a position reached from elementary principles of social rights, but we wish to present and defend our findings within the context of a clear expression of our policy on Maori education.

Class, Ethnicity and Cultural Capital

Some writers have argued that correlations between school performance and ethnicity are an artifact reflecting no more than the differential social class or socio-economic status distribution of the ethnic groups in a society. If 70 percent of Maori are working class compared to 30 percent European, then it might be expected that there will be a commensurate Maori-European difference in educational attainment since it is well-established that the attainment of working class pupils is markedly below that of middle class pupils. Fergusson et al (in press), for example, present data which show that this seems to be the case for their small Canterbury sample. On the other hand, Harker (1978), with a central North Island sample, found that controlling for socio-economic level reduces but does not eliminate a Maori-European difference in achievement outcomes. Nash and Harker (1988), making use of recently published information (Mitchell et al, 1982 and Hughes and Lauder, 1988), provided further support for the latter position. This discussion was advanced with additional data from a large scale survey by Nash and Harker (1990) and Nash, Harker and Charters (1990).

The concept of cultural capital, of course, is not necessarily tied to a class analysis, but assumes simply that a particular family culture or habitus constitutes a form of capital in relation to some habitus that may be embedded in a particular field or institution such as a school. Hence, a particular structure of schooling may be biased in favour of the habitus of a particular ethnic fraction as well as a particular class fraction of the social hierarchy. As we stated earlier (Nash and Harker, 1988), what we need to know is what socio-cultural practices (of families, students and schools) play a part in determining the level of educational attainment reached by identifiable social groups. Nearly twenty years ago, Ranginui Walker (1973:112) pointed out how he thought that the arbitrary elements of European cultural capital implicit in the organisation, transmission and evaluation of knowledge in schools are inimical to the needs of Maori pupils:

1. Teachers are predominantly Pakeha and monocultural, consequently teachers are generally ignorant of the other (Maori) culture and not sensitised to react to biculturalism and minority group needs.
2. Education is geared to a single cultural frame of reference. Education purveys and perpetuates a cultural tradition of West European origin that is ethnocentric and middle-class oriented.'
3. Maori children see little of relevance to them in the education system. They succeed at sport, but fail at school. School becomes a place of little value, a place to leave as soon as one turns fifteen.
4. Maoris have an ambivalent attitude to education. The Maori desires education as a means to improve his life chances, yet at the same time he fears education for its alienating effect

on the individual. In short Maoris are afraid of their children becoming monocultural and of losing them to the Pakeha world.

It is not necessary to suppose that Maori underachievement in education is wholly, or even mostly, due to such causes, but this theory is widely held and deserves close attention. Since Walker's article there have been several changes in policy and practice, although none which alter the basic structures of the system, designed to make schools more aware of and sympathetic towards the culture of Maori families. The argument revolves around the assumption that the instrumental outcomes of schooling (Walker's 'life chances') are somehow inextricably linked to the culture of middle-class Pakeha society. And it follows that in order for Maori to succeed they must set aside their traditional family culture and adopt the class habitus of successful European families.² This thesis must be interrogated. Is there an inherent and necessary connection between scholastic knowledge and its modes of transmission and the 'Pakeha way', or is the actual connection imposed by the schools merely arbitrary and open to decoupling? The next section of this paper outlines some findings from a large family based research survey conducted during 1989 which sought to explore the relationship between school achievement and a number of background factors including various indices of 'cultural capital'. We conclude that a certain kind of decoupling may be possible.

The Access and Opportunity Project

We believe that the processes causally responsible for social differences in educational access and opportunity are complex but essentially located in the cultural interaction between the family and the school. We understand families as collective actors who regard themselves as having a certain social standing and who utilise their resources (financial, cultural, intellectual, social) strategically in the interests of at least maintaining their families' social standing (according to their own criteria) in the present and in succeeding generations. In order to test hypotheses derived from this theory our principal research instrument, a family interview schedule, was carefully designed to obtain quantifiable information about the fundamental and effective resources of ethnic and class located families. In 1989 this interview schedule was completed by a random sample of 1393 families in three areas of the North Island.

Cultural Resources

A number of questions were used to establish the nature of the intellectual resources available to the family in addition to their specifically educational qualifications. We asked whether respondents spoke any language other than English (those who claimed to speak Maori were asked to indicate their degree of fluency) and we investigated cultural consumption in the area of reading, radio listening and television viewing. Respondents were asked whether they took a daily paper, whether they belonged to a public library and whether they read much. Those who claimed to read more than a little were asked to estimate how many books they owned. We asked about listening habits and what station people preferred. As to television we asked respondents to say what sort of programmes they most liked to watch.

Social Resources

In this area we asked people to state whether they belonged to any formal organisations or associations. We used a prompt card to indicate the range of organisations we were interested in. Respondents were also asked to state if they held any official position in any association they belonged to. We also asked if they did any voluntary work and if so, in what capacity.

Ethnicity

Respondents were asked whether they were born in New Zealand and if they were not, for their place of birth and length of residence in this country. We asked then what ethnic group they considered themselves to belong to making it clear that we were interested in descent. Five categories and a write in 'other' category were offered for this question: Maori, Maori/European, European, Pacific Islander and Asian. The sample contains 17 percent Maori respondents.

Educational Achievement

We obtained from schools PAT Reading Comprehension percentile scores for 997 pupils. Scores were sought only for pupils whose parents had given their signed consent.

Multivariate analysis

The basic zero order relationships between the variables described have been discussed in Nash and Harker (1990). In this paper we concern ourselves with the inter-relationship between them. Multivariate analyses were carried out using both path and factor analysis. Table 1 shows the zero order intercorrelation matrix of the variables. Multiple regression was used to calculate path coefficients for the model shown in Figures 1 and 3 for Pakeha (actually non-Maori) and Maori respectively. The revised models showing only the statistically significant path coefficients involving reading comprehension are shown in Figures 2 and 4.

Inspection of Table 1 shows that most of the variables are related to each other at a statistically significant level, the main exception being the measure of Maori social/cultural capital, which (not unexpectedly) has its strongest association with family ethnicity. Inspection of Figure 2 shows that in terms of 'explaining' the measure of school achievement, most of these correlations are partialled out due to their high level of inter-correlation. The index of Maori social and cultural capital is not independently related to our measure of school achievement: the significance of this is open to debate. The best (most parsimonious) explanatory model of school achievement in this analysis involves the length of both parents' education and the index of (literary) cultural capital. Substituting family social class for parents' education in the models does not substantially affect this conclusion - as shown in Figures 5 and 6 for Pakeha, and Figures 7 and 8 for Maori. It is interesting to note that social class and (literary) cultural capital are equally strongly linked for Maori and Pakeha, but that reading comprehension is more strongly linked to (literary) cultural capital for Maori than for Pakeha. For Pakeha, social class has a slight independent effect. The conventional socio-economic and educational variables are correlated more highly with Reading Comprehension in the case of Maori pupils than for Pakeha pupils (for example, with father's education the correlation is .342 (Maori) and .198 (Pakeha); with mother's education .323 and .229; with family class .309 and .196; and with family cultural capital .375 and .252. These data give no support to the often voiced hypothesis that socio-economic or social class variables do not 'explain' differential performance in the Maori population.

A careful scrutiny of Table 1 indicates that a factor analysis of this set of variables should produce two principle components: the first involving school achievement, cultural capital and parental education; and the second involving ethnicity and Maori social/cultural capital. The other variables should be mainly associated with the first component. Table 2 shows this to be the case.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficients (N = 720)

	MYRSED	FYRSED	FAMETH	SOCCAP	INCOME	RCPCLE	FCLASS	MSCAP
CCAP	.3881	.4659	.1148	.2747	.3268	.2849	-.4710	-.0361
MYRSED		.3974	<u>.0929</u>	.1813	.2731	.2365	-.4574	-.0183
FYRSED			.1317	.2520	.3332	.2179	-.4962	-.0133
FAMETH				.0346	<u>.0843</u>	.1273	-.1820	-.4014
SOCCAP					.1863	.0958	-.2764	.1367
INCOME						.1389	-.3703	-.0342
RCPCLE							-.2168	<u>-.0754</u>
FCLASS								.0438

bold $p < 0.01$; underline $p < 0.05$.

Variables are: CCAP (Cultural Capital); MYRSED (mother's years of education); FYRSED (father's years of education); FAMETH (family ethnicity); SOCCAP (social capital); INCOME (family income); RCPCLE (PAT Reading Comprehension percentile score); FCLASS (family class) and MSCAP (Maori cultural capital).

Table 2: Rotated factor matrix

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
CULCAP	.74	-.05
MYRSED	.67	-.04
FYRSED	.74	-.04
FAMETH	.16	-.78
SOCCAP	.49	.26
INCOME	.58	-.03
RCPCLE	.41	-.21
FAMCLASS	-.77	.10
MSCAP	.04	.84

Variables are: CULCAP (cultural capital); MYRSED (mother's years of education); FYRSED (father's years of education); FAMETH (family ethnicity); SOCCAP (social capital); INCOME (family income); RCPCLE (PAT Reading Comprehension percentile score); FAMCLASS (family class) and MSCAP (Maori cultural capital).

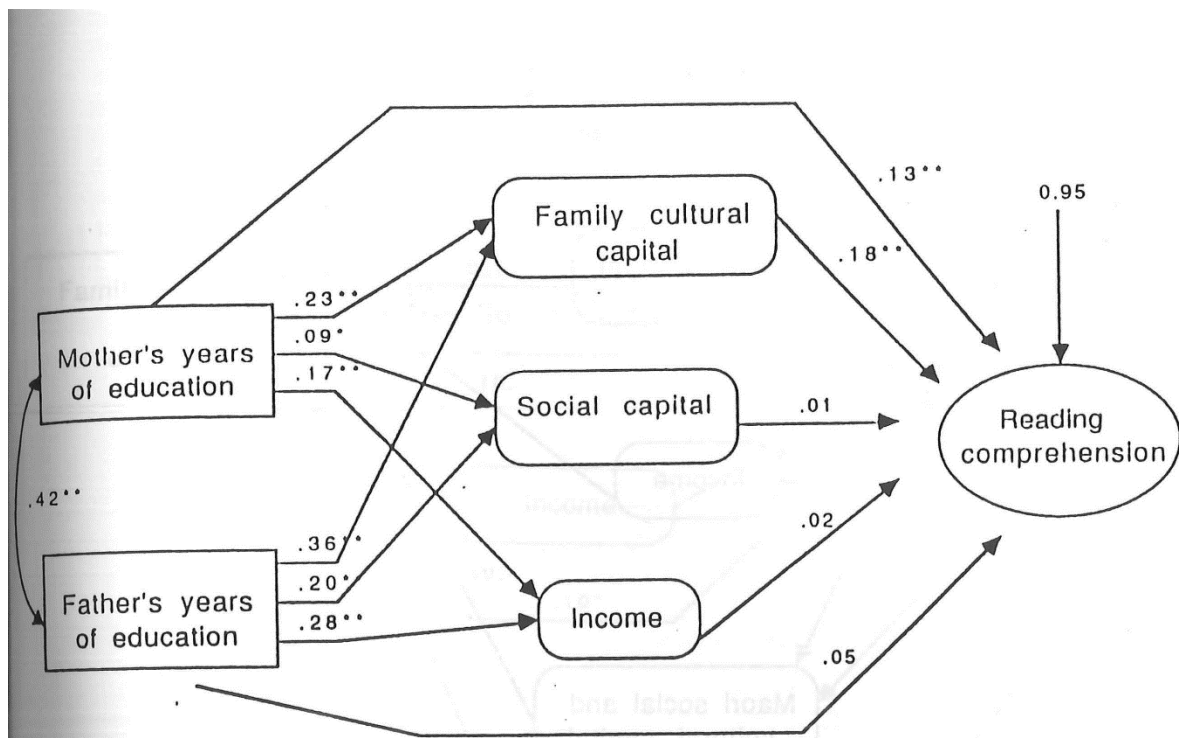


Figure 1: Path diagram for Pakeha sample; N=612; Multiple R = 0.30**

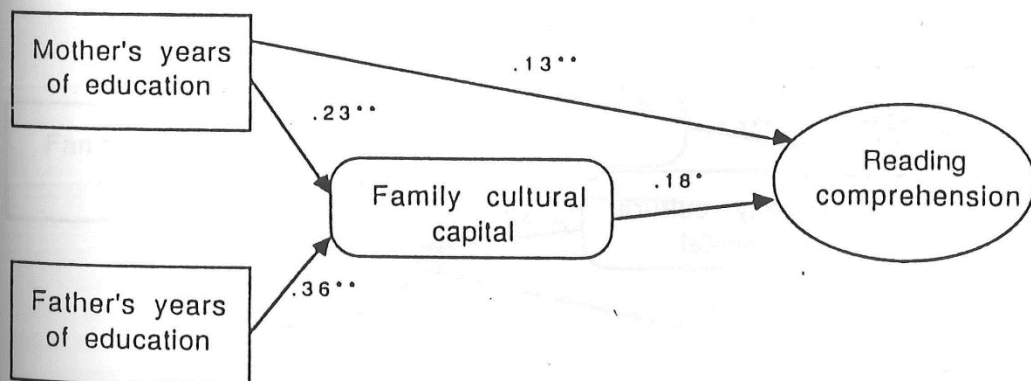


Figure 2: Reduced model of Figure 1.

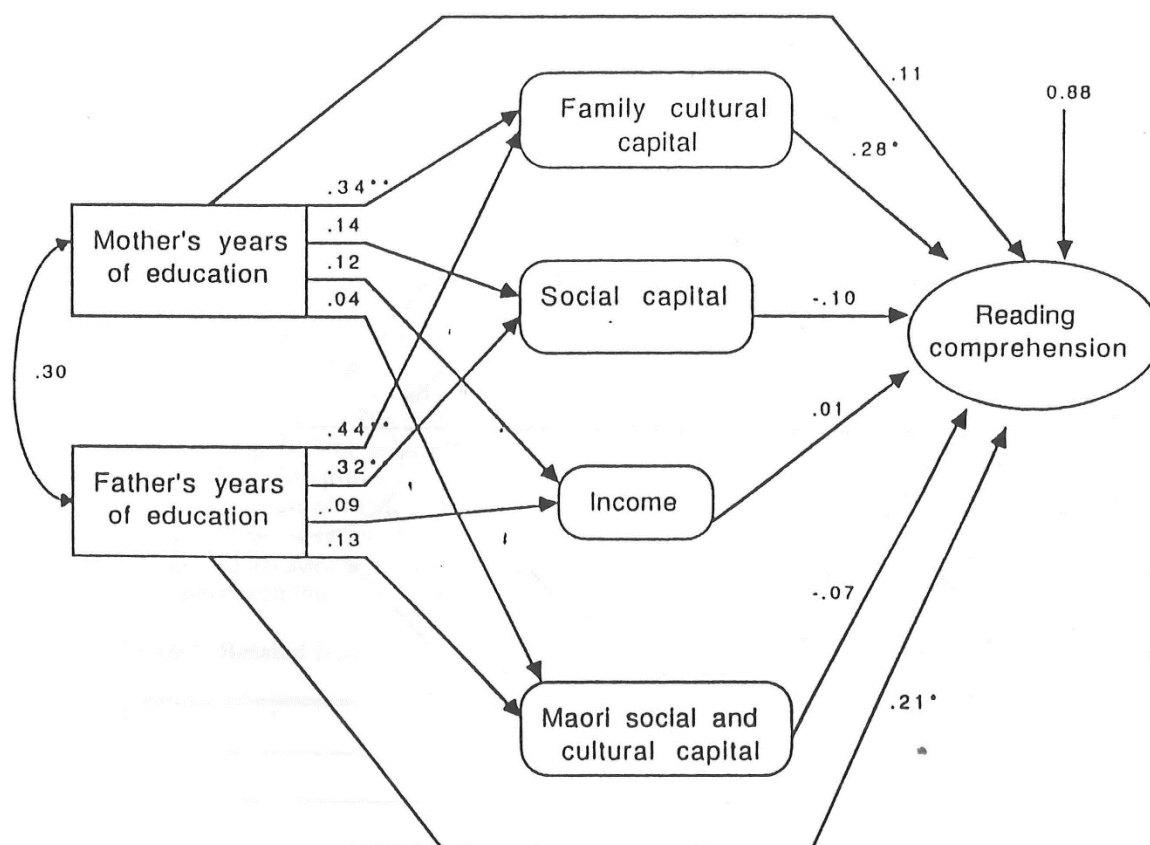


Figure 3: Path diagram for Maori sample; N=114; Multiple R = 0.47**

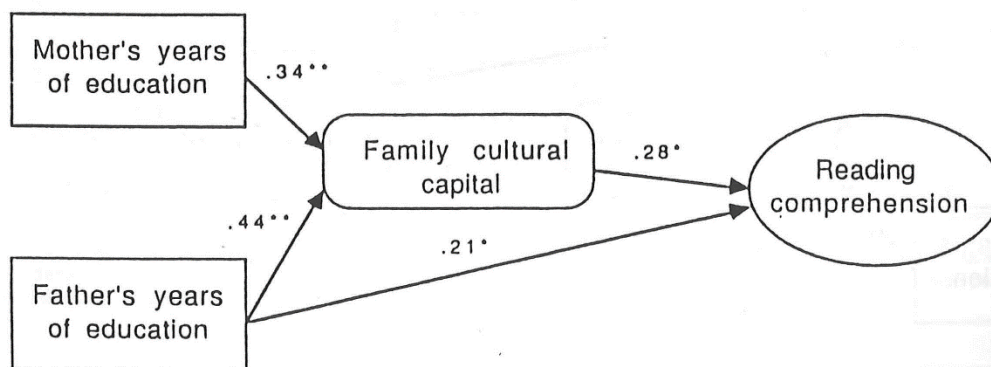


Figure 4: Reduced model of Figure 3.

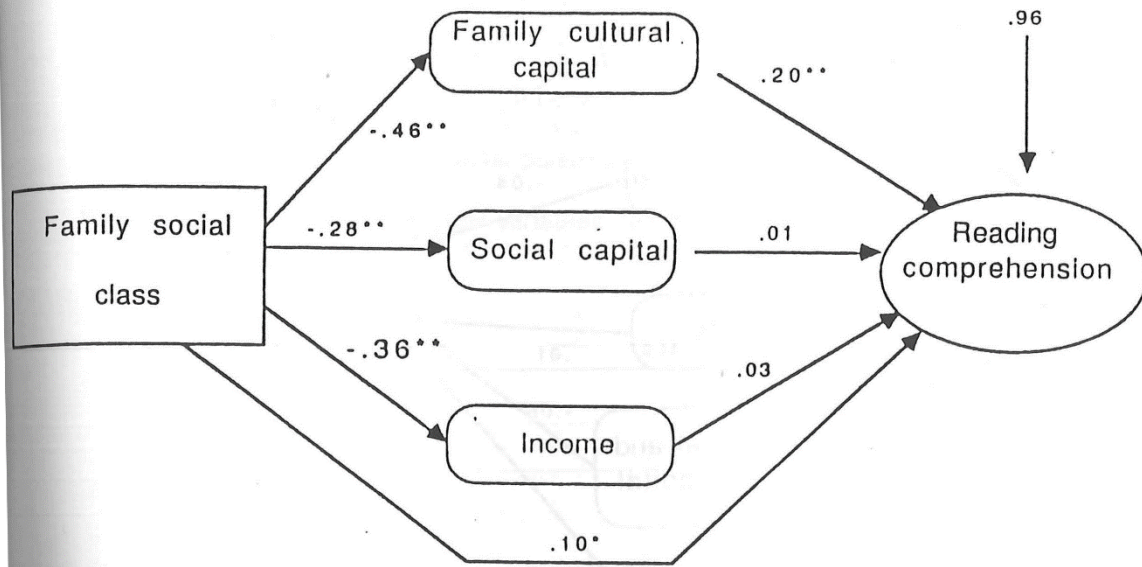


Figure 5: Path diagram for Pakeha sample; N=612; Multiple R = 0.28**

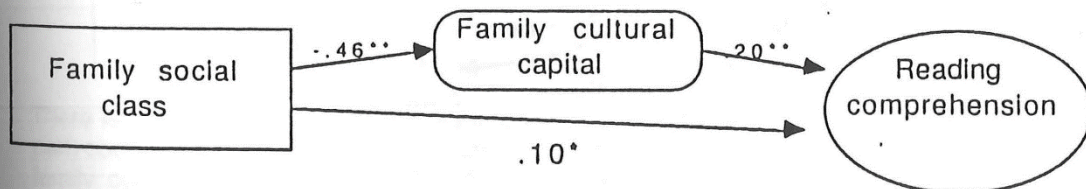


Figure 6: Reduced model of Figure 5.

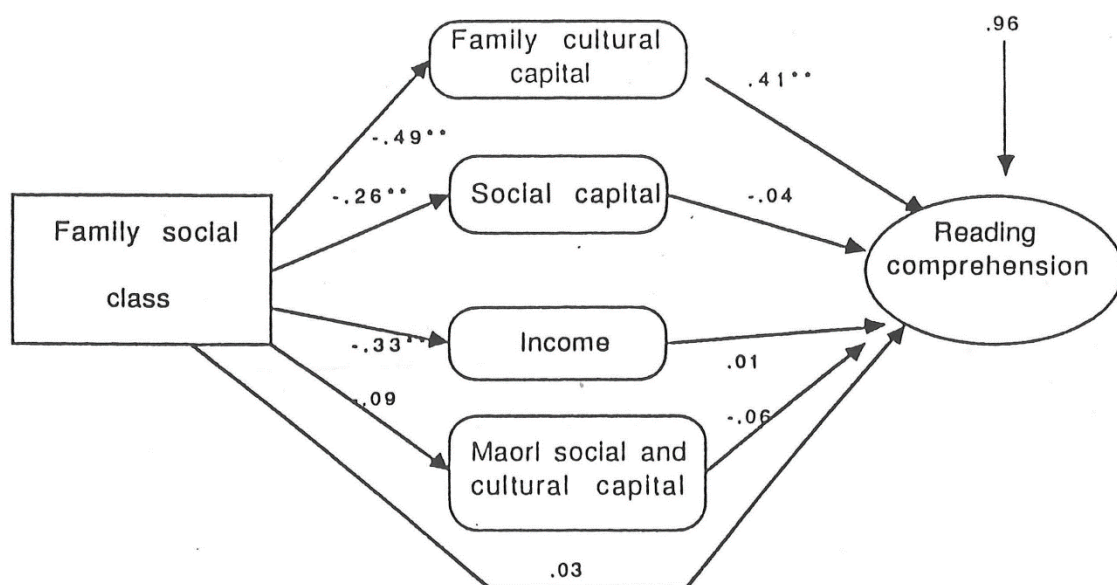


Figure 7: Path diagram for Maori sample; N=114; Multiple R = 0.43**

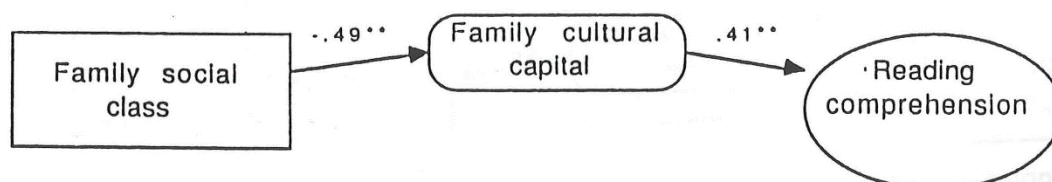
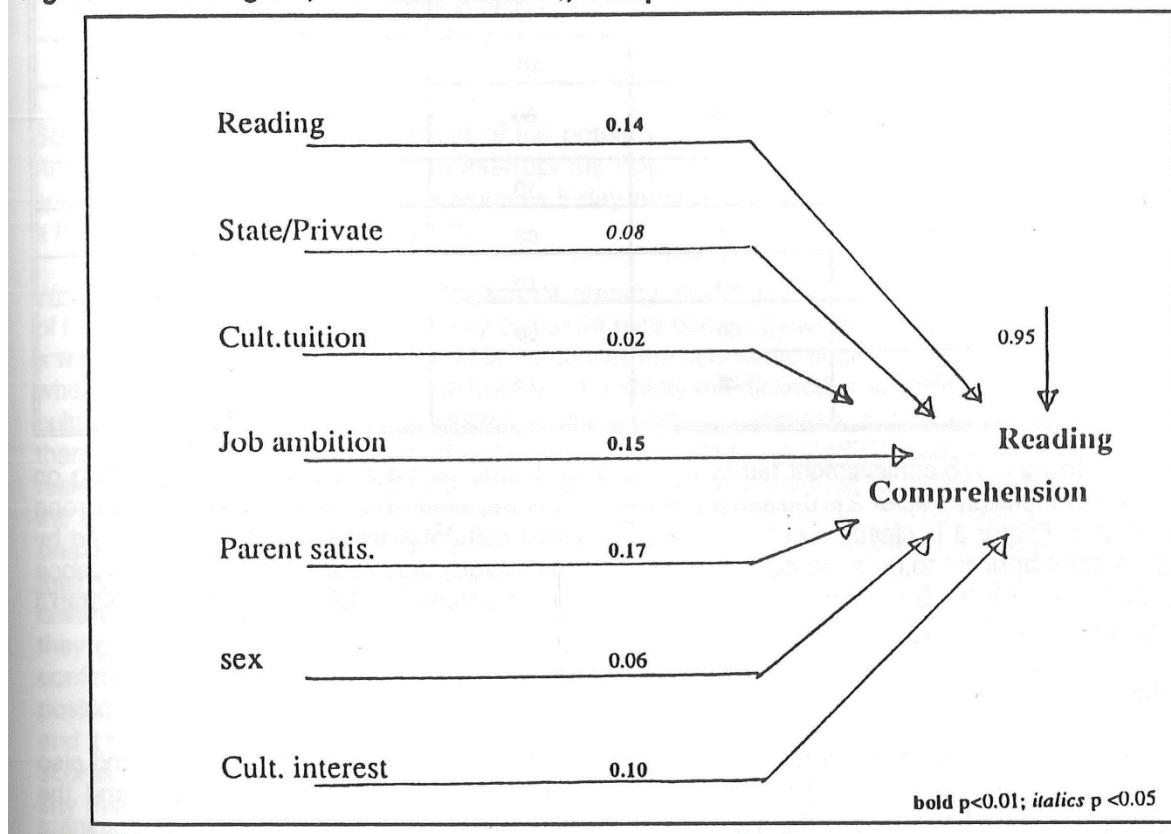


Figure 8: Reduced model of Figure 7.

Individual variables

Again, path analysis is the main analytic technique used to test the model in Figure 9. The variables used are as follows: Reading is a dummy variable indicating whether (1) or not (0) the pupil's parent reports reading as a leisure activity of the pupil; State/Private is a dummy variable indicating attendance at a state (0) or private (1) school; Cult.tuition is a dummy variable indicating whether (1) or not (0) the pupil has private tuition in cultural activities (piano lessons, ballet, elocution etc); Job ambition is a 20 point scale reporting the pupil's job ambitions as reported by the parents, ranging from 'professional' to 'unskilled'; Parent satisfaction is a 4 point scale of the level of parent satisfaction with the pupil's progress at school; Cultural interest is a dummy variable indicating whether (1) or not (0) the pupil is said to express interest in any cultural pursuit such as music, dancing, art, etc.

Figure 9: Path diagram, individual variables, Multiple R=0.32



There is nothing here that we do not already know or could not discover from descriptive data. The path coefficients are not high, but they are consistent with a model that centrally implicates class located family cultural practices in the school achievement of children. Nothing from the individual level variables has detracted from the power of our index of family cultural capital, which together with the level of parental satisfaction with the child's schooling, carries the bulk of the statistical relationship. It should be noted that parental satisfaction is derived from the question 'Are you satisfied with [child's] progress at school?', and is positively correlated with Reading Comprehension. Factor analysis provides an additional statistical tool and when all of the family and the individual variables are factor analysed a highly stable, 5 factor structure emerges. Two analyses were carried out: first without reading comprehension scores; and second the same analysis with reading comprehension scores included, in order to compare the latter results from an N of 700 with the first analysis with an N of over 3,000. The same 5 factor solution with almost identical loadings resulted. The rotated (varimax) factor matrix of the second analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Rotated factor matrix - all variables

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Fam.cult.cap.	.73	-.06	.09	.10	.00
job ambition	-.10	-.10	.17	-.54	.26
school status	.13	.02	-.18	-.08	.76
parent satis.	.08	.05	-.25	-.40	-.62
mothers educ.	.68	-.02	.03	.13	-.02
fathers educ.	.76	-.06	.02	.03	.04
cultural int.	.13	.02	.78	.12	-.13
reading	-.05	.04	.01	.67	.08
cultural tuition	.03	-.05	.80	-.16	.10
reading comp.	.32	-.17	.10	.59	.21
ethnicity	.15	-.79	.03	-.02	.04
Maori capital	.02	.84	-.01	.01	.02
occupation	-.79	.09	.00	-.00	.00
social capital	.50	.25	.12	-.17	.26

Factor 1 is clearly a pro-achievement family environment factor, with a strong secondary loading on reading comprehension. Factor 2 is the same one we saw before, a Maori factor that maintains its strong independence. Factor 3 is clearly a cultural one, (it includes cultural activities of all kinds pursued by pupils). Factor 4 appears to be a pro-achievement individual literacy factor that clearly has an influence on job ambition. Factor 5 is a school related factor relating parental satisfaction with the children's progress and the status of the school.

Discussion

These data, it seems to us, tell something of the nature of the culture implicit in the schools, and also of the culture of many Maori families. We can distinguish between the cultural arbitrary and the scholastic necessary. Schools may be said to reflect the cultural arbitrary of the politically dominant culture in the society they serve. In this sense French schools (whether in Paris, Geneva, Montreal or Noumea) may be said to reflect a particular and distinctive cultural arbitrary - that of traditional French academic life. Schools in New Zealand also reflect the cultural arbitrary of the dominant class and ethnic fraction, expressed (as Walker pointed out) in the attitudes and values of the teachers, the content and organisation of the curriculum, teaching and evaluation methods, and so on (see also Smith, 1990: 187-8). The scholastic necessary of the school should be understood, in contrast, as given by the nature of the knowledge which any modern school must be centrally concerned to produce and transmit. We argue that the scholastic necessary of the school is independent of its cultural arbitrary. In this sense, and it is crucially important, the non-arbitrary culture of, say, a French school and an English school may be the same (Harker, 1987).

Recent studies fail to provide convincing evidence that the pedagogic practices within Maori and non-Maori schools and between Maori and non-Maori teachers represent significant differences within the level of the cultural arbitrary. Kerin (1986), for example, found 'no clear benefit for Maori children in Taha Maori teachers' and states, furthermore, that:

Whilst it is important to bring attention to the particular achievements of Maori teachers with Maori children in this study, it is equally important to stress that Maori and Pacific Island children in this study also did quite well with European teachers. (119)

Two recent studies of Maori boarding schools (which incidentally provide evidence that the student intake is drawn from a higher than average socio-economic level within the Maori community) also support the interpretation that the scholastic necessary is recognised in the pedagogic practices of these schools. This pedagogy is anything but "progressive". Curtis (1981 : 138) states unequivocally that:

It was found that a formal type of education with a highly structured programme does contribute to academic success, in Maori boarding schools. It was seen and assumed by both staffs (of the two schools involved in the study) that regular study programmes and the total concern of the teachers towards the students' development were contributing factors in support of this query [the hypothesis that structured programmes contribute to academic success]. A "controlled" environment was seen as conducive to learning.

Solomon (1980) is equally convinced of the potency of these traditional European (arguably by now Anglo-Maori) forms of pedagogy to interrupt the oppositional elements of Anglo-Maori working class socialisation, and he accordingly advocates 5-day hostels to expand the availability of those forms to a larger proportion of Maori students .

What has to be learned in the primary school, literacy, numeracy and an understanding of the function of logical deductive argument, can only be taught by a pedagogy which privileges linguistic fluency and a willingness to embrace the meaning structures of the scholastic necessary. It is highly probable that where children feel secure within a school which reflects the distinctive elements of their class or ethnic cultural arbitrary their capacity to assimilate the scholastic necessary of the school is enhanced. But there is a profound sense in which this cultural arbitrary may be superficial and actually irrelevant to the real scholastic culture which it is the necessary function of the school to transmit. It is this culture of the school that we wish to bring to the forefront of analytical attention. Some families, we believe, do prepare their children for this culture more thoroughly than others because it is a simple extension of their family habitus, and this preparation is extremely important. It is not so much that once ahead children tend to stay ahead (although they do), nor is it that other children cannot catch up (although they generally do not), it is rather that this easy assimilation into the scholastic culture of the school confirms the correctness of the strategy of the home and legitimates the family's conception of its own position. This sets up a complex field in which other families must also behave more or less strategically and it may be suspected that much of the evident withdrawal from the educational system which the low scores of certain groups reveal can be explained by the precise obverse of this mechanism. That is to say that their experience, not so much of the schools but of their relative position within the structural matrix of constraint, is such as to confirm the family's belief that the strategic route offered by the school is not for them.

There is a meritocracy of aspirations among New Zealand parents and secondary school pupils. Whatever their social class origins occupational aspirations follow demonstrated school performance. However, many working class pupils fail to realise their aspirations and accept destinations below those which their educational achievements seem to make possible. It is not that the valuation they place on different occupations changes, rather the costs of pursuing high level aspirations proves to be too great. These costs include not only the actual financial expense of higher education but (and perhaps more importantly) various opportunity costs associated with that route. These opportunity costs include income (and again perhaps more importantly) the cost of forgoing a lower level destination in favour of a higher one when the former represents an acceptable level of occupational and social mobility. Levels of satisfaction with relative mobility are clearly set at a lower level for students of working class origin When compared with those of middle class origin. These processes of managing the transition from school to post-school destination (a somewhat prolonged business) are best understood within the collective context of sub-cultural

formation. All the relevant evidence suggests that among Maori pupils, in particular, there is developed (produced is the theoretically sound term!) a distinctive Anglo-Maori working class sub-culture which, while rooted in the objective conditions of educational and employment opportunities, actually has the effect of increasing the likelihood of outright educational failure and the gross under-representation of Maori young people in employment.

Bourdieu models these processes in terms that some critics have found metaphorical and circular but that, nevertheless, have a certain authority. 'Everything happens', says Bourdieu (1974:53), 'as if parental attitudes towards their children's education ... were primarily the interiorisation of the fate objectively allotted (and statistically quantifiable) as a whole to the social category to which they belong'. Within this argument objective probabilities are intuitively perceived and internalised as subjective hopes (a process he elsewhere (Bourdieu, 1984), calls 'making a virtue of necessity'). This stands as a specific instance of the more general theoretical proposition developed in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977:164):

Every established order tends to produce ... the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agent's aspirations, out of which arises the sense of limits, commonly called the sense of reality. i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalised classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order.

What happens, we believe, is that as pupils individually, but through their involvement with the powerful sub-culture, confront the choices open to them and begin to re-think their aspirations (which can be understood in terms of a cost-benefit model) they are, at the same time, confronted with the task of coming to terms with the abandonment of earlier hopes and the acceptance of another fate. It is this collective re-adjustment which gives the sub-culture its most distinctive characteristic. But as the processes of rationalisation are experienced in their complex and contradictory way ('I wasn't bright enough', 'people like us don't stand a chance', 'I'd rather be with my mates, anyway', 'how can you get a fair go at this school?' and so on) there is thus created an additional force able to suppress aspirations even beyond what would be expected by a secondary effect rooted in cost-benefit processes. The debate between the 'value position' and the 'rational calculation' position is a lot messier in the school yard than the university seminar room. In reality, pupils form aspirations on the basis of their demonstrated performance, but a sub-culture that stands in plain opposition to the social values of the schools (and most particularly to its concept of the social hierarchy) does exist and has an affect on many students as they translate aspirations into actual destinations. Thus, the forms of a sub-culture which are fundamentally structured by the objective conditions of the labour market and the social position of working class Maori, come to pose a recognisable threat to the success of even those Maori students who but for its power might well achieve that success. This sub-culture amounts to an additional hurdle for many Maori students - and their parents are well aware of that.

Given the separation we have argued for, between the scholastic necessary of the school and the cultural arbitrary which sets the framework for its transmission, Kura Kaupapa Maori may be seen as an attempt to 'naturalise' a different 'arbitrariness':

Kura Kaupapa Maori have initiated educational change from a relatively autonomous position outside of mainstream state schooling in order to be relatively free from the influences of Pakeha cultural reproduction. Kura Kaupapa Maori have evolved their own counter hegemonies which the state is now being invited to accept. (Smith, 1990:185)

This 'counter hegemonic' option is a language immersion school (in Maori) aiming to produce bilingual, bicultural individuals and 'is concerned to teach a modern, up to date, relevant curriculum (within the national guidelines set by the state)' (ibid:194). This highly significant comment demonstrates to us that the Kura Kaupapa Maori schools are designed to intervene at the level of the cultural arbitrary and not at the level of the scholastically necessary practices of the school

system. Kura Kaupapa Maori schools are apparently based around the celebration of Maori values and forms of organisation, which, it is believed, will be a simple extension of the family habitus of participating families. Whereas the Taha Maori programme in schools was an attempt to insert in 'mainstream' schools some knowledge of things Maori and may have benefitted some Pakeha pupils, it did not represent a significant transformation of the cultural arbitrary of the majority population. Kura Kaupapa Maori, on the other hand sets out to transform the school into a form recognisable to Maori, and through strong community links, to insert the idea of schooling as an integral part of modern Maori culture, and highlight the role of families in the success of their children (an idea very well understood by the middle classes).

It is often suggested that such schools would be unnecessarily divisive of our society and are consequently regarded with considerable suspicion in the Pakeha community. There are a number of points to be made here.

1. What has been called the necessary knowledge is common to both Maori and Pakeha and would constitute the majority of the curriculum in all schools. A curriculum in which such necessary knowledge had been thrown out because it was defined as pakeha, would be counter-productive to equality at the level of jobs and politics. Indeed, many argue that the current vogue of multi-culturalism in education with its strong focus on life styles, ignores the whole question of life-chances, and hence diverts attention from the basic equality issues. The Kura Kaupapa Maori school is committed to maintaining a 'modern, up to date' programme of study leading to national examinations.
2. As we pointed out before, there is no necessary link between the kind of knowledge to be transmitted by a school, and the kind of cultural context in which the transmission takes place - for example, Japanese bridge builders have the same engineering knowledge as civil engineers from New Zealand or France, but each still retain their unique characteristics as Japanese, French or New Zealanders.
3. Most Maori parents express the wish for their children to get the best of the Pakeha world while retaining the best from the Maori world. This is a legitimate demand that has been conceded to other groups (e.g. the integrated denominational schools of one sort or another) and should be a priority for Maori, since: (a) in a bicultural society, they should have these rights as the tangata whenua; and (b) there is no external source for renewal if the culture should die out in New Zealand (Harker, 1986).

If we are to be concerned with social equity rather than simply equality, we must get beyond culture in order for pupils to be able to reflect on their own culture - both majority and minority. As Burtonwood (1986) argues, this is a transformative view of schooling, and the only way to avoid (in his view) the kind of cultural isolationism usually associated with separate schooling. The alternative is to try to cope within the mainline state system, and confess that our hidden agenda all along has been assimilation. As Churchill (1986:21) states on the basis of the OECD survey of educational provision for minority pupils:

attempting to 'integrate' a minority group into a system is diametrically opposed to attempting to foster its separateness ... Faced with a population whose goals may be different from the assumed goals of the 'majority' society, one must confront de novo all the issues, even the most fundamental, of what education is all about.

But a note of caution is necessary. This entire programme rests on a belief about the reason for Maori failure in school which is supported by surprisingly little concrete evidence. If it is indeed true that the massive under-achievement of Maori pupils is caused by the structured incapacity to provide a cultural arbitrary which provides a positive context of learning for Maori students then the Kura Kaupapa Maori schools will succeed. If, however, the principal reasons for Maori under-achievement are familial cultural practices characteristic of the unskilled working class (including, most importantly in this context, minimal levels of involvement with a culture of literacy) the task of these schools, if their intake is representative, will be much more difficult. It may be that involvement with

Maori schools of this type would, in the long run, help to interrupt those practices of the Anglo-Maori working class which, in our view, are, in fact, the immediate cause of under-attainment. We will plead again that this should not be interpreted as a reversion to 'deficit' theory and we leave aside, in remarking on the immediate cause, the history of colonisation which has created such a class-located Maori community. The bulk of our research, however, indicates that in the structures of the current school system Maori children underachieve when compared with Pakeha children because of quantitative differences in the cultural, that is literary, resources possessed by their families. More than school structures and practices need to change.

Notes and References

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