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AUTHOR	Doerr, Neriko Musha
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ABSTRACT

School reform in New Zealand in the 1990s greatly affected funding strategies and school social dynamics. This paper investigates the effects of per-pupil funding and the track system on the sensibilities of students in one New Zealand secondary school. Per-pupil funding and the track system are used in an effort to attract parents (consumers) and raise the school's value in the education market. The paper uses data from ethnographic research, focusing on 560 Year 10 students. Data were compiled from observations of students and interviews with students, parents, administrators, and teachers. Conclusions, meant to open up further discussion of school reform, include the following: (1) "Free-marketization" of education encourages a division between top-track and lower-track students, which creates for students different feelings of belonging to the school; (2) poorer students are sacrifices in the school's value-creation efforts, victims that the school sees as necessary for its survival; and (3) the school became "commodified" by the reforms but by different degrees, depending on the socioeconomic positions of parents. Included is a discussion of recent sociopolitical forces in New Zealand and how they influenced school reform. (Contains 27 references.) (WFA)

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Belonging and "Achieving" in the Free Market of Education: a Study on Students' Sensibilities in an Aotearoa/New Zealand School

Neriko Musha Doerr
NerikoMushaDoerr@aol.com

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Introduction

This paper investigates the little-analyzed effects of the free-marketization of education on the sensibilities of students in a state secondary school in Aotearoa/New Zealand[1]. Aotearoa/New Zealand's neo-liberal education reform of 1989 was the most comprehensive in the world, offering us insights into other such reforms, including those advocated in the United States (Fiske and Ladd 2000: 12; Whitty et. al. 1998: 21). This paper focuses on the effects of the introduction of per-pupil funding, which pushed schools to transform their operations to attract more parents, the consumers. Based on data from a nine-month-long fieldwork at Waikaraka High School (alias)[2] in 1997-1998, this paper analyzes changing social dynamics within a school caused by its tracking system, one of the school's major efforts to raise its value in the education market. By using anthropological approaches, this paper offers unique perspectives on the research of neo-liberal educational reforms.

Aotearoa/New Zealand's neo-liberal education reform of 1989 was part of a world-wide trend for a less state-regulated economy. Since the late twentieth century, the state in many parts of the world has been increasingly removed from a substantive role in the national or global economy, except as a guarantor of free movement of capital and profits; and many government businesses, agencies and services were sold to private owners (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 279-294; Cox 1996: 31; Gilpin 1987: 232). In countries such as Great Britain, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, the free-marketization of education was initiated in the late 1980s with the education reforms led by the New Right ideology[3].

The New Right emerged from an alliance of the Anglo-centric conservatives and the supporters of the liberal ideologies of individualism and free-market, drawn together by a mutual disdain of the post-World War II collective social reform: the conservatives, against its egalitarianism; and the liberals, against its constriction on free competition. In the context of high youth unemployment, an alleged decrease in educational "standards," and failure of the state education to secure equality of opportunity in the 1970s, the New Right education reform shifted the site of responsibility from the government to schools and parents (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993: 1-12; Brown 1990: 73-80; Whitty et. al. 1998: 15-47). For example, according to Phillip Brown, in Britain, while the state extended its control in areas such as curriculum, it gave up responsibility for the educational outcome and left it in the hands of the free-market: the concept of competition holds each school responsible for producing good results and the parents responsible for selecting a "good" school. The inequality of educational

outcome is often viewed as an expression of parental preferences and healthy "diversity" (Brown 1990: 77-80).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Fourth Labour Government (1984-1990) initiated the New Right reform of education in 1989. Following the education reform of Great Britain, the Aotearoa/New Zealand's reform minimized the state obligations, while extending state control in other areas. The reform consisted of the following changes: (1) The Department of Education was replaced with a policy-focused Ministry of Education in addition to agencies covering accountability, qualifications and assessment. (2) Regional bodies were abolished, and their major functions were devolved to schools. (3) A Board of Trustees, consisting of the principal and representatives of staff, parents, and students[4], was created for each school. It gained decision-making power regarding various issues, including the allocation of the school budget[5], and became accountable to the local community. The powers and responsibilities of the Board were listed in the school charters, which were obligated to include the governmental requirements such as a commitment to equity[6]. (4) The governmental funding of each school was to be based upon the number of enrolled pupils combined with complicated formulae to measure the needs of students, causing schools to compete for pupils (Codd 1990: 191-205; Dale and Robertson 1997: 209-227; Gordon 1997: 65-82; Middleton 1992: 304-305). As a result of this reform, there emerged an aggregation of schools apparently autonomous but actually tightly controlled from the center through a national curriculum, a national qualifications system, and a national audit system. Also, encouraged by per-pupil state funding, an increased need for non-state funding, and local management, schools began focusing on maximizing their school rolls and the sale of services (Dale and Robertson 1997: 219).

This paper focuses on the effects of the introduction of per-pupil funding on the social dynamics within a school based on data from an ethnographic research on the tracking system. This paper investigates the tracking system for two reasons. Firstly, tracking was a strategy that schools increasingly adopted in the free market of education because it served to attract certain kinds of parents, who were often wealthy (Moltzen 1996: 12-17; Whitty et. al. 1998: 90). Secondly, the tracking offers a site of struggle for prestige, resources, and "academic success": that is, what were at stake in the educational arena (see Oaks 1985: 15-39). For these reasons, the tracking offers us a window to understand the new politics developed within a school by the neo-liberal reform.

There are three theoretical contributions of this paper. First, this paper

adds a fresh perspective to the works on the effects of uneven exercises of parental choice in the educational free market. Previously, researchers focused on the differentiation *among* schools and how they became polarized into "successful" and "unsuccessful" schools (Fiske and Ladd 2000; Gordon 1994; Lauder et. al. 1999; Nicholson 1995; Thrupp 1997; 1999). This focus, however, does not explain the development of the social dynamics and emergent sense of differentiation among people *within* a school. This paper, instead, analyzes how the school incorporates people of various backgrounds, orders them taxonomically, and invests in their "differences" in its effort to survive in the free-market of education.

Second, this paper offers an analysis of an unexpected role played by the students who could not afford to move to other schools. Instead of viewing such students as victims left in "unsuccessful" schools (Gordon 1994) or as "burdens" off-loaded to "unsuccessful" schools (Lauder et. al. 1999: 132; Tomlinson 1997), this paper argues that they became an indispensable sacrifice in the school's value-creation efforts.

Third, by emphasizing the compulsory nature of education, my paper adds to the studies of governmentality[7] that view that, in the age of neo-liberalism, individuals are governed through their very sense of being free (Rose and Miller 1992: 201). My paper suggests that, in compulsory education, poor parents were feeling not only that freedom was assigned differently by one's wealth but also that they were forced to sacrifice their wishes for the wealthy people's freedom to choose schools. In short, a contribution of my paper is to offer a detailed examination of the dynamics among variously positioned students within a school and to show how the school divided its student body in order to cater to the wishes of wealthy parents.

The aforementioned ethnographic research was carried out at a state secondary school, Waikaraka High School. Waikaraka High School caters to Year 7[8] to 13 (age eleven to seventeen) students. There were 560 students (male 269, female 291) at Waikaraka High School in March 1998[9]. During my fieldwork in 1997-1998, Waikaraka High School was practically[10] the only high school in the town of Waikaraka, a town with a population of 5000 located over an hour drive from the capital city of Wellington. However, it had four competitors for students in nearby towns and many more in the commutable cities. Although half the town's population was receiving some kind of social welfare (Department of Statistics 1997), there were some high-income households who could afford to send their children to out-of-town schools.

I observed Year 10 students in their transition from Year 10 to Year 11

throughout 1997 and 1998. Year 10 in 1997 was comprised of four Form classes. What the Form class meant differed from Year to Year[11]. For the Year 10 students, students of the same Form class stayed together for the compulsory subjects (seventeen class periods per week), but not for the elective subjects (nine class periods per week). As the group in which the students spend most of their time at school, Form classes served as sources of belonging for the Year 10 students. Four Year 10 Form classes were divided into one bilingual Form class[12] and three "mainstream" Form classes. The bilingual class was part of an optional bilingual unit, in which classroom instruction was both in Maori and English. It was part of the movements to revitalize the Maori, the language of the indigenous people. Three mainstream Form classes were tracked into one top-track and two same-level lower-track Form classes. This arrangement changed significantly in Year 11: 1) Form classes ceased to be significant sources of belonging, because the members of the same Form class were no longer put together in the compulsory classes; 2) tracking was done by subject (but only from 1998 on); and 3) the bilingual students joined the mainstream classes.

In examining the tracking system, this paper utilizes two anthropological methods. First, I use data from my participant observation in the Year 10 tracked classroom in order to show briefly the difference between the top and lower-track classes. Second, I examine the results of semi-structured interviews of Year 10 students and their parents, school administrators, and teachers in order to understand their views regarding tracking. Some interviews were tape-recorded upon permission. I took notes of all the interviews. There was no translator because all the interviews were done in English, except for an exchange of some Maori sentences insignificant to the interview content. In the following sections, I will analyze the above data and situate my findings in the existing research on the free-marketization of education.

Differences and Similarities of Top and Lower-Track Classrooms: Participant Observation

In 1997, I observed nineteen sessions of social studies classes of a lower-track Form class and eighteen sessions of the top-track Form class, both of which were taught by Alice. I observed several similarities between the way these top and lower-track classes operated. First, both classes covered the same curriculum. The bulk of the class time was spent by Alice's explaining the assigned work for the period—usually activities in the workbook—and students carrying out that work. However, Alice either gave extra work to the top-track students or

modified the way she covered the curriculum. Second, the students' "work attitudes" were similar in the top and lower-track classes, mainly because Alice used slightly different tasks in each class so that both classes would have similar amounts of concentration.

There were also differences. First, the number of students in the top-track class was the highest (twenty-nine) in Year 10 because many parents wanted to squeeze their children into it. There were twenty-five and eighteen students in each of the lower-track classes. Second, the top-track class had student presentations (for example, on current affairs) regularly, while the lower-track class rarely did. Third, Alice assigned more group-type work in the top-track class. In the following sections I discuss how teachers, parents, and students viewed and experienced this tracking system.

Why Tracking Exists: Interviews of Staff

Interviews of staff members were done either at their homes or at school, lasting an hour to six hours each, mostly during the summer holiday. I interviewed thirty-eight staff members out of thirty-nine who taught during my stay in 1997 and one of the new teachers in 1998. I first asked them to fill out a sheet about their personal and career background. Then, I asked them standardized questions verbally. I also asked questions on certain issues, such as the tracking system, to some teachers. I introduce interviews of three staff members on tracking here. As I discussed in detail elsewhere (Doerr 2000), the teachers' positions in relation to tracking affected the way they framed their answers.

William: the founder of tracking

William was the principal of Waikaraka High School for 21 years until he retired in October 1997. I interviewed him at his house two months after his retirement. William explained to me why and how he introduced the tracking. The first reason was to solve the problem of the falling performance of the able student, who were receiving put-downs and called "teachers' pets." Parents of these students wanted the school to solve this problem by putting the students in a class in which they wouldn't be "put down" but instead be supported by their peers. The second reason was the increasing behavioral problems in class. Some parents threatened the school that they would take their children out of school if their children were in the same class as such "behavioral problem" students. Waikaraka High School's response to these issues, materialized in 1990, was to

introduce the tracking system.

The tracking started in Year 11 because students take their first national examination (School Certificate) at the end of Year 11. The tracking was always set by Form class until he retired. Examination results went up after the introduction of the system, especially for the top-track students.

There was no significant debate when the tracking began, except for a small group of staff. They thought the tracking was elitist and socially unacceptable in the egalitarian New Zealand society. Two students opted out of the top-track class for the same reason. There is always opposition, William said. The Board of Trustees supported the tracking system because of community pressure. Especially, the parents of able students were vocal. The tracking system stayed.

Jack: pro-tracking

Jack was the Form teacher of the Year 11 top-track Form class from the beginning for six years. Jack said that the tracking system should stay, despite opposition by some teachers, because it was driven by community expectations. If there was no tracking, parents of "good students" would change schools, especially with the present increased ease to change schools. Since Waikaraka High School is small, if many parents pulled their children, it might have to close down, he said.

Alice: anti-tracking

Alice, who opposed the tracking, had a slightly different take on the tracking system. Alice explained to me that the tracking began because "they wanted to make an elite class." Teachers first filled up the top-track classes with students whose parents wished it so. These parents were mainly of high socio-economic status. She later added that the tracking began also in order to raise the scores of students' national examinations. About the parental pressure, Alice mentioned that, every year, there were two to four parents who pressured teachers to put their children in the top-track class.

Discussion

From these different reasons given for the existence and sustenance of the tracking system, there emerged various images of the students and parents of the top-track class: William described the top-track students as bright but helpless, being the target of ridicules and bullying acts; Jack described the students in the

top-track class as having parents who wanted nothing but the best for their children; and Alice described the top-track students and their parents as elitist. This indicates that the staff saw different characteristics between the top and lower-track students/parents.

Also, although the power of parents was recognized as the force behind the existence of the tracking system, teachers perceived it in different degrees depending on their position: Jack saw it as threatening the existence of Waikaraka High School and Alice, merely two to four per year. That is, the New Right reform provided some teachers (like Jack) with a new logic for arguing for continuing the tracking system: whatever the parents/consumer want is right for the school. What becomes a significant issue in this paper is whether all the parents could become such privileged consumers. My interviews with parents show below that not all parents felt to be consumers in the same way.

Kinds of Engagement with Tracking: Interviews of Parents

I interviewed parents of Year 10 students of 1997 mainly at their houses, lasting from half-an-hour to three hours each. I mailed two-page-long survey sheets beforehand to fill out. I then asked questions in person about things that they answered in the sheets. I interviewed seventy-seven parents (including twenty-three couples) of Year 10 students.

Anne

Anne was a part-time school teacher at an elementary school and was married to a lawyer. I interviewed her as a parent of a Year 10 top-track student, Julie. They lived in a prestigious section of town. She also had then a Year 9 student, Ken, and an elementary school student, Mary. She saw the tracking as helpful for her children to reach their academic potential. In the lower-track class, there were behavioral difficulties and the teachers' time was spent on controlling them. The top-track class was good because students bounced ideas off each other and had somebody to work with in good competition. Anne was happy with the current situation that both of her elder children were in the top-track class. She then added, if they were not in the top-track class, she would be sending them to another school because she wanted her children to have the best chance to achieve highly academically.

Her daughter Julie was always in the top-track class, but her son Ken did not join the top track until Year 8. Ken often talked about "good students" and "naughty students." For example, when he was deciding his electives for Year 9,

although he liked horticulture class better as a subject, he did not want to take it because "naughty kids" were taking it and he felt he would be "naughty" if he was with them. Julie never complained about "naughty students," Anne said. I will introduce Julie's interview later.

Cameron and Tracy

Cameron and Tracy were a retired post office worker and a housewife, respectively, whose son was in the lower-track class at Waikaraka High School in 1997. They opposed the tracking system for various reasons. First, they felt it is not fair that the top-track class was given better teachers and more time by the school. The top-track students were guaranteed by the school to do well. Tracy felt the school did so in order to guarantee a certain number of passes in national examinations. But, lazy ones should be pushed more, she said. Second, not mixing with "good students" was not good for the lower-track students. Cameron said his child became mixed up with trouble-makers. If his son were in the top-track class, he would be mixing with good ones, he said. Third, lower-track students' self-esteem was affected adversely. Being placed in the lower-track class is like being told that you are not good, Tracy said. Fourth, Tracy said that it is a class thing: better-off kids are in the top-track class. However, Tracy and Cameron were not informed as to how the top-track students were selected, and they did not complain to the school about their feelings nor threatened to send their children to other schools.

Discussion

Anne's case illuminates what some teachers told me: that some of the wealthy parents threatened Waikaraka High School that they would send their children to other schools if their children were mixed with children of low "academic ability" and/or socioeconomic background. While not all parents of the top-track class were as open as Anne about "top-track or another school" alternatives, many did send their children to another school, often temporarily. Six out of twenty-one sets of the interviewed parents from the Year 10 top-track class told me that they had sent or were going to send their child to another school.

The comments of Cameron and Tracy show one of three kinds of reactions I noticed by parents of the lower-track students. I place Cameron and Tracy in the first category in which parents actively opposed the tracking system without having the resources to threaten the school to change the system. Answers of twelve out of twenty-nine parents belong to this category. Some other parents'

concerns in this category overlap Tracy's and Cameron's: a sense of being unfairly ignored ("I felt angry [about the tracking system] because the students who are not in the stream [top-track] class are the ones that need to learn more at school." "Teachers don't seem to care in the lower-stream [track] class."); a problem of having no "able" students in the Form class ("It is difficult for the average students because they end up with too many slower/problem students in the classes."); and the lowering of the students' self-esteem by separating and marking them ("Putting himself down from the start."). The last two are dissatisfaction specifically towards the system of tracking itself.

However, most lower-track students' parents, like Cameron and Tracy, did not talk about any potential way to press the school to un-track or change their children's class. For example, there were students whom teachers considered to be "top-track quality," yet stayed in the lower-track class. Alice told me one Year 10 student came to Waikaraka High School recently, and there was no room in the top-track class. Another student who would make the middle of the top-track class easily stayed in the lower-track class because she was not chosen at the beginning of Year 9. As the interview of students in the next section shows, some students in the lower-track classes were told by teachers that they deserve to be in the top-track class. Nonetheless, they were placed in the lower-track because there were no slots left in the top-track class. Parents of these students did not pressure the school.

The second category of reaction by the parents of the lower-track students was being uninformed. Eight out of twenty-nine interviewed parents of lower-track students did not know what the tracking system was. This makes a strong contrast to the parents of top-track students: only one out of thirty-five were unfamiliar with the tracking system. This shows how some of the parents of the lower-track students lacked resources to even begin challenging about where their children were placed.

The third category of answers by the parents of the lower-track students was to talk about their other children who were in the top-track class. Three parents did so. Here, I note three observations: 1) these parents felt that the tracking serves only the top-track students; 2) while I have done so for convenience in this paper, not all the parents of the top-track Year 10 students were intolerant of their children being placed in the lower-track classes; and 3) parents cannot be accurately categorized as those of top-track students and lower-track students because a set of parents can have some of their children in the top-track and others in the lower-track class.

In sum, some parents of the top-track students and most parents of the lower-track students had different senses of control over the school operation. Some parents of the top-track students were willing to threaten school to pull their children for having their wish catered to. Replies of most parents of the lower-track students showed their lack of control as to 1) their ability to press the school to untrack and 2) in which class their children were placed once the tracking system was in place. Most of the parents of low-track students had little leverage in pressing the school because they could not afford to send their children elsewhere. While some children of wealthy parents entered the top-track class despite the teachers' decisions against it, some children of parents with less resources entered the low-track class despite the teachers' recommendations for otherwise[13].

Othering via Tracking: Interviews of Students

The students' views were more complex, as they experience the tracking in conjunction with their experience of growing up and peer pressure. The meanings that students see in top and lower-track classes became visible not only in straight-forward interview answers but also in various moments in everyday life and in between the lines of interview answers, both of which I seek to introduce in this section. Interviews of students, upon parental written consent, were done mainly at school, during class time, intervals, and lunchtime, lasting from fifteen minutes to half-an-hour each. I gave them survey sheet to fill in and asked some questions in person about their answers. I interviewed students twice: once when they were Year 10 students, and once after they turned Year 11 and were put in the subject-tracking system. I interviewed sixty-four out of eighty-nine Year 10 students[14].

Julie: A Top-Track Student

Julie, a top-track student and a daughter of Anne's that I introduced earlier, had a different opinion from her mother. During the first interview, she said she did not think the tracking was a good idea: "If you try hard, you should be extended in any class. It's better to have all the students in the same [untracked] class." While mentioning that she knew her parents supported the tracking system, Julie said that she would have done just as well in untracked class.

When Julie became Year 11, I interviewed her again. She told me that she felt more comfortable being a Year 11 student because she was no longer in the "brainy [top-track] class" (in terms of Form class). When she was Year 10, some

students in the lower-track classes were not friendly to the top-track students, saying "shut up, brain," she said. Although she did not mind it the previous year, she felt more equal and "normal" in the Year 11 arrangement, she said.

Although Julie had different opinions from her parents about tracking and mixing with students from lower-track classes, her position within the school was under her parents' authority. For example, her mother visited school and pressured Julie's music teacher to change the content of the class to cater to Julie's desire to take the national examination in music. Julie did not want her mother to do so, causing a fight between them.

Sandy: A Lower-Track Student

Sandy, a Year 10 student from one of the lower-track classes, was a daughter of a production foreman and a tutor for dropout students. I did a standard interview of her while friends of hers were present. Sandy said that the tracking system lowered her self image and made her feel she was dumb because she was not in the top-track class. She also felt that the selection process was not fair because it sought to balance gender in the top-track class. Sandy was on the list to be in the top-track class, but other boys below her in the list were chosen over her for the purpose of balancing gender. She said a similar thing happened to her friends.

Some of her friends from the first year at Waikaraka high School were chosen to be in the top-track class when they became Year 9. They changed and became snobby after that, Sandy said. Top-track students stuck together and did not mix with lower-track students, she added. One of Sandy's friends commented that students in the "brain [top-track] class" looked down on the lower-track students as "cabbages." Another friend of Sandy's described how, in the art class in which top and lower-track students were mixed, the top-track students looked down on her and what she said: they looked through her and ignored her presence. Sandy said, although students in the "brainy class" act brainy, she received better grades in mathematics than ones in the top-track class. According to her: "It [tracking system] doesn't make sense."

Bill: Shifting Between Top and Lower-Track Classes

Bill was a son of an unmarried masseuse. Bill moved between the top and lower track classes between Year 9 and Year 10. When I interviewed Bill when he was Year 10, he said the tracking system was okay, but he should be in the "smart [top-track] class." He was in the "smart class" in Year 9, but he talked too

much in class. So, he was put in the "dumb class" when he became Year 10. He should be back to the "smart class" when he becomes Year 11, he said.

I had another standard interview with Bill after he turned Year 11. It was done after he was moved from the Year 11 lower-track English to the top-track English class upon his request to be with his friends. He said he felt more comfortable compared to the previous year because he was in many classes with people he wanted to be with. He said he worked hard to get in the top-track class. But, once in the top-track English class, the top-track students were not as great as he thought they would be. There were several top-track students who acted snobby to him. For example, when Bill said, "I have an idea!," they would say "that's silly" without even listening to what his idea was. Bill felt that these students have a low view of him because he was not in the top-track class the previous year. Still, he felt he got along with the top-track students better than the lower-track students, who used to call him names.

B. J. Beever: A Top-Track Student that Changed

B. J. Beever was in the Year 10 top-track Form class in 1997. When she became Year 11, she was in all of the top-track subject classes. However, she told me in her second interview, that her personality changed when she turned Year 11: "I'm different... the guys I talk to changed this year... I started to talk to stoners [people who smoke dope] ... [she named one student from the top-track and three from the lower-track classes of the previous year]... They are more mature... I feel I changed and became mature. Guys that I used to hang out with are not mature anymore [she listed four male students from the top-track class of the previous year]." In an elective class in which students of various tracks mixed, B. J. Beever was sitting with male students from the lower-track class that she mentioned in the interview. I never saw her talking with them when she was Year 10. She said she got to know them from parties and began talking with them on the phone often.

There was an implied link between things that receive negative sanctions at school and maturity, and vice versa, in her view. Stoners were more mature than her, compared to non-stoner male students from the top-track class whom she used to hang out with. Also, the comparison of her answers to the same questions in the first and second interviews, which were done in December, 1997, and April, 1998, illuminates this. In the first interview, B.J.Beever described herself to be "easy going, fun, dizzy at times, likable, flirtatious." She also mentioned that she was a hard-worker in class. In the second interview, there was a change of tone:

she described herself to be a "stoner, druggie, flirtatious, slut [crossed out], confident." Likable aspects, both to her peers and teachers, gave way to things that were disapproved of by teachers, and probably by her old friends.

Her change was also seen in the way she differentiated herself from others. In the first interview, she replied to the question whom does she think are different from her, "no one. I can fit in to most groups." In the second interview, she answered, "preppy try-hards, sporty people, environmental people, quiet people, choir singers." There was a shift from the presented image[15] of a likable, friendly-to-all person to a teenager with a smell of viciousness and rebelliousness. Contrary to her portrayal of herself to be a hard-worker in the first interview, in the second interview, she was distancing herself from the "preppy try-hards," which was an often-used term against the students in the top-track class. She was also distancing herself from various kinds of people, such as sporty people, who received positive sanctions at school or from adults.

Discussion

Among students, there was a sense of division between those of the top- and lower-track classes and a differential sense of belonging to school by their parents' relationships to school. The outlook of these senses differed between Year 10, when students were tracked by the Form class, and Year 11, when students were tracked by subject. In Year 10, when students were tracked by the Form class, the top-track students were selected by their general attitudes toward schoolwork because their differential "achievement" by subject was overlooked. Therefore, the label of being in the top or lower-track class tended to be perceived as that of "intelligence" and "discipline" rather than what one was good at. Divided by such general criteria, the sense of division among students of the top and lower-track was quite stark in Year 10.

As Julie mentioned, some top-track Year 10 students felt alienated from the lower-track students. Another top-track student mentioned uncomfortableness in elective classes in which top and lower-track students mixed: when teachers asked questions, the lower-track students would say to the top-track students, "you guys should answer that question because you are in the brainy class." Yet, it was not a majority opinion: three out of twenty-four interviewed top-track students mentioned this.

On the other hand, many lower-track students mentioned resentment toward the top-track students, as Sandy and her friends did, and in a more complex way, as Bill felt. There were other lower-track students who commented

negatively about the top-track students' traits or attitude ("[top-track students are] brainy, rich and snobby," "[the tracking system should stay] so they don't make people like myself sick listening to them go own [on] about how much they know");

In Year 11, there also existed tracking, although in a different shape as tracking by subject in compulsory subjects. Most of the students from the Year 10 top-track Form class stayed in most compulsory subjects' top-track classes. Even in elective classes, students from top and lower-track class from Year 10 often experienced *de facto* separation. It was mainly because of timetable arrangement that put less academic elective subjects with more academic elective subjects in the same time slot. For example, there were two elective geography classes offered that year. One was taught by Jack, who had a history of teaching top-track Form classes, and the other was taught by a lower-profile geography teacher. Julie told me that because she was taking music class (considered as less academic), which overlapped with Jack's class, she had to take another teachers' geography class. Her geography class had students mostly from the Year 10 lower-track class. Another student from the Year 10 top-track class told me a similar story, saying that her taking technical drawing class (considered as less academic) as an elective put her in many other classes with students from the Year 10 lower-track class. In short, there was a *de facto* funneling of students in Year 11 between the top and lower-track classes according to the degree of academic bent in the elective classes.

However, in the subject-tracking of Year 11, the meaning of being in the top-track class changed drastically. The criteria for tracking became more focused on students' performance in a particular subject rather than general "achievement" and "work efforts", as was the case for the Year 10 tracking system by Form class. That is, being in the top-track English class meant that that student was good at English, rather than being "intelligent."

Also, there were more opportunities for students from different tracks to mix in Year 11. Despite the *de fact* separation mentioned above, the students spent less class time separated by track. While Year 10 students spent seventeen out of twenty-six class periods per week separated by tracking as Form class members, Year 11 students spent twelve class periods per week separated by subject-tracking. These changes had some effects on relationships between students from different tracks. Some lower-track students changed their views about the top-track students: "they [top-track students] don't seem to be brainy or better than you."

However, despite the blurred borderline and definitions of the top and lower-track classes, there still lingered some sense of division between the top and

lower-track students. A student from the Year 10 lower-track class commented that subject tracking still separated and labeled students. Also, there emerged a new kind of othering between the top and lower-track students. B.J.Beever's new fascination with the kind of students who tended to be in the Year 10 lower-track class had an element of exoticization, therefore othering, of these students.

The students' sense of belonging to school also differed by their parents' relationships to school. This difference roughly overlapped with the top and lower-track distinction because almost all the parents of the lower-track students hardly pressed school with their wishes, whereas many parents of the top-track students did so (although there were some parents of the top-track students who did not). As Julie's case indicates, students whose parents are willing to pressure the school had a sense that their parents can demand things from the school, although some may have been resented or embarrassed by it. This contrasts with the way Sandy tolerated the school's decision to place her in the lower-track class without her parents acting on it. Other lower-track students also expressed their views on the school operations and their helpless positions in them: 1) a sense of unfairness about the differential resource allocation ("[top-track students] get better education than us"); 2) resentment against labeling ("the separation makes some people look dumb and some people look brainy," some low-track called their own class cynically as the "dumb class" or "cabbage class"); and 3) a sense of unfairness about the selection criteria ("Some kids are forced to be in the 'brainy class' [top-track class]. They didn't want to go, but their parents forced them. Some kids should be in the 'brainy class,' but weren't given a chance. Something to do with the parents. Parents of half of the kids in the 'brainy class' are rich"). That is, while Julie belonged to the school as (a child of) a consumer, these lower-track students did not.

New Patterns of Belonging

From the above discussion, this paper argues that the school's efforts to raise its value in the education market by having a tracking system produced differential modes of belonging for students depending on their parents' relationships to the school, dividing and creating senses of otherness between students of different tracks. Students whose parents were willing to challenge and even threaten school that they would send their children to other schools belonged to the school as consumers of school service. In order to keep such students, the school gave them privileges and extra resources by, for example, putting them in the top-track class. These students belonged to the school as

children of consumers. On the other hand, students whose parents did not feel comfortable nor have leverage in negotiating with the school did not belong to the school as children of consumers. Some top-track students, whose parents did not care to press schools with their wishes, belonged to the school as merely academically recognized students. In the lower-track class, the "underachievers" preferred mixed-ability classes rather than lower-track classes with less resources. There were also students who were forced to be in the lower-track class despite teachers' recommendations for otherwise because there was no room in the top-track class. Their parents did not threaten the school to change this situation. The school sacrificed both kinds of lower-track students for the school's market success.

They were sacrifices because their presence as lower-track students was necessary in creating a consumer-pull of the school: the top-track class with a sense of privilege and comparatively better resources. An anthropologist, Bruce Kapferer, argued that sacrifice marks the transformation of the old order to the new (Kapferer 1988: 135). If students were not tracked, the presence of the "disruptive" and/or "academically underachieving" students would have made Waikaraka High School an undesirable school for some parents. However, by being forced into the lower-track class with little privilege—their belonging to school as sacrifices—these "unsuccessful" students transformed Waikaraka High School into a reasonable commodity that offers comparatively more privilege and resources for their children to enjoy, if their children are in the top-track class. It is ironic that, in the neo-liberal reform that celebrated individuality, those who could not afford to be consumers sacrificed their individual wishes for the good of a group—the school. The services that Waikaraka High School offered was a commodity to parents who could shop around in the free market of education despite its extra cost, but, to parents who could not afford to do so, a default and an obligation. Belonging to school as consumers or as sacrifices, students in the top and lower-track classes developed a sense of otherness toward each other.

This analysis has three theoretical implications. First, this paper adds a fresh perspective to the works on the effects of uneven exercises of parental choice in the free market of education. Researchers on the effects of free-marketization of education described the consequent "middle class flight," arguing that schools became polarized to "rich" and "poor" (Gordon 1994; Nicholson 1995), "successful," and "unsuccessful," (Fiske and Ladd 2000), or "high-, middle-, and low-circuit" (Lauder et. al. 1999) schools. In comparing characteristics of various schools, these researchers tended to base their arguments on the (developed) homogeneity

of the school community. For example, Martin Thrupp argued that the class status of the "critical mass" of the student body defined the school character, "rubbing off" its character on students of other class statuses (Thrupp 1997; 1999). My paper, instead, suggested that school consciously divided its student body into top and lower-track, or "guaranteed to succeed" and "not guaranteed to succeed" groups, in order to cater to the wishes of wealthy parents. The polarization of students within the school by tracking served as a way to increase school's value in the educational market, for a limited number of consumers, without necessarily increasing the number of teachers or resources.

Second, this paper offers an analysis of an unexpected function of the students who could not afford to move to other schools. Existing studies viewed such students as victims of a vicious circle that "unsuccessful" schools suffer in (Gordon 1994) or as "burdens" off-loaded to "unsuccessful" schools (Lauder et. al. 1999: 132; Tomlinson 1997). My paper suggests another aspect of such students: sacrifice in the school's value-creation efforts. They are victims, but victims that school saw as necessary for its survival.

Third, by emphasizing the compulsory nature of education, my paper modifies studies of the governmentality in the neo-liberalism (Green 1998; Marshall 1997; Rose and Miller 1992). Nicholas Rose and Peter Miller argued that neo-liberal ideology governed individuals through these individuals' very sense of freedom (Rose and Miller 1992: 201). My paper adds to this: in compulsory education, poor parents were feeling not only that freedom was assigned differently by one's wealth but also that they were forced to sacrifice their wishes (by putting up with their children's being in the lower-track class, for example) for the wealthy people's freedom (to choose schools, that made schools compete for them).

In conclusion, I argue that the free-marketization of education encouraged a division of the student body, creating differential sensibilities in their belonging to the school as the school sought to raise its value to the parents/consumers who form only a part of the school community. School became commodified through the neo-liberal reform (see Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). However, this paper argues, school was commodified in different degrees depending on the parents' socioeconomic positions. By school's dividing its student body in order to cater to the wishes of wealthy parents, the celebrated individualism of the free-market ironically forced some students to become sacrifices for the group. This paper sought to open up a discussion of the effects of free-marketization of education in terms of its uneven commoditization of schools.

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[1] Aotearoa is a Maori term for what is widely known as New Zealand. In this paper, I use the name Aotearoa/New Zealand to indicate the nation after the emergence of biculturalism in the late 1970s.

[2] All the place and personal names are aliases to protect the privacy of the people involved.

[3] However, in some countries, such education reforms often originated from and were supported by various groups with other diverse intentions, such as achieving community empowerment. Nonetheless, they have subsequently been incorporated and transformed by a New Right agenda (Whitty et. al. 1998: 33-47).

[4] Some non-elected members could join the Board upon the approval of the Board members. At Waikaraka High School, the school *kaumatua* (Maori elder) held this

position.

[5] The exceptions are teacher salaries and some programs of deferred maintenance and capital development.

[6] The Aotearoa/New Zealand's New Right reform initiated by the Labour government embodied contradictions between the individualism that the free-market economy is based on and the concept of group rights in its concern of equity (Middleton 1992: 303-306). This concern of equity, along with the emerging need to redefine the nationhood as bicultural, resulted in the commitment to the Maori cultural renaissance in some cases (Gordon 1997: 72-77).

[7] Governmentality is an ensemble of procedures aiming to shape, guide, or affect the persons' conduct in relation to oneself, to others, to institutions and to political sovereignty (Foucault 1991: 93; Gordon 1991: 2).

[8] Years 7 and 8 were the last two years of primary education, but were included in Waikaraka High School. Year 7 and 8 students shared classes with each other, combined into a Year "7/8."

[9] For that month, there were 78 students in Year 7, 94 in Year 8, 94 in Year 9, 79 in Year 10, 87 in Year 11, 85 in Year 12, and 43 in Year 13 (from the roll in the Principal's Report for the Board of Trustees).

[10] There also was *Whare Kura*, a Maori immersion high school run by the local Maori community. *Whare Kura* focused on students who have commited to learning in and about Maori culture since kindergarten, making it not an option for many parents.

[11] For the Year 7 and 8 students (primary education), members of a Form class stayed together in all classes, except for the "taster" classes in which students tried out various elective subjects for several weeks each. Such "taster" classes were four periods out of twenty-six periods per week. The Form teacher taught most of the regular classes. The students also saw the Form teacher during the Form time (homeroom time) in the morning. There was almost an atmosphere of family in the Year 7/8 classroom: the parental figure of the Form teacher and two age groups of students, as if they were siblings, spending most of the day together.

[12] The system for the bilingual unit was more complicated. There was one combined Year 9/10 Maori immersion Form class and one combined Year 9/10 bilingual Form class. However, when the students were in class, Year 9 students from both Form classes were combined to form a quasi-Form class and likewise with Year 10 students. Therefore, on the timetable of the school, Year 9 and Year 10 bilingual students appeared separately from the Form classes.

[13] To put it another way, there were two possible reasons for students to be in the top-track class: their efforts/"ability" and parental influence.

[14] This is the total number of interviews. The number varies depending on the question because I interviewed most of them twice, but some only once depending on the timing of receiving parental consent. Also, some students left Waikaraka High School during my stay, changing the total number of students.

[15] It is not to say that B.J.Beever's personality changed from friendly-to-all student to vicious one. For example, in her first interview, she wrote of the bilingual students as "Not really good friends, but [I] talk to them. [I] consider them as friends." However, in the second interview, she told me that "before [we turned Year 11], people told me "don't mess with bilingual students because they'll bring their friends and they'll beat you up." ... *But now*, I think they are not like that. They are all really nice (emphasis mine)." The implication was that she used to be suspicious of bilingual students, which became clear only retrospectively as she distanced herself from her past-self. That is, it was more of the image she presented about herself that changed between the first and second interview.

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