Despair Turned to Hope: A Theoretical Reconsideration of the Maori as a Caste Minority

By Ellen Preston Motohashi

Introduction

In this article I consider the impact of research and theory on non-dominant minority groups[1] and the influence these have on shaping educators' understanding of the sociocultural, historical, and structural forces that impinge upon their work in the schools and communities they serve. Specifically, I will be reconsidering the constraints of John Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) involuntary-voluntary minority typology as it applies to the Maori in New Zealand against the backdrop of R.A. Schermerhorn's (1970) comparative sequential interaction model and *Kaupapa Maori* research (Bishop et al., 2003; G. Smith, 2003; L.T. Smith, 1999; Tutta et al., 2004) to piece together a holistic image of the forces that have intertwined to bring about the changes leading to the Maori "revolution" (G. Smith, 2003). Further, I question the representation and categorization of the Maori within a grouping that delimits them to deterministic or static social locations in order to fit them within a rigidly defined dichotomous model. Mark Fettes (1998) articulates the importance of considering theory in light of whether or not it improves the lives of the individuals the theory is built around.

Ellen Preston Motohashi is a teaching fellow in the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies of the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"The ultimate test of [a] theory, however, will be whether it can be picked up and applied, criticized, revised, and extended as an evolving guide to practice. The most rigorous of critics is life itself" (p. 251). I have chosen to reconsider Ogbu's theoretical typology to the Maori in New Zealand because I believe the events of the past three decades provide a context to reconsider the theoretical categorization of the caste status historically applied to the Maori (Ogbu, 1978).

A Collective Call to Action

One need not look far to read of the dismal pasts and future prospects which face many indigenous peoples across the globe as cries for sovereignty and self-determination echo from north to south and east to west (Ewen, 1994). These voices urge governments to recognize and offer reparations for a collective past steeped in social injustices, genocide, forced relocation, and assimilation policies (Ewen, 1994; L.T. Smith, 1999; Spring, 2004; Willinsky, 1998). In particular the institutionalized violence imposed through state sponsored indigenous education programs have been openly coercive and effective in distancing indigenous peoples from their cultural identities, languages, histories, geographical locations and kinship ties (L.T. Smith, 1999; Spring, 2004; Willinsky, 1998). The history of the Maori's unwavering perseverance to retain hope, reclaim their history, and envision a future free from the shackles of the past has been vital to their ongoing emancipation. Maori scholar Graham Smith (2003) discusses the importance of the Maori's struggle to see things other than they are and have been in order to fight against the hegemonic forces that have historically encroached upon them.

> The counter strategy to hegemony is that indigenous people need to critically 'conscientize' themselves about their needs, aspirations and preferences. … Thus a critical element in the 'revolution' has to be the struggle for our minds - the freeing of the indigenous mind from the grip of dominant hegemony. (p.2)

The Maori have taken a proactive stance which calls into question previously designated roles that have undermined and misrepresented the regenerative force of their activism and social agency to initiate social change. The work I initially undertook to understand the forces that have shaped the Maori cultural and linguistic revitalization movement transformed into a deconstruction of the dominant theories that have shaped my conceptions of intercultural and ethnic relations within a schooling context. As an educator I am concerned with the ways in which science, theory, and research shape teachers' views of their linguistically and culturally diverse students to see them as merely oppositional, reactive, or complacent. It is my hope that by rethinking accepted representations or categories of non-dominant minority students other teachers will also begin to *see* their students as they *are* rather than how they may be (mis)represented.

Placing Ogbu's Voluntary-Involutary Typology within a Broader Framework

Just as facing a past wrought with injustice, objectification, and misrepresentation

has been critical to the Maori's own transformative actions, educators will benefit by questioning the boundaries of theories that may shape or influence perceptions of their minority students. Oftentimes in educational research a theory takes on a monolithic stature and educators may neglect looking beyond it to seek out where the notions and work that shaped it are located. One such theory is John Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) voluntary-involuntary minority typology used to compare the schooling experiences of non-dominant minority groups. His influential work investigating the historical and structural forces that have repeatedly failed to provide non-dominant groups equal access to social and economic resources available to the dominant social group has provided the springboard for many comparative studies in minority education (Bhatti, 2006; Eldering, 1997; Gibson, 1997; Okubo, 2006). Yet, by looking slightly beyond Ogbu's work in comparative minority studies the work of R.A. Schermerhorn (1970)[2] provides a frame that helps expand Ogbu's theoretical framework and typology, though I have been unable to find any reference to Schermerhorn (1970) in the work of Ogbu's that I have read.[3]

In *Comparative ethnic relations: A framework for theory and research,* Schermerhorn (1970) highlights the importance of disrupting the historically dichotomous perspective between structural or systems analysis and conflict theories used to explain ethnic group tensions. In contrast, he advanced a dialectic whereby these polarized theories play against one another to provide a more complex analysis of inter-ethnic relations within social systems. Schermerhorn (1970) linked the structural-functionalist theories of Parsons (1951, 1954 in Schermerhorn, 1970) and Levy (1952, 1966 in Schermerhorn, 1970) to Lenski's (1966 in Schermerhorn, 1970) power-conflict theory to better conceptualize the macro and micro-sociological forces which intersect the lived experiences of non-dominant minority group members as they negotiate power relations within the dominant social structure.

> Applying systems analysis to comparative ethnic relations actually centers attention on the functions the ethnic group performs for the entire system, viewing the ethnic group itself as a subsystem gradually fitted into the entire society by a series of adaptive adjustments regulated by norms and values of its institutions that eventually become internalized by members of the ethnic groups involved. On the other hand, from the standpoint of power-conflict theory one can view each ethnic group as being in an embattled position, fighting for its life, its identity, or its prestige, subject to perpetual constraints that threaten its survival, its freedom, or its life chances in a precarious world. (p. 51)

Schermerhorn (1970) was interested in looking beyond the present circumstances in which non-dominant minority groups interact with the dominant society to the origin of contact and integration into the dominant group according to "recurrent historical patterns" and "intergroup sequences" (p. 94). Schermerhorn's definition of minority and dominant groups is important to clarifying his focus on the asymmetrical positions of power between the two and the importance he placed on this to better understand their historically marginalized social locations.

According to Schermerhorn (1970) a minority group possesses "limited ac-

cess to roles and activities central to the economic and political institutions of the society" (p. 14), whereby dominant group members are the "prime allocators of rewards in society" (p. 13). Schermerhorn (1970) then proposed that integration of a minority group into the dominant group is contingent on the following sequential patterns (which I will place alongside Ogbu's classification to be discussed later in relation to the Maori). These are: *the emergence of pariahs* (similarly described as caste groups in Ogbu's typology*),* "outcaste members [whose position is considered] 'inevitable, immutable, and in some way deserved' "(Price quoted in Schermerhorn 1970, p. 95); *the emergence of indigenous isolates* (resembles autonomous groups in Ogbu's typology and receives little attention), which refers to the economic isolation of indigenous groups that experience "limited communication [and] relative isolation [which] restricts their knowledge, experience and participation in the life of the wider society" (p. 96); *annexation* (classified as involuntary minorities for Ogbu) or the forceful inclusion of a country or territory either through domination or purchase; and *migration* (Ogbu's immigrants or voluntary minority) which Schermerhorn (1970) further broke down into categories of migration based on "the exercise of power over migrants at the point of origin…embodying a continuum of coercive control exercised by the receiving or host society" (p. 98). The continuum flows from most coercive to least: *slavery, movements of forced labor, contract labor, reception of displaced persons or refugees, and voluntary immigrants*.

This gradation of coercion in Schermerhorn's (1970) category of migration is an important distinction between Schermerhorn and Ogbu's (1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) typology of involuntary vs. voluntary minorities because Ogbu's typology compresses three of Schermerhorn's migratory groups (*forced labor group, contract labor group, and immigrants*) into one generalized voluntary minority category. Furthermore, in Ogbu's typology Schermerhorn's migratory categorization of *slavery* is categorized as an involuntary minority group. While Ogbu (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) did consider the impact of differing levels of coercive force over different minority groups' entry into dominant society, he did this more so for involuntary minorities than for voluntary minorities. In Ogbu's voluntary minority or immigrant category he was predominantly concerned with an individual's *will to migrate* and based his typology of survival strategies and integration into the host society squarely on this factor despite the differing circumstances that may have determined relocation to the host society (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). This distinction becomes increasingly important when considering the forced relocation many "voluntary" minorities face in light of global warfare and economic inequities that have devastated economic opportunities in many developing countries (Suarez-Orozco, 2004).

In the same manner, Ogbu classifies the *slave category* (from Schermerhorn's migration sequence), *pariah, and colonization* sequences within his involuntary minority or caste-like grouping. His analysis regarding the failure of these groups to successfully integrate into dominant society is applied to all despite the different histories of conquest or forced migration. This becomes particularly problematic because indigenous groups generally remained intact with regard to familial and

tribal affiliations, but slaves were most often transported individually; purposefully wrenched from their families to further weaken them from collective action toward rebellion or resistance (Schermerhorn, 1970). Schermerhorn (1970) did recognize a linkage between the historical domination of slaves and the colonization of indigenous peoples in North and South America to meet the economic needs of the colonizers, yet noted that their responses to this coercive control was radically different.

> During early American history...the incoming colonists, seeing the value of cash crops, made their first attempts to procure mass labor for plantations by enslaving the Indians—a process that failed utterly. …Thus the failure to impose forms of disciplined mass labor in one intergroup sequence brought about a shift to another sequence with a different set of subordinates to fulfill the same economic purpose… A merger of colonization with slavery was therefore a frequent occurrence in the New World with the racism of each reinforcing the other. (pp. 108-109)

I believe Schermerhorn's more discriminating grouping provides a clearer historical view of not only the relationship between the origin of contact and resultant group responses, but also of the political and economic motivation behind either the forced inclusion or exclusion of these groups into the dominant society. This more differentiated breakdown also facilitates a better analysis of the subsequent strategies employed by different minority groups to survive culturally despite shared experiences with social and structural exclusion, discrimination or marginalization. In the following analysis, I critique Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) typology and the categorization of the Maori within his condensed and overly generalized involuntary or caste-like grouping. I will focus my discussion on two particular components of Ogbu's typology; the influences of community forces, and primary vs. secondary cultural differences and how these are seen to affect school achievement between voluntary and involuntary minorities as classified by Ogbu.

Reacting against Oppression OR Responding to It

In cultural studies of education, John Ogbu (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) likely holds the distinction of introducing the voluntary and involuntary minority typology within his cultural-ecological model to many students of education. This binary model has progressed across more than two decades of ethnographic research and has provided an important tool for students of education to consider the sociocultural and historical influences that shape the schooling experiences of many minority children (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Ogbu (1978) expanded his typology out of his initial work comparing differences in school achievement between White and Black children in America. In the early stage of his analysis he seems to have located differences in school achievement more heavily on structural barriers, though he did recognize the influential nature of the home or community culture on the schooling experiences of minority children.

> The policies and practices within schools prepare them [caste-like minorities] primarily for low-status social and occupational positions in life. The devices

> by which the schools accomplish this are the same mechanisms, both gross and subtle, that schools with a majority of black students use in preparing blacks for inferior roles. (Ogbu, 1978, p. 231)

Through the lens of this model Ogbu (1982, 1987, 1991) conceptualized differences in educational successes and failures of voluntary and involuntary minority students, and more gradually sought the origins of variations in school achievement across these groups according to community and cultural forces. The following statement illuminates the general premise behind Ogbu's cultural (community forces)– ecological (structural forces) model within which the voluntary-involuntary minority binary is situated (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

> According to the theory, the treatment of minorities in the wider society is reflected in their treatment in education. …Structural barriers or discrimination in society and school are important determinants of low school achievement among minorities. However, they are not the sole cause of low school performance. …Ogbu has suggested that the clue to the differences among minorities in school performance may lie in the differences of their community forces. (p. 161)

Although few would dispute the valuable contribution of Ogbu's research, particularly with regard to exposing the social and structural inequalities that link to schooling experiences of minority children, the limitations of his theory have recently come under fire in light of educational ethnographic research investigating changes across and within groups traditionally dichotomized by his typology (Bhatti, 2006; Cummins, 1997, 2000; Erickson, 1987; Foley, 2005; Gibson, 1997; Okubo, 2006). There is also increasing documentation of immigrant intragroup variation and educational achievement that supports a renewed look at Ogbu's typology with regard to the voluntary minority typology (Conchas, 2001; Eldering, 1997; Lee, 2001; Louie, 2001).[4] In what follows, I will both apply and critique Ogbu's theory in light of the dramatic changes which have occurred in New Zealand with the Maori and question the continued validity of an uncritical application of criteria that objectify the Maori by placing them within a static category which I see as rigidly defined and limiting.

As mentioned, Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons,1998) involuntary-voluntary minority typology places non-dominant minorities into the following groups according to their incorporation into the dominant society; *immigrants* or *voluntary minorities* who initiated the move into the host or dominant society; and *nonvoluntary or castelike* minority groups who have experienced a history of colonization, conquest or forced relocation away from their country of origin. Before reconsidering the constraints of categorizing the Maori as a caste-like minority it is important to identify how they came to be defined as such in the first place. The sociohistorical context leading up to the Maori cultural and linguistic revitalization movement of the 1970s and 1980s offers strong support for their inclusion within Ogbu's involuntary typology (Ogbu, 1978).

New Zealand (*Aotearoa* as it is called by the Maori) was colonized and settled by the British after the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi between Maori tribal chiefs and a representative of the British Crown in 1840 (Barrington, 1991; Chile, 2006;

Fleras, 1987; Harrison, 1998). The Treaty of Waitangi was written in both English and Maori and formal recognition of discrepancies between these two paved the way for later reparations and redress. The Maori version guaranteed not only land rights, but cultural and linguistic rights and the protection of these rights by the British Crown (Barrington, 1991; Chile, 2006; Fleras, 1987; L.T. Smith, 1999).

For two decades it appears the Maori, European settlers, and missionaries were able to coexist amicably, although motivations behind this accommodating relationship appear quite distinct. The European missionaries focused on "civilizing" and educating the native Maori to fulfill assigned roles within society and the workforce (Spolsky, 2003). The Maori, on the other hand, were divided in their opinions about this relationship with some tribes seeking a separatist position, while others formed alliances with the settlers in hope of further negotiating their continued autonomy and sovereignty (Barrington, 1991; Spolsky, 2003). Barrington (1991) writes of the early relationship between the Maori and Europeans,

> the treaty of Waitangi heralded the beginning of a period of acculturation which was to last, virtually uninterrupted, for two decades as the Maoris enthusiastically adopted European ways. They planted acres of wheat, maize and potatoes, bought horses, pigs and cattle, operated flour mills and coastal schooners, and entered paid employment as laborers, carpenters, sawyers and blacksmiths. These activities benefited the European settlements and were generally encouraged by the government, but disputes over land rights soon began to disrupt what had up until then been relatively harmonious relations between the races. (Barrington, 1991, p. 310)

This period of negotiation and coexistence was soon to be replaced with one defined by conflict and subjugation of the Maori. Despite a five-year period of resistance to the forceful removal of Maori from their lands in the Land Wars of the 1860's the colonizing government proved successful in their conquest (Barrington, 1991; Durie, 1998; Smith, 1999; Spolsky, 1989, 2003). The imperialist domination of the Maori by the English resulted in the dislocation and alienation of the Maori from their spiritual and life sustaining environments despite varying responses across the different tribes to the coercive forces of colonization (Barrington, 1991). Soon to follow came the Native Schools Act of 1867 and the 1877 Education Act, which enforced compulsory education and English-only instruction, turning the schools into tools for forced assimilation resulting in near linguistic and cultural extinction of Maori language and traditional ways (Barrington, 1991; Benton, 1997; Durie, 1998; Spolsky, 2003).

As a result of the colonial government's disregard for the dictates of The Treaty of Waitangi, the following century witnessed the complete decline of Maori sovereignty for self-determination and economic independence forcing the government to enact welfare laws to address the Maori "problem" (Chile, 2006). The cultural and linguistic protection promised by the Treaty of Waitangi remained out of Maori reach until the establishment of the Treaty of Waitangi Act and the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975 (Barrington, 1991; Chile, 2006; Durie, 1998; Fleras, 1987). The Treaty of Waitangi Act and the Tribunal have provided the backbone for current and past grievances against the Crown, which have further advanced Maori activism toward reclaiming their

lands, culture, language, and self-determination. Some of the grievances which have advanced culturally and linguistically relevant education programs are: Maori being recognized as an official language in 1990; Maori-centered education reforms at the national level; the ongoing development of Maori immersion language programs known as *Kohanga Reo* (language nests) and *Kura Kaupapa* (immersion elementary schools); Maori-medium and bilingual schools (Benton, 1997; Cummins, 1986; Spolsky, 1989); *Kaupapa Maori* research focused on raising awareness of Maori social issues from a Maori perspective and philosophy (G. Smith, 2003; L.T. Smith, 1999); and addressing low Maori student achievement in mainstream schools (Bishop et al., 2003; Durie, 1998; Fleras, 1987; Harrison, 1998; Reedy, 2000; Tutta et al., 2004). The continued work of the Maori to ensure the survival and transmission of their cultural and linguistic heritage is directly related to their collective resistance to assimilate by reclaiming a space that is distinctly Maori. These actions, according to Ogbu's model (1982, 1987, 1991) should have resulted in further marginalizing, rather than strengthening, their social position.

Reconsidering the Stigma of the Involuntary Minority Categorization

Ogbu's (1978, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons,1998) main theoretical concern was to discern minority group strategies that either benefit or hinder group integration into the dominant society. In order to do this he generalized group responses according to the following cultural and structural criteria: folk theories of getting ahead; perceptions of economic barriers or the job ceiling; primary vs. secondary cultural or language difference; and dual or oppositional frames of reference (Ogbu, 1982, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Through extensive comparative ethnographic research Ogbu (1978, 1987, 1991) determined that students from voluntary minority groups are more favorably positioned to succeed in public schools, thus securing easier access to the social institutions and resources that promote greater social inclusion and movement away from the low status position they may have entered the host society. Ogbu (1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) further argued that the survival strategies and folk theories of getting ahead immigrant groups employ to succeed in their host country stem from their perceptions of a lack of opportunity in their native countries.

Immigrant groups appear to exhibit more agency than apathy or opposition because they are purported to have a positive dual-frame of reference allowing them to endure the hardships they encounter by reflecting on inadequate educational opportunities in their native country and a past life of strife from which they escaped. In addition, when immigrant groups encounter discriminatory barriers in schools or other social institutions they find it easier to discredit them as resulting from cultural and linguistic differences rather than internalize them as a confirmation of one's lack of self-worth or cultural inferiority as involuntary minorities do. Ogbu and Simons (1998) claim:

> What further helps the immigrants to cross cultural and language differences is that they define the cultural and language differences they encounter as barriers

> to be overcome by learning the differences. Furthermore they are *willing to accommodate* because they do not imagine that learning mainstream white ways and language will harm their group identity. (p.175, my italics)

On the opposite end of the dichotomy, the involuntary minority group rather has a negative frame of reference because they do not have a different past to reflect upon as a comparison for their present disadvantaged existence. The involuntary group's only frame of reference is to judge their own position, experiences and barriers to social inclusion according to that of the dominant society. According to Ogbu (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) a culture of resistance to "white" institutions or to emulating "white" ways has been transmitted intergenerationally further entrenching the group into their caste-like position.[5] Ogbu and Simons(1998) write,

> [involuntary minority] identities are defined to some extent by their differences from the white society. Because their *identities were developed in response* to discrimination and racism these minorities are not anxious to give them up simply because their 'oppressors' require them to do so. (p.178, my italics)

Another important distinction Ogbu (1982, 1987, 1991) makes is between the influence of primary and secondary cultural differences or discontinuity and schooling. Primary cultural differences are defined as existing prior to coming into contact with the host society's culture or western-type schooling for the first time and are attributed to voluntary or immigrant minority groups.

> The differences between the cultural systems of the immigrants and the dominant group members of their host society existed *before* the immigrants emigrated. …They bring with them a sense of who they are which they had before emigration, and they seem to retain this social identity. (Ogbu, 1991)

Immigrants apparently are provided the option of primary cultural discontinuity theory to explain some of the difficulties they face in school based on cultural miscommunication or conflicts with the school because they did not develop these *in opposition to the dominant cultures* and were clearly established before contact with the host society.[6] Secondary cultural differences or discontinuity, attributed to involuntary minorities, on the other hand defines the cultural conflict that has developed *after* contact and "[is] a response to a contact situation, especially a contact situation involving stratified domination" (Ogbu, 1982, p. 298). To follow this line of reasoning requires a complete disregard for the primary cultural and linguistic differences of the Maori (or any other indigenous group) as a people with cultural traditions, language and beliefs that existed long before their first encounters with Europeans (Fettes, 1997).

Ogbu (1982, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) claims that secondary cultural differences are reflected *through the lens* of the dominant group. Messages in the form of media representation, low status in society and the employment sector all transmit the dominant society's view of the involuntary group's inability to change their position as attributable to lack of aspiration, ability or will. These messages form barriers so pervasive that the group internalizes them and turns against any action that might lead to inclusion to the dominant society. The following state-

ment from a Maori student alludes to the impact teacher attitudes, also framed by dominant discourses and representations have on student identity.

> The…teacher said—I don't want to invest my time on you, 'cause you're too dumb…I just sit there and yell at him…Just sit there and purposefully annoy them. Or we walk out before we get a detention. (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 48)

This student's comment brings to the foreground the importance of considering the teacher-student relationship in the development of oppositional behavior.[7] This topic is given very little mention in Ogbu's work, but has been documented as effecting both voluntary and involuntary minority students' successes or failures at school (Bishop et al., 2000; Cummins, 2000; Deyhle, 1995; Education Research Office (ERO), n.d.; Gay, 2000; Tuuta et al., 2004). I do not believe the Maori should be denied the positive dual frame of reference and primary cultural difference coping strategies available to voluntary minority groups. The Maori clearly have a past to look back upon steeped in positive images of sovereignty, self-subsistence, rich cultural heritage, and a period of collaborative coexistence and active negotiation with the European colonizers (*Pakeha*). This is not some romanticized past but rather one defined by the struggles of a people constantly engaged in negotiating their identities and culture against the seemingly omnipotent power of a dominant social structure rooted in colonial practices (Barrington, 1991; Spolsky, 2002).

In the case of the Maori an important strategy to moving out of the painful and oppressive colonized experience is to reimagine *the future as a return* to the past in order to regain the cultural identity, independence and agency they once had. In this way I see the Maori as exhibiting a positive dual frame of reference grounded in resistance, resilience and hope. Maori scholar and activist L.T. Smith (1999) discusses the importance of the Maori returning to and reclaiming the past in order to reestablish themselves in the future: "The past, our stories, local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices—all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope" (p. 4). The following comment from a parent interview in the 2002 *Kaupapa Maori* research project, *Te Kotahitanga,* that looked into the experiences of Maori students, their parents, and educators within mainstream schools also highlights the importance of reclaiming a positive Maori identity.[8]

> Knowing who you are makes you proud and makes you stand up. But once we know who we were and how beautiful our culture is—you know—you were proud to stand up and achieve….to start looking at who they are and starting to see how it's beautiful to be a Maori person. (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 63)

This emotional claim has strong support for the importance of recognizing, nurturing and honoring cultural identities and recognizing involuntary minorities' primary cultural differences within the schools (Barnhardt, 1999; Bishop et al., 2003; Conchas, 2001; Corson, 1998; Cummins, 1986, 2000; Deyhle, 1995; Durie, 1998; Erickson, 1987; Fettes, 1998; Gay, 2000; Kamana, 1996; Lipka, 1994; Spolsky, 1989 ; Stiles, 1997; Tuuta et al., 2004; Vogt , Jordan, & Tharp, 1987; Benton, 1997).

Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons,1998) theoretical polarizing fails to recognize the proactive agency of the Maori and diminishes their unwillingness to relinquish the only form of collective struggle that has fueled hope for social recognition on their terms; that of distinguishing themselves by *affirming and revaluing* their cultural and linguistic markers separate from the dominant culture *rather than* in opposition to it. Ogbu's (1982, 1987, 1991; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) secondary cultural differences theory continues to locate the source of power outside of the involuntary minority group and maintains the status quo by placing the nexus of self-worth according to their subordinate position to the dominant group. As long as an involuntary minority group continues to perceive themselves according to what they lack, rather than reverse the gaze to reflect upon the value of their own cultural identity they may remain in their entrenched social position. It appears that much of the work being done in the Maori community is work toward social repositioning through cultural revaluation and recognition. Rather than continue chasing the proverbial "tail" the Maori have turned their attention inward to find the gifts that lie within.

The importance of community and cultural identification has been a vital element for self-preservation to resist forced assimilation into *Pakeha* society, which when it occurs, often results in low wage employment and marginalization at best (Kauffman, 2003). The well known *Kohanga Reo* language nests and *Kura Kaupapa* immersion elementary schools grew out of a desire to initiate nation-wide education reforms that would reverse such trends (Benton, 1997; Corson, 1998; Durie, 1998; Fettes, 1998; Fleras, 1987; Harrison, 1998; Reedy, 2000; Smith, 1999; Spolsky, 1989). These programs were developed by parents and grandparents as a response to the psychological and emotionally damaging racism and discrimination that continue to confront their children in school and society *as* barriers they had to overcome to ensure a hopeful future (Chile, 2006; Durie, 1998; Fleras, 1987; Harrison, 1998; L.T. Smith, 1999; Spolsky, 2003). The *Kohanga Reo* early learning centers for Maori children from birth to five years, were established in April 1982 in the suburbs of the capital of Wellington. Maori language is used exclusively at these centers, which are committed to incorporating cultural values into the daily affairs of the centers (Fleras, 1987; Harrison, 1998). By 2001 the number of centers had increased to 606, educating approximately 9,910 children (Te Puni Kokiri). In addition to these early learning centers, immersion primary schools called *Kura Kaupapa* were established in 1985 to ensure retention of Maori and pride in being Maori (Durie, 1998; Harrison, 1998). Subsequent bilingual and Maori medium programs in public primary and secondary schools have been established and supported by both Maori and non-Maori communities alike (Benton, 1997; ERO, n.d.; New Zealand Ministry of Education, n.d.; Reedy, 2000, Spolsky,1989).

The *Kohanga Reo* centers were initially opened independent of government support and operated solely on the authority, funding and participation of the Maori community (Chile, 2006; Durie, 1998; Spolsky, 2003). "The financial and physical commitment made by member families made clear the importance so many Maori families do place on appropriate education" (Durie, 1998). This statement provides an

interesting juxtaposition to the following claim by Ogbu (1991), "involuntary minorities emphasize the importance of education…but this verbal endorsement is not usually accompanied by the necessary effort" (p. 24). The following statistics provide some insight into the scope of the efforts made to advance this educational movement. In 2006 Maori children aged five to 14 years of age represented 21 percent or 9,829 of all students enrolled in school (Education Counts). In 2004 10,600 or 40 percent of all Maori children under the age of five were enrolled in *Kohanga Reo* early learning centers (the highest enrollment of all early learning providers), and 6,140 elementary-aged Maori children, or 3.8 percent of the population were enrolled in *Kura Kaupapa* Maori in 2006 (Education Counts). There were a total of 19,875 students learning Maori in addition to these immersion programs in 2006. Out of this number 6,363 are Non-Maori (Education Counts). Clearly, in the case of the Maori the effort to create and promote positive educational experiences has and is being made.

Conclusion: A Renewed Look at the Possibilities of Research Centered on Transformative Action

While the results of the immersion and bilingual programs are encouraging the majority of Maori students, over 85 percent, attend mainstream schools and struggle to validate their cultural identity and achieve in a school system based on monocultural, Eurocentric perspectives and values which perceive Maori identity as a "disability" rather than an asset (Bishop et al, 2003; McDermott,1995; Tutta et al., 2004). In 2000 The New Zealand Ministry of Education approved two large-scale studies to address the increasing performance gap between Maori and *Pakeha* students; The *Te-Kotahi-tanga* Study of year nine and 10 Maori student experience in mainstream classrooms (Bishop et al., 2003), and The *Te Kauhua* Mainstream Pilot Project (Tutta et al., 2004). The underpinnings of this research was that Maori student outcomes would improve once they began to see their culture reflected in the mainstream curriculum, school environment and by establishing supportive relationships with teachers, administrators, and the Maori community (Bishop et al., 2003; Tutta et al., 2004).

The philosophical foundation of this research is solidly embedded within a Maori worldview and investigates structural, personal, historical, and interpersonal barriers to school success. This research recognizes participants as valued partners privileging their lived experiences as instrumental to the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The establishment of a Maori-centered research methodology, *Kaupapa Maori,* has been important to locating the Maori as the beneficiaries and participants of research (Smith, 2003). *Kaupapa Maori* research is founded on principals of survival, recovery, development and self-determination. Intersecting within and across these principals is a focus on: healing, decolonization, mobilization and transformation (L.T. Smith, 1999 p.117). L.T. Smith (1999) clarifies the importance of a Maori-centered research agenda to further advance the movement,

> the agenda is focused strategically on the goal of self-determination of indigenous peoples. Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a

> political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as a people. (p.116)

Ogbu (1982; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) describes his own model as explanatory and descriptive. A descriptive theory, by nature, is external and works to define a situation according to an outsiders view (Ogbu, was a voluntary minority in the U.S. from Nigeria) (Foley, 2005)). This theory based on objective, descriptive criteria that classifies and categorizes groups works against agentic or transformative action because it confines the groups under scrutiny to representations that can further encapsulate, seclude, and limit them. In the case of Ogbu's (1978; Barrington, 1991) categorization of the Maori as a caste minority, the social reality of their activism and continued transformation has not been recognized by the constraints of the theory. A final return to Schermerhorn (1970) is helpful here because he warns against static categorization and theoretical rigidity in favor of the sociological notion of a dialectic theoretical frame.

> The dialectic perspective involves the recognition, and attempts to portray many types of duality that appear in continually changing social values. …As change continues, some types of duality are transformed into others under special conditions. One of the tasks of social research is to seek out these conditions and specify them in particular cases. (pp. 48-49)

Social research focused on exposing the structural and cultural barriers confronted by non-dominant minority children is vital for teachers to better understand the forces that influence their work. A danger occurs if teachers do not critically assess the limitations of theories that categorize groups of people and are immutable. Just as educators come to know their students through a subjective lens, researchers also come to "know" the object of their inquiry through a subjective position and theoretical lens that directs the outcome of their work. It is important for teachers to recognize the need to disrupt the location of their "knowledge" and reconsider the influences on their perceptions about and responses to those they assume to *know.* This can be accomplished by seeking out alternative research which is motivated by a desire to advance knowledge within the community it is situated and is not fixed but dynamic and may counter or expand taken-for-granted notions of non-dominant minority students' experiences with success or failure in school.

Authors Note

I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Hyde, Julie Brooks, Robyn Bracco, and Dr. Christina Bratt Paulston for their insightful comments and encouragement. The unconditional support and friendship that have guided this project have been essential to my determination to see it through. I would also like to thank the review board for providing me the opportunity refine my originally submitted work.

Notes

[1] I prefer to use the term non-dominant groups because it highlights social relations to power rather than demographics. Paulston & Heidemann (2006) provide a more detailed consideration of the characteristics which define non-dominant and dominant groups.

[2] I am indebted to Christina Bratt Paulston for introducing me to the work of R.A. Schermerhorn.

[3] Margaret Gibson (1991) mentions Schermerhorn's work in her discussion of the coercive nature of the integration of minority groups and their responses to assimilative educational policies.

[4] Ogbu & Simons (1998) do address the findings of these researchers which problematize the rigidity of the immigrant/involuntary binary yet the typology remains steadfast in its distinctions of the different strategies employed by the two groups in this model.

[5] Horvat & McNamara (2003) provide a convincing critique of Ogbu's "fear of acting white" analysis of African American oppositional behavior .

[6] Lotte Eldering (1997) problematizes Ogbu's (1982, 1991) distinction between primary and secondary cultural differences. In her comparative study of school achievement among Surinamese, Moroccan, and Turkish students (immigrant population) in public schools in the Netherlands she found that the Moroccan and Turkish immigrant populations struggled more with cultural differences between the home and school than the previously colonized Surinamese who had higher levels of achievement despite low social status.

[7] Jim Cummins' (1986, 1997, 2000) integrative framework provides a model to consider the coercive or collaborative nature of teacher-student relations and the impact of this relationship on the learning experience of non-dominant minority students.

[8] The New Zealand Ministry of Education and Education Research Office websites provide downloadable files of the research mentioned in this paper as well as numerous other documents concerning the schooling experiences of Maori in public school. See http://www.minedu.govt.nz/ and http://www.ero.govt.nz/

References

Barnhardt, R. (1999). Lessons for all schools [Electronic Version]. *Sharing our Pathways; A Newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative*, *4*, 4-7. http://www.anku.uaf.edu/SOPv415.html

Barrington, J. (1991). The New Zealand experience: Maoris. In M. A. Gibson, & J. Obgu (Eds.), *Minority status and schooling: A comparative study of immigrant and involuntary minorities* (pp. 309-328). New York: Garland Publishing.

Benton, R. A. (1997). Balancing tradition and modernity: A natural approach to Maori language revitalization in a New Zealand secondary school. In D. C. F. Genesee (Ed.), *Bilingual education* (pp. 95-108). Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications.

Bhatti, G. (2006). Ogbu and the debate on educational achievement: An exploration of the links between education, migration, identity and belonging. *Intercultural Education, 17*(2), 133-146.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S. & Richardson, C. (2003). *Te kotahitanga: The experiences of year 9 and 10 Maori students in mainstream classrooms*. Waikato, New Zealand: Maori Education Research Institute (MERI), School of Education, University of Waikato. www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/tekotahitanga

Chile, L. M. (2006). The historical context of community development in Aotearoa New

Zealand. *Community Development Journal, 41*(4), 407-425.
Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring failure and succes: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review, Theme Issue: Immigration Education, 71*(3), 475-504.
Corson, D. (1998). Community-based education for indigenous cultures. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 11*(3), 238-249.
Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(1), February 1986.
Cummins, J. (1997). Minority status and schooling in Canada. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Theme Issue: Ethnicity and school performance: Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology 28*(3), 411-430.
Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
Deyhle, D. (1995). Navajo youth and Anglo racism: Cultural integrity and resistance. *Harvard Educational Review, 65*(3), 403-444.
Durie, A. (1998). Emancipatory Maori education: Speaking from the heart. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 11*(3), 297-308.
Education Counts, http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/index.htm
Education Research Office, Ministry of Education, http://www.ero.govt.nz/
Eldering, L. (1997). Ethnic minority students in the Netherlands from a cultural-ecological perspective. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Theme Issue: Ethnicity and school performance: Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology 28*(3), 330-350.
Erickson, F. (1987). Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of educational achievement. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*(4), 335-356.
Ewen, A. (Ed.). (1994). *Voices of indigenous peoples: Native people address the United Nations*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.
Fettes, M. (1997). Stabilizing what? An ecological approach to language renewal. In J. Reyhner (Ed.), *Teaching indigenous languages* (pp. 301-318). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.
Fettes, M. (1998). Indigenous education and the ecology of community. *Language, culture and curriculum, 11*(3), 250-271.
Fleras, A. (1987). Redefining the politics over Aboriginal language renewal: Maori language preschools as agents of social change. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, VII*(1), 1-40.
Foley, D. (2005). Elusive prey: John Ogbu and the search for a grand theory of academic disengagement. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18*(5), 643-657.
Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Gibson, M.A. (1997). Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Theme Issue: Ethnicity and school performance: Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology, 28*(3), 431-454.
Gibson, M. A., & Ogbu, J. (1991). *Minority status and schooling: A comparative study of immigrant and involuntary minorities*. New York: Garland Publishing.
Harrison, B. (1998). The development of an indigenous language immersion school. *Bilingual Research Journal, 22*(2,3,4), 297-317.
Kamana, K., & Wilson, W. H. (1996). Hawaiin Language Programs. In G. Cantoni (Ed.), *Stabilizing indigenous languages*. Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.
Kauffman, P. (2003). Diversity and indigenous policy outcome: Comparisons between four nations. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations, 3A*, 1-28.

Lee, S. J. (2001). More than "model minorities" or "delinquents": A look at Hmong American high school students. *Harvard Educational Review, Theme Issue: Immigration Education, 71*(3), 505-528.

Lipka, J., & McCarty, T.L. (1994). Changing the culture of schooling: Navajo and Yup'ik cases. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 25*(3), 266-284.

Louie, V. (2001). Parents' aspirations and investment: The role of social class in the educational experience of 1.5 and second generation Chinese. *Harvard Educational Review, Theme Issue: Immigration Education, 71*(3), 438-475.

McDermott, R. (1995). Culture as "disability." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 26*(3), 324-348.

Ogbu, J. (1978). *Minority education and caste*. New York: Academic Press.

Ogbu, J. (1982). Cultural discontinuity and schooling. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 13*(4), 290-307.

Ogbu, J. (1987). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an answer. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*(4), 312-334.

Ogbu, J. (1991). Immigrant and involuntary minorities in comparative perspective. In M. A. Gibson & J. Ogbu (Eds.), *Minority status and schooling: A comparative study of immigrants and involuntary minorities* (pp. 3-33). New York: Garland Publishing.

Ogbu, J., & Simons, H.D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 29*(2), 155-188.

Okubo, Y. (2006). John Ogbu and minority education in Japan. *Intercultural Education, 17*(2), 147-162.

Paulston, C. B., & Heidemann, K. (2006). Language policies and the education of linguistic minorities. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method* (pp. 292-310). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Reedy, T. (2000). Te Reo Maori: The past 20 years and looking forward. *Oceanic Linguistics, 39*(1), 157-169.

Smith, G. H. (2003). Indigenous struggle for the transformation of education and schooling. Paper presented at the Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN) Convention, Keynote Address.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies.* London, UK: Zed Books.

Spolsky, B. (1989). Maori bilingual education and language revitalisation. *Journal of Mulitlingual and Mulitcultural Development, 10*(2), 89-106.

Spolsky, B. (2002). Prospects for the survival of the Navajo language: A reconsideration. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 33*(2), 139-162.

Spring, J. (2004). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Stiles, D. (1997). Four successful indigenous language programs. In J. Reyhner (Ed.), *Teaching indigenous languages* (pp. 148-262). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Qin.-Hilliard, D.B. (Ed.). (2004). *Globalization: Culture and education in the new millennium*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Maori Development, http://www.tpk.govt.nz/

Tuuta, M., Bradnam, A., Hynds, A., Higgins, J. & Broughton, R. (2004). *Evaluation of the te tauhua Maori mainstream pilot project*: Wellington, NZ: Maori Education Research, Ministry of Education. www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/tekauhua

Vogt, L., Jordan, C., & Tharp, R. (1987). Explaining school failure, producing school success: Two cases. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*(4), 276-286.

Willinsky, J. (1998). *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.