'Polycultural' capital and educational achievement among NZ-born Pacific peoples

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Abstract: This research uses a mixed-methods approach to study the Pacific findings from New Zealand's first national secondary school student health and wellbeing survey and tries to determine the relationship between culture and educational outcomes. Narrative interviews further explored the significant associations from the quantitative analysis. Adapting Bourdieu's theory of social space, 'polycultural capital' is coined as a theoretical construct which describes the potential advantage Pacific second generation (New Zealand-born) may experience from ongoing exposure to culturally distinctive social spaces. It is argued that having Pacific cultural capital as well as capital sourced to dominant social spaces assists in realising cumulative advantage and may be associated with improved education outcomes.

Keywords: cultural capital; education; Pacific peoples; second generation

Introduction

It seems appropriate to begin with a Tongan proverb: "ali 'i sia, ala 'i kolonga". This translates as "skilled on the mound; skilled in the hut" (Māhina, 2004, p. 177). According to Ka'ili (1997), the proverb can be interpreted in terms of adaptability where a person's ability to master more than one environment was highly valued among the early Tongans. Ka'ili writes:

> This esteemed ability is reflected in a similar well-known Tongan proverb: "ala 'i sia, ala 'i kolonga" which translates as "skillful at sia, skillful at kolonga". This indigenous Tongan proverb derived its meaning from the pigeon trappers' practice of *heu lupe,* or the snaring of pigeons. The mound on which the pigeons were trapped was called the *sia,* and the cooking place for the pigeon trappers was called the *kolonga.* Thus, the proverb ala 'I sia, ala 'i kolonga was phrased to honour the trapper who was not only skilful in snaring the pigeons, but also skilful at cooking the pigeons. Later, this Tongan proverb became applicable to individuals that have the ability to successfully function in multiple contexts. (Ka'ili, 1997, p. 1)

The ability to function successfully in multiple contexts remains a valued skill, perhaps even more relevant and important for Tongans and Pacific peoples in diasporic locations. This article explores the relationship between culture and educational achievement amongst second generation or New Zealand-born (NZ-born) Pacific migrants in New Zealand.

The research takes a positive deviance or strengths-based approach, which requires an emphasis on learning from strengths and positive outcomes already achieved within the Pacific population. Two sources of data are sought to explore the relationship between culture and educational achievement: the quantitative dataset from the Youth2000 Adolescent Youth Health Survey followed by qualitative inquiry with a small sample of high achieving second generation Pacific professionals. The quantitative component of the research focuses on which cultural variables

might be associated with better educational outcomes among a random sample of approximately 1,000 Pacific students from the Youth2000 Survey. After identifying which cultural variables could be quantified as having a significant relationship with advantageous educational outcomes, interviews were commenced with the much smaller sample of Pacific professionals. These were life-history interviews, where they were asked to talk retrospectively about their educational journeys and life experiences, and answered specific questions about the way they have identified and operated culturally.

Both data sources confirmed the importance of pride in Pacific cultural identities, placing continuing importance on Pacific cultural values, feeling accepted by your own Pacific ethnic group, as well as by others, and the advantages associated with continuing to speak Pacific languages. These cultural variables were significantly associated with advantageous education outcomes in the quantitative analysis and were further qualified and elaborated upon in the face-to-face interviews.

After analysis of the two data sources, it was concluded that exposure and access to more than one culture could be associated with positive advantages in some circumstances, rather than marginalisation or being 'caught between cultures'. To theorise what positioned some Pacific people who were growing up in Aotearoa/New Zealand so strongly, Bourdieu's (2007) concept of cultural capital was drawn upon, but necessarily pluralised. 'Polycultural capital' provides a way of theorising the realisation of cumulative advantage possible in a context of ongoing exposure to more than one culture. The final section of this article explores the theoretical construct of 'polycultural capital' in relation to second generation Pacific peoples.

A focus on NZ-born Pacific peoples or the "second generation"

Sixty percent of the Pacific population is born in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, cited in Callister & Didham, 2007). Among the Cook Islands and Niuean ethnic groups, the proportion of NZ-born rises to 73 percent and 74 percent, respectively (Statistics New Zealand, cited Callister & Didham, 2007). Among Samoans (60%) and Tongans (56%), the proportion is lower at just over the half-way mark (Statistics New Zealand, cited in Callister & Didham 2007). The focus of this article is the second generation of Pacific peoples whose primary cultural experiences are of being 'Pacific' within New Zealand, rather than migrants.

In Aotearoa, the designation 'New Zealand-born' is commonly used. Such a term, Macpherson (2001) argues, recognises "Pacific heritage and local New Zealand upbringing … creating an identity shared with other Pacific young people and which was built around their experiences in playgrounds, schools and malls of urban New Zealand" (p. 75). In the international literature the term 'second generation' is used to refer to the children of migrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Waldinger, Lim, & Cort, 2007). This tends to be inclusive of native-born children of foreign migrants, as well as foreign-born children of migrants, who were very young (e.g., pre-adolescent) at time of migration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 23). Although the term 'second generation' is rarely used in a New Zealand context, these terms are used interchangeably in this article. Both terms are deployed inclusively, to include Pacific peoples who have 'come of age' in New Zealand regardless of birthplace.

A positive deviance approach

Paea Wolfgramm, an award winning Tongan journalist wrote an article in SPACIFIK Magazine (2007, p. 12) titled "What about the zebras who climb trees?" In this article, Wolfgramm wrote about attending a Pacific education lecture, whereby the lecturer described the New Zealand schooling system as a tree. This education specialist went on to describe different ethnic groups trying to climb the tree. Some were monkeys; some were zebras, and a range of other animals. The point the lecturer made was that some animals were designed to climb trees whereas others—such as zebras—were not. This education lecturer likened Pacific peoples to zebras who were not designed to climb trees.

Wolfgramm, in his article, struggles with the analogy of Pacific peoples being likened to zebras, who are not anatomically designed to be tree climbers. Wolfgramm referred to the small proportion of zebras who do manage to climb to the top of the tree. He writes: "I thought quietly. Why don't we look at the how those 'zebras' did it?" (2007, p. 12)

To focus on "Zebras who can climb trees" has resonance with a "positive deviance" approach (Berggren & Wray, 2002). "Positive deviance is the observation that in most settings a few at risk individuals follow uncommon, beneficial practices and consequently experience better outcomes than their neighbours who share similar risks" (Berggren & Wray, 2002, p. 9). Initially "positive deviance" was used and applied to a setting of poor nutrition within a relatively poverty-stricken environment in Egypt. The researchers recognised that there were a few members of this community who were not malnourished and decided to focus on their eating practices. The nutrition solutions that were generated by these local "positive deviants" were transferable across to other members of this society and had a number of advantages over "external" ideas to the problem (Berggren & Wray, 2002). Positive deviants then, are "individuals with better outcomes than their peers" (Marsh, Schroeder, Dearden, Sternin, & Sternin, 2004, p. 1177).

Learning from positive deviance recognises that solutions to problems already exist within communities, and identifying potential transferable behaviours and enabling factors (Marsh et al., 2004). Such solutions are proven in their own context and are generally found to be practical and affordable (Berggren & Wray, 2002).

Central to the 'positive deviance' approach is identifying role models "who use uncommon, but demonstrably successful, strategies to tackle common problems" (Berggren & Wray 2002, p. 1178). When a strengths-based approach is applied to youth, it tends to emphasise the way young people are actors trying their best with the resources they have, to negotiate difficult environments and stresses (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). In this research, a commitment to a strengths-based and positive deviance approach meant choosing to interview 'role models' and highly successful second generation professionals about their educational journeys and cultural orientations rather than focusing on barriers or failing students. It meant analysing a Pacific dataset to identify factors associated with existing high performance, rather than focusing on the disparities or reasons for gaps between Pacific and NZ-European students.

It also meant that some of the frameworks which are frequently employed for understanding second generation migrants, NZ-born Pacific peoples and the way they operate culturally, such as concepts of assimilation (Park, 1950; Rumbaut, 1997,) and acculturation (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936; Padilla, 1980; Berry, 2002) were deliberately resisted. These have repeatedly

associated cultural change with loss: marginalisation, liminality, stress, anomie, pathology and low achievement and poor outcomes (Ministry of Health, 2008; Waldram, 2004; Samu, 2003; Tiatia, 1998; Furedi, 2001).

In addition, in much of the international scholarship, the second generation has been associated with dismal prospects, adversarial outlooks and permanent poverty traps in environments with declining economic opportunities (Gans, 1992; Perlmann & Waldinger, 1996). Terms such as "second generation decline" (Gans, 1992) and "second generation revolt" (Perlmann and Waldinger, 1996) have been used to describe the circumstances of second generation migrants.

Researching second generation Pacific peoples and the relationship between culture and educational achievement within these frameworks was rejected. This research sought to focus on the 'zebras who can climb trees', those with better outcomes with their peers and sought to learn from achievement and success rather than failure. It sought to analyse advantage rather than mine deficit and to focus upon and learn more about the existing strengths of Pacific peoples in relation to education, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The quantitative platform

Youth2000 is New Zealand's first national secondary school student health and wellbeing survey. It included 523 possible questions relevant to young people's health and wellbeing. It contains a valuable cross-sectional snapshot of Pacific High School students across New Zealand (see Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003, for more detailed information).

In 2001, one third of the 389 secondary schools in New Zealand with more than 50 enrolled students were randomly selected and invited to participate in the Youth2000 survey. In total, 12,934 students were invited to participate in the survey. Three-quarters (9,699) agreed to take part, and data was obtained for 9,567 students. This number represents four percent of the total 2001 New Zealand secondary school roll. Just over 1,100 students (n= 1,114) in Youth2000 identified with one or more Pacific ethnic groups. This constituted 12 percent of the 9,567 participants in the final dataset. The survey information was collected anonymously using a youth-friendly multimedia computer assisted self-interview (M-CASI) programme (see Mila-Schaaf, Robinson, Schaaf, Denny, & Watson, 2008) for detailed information about the Youth2000 methodology and Pacific participants).

A context of ethnic inequalities
Analysis of the Youth2000 Pacific findings in comparison with the Youth2000 NZ-European participants established a pattern of significant and consistent ethnic differences between Pacific participants and NZ European participants in numerous health and wellbeing domains (Mila-Schaaf et al. 2008). While these findings were not encouraging, the quantitative data provides a useful picture and demonstrates ethnic inequalities consistent with the findings of many other studies (Craig, Taufa, Jackson & Yeo-Han, 2008; Harkess, Murray, Parkin, & Dalgety, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2008).

In examining this dataset, the focus was not to explore the reasons for ethnic inequalities in education, but rather learn from Pacific students who have better educational outcomes than others. One of the limitations of aggregate ethnic comparisons is that it tends to mask the fact that

many Pacific students do succeed and achieve. Focusing only upon the Pacific sample, multiple logistic regressions were used to test for variables which might be associated with better educational outcomes or profiles. Because of the 'single point in time' manner of cross-sectional surveys, this research cannot determine causality. Rather, it seeks 'proof of' association between variables.

The variables selected for testing included: (a) pride in own Pacific ethnicity and placing importance on Pacific cultural values, (b) speaking own Pacific language, (c) acceptance by own ethnic group and acceptance by others, (d) economic prosperity and (e) churchgoing and spiritual beliefs,, along with three educational outcome variables, (f) usually trying hard at school, (g) achieving in the middle or above the middle compared to other students and (h) reporting future plans for tertiary study or getting a job'.

Odds ratio [OR] statistical tests were conducted using SAS (version 9.1) software. In these analyses the participants who answered with 'negative responses' to the median variables were the reference groups (i.e., I do not speak my own Pacific language). Therefore, an odds ratio greater than 1 [OR>1] indicates that the factor of interest is more likely to occur in the 'positive responses' group than in the 'negative responses' group. Likewise, an Odds Ratio less than 1 [OR < 1] indicates the factor of interest is less likely to occur in the 'positive responses' group than in the 'negative responses' group. All of these tests were controlled for age and gender. Only the significant results are provided below. It is noted that churchgoing and spirituality were not significantly associated with the selected educational outcome variables. The four other analyses, however, resulted in significant associations.

The impact of socio-economic variables

Considerable socio-economic disadvantage among Pacific students was evident in the Youth2000 Pacific Report (Mila-Schaaf et al., 2008). Economic prosperity was determined by creating a super-variable, made up of a variety of socio-economic measures. For example, those Pacific participants who reported that their household has a working car *and* a working phone and has at least one parent employed *and* reported never worrying about having enough money for food (relatively prosperous), compared with those who did not meet all of these criteria. Approximately one third (36%) of Pacific participants met all four criteria and were consequently classified as 'relatively prosperous'. After adjusting for age and sex, those Pacific students who met the relatively prosperous criteria, compared with those who did ,were more likely to report "trying hard" at school [OR 1.30, CI 95% (1.01-1.67), p=0.0424]. For example, Odds ratio of 1.30 means 30% more likely, with a 95% Confidence Interval (CI) and the p value (probability value) indicates the level of statistical significance. They were also approximately 85% more likely to report doing well at school ("about the middle" or "above the middle") [OR 1.85, CI 95% (1.12-3.07), p=0.0167].

Pacific language

The Youth2000 findings show that half (49.8%) of all Pacific students reported speaking their own Pacific language at 'an average or better' level, with slightly more (56.8%) reporting they could understand their own Pacific language at an 'average or better' level. There were, however, considerable intra-Pacific ethnic differences with regard to language retention (see Mila-Schaaf et al., 2008). After controlling for age and gender, the Pacific participants who spoke their own Pacific language at 'an average or better level' were compared with those who reported not speaking their own language at an average or better level. Results showed that those who spoke

their Pacific language were a third more likely to report "usually trying hard" at school [OR 1.33, CI 95% (1.04-1.71), p=0.022].

Ethnic pride and placing importance on ethnic values

The next area tested was that of ethnic pride and values. Could Pacific participants who reported feeling proud of their ethnic identity and who placed importance on Pacific (Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, Niue) ethnic values, be determined to have better outcomes than those who did not? Results showed that being proud of Pacific ethnic identity and placing importance on Pacific ethnic values was associated with being twice as likely to report doing well at school (either 'about the middle' or 'above the middle" at school) [OR 2.01, CI 95% (1.26-3.23), p=0.0036] compared with those who reported no pride or continued importance in values. Pride and importance of Pacific values was also associated with students being one and a half times more likely to have plans for post school activities (either ' further training' or 'getting a job') [OR 1.53, CI 95% (1.06-2.20), p=0.023].

Feeling accepted

The final area tested was acceptance by people from your own Pacific ethnic group (Samoan, Tongan, Niue, Cook Islands) and from others. The vast majority of Pacific participants (87%) reported that they felt accepted by members of their own ethnic group. However, in response to a more generic question: "Do you feel accepted by other people?" approximately half of Pacific participants (52%) responded in the affirmative.

Those Pacific participants who felt accepted by their own ethnic group <u>and</u> by others were compared with those participants who reported not feeling accepted. Reporting 'feeling accepted' in response to both questions was associated with being one and half times more likely to (usually or always) try hard at school [OR 1.52, CI 95% (1.03-2.24), p = 0.0514]. Those that felt accepted were also two and a half times more likely to report doing well at school ('about the middle' or 'above the middle') [OR 2.47, (CI 95% 1.21-5.04), p = 0.0005].

Summary of the quantitative results

Alongside socio-economic factors, the odds ratio results indicate the importance of having access to Pacific cultural capital: speaking Pacific languages, feeling accepted by other Pacific peoples and others, taking pride in Pacific identities and continuing to place importance on Pacific values. These were all associated with better educational outcomes. Neglect of Pacific cultural capital—allowing Pacific knowledge traditions to deteriorate and failing to sustain Pacific languages and cultural values—appeared to be associated with disadvantageous educational outcomes.

The qualitative component

A small sample of 14 second generation Pacific peoples was purposively selected using the networks of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and the researcher's own Pacific community networks. They represented high achieving individuals from a range of Pacific ethnicities, regions, and professions. The majority of this sample consisted of university educated professionals who maintained strong ties to Pacific communities. They had all achieved rapid social and occupational mobility. They participated in narrative interviews consistent with a talanoa approach: "A talanoa approach is a traditional Pacific reciprocating interaction, which is

driven by common interest, regard for respectfulness and are conducted mainly face to face" (Morrison & Vaioleti, 2008, p. 11). The interviews were characterised by open-ended questions with prompts.

The first question was: "Can you tell me a little bit about your story?" Eastmond argues that, "Such stories, properly situated, can rather bring out more clearly the ways in which experience and agency are socially and culturally mediated phenomena" (2007, p. 261), I was particularly interested in the way that participants chose to represent themselves and their lived experiences. In other words, how they negotiated their meaning and evaluated their significance.

The second generation stories

Most of the interview participants talked about feeling motivated by the 'migrant dream' proffered by their parents. They had internalised intergenerational aspirations to acquire capital. Within the migrant dream discourse, New Zealand was perceived to be a country rich in resources, capital and educational opportunities for social and socio-economic mobility, especially when compared with Pacific nations, which were represented as having "few opportunities for socioeconomic advancement" (Lee, 2004, p. 135). Connell writes: "Migration is largely a response to real and perceived inequalities in socio-economic opportunities, within and between states" (2006, p. 60). Consistent with other research (Macpherson, Bedford, & Spoonley, 2000) education was identified as one of the key drivers for Pacific migration and upward mobility. (Note: Psuedonyms are used throughout this article). As one of the participants, Tama, said:

> I think my parents were similar to lots of Samoan or Tongan or migrant parents. I think that they come here for that sole reason, I think, for my parents it was to be able to educate their three sons... Education and being able to make money, those were the two drivers.

One aspect of the 'migrant dream' as it carried over to the second generation was a focus on 'making good' on parental sacrifices via 'tours of duty' (Tonga, 2007). Migrant parents had endured low paid, low status jobs involving long hours of manual labour. Many participants described their parent's sacrifice as key motivators. As Leo explains:

> I didn't enjoy seeing Mum catch the bus at 5.30 in the morning. I didn't enjoy not having Dad home because he was out driving.... Mum and Dad would get home really late because Mum would pick up as many shifts as possible. The value that I took from that was that they were hard working but they were missing. I don't think that was their fault.... But I was always missing my mum and dad. I only saw them on the weekends or at church if we were lucky.

> I think there was a part of me that was angry for not ever buying a house too. Because everyone else it seemed – because we'd always been told by Mum and Dad you know - 'Try and always do your best'. Yet we lived in this state house forever. I think those were the times where I felt, if you lived in a state house you were poor and your family was useless. I think there was a bit of resentment in there, that they'd never actually bought a house.

> So, part of me started to dream of "one day I'm going to".... Sometimes, you take all that negative stuff, all the stuff that you didn't like and you try and apply it to "when you

finish university and hopefully you'll get a job" so that you can provide for what you didn't have.

Many participants spoke about how their parents' position and financial adversity motivated them to fight and succeed. They did not want to be in the same economic position as their parents, and this was something that was deeply instilled by the parents themselves. However, it was also recognised that the dream of pursuing capital in new fields, in many cases was not realised for many Pacific families (see Macpherson et al. 2000). As Leo went on to say:

> *I'm tired, aye, I'm really tired. Because I guess all I see are the negative stats, the prisons and our young people falling out of school. I've had enough. There has to be a better way. But in order for me to make a dent – hopefully - in order for those of us who might deem ourselves able, we have to win that other world. We have to be able to move in that other world and negotiate it. Because then it begins, hopefully, to feed into our Samoan world.*

Many of the participants I interviewed felt that they were indeed charged to "move" in "that other world" to try and change their relationship to capital. Bourdieu (2007) recognised educational qualifications as "institutionalised" cultural capital which has the "potential capacity to produce profits" (pp. 83–84). As one of the participants, Tama, said: "Education to me is—was—a silver bullet." University was seen as key to mobility. The sons and daughters of Pacific migrants who were interviewed told stories of exceptionally high expectations, of parental sacrifices and of being encouraged to do well at school. As Tama said: "Going to university was tattooed on my forehead at birth, I think: if I be honest." As another participant, Simone, explained:

> *I think for me it's been the first everything, being the first person in the family to go to university, and being the first to actually go out there and face those challenges. And I mean even going to university! Having no idea about, you know…. You know I just followed their dreams and just floundered around and finally found my way…. That whole journey I think is a process of self discovery but also a process of educating my parents. And I suppose other peoples' parents, about what is really involved in tertiary education….*

Despite beginning with relatively limited relevant 'mainstream' cultural and social capital to draw from, the second generation participants I interviewed had navigated dominant social spaces and accrued cultural, social, symbolic and economic forms of capital associated with those spaces. Their success could be attributed to many different elements; in particular, supportive and ambitious families who were strongly driven by the migrant dream. In many cases, humble financial beginnings, parental sacrifices ('tours of duty') and experiences of adversity were able to be 'turned around' by these participants and realised as motivational drivers. These motivational discourses starkly contrasted to ideas participants had to face about Pacific peoples and poor achievement in dominant social spaces. As Pita explains:

> *There were only two of us at uni [laughter] from our school, which says a lot you know. There were not many of us at all. And you weren't really expected to succeed and I didn't get a good start either. I didn't get a heads-up from the Pacific Liaison person there. I put English down as my subject and they said, 'Oh don't do that it's too hard for you' and that was a subject I was relatively decent at, you know.*

Tiare talked about her dream to train as a nurse:

> *When I went to see my careers guidance counsellor when I was about 13, she said, "Oh*
> *no you should just stick to home economics and typing."*

At the time, Tiare accepted the limits set by the careers advisor. However, later as an adult she attended university. As a professional who now works with young people, she looks back at that incident saying, "It is a story I reflect on… I'm not blaming anyone but that certainly was not very encouraging."

Exposure to Pacific social spaces provided access to alternative empowering discourses which proved to be valuable resources in dominant social spaces, but also provided different knowledge traditions, worldviews and culturally derived forms of capital. Pacific knowledge traditions, languages, and values provided valuable hermeneutic tools and vital resources for moving confidently in New Zealand social spaces. Leo says of his Samoan heritage: "I think it's given me a base, somewhere I can actually attach who I believe I am to. And say this is my way of defining who I am." Another participant, Pita explains:

> *Being Tongan, and being a real staunch Tongan at that, I think it has a big bearing on*
> *how I operate. I take what I know from the Tongan culture and use that as a guide, or*
> *lens, in terms of my own behaviour and my own sort of actions*

Pita explains how learning Tongan culture and language required labour and effort. The definition of capital as the accumulated product of past labour appears particularly applicable.

> *It took work and it took a passion to try and learn it. Even the language I had to pick up*
> *on my own. I wasn't taught the Tongan language. Most of the time we spoke in English*
> *at home, even though Mum and Dad spoke to us in Tongan, so I even had to learn that.*

Pita talks about his ability to mobilise his proud Tongan cultural identity as a 'shield'. He says:

> *The mechanisms to defend yourself against whatever, that comes from within. I think*
> *that's something important that our young people should learn too, is how to shield*
> *themselves. Not to be indifferent or not care, but to protect themselves, and to project an*
> *identity because it doesn't have to be a hardcore Tongan like me.*

All of the participants interviewed had pride in their ethnic identities. For Pita, having a strong Tongan identity was described as both a protective and defensive measure. The metaphor of shield belies the sense that coming of age in New Zealand as a Pacific person is not necessarily easy. Pita sees that strong sense of identity provides a level of security and sureness across contexts. However, constant movement between culturally distinctive spaces meant that for some, cultural identifications were not necessarily singular or straight-forward. This was especially the case for those participants of multiple ethnic backgrounds, although the importance of pride in identity remained salient. As Bill pointed out, "It's the way we have been brought up, which is to be proud of who you are. And '*who you are*' is not *one thing*, you're not a singular being…" Lola represented the perspective of many participants when she said:

> *I suppose that would be the first thing, figuring out who you want to be… I suppose it's*
> *that idea that there isn't one way to be. You know, there are so many different people*

> *within the subset Pasifika that that idea of figuring out who it is that you want to be and what it is that you want to take from the different cultures and then move from there....*
>
> *There is that recurring theme of forging ahead without compromising your core cultural values, but that presupposes that you have identified and owned those core cultural values. And I suppose that is the first step, identifying who you are, who you want to be and what that means.*
>
> *So that's not just a Pacific thing that's a journey that everybody goes through. But I think for Pasifika in New Zealand there are the added elements and the added dimensions to that, which adds complexity to that process. But it also adds richness and reward to that process as well.*

Identifying through discourses and knowledge traditions sourced to Pacific social spaces could be particularly useful when the discourses in Palangi social spaces were not empowering to identify with. Within Pacific social spaces, an alternative body of knowledge and language provided valuable counter-discourses that provided other ways of framing, interpreting and making sense of themselves, their world and experiences. Yet it was also clear that for many, dominant New Zealand social spaces provided an important source of knowledge, ideas and identifications. Participants drew selectively and strategically from both sets of spaces and operated most of the time, at the interface. It is argued here that rather than being caught between cultures the participants became seasoned cross-cultural sojourners, moving with increasing ease across culturally distinct spaces. The salient question then becomes, why were they positioned so strongly to navigate these culturally distinct spaces? Exploring the concept of 'polycultural capital' is the focus of the final section of the article.

Polycultural capital and the power to negotiate

This theoretical analysis draws upon and adapts Bourdieu's concepts of social space (1985) and cultural capital (2007). Bourdieu (1985) writes:

> The social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates… Thus, agents are distributed within it, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital — i.e. according to the relative weight of the different kinds of assets within their total assets. (p. 724)

Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' is defined as that which may be in "objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate" and which has "potential capacity to produce profits" and which "determines the chances of success for its parties" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 83). It is considered "a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 83).

It is argued here that Pacific migrants have created social spaces which de-territorialise (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997), replicate and revision the structures and fields from places of origin (see Macpherson, 2002). Citing Gilroy (1987) Clifford describes these as "Alternative public spheres,

forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference" (2006, p. 251).

In the case of Pacific migrants these social spaces are organised in ways that were generated within kin oriented, rural, agricultural and marine-based economies of Pacific islands and archipelagos (Macpherson, 2002). The socio-economic sustainability of such societies traditionally depended upon extended family co-operatives, cultivating and maintaining strategic reciprocal relationships bound within a system of exchange (Helu, 1999; Campbell, 2001; Evans, 2001). Within such societies, different hierarchies, forms of capital, and structures exist, distinctive to those predominant in Western capitalist societies. For example, in the case of Tonga, Evans argues, "The maintenance of effective gift exchange relations with God and others is the mark, and the result, of social competence and prestige" (2001, p. 154).

It is argued here that speaking Pacific languages, feeling pride in Pacific identities, placing importance on Pacific values and acceptance by other Pacific peoples are forms of Pacific cultural capital. They are non-financial assets, skills, knowledge which have been acquired over time and are associated with forms of power, status and/or advantage.

The participants I interviewed talked of being exposed to both Western-oriented New Zealand social spaces and Pacific social spaces. Their experiences were significantly shaped by enduring exposure to New Zealand society or social spaces and the stigmata of their effort to acquire capital in these spaces. It was clear that many of those interviewed had gained considerable Palangi cultural capital. Yet they also operated in spaces which were organised in alignment with the social structures of Pacific societies of origin and where capital was configured quite differently.

Ongoing exposure to more than one culture is regularly associated with being torn between conflicting cultures, and experiencing liminality, confusion and anomie (Samu, 2003, Tiatia, 1998, 2003). While this is accepted as valid for some, it did not fit the cultural experiences described by many of the participants I interviewed. For example as Lola said:

> *I feel so lucky that I've had enough of a range of experiences that I can feel completely comfortable and at home in all of those different environments. I think I've met people who are only comfortable in one or another of those and freak out a bit if they're out of their comfort zone. I think that's been one of the real assets of having the advantage of both cultures, that I can feel comfortable in all of those different contexts.*

Bill alluded to developing the skills to fit into and navigate multiple spaces. He said:

> *It means that I can dip in and out of things very easily and I can have a lot more choices. So I'm able to be comfortable, very comfortable in a Pacific environment however you define it. I'm very comfortable in a European environment, however you define it. I'm very comfortable in an upper socio economic, I am just able to be comfortable and at the same time I am able to be referencing - so I can get white peoples' jokes because white people do have a form of humour. I can get brown peoples' jokes because brown people have their own sense of humour. I think that makes me culturally literate.*

Margaret says, "We can put on caps and take them off when we want to and it's not even the best of both worlds, sometimes it's the best of many, many different worlds. And as Tiare expains, "I

do kind of swing a lot. I'm not so clunky now. I do think that I navigate or swing (or whatever) between them both quite naturally now and it's not really a conscious thing anymore." Leilani concurs: "It took me some time to learn how to modulate myself but now that I can, you know, I do feel quite comfortable". And Lola says: "I do adjust myself to the different situations and part of it is unconscious cultural cues. But part of it definitely is what's going to suit my purpose in this context."

It is theorised that having Pacific forms of capital, as well as capital sourced to dominant social spaces, puts participants in a stronger position to have agency to dip in, dip out, opt in, opt out, adjust to cultural cues and respond strategically to what will suit their purposes in different cultural contexts. Polycultural capital is associated here with cross-cultural resources, knowledge, skills and agency to potentially realise cumulative advantage. The term polycultural capital shadows earlier 'doubling' concepts, such as double consciousness (Du Bois, cited in Zuckerman, 2004) and double vision (Wright, cited in Gilroy, 1993). Polyculturalism captures the 'more-than-one' doubling dynamic, but unlike the term 'bicultural' it is not limited to just two. As Margaret says above, "sometimes it's the best of many".

Polycultural also encompasses the promise of hybrid synergies—that which is more than the sum of its parts. Kelley (2003) argues that the term polycultural captures cross-cultural interrelationship, overlap, fluidity and shared spaces, rather than reified multi-cultural differences. Not all invocations of 'multicultural' reify difference, but the term polycultural is more open to new incarnations of meaning and provides a pun on the word 'Polynesian'. Here, the term 'polycultural capital' also encompasses agency and ability to efficiently reference more than one knowledge tradition; to choose selectively or respond effectively - dependent on context and purpose. Bourdieu writes: "rational choice" and "the art of estimating and seizing chances… are dispositions that can only be acquired in certain social conditions" and which are "defined by possession of the economic and cultural capital required in order to seize the 'potential opportunities' theoretically available to all" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). Polycultural capital provides a way of thinking about how to theoretically realise the potential opportunities of cumulative advantage to all (although perhaps not practically). As the participant Lola stated, "There is an opportunity to have the best of both worlds and to draw the richness from both cultures, and reject the negative bits that are in both cultures"

It was clear that participants had become very experienced at mediating conflict between cultures and negotiating:

> *Yep, I think negotiating is probably the apt term. Because, you know, I grew up in this society and then you realise that there's also another one, my traditional Tongan one. In saying that though, you know it's also about options and you have those options to defer, to switch.*

> *I think that it's also good to know how the other person thinks. They don't know how you think, on the other side… I think it's a benefit having the ability to experience and know both sides.* (Pita)

> *The values of pushing the individual society versus values pushing the family - that's what I think is that big negotiation.* (Leo)

> *I think it's a constant thing, I don't think it will ever go away:still negotiating.* (Simone)

> *Oh, all the time, all the time and that's, but that's sort of what you have that ability to just do that.* (Bill)

> *I feel like I'm doing it all the time.* (Margaret)

> *I think I negotiate, like for myself, I think I've come to my own resolution of how I want to live and my family. My wife and I discuss it all the time. We have our own little debates. I try and help my younger nephews and cousins too. Because they're more competent in the Tongan things than me, but I try and encourage them not to be shy of achieving in the Palangi world. Some of them think that going to Uni is hard, and I say that it is hard, but it is do-able.* (Alipate)

Alipate, like many others, has more Palangi cultural capital, but he negotiates with the knowledge and resources he has at his disposal. He finds his own balance, influenced by the cultural capital at his disposal, the forms of knowledge he has acquired, the resources passed down to him and those he has struggled to obtain.

In terms of negotiating balance between ideas sourced to different cultural knowledge traditions, the concept of *noa* is quite applicable here. Noa is described by Māhina (2009, personal communication) as zero-point or harmony or balance, where two sets of equal and opposite forces are mediated to a state of equilibrium. Māhina writes of noa:

> This is evident in architecture, where forces move in opposite ways meeting at a common point, i.e., noa or zero-point or harmony or balance or proportion or equilibrium, as seen in a stationary house, and if one or more of the forces is or are being upset, the whole building collapses.

> Points of conflict do not simply wane away – rather they are lying dormant, only to be made manifest when that whole state of balance is being upset. (Māhina, 2009, personal communication)

It is argued here that polycultural capital (more than one form of culturally derived capital) positioned the second generation participants to have the resources to facilitate their own point of *noa* or equilibrium between competing cultural discourses. As Tama said of his high achieving peers: "Regardless of fluency in their home language, they all have learned somehow, to balance that and bring it together…" And Leilani said:

> *If those things are all in balance then I think that you are a success. Some days they may be totally all out of kilter and you don't feel successful and then six months later they all come back into balance. It's not a static thing.*

The sense that these negotiations were ongoing, and achieving a sense of balance or satisfactory resolutions was temporal, time-, context- and purpose-specific was widely shared by participants. As Bill said, "That's what you have the ability to do."

Conclusion

In this article it is argued that 'polycultural' capital may be a useful way of framing the potential advantage associated with ongoing exposure to culturally distinctive social spaces. It does not argue that such advantage characterises the situation for all NZ-born or second generation Pacific peoples, but it deliberately seeks to learn from positive deviance among this population, deploying both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The quantitative analysis involved identifying cultural variables among Pacific high school students that were significantly associated with better educational outcomes. Maintenance of Pacific values, cultural pride, Pacific language fluency and acceptance from Pacific peoples and others, were all significantly associated with positive educational outcomes: trying hard at school, doing well at school and making plans for the future.

Continuing with a positive deviance approach, a small sample of second generation Pacific professionals who had achieved rapid social and economic mobility were asked to reflect on their education journeys and answer question about the ways that they operated culturally. They could be described as the 'zebras who have climbed trees'. The importance of cultural confidence, acceptance, vitalisation of cultural values and language was reaffirmed in narrative interviews.

This supported the development of a theoretical approach which focuses on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital but necessarily pluralised it. It was argued that NZ-born Pacific generation were exposed to culturally distinctive social spaces: Pacific social spaces, as well as (Palangi-oriented) NZ social spaces. Both were sources of cultural capital, knowledge and skills that could be useful across contexts. Ongoing exposure to culturally distinctive social spaces could result, in some circumstances, in acquiring polycultural capital.

Polycultural capital is associated here with cross-cultural resources, knowledge, skills and agency. It is also associated with agency to draw purposively and strategically from more than one cultural way of knowing and interpreting the world. This strategic way of operating interculturally could not be accurately characterised in terms of cultural loss, liminality or marginalisation and was described by many participants as preferable to monocultural alternatives. The ancient Tongan proverb ala 'i sia, ala 'i kolonga (being skilled on the mound and skilled in the hut) has continuing relevance and importance for the generation of Pacific peoples growing up in New Zealand.

The applicability of the concept of polycultural capital to populations other than the Pacific or Polynesian population is beyond the scope of this paper and research. However, it is argued that there is value in nominating a strengths-based and positive deviance approach to second generation or NZ-born Pacific scholarship and Pacific education research broadly. This provides a useful opportunity to interrogate key concepts and assumptions within our frameworks and focus. In particular, it may provide a timely reminder to ensure that our research does not end up focusing excessively on the stripes of the proverbial zebra 'who cannot climb trees'.

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