

**Access and Participation
in
Tertiary Education:**

**A study of students from low decile
schools attending the University of
Canterbury.**

**A thesis
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of
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By
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Abstract

The findings in this thesis represent research that was undertaken at the University of Canterbury on the topic of participation in tertiary education by students from low decile backgrounds. This work focuses on students from low decile backgrounds participating in university education. In addition to a review of the relevant literature and policies, interviews were conducted with 13 students who were enrolled at the University at the time of the interview, one University staff member employed in a position responsible for fostering greater participation by students at four low decile schools in Christchurch, and interviews with three career staff at the low decile schools in Christchurch. The focus was placed on low decile students due to the use of school decile as a proxy for social class due to the difficulty of sorting participants by social class.

The interviews were conducted during 2005 and 2006, while enrolment statistics were gathered from the University of Canterbury and the Ministry of Education for the period of 1999 to 2004. This information is represented in the study to help highlight the inequalities in participation rates based on students attending different decile schools. The interviews in particular identified themes in the experiences of the students when they were talking about their decision to attend university and their school life.

The literature review as well as the use of Bourdieu's theory regarding the influence of social, cultural and economic capital was important in the development of this work. The thesis uses the theory and literature as a starting point, and a reference point that locates it within the field of sociology and education. In particular Nash's work in the New Zealand context offers useful connections between his findings and this current work while also providing at times mediation between the theory of Bourdieu and the findings in the research.

This research has found a number of areas where students had very similar experiences and these are reflected in the four findings chapters of policy, schools and

career teachers, family and peer groups. There is a clear understanding by students and staff alike about educational outcomes, and the commonly accepted outcome of class based inequalities in education. The implications of the findings in this study broadly include concerns over the way participation is counted, access to financial assistance while studying, and the quality of advice being given by career teachers. There remain also ongoing concerns about the impact that culture and class have on the decisions made by individuals.

Out of the findings of the research a number of recommendations for future study were generated. It is hoped these will encourage further work in the area of participation in education, particularly in regard to the policy areas of the way student enrolments are counted, the government financial assistance that is offered, and the approach of schools towards careers education. The final aim of any further work however should be to move the field of education research closer towards finding a way to equalise the participation rates between the different social classes.

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Chapter 1

Introduction, literature review and theory

Introduction

One of the most important areas of consideration for a nation is education. In New Zealand the government funds education providers from pre-school through to tertiary; and tends to have an egalitarian policy approach encouraging everyone to be able to participate. What is apparent from statistics however is that some groups in society participate in certain areas more than others. This trend of unequal participation rates is not unique to New Zealand, with England and Australia being two similar systems that experience very similar concerns regarding participation rates in higher education. In all of these countries it appears from statistics that students from lower socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds are less likely to access a university education than students from higher SES situations. An illustration of this is the research finding that during the early 1980s 36 percent of working class students left school without school certificate compared to 12 percent in the upper classes (Lauder et al, 1984). The same research argues that there is a similar trend for university entrance qualifications, and that therefore there are ongoing differences in the ability for people to move between social classes, or attain higher educations. This stratification of participation is a problem for any society that espouses equality, and also poses significant challenges to attempts to encourage greater involvement. It should also be considered however that the espousal of equality and championing of education as the equaliser is quite divergent from the arguments of the theorists in this thesis that the school has a pedagogic approach allows only certain groups of students to succeed.

In New Zealand, policy rhetoric discusses a need to encourage increased rates of students attending tertiary education from lower SES backgrounds, and varying policies have attempted the implementation of this. Despite the different policies,

statistics show that the rate of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds accessing university education has remained relatively static over at least the last 10 years in New Zealand.

Within the different factors that relate to why some students participate in non-compulsory education it can be argued that within New Zealand there is a strong sentiment that everyone should have the opportunity to participate if they choose too, and within this the school is seen as an equalising force (Nash, 1999). This egalitarian view is echoed in policy and illustrated in the Peter Fraser quote below:

Every person, whatever his (sic) level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind to which he is best fitted and to the full extent of his powers (Dale, 2000, p. 107).

It is not only New Zealand however that approaches policy in an egalitarian way. At the end of World War II in many countries including England there was the recognition that people had a right to an education, and free education for everyone was offered up to the age of 15¹ (Alcock, 2003). New Zealand went further than the English in this bid towards free education by having low cost compulsory and tertiary education until the 1980s and the widespread introduction of user pays policies.

The egalitarian approach of treating everyone equally, although often seen to be attempted does not appear to have been successful when participation rates are compared prior to, or after the policy reforms of the 1980s which saw the focus of policy being on greater participation within education (McLaughlin, 2003). Lauder however argues that despite these policy reforms, working-class young people have barely increased their rates of participation at universities in thirty years (Lauder, 1990); and research undertaken in 1999 indicated that only 12 percent of students in low decile schools enrol in university compared to the much higher percentage of 44 percent of high decile school students (McLaughlin, 2002). These figures highlight that something is not working in attempts to get students from low decile schools participating in university education. Although figures can be found on participation rates, without looking deeper into the issue of why the rates are not improving it is

¹ This was later increased to 16.

unlikely that attempts to improve the situation will be effective. Given the problem of unequal participation rates, this research aims to address what causes some students from low SES backgrounds to participate in university education where their peers do not. The research approaches this from the perspective of students currently in university education from low decile school backgrounds.

The motivation behind this study was the hope that those students who do attend a low decile school and then go on to participate in university study would, through interviews, be able to highlight aspects of their lives that allowed them to access a tertiary education. Interviews were also carried out with careers advisors and a liaison person at the University of Canterbury to identify from an institutional perspective how the issue of education transitions and participation are approached. It was hoped that if common themes regarding participation were identifiable in the research interviews that this could contribute to the development of strategies to level the uneven participation rates that are continuing to be highlighted as a problem of the education system in New Zealand. In performing qualitative research that is aimed at students who are currently participating, this research provides a new approach to the old problem of participation occurring in an unequal fashion. Other research in New Zealand for example provides the perspective of those students who are engaging in compulsory education (Choat, 1998, Dale, 2000, Higgins, 2002, Hughes, 1994, Hughes, 1995, Hughes, 1996, Hughes, 1997, Hughes, 2000, Hughes and Pearce, 2003, Lauder, 1984, Lauder, 1990, Lauder, 1999, Nash, 1990, Nash, 1993, Nash et al., 1995, Nash, 1997, Nash, 1999, Nash, 2000), however, there is very little that addresses the issue from the perspective of those students who are actively engaging in tertiary study (Jefferies, 1998, Matthews, 2001, McLaughlin, 2002). This focus on secondary school students' future intentions rather than interviewing students participating in tertiary education is also evident in overseas research (Ball, 2000, Ball, 2003, Blackman, 1998, Boaler et al., 2000, Eder et al., 1995, Lareau, 2003, Reay, 2001, Reay et al., 2005).

In order to undertake such research, there is a need to acknowledge that divisions of groups amongst society based on the possession, or failure to possess particular attributes. Class divisions and socioeconomic status (SES) divisions are two examples of the ways in which society can determine these different groupings. The

terms are contested within the field of sociology given the many different variables that can be considered and the accuracy of those variables in relation to what is being studied. The use of Bourdieu as a theoretical basis in this work however requires an acknowledgment that class differences are one way to see the organisation of society. Bourdieu, as is discussed below, draws in many of the aspects of individuals that a more economic worth type scale such as SES cannot include. Bourdieu includes economic, cultural, social, and individual attributes (*habitus*) in his explanations of class and clearly views that there are a strata of classes that make up society. Scales of SES however rely less on individual attributes such as preferences for visiting art galleries, or particular authors, and more on economic possessions such as housing or levels of education. The use of SES and class definitions of groups within society both rely on the assumption that there are groups at the upper, more wealthy end of the spectrum, and groups at the lower, less wealthy end of the spectrum, with generally a middle group between them. Much statistical research utilises SES because of its focus on measurable things, although because of the broad number of variables that are able to be measured which may have an impact on positions within society, as with other measures it is open to criticism. Much of the research into participation into education is based on class considerations as can be seen through the literature reviewed in this thesis and the theoretical writings of Bourdieu (1990), and others such as Bernstein (1977).

The decile of schools, which is the basis upon which students were interviewed in this thesis also recognises a difference in incomes in families in New Zealand, and based on an income measure grades schools into the decile system based on ten different ranking levels. This grading focuses solely on family income, although as can be seen in the interviews that such measurement does not necessarily accurately represent individuals SES positions, or their social classes separate to the grading of the school. Bourdieu in his writings does not consider school decile, although it can be seen in this study that the New Zealand based research, particularly that of the Smithfield study does consider it in conjunction with more social class considerations. It is important therefore to use the terms of SES and class as tools in understanding a way of dividing society into certain groups that explains why some groups are considered above others. Or for the purposes of this thesis in particular, they are tools to help

explain that some groups fail to participate in university education in the same rates as other groups.

Theory of Bourdieu

One of the most common theoretical underpinnings of research on education in the field of sociology is that of Pierre Bourdieu. The basis of his theory is that society orders itself based on the possession of different levels and types of capital: cultural, social, and economic. These forms of capital interact with different fields to recreate the existing class structure. The theory is useful to this research given the fact that Bourdieu also acknowledges the existence of a further influencing factor, that of an individually possessed habitus which affects how individuals choose to operate within society. Habitus provides for the level of mobility that occurs between classes and the subsequent differing outcomes of individuals as Bourdieu otherwise argues that class positions are relatively fixed. Below is a further description of this theory which has been selected due to its widely accepted use in educational sociology and its particular applicability to the nature of the research topic in this current work. The work also of researchers in New Zealand such as Nash and many others have given the work of Bourdieu validity for the New Zealand context and in many ways kept the basis of the theory current.

Bourdieu argues that culture is reproduced over generations and it is this longevity that allows for the class system to be maintained as it becomes an accepted part of society. The class system is generated and maintained through a relationship between the classes so that the lower classes remain lower and the higher classes remain higher. The system as Bourdieu views it is a system where society functions in a manner that recreates the different class levels and organises itself in such a manner that there are limited opportunities for class mobility. One of the strongest arenas² for this recreation occurring is via the education system, where some argue that the reproduction of culture and social position is one of the primary functions of the schooling system (Harker, 1990), although education is also promoted as being a mechanism that allows for social mobility. In Bourdieu's model of class however

² Bourdieu refers to "fields" rather than arenas when discussing different locations of influence or interaction such as institutions such as schools, or church.

education providers are seen to offer an equalising force and this masks their actual role of social recreation aimed at continuing the advancement of the middle and upper classes.

Interacting with the various fields there are a number of different types of influences that contribute to the creation of class and class oriented beliefs. There are predominantly three influential types of capital that impact on individuals and their ability to undertake higher education and that is cultural capital, and social capital. While cultural capital refers to the broader interests of people regarding styles and taste, and can be measured by either having or not having a particular qualification, or the types of books that are read or owned, social capital depends on the worth that is attributed to different aspects and characteristics of the individual. Social capital counts for attributes such as the types of social networks a person or family has, or the topics of discussion that individuals may share in (Reay et al., 2005). Bourdieu refers to this as: “the theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes...” (Bourdieu, 198, p.243 cited in Reay, 2005). In contrast to social capital, cultural capital is able to be counted because while social capital requires subjective values to be placed on certain characteristics, cultural capital relates to such things as the types of films watched, the number of books that are owned, or the level of education attained. This type of capital while being able to be accrued and counted relies largely on how it is utilised in order for it to be effective in influencing an individuals’ social position. Economic capital, as can be suggested from its name, relates to an individuals’ financial worth made up of assets and can be either inherited wealth or new wealth generated by the individual. These three different types of culture work together to allow individuals to place themselves within certain groups within society although there is the potential for one type of culture to make up for shortcomings in other areas (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu highlights that it is the variation in amount of the various types of capital that provides for the differing types of social class describing it as: “reducing the social universe to a continuum of abstract strata (‘upper middle class’, ‘lower middle class’ etc.), obtained by aggregating different forms of capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.125). These different types of wealth then become affected by the other forms of capital which is how Bourdieu is able to speak of the ‘nouveau riche’ being of a different social position to those with inherited wealth

(Bourdieu, 1984). Although each type of capital is able to be possessed in varying amounts by each individual, Bourdieu stresses that the different types of capital influence the development of other types. Reay describes this as:

Bourdieu envisages a process in which one form of capital can be transformed into another. For example, economic capital can be converted into cultural capital by buying an elite education, while cultural capital can be readily translated into social capital (Reay, 2005, p. 21).

One such example of the way different capitals interact comes from Bourdieu's interviews with middle and upper class university students, several of whom speak of friends getting together and debating politics as a pastime while they are at university (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). To do this there is a need for the students to have gained an education that allowed them entrance to university, and also for them to have an understanding of politics to the extent of being able to discuss it. Thirdly there is also a need for the students to belong to a group of friends that share an interest and understanding of politics, and who have the time to meet and discuss it (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). Bourdieu describes this as a way for students to exercise their individuality and also as a kind of play (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). Central to this however is the realisation that those who failed to meet the criteria necessary to get into this group of students have already been eliminated from the opportunity to attempt to influence and share their cultural and social capital. The example highlights the different forms of capital that can be required to successfully participate in these student social activities and the way that the right mix of capital allows people to actively participate in higher education. By referring to the different types of capital as tokens Bourdieu seeks to explain the different effects of capital by saying:

Those with lots of red tokens and few yellow tokens, that is lots of economic capital and a little cultural capital will not play in the same way as those who have many yellow tokens and few red ones.... The more yellow tokens (cultural capital) they have, the more they will stake on the yellow squares (the educational system) (Bourdieu 1993, p.34 cited in Reay 2005, p.22).

In order for different social classes to interact and measure themselves against each other, share information, and other acts relating to class, there is a need for there to be places for people to meet which are referred to by Bourdieu as the field. Reay

describes them as “a particular social setting where class dynamics take place, for example a classroom or a workplace, but it can also refer to more abstract and broader concerns like the field of politics or the legal field (Reay et al., 2005, p.27) which highlights the ability to define them amongst the wider social space (Harker, 1990). The institutions, Bourdieu argues, also provide a level of influence themselves by reacting to and being treated in different ways by different groups and through the possession of institutional power such as the taken for granted authority of the schooling system. Importantly, fields are not simply fields of interaction, involved in the power relations of each field there is a struggle for capital by the groups involved (Harker, 1990). Harker describes it as a “multidimensional social space through which individuals (or whole social groups) could trace a certain trajectory or path” (Harker, 1990, p. 97). Schools offer a field for class interaction, and it can be seen within the school that there is a difference in power between the students and the teachers, and within the actions of the school there is a grouping process into classes of students. The pedagogy of the school can act to institutionalise the reproduction of class due to the nature of the sorting of students for example, but also through the expectations they place on particular groups of students. Also through the school the interaction of capital can occur which allows students with the appropriate types of social capital to translate this into greater cultural capital and vice versa, such an action necessitates however an influence from the family to have granted this culture to their children. For this reason that capital can be altered and enhanced through the school, Bourdieu describes the family and the school as the most powerful influence over capital (Harker, 1990).

Nash however indicates that it is not just the field that can affect the social division of class, nor is it the elite classes distancing themselves from the lower classes. Such comment indicates that there are class based interactions occurring at the school that relate to grouping of individuals that are not necessarily influenced by the field:

“[I]f people failed to overcome class barriers to interaction the cause was likely (if not more likely) due to reserve on the part of the working-class students who feared that they would not be accepted...” (Nash, 1999, p.30).

The use of Bourdieu’s discussions are international, however his analyses relate to schooling models in the French education system where he argues that in this system

schools deliver different capital depending on where the school sits in the national hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu argues that achievement of some classes over others becomes legitimated by identifying particular characteristics in some people such as skills. These he argues are promoted through the education system and so “...by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies, the educational system fulfils a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the ‘social order’...” (Bourdieu, 1973, p.84). This implicitly means that schools through different methods filter students in such a way that they discourage the students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from moving into certain higher education outcomes such as university study; while on the reverse of this the school encourages those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Because schools tend to reflect different socioeconomic groupings they then deliver different types of teaching (Bourdieu, 1990). This reflection on the impact of schooling was of particular interest to this current study, as is the discussion around the impact of family on the outcome of their children (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu describes this by stating:

The school can only contribute to the reproduction of the class (in the logical sense of the term) by sacrificing certain members of the class who would be spared by a mode of reproduction that left the family with full power over transfer. The *specific contradiction* of the scholastic mode of reproduction lies in the opposition between the interests of the class that the school serves *statistically* and the interests of the members of the class that it sacrifices, that is, not simply the so-called “failures,” but also those who hold titles that “normally” (in other words, in an earlier state of the relationship between titles and jobs) would give them the right a bourgeois occupation... (Bourdieu and Clough, 1996, p.287).

Although the school is seen as a powerful institution, it is important to note that a certain amount of filtering of students is begun even before school is attended. Students are able to be influenced by their parents about what to expect from school, and also whether they should have either negative or positive attitudes towards learning. During this early socialisation process Bourdieu argues that for those students who are negatively socialised towards education, there begins to develop a process of self-exclusion that leads students to opt out of education at an early age (Bourdieu, 1990). The impact of class reproduction clearly can be considerable when it is considered that over generations of influence, it can become an accepted part of

socialisation that some groups will achieve and have access to some things that lower class people do not. The extent to which the concept affects an individual can be great given it can affect an individual's view of their chances of achievement, and in relation to education affects the likelihood of going on to further study if for example other family members have not gained a higher education (Miller, 1977, Bourdieu, 1990). The level of conflict between the approach of the school and the experiences of students from lower classes is described by Nash as:

“The school actively excludes the majority of students who bring to the school non-acceptable modes of thought and practices which it “systematically denies, dilutes, downvalues, or distorts” (Willis, 1977, in Nash, 1999, pp.72-73).

...

“Those few working-class students who do succeed are, by implication at least, those who have lost their class derived capacity to reject the official meanings of the school and , at the risk of compromising that class solidarity so central to working-class culture, set themselves apart by their pursuit of a trajectory of individual mobility” (Nash, 1999, p 73).

It was expected in preparing this study that self-perception was likely to be discussed at length by the interviewees. As such different factors regarding self-perception were raised during the interviews particularly given the fact that these students from low decile schools appear to be challenging societal expectations regarding their educational outcomes. The development of a self-perception is not only influential on the individual, but can further be impacted on by ongoing interactions with institutions such as schools who identify some students as more academic than others through pedagogic selection processes such as assessments throughout school (Bourdieu, 1990). Reay, in her discussion of Bourdieu and the different forms of cultural capital highlights that self-perception is affected both by the attainment of formal qualifications from educational institutions, but also by the various capitals that are gifted to children by their parents that enable them to achieve (Reay et al., 2005). Throughout the different research reports there seems to be a theme of an interaction between the individual and institution regarding academic achievement whether it is through the sitting of exams, streaming of pupils into classes based on ability, or career advice. Ultimately however it seems that many studies (Ball, 2000, Bourdieu, 1990, Hawk and Hill, 1996, Jefferies, 1998, Nash, 1993) indicate that self-

perception is generated and maintained through particular experiences of schooling that leads to the self-exclusion from the education system, rather than overt exclusion.

Bourdieu, and subsequently other research that has utilised his theories highlight that although there are a number of factors that influence educational outcome and class mobility, it is a mixture of these factors that creates the outcomes of individuals. Bourdieu indicates that there is no one type of capital, or no particular type of habitus that alone will necessitate certain outcomes. It must be borne in mind that the theory does not provide a particular formula for education participation but that there is a mix of influences that interact. Bourdieu indicates that it is the capital that an individual possesses as well as their own 'habitus' that affects an individual's educational outcomes. The concept of 'habitus' was developed by Bourdieu as an explanation for the way that people operate that embodies their capital and allows them to behave in an individual but classed manner. He describes that it can be expressed through "...standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Reay et al., 2005, p.23), and that it is a "system of cognitive and motivating structures (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Each person has an individual habitus that is shaped by their upbringing and constantly altered by their life experiences. It is this that influences individual's actions. Habitus appears generally dealt with less in education based research than of cultural, social, and economic capital, perhaps because it is less measurable for a quantitative study than the other capital based attributes. It is perhaps also due to the greater ability to influence different areas of capital in a general way while habitus is unique to each individual thus making change in it more difficult. The number of different outcomes available through the influence of habitus is great however, and is explained by Bourdieu as:

To a given volume of inherited capital there corresponds a band of more or less equally probable trajectories leading to more or less equivalent positions (this is the *field of the possibles* objectively offered to a given agent), and the shift from one trajectory to another often depends on collective events – wars, crises etc. – or individual events – encounters, affairs, benefactors etc. – which are usually described as (fortunate or unfortunate) accidents, although they themselves depend statistically on the position and disposition of those whom they befall... when, that is, they are not deliberately contrived by institutions (clubs, family reunions, old-boys' or alumni associations etc.) or by the 'spontaneous' intervention of individuals or groups. It follows from this that positions and individual trajectory are not statistically independent; all

positions of arrival are not equally probable for all starting points (Bourdieu and Clough, 1996, p.110).

The fact that students from lower class backgrounds are generally less likely to attend university, but that some go against this trend is illustrated by the students in this current study. Although the students often shared similar social, cultural and economic capital to their peers, their individual habitus' may have allowed for the different educational intentions to those of their peers. One of the difficulties with Bourdieu's concept of habitus however is that despite it providing an explanation for why different people within classes are different in their outcomes and opinions, it is unlike cultural and social capital in that it is difficult to measure as it involves measuring very individual characteristics (Reay et al., 2005). Habitus, despite its problems seems to have the ability to provide an answer to why people are different in their outcomes although similar in capital.

These factors of habitus, social, cultural, and economic capital are all influential in discussions around participation in education. It should be noted however that possession of some capital may provide for the development of other types. Economic capital for example has the power to be influential due to the power this can give families to choose where their children will attend school. Private education for instance is often priced in such a way that it would exclude lower SES families due to their lack of economic capital. The exclusion of families based on price of education also masks the act of the school to exclude those it considers to fail to have the appropriate habitus by making certain forms of education inconceivable as an option despite actual academic ability (Reay et al., 2005). It can be seen that Bourdieu's consideration of the ability for people to participate in education based on both to the individual possessions such as habitus and capital as well as external influencing factors such as field and the class system. Because of this it is little surprise that many of the researchers in the area of education are influenced in their research by Bourdieu's theory (for example Nash in his work *Succeeding Generations* (Nash, 1993).

Literature review

Within the literature around participation in education, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1973, Bourdieu, 1990, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979) has provided the theory that participation depends on individual and societal influences that determine who is encouraged and able to participate in higher education. Those students who despite constraints aspire to achieve academically are represented in this study and are well described by Roy Nash in the following quotation.

“The blunt fact is that bright working-class boys and girls do not want to become mechanics and typists. On the contrary, they want to be doctors and lawyers – just like bright middle-class boys and girls” (Nash, 1993, p.166).

The above quotation highlights the contrast between aspirations and outcomes for young people from lower SES backgrounds. It also highlights that there is an ongoing reality that despite their desires to participate, these young people are not doing so in the same rates as their higher class peers. This is seen in the New Zealand statistic that young people from upper SES backgrounds are more than five times more likely to go to university than students from lower SES positions (Fergusson and Woodward, 2000). Some of the most relevant research to the research being undertaken in this thesis emanates from the UK and also from Australia. The reason for this is due largely to the similarities of the education system in all three countries. It is useful to note too that Australia and New Zealand both grew from English colonial settlement and so it could be argued, adopted much of the class consciousness present in England. Over time however it would seem many education systems are having similar experiences and the educational systems themselves are becoming more internationally homogenous. Within research coming from England, the writings of Stephen Ball (Ball, 2000, Ball, 2003), and Diane Reay (Reay, 2001, Reay et al., 2005) proved particularly useful in relation to their discussions over why some students participate in higher education where others do not. The preoccupation with the impact that secondary education has on higher education participation however is not solely considered by these two authors, Thrupp (Thrupp, 1997) also considers the impact of school choice, as does Boaler in her consideration of the effects of ability grouping in schools (Boaler et al., 2000). Ball (Ball, 2000) addressed the issue of class impacts on the decisions that are made about education and of note was the way that he utilised secondary school students to address the topic of participation in education. He interviewed students about their career aspirations

while they were at school and found that some groups held common ideas and beliefs about access to education and its worth. These common themes then contrast to the students own individual beliefs about their own ability in relation to accessing a higher education. This was useful for the current study in regard to some themes however it should be noted that a limitation of Ball's approach in relation to this current study is that some students may fail to achieve their intended goals and therefore their intended outcomes of higher education may not actually be realised.

Ball, in another study related to the one discussed above considers class and education options available to people (Ball, 2003), the work is interesting as it focuses on the middle classes and so highlights the different education options that can be available but also the need to possess the right amount of social, cultural and economic capital to access them. This was a useful contrast to this current study where the students generally did not exercise a choice in the education market and attended their local low decile school as the families in Ball's study were able to exercise some choice. Although the research output is limited in the field of participation in non-compulsory education, the works that Reay and Ball have been involved in have tended to be very large research projects taking a number of years and utilising a number of researchers simultaneously which provides a solid base upon which further research can be undertaken.

Reay, in the co-authored book *Degrees of Choice* (Reay et al., 2005) provides a particularly useful consideration of the topic of choice in tertiary education. In dividing the book into discussions around institutional, family and class, and cultural considerations, it echoes the trends that were raised in this current research. The inclusion of culture as a factor in why some groups participate in greater numbers than others has also been echoed in New Zealand research in regard to the participation rates of Maori versus non-Maori students (Jefferies, 1998). In some American studies Hispanic and African American students are found to be underrepresented in tertiary education (Brantlinger, 1993, Eder et al., 1995), and also in Australia (Knight and McGaw, 1977), which highlights a theme of indigenous people being underrepresented, although also indicates that immigrants may be at risk also. It seems clear that there are certain groups that are more likely to not participate in university education and which factor the most influential in this situation remains

unknown; rather it would seem that there are mixture of factors representing class and the other demographic factors that may collectively contribute to decisions away from further education.

Within New Zealand there have been two large studies that have contributed to the field of research considerably. Both these studies, as with the other international studies, have relied on interviews with school age students. This is different to the approach in this current study of interviewing university students. In this way rather than addressing intentions to study, students who had actually gone on to study were accessed and were able to talk about their experience of gaining access to tertiary study. Interviewing students while they were at school allows very similar questions to be asked to those that were asked in this current study however rather than looking back on the impact of school, the students in the New Zealand and the international research are discussing the impact of school and family while they are still in the process of making decisions about further study. One of the largest pieces of research into education of this nature is known as the Smithfield research. The research was commissioned by the Ministry of Education with the intention of looking at education in relation to the SES backgrounds of students, although this is at a secondary rather than tertiary level (Hughes, 1994, Hughes, 1995, Hughes, 1996, Hughes, 1997, Hughes, 2000). Although a very large study, the Smithfield study focussed predominantly on school selection and the factors that led to students being enrolled in some schools, or the attempt made to enrol in some very popular schools. The research is orientated within concerns about the effect marketisation and zoning of schools had on students and families regarding education. Also considered in the work is the effect of ethnicity on school selection as it was found that as well as SES related changes, ethnicity also became a factor in school choice. Although these findings are of great importance to the field of education, school selection is not directly addressed in this thesis beyond the fact that the work looks at those students who have gone to a low decile school, and have then gone on to university. As an overview of the situation in New Zealand education however the Smithfield study provides some useful insights, particularly in the realisation that even within socioeconomic groups if a family is able to shift their children into a school that is seen as being better for them then they will take it (Hughes, 1994).

As in the United Kingdom, it would seem that researchers in New Zealand working in the area of education seem to work together, included in the work on the Smithfield study were Hugh Lauder, Sietske Waslander, Martin Thrupp, Jim McGlenn, Sue Newton, and Ann Dupuis. In addition to the large Smithfield study, another large piece of research was undertaken by Roy Nash. Nash, who is discussed below addressed the issue of transitions from compulsory education. This topic of research seems to have only be furthered to any extent by the work of Jane Higgins, who rather than focussing on schooling or class, has provided work into the impact of transitions policies for school leavers (Higgins, 2002)³. Nevertheless the work being done on the effects of schooling in any form must be a positive move towards identifying potential areas for improvement and as such the body of work provides a platform of knowledge from which further study can be developed. One of the interesting points to note about the work of Nash (reporting on in his book *Succeeding Generations* (Nash, 1993) is his use of a survey. Unlike Ball and Reay in the English studies, Nash was part of a project that surveyed 1400 families of school aged children. In depth interviews were then conducted with a number of the families involved in the initial survey.

In the research Nash indicates that he utilised the family as the unit of focus for the study because he felt that they are the most influential group on educational outcomes (Nash, 1993). This current research also acknowledges the importance of family in decision making however it does not go as far as arguing that the most influential factor on children is education as the interviews were not able to confirm this. Nash however does, and succinctly describes the interrelations of family as influencing class position by saying:

“Families may be regarded as one of the fundamental units of society and as entities with a distinct location in the class structure. From their class position families derive certain material and symbolic resources (financial, cultural/intellectual, and social) which their members use with strategic effect in the interests of maintaining, or improving, their social and economic standing in the present – and in succeeding – generations” (Nash, 1993, p.).

³ Higgins’ work is currently ongoing and at the date of this thesis the research project being undertaken had not been published.

His work draws heavily on the theory of Bourdieu and clearly shows a delineation between the role of families and the role of schools. Nash shows in the New Zealand context that the pedagogic approach of schools is aimed at the middle and upper classes and that the lower classes struggle to effectively participate in schooling. This favouring of particular classes then serves to influence students in their decisions regarding post-compulsory education although he argues strongly that the school does not overtly acknowledge that it performs this societal function, rather the school is promoted as an equalising force. These arguments directly echo those of Bourdieu and in this Nash provides a useful New Zealand reference for the theory. Nash published more than once on the *Progress at School* project. The earlier published *Inequality/Difference* (Nash, 1997), and *School Learning* (Nash, 1999) also provide a good analysis of the situation in New Zealand faced by students regarding their access to education and experience of participating in it while the publication “*We have to know it...*” (Nash et al., 1995) provides a discussion around students and their interaction with school. *School Learning* in particular complemented the survey findings by presenting indepth interviews with eight of the students involved with the study and also providing a discussion around what the students said. In many ways this approach allowed comparison with the interviews that Ball (Ball, 2000, Ball, 2003) undertook in England and provides a local qualitative illustration of what was shown in the broader research findings.

While the Smithfield study and the Progress at School Project have clearly made considerable contributions to the field of participation in education in New Zealand, there have also been other studies which are of particular use to this current research. David Hughes and Di Pearce co authored a paper in the New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies that questions some published participation rates. This publication provided a reminder that statistics can be misleading but also that there are problems with the way statistics are gathered in New Zealand (Hughes and Pearce, 2003). This current study also highlighted to me the potential for statistics to be potentially misleading by cloaking the levels of attendance of students who are actually from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and are attending tertiary education having been educated at lower decile schools. The statistics considered in the work by Hughes and Pearce were sourced from work done by the Taskforce for Improving Participation in Tertiary Education, and were critiqued by the authors (Ministry of

Education, 1999). The Taskforce nevertheless did achieve the bringing together of participation statistics in a useful way given that statistics gathered by the Ministry of Education seem rarely to be analysed further than their production in annual reports.

In recent years the 1999 study by Boyd, Chalmers, and Kumekawa (2001) provides a useful survey based example of the differences between students from lower, middle, and upper decile schools. The study confirms that there is a difference in the attendance rates at university by students from lower decile schools and their higher decile counterparts. They also very usefully raise discussion on the issue of the careers advice for students and the facts that influence them in their decisions regarding their post compulsory outcomes. This was done by interviewing school students in 1999 and then again in 2000 to track where they had gone after giving their initial intentions while they were still at school. This type of research is useful due to the way that it is presented and shows that there are a number of changes and decisions made by students during their transition out of school.

To better understand the situation in New Zealand it was also useful to gain an understanding of the policy climate and the history of education reform, these are some of the most relevant chapters published on this topic (Dale, 2000, Boston and Dalziel, 1992, Boston et al., 1999, McLaughlin, 2002, Olssen, 1997, Vaughan, 2003) while government policy reports also provided some considerable amounts of information (Ministry of Education, 2002, Ministry of Education, 2004, Ministry of Education, 2005b, Ministry of Education, 2005a, Tertiary Education Review, 1997, Tertiary Education Review, 1998). While it would seem that government reports are relatively readily available in New Zealand, there is little academic commentary published about them. It is hoped that the impact of the new tertiary governance system through the Tertiary Education Commission and the secondary accreditation system of NCEA will attract more academic attention than has to date been the case.

It can be seen from this review of the current state of research in the area of tertiary education that little has been done on the topic of students from low decile backgrounds who actually participate in university study. As the lack of participation by some groups of society is often identified as a failure of an education system, or the policies that govern it (Ministry of Education, 2002), it seems appropriate that

research is undertaken on the students from this underrepresented group who do achieve in participating in a university education. It was hoped that such research can identify what has led them to go on to study when so many of their peer group do not. The lack of research being undertaken on this topic of tertiary participation in general is somewhat dismaying given the importance that education plays in society. It should however be acknowledged that what research is being undertaken has the potential to provide indications for areas where improvement can be made to the education system in attempts to overcome what are deeply ingrained social conditions for different groups within the population that can lead to educational inequalities. These particular topics such as the importance of schooling and the influence of family helped to inform the design of this current research by highlighting that there may be experiences of the students relating to their schooling as well as their family and individual habitus that motivated them to attend university. Although the theory of Bourdieu provides a central reference point for different research projects, and any research is valuable, there is an ongoing failure to identify any strategies to change the rates of participation locally and internationally. This should be of some ongoing concern to policy makers and individuals participating in education.

Conclusion

This thesis hopes to offer a further insight into the issue of participation in university education, and although based on a case study in the Christchurch location takes a new approach of interviewing those students already participating in university that has not often been utilised nationally or internationally. In many ways these are the students who have made it where their peers did not, and it is hoped that within the chapters there are themes identified which will help highlight why these students have been able to achieve. Although class seems close to considerations of participation in education, this study uses the proxy of school in place of class to access students. This does not however reject the applicability of Bourdieu's theory, or any other research which considers other criteria for lower participation rates such as ethnicity or gender in lieu of, or as well as class based criteria. This chapter sought to provide an introduction to the theory and relevant research utilised in this thesis however a

fuller understanding of the relevance and concepts and findings will be realised within the different chapters.

This thesis is written in chapters as outlined in the table of contents. Following this introduction chapter the second chapter contains information regarding the development of a methodology and a theoretical basis on which the research could sit, the chapters on policy, schools and career teachers, family, and peer influence all address the themes that arose within the research. The chapter on policy provides an overview of the development of policy in the New Zealand tertiary system over time and also discusses some of the policy issues that were raised by the students in their interviews. Of note in this chapter is the students' opinions regarding the student loan scheme which they exhibited understood well and had a number of opinions regarding how it could be improved. The policy chapter shows the framework that is developed by government, and the way institutions respond to this regarding the delivery of education. It is important to acknowledge that the interaction of educational institutions and government can have a considerable effect on attracting students into different types of study which is also further considered in the chapter.

Incorporated into the chapter on schools and career teachers is the presentation of enrolment statistics that serve to highlight the rates of participation by students from low decile schools in comparison to other students. These statistics are about the University of Canterbury and so serve to illustrate the particular situation on this campus. Schools and career teachers within the schools provide a field for influence to occur in, and given the imbalance in power between teachers and students, it seemed appropriate that their influence over students in their decision to undertake further education be considered. The interviews with the career teachers, when compared with the interviews with the students provide a considerably different finding about the perceived effectiveness of the advice given by career staff.

Family, as with school environment is considered in other research as being the main location from which intentions to attend university are generated and sustained. The interviews with the students discussed the support of their family, their involvement in their secondary schooling and also whether they considered anyone in particular as having influenced their decision to attend university. The importance of family was

raised in this chapter and the influence they have is discussed. Given that family has such an ongoing presence in a young person's life it was important to consider it in this research and also because Bourdieu argues that it plays such an integral part of a young person's development and position in society (Bourdieu, 1973, Bourdieu and Clough, 1996, Bourdieu, 1990). Of note also in this chapter is the consideration of the tripartite interaction between the school, student and the family. This provides stronger influence by having family and school giving the same message about achieving academically (Reay et al., 2005). Family was talked about in a number of different ways by the students, and although each family situation is unique it seemed that some experiences were shared by a number of the interviewees.

Less commonly included in research on participation in education is the impact that the students' peer groups have. This research seemed to indicate that peer group interaction can influence academic aspirations and intentions although as with all the findings of this research the number of students interviewed was not great enough to consider the findings as being true of the wider student population. The chapter considered peer groups and draws on research into the impact of peer groups such as the Auckland AMIHI study where students in decile one school actively pressured their peers into failing to achieve (Hawk and Hill, 1996).

The last chapter in this thesis provides the conclusion for the work and considers the implications for the findings overall. Recommendations for future research are also included within this chapter given that although this thesis provides another piece of research in the field of non-compulsory education, the research is by far from exhausted, and the problems associated with inequalities in participation are far from solved.

Chapter 2

Methods

Introduction

This thesis predominantly draws on interviews conducted with students and teachers on the topic of selecting university as an option for post-school study. Prior to interviewing however, it was necessary to plan what would be studied, and once the information was gathered, how it would be used. In order to address these areas, decisions regarding the methods for this thesis were made, and these are outlined in this chapter. This chapter provides a description of the different methodological issues that arose in relation to the development of this thesis, and also describes the methods that were used in the project. By describing the underlying methods of the research it is hoped that a greater understanding can be gained from the research findings and also the rationale for why the research developed in the way that it did. In providing this discussion it is realised that had different methods been used, different information may have been found. The core purpose of this research was to try to highlight certain themes that students from low decile schools presented in relation to their decision to attend university, and it was important to focus on these types of questions rather than attempting to replicate areas of interest from other studies. There is a need for many different research projects to be developed out of the existing research, however for the research to be most useful this thesis focuses on just one of the areas.

Selection of topic

Although I had had an interest in tertiary education issues throughout my time at university, and was well aware that I wanted my thesis to be on the topic of participation in tertiary education, even this slightly narrower topic area was too broad

as a research topic. I had realised prior to beginning the thesis that a number of decisions about the topic would need to be made prior to the methods being decided, advice which I had gained from reading Blakie's book *Designing social research : the logic of anticipation* (2000). I had identified that I wanted to study a topic that addressed the inequalities in the participation of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in university education. This topic was of interest to me because these students have consistently been underrepresented in enrolment statistics, and despite research having been done to suggest ways to improve the situation there appears to have been little change in the participation rates. It is worthwhile to note that in the polytechnic and wananga areas of tertiary education in New Zealand, the groups that are under-represented are those students from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

School decile in New Zealand is calculated based on a ten point ranking scale and is calculated by the Ministry of Education. It also forms the basis of school funding as schools of different decile attract different levels of funding outside of the funding they receive for the numbers of pupils they have on the school rolls for example. The scale is based on a sample of incomes from families within a specific geographic area near to the school. The lower the average family income the lower the decile grading given to the school. Thus the lowest income groupings in New Zealand are reflected by a decile one rating in the school, and the highest income groupings being that of a decile ten. Because there is a correlation between the decile and family incomes, the use of school deciles is a useful way to identify particular areas of the population that are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There are difficulties with interviewing students based specifically on SES that are discussed below, and it was for these reasons that attendance schools of low decile were selected as a criteria to be eligible for the research. Statistics gathered by the University of Canterbury are based on school decile of students, as are national statistics gathered by government. As such some of the more longitudinal statistics such as those gathered by universities for enrolment information are based on the premise that the decile of a school relates to the classes of the students that attend them. Decile of schools is thus a very important consideration for this research as it gives a starting point from which the rest of the research could be developed. It is also important to note that the University of Canterbury, in running the Equal Educational Opportunities programme addresses the school as the unit of focus. Within their work

they expect that by targeting the students at these schools that they are accessing the students who are more at risk of not attending higher education. As is acknowledged in the conclusions of the work, the decile of the school does not necessarily guarantee that students from lower SES backgrounds will be the ones to go from the lower decile schools onto university education. This perhaps confirms the arguments of Bourdieu, Bernstein and others that the actions of the school act as a filter for success despite the outward societal expectation that the school will encourage greater participation.

The selection of a topic relating to educational inequality from the position of class based arguments regarding higher education generated a framework within which the thesis would be written as it meant certain methods and theories were more appropriate than others. To fully situate the research within the field of educational sociology, other work already reported on the topic was reviewed, and it appeared through this review that the theoretical considerations of the current study should take into account either the influence of Human Capital theory, or Bourdieu's theory regarding social and cultural capital, given the strong use of these in other research. Because Bourdieu argues that people are affected in their educational outcomes and decisions due to the capital they possess which is influenced by their life experiences and resources, this seemed appropriate theory in this research. Bourdieu's theory is also appropriate given the ongoing use of his writings through different research programmes such as those by Ball, Nash and Reay (Ball, 2000; Ball, 2003; Nash, 1997; Nash, 1993; Reay, 2001). Bernstein further argues that education is a strong factor in the continuation of inequalities over time between groups within society. In much the same way as Bourdieu he suggests that the school utilises a specific pedagogic and testing approach that allows for the success of particular types of students over others who fail to possess the ability to adapt to the approach of the school (Bernstein, 1977). These theorists that argue that the school is a strong influence in the ability for students to succeed are clearly highlighting that although the school is promoted as a class equaliser, it in fact behaves in a way quite contrary to this.

Once the decision to research students from low decile schools was made, it was realised that the number of students who undertake tertiary study from backgrounds of

lower socio-economic status is low, and so it was important to access students in a way which would provide the highest potential number of applicants. By using the decile of the school as a substitute for SES, this overcame the difficulty that may have arisen with students not possessing a definable SES of their own, being unaware of the SES of their family, or the potential that they may not wish to identify themselves that way⁴. In addition to the interviews with students the interviews with teachers at the four low decile schools worked to give an insight into the situation that the school faces in regard to socio-economic related issues, and to provide a comparison to what the students said about their schooling, and experiences of it. The issue of class is however still addressed by using the students and staff from low decile schools due to the fact that decile ratings are calculated on a geographic sample of the incomes of families enrolled at the school (Ministry of Education, 2003), and so it can be assumed students at low decile schools are more likely to be from lower socioeconomic households. It is seen in the research however that the assumption that all students from lower SES households attend the low deciles schools and are then reflected in decile participation rates in university statistics is not necessarily borne out. The interviews showed that a number of the students who were interviewed were from higher SES backgrounds, and presented a higher class position than that of their school peers.

By using decile rating as a filter for participants, one of the risks was that students would be identified whose backgrounds were of a higher SES than the decile rank of their school would represent. This was also an advantage however as they would have had the same experiences of low decile schooling as students from low SES backgrounds although potentially with different individual experiences. One of the disadvantages of including people in such a study however, was the possibility that a large number of students from higher SES backgrounds may be overrepresented in the numbers of students going to university from schools with a low decile. Out of this research there arises the possibility that students from lower decile schools who attend university tend to be from high SES families. Although further research would need to be done to confirm it, the exclusion of these students from the study may have eliminated this possibly new theme from being discovered.

⁴ There is further to this the question of at what age a child develops their own SES rating rather than using that of their parents.

Because the research output into participation is relatively sparse, there was relatively little work with which the current research could be compared to. In this the use of Bourdieu's theory was able to create a link between the various pieces of research given that many of them devote considerable discussion to his writings nationally and internationally. An illustration of the limitations is the inability to rely on existing research and data to discover motivations and experiences of university as data is not gathered in New Zealand in any usable or ongoing way. What data is useable, in the form of enrolment statistics was sourced from the Ministry of Education and the University of Canterbury and are discussed in the chapter on schools and career teachers⁵. Selecting this topic also limited the available data gathering methods that would be practical for use given what information was wanted and the other influencing factors such as time and resources. It can be seen therefore that by narrowing down the potential research topics to one final topic also serves to limit some of the available methodological options (Blaikie, 2000). This is however to be expected, and in using the approach that was decided upon a platform for the work to proceed was created.

Selection of location

Given that I was enrolled at the University of Canterbury for my thesis, and that travel options were limited, it was decided that the University of Canterbury would be chosen as the location for the study. Although any student who attended a decile 1-4 school was eligible to participate the students who applied to be interviewed all represented schools located in the Canterbury, Marlborough and West Coast region of New Zealand. The use of low decile schools in Christchurch as the site for the interviews with the school staff meant that decile one schools are not included in the study as there are no decile one secondary schools in Christchurch. Although interviews could have been arranged in Wellington or Auckland where there are decile one schools, resources were not available for this to happen and the constraints meant it was feasible only to study a single location. Canterbury University runs a programme targeted at encouraging students from low decile schools to attend

⁵ Although the enrolment information is public knowledge, gaining access via the Ministry of Education provided faster access than going through the institution.

university⁶. Such a programme does not seem to run at other universities, and this factor has provided a base for the research to grow from. Enrolment figures from the University indicate that students tended to enrol at the University of Canterbury from areas proximate to Canterbury. This made the link to interviewing schools in Christchurch a useful one as the experiences of school staff provided a contrast to the views of the students. The schools participating in the Eedo programme are all urban schools and there is the potential that schools in rural settings may well have different challenges and experiences: for example the distance that students have to travel in order to attend university is a greater challenge for those having to leave home in order to attend university than those who can travel on a daily basis from home to university. Other than the potential for difference in experience of rural and urban schools there is also the potential that the methods chosen may produce results different to other types of data gathering.

The students in this study appear often to represent students with higher socio-economic backgrounds than were expected in a study of students from schools with a decile of 4 and below. This finding is of interest to the study due to an expectation prior to starting the data gathering was that themes would arise in the research that may not have been found in other methodological approaches. Related perhaps to this is the issue of the SES background of the students attending university from low decile schools being higher than was expected particularly due to the implications this may have on the actual participation rates for students with low SES. While other studies have not had low SES students as the main focus of the study, using a comparative approach, or have selected schools that are of a lower decile than the ones in this study, this study used school attended as one of the criteria for sample selection.

Approach to gathering the data

⁶ The Eedo programme is facilitated and funded by the University of Canterbury with the purpose of encouraging students to attend university. In doing this it liaises with four low decile secondary schools in Christchurch by visiting the schools with both staff and ex-students to talk to the students about university, and organising visits to the university for the students.

Once the topic and research location were defined, the method selected for gathering the data was an important consideration given that different data gathering approaches had the potential to yield different types of information (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). In particular, the type of method needed to be compatible with the type of information that I wanted to utilise in my research. Because I had identified that I wanted to learn what the motivations were, and what had encouraged students from a low decile school to attend university, there was a need to access students while they were at university.

Other research into the field of education uses a mixture of observation and interview, and it was interviews that were selected for this research work. Semi-structured interviews offered the ability to talk to a number of people involved in both the schools and the students at university in a way that covered areas of questioning I felt may have provided information about the decision to attend university, however it also left enough freedom in the interview for people to discuss areas that were not planned in the interview schedule. This semi-structured interview style is also common to other work in the participatory education field (Blaikie, 2000) and so allows this current work to be compared to these other works with more ease than different research approaches may otherwise create. As many of the students may have formed their intentions to attend university at a very early age it was important also that they be allowed to think of different memories which may have triggered a desire for their education. One of the potential dangers in choosing this research approach however is the potential for the people being interviewed to have interpreted past actions in different ways, or for them to be selective in their memories (Tagg, 1985). Kotre, in his book *White Gloves* (1995) discusses at length the way that memory gets filtered, and the way memories become categorised and interpreted differently over time. Because most of the students were talking about relatively recent experiences, remembering the order of events may not have changed very much, however, the interpretation they have placed on experiences and how they remember them may have (Kotre, 1995). With all research approaches there are pros and cons, and being aware of this potential hazard meant that it was a consideration constantly kept in mind during the interpretation of the interview transcripts.

In using interviews there are limitations created by the mechanics of the situation itself, not the least of which is the fact that it is usually a conversation conducted between strangers (Bechhofer, 2000) in a way that is very unlikely to happen naturally. Because the people involved in the interviews are usually strangers, there is an assumption between the parties that the interviewer has more power over the direction of the conversation, and given that the meeting often only happens once there is a need to attain as much information as possible even though some of the information might be quite personal in nature (Bechhofer, 2000). In this research the interviews did only occur once with each of the participants, and some people did discuss quite private issues during the interview. It is perhaps the anonymity of the situation that allows such personal experiences to be discussed between strangers and the semi-structured nature of the interview design also allowed for areas that were unplanned to be discussed which may have helped the interview to more closely resemble a conversation. Bechhofer and Patterson warn however that interviews, regardless of how attractive it is to consider them as conversation are conducted in a specific way where there is a motivation behind the questions and an intention to cover particular areas of information which affects the conduct of the interview participants (Bechhofer, 2000).

The interview questions were developed once a review of the literature had been undertaken as it was this existing research that aided in the development of an understanding of the types of influences and experiences that the students may have had. The semi-structured interview style was intended to loosely fit a chronological pattern of each individual's experiences of school, home life, and then their university life. This pattern proved useful when starting the interviews as people seemed to be willing to talk at ease about careers councillors, and other school related questions as well. Using a life story approach is another method by which the information could have been gathered allowing people to talk freely about their educational experiences. This approach was used by Ball for example in his book *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the Global City* (Ball, 2000). Given the closeness of communities however, and the small number of students taking part in this research it was considered too much of a risk that students could be identified by the life story they presented. By using the approach of encouraging people to talk about their lives at school and university, in a relatively chronological

manner it was hoped they would provide longer and more complete answers than they may have in a more formal interview approach (Nespor, 1990, Cotterill, 1993).

In order to make people as comfortable as possible with the content of the interviews nearly all of the students who participated in the interviews had a chance to review the interview schedule prior to the interview taking place. Some of the participants prior to the interview expressly noted that this had been useful to them. It is hoped this led to fuller, more coherent responses than may have otherwise been given as it gave them time to contemplate the topics in relation to their own experiences of them. One of the possible problems with this approach however was that by losing some level of spontaneity in the responses students may have edited their own version of their experiences of deciding to enrol at university to provide answers they think are more appropriate than the ones they would otherwise have provided. In the interview there was also the formal provision of an information sheet and permission form that was provided as per the requirements of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee in addition to the interview schedule that was emailed to them prior to the interview taking place.

To advertise the opportunity to participate in the research access was gained to a university email list of all the students currently enrolled at the university who listed their last school attended as being one of the four schools in the Eedo programme⁷. This did not, however, preclude other eligible students from participating given that posters were also placed around the university advertising the study, and students were encouraged to advertise the study to anyone they knew who may be eligible. The email that was sent was written in such a way as to reflect the information letters that were approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics committee and indicated that participating students would receive an Instant Kiwi ticket by way of thanks. At the outset I did not predict that access to participants would have been difficult. The response rate to the email initially provided about 60 people responding, a number of these were however unable, or unwilling to commit to an interview, and others became unable to be contacted within a short space of time of

⁷ The list I would guess to be made up of 340 people. This is based on the enrolment figures for the 4 schools in the study at the University of Canterbury in 2004. The email was sent in 2005; however trends show that enrolment rates tend to remain stable. Assuming the enrolments were again stable in 2005, it can be expected there would have been approximately this number of students on the email list.

responding to the email. Overall, email was an effective way to contact the students to advertise for research participants although it would seem that once the email was sent there was a need for the interviews to be conducted within a very short space of time after the initial contact, in order for the interview to be successful and it perhaps would have been advantageous to have gained a contact phone number from the students in the first email contact. The use of surveys by internet and mail is considered in *Mail and Internet Surveys: The tailored design method* (Dillman, 2000) in a methodological acknowledgment that the internet offers new opportunities as well as challenges in social research.

Because as many people as possible were contacted about the study it was decided that no more than 15 people would be interviewed for the research so that an in-depth analysis would be possible. The range of participants was intended to be as wide as possible, while still remaining feasible in the time allowed for the study to be done. Gender, ethnicity and age were the demographic factors taken into consideration when selecting people for the interviews to ensure a range of backgrounds. These factors are linked to participation in education and as such it seemed appropriate to explore a range of the experiences. Another reason for these factors to be considered in this research is national statistics that note that women are more likely than men to participate in tertiary study, and also that Maori and Pacific Island people are the most likely ethnic groups not to participate in tertiary, particularly university study (McLaughlin, 2002). Of note, there were no Pacific Island students interviewed in this study, however, there was a mix of New Zealand European, Maori and international students as well as an equal gender split and a range in the ages and level of study of the students. The level of study for the students ranged from first year through to postgraduate while at least one of the students had returned to university to do some additional papers after the completion of their degree.

Prior to any of the interviews occurring with the students permission was granted by three of the four schools involved in the Eedo programme to interview the careers teachers at the school. Interviews were subsequently undertaken with the teachers using a different set of interview questions which were emailed to them with the information sheet prior to the interview taking place. For all three interviews I travelled to the school and the interviews took place in the teachers' offices. The

interviews with all the participants in this research were recorded onto tape for later transcription.

A fourth non-student interview was also undertaken, and that was with the coordinator for the Eedo programme at the University of Canterbury. This interview, as with the interviews with the staff at the schools, took place in her office. The interview with the Eedo coordinator was perhaps the least structured of all of the interviews as I wished to gain an understanding of both the work they undertook on the Eedo programme and also their own views of the situation faced by the students. This was the first interview to be undertaken and in many ways was used as a scoping interview to attempt to find any areas for the future interviews that may have been overlooked.

Sorting and processing of the data

Once each interview was conducted, the tape recording was replayed by me as soon as possible, and any notes were made regarding areas that might be useful to discuss with other students. The transcripts were written up while the interviews were still being conducted and were written in a way to record everything that was said. They are not however verbatim in that some of the “ums”, and “ahs” that are included in everyday speech were not noted. Where there was a pause or an incomplete sentence this is reflected by ellipses, however the length of the pause was not recorded. The basis for this type of recording of the interviews into written language was in order to encapsulate the meaning of what the individuals were saying as much as possible without cluttering the written interviews with additional grammatical necessities (Kvale, 1996). The quotation from Kvale below provides a description of the difficulties in recording the spoken word into that of the written. It is acknowledged that some research interview transcriptions include the length of pauses and record all of the sounds made during the interview, however the analysis being done in this research did not require this.

The transcriptions are detemporalized; a living, ongoing conversation is frozen into a written text. The words of the conversation, fleeting as the steps of an improvised dance, are fixated into static written words, open to repeated

public inspections. The words of the transcripts take on a solidity that was not intended in the immediate conversational context. The flow of the conversation, with its open horizon of directions and meaning to be followed up, is replaced by the fixated, stable written text (Kvale, 1996, p.167)

The interviews were, where possible, returned as transcripts back to the participant for reviewing and comment (Anderson and Poole, 2001) although no one who received their interview wished to add or omit anything from the transcript. As the interviews occurred over the space of two years, some of the students who provided email addresses no longer appeared to be enrolled at the University as the transcripts were returned to their student emails and these were returned as having a wrong address, or could not be found in the email system. This difficulty perhaps reflects a modern dilemma of research in that communication by email relies on the addresses remaining current for a length of time, and this can be uncertain in the situation of students who it would seem may also use more than one email address on a regular basis, or may discontinue their studies with no forwarding email address being available.

The transcripts were read a number of times through in order to gain a feel for them and then finally divided into different parts representing different themes that came through in the interview. These included themes such as family involvement in school, working while studying and the impact of career teachers on the decision to attend university and provided the basis for the chapters and the topics discussed that are seen in this thesis; however, in addition to the interviews statistics were gathered for the University of Canterbury and were used to assess the situation at the university and ascertain that there is actually unequal rate of participation by students from low decile schools.

The statistics, although not initially anticipated in the research planning, supported an assumption made at the beginning of this research, that students from lower decile schools are under-represented in the enrolment figures at the University of Canterbury. The statistics were provided by the University and also the Ministry of Education and were delivered in the form of excel spreadsheets. Data was then sorted into categories that were useful for this thesis and are presented in table format in the chapter on schools and careers teachers. Although it was time consuming to gain the

statistics from the university both these results and the results from the Ministry of Education are public information and as such should be available to anyone wishing to access them.

Presentation of the data

The data as it is presented in the thesis is an attempt to illustrate the general themes that came through in the research. The names of the students and the staff have been omitted and the initials that can be seen are the first letter of the pseudonym that they chose to represent them in the research. The attempts to disguise the identity of the students were important given that the numbers of students from low decile schools are very low, and so the ability to identify someone may be slightly easier than for other more populous groups, particularly because their level of study at university or the subjects they were studying are discussed in some parts of the report.

Conclusion

What can be seen from this chapter is that although a number of different research options were available for selection in gaining the data necessary to address the focus of participation in university education, there were some that were more readily accessible and appropriate than others. In order to develop the research in a useful way students were interviewed who were currently undertaking university study, rather than those who were considering it while still enrolled at secondary school. This factor in itself is potentially the most different characteristic to the research undertaken in this study in comparison to other studies that have been done on the issue of higher education and participation in it by different groups.

The strength of using semi-structured interviews meant that participants could talk freely and if a particular issue arose it could be included in the interview data. Another useful aspect of this style was considered to be the ability for participants to feel less as though they are required to give very structured and concise answers to questions which may require a longer explanation. These semi-structured interviews are then supplemented with enrolment statistics from the University of Canterbury to

support the central thesis that students from the lower decile schools are underrepresented as a group in enrolment numbers.

Overall, by describing the particular research challenges and methodological issues within the thesis it is hoped that this allows for a greater understanding of the research findings. It is acknowledged that other methods and approaches might have provided different results, but that the findings here were in some areas similar to findings made in other research. This result appears to indicate both that there is a problem regarding unequal participation rates in New Zealand, and possibly in other similar education systems such as Australia and England, but also that over time, the same issues are continuing to arise. As with much research it is hoped that eventually a solution will be developed that sees participation figures for higher education even out.

If I were to make a recommendation on how this research could be further advanced it would be to include interviews with parents of students if at all possible. It is likely that students may be able to provide an access point to their parents. This would provide a further group of people who are able to provide a perspective on the topic and also their experiences. The use of interviews with students, staff and parents would provide views from each of the areas that seem to provide influences on the students. A further method that may be of use in the research would be observations of the students at careers expos or during their meetings with careers teachers. This would provide information on the interaction between the students and the teachers, and also provide indications about what the students have access to in relation to careers information. This would be of particular interest in further research given that the students in this study suggested that careers teachers were of little support in their decision to attend university.

Chapter 3

Policy

Introduction

In order to address issues of inequality in educational outcomes policy is often developed at a national level with the intention of creating a cohesive approach towards the perceived problem. While policy movements have been made in New Zealand in relation to tertiary education almost without an end since the 1990s, the ongoing problem of inequalities in educational access and participation by different groups has not been successfully solved. The general nature of the policies has been to reform the education system by most recently altering the structure of reporting and funding for Universities. Student related policies have been introduced that further ensconce a user pays system of education through the introduction of a student loans scheme. Within the reforms it has been noted that there is an ongoing feature of tertiary education statistics that Maori and Pacific Island students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds generally do not participate in numbers equivalent to other groups in society. This statistic arises despite this concern being of central consideration to many of the policies developed over the past 10-15 years and while the rates rise for all groups, the gap has remained stable. During the introduction of student tuition fees, the development of student loans and allowances, and then again during the recent institutionally focussed changes in policy introducing a new monitoring and enforcement body, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC); and the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), it has been argued within the policy rhetoric that the changes when brought into effect will have a positive impact on the tertiary sector. It is not only at the tertiary level that these participation statistics are of concern; although it is at the tertiary level that the participation statistics are counted, the experience of compulsory education at the primary and secondary levels impacts on students' decisions regarding further education. It is within secondary education that students gain the necessary qualifications to be able to undertake some

forms of tertiary education such as university, but also where they receive information about possible future careers. Because of this, a greater focus on careers advice has been developed in recent years with government policy seeking to focus more attention at the secondary school level on ensuring that students are able to access careers information in a number of ways. Why the changes in policy do not appear to have an effect on participation rates for some groups heavily influences this research given the desire in the research to find factors that may help or hinder participation. The participants themselves showed clearly in their interviews their opinions regarding government policy, and it is the impacts of these policies that may well contribute towards the decisions individuals make about education options.

This chapter will address the different areas of tertiary education that are of importance to this study. In particular, the consideration of how tertiary education and careers advice is considered in policy will be focussed on given that the reforms over the last 15 years in education have impacted on students and institutions alike. With the overall trends in participation rates failing in general to change for the positive it could be argued that the current changes in the tertiary and secondary education sectors will continue to have little impact on the levels of participation by currently underrepresented groups, however, it will be the place of future reviews of policy to determine this definitively.

Education has long been seen as vitally important to the progress of a society. The themes of broad access to education are still deeply ingrained in New Zealand policy as is expressed in the quotation from Peter Fraser and Clarence Beeby used in the introduction. Since the 1990s tertiary level education has increasingly moved towards a user pays fees based system. The expectation that everyone has access to an education is still important however, and in addition it is now more openly recognised in policy rhetoric that there is a positive economic outcome for the country that is related to how educated the workforce is. This was highlighted in a discussion in 1998 on the policy directions for the future when in a White Paper it was suggested that:

A well-performing tertiary education sector will play a key role in securing New Zealand's future. It will improve New Zealand's competitive edge,

economic growth, employment opportunities, productivity, and social cohesion. (Tertiary Education Review, 1998, p.3)

In this version of the importance of education, there is the acknowledgement of the impact that education can have on a nation's economy, and also on the social aspects of a country. This is not to ignore the individual benefits that come from tertiary education which are listed here as providing employment opportunities. The fact that much of the workforce has to be vocationally trained is a reality for any economy, although much of this reality may be omitted from the rhetoric used by ministers as they introduce a policy. Objective 21 of the Tertiary Education Strategy, for example, explicitly states the need for students to be able to make informed choices about their further education. In order to make informed choices there is the expectation that students will be able to search through information on skills that are "on demand" in the workforce, the average incomes for different jobs, and what type of employment different qualifications lead to (Ministry of Education, 2002). If however careers' staff or other influential people and groups expect different things of different students then regardless of where skill shortages are or what qualifications are available there is the potential that students will be guided to make some choices over others. It is also important to note that despite the suggestion that students can access information regarding which skills are needed in the workforce this may not have any effect on influencing individuals who have already formed a belief about the skills and type of work that is most suited to them, or most appropriate to pursue. This study will show that some students felt as though their careers advice provided them with little assistance in the decisions they made. The staff in contrast, talked at length about their involvement in vocationally directed programs which may highlight a cross purposes type process between what some individuals find the most appropriate course of study versus the view of those with institutional power. This chapter also provides below an outline of the development of policies that have seen reform in the education system.

Tertiary education reform policies

It has been seen that education in New Zealand is in a seemingly constant state of reform. Tertiary education in particular is currently involved in what seems to be

nearly two decades of change that has seen that nature of student participation and institutional governance alter considerably. Maureen McLaughlin, in her summary of tertiary education policy in New Zealand has grouped the changes in policy since the 1980s into three distinct areas (McLaughlin, 2003). She argues that during the mid to late 1980s that policy generally had a focus on increasing participation rates and that this was financed through the requirement that students cover some of the costs of their education. The second period of policy change was during the 1990s where the use of fees was continued but extended further towards the market model of institutional autonomy over the setting of fees. McLaughlin describes this period as:

Introducing the efficiency of the market, making institutions more innovative and responsive to the market, opening up the market to new private sector providers, increasing student participation and constraining government costs were the main objectives guiding policy for the early 1990s (McLaughlin, 2003, p.22).

The third period of change has been since 2000 with the continued use of a market-based model however the biggest change has seen the autonomy of institutions restricted and more central government control being introduced. This most recent period of change is ongoing and the full effects of it are unlikely to be realised for some time as institutions are still seeking to implement many of the policies that have been developed.

Within these three broad periods of change there have been a number of significant policies and reports developed by the different governments. These are outlined in the timeline below which seeks to illustrate the types of change that have occurred, and also the rapidity with which policy can be developed and introduced in New Zealand.

1988 – The Picot report. This report reviewed schools and developed the Tomorrow's Schools reforms (Adams et al., 2000). The Picot report provided two objectives that must exist in the education system.

- Every learner should gain maximum individual and social benefit from the money spent on education;

- Education should be fair and just for every learner regardless of their gender, and of the social, cultural or geographic circumstances. (Adams 2000, p.151).

The reforms of Tomorrow's schools saw changes in the decision-making process and administration of schools away from as much government involvement and placing power into the hands of the newly formed Boards of Trustees. Schools were provided with bulk funding and money was to be budgeted as the Boards of Trustees agreed to.

1988 – The Hawke report. This commissioned work provided the basis for the Learning for Life policy (Kelsey, 2003). The result was that there would be greater monitoring and control over the qualifications in the tertiary sector by a centralised government organisation. The report was also central in the development of institutions charging fees for students, and changing the funding of institutions to reflect student enrolment numbers. By supporting the introduction of fees, the report also showed support for the introduction of the student loans scheme (McLaughlin, 2003).

1989 – Education Act amendment. This saw the introduction of tertiary fees, and the removal of free tertiary education. Initially fees were set at a flat rate but by 2000 all universities were differentiating the level of fees being charged based on the qualification enrolled in (Kelsey, 2003).

1990 – Education Act amendment bill. This bill saw the introduction of greater centralised control. It became clear that that different tertiary institutions would have different things expected of them, and that all tertiary institutions would now have to develop charters, and annual statements of objectives (Kelsey, 2003). Central groups were set up to monitor quality and accreditation (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and the New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee) (Kelsey, 2003).

1992 – The Student Loan Scheme. This was introduced allowing students to borrow the money for their education fees, course related costs and if necessary and they were not receiving student allowance, they could borrow living costs. The student allowance criteria became means tested on parents incomes (Kelsey, 2003).

1994 – Todd Task Force. This commissioned work established the importance of tertiary educated people in New Zealand by identifying that tertiary training would be required by all New Zealanders in the 21st century. The report showed continued support of the government's student financial aid schemes, and that institutions should continue to be funded based on their EFT enrolment figures (McLaughlin, 2003).

1998 – Green paper. Was largely rejected by the public but the government continued to implement those areas which did not require legislation. Worked towards a market system in education and considered a voucher form of education subsidy for students. This was not implemented (Kelsey, 2003).

1999 – The Bright Future strategy. Saw the development of a focus on the idea of a knowledge economy. The intention was for government to reduce its involvement in education. With the introduction of greater administrative control as noted below however, this has to some extent been reversed.

2000- Tertiary Education Advisory Commission. Since 2000 the main reforms and policy changes in tertiary education have been administrative in focus. The development of the body, the Tertiary Education Commission, separate from the Ministry of Education has seen a new area of central control created. Funding is now more tightly controlled by government and power has moved somewhat more central than was the case under the policies of the early 1990s which saw a decentralisation of control and influence in the whole education sector (McLaughlin, 2003).

Institution focused policies

Within New Zealand there is a wide range of tertiary education opportunities with some courses lasting a day, right through to other qualifications taking a number of years of full-time study to complete. Broadly, all of these education opportunities can be divided into the categories of publicly or privately provided education. Public providers, the group within which universities, polytechnics and wananga fit, operate in the public sector making them subject to government regulation, monitoring and funding. This is in contrast to other private education providers who provide

qualifications, but operate in a way that does not make public funding available to them as an institution, but also frequently students enrolled in these courses are ineligible to access government loans and allowances. The split between public and private education institutions at the tertiary level is often not entirely clear given that although some institutions are private, they may provide nationally accredited courses that are eligible for government funding. Arguably therefore, rather than the division of public and privately provided education being the appropriate way to distinguish different types of education provider, the division between government funded institutions and non-government funded institutions is the most appropriate way in which to discuss the different education options available within the New Zealand tertiary education sector. Within the category of public funded education, this chapter focuses on policies that affect the University of Canterbury given that it is this institution which the thesis uses for its research.

Although the reforms in education that have seen the shape of the early education, primary and secondary education and tertiary education sectors changed through policy reforms, the direction taken in the reforms appears to have changed little regardless of the government in power (McLaughlin, 2003). One such example comes from the Green and White papers issued in 1997 and 1998 that outline potential avenues for reform (Tertiary Education Review, 1997, Tertiary Education Review, 1998), such as greater control over the system through funding and the concerns over student fees in regard to participation by some under-represented groups. These are again considered in later publications during the development of the TEC, and reports on the student allowance and loan schemes. In the development of the TEC, for example, it was argued that there was a need for greater control over quality (Ministry of Education, 2005a) which can arguably be seen as a reflection of the implementation of what the White Paper entitled *Tertiary Education in New Zealand: Policy direction for the 21st Century* identified as “[a] new quality assurance system [that] will ensure that all publicly funded New Zealand qualifications meet appropriate quality tests” (Tertiary Education Review 1998, p.7). In the White Paper this refers directly to the idea of altering the roll of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Although the White and Green papers are largely discussion based, they can be seen as a major forerunner for the changes that subsequently occurred. This is seen in the above example but also again in the following quotation where it is made

clear that the governance structures under which tertiary institutions were to operate in the future would be quite different. The Tertiary Education Review in its Green Paper claimed that “The Crown does not have sufficient mechanisms to influence governance decision-making, though this is a key right normally associated with ownership. Consequently, the Crown has insufficient assurance about the quality of the governance of TEIs” (1997, p.50). This implies that although the government had ultimate control of the tertiary sector, there was a greater need to manage it. Whether this demand over greater guidance was spurred by a greater viewing of the education sector as a market is difficult to determine from the policy, however, it seems clear in many of the policy documents that there is a conscious undertaking by the policy developers to create a more consistent and accountable education product.

The development of the TEC forms the major part of this most recent move by Government to assert more control in the tertiary sector with the intent of creating a more consistent education product, and also seeking to assert greater control over the governance of institutions. The key areas of focus of the organisation are the limiting of repetition in course delivery, and monitoring the performance of the tertiary sector in the teaching and research areas. Much of this control is done via the requirement of tertiary institutes to develop and submit to the TEC documents that outline the charter and profile of the institution (Ministry of Education, 2002). Within the development of charters and profiles, the government has also developed a Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP) and highlighted within this participation is identified as a key issue to address (Ministry of Education, 2005a), although the focus is on the ethnicity of students rather than their socioeconomic position. Through the development of charters and profiles being submitted to the TEC, institutions can be controlled by funding pressures being placed on areas seen as deviating from the agreed charter, which highlights the different types of pressure the government can exert on the tertiary education market.

Student directed policies

In recent years the tertiary sector has seen a number of changes undertaken in relation to the way it operates. These changes have impacted on institutions and students

alike, and have been accompanied by the expectations of policy developers that they will improve the quality of education and participation. One of the biggest changes has been the introduction of tuition fees. Much has been written on the introduction of user pays in education (Boston and Dalziel, 1992, Boston et al., 1999, Fitzsimons, 1997, Lauder, 1990), and it has been argued that the impact of the student loan scheme which followed the introduction of tuition fees has been considerable on the social make-up of New Zealand society (Matthews, 2001). The introduction of the student loan scheme and student allowances during the early 1990s predominantly represents the financial aid offered by government directly to students. The policies can be seen as both recognition of the need to support students while they study, but also the cementing in place of an ongoing commitment towards a level of user pays in education. The student loan scheme has, since its introduction, been through some changes during the time it has been operating, however, what appears to receive the most public attention is the growing levels of debt being incurred individually by students and the nationally aggregated figure which represents a threat to all taxpayers (Matthews, 2001).

While the Student Loan Scheme is available to all students who enrol in eligible courses the other major source of financial aid, the student allowance is targeted at students whose parents earn lower incomes, and those students who are over 25 years of age. There were two main policies that aim to encourage students from lower SES backgrounds into tertiary education. The first is the student loan given that it has the widest accessibility, while the student allowance is provided to students who meet certain parental income thresholds (Boston et al., 1999). The introduction of these policies was seen as a move to overcoming the economic barriers to education that were created with the cost of a user pays education system but also to combat the lost earning potential while a student takes time out of the workforce to pursue an education. Unfortunately despite the stated intention of these policies, which have been in operation for over 10 years, it appears that they have had little impact on improving the participation of these under-represented groups.

While the student loan scheme has been publicly debated since its inception, the students in the current study seemed on the whole to accept the scheme, however, they were often critical of the administration of it. The level of debt being incurred

while studying was also of concern to the students. When asked about the different student financial aid policies the students were able to talk at length about the student loan scheme and the student allowance policy. Although they talked about their own experiences of it, some of them also spoke of the experiences of others. It was evident in the interviews that the students were quite knowledgeable of the policies in general. One student quoted below shows an awareness that students are being reported as going overseas as a way to either avoid repaying their student loans, or to find a job with a high enough salary to enable the repayment of the loan.

M - ...Um, I was quite surprised at how easy it was to get a student loan. Um, I do worry at times about how it's ever going to get paid off, and I do think that the interest [is] far too high and that at the moment it's getting to the point that the only way that I can pay it off is by going overseas.

The realisation of how much the debt can increase if the living cost component is drawn down was also noted by some of the students. One student spoke of having taken time off between finishing school and attending university, which made him eligible for an independent circumstances allowance. This allowance is provided to students at the same rate as the student allowance but is not means tested on the income of their parents. Largely students over 25 are the ones most eligible for the 'independent circumstances' allowance, however some students under 25 can apply if they are able to prove they do not receive any form of support from their parents. In talking of these policies, the student clearly showed an awareness of the intricacies of the policies, and also how other students are affected.

D – Well the loans system is certainly a hindrance. We.... I wouldn't have been able to study without the independent circumstances allowance or rather I wouldn't have been able to do as well as I did without that financial support; I would have had to spend so much time a week working to support myself, so that's certainly not a lot but I do realise that I was only on that because I spent two years between school and university. My parents earned over the threshold for the allowance so I would have had to live off the loan and....

I – and it would have made the loan huge.

D – Yes... so I do realise that there are a lot of students who aren't as fortunate as far as the allowance goes especially income tested ones....

...

D – it's daunting enough coming from school to university, it's a huge step in itself and trying to figure out what you want to do and the work of university compared to school is immense.

A quality education

It is not only participation rates within tertiary education that have been focussed on in the changes currently occurring within tertiary education. Quality is of concern to the policy makers, and in particular the proliferation of courses and perceived lack of co-operation between institutions (Ministry of Education, 2005a). During the development of the Tertiary Education Commission, one of the major concerns noted was the need for New Zealand to have an appropriate tertiary education system that allows people to access an education. In many ways this identification of a need for an appropriate education system echoes the views of Beeby and Fraser when they spoke of having individuals gaining an appropriate education (Shaw and Eichbaum, 2005) in their often quoted 1939 speech on the future direction of education. This need for appropriateness of a qualification also relates to the quality and demand for courses. The TEC indicated that in attempting to develop an educational system that fits within the current climate, it was important that education providers regionally, and to some extent nationally to not duplicate qualifications beyond the point where there is not enough demand to meet the supply of the courses (Ministry of Education, 2002). In making this decision the TEC has encouraged increased levels of specialisation and interdependence between institutions. In some instances this was already occurring; Canterbury University, for example, offers an Engineering degree at its university however does not offer degrees in Architecture, Medicine, or Veterinary qualifications while other universities do. This situation existed prior to the development of the TEC and its decision to limit the duplication of courses, however, the policy decision to limit qualification offerings makes the specialisation or interdependence of institutions official.

Whether the current policy trend towards greater control of institutions actually reduces duplication and encourages more co-operation between institutes, or will be in effect for a considerable length of time remains unknown. During the 1990s there was a trend towards a withdrawal by the state from control of the tertiary

education sector, and now after a decade the movement appears to be in the other direction which highlights the various different directions that governments have chosen to take with education. Nevertheless, the impacts of the current policy framework being implemented by the Tertiary Education Commission mark a new shift away from previous policy development as the Tertiary Education Commission operates in a relatively autonomous way as opposed to the Ministry of Education, which also retains control of the tertiary sector. The particular changes in the tertiary sector are aimed both at the governance and management of institutions but are likely also to impact on where students decide to study. One such circumstance where the changes may affect student choice is if polytechnics are discouraged from offering degree type courses. Traditionally polytechnics offered trades and non-degree qualifications while universities offered degrees however over time there has been a blurring of this and for some time polytechnics have offered degrees such as nursing, information technology, and business while universities are increasingly adding diplomas and certificates to their enrolment options. With the TEC seeking to encourage the different areas of the tertiary sector to differentiate themselves, a stratification of qualifications and tertiary institutions may develop. Whether these changes will have a greater impact on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds than the rest of the current and future student populations remains unseen. However, with the renewed focus on tertiary reform it is hoped that greater participation will be one of the results of the newly managed system.

Secondary School based policy

As is identified in the chapter on schools and career staff, the advice and work of careers staff at the school was viewed as positive by the staff, but as not useful by the students interviewed in the study who had gone to university. Outside of this study however, careers advice is seen as one of the central ways of conveying information to students while they are still in compulsory education (McLaughlin, 2003). Given this, the introduction of a National Administration Guideline provided national level policy requires schools to implement careers information and guidance as part of their work in schooling (Young and Wilson, 1998). Once implemented at a national level, schools have some freedom in the way that the policy is undertaken in their schools.

It can be seen in a review of the policy conducted in 1998 that many different approaches had been used by the schools to present information about future possible pathways. One of the key findings in the report was that careers information and its delivery becomes more intense up until Year 12 (Form 6) when it peaks after which the Year 13 students tend to receive information about university study more than at any other stage of their schooling (Young and Wilson, 1998).

Although not argued in the above report it seems possible that if students were exposed to more careers information at an earlier age rather than in the higher levels of schooling, it would allow students time to consider potential career paths, and subsequently direct their learning towards this goal. One such example that can be used to illustrate this different pedagogic strategy comes from Nash who in discussing the situations of different classes, families indicated that in relation to science qualifications working-class families "...have only the sketchiest outline of the great range of technical and scientific occupations available (Nash, 1997, p.98). Had families and students been exposed at an earlier age then there is the potential for those people to change their academic goals at an earlier and arguably more manageable age. Although families are seen in Nash's study above, and the work by Ball (Ball, 2003), it seems that there is no real push from parents to introduce careers planning and advice at earlier levels of schooling although this may perhaps be due to a lack of consideration by parents that this is an option for the school. Despite the lack of people identifying the potential need to introduce career options at an earlier level and the lack of policy development in this area it seems apparent that some students would no doubt benefit from being exposed to greater levels of careers advice at earlier levels of school⁸.

Although the requirement of careers being taught within schools is a nationwide one, required regardless of the socioeconomic position of students within the school, there are additional challenges felt by schools with lower deciles. In reviewing the success of the teaching policy, Young and Wilson (Young and Wilson, 1998) found that particularly in the situation of lower socio-economic communities careers staff had problems motivating students to plan a career. They argue that this was partially due

⁸ The findings of Nash reflect this.

to an employment market where they were unlikely to find employment but also that this was “compounded by a lack of role models in the local community and among students’ peers” (Young and Wilson, 1998). This highlights that although careers advice is important, the environment that a student is living in can also impact significantly on their goals and decisions regarding careers options. Advice provided at school can be seen as a proxy to information that is not held within the family resources of some families but not others. It should be realised that some students will consciously make their decisions regarding career choices and education options despite the best intentions of family and the school.

The situation at the University of Canterbury

The University of Canterbury is operating within the New Zealand education market, although it also provides education to international students, and operates within a global research and education network. Because the university is physically located within New Zealand however, and is predominantly focussed on the education of domestic students, it needs to comply with the newly developed tertiary policies. In an environment where government policy requires strategies for increased participation from under-represented groups (Ministry of Education, 2002) it is to be expected therefore that the University of Canterbury will respond with policies that reflect this, particularly since the government funds universities on a formula based on the number of equivalent full time student enrolled at the institution. All institutions will be expected to make greater efforts to attract students that historically have been underrepresented in enrolment statistics. For this reason it could be expected that more work will be done in attracting not only the specific ethnic groups of Maori and Pacific Island students, who historically are over represented in lower socio-economic groups but all students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The methods used to attract these students may be challenging as it would seem that traditional recruitment procedures are relatively ineffectual.

Although the University of Canterbury operates in the global and local environment that is described above, as with any institution it has challenges that are unique to its situation. In particular the university has to address issues that relate to the student

market but also respond to issues that relate to its location within a suburban area. While some universities attract students because of certain degrees, or successful marketing, Canterbury has to compete in this environment of an education market that attracts both international and domestic students. Below is a description of the particular situation at Canterbury with a discussion on the students, location and also its operating environment. It can be seen from its charter that one of the core focuses it has is on the encouragement of students into the university but to interact with them while they are there also:

To attract and value students from a wide diversity of backgrounds; promote equal educational opportunities for disadvantaged and under-represented groups; encourage and support all students in their studies and beyond; and foster in them a sense of the University's vision of what it means to belong to a scholarly community (University of Canterbury, 2003, p.5).

The University of Canterbury is located in the western area of Christchurch, on a large campus that was established predominantly during the 1970s after the student enrolments grew too large for the central city campus. The campus is generally divided up into Colleges and Schools such as Engineering, Arts, Law, Science and Commerce, however there are some shared lecture areas which are used by all of the faculties. In the centre of the University is the large central library which also houses the careers advisory service and other student services such as the Budget Advisory Service and the Academic Skills Centre. The central library is directly opposite the main administration building, the University Registry. The campus itself is bordered by residential suburbs and there are two main shopping centres nearby. In the block to the west of the grounds there are student accommodation buildings predominantly used by first year students and international students at all levels of study who are moving into the city from other locations. A number of bus routes service the university, however many students are also accommodated in private houses within the immediate area that eliminates their need for transport to and from the campus.

The student population is diverse although there are large numbers of enrolments of students from Christchurch or the greater Canterbury region. Enrolments also come from other parts of New Zealand, and a considerable number of student enrolments come from international students who come to New Zealand from overseas for the

sole purpose of studying⁹. The University offers a wide range of courses covering all of the main degree areas, although it does not offer medicine or architecture as degree courses. Generally the courses at Canterbury have an open entry at stage one provided the person has the necessary qualifications to gain entry to university. At the higher level courses of study have different requirements in relation to which papers can be taken for a degree. Students at the University of Canterbury are eligible to apply for Government tertiary education assistance such as the student loans scheme, and different forms of income assistance such as student allowance and the accommodation supplement. The University also manages a number of different scholarships which can provide students with financial assistance through their studies. In addition to the different types of income support potentially available to students, there exist other more pastoral support systems through the University of Canterbury Students' Association, the Student Health Centre, and the University Recreation Centre and the Chaplains Office. For Maori students there also exists Te Akatoki, the Maori students' association which is housed on the outskirts of the campus, and has employed staff support from the University of Canterbury.

Within the university there exists an undertaking, formalised in policy, that there will be a focus on equal educational opportunities for students (Equal Educational Opportunities Committee, 2005). The University, in identifying that there is an imbalance in the number of students attending from low decile schools in comparison to students from higher decile schools has led, along with a statutory requirement to address this, to the development of the Equal Educational Opportunities Committee. The project is now five years old and employs one part time staff member to co-ordinate the activities undertaken by the committee to encourage greater participation. Currently the programme uses a mixture of approaches to provide students from four low decile schools in Christchurch with access to information about the university. In particular they use the direct method of taking past students back to the schools they came from to talk to the senior students about their university experience; the program also runs days where the senior students visit the university, and younger students have a half day visit to the university during the later stages of the year. These days

⁹ Enrolment figures for 2004 indicate that 18 per cent of the students at the University of Canterbury had been enrolled at an overseas high school prior to entering university.

are in addition to other open days for the public that the university offers. The Eedo as well as information and the experience of visiting the campus is part of a scholarship funded by the university for one student from each of the schools involved in the programme. This financial assistance is expected to provide encouragement for students who otherwise might see the financial costs of university as too great.

It is not only students from the schools within the Eedo programme however that gain access to information about the University. Tours and open days, for example, are offered at certain times of the year to encourage potential students to access the university. To further orient students with the university and campus during enrolment week, and the week prior, it offers an orientation programme which allows people to tour the university and have access to staff ask questions of. Discovery days are still another way potential students can orientate themselves with the university and different study options. The discovery days are aimed at younger students although the program is still in the early stages of development and so the number of schools utilising it is quite low. It should however be noted that although a wide variety of options exist in relation to gaining information about university, the introduction to university approach that is taken by the Eedo group is unique to those four schools due to the multi-tiered manner in which the information is presented.

As can be seen, the University of Canterbury already has a number of mechanisms in place to encourage and support students to attend. The Eedo in particular can be held up as specifically targeting a group of students for whom participation is lower. How this policy relates to the more specific government policy requirements relating to the ethnic orientation of students remains unknown although the University does offer scholarships to students who identify as Pacific Islander or Maori separate from the scholarships it offers students from low decile schools, and the University is also attempting to develop ongoing links with the Maori and Pacific Islands communities as a way of increasing the depth of knowledge about university (University of Canterbury, 2003). Whether the change in focus towards tertiary institutions proactively encouraging enrolment by these underrepresented groups is successful remains to be seen, although current trends in participation may indicate that as with previous policies, the effectiveness may be limited.

Conclusion

This chapter can be considered a number of different policies that have been integral in the shaping of the tertiary education sector. It can be seen through the discussion of the policies that New Zealand has seen a change in the type of controls that governments have placed over the institutions, and also the type of support that they have offered students. It is clear from the direction of recent policies however that policy seems to be going in a direction of greater direct government controls over institutions. With the introduction of TEC there has been greater control already exerted through the requirement of having a charter and profile which means that the university must comply with existing requirements as well as attempt to differentiate itself from other education providers. Because failure to comply with the charter and profile documents may now have financial implications for an institution, the push to generate new students from previously under utilised markets may well be both greater but more dangerous if it generates a reduction in the number of enrolments from the traditional student markets.

The University of Canterbury has clearly acknowledged the need to show their focus on students by outlining in their charter the importance of encouraging students into the University and ensuring that they interact with the institution and their education while they are enrolled. The language used by the University is one of seeking to comply with the national direction while also confirming themselves as a separate entity to other universities in New Zealand.

Policies for students in recent years appear to have reflected the introduction of user pays charges in education. The introduction of student loans and allowances are seen as a way to provide income to students while they are enrolled in education. Prior to the introduction of institutions charging fees for education there was little need for a government funded loans system as the costs of education were relatively low. Through maintaining the policy of offering financial support to eligible students, the government appears to be further confirming an ongoing commitment to placing some of the cost of education onto the consumers, the students.

While this chapter has seen that government policy impacts on institutions and students alike, at a tertiary and a secondary level, it can be seen in the following chapter that the impact of institutions directly on students can be considerable despite the direction of policy. The enrolment statistics for the students at the University of Canterbury as considered in the following chapter also illustrate the fact that while policy may be generated to encourage participation, this does not necessarily mean that they will be effective in their aim.

Chapter 4

Schools and career teachers

Introduction

In previous research undertaken in New Zealand on school decile, students, and participation in education one of the foci seems to have been the way different classes of family approach education options (Hughes, 1994, Nash, 2000). It appears fair to conclude that research is undertaken on these topics because it is expected that students who come from low SES backgrounds are less likely to have a desire or ability to attend higher education, such as university. This type of supposition was a motivation for this research but in doing so focused on the students who go against this general expectation and do participate in university studies. Although family life is taken into consideration and the individual students are interviewed in research on participation in education (Nash, 2000), as part of this research interviews were also undertaken with career advisors at three low decile schools.

This chapter discusses the impact that schooling can have on an individual's decisions regarding further education, with a particular focus on the influence of career advice given while at school. Prior to this however is a discussion on the impact of the pedagogic decisions made by schools due to it being highlighted in other studies that the use of resources effects students' opinions of education, and their outcomes. The purpose of interviews with career advisors was to ask questions about the students, and the type of work that they do, but also to identify any areas that needed inclusion in the students' interview schedule. The interviews with the career advisors were done prior to the interviews with the students, and provided a level of understanding about the way the students and staff interact. Despite their involvement in career work that the staff outlined, and the interactions they have with the students, the students in the interviews failed to describe any assistance or support coming from the career staff or other staff at their schools. This result of an apparent break between

the work that the staff appear to believe aids the students in deciding to attend university, and the students' failing to believe that there is any assistance from the staff is considered in the later part of the chapter. It opens questions about where the motivations to attend university come from, and also how the necessary information is gained. In order to illustrate more fully the under-representation of low decile students in enrolment statistics, figures are presented in the early part of the chapter.

University Enrolment Information

When entering into this study a number of different literature sources indicated that statistically, students from low decile schools, and/or lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to access a university education than students from other higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 1999). These statistics are of concern to researchers (Hughes and Pearce, 2003), and government (Maharey, 2000) alike as they highlight an area of apparent inequality affected more by socioeconomic situation than by academic ability. Although differences of opinion arise in different literature as to which is the most appropriate way to address the apparent inequality, or the contributing factors in creating the inequality, what is agreed by nearly all of the research is that there is a need for the inequality in participation rates to be addressed. In order to carry out the study at the University of Canterbury it was necessary to obtain enrolment information in order to check that unequal participation rates based on decile were being experienced at that university. This part of the chapter looks at these statistics provided by the university in order to illustrate the different rates of participation.

The use of enrolment information below illustrates the situation at the University of Canterbury although it is important to note the use of equivalent full time students (EFT) rather than the actual number of physical enrolments at the university. Because of this it is important to consider that for all the categories, the number of people involved is likely to be higher than actual enrolment figures to account for students with a part-time enrolment status. EFTs are calculated on the number of papers that a student enrolls in, based on the course weight given to each of those papers. If the combined course weights add to 0.8 or greater for an individual, they are classified as

a full-time student. Figures 1 and 2 below are based on aggregate annual enrolment numbers from all students at the university by decile of all students' schools of origin. Although the four decile 1-4 schools in the Christchurch area are included in the numbers, the figure includes all students who listed their last school attended on the enrolment information as being in the low decile category. The statistics provided show that enrolment is dominated by domestic students from mid and high decile schools at the University of Canterbury.

One of the points to note about Figure 3 is that when the students listing an overseas origin, or those not listing a school at all are removed from the enrolment data, students from the lowest deciles of 1-4 represent at most 11 per cent of the enrolment numbers. This is less than half of the enrolments in the next group of deciles, being schools with a decile rating of 5-7. These figures are slightly higher than the statistics found by Hughes and Pearce in their reworking of the results found by the Taskforce for Improving Participation in Tertiary Education (Hughes and Pearce, 2003), however, they generally follow their results and what appear to be national trends in participation. As can clearly be seen from figures 1 and 2, the enrolment rates for the low decile school students is consistently lower than any other domestic school category. During the period of 1999-2004 the data demonstrates an overall decrease in the number of domestic students enrolling despite the total enrolment figures increasing, due to an increase in the number of international students who enrolled at the University during this time. Therefore the decrease in lower decile student numbers was in proportion to the overall decile in enrolment figures. When the student enrolments from overseas schools and those students who do not list the school they last attended are removed from the results the gap between participation rates can be seen even more clearly with an over 40 per cent difference in participation rates between the lowest and highest decile groups. Although these statistics cover a five year period, arguments have been made that the enrolment of lower socioeconomic students in universities has not shifted for decades (Lauder, 1984, McLaughlin, 2002). Given the research available, there seems no reason to question this.

Table 1. Total EFTS by decile.

Decile	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1 - 4 (lowest)	1,039.1	926.0	873.3	864.6	780.5	815.5
5 - 7	3,380.5	3,172.4	3,171.1	3,113.4	3,095.7	3,020.4
8 - 10 (highest)	5,095.3	4,913.3	4,857.5	4,940.7	5,003.3	5,165.0
Overseas School	879.3	916.6	1,135.5	1,345.7	1,836.1	2,308.2
Unknown	1,366.5	1,274.3	1,215.7	1,254.4	1,672.6	1,421.6
Total EFTS	11,760.6	11,202.6	11,253.1	11,518.7	12,388.2	12,730.8

Table 2. Percentage of EFTS by decile.

Decile	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1 - 4 (lowest)	9%	8%	8%	8%	6%	6%
5 - 7	29%	28%	28%	27%	25%	24%
8 - 10 (highest)	43%	44%	43%	43%	40%	41%
Overseas School	7%	8%	10%	12%	15%	18%
Unknown	12%	11%	11%	11%	14%	11%
Total EFTS	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3. Percentage of New Zealand school EFTS by decile.

Decile	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1 - 4 (lowest)	11%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%
5 - 7	36%	35%	36%	35%	35%	34%
8 - 10 (highest)	54%	55%	55%	55%	56%	57%
Total EFTS	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Although it appears clear that there is a large difference between the numbers of students enrolling from decile 1-4 schools and students from higher decile schools, it should be noted that there are fewer low decile schools in the Canterbury region than their higher decile counterparts; and given that the university draws a large number of its students from the local catchment, the difference in the figures could be conflating the actual difference in enrolment figures between groups. In order to best illustrate how much the local school market impacts on the enrolment figures for the university for lower decile students Figure 4 shows the number of EFTS from the four local lower decile schools. These figures are also included in Figure 5 which shows all the schools with a decile of 1-4 in the top of the South Island region¹⁰ that are represented

¹⁰ This South Island area covers Canterbury, the West Coast and Marlborough.

in the University of Canterbury enrolment data. This wider area can be considered the local catchment area for the University of Canterbury since for many of the families with children attending university it is the closest and largest university available in the South Island. As can be seen from Figure 3, the lower decile schools in the greater catchment area for Canterbury provide at least half of the enrolments for lower decile school students attending the University. This may highlight potential barriers to education because of the need to travel and find accommodation while studying, and there is the possibility that having to move away from home as well as enter tertiary study may be too daunting for students, which may cause them to choose to put further education either on hold, or abandon it as a possibility altogether. This issue is not necessarily felt as greatly by people with more financial resources who are able to support their children in the additional costs of having to find accommodation. Additional to this is the fact that a number of students did travel from further away than the local catchment area to attend the University which would indicate that the proximity to home factor of consideration might not be required by all students.

Table 4. Total EFTS by Christchurch low decile schools.

School	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Aranui High School	98.6	92.9	80.4	89.2	70.3	77.1
Catholic Cathedral College	76.9	76.3	76.6	84.4	76.6	74.9
Hornby High School	81.0	74.6	70.5	75.6	66.5	74.9
Linwood College	153.9	136.7	127.2	115.0	101.1	110.4
Total	410.5	380.5	354.8	364.2	314.6	337.4

Table 5. Total EFTS by upper South Island low decile schools.

School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Aranui High School	98.6	92.9	80.4	89.2	70.3	77.1
Buller High School	52.6	57.5	49.9	38.0	32.2	27.7
Catholic Cathedral College	76.9	76.3	76.6	84.4	76.6	74.9
Greymouth High School	47.2	53.2	50.3	47.1	49.0	46.4
Hornby High School	81.0	74.6	70.5	75.6	66.5	74.9
Inangahua College	3.8	1.8		1.0	1.5	2.5
Linwood College	153.9	136.7	127.2	115.0	101.1	110.4
Queen Charlotte College	6.5	4.8	8.3	6.8	4.0	3.6
Temuka High School	24.1	23.3	27.1	27.2	18.0	15.8
Decile 1 - 4 in Canterbury, Marlborough and West Coast region total	544.7	521.1	490.5	484.3	419.3	433.4
Total of all New Zealand low decile schools	1,045.6	936.9	876.9	867.3	783.0	818.3
Percentage from Christchurch low decile schools	52%	56%	56%	56%	54%	53%

Although there are a large number of students attending their local university, it appears from the enrolment statistics for the lower decile schools that students are willing to travel to another part of the country to attend university as nearly half of the enrolments are coming from outside the local catchment area. Nash, in a study on high school selection (Nash, 1993) found that families from lower SES backgrounds were most likely to attend the closest school to their home, and as SES increased the mobility in school selection did also. This does not appear to follow through to university selection here based on the statistics, although it should be noted that there is a possibility that although students are recording that they are from a low decile school in their enrolment information, their backgrounds may well be that of a middle class, medium socioeconomic position which may then allow for a greater flexibility in university selection. It is worth considering, however, that when students were asked why they chose Canterbury University, many did so based on being able to stay at home. Commonly mentioned also was the quality of a Canterbury qualification.

This indicates two areas that were considered in selecting a university: location, and the quality of the qualification.

Secondary school pedagogy

During the development of the Tomorrow's Schools programme of bulk funding and the introduction of governance of schools by Boards of Trustees, schools had to budget in a way that made the best use of their limited available resources. The effects of having to use resources in the most efficient way meant that for some schools resources have to be focussed on some groups of students over others. This has been confirmed as occurring in a study of Maori participation rates where there was an attitude that the Maori students were given the less experienced teachers and the poorer learning resources (Jefferies, 1998). Within this current study a student highlighted a different use of resources where the higher ability classes were not focussed on as much as the less able classes due to an attitude that they were more likely to succeed without needing additional attention. The conscious decision by the school to deliver varying learning experiences to different groups of children has the potential to create a barrier to education based on the messages the students interpret from these actions. It was clear in this study and that of Jefferies that students are aware of resource distribution in the school and that this can be performed in ways that focus on some student groups over others. It is not always the solely the delivery of teaching that can influence students, the undertaking of formal examinations (Bourdieu, 1990), and the approach taken to the act of streaming can also provide legitimations for different educational outcomes. All of these approaches are a way for the school to advance the dominant classes in society while appearing to behave in a legitimately fair equalising manner.

The pedagogic decisions that schools must make in regard to the delivery of teaching balanced against resource availability opens an area of concern due to the need for schools to direct attention to class groups rather than individuals. Although career teachers meet with students often on a one-on one basis, other teachers have to consider the needs of the class, and then if possible focus on individuals within the group. By generally using the class group as the unit of attention, the school

generates a message of expecting outcomes from different school classes. This message, as it is received by students has the ability to affect educational outcomes by influencing the self-opinion of the individual students in the group (Jefferies, 1998, Hawk and Hill, 1996). There is clearly an interaction that occurs within the process of teaching that filters through to the career teachers who often become occupied with the end result of these other pedagogic processes, by trying to find opportunities for those leaving school prior to completing their final year 13 year, and reserving resources by only offering higher education information to those in the senior school (Hawk and Hill, 1996).

The concerns of how schools distribute their resources are of central focus to all schools. Relatively unique to lower decile schools however are the issues faced by schools that have students, who due to their family situation have additional barriers to their learning. These can be caused by ill health, poor nutrition, fatigue caused by hours of employment, or forms of abuse (Hawk and Hill, 1996). While the schools in the AIMHI study had to attempt to provide the same education as other more resourced schools, they faced additional challenges with students who were often suffering from problems relating to their home situation. In conditions such as these the school has to make the decision how to act as a support network as well as a learning centre. The focus of the teacher is also affected as they more often have to focus on individual students rather than the wider class group which creates problems in effective delivery of the curriculum. Further to these concerns, the AIMHI study highlighted the fact that schools situated in lower SES areas are much less able to fundraise than schools in more affluent suburbs which further impacts on their ability subsidise the government funding they receive (Hawk and Hill, 1996) and the options they have available to them.

All of the many issues that have to be dealt with by the school appear to show that schools have multiple ways of approaching education and pastoral care of students. The way in which they choose to solve the issues can have a very strong impact on the students and although it is more efficient to deal with groups of students, the outcomes may be more damaging than if the students were catered to as individuals within a class of their peers. The reality of having limited resources available to the school however dictates that they need to make decisions based on broader welfare

across all of the students and staff to the detriment of individual students, this further acts in such a way to cause the success of some students over others in a legitimated way.

Careers teachers and school influence

One of the key areas in this research that was expected to provide influence and support to students in their decisions to pursue a university education was the career advice and counselling available at schools. The teaching staff believed the work they did was valuable and assisted their students in decisions regarding further education or the transition to work. Although they talked at length about programmes that are not focussed towards university they did, in various parts of the interviews make mention of different strategies they employed to present university as a post-school option. These strategies included a tour of the University for some or all of the students (depending on their age), utilising of the university liaison service, as well as providing any available written information to the students. Parents too are involved as they receive career information about options that have been discussed with the individual students. While each staff member has their own methods for engaging with the students, it appeared that generally they felt positive about the work they were doing. Vaughan argues that transition decisions, and the planning of them are now more important than they have been in the past, and students are expected to actively involve themselves in the decisions they make (Vaughan, 2003). This pressure to be actively involved seems likely to originate with family and schools so that they can work towards creating training opportunities, and also develop learning pathways appropriate to the desired outcome. This type of encouragement to link school experiences to post-school opportunities is reflective of the goals of the Tomorrows Schools policy directions. Because of this active involvement, it could be expected that careers staff would be influential in the decisions regarding further education opportunities or the transition to work, and it has been said by the Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard that “the quality of teaching practices...is the largest influence on the achievement of children in schooling” (Vaughan, 2003) which

further supports this. Careers teachers are now present in all schools although the universal employment of them was established during 1989-1995 (Besley, 2001)¹¹.

Despite the fact that careers teachers are now present in schools it seems that the usefulness of careers staff varies depending on individual students' experiences of the service. What became apparent in the interviews with the students was that the success and usefulness of careers advice at school was contrary to their opinions of it. In the interviews the students generally indicated that the careers advice and staff had proven to be of very little use to them in forming their decision to attend university. One student felt that the careers teacher at their school was only interested in transitioning people from school to work. This duality in opinions regarding careers advice, with teachers presenting a very positive attitude, and students indicating very little support from staff is conflicting due to the findings of other research that indicate school staff have the ability to influence students' decisions (James, 2002) (Hawk and Hill, 1996). Boyd et al. also found in research that the students' experiences of careers information in schools was considered of more use by students from lower decile backgrounds (2001) which is in direct contrast to the findings of this study. Whether the students failed to acknowledge assistance by staff when it was actually given conflicts with many of the stories they provided during their interviews, however to argue that the staff are omitting the truth during their interviews seems unlikely, particularly given their readiness to talk about the approach that they take towards careers advice. One of the possible reasons for the students in this research recording the careers staff as being of no assistance is that they had already decided what they wanted to do at the end of their compulsory education prior to meeting with the careers advice staff member. Many of the students indicated that they had always, or for a long time had the idea that university, or a job that involved a university education was what they wanted. There is the potential that once the students indicated their intentions of attending university that the staff allowed them to continue without intervening. This does not however account for those students who had little understanding of what they intended to do after school, and those who took some time away from education before enrolling at university. Below are a number of quotations from the students that give an indication

¹¹ There has since 1996 been no formal requirement for a school to have a councillor Besley, T. (2001) Over Forty Years of Guidance Counselling: Specialist teachers in New Zealand Secondary Schools 1959-2001. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 11..

of the sort of experiences and opinions that they formed about the careers advice service and the attitudes of the staff.

E – She’s a lot more interested in getting people into jobs than helping anyone go to uni or polytech.

T – Um, let me think. I didn’t get any information about university until 7th form, which is the last year, and then they sort of ask you what you want to do in your first year at uni. And then you were like, well I don’t know, what’s in there. And the teachers are like well there’s this and this but the idea is so vague you can’t picture it in your mind. And then one day someone came to the school and talked about it and I thought that’s better, and you get a weird sort of idea in your mind. Um, and then, um, you couldn’t have a tour of uni until the year after I was at school. I was at uni and I saw all these high school students, but when I was in my last year there was no such thing. So I didn’t know what it was like.

D – We had a career councillor, I never saw them. I don’t think he was very active. Um, and he was... there’s no one there now, I don’t know what happened to him.

I – The guy who’s there now has just been there for a year.

D – I think there may have been one between them as well. Um, advice about university was always available but you had to seek it, it was never really made clear to us...

One mature student described their experience of career guidance as that of being on a flow chart:

I – Did you have careers counselling?

N – I think I remember one session, and it was really interesting. Looking back on it, it was really elementary. Like it was like you were almost on a flow chart.

I – Yeah.

N – Tick this box yes and you’ll do well and you’ll end up somewhere kind of thing. And so I never felt like it was um, I never felt that I really got to explore what I enjoyed, or what I actually... or the skills I had that I never got to use them.... And I don’t know that they especially worried about the upper classes, I think they were more career guidance for the ones that were leaving.

It can be seen from the quotations above that the students have in some circumstances felt quite confused with the advice they have been given, while other students, such as the student in the last quotation felt that the advice that was available did not cater for them. This is further illustrated by the student who felt as if they were on a flow chart. The use of a flow chart as an analogy is particularly useful to show the way that advice appeared to the students to be prearranged and that they were expected to fit into a particular career path depending on their academic ability, or their interests. This misfit between the information provided and the approach taken towards giving students advice about careers may not be entirely attributable to the careers staff but may be experienced in the wider school experience also. Although careers staff were interviewed for this research, there is no reason why other staff cannot, and were not influential in the decisions made by the students to attend university. This is particularly possible given the incorporation of career type programmes into the everyday curriculum taught in schools however students spoke of careers teachers rather than other staff when they were asked about career advice at their school.

In the interviews with the careers staff, two of the staff talked at length about non-university directed programs that students undertake which provide them with work skills and also lower level qualifications that are provided within the normal curriculum. One such program, *Gateway* works in a way that allows students to gain NCEA credits whilst being in a workplace one day of the school week. The areas in which they can undertake this study range across a broad spectrum of the labour market such as early childhood teaching, retail and building (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003). Although this programme was reported as proving very popular with students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003), for those students who wish to attend university, the focus on work based education initiatives may serve to alter their perceptions of what the school expects academically. The teachers also spoke of other schemes of a similar theme operating in schools to encourage students to remain in school to gain work relevant skills. Whether there is a self-perception by the students of needing these programs rather than attaining the higher level education available to them, or whether the need for the courses evolves due to the expectations of staff and families cannot be ascertained in this research. What became apparent in the interviews however was that staff placed a considerable emphasis on not having

students remove themselves from school without qualifications and no career aspirations.

The concept of self-perception and the impact of it on individual achievement was considered by Bourdieu. He argues that individual self-perception is developed by a number of means including schooling, and leads not only to certain educational outcomes, but also in the extreme, to the self-selected removal from the educational system. Bourdieu argues that most students in the French educational system actually remove themselves from education before they are examined. Of those who do not withdraw entirely Bourdieu says that students opt for the branches of education that are the least likely to lead to the next educational level (Bourdieu, 1990). The following quotation exemplifies the approach towards promoting university to students by the staff in this study which highlights that the staff member felt that there was an intrinsic value in going to university. The further explanation that university is not a realistic education option for some of the students perhaps illustrates that there are limitations on the students, not all of which may be academic in nature.

I - ...do you have a specific approach to telling students to go to university? Or do you just look at the whole tertiary spectrum and then fit students accordingly?

S – oh, well. We are quite keen that students should have a tertiary education. I guess it's something that, well, I was sort of a working class kid, and I went to university and it does change the rest of your life, and so I'm quite keen that the students who have the ability to get there should go there because I think it's actually really really good for them.

S – And I think for many of the students who come through, they don't have the same pressure at home, to.... Well there's no pressure to go to university, and sometimes there's no suggestions, and sometimes there's no encouragement to go there either.

S – so um. A lot of encouragement for students to go to university but also realizing that for many of them they are interested in polytechnic and that's just as good as well.

I – Yeah of course.

S – So, yes, I do encourage students to go into the trades. That's actually really difficult for some unknown reason at the moment. I just think that if students have got the ability they should consider university, because it is a life changing decision

Although this staff member acknowledged her belief in the importance of university, the school only selects certain students in the younger classes to have the information about university available to them. For example, while all of the final year students were allowed to attend a university open day, only the top students in the year 10 class were allowed to go to a university discovery day, and only the boys in the year 9 class were taken to an engineering open day. This filtering of information while meaning that the school is able to streamline the delivery of information in a way that they see is useful, actually operates in an exclusionary manner, and in the case of the boys going to the engineering presentation, sexist, way. Research into transitions has noted that information about careers needs to be available at a very early age so that students have the opportunity to shape their education to fit their end aspirations (McLaughlin, 2002) and this is further supported by Boyd et al. in their study of New Zealand students (2001). The limiting of information as is seen above by making it available to selected students only at an earlier age may well affect students' self-perception by fostering a belief that only certain people have university available to them, and that the school is involved in selecting these people. If this occurs then by the time the information becomes available to all the students in the higher classes, many students may have already shaped their aspirations and learning outcomes away from university, or perhaps even higher education in general.

The decision to study at university generally appears to have been made quite early by the students, or as a late decision when they have not been sure what they should do. One piece of New Zealand research that looks at the importance of pathways and transitions has mentioned that increasingly it is important for young people to be involved in decisions as to what they are going to do on the completion of schooling (Vaughan, 2003). As such it can be understood that these decisions are made while still at school. This trend is not unique to New Zealand, England too has experienced a greater focus on the decision made by students about their education (Hodkinson, 1996). Lauder has argued that the automatic decision to go on to higher education which is expressed by some of the students in this study is a particularly common outcome for students from middle class backgrounds (Lauder, 1999). For many of the students in this study there was the indication made that they considered university as automatically the next step in their education. This raises that potential that a number

of the students attending these lower decile schools were actually of a more middle class background. Should this be the case, and the students who are attending school from low decile schools are actually coming from home environments more equivalent to a middle class socioeconomic status, this would create a potentially different environment for a student to make decisions in. Richard James in an Australian study argues that social origins, schooling, self-perception, influence by significant others, educational aspirations, and academic achievement all interact and impact on the decisions made by students (James, 2002). These interactions therefore, when of a similar nature provide a more cohesive influencing force than if each area is attempting influence a student in different directions. An Australian student further supports the fact that students are influenced by the field and those within it by finding that although students have the ability to make decisions, they often rely on external factors to make the decision. These factors include: friends, family, and the outcome of their studies (Johnson, 1996).

Below is an extract of some of the interviews that appear to highlight one of the common experiences of making the decision to attend university:

I – So you'd worked out while you were at school that you wanted to go to uni?

L – Yeah. I wasn't always certain but I knew that that was an option.

I – What would you have done if you didn't go to uni?

L – Um probably have looked for a job. I think I was pretty sure that uni was what I wanted to do.

Another student who was currently enrolled in a postgraduate qualification said

I - ...um, so at what point do you think at your time at school, or before school did you decide that university was where you were at?

D – It just was really always expected of me. I didn't do particularly great at school but I didn't do badly and um, having at least a bursary meant that university was an option....

The many different influences over students and their decisions regarding their lives at the end of their compulsory schooling are affected by a number of different factors unique to each individual. What seems generally to be different for some of these students however is that they are deciding to attend university with no prior background in it. Hodkinson in his British study found that students largely formed their decisions about careers around areas they, or the family, had a close knowledge of and there was consideration of the value of the job or qualification undertaken (Hodkinson, 1996). Many of the students in this study were in fact following the educational paths of parents or siblings. For those few for whom university was a decision made without prior family knowledge, this decision highlights that for some students, trends regarding participation can be broken.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed both the participation statistics for the University of Canterbury and also discussed the interviews that were undertaken with the careers staff at three low decile schools in Christchurch. The statistics from the University show clearly that there are fewer students from low decile backgrounds attending university than students from decile five and higher schools. The result of this is that although the enrolment figures appear to be remaining static, there has been no notable improvement in participation rates. It is also useful to note that slightly over half of the lower decile students enrol at the University come from the top half of the South Island. This leaves nearly half of the students travelling a greater distance in order to attend the institution. The reasons behind the travelled distance may relate to perceptions of quality of the qualification, or perhaps the type of qualification gained. In travelling however, this generates questions regarding suggestions that have been made that secondary school students will only attend another institute than their local one if they have an SES position that allows it (Hughes, 1996). It has been suggested through analyses of responses from the students that some of the students behave in ways regarding their education more reflective of a middle class situation and the ability to travel to attend a tertiary institute may further support this indication.

Through the interviews with staff which covered topics regarding the delivery of career advice, and also their perception of challenges in encouraging students to aspire to university study it was seen that staff often saw limits in the likely outcomes of the students that were not necessarily academic in nature. University was seen by the staff as a viable option for students, and all three schools gave students the opportunity to meet with university liaison staff and also provided a field trip to visit at least the University of Canterbury if not other universities. Staff clearly gave the outward impression that students were given many opportunities to gain information about university as an option, however, one interview highlighted that the presentation of information by the school can at times be selective in who it is aimed at. This type of approach of providing information may send messages to students that conflict with the open and positive outlook that staff otherwise provided about their delivery of career information.

Students, in contrast to the interviews with staff tended to indicate that they had found little use in the advice given by careers staff at the school. This finding in the research was important given that schools are one of the sites of social reproduction and it would seem that their approach towards providing information has the potential to reinforce messages that only certain students are likely to attend university. It appeared that although the careers staff provide information and advice about university, students are using other means to form their decisions. This may well be in reaction to the message that through the field of the school, only certain students will gain access to the information they need in order to develop transitions plans out of school and into higher education. Students, as can be seen in later chapters consider themselves influenced to some extent by family, and also by themselves in an individual decision to attend university with the impact of staff at schools appearing to be relatively minimal. These findings regarding the delivery of careers information in the schools may highlight one of the areas in which improvements could be made in order to effectively encourage students in the message that university education is attainable.

Chapter 5

Family

Introduction

It is widely accepted within the sociology of education that one of the main influences on a young person is their family in most, if not all cultures. The way in which a family approaches education can have very strong effects on the attitudes and aspirations of children. Because of the indications in nearly all research that the family is a location of influence and socialisation regarding educational opportunity, it seemed very appropriate to address family in this study. This chapter addresses the influences that family had on the students in this study and their decisions to attend university. The discussion over family influence is written from the perspective of the students as they were asked questions directly about their families within the interviews. The issue of family often also mentioned in relation to other areas of the interview about university and schooling experiences. This chapter is divided into a discussion around the types of backgrounds that the students had, and while this chapter does not look at family histories and stories, it considers the qualifications and occupations held by parents and in some cases siblings and extended family. The second part of the chapter discusses the areas that the students themselves considered to be influential in their decisions to enter university. This latter section highlights the potential for different approaches being taken by students from non-New Zealand backgrounds to those of New Zealand children. It is shown that at least for the students interviewed in this study, the influence of family is considerable in their decision to attend university. The way influence is exhibited or interpreted varies between students however, for most of the domestic students interviewed it seems that there may well be a more self-motivation in the mixture.

In this thesis it is seen that the influences of careers staff were not considered important in the decisions students made to attend university. This finding was a theme seen in interviews with all of the students involved in the study. In this chapter

however, it can be seen that the influence of family, and in particular, parents, there is a great deal more variation in the impact made on students' decisions.

Types of influence

There is a wide range of different ways that young people can be influenced by their family and peer group. One of the particular areas of interest however is the influences that occur within families given that this is a site of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1990). The influences made by families in this current study appear to have varied considerably in the type of influence perceived by the students. What appeared in the interviews is that in much the same way as a family influences where a child goes to school, at least in some circumstances, they also influence the type of higher education that they select. These influences can be overt, covert, or perhaps not intentional at all. Regardless of the approach however, the fact that it happens at all echoes Bourdieu's theory on social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu argues not only that the tertiary decisions of people are influenced by family, but that the teaching of the need and ability to adapt to the education system begins at the pre-school level where the "assimilation of the classroom message..."(Bourdieu, 1990, p.43) is taught.

Family involvement appears to begin at a very early age and continues throughout the child's youth where parents have an active involvement (Adams et al., 2000). Nash argues in the New Zealand context that families provide an ongoing influence on their children through being constantly aware of what is happening in a child's life in the wider context than merely the type of homework or school grades (Nash, 1990). This wider involvement then allows for a more effective level of influence in regard to educational outcomes than may otherwise occur. This sense of a family that is interested in their children came through in the interviews as a theme when students were asked about the involvement that their parents had had in school while they had been attending. Nearly all the parents had attempted to go to meet the teacher evenings, and the students felt that their parents had taken an interest further than this with some noting a focus on homework as another area in which the family placed emphasis. The following quotation exemplifies the type of involvement that families had in schooling, and shows how it is likely that the type of involvement parents have

in their children's education seems likely to provide some level of influence over the decisions they make regarding tertiary education.

N – My Mum used to come to all the school events and things like that, like the school sports or something.

I – yeah and if you had meet the teacher nights sort of thing?

N – Yep, she used to come. She used to make at least one a year if she couldn't get to all of the.

I – She'd make an effort. And what about your Dad?

N – He wasn't interested. That was Mum's side of things.

Whether the influence of having only one parent involved in schooling matters makes any difference in the type of influence that can be had is uncertain. It was apparent in the case of this student that even though she noted her father had not been involved in matters relating to her education, it seemed that his lack of involvement was an implicit consent and that he had given responsibility over to the mother. The student above who is now at university after having had a gap between the end of compulsory education and enrolment at university is living at home and not paying board or rent. The ability to do this arguably comes from having a supportive family environment that has continued through from school to tertiary study a fact that is reflected in the work of Nash where one of his students noted the importance of their parents' ongoing support (Nash, 1999). While many of the parents it seems focussed on attending parent teacher nights or other events, some were more involved than this. Two of the students had parents who were involved in the Board of Trustees at the school, and another boarded with a teacher who while at school was on the Board of Trustees. The student who was boarding was an international student and spoke of also having other host families who had made an effort to attend school events.

This general feeling of support and encouragement was not one felt by all the students. One student for example noted that there was no real support for gaining a tertiary qualification in their family. The interview extract below provides an illustration of this; and although this does not appear to have been the norm for the group of students interviewed, and in many ways it is perhaps expected from existing literature that this type of comment would have been more common that it was.

M – My parents were very much everyone should go out there and get a job and that's it for the rest of your life, and so they didn't quite understand why I wanted to go to uni so they're not as supportive as they could be.

The student identifies that it was clear to her that her parents did not place a focus on higher education. It is this type of comment about a lack of focus placed on getting an education that seems to be predominant in the educational expectations found in the work done by Lauder, Nash, and in the theoretical writings of Bourdieu (Nash, 1997, Bourdieu, 1990, Hughes, 2000, Ball, 2003). In many ways this appears to be the more expected situation for students and families from lower socioeconomic positions to be in. Harker for example, in discussing the position of what he terms “disadvantaged” families states that although families may not place a focus on education and the importance of it for success, they make decisions that may be based on “opting for known ‘security’, which for many families is a synonym for ‘success’.” (Harker, 1990). For the student above while they are supported by family in their decision to attend university, initially while they were at school the family considered their daughter as a success if she left school and gained employment. This perhaps illustrates the different ways family can view success. The expectation that a child will get a job rather than pursuing further education was also raised by one of the careers staff who was interviewed in the study. They noted that despite the work they were doing they had to realise that for some of the students getting a job and bringing money into the household was more important than gaining further education.

Although the existing research into parental involvement indicates that families with a lower socioeconomic status tend to place less expectation on the attainment of education (Lauder, 1984, Nash, 1993) than families of higher SES status, it became apparent in the interviews that the students generally tended to be supported. For at least two of the students, the support went further with an expectation by family that they would attend university at the end of their compulsory schooling. One of the potential reasons for this theme appearing in this research rather than in those of Nash and Lauder (Lauder, 1984, Nash, 1993) may well be due to the fact that in this study interviewed students had already accessed a university education, whereas the main focus of the other research was on secondary school pupils. It is also possible, and is discussed below, that although the university students who were interviewed attended

low decile schools, their parents' SES was higher than the majority of the other students at the school.

Family Influence

The family environment is clearly very influential in the development of children including how they view education. While the job may often fall to schools to fix different perceived societal problems (Adams et al., 2000), the family is the site where the greatest changes can be effected as the time spent with family is a time of learning and socialisation. Part of this socialisation relates to learning attitudes towards education, and also, it has been argued, the right ways in which to learn in the education system (Adams et al., 2000). Bourdieu has theorised and researched this act of socialisation extensively and has called these learned attitudes and positions within society the habitus and social capital. He explains the process in relation to education by saying:

Because learning is an irreversible process, the habitus acquired within the family forms the basis of the reception and assimilation of the classroom message, and the habitus acquired at school conditions the level of reception and degree of assimilation of the messages produced and diffused by the culture industry, and, more generally, of any intellectual or semi-intellectual message (Bourdieu, 1990, p.43).

The argument about development at home, in theory and in practice is one that must to some extent affect families and the expectations placed on children. Nash reviews this in his interviews with parents (Nash, 1993), and in this study students talked of the involvement their parents had had in their own education. The influence of family it seems may be a conscious one, although there must also exist the ability for children to learn from unconscious messages that are generated in the home environment.

In this study although all of the students have attended a low decile school as the last school they had attended before attending university, there are a wide variety of backgrounds within this group that was explored throughout the interviews. Some of the students came from other countries, and these students appear to have attended the equivalent of quite high decile schools in their country of origin. For the majority of

students from New Zealand backgrounds that were interviewed they had lived in the same area for all of their youth and had attended their local school at primary and secondary levels. However, even within this group of students who have lived in the same area and attended the same school throughout their secondary education there are differences. These differences are those demographic factors such as ethnicity, age, and gender, but also relate to experiences of schooling as some had had experience of more than one secondary school. One student for example had also attended a private school consisting predominantly of students from high SES backgrounds in Christchurch for a number of years before his parents allowed him to return to the low decile school he had originally attended. The student made it clear in the interview that he had wanted to remain at the low decile school throughout his education but his parents thought he needed to access the “old boys’ network”. This experience of schooling seems in direct contrast to another student who wanted to attend a high decile school but had been told by her parents’ that she had to attend the local school as they believed that the school was good enough for their family. The students ranged in level of study and also age, and other than three international students, the domestic students identified as either New Zealand European or New Zealand Maori. Amongst the group there were no students of a Pacific Island origin and there was an approximately even split of male and female students. Each of the students had their own unique family experiences purely because all families are different. However, there is also the potential for variation between students due to cultural differences between families rather than other influencing factors and these can impact on family opinions regarding education.

In studies by Hughes and Nash in New Zealand, both have used the Alley Irving scale to ascertain the socioeconomic position of families separate from other considerations such as education and demographic characteristics. Although this current study did not use the Alley-Irving scale¹², it was clear from the type of jobs the students listed for their parents that some were from higher SES backgrounds than the decile rating of the school reflected which was often also reinforced through discussions over ineligibility for student allowances due to parental income levels. It can be assumed that with a family environment of higher SES and the experience of more skilled

¹² This scale is now out of date.

jobs, that the expectations regarding educational expectations for students may well echo other middle to upper class sentiments rather than what has come to be expected stereotypically as the educational outcomes of the lower classes. If this line of argument is drawn to its natural conclusion it would seem likely that these students develop educational aspirations not typical for lower SES families, given that they themselves are not from a lower SES family. The following interview excerpt perhaps best exemplifies this higher class view on education:

J – Yeah, it was like you're going to uni. There's no question about it, you have to go to uni in my family. All my father's brothers are like that as well, so all my cousins have to go to uni like I said.

...

J – I just thought you go to university, it's just another part. It never occurred to me that some education was compulsory and some was not. I never even knew that until I came to New Zealand. I thought really? You only have to study until fifth form! I didn't know that, I thought it was all compulsory.

This quotation above comes from an international student from an Asian country. She came to New Zealand to undertake part of her secondary school education in Christchurch prior to attending University. This student in another part of the interview talked of the different jobs that she wanted to do and noted that although her family had finally supported her desire to have a career teaching dance and music, this was with the expectation that she had a university qualification to use for gaining employment rather than relying only on teaching. She is strongly influenced by a family that is living in another culture, and was required to undertake a university education because of her family's opinions regarding the need for higher qualifications to do well in the employment market. The type of support or influences within the home regarding attending university varied in each case. The student quoted noted an expectation not only within the immediate and wider family for university study to be undertaken. It would seem that for the students in this study whose parents were overseas the support offered appears to be an overt expectation that the student will attend university coupled with financial in the form of the granting of money for fees and living allowances. For the domestic students, the support appears to come in the form of free or very low cost board while they are studying. It should however be noted that there were only three international students

included in the interviews and so the results are not strong enough to provide definite results.

Financial assistance while studying was an issue for the students and for most domestic students working a part-time job while attending was the norm. It is also of note that the work did not relate to the qualification they were studying for, and they had held more than one job while they were studying. It seems very likely that for those students who are not eligible for a government funded student allowance, or equivalent benefit, the need to work is more of a requirement, and these students often also held a paid job while they were in secondary school. For the international students work was also part of their university experience, and as the international student quoted above noted in another part of the interview, the work was not necessary to cover the cost of living as her parents were willing to give her the money she needed. Despite this, she noted that she had in her final few years at university wanted to work for an income because her New Zealand friends did this and she felt as though she could do it as well. The response from her parents was one of questioning why she no longer wanted their support as it was expected that they would fully financially support their child throughout their studies. For international students the financial implications of studying in New Zealand is considerable given the level of fees and additional expenses of studying and living in another country. The financial undertaking by these students' parents is also considerable, while on top of this there is the difficulty in sending a child far away from the home to pursue their education.

One of the themes that was relatively widely reported by all the students was their perception that their parents had no influence in their decision to attend university. Rather than talking about parents influencing their decision, students appear to indicate that it was a decision they reached on their own but which their parents have generally supported. One domestic student spoke of being able to go home for dinner on his way to work, while other students spoke of living at home while they were studying. While indirect financial support and supportive family environment contributes towards university participation, the actual influence to attend university for some was attributed to another sibling attending university. Having another person in the family who they could talk about study with was clearly of some

comfort to at least one student who indicated that they had not only talked to their sister about study options, but also met with them on campus regularly on a social level. New Zealand families seem to provide support without being at the level of the students overtly recognising an influence if there is one at all in making the decision to attend university.

Why the students do it

Thus far in this chapter, the discussion has largely focussed on the financial contributions that families make in order to facilitate studying at university, or their ability to provide some partial assistance to their children while they are studying. It has also been noted that for many of the students interviewed despite their attendance at a low decile school the income of their families is above the threshold to qualify them for government assistance such as the student allowance¹³. These factors relate largely to the everyday reality of dealing with the decision to attend university but not in relation to the influence over the actual decision-making process of choosing to attend university. Although it was noted that students identified different levels of influences being made by the different families, it is important to note that the level of influence was reported by the students themselves rather than their parents and as such relies on an interpretation of what they felt was important. Had the parents been interviewed, or an observation of life within the family been undertaken it is very likely that additional information would have been gathered, although such work was outside the scope of the study. Nevertheless, the students did report different reasons for attending university and while for one student it was clearly important to her that she attend because of a feeling of duty to her parents:

E – I just always felt indebted to do it for my parents because they've always thought I was really smart. I never thought I was but they have always thought I was. So I thought I have to go to uni otherwise... not that they'd be disappointed, but that a thing inside me just says I have to go.

¹³ The current income thresholds for students under 25 applying for student allowance are based on parental income. If the student is living away from home parental income cannot be over \$63 825.84 before tax and for students living at home there is a threshold of \$57 981.04 before tax. Students can also earn up to \$180 before tax per week from their own employment before their allowance levels are affected (Sourced from <http://www.studylink.govt.nz/pdf/2006-help-for-students.pdf>).

Another student relayed a very similar sentiment in a different way:

H – I guess it's implied that it will happen but I don't think they would have objected if I had have wanted to do something else. But it's just, you know, by default that this is what will happen that's just the culture of it. Because as I said, my parents, my grandparents, most of the family are graduates, this is just how it goes you know.

It was not only a feeling of a need to make parents proud however that directed some students towards university; another student noted very clearly that they felt that their parents wanted their children to do well in education as a way of proving that the family was doing well. Whether the parents actually verbalised this, or it is an interpretation on the part of the student is unknown, however, it brings the possibility that families exert influence in non-obvious or even arguably, unconscious ways.

N – My mother always encouraged the academic side of us, so she was always really proud. She was quite bright herself, but she'd left school early herself and so she was really fostering her daughters. And also that was where we got our self esteem from as well, if you do well in school then that's a good thing. Dad, no. And I think also, I don't know how far you want me to go into this but they didn't have a particularly good relationship themselves so I think the idea that their daughters were doing well at school was a good thing.

These interview excerpts exhibit some of the different forms of influences that may be given by family. There is however every chance that these verbal or non-verbal prompts by families about the importance they placed on a tertiary education were said, or done by the family with no knowledge of the impact they were having. Not only is it possible that the parents were influencing the students into attending university, it could be that for some of the students, the influence was so subtle that they too did not realise it. Although some of the students did not feel their family was influential in their decision it would seem that there was an overall acceptance by the families regarding their child's educational decisions. Because of this lack of acknowledgment students tended to see other people as influential in their decision, such as siblings, or indicated that they had reached the decision themselves. Siblings it would seem for at least two of the students have played an important part in their attendance at university through possessing the knowledge of the institution and therefore being able to provide advice, but also by also attending university there is a support for each other physically on the campus. All of these influences are very

possible, however it seems unlikely that the opinion of family plays no part in the decision.

For some of the students when asked who they considered influential in their decision to attend university, they were unable to provide any group, or person who had influenced them. When the students were asked however what job they would like when they completed their studies, the jobs and careers they imagined themselves doing required the university education they were undertaking. Although not appearing to be able to identify an influencing factor, the decision to want a particular job and to then attend university for a number of years appears to require some amount of forethought. Whether students while they are still in secondary school are able to plan ahead towards a career without some involvement by family or friends is not identifiable in the material gathered for this study although it seems more likely than not that they will have received some form of encouragement.

Conclusion

Family it seems plays a different role in different families when the students are at university. For some families it seems that there is an ongoing financial support as well as emotional support while for other families it seems that the ability to offer full financial support is not possible while their children are studying. The students felt themselves supported by their families however they all held employment in order to provide for the costs of living. Out of all of the different forms of support there is a real concern that students once at university have difficulty with financial assistance through government allowances due to their parents' income being over the acceptable threshold. How the government policy impacts on domestic students by setting assistance criteria based on parental income levels is potentially quite considerable given that nearly of the students interviewed held paid employment while studying. This distraction away from concentrating on studies has implications for the encouragement of participation in education.

Students realised that parents' were there to support their decision to attend university and support them in ways such as providing a home to return to. For some this meant

remaining in the home, or moving home while they were studying, while for others there were trips home for family dinners. There seemed to be a noticeable difference between the situation of international and domestic students when they reported the types of support provided. Both groups have supportive parents however, the granting of financial support seemed more common amongst the international students than the domestic ones. Given that one of the careers councillors noted that some students have to go out to work to bring another income into the family, for these students there was no such pressure from their family although some had held employment while they were at school, and nearly all of the younger students also held employment while they were at university.

Although there are many different levels in the influence and support that families can have over children it appeared from the students in this study that the families of the students both supported their decision to attend university and were there to offer any support that they could. On top of this support however is the questions of the levels of influence that the family has over the actual decision to attend university. It was seen in an interview with an international student that in their family there was an overt and express expectation that university study would be undertaken, while other students said that their families expressed that they would be happy with whatever their children did as long as it was honest. It would seem that none of the students was going against their parents' wishes or intentions by choosing to go to university and it is this point that perhaps highlights what the students did not expressly state, that their family can be influential in the decisions that are made regarding tertiary education.

It seems that family is one of the factors that has the ability to influence students both through the support and encouragement they give to their children while they are in compulsory schooling, and also from the earliest age, through to while they are actually participating in tertiary education. The type of support and involvement may vary between families, however it seems that there is an overall feeling of support felt by the students that may translate into influence over the decision despite students often failing to acknowledge to this. The following chapter discusses another of the influential groups who students spoke of during the interviews, and who should be of interest to policy developers looking for ways to encourage participation. Discussion

over peer groups provided some useful insight into the way in which young students sort themselves socially in ways to reflect their academic aspirations.

Chapter 6

Peer groups

Introduction

This thesis has so far addressed the impact that a number of factors can have on education options and the way that encouraging participation is approached. The interviews throughout the thesis have shown that people have the potential to be influential in the decisions made by others about education. Although policy is a strong and centralised way to affect change within the education sector as an entirety, family and staff at school (who are responsible for implementing policy) have been highlighted as two groups also with the ability to influence the decision to attend or not attend university. The interviews showed that while family provided some influence, the students in the study felt that the careers staff were of no influence or assistance in their decision. This chapter will consider a third group of people who create an influence on young people, their peer group. For the purposes of this chapter, peer groups refer to the broader group of students of a similar age, friendship groups refer to groups of friends, and in the context of the school, there are groups of classmates which reflect groups within the peer group sorted by the school into ability groups.

The aim of this chapter is to address the area of discussion regarding peer influence and how it was presented within the interviews with the students who volunteered in this study. The students at times made mention of the actions of their peers relating to the culture of the school or the expectations that were formed in groups regarding educational outcomes. While at school students saw a separation socially between those students who were perceived as likely to go to university and those who did not intend for this educational outcome. Whether this consciousness of class affects educational outcome is difficult to determine definitively from this research, however it would seem that the culture within a school could well be affected by the type of interrelations occurring between different groups.

This chapter will address the topic of peer groups and their influence over decisions to attend university. There seem to have been two main ways that students interacted: with members of their peer group, but also the interaction with between the school and the peer groups. Although this chapter discusses the importance of peer groups on decision making, for most people there will be a combination of factors that lead them to make decisions regarding their participation in tertiary education.

The influence of peers

The literature defines family and school influence as being central to the influence and socialisation of young people. It seems however to largely overlook peer groups as another potentially influential group. Whether they are friendship groups, classmates, or the wider peer group, peers have the ability to provide an influence over the decisions that students make in addition to decisions about non-compulsory education. Students can be influenced by their peers in their opinions and attitudes towards education in general, for example, the approach taken towards a school environment such as teaching styles (Hawk and Hill, 1996, Boaler, 2000). Taking into consideration the effect that education can have on the development of friendships, Wilkinson, in a review of a wide range of literature relating to peer groups and education, found that within peer groups, friendship groups form and these different groups exert different influences over the members (Wilkinson et al., 2000). This can mean that within a peer group there are friendship groups developing quite different attitudes towards education. Despite the fact that peer groups are not homogenous in their attitudes and aspirations about education, it should be realised that as with family and school that friends and peers will influence students. It seems unlikely however, that any one group is the primary or sole factor in the decision made by students to pursue a particular educational outcome.

In the current study students interviewed often mentioned that their friends from secondary school had gone to university and although they did not identify this as being a motivating factor in itself to attend higher education, it appears to have been included as part of their transition from school to university. Wilkinson et al. indicate that friendships made by children are based on similarities between students such as

“attitudes, values, activities, and personality” (Wilkinson et al., 2000, p.16), but that friendships can also be developed to reflect factors such as “gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status” (Wilkinson et al., 2000, p.16). This similarity of experience appears to have existed in this current study with students having similar education aspirations and also for some students, similar family situations to their friends. This wide range of areas of similarity give students a base upon which to form friendships, however, it seems unlikely that the main basis for the friendships would be educational aspirations.

It is acknowledged that within the cultural capital theory of Bourdieu, and as seen in school choice research (Ball, 2003, Nash, 1997), class impacts heavily on education outcomes. It would seem likely that students are aware of class issues while they are forming friendships at school and it is clear from one interview with a student quoted below that they were aware of social class differences while at school. The school attended by this student was the only one that attracted students from another higher socio-economic part of town although this was due to it being the closest high school to the higher SES areas. This may have allowed for a more pronounced difference in social classes within the peer groups as there appeared to be a real understanding of class within the school. Nevertheless, this realisation of class difference was not unique to that school.

N - ...all those kids were the ones doing Economics and were allowed to do [Economics]... They were the ones you wished you were. There was a real class thing when I was there; I don't know if it's there now. There's like Lyttelton kids, and Heathcote kids, and then snobby Sumner and Mt Pleasant kids, and then there was us lot....

It can be seen from this interview excerpt that students not in the advantaged social classes are aware of the differences in the groups. This suggests that at an institutional level there was also a difference in the subjects allowed to be studied based on class. This quotation comes from an adult student who had a considerable break of time between the end of their schooling (which they did not complete) and their enrolment at university. The effects of sorting seemed to show that depending on where the students were from determined their social class within the peer group, and also impacted on their ability to study due to the schools' predetermined decisions

about their academic ability as has also been seen in the studies of Ball, Nash and Jefferies (Ball, 2000; Nash, 1999; Jefferies, 1998).

In addition to the potential for students and families to be conscious of the social networks available at schools it would seem that peer groups have the ability to sort themselves by appearance into groups that reflect class and educational aspirations. The quotation below indicates not only that the students are aware of the different socio-economic status of students, but that they do this by deciphering outward appearances. The student indicates that some people have a certain way of presenting themselves that in her view clearly gives an indication of non-visual characteristics such as a particular family situation or educational outcome. This classifying of students based on appearance and a class awareness reflects the findings of an American study that found students were very aware of the social class of their family and formed friendship groups that reflected the various social class groups (Brantlinger, 1993). Within this research, it was also noted that there was within the schools hostility towards the different groups with the higher income students tending towards a derogatory opinion of lower income students while lower income students were also derogatory towards the higher income students. Both groups mentioned experiences of being bullied about their social class position (Brantlinger, 1993). In the current study there was no explicit discussion around pressure in the form of bullying or other aggressive tactics, however there was clearly sorting done amongst the students based on academic ability as judged by individual appearance which is affected by the students' decisions regarding what particular appearances represent. The stigmatizing of people based on appearances was also seen in the study by Blackman where a group of girls presented themselves in a particular way which caused their peers to view them as 'weird', despite the fact that within the group they considered their actions and views to be normal (Blackman, 1998). This 'weirdness' concept, or the concept of being different from the generally accepted norm, seems to be evident in this study with the student quoted indicating a seemingly complete separation between the group they belonged to and the majority group of students who are described as being from broken homes and having messy hair buns.

J – But at school everyone who was from...you know how everything is about social status, ish. Everyone who was from the same little group: my parents

are still together, we have family meetings, you know, my parents have some high paying job. They were in one little group, and everyone else was I like grunge music, and I'm from a broken family, and I like peroxidizing my hair blonde and wearing lots of eye liner. They were in another group.

...

J – That's right the multiple piercings and the one in the navel which I think is tacky, and stuff, and the chunky shoes, and the messy hair buns. I don't like messy buns. Those were all in one group, and we were all in one group. So it's like a distinct group and you just didn't talk to the other ones.

While the student in the above excerpt clearly identified herself as being in a separate group from the people with “multiple piercings” and “messy buns”, the situation was not unique to just that school. At all four schools in the study students were able to identify that there were groupings of students who were expecting, and were expected to attend university. In the above interview excerpt, it is clear that at the school they attended there was a definable social class based separation within the peer group into friendship groups linked to the choice to continue their education or not. Whether the groups once formed remained relatively fixed is unknown, however it would seem that social class awareness (and linked to this, education related aspirations) is common amongst adolescents, as was found in an Australian study by Poole (Poole, 1990) and has been noted in other class based research by Beverley Skeggs (Skeggs, 1997). In Skeggs' study of working class girls in their transition out of school she noted how the women were occupied with their own appearance as well as their possessions such as their house in an attempt to disguise their class. The ongoing preoccupation in disguising class highlights that certain appearances portray different messages, and that some classes are considered more acceptable to belong to than others (Skeggs 1997). In this current study the student quoted above realised that certain attitudes did not fit with those of her friends and that this could be identified through dyed hair and messy buns as a hairstyle, thus making appearance an important factor in social class identification. The sorting into friendship groups by peers is largely missing from education related literature, with most authors seeming to focus on individual students' responses to the institutional pressures of family and school. It would seem however, that if peers are influencing each other and potentially sorting themselves into groups reflecting educational aspirations then this is an area that needs consideration in attempting to improve the rates of tertiary participation of some groups.

Even though social class is amongst the factors that seem to influence higher education, there are some students who are educated in a lower class environment but continue through to university study, and it is these students that have been the focus of this study. The interview excerpt below shows that although this student was in a group of people who went to university, their norm was not the norm of the majority of the students at their school. It is perhaps their differences which have allowed them to create a separate identity for themselves. This process of creating a separate and different identity may allow some of the students to foster their intentions for university with other similarly intentioned students rather than be involved with a friendship group or classmates who do not share this goal.

I – You said a few of your mates came.

E – Yeah.

I – But do you think it was normal in your school?

E – I don't think so. At school there's all these international students and then all the naughty year 9s that they're trying to keep under control. They care about us, but we're not top priority.

In the above quotation there is a sense that in addition to a friendship group existing with shared interests of tertiary education, there is also a feeling of not being the priority of the school. There was also clearly a feeling that transitioning from school into university was not the normal outcome for the students in the school which created a point of difference between the friendship group and their peers. Whether this feeling the students have about each other has an influence on the way the school treats them is unknown, however, it would seem that there is a certain realisation that the school does treat certain groups of students in different ways as was seen in the chapter on schools and careers teachers, and is considered later in this chapter.

Although a reasonably common theme amongst the students in the study was to have friends who were going to university on the completion of their secondary school, this was not the experience of all the students. For at least one of the students for whom university was not a shared aspiration within their friendship group there is a sense of conflict at times between their decision to attend university and that of their friends who have chosen not to undertake further education. They described this as not

causing a problem in the friendship, but as something that is verbalised in conversations between the friends on occasion. The quotation below suggests that despite friendship groups sometimes being formed around common interests such as education (Wilkinson et al., 2000) this does not always have to be the basis for a friendship to develop, and serves to highlight the fact that for some students their education is an individual aspiration. This may further illustrate the pressures placed on young people to remain within one friendship group.

I – So you think you’ve been pretty well supported by your family and friends in coming to uni. You don’t feel like you’ve been alienated at all.

B – No, not at all, although some people are a bit like, sometimes like... when you accidentally say something they don’t understand, they go “oh just ‘cause you go to uni”. It’s not much, just a bit of a joke.

I – But it still comes up every now and then.

B – Oh yeah, it’s not something I get really worried about or anything.

School affirmation of peer group aspirations

Schools are a site for peers to meet and interact in. The interaction is not only between peers however, the school and the students as a group seem also to have the potential to influence depending on the nature of the interactions. The treatment by the school of approaching education decisions on a group basis rather than considering individual students raises some important considerations in this chapter. While students are shown to be aware of the social class of their peers, it would seem that the school too often sorts based on a grouping process. Through this there is the potential for students to see this grouping as a reinforcement of expected outcomes and actions. Interviews with staff and students in the Auckland AIMHI study for example, showed that there was pressure within the schools to not achieve. There were reports of physical and vocal ways to pressure students, such as destruction of property and name calling, and it appeared in the report through an interview that it was not considered acceptable to achieve academically until the sixth and seventh form levels of school (Hawk and Hill, 1996). Within the current study it appeared from the interviews that the majority of the work of exposing students to information about university was retained until the senior school years. One of the effects of such

a move within the school may well have been to send a message that university was only an option for those who had already chosen to do their senior schooling. This would also suggest that the decision to attend university may become more acceptable to peers at the higher levels of their secondary schooling. This approach however conflicts with the fact that most of the students involved in this study, had decided on attending university at an earlier age than this.

It is not only the delivery of careers advice and the culture of the school that may impact on peers; the act of streaming may provide another pedagogic activity through which the school can influence students in their opinions about themselves and their peers. All of the schools in this study indicated that they streamed children into classes based on academic ability at least during the junior years of their secondary education. The impact of streaming on educational outcomes is considered within the literature as it would appear that in streaming students by ability they may become aware of an expectation of certain academic outcomes (Boaler et al., 2000). For instance, in the research by Boaler, William and Brown, *Students' Experiences of Ability Grouping - disaffection, polarisation and the construction of failure*, the students in the lower ability classes felt that they were expected to learn only at a certain rate and were not given more advanced work even when they requested it, while the students in the higher ability classes were given more complex work and the teacher did not decrease the work level even when asked as it was felt that the students should have been able to work at that level (Boaler et al., 2000). Because of this potential for streaming to be seen as a negative influence for some students, one teacher was at pains to note that it was not called streaming in their school. They did however acknowledge that the students were aware that classes were based on ability. Bourdieu argues that the work of schools is undertaken in such a manner that reflects the habitus of the dominant group and it is expected that all students are able to access this. Clearly students are aware that they do not all conform to this expectation and therefore there is a need for the school to mask the actions that they take. Bourdieu describes these actions by the school as:

The culture of the elite is so near to that of the school that children from the lower middle class (and *a fortiori* from the agricultural and industrial working class) can only acquire with great effort something which is *given* to the children of the cultivated classes – style, taste, wit – in short, those attitudes

and aptitudes which seem natural in members of the cultivated classes and naturally expected of them precisely because (in the ethnological sense) they are the *culture* of that class (Bourdieu, 1974, p.39, cited in Harker, 1990).

Many low decile students remove themselves from education prior to reaching the senior school classes. There are clearly a number of factors that lead to students leaving; included in these must be the self-belief that higher education will be unsuitable for the individual students. For some students who desire a career or job that does not require higher qualifications additional years at school may be unsuitable, however many are led to exit their education early and streaming may well form part of the influence to leave school if the student feels there is an expectation they will not be academic. The quotation below highlights the attrition at the school this student attended, and also the different pathways that the remaining students took.

A – Well not many people finished seventh form in my school

...

A – There was only six or seven graduated I think, and like some went to Otago, and like up north and stuff, and there was only five of us that came here in the end.

...

I – Wow. And so of those sort of seven left, were there some who weren't going to uni, or not going to do anything, or were they all polytech, uni people? Were they staying there because they were going onto tertiary, or because they thought they should do seventh form?

A – I don't know, I think it was that they thought they should do seventh form, like some of them went and got apprenticeships, some of them didn't pass it.

In the case above the reason why the rest of the students who would have started secondary school with the six or seven who remained opted out of their education is unknown, however, Bourdieu would argue that for some of them, their social class affects their educational decisions due to social and cultural capital drawing them into areas of work not related to higher education (Bourdieu, 1990). Social class clearly appears to have an impact on the way that peer groups are formed and is also reflected in the way that ability groupings are made in schools. One student is quoted below expressing a negative attitude towards the streaming while they were at school,

describing it from a race based perspective. This student in other parts of the interview also felt there was a different treatment of students in the school depending on SES.

N – Yeah I hated being at [name of school]. I never wanted to go there. I actually wanted to go to Girls' High and I actually got in and my father had this concept that “you'll go to the same school as your brothers”.... And the third and fourth form I got put in classes with really stupid people, and yeah... I was probably one of the top people in the class and they were like yeah. I just felt like they shoved all the Maoris in one class. I just felt like that.

... I just thought I was stupid when I was at school. That I was no good, because they told me, “oh you'll never go to university”. And they convinced me that.

The above quotation, although only the experience of one student, highlights the potential for students to interpret the different actions of the school and the home in ways from which they are intended. The idea that many of the students in the class were Maori may further serve to reinforce an understanding that students from certain groups, not just class based, but ethnically orientated are not expected to achieve academically. This can become a belief held within the group as well as by external groups¹⁴. There was an expectation held within the classmates that students put into that group would not achieve, and it seems that the students behaved accordingly. For those students from a Maori background who do go on to university, the influence of ethnicity is not necessarily diminished since as a group there are number of factors that may increase their attrition rates while at university as well. These factors include cultural capital related issues such as being the first in a family to attend university and the social capital factor of peer influence “who often tell them that their time and money are being wasted” (McKenzie, 2005). The impact of peers here are being identified as coming from an ethnically based grouping, which research would indicate may have a stronger influence over the members of the group than other types of characteristics which generate groups of people (Jefferies, 1998). This additionally highlights the way in which peers although able to be supportive are also able to discourage people from attending university.

¹⁴ Research undertaken by Boyd et al. (2001) found that Maori students tended to leave school at an earlier age than European and Asian students and were more likely to report that they were unsure of their intentions upon finishing school. Maori students were also more likely to report dissatisfaction with careers advice and enrolled in lower numbers than European and Asian students in universities.

The selection of a school for students by parents has been seen in research by Ball (2003) and Hughes (2000) to be based on a number of different factors. Included in these are considerations over the types of students that attend the school and therefore whether a student will benefit socially from attending the school. The student in this study clearly shows that although their experience of schooling was not enjoyable socially or academically, the views of her family, particularly her father restricted her school selection options. The opinion of a school being good enough for a whole family may well be representative of a lower SES view of education where the value of the different education options available are not as well appreciated as in the higher SES families. Therefore although family may have little direct influence over the students that their children choose to socialise with while they are at school, the habitus and class they bestow on them, in conjunction with their ability to select the most appropriate school limits the peer group available to the individual. The effects this may have on the individual student can be great. As she said in the interview, she became convinced that she was “stupid” and would never go to university, in this students’ situation it took a number of years and a divorce for her to decide to enter tertiary education. Nash argues that it is a characteristic of the working classes is to reject school and it is therefore “those who have lost their class-derived capacity to reject the official meanings of the school, and at the risk of compromising that class solidarity so central to working-class culture, set themselves apart by their pursuit of a trajectory of individual mobility” (Nash, 1999, p.73) that are able to succeed. This current student clearly fits within this group identified by Nash, including the individual mobility of gaining access to education.

Theory

In considering what sociological theory states about the influence of peers in education decisions Bourdieu remains largely silent. This is of some concern as it seems likely that peer interactions whether about education or not are an influencing factor on the members of those peer groups. Whether it is social or cultural capital that contributes to the forming of certain friendship groups along class divisions, once the capital is held within the group it can be shared with those members. Although

social class, and within this, the effects of cultural and economic capital as well as the individual influence of habitus, are seen to be a filter for who gains access to university study, there are contributing groups who may influence individuals in particular ways, through the possession of social capital.

In both Bourdieu's book *Reproduction in Education and Society* (1990) and the shorter consideration of the topic in his chapter 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction' in the book *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change* (Brown, 1973), Bourdieu fails to consider the influence that young people may have on each other. While Bourdieu includes in his analysis such items as the use of books for leisure and museum attendance as activities that aid in the reproduction and maintenance of class, he omits peers as a potential influence. By recreating class and therefore social differences between groups there is, Bourdieu argues, a difference between what people from different classes speak about in social interaction, and the activities they expose their friends and families to. Within this limiting of who is able to interact because of class differences there is the potential that Bourdieu expects peer groups to form around class boundaries although he does not state this. The lack of consideration of peer influence may well have had an ongoing impact in educational research given the general lack of consideration of peer influence on educational outcomes despite it being relatively commonly considered in health related research such as the Christchurch based study on teenage peer group norms regarding alcohol usage by Abel (Abel and Plumridge, 2004).

Bourdieu argues that one of the control mechanisms exercised by schools in general is that of limiting the amount of social mobility possible between the dominant and dominated classes (Harker, 1990), and it does this through different actions towards different social classes of students. Within discussions on the selection of a school for children there is perhaps implicitly the consideration of the culture of the school towards areas such as educational, social and physical achievement that is offered in those schools. While attending school, students sort themselves into friendship groups reflective of social class categories which also seem to reflect educational aspirations. It would seem that the students in this study are aware of this process of sorting given an awareness exhibited by at least one student that the school seemed to place all the

Maori students in one class, and that this class was not expected to achieve academically. Although such actions by the school may be performed for different pedagogic reasons, the message that it sends to the students might be quite different. The effects of schooling practices serve, in Bourdieu's argument to ensure that some students succeed academically and others exit the education system early (Bourdieu, 1990). Such activities undertaken by the school create different outcomes for students include the selection of only certain students for exposure to information about certain education options, streaming by ability; and less overt processes such as using different language, or setting different expectations from different students in regard to their education within the same classes. In causing these acts to appear as part of the schooling process, the self-perception induced exiting from the education system does not necessarily highlight these external influences on students. In regard to situations where schools group based on ethnicity it seems that there are a number of problems that can arise as is highlighted below in a quotation from a study *Maori Participation in Tertiary Education Barriers and Strategies to Overcome Them*:

In some instances recounted, Maori children were labelled merely because they were Maori, because of experiences teachers had had with older siblings or other whanau members, or because of the Primary reports without further investigation of the child's ability. It is suggested that this labelling eventually rubs off on the self image of the Maori child (Jefferies 1997, p.80).

Because peer groups operate within schools as well as outside of the school boundaries it can be expected that there is an interaction between the "diffuse education" developed between peers and the "institutionalised education" of schools (Bourdieu, 1990). This interaction may well mean that although in Bourdieu's view schools are the location of social reproduction, and aid in the continuance of class separation, peer groups fit within this framework of influence through their attendance and interaction with the school. It cannot however be suggested that the school and peers are the two sole influencing factors, family is clearly also involved in the development of differentiated class outcomes (Bourdieu, 1990). Family too interacts with the school in such a way that may influence peer groups as students develop their friendship groups having grown up in a home environment that has taught them about societal expectations, as well as attitudes towards education and educational outcomes. These different groups that are able to exert influence over individuals

seem more likely to provide a supportive environment if they are all giving a similar message to the individual. It therefore appears important that work be done to explore the ways that peers are involved with education related decisions in New Zealand in the hopes that there are ways to encourage support amongst themselves.

Although Bourdieu's arguments about social and cultural capital do not encompass peer groups, it would seem that the influence of these on individuals may at the most basic levels, impact on the type of friendship groups that are formed. It was seen in this current study, and in overseas research (Ball, 2000, Brantlinger, 1993, McKenzie, 2005, Blackman, 1998) that friends tend to share similar experiences and opinions through their interactions and individual experiences. Bourdieu would argue that these experiences and opinions are formed and influenced by the class of the individual and their family (Bourdieu, 1990). If it can be expected that the social capital of the individuals influences their choices in making friends, then the few students in this current study who went to university despite having little family support and friends that did not share the goal are all the more extraordinary. Although class by itself may not affect the students in the way that they interact with their peers, the capital that goes with certain experiences appears to. It is perhaps the considerations of the ways these different peer groups interact and are interacted with that needs to be the focus of further research and policy consideration when the question of participation by under-represented groups is considered in the future. Aiming at peer groups may well be a new approach to the problem of participation in education, and the impact of class differences in educational attainment given they are a potentially influential group that has largely been left unconsidered in research and theory.

Conclusion

Within the interviews with the students one of the most striking factors that arose was that they clearly had formed friendships at school that reflected intentions to attend university, there was a clear consciousness amongst the students about who would go to university and who would not. This type of information may easily be gained through talking to each other, sharing intended outcomes at careers days, or visits to

different educational institutes, however, students indicated that there were also visual characteristics such as hairstyles of students which were able to indicate likely educational outcomes rather than talking about the topic with each other. The ability for students to use visual clues to give an indication of educational aspirations indicates that as with the American study by Brantlinger (Brantlinger, 1993) the students are very aware of class differences. The ordering of peer groups into class related groups is potentially problematic in regard to the issue of participation in education as it would seem the different groups are able to form different commonly shared beliefs about their educational outcomes.

It is not only peers that interact and have the potential to influence each other, the school it would seem can also generate influence through the way it treats different students. In particular it would seem that schools, through the pedagogic process of streaming have the ability to influence students in regards to their educational outcomes due to the impact that being placed in a particular class. The expectations that are placed on the students in the different classes may also be different for the lower classes than the higher ones. Placing peers within the school allows for social interaction to occur both amongst the group and also with the school. These interactions can help in the development or maintenance of cultures of learning within the school. It seems possible that students, by being influenced about their likely outcomes can then start to develop cultures within their groups that ensure that these expectations are realised. This was seen in a study in Auckland where the culture in the decile one schools was often one of actively seeking to alienate people who wanted to achieve (Hawk and Hill, 1996). In contrast, the schools in Christchurch involved in this study did not seem to experience this type of behaviour but in may be much more prevalent in those groups who did not go through to tertiary education. The students represented in this study clearly still have an awareness of being different to their peers by aspiring to university study.

Overall this chapter has discussed the way in which young people can influence other young people and the way the school can be involved in this process. It seems that generally the students within this current study feel that the friendship groups they have formed while at school shared similar educational aspirations, and that these friendships have lasted through to university. What was interesting about the

formation of these groups at school was that they were aware that within the school they attended their group of friends was different due to their educational aspirations, and were treated in some instances differently by the school as well as the friendship groups they chose. The sorting of peer groups may reflect the impact of schooling on the peer group given that nearly all of the schools use streaming of students into classes based on academic ability. It is not clear how the school affects peer groups and their educational expectations, however, it would seem that there is a very real possibility that the way groups of students are treated in the school may influence the view they form of themselves and their group.

Peer groups appear largely unconsidered in educational research, but it has been identified they are very capable of influencing members in their group in a positive or a negative way. The students interviewed in this study generally experienced a supportive peer group regarding their decision to attend university, and for many of the students, their friends also attended university after completing school. For those students who did not have friends with similar aspirations, while they still consider themselves supported by their friends, there are times when the difference of having a tertiary education arises in their everyday interactions with friends. The potential for peers may have the ability to create a culture amongst friendship groups and classmates of success, however further research is needed to explore this. Any developments such as this must surely hold the potential to encourage more students from low decile schools into university participation.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

At the beginning of this thesis Roy Nash talks of lower class children growing up with the same aspirations as their middle and upper class peers but that they don't achieve the realisation of them. This is a good summary of my reasoning for undertaking research on access to university and the participation in it by students from lower class backgrounds because there is an ongoing difference in participation rates between social classes that in an egalitarian New Zealand that needs to be addressed. The difference however between the students Nash is speaking of and those in this study is that the students studied here have realized their dreams of attending university despite having attended a lower decile school. This point of difference was intentional when the research was first developed in the hopes that the students who have attended university may be able to identify certain aspects of their lives that allowed them to attend university where the majority of their classmates did not. Despite the difficulties involved with attempting to locate students who had attended low decile schools, there were further complications in discovering that some of the students who attend low decile schools are not from lower SES backgrounds. This finding, although largely unexpected at the start point of the research has shown through as being one of a number of themes previously unrealized in other research.

The thesis for ease of reference and discussion about the different aspects of the students' lives is broken up into chapters that cover the impact of policy, family and peers as these were the main themes which were covered in the interviews. Throughout these different chapters a number of different factors were identified and perhaps the most noticeable theme that ran through the interviews was the self-perception for most of the students that they would be able to achieve entrance to university. The road to higher education is unique for each student that travels it

although there are some themes that appear to be more common than not amongst their experiences. It these themes that hopefully will generate some new areas of interest in attempting to gain greater participation rates. This chapter serves as a summary of the key themes that were raised in this thesis, and at the end of the chapter provides a list of recommendations for anyone choosing to undertake research on the topic of participation in tertiary education.

Family

Family is of some interest to sociologists in many areas other than education. In regard to education however it would seem that many studies focus on family in much the same way that Bourdieu does (Ball, 2000, Ball, 2003, Hughes, 1994, Hughes, 1995, Hughes, 1996, Hughes, 1997, Hughes, 2000, Hughes and Pearce, 2003, Lauder, 1984, Nash, 1990, Nash, 1993, Nash et al., 1995, Nash, 1997, Nash, 1999 Nash, 2000), as a socializing factor in the lives of young children. In this current study students were asked about their family and whether they influenced the decision to attend university or not, but also about the types of support that the family gave to the students while they were at school, and while they were at university. Of note it would seem that the biggest differences between students interviewed in this study was the contrast in the experience of domestic students and international students studying in New Zealand. Their expressions of SES culture were quite different particularly in regard to family expectations of education outcome, and the support offered while the students were studying. While nearly all of the students felt that their families supported them in their decision to attend university, for international students the support tended also to be financial in the form of families paying allowances while they were studying. The New Zealand families did provide financially however it seemed to be indirect financial support through free board at home for some students, and emotional support through taking an interest and offering a home base for the students to return to while they were studying. Although it can be assumed that the parents of the international students (who were not generally from a lower class background) also offered emotional support, there was an additional factor that the students noted which was largely absent from the narratives of the domestic students. It would seem that for the students from other

countries there was an air of taken for “grantedness” that they would attend university, an expectation formed at an early age that was not seen in the interviews with the domestic students. One student spoke of how they did not realize that some education was not compulsory before they came to New Zealand which illustrates how taken for granted higher education can be amongst some families. This type of contrast of taking education for granted compared to other students for whom higher education was not so determined illustrates differences in habitus. While these students all shared very similar schooling experiences having attended low decile schools in Christchurch, their intentions at an individual level are clearly very different. It is the individual nature of educational attainment that Nash argues is characteristic of lower class education participation (Nash, 1999) in contrast to the higher class students who view their education with a sense of inevitability. While the number of students that were interviewed for this study is not enough for this to be extrapolated further than just these students it does present the possibility that different cultures place different types of influence over their children.

While the students in the study spoke of family interest and support in their education, it would seem that a higher than expected number of students had a parent who was actively involved in the running of the school through either Board of Trustees or Parent and Teacher Associations than the rest of the school population. Although not all of the students noted an involvement by their parents during school, it is possible that the decision to attend university was further influenced by the interest that their parents exhibited during their compulsory schooling. This was however not the situation for all of the students, for some, their enrolment at university was contrary to the outcomes that were expected of them. These few students for whom university was not the expected outcome appeared to indicate that there were few external supports or mechanisms that encouraged their enrolment and presented themselves as very self driven. Regardless of whether the students had parents that were involved or not, reporting no real influence in the decision to attend university was for the domestic students a common situation, although, they all expressed that once at university they are supported in their decision by family and friends. It remains possible that the types of influences were performed in a manner not recognized by the student when thinking about how they made their decision. Such an influence would reflect the early socialization that is discussed by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1990),

and also witnessed by Adams (Adams et al., 2000) who found that the socialization regarding education begins at a very early age and continues if parents are actively involved with the child's development throughout their education. Research by Boyd, Chalmers and Kumekawa also found that for students from lower decile schools attributed careers information to making the decisions about post-compulsory education outcomes while higher decile students relied on family members for their advice (Boyd et al., 2001). This is in contrast to what the students in this study indicated it highlights again the influence of family on decisions when they possess an understanding of education available for their children. If the family was influential in the way of providing an environment where the students were unaware of their influence there is the possibility that the student takes information about education from the family as part of their everyday interactions rather than overt influential behaviour.

Despite the different experiences of students regarding their families, the chapter on family raised the real possibility that influence that is aimed at the student without taking into consideration family situation and support may not be as effective as if the message about university education was directed at the student and the family (Boyd et al., 2001; Hawk and Hill, 1996). This is due to the fact that families have the ability to support the student throughout their studies, and at an earlier age than the schools introduce to the child the importance of education (Adams et al., 2000). Clearly therefore there could be further work undertaken that focuses on the family as an influential group on the decisions made by youth about tertiary education. This is despite the fact that for many students at the age of entering tertiary education they are also beginning to be independent of family and some are moving out of the home due to the decision regarding education often being made at a much earlier age.

Policy

When addressing policy it seemed particularly prominent in the minds of the students that there were a number of problems with the government student loans and allowances scheme. Although many of the students did not qualify for student allowances due to their parents' incomes, this did not stop them having considerable

knowledge of the policy. The students seemed to very often have loans however it was variable as to whether they drew down on the living costs component of the loan or whether they used it for mainly for fees and the course related costs option of the loan. It was not just loans that the students were knowledgeable on, they also exhibited an understanding of the allowances policy and had formed opinions on it particularly around issues of access.

The history of policy regarding encouraging participation in education is also considered in the chapter and it is important to note that the experiences of the students in this study are located within the broader policy context of building an education system that wants a greater equality of participation. Policy it seems acknowledges that there are a number of groups within society that are underrepresented in university education however its attempts to improve this have to date been unsuccessful. As policy is often seen as a tool for creating change it would seem that students from underrepresented groups should be aided by the policies, however, the students indicated that this was not the case for them. Students in this current study were often in a position where they could not access government assistance; however their parents were often not able to assist financially either given that domestic students have access to student loans they were utilized by the students. In general, student loans were accepted by the participants as part of their education, particularly for payment of fees, however, discussions over the level of debt incurred and the anxiety this produces were not uncommon.

Once at university the student support policies of allowances and loans seemed to provide concerns for the students participating in this study despite the expectations that the policies would aid the students in being able to participate. At the outset of this research I made the assumption that given that the students in the study had all attended lower decile schools that they would have been likely to receive government allowances. It became apparent through the course of the interviews however that most of the students did not qualify for government assistance due to their parents' income levels. This fact raises the possibility that the students who participated in this study overrepresented the numbers of students who have parents with higher incomes that send their children to a lower decile school. The inability to gain financial support while a student is studying may only leave the option for some

students of either drawing on their student loan, or working while they are studying if they are unable to be supported by their parents. The reality for most of the students in this study was that they were working part time in non-degree related jobs to support themselves financially while they were studying. The implication of this for some students of having to find a balance between working and studying may serve as a disincentive to study. The need to have to gather debt through a student loan may only further deter a student from studying, particularly if they are unaware of the economic advantages of having a tertiary education.

The fact that students are not receiving allowances due to parental income, despite their attendance at a low decile school raises another area of concern that needs further consideration in future research. It was expected in the research, based on previous research that students attending low decile schools would be likely to come from lower SES backgrounds. In accordance with this, it could be expected that students participating in the study would be eligible for a student allowance, however the general experience for the students was that they did not qualify for assistance. The current income thresholds for students under 25 applying for student allowance are based on parental income. If the student is living away from home parental income cannot be over \$63 825.84 before tax and for students living at home there is a threshold of \$57 981.04 before tax. If students attending university are ineligible for government student allowances they are unlikely to be from low SES backgrounds in comparison to their peers who are also attending low decile schools. The number of students involved in this study is not great enough to draw final conclusions, however, if the students coming to university from low decile schools are more often than not from higher SES backgrounds then the decile of the school would suggest it indicates that participation rates may be worse than the statistics would indicate. By using decile it masks the SES status of students however to use SES of individuals it presents remains the problem of how to accurately record the SES position of students while they are young due to their increasing independence from their parents. Decile remains a useful tool to attempt to group students despite it causing some problems with accurate representation of the types of students that are attending university but was highlighted in this study as representing more students than the low SES students that were generally expected. There is a need for work to be done into the actual SES status of students attending university from low decile schools.

Careers advice

One of the areas that appears to have been unique to the current study in comparison to other studies is that the students did not find their careers advice at school to be of any use or influence in their decision to attend university. Whether this was due to stronger influences or pre-existing intentions to attend a particular university and pursue a particular field of study is not known. What did come through in the interviews however was an opinion on the part of the students that the type of information and advice that was available to them was not useful, and perhaps it can be argued was delivered to them too late. Boyd et al. (2001) also argue that careers advice being available at an earlier age than the final years at school would potentially be of more assistance for students, but argue that students from lower decile schools find careers advice useful in their decision making regardless of when it is delivered. It would seem that the tours around university campuses and discussions about university study may have been reserved by the schools in this study until the senior school level which excludes a lot of students who exit the school system at an earlier age. This is particularly important in light of the argument advanced by Vaughan that students now have to make their career decisions at an earlier age (2003).

The careers advice that was offered to the students seems from the interviews conducted with the staff to have been of the nature of providing a centralized place within the school that careers information could be kept but which did not outwardly appear to encourage students into particular career choices. During the interviews the teachers noted the reality that some students despite their aspirations would not achieve the careers they wanted, and it was indicated that this was sometimes due to factors outside academic issues, a point not unique to this study (Hawk and Hill, 1996). These factors include having to find employment in order to provide income for family rather than being able to take time to pursue further studies. Family expectations such as these with the potential to affect tertiary education participation seem more likely to be experienced by students from lower SES backgrounds than their higher SES counterparts given students from higher SES families are less likely to be required to contribute financially to a family unit. It is also a potential factor of

consideration for careers teachers who, although they do not acknowledge it, may aim at non-university career advice for some students due to pre-conceived ideas about their ability and likely career outcomes.

It would seem that students generally had concerns over the type of careers advice they were given while they were at school, and also the policies that were available to offer financial support. These two areas which are largely institutionally based appear to have both the potential to offer the most support, however, also seem to be the most problematic. Although it was expected at the outset of the research that careers advice gained while at school may have provided a type of influence or support for the decision to attend university, the feedback from the students indicated that they gained very little of use from their experiences. The fact that the students found little of use in their careers guidance may indicate that they have failed to attribute any importance to what they were told despite the advice actually being of use, or it is possible that the students formed their intentions of attending university prior to any careers information being provided to them. James (2002) and Boyd et al. (2001) argue contrary to this and highlight that staff can be influential although not seen in this study. If this latter option of early selection was the situation, and it would seem that this may well have been the case, then it could be seen that the students had little to gain from any subsequent information that was given to them and accordingly may not have considered careers advice useful. This area of secondary education, although requiring further investigation may highlight an area of teaching that needs to be addressed in order to be more effective in presenting to students the possibility and value of attending university. One of the implications should this occur may be that teachers, in order to encourage more students to pursue a university education need to introduce the possibility of university at an earlier level of their education (Vaughan, 2003) and perhaps use other strategies such as greater family involvement (Boyd et al., 2001). Currently it would seem that much of the exposure to university study happens during the senior schooling years, if this were moved to a more junior level of school students are less likely to have chosen their careers, and more students would be reached as they are less likely to have exited the education system.

Peer groups

The issue of peer groups and the influence that they have over members of the group was acknowledged in this thesis as lacking in much education based research. While the students did not directly indicate that their peers influenced them in their decision to attend university, for those students participating in university it was apparent that their friends tended to also have attended university and shared this goal while they were in secondary education. It can be assumed therefore that other friendship groups experience situations where no one in the group attends university after they complete their schooling. Grouping in a voluntary way such as this may indicate that students sort themselves based on finding similarities amongst themselves which is supported in the theory of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1990), and reflected in the work by Ball on class differences to education in England (Ball, 2003). Within the chapter the ability to create groups based on similarities is described through examples of students noting differences between themselves and their friendship group, and other people. Although different groups do present themselves in different ways, there was a possibility discussed in the chapter that with these outward appearances students are able to identify certain non-physical characteristics such as family situation and educational aspirations through hair styles or body piercing. This trend was reflected in an American based school study by Brantlinger (Brantlinger, 1993) which also saw that students sorted themselves based on external appearances but were able to explain non-visual characteristics from these appearances.

Although students group themselves in such a way that seems to reflect educational aspirations, there exists within these groupings the potential for students to exercise their position within a peer group to actively discourage students away from university. This was presented as a possibility in an Auckland based study (Hawk and Hill, 1996), and although not discussed by the students in the current study does seem a possibility that requires consideration in any future work that attempts to find if peer influence can be used to positively influence participation rates in tertiary education. The school provides the location for much of these influences to occur as is illustrated in the AIMHI study (Hawk and Hill, 1996) as it was the location for bullying and name calling to be used to discourage students from wanting to achieve academically in that study. It is however also the field within which the pedagogic decision to

stream by ability can be implemented (Nash, 1999). The move by schools to consciously group peer groups into ability groupings may reinforce already held beliefs about their academic ability (Boaler et al., 2000), the effects of which may lead to academic success or failure depending on the placement of the students. Some of the interviewees reported feeling that there was an expectation that the upper academic classes or more academic students would achieve and that the school did not have to worry as much about them which allows the school to place more focus on the other students. Messages such as this are received by students and affect their perception of their ability and also what is expected of them (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, Nash, 1999). For the students in the upper classes there was also sometimes the feeling that the school did not expend the same resources on them as other classes because they were considered the ones not needing attention. The school can therefore send many varied messages to the students through the approach taken by the institution.

While it seems that each of the different areas focused on in this thesis has the ability to influence students, it seems likely that if the same message is presented to the individual by four different influential areas of their lives this would serve to reinforce the message rather than working contrary to each other. The careers teachers in some ways addressed this in their chapter when they talk of trying to involve parents in the schooling of their children so that they are aware of what the school is providing in relation to careers and non-compulsory education opportunities. The peer groups too interact with the school through placement in certain classes but also through the perception that different groups within the school peer group are treated differently by the school. Students spoke of feeling that some students were treated in different ways in this current study, and still others in another study had different things expected of their academic ability depending on the way in which they had been academically streamed (Boaler et al., 2000). Overall peers seem to have a strong ability to influence each other given the long amount of time they spend the company of each other. From the perspective of encouraging participation it would seem difficult however to target peers as being able to influence decisions, although fostering the message of academic success as socially acceptable and desirable may have some impact, and encourage students to encourage each other. Nevertheless it is

an area in which further research would prove useful to identify the extent of peer group involvement in education related decision making.

Conclusion and recommendations for future research

It is clear from the interviews in this study and findings from other studies that there is problem with unequal participation rates in education in regard to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Mentioned throughout this thesis is the fact that the different areas of influence such as family, peer groups, schools, and policy interact. It is the interaction of the groups that may serve to create the most cohesive approach to the problem of the lack of participation by students from lower class backgrounds in university. Although the family can begin at the earliest age introducing the message of the importance of education, for them to then pass this to the school and abandon the message at home creates a mixed message. Getting the different areas to interact with a student is likely to be very difficult given that it requires a number of divergent tactics to ultimately generate the same message, however, I believe that if this were possible then it would create a strong basis from which participation rates could be addressed. Perhaps if any one area was considered more important than the others to focus on for further research it seems that the age at which careers advice and information is offered to students would prove perhaps the most useful.

It was noted in the interview with the Equal Educational Opportunities Coordinator that they would do tours of the university for students in the more junior levels of secondary school if it was requested by the school, however, it was an area where there was no consistent planning. Being able to show students around the university and present to them some of the different career opportunities available through having a university education at a younger age may provide them with knowledge they do not have access to anywhere else. Reserving the exposure of careers information about university education until a number of students have already opted out of their education reduces the number of students being given the information but also increases the likelihood that the remaining students have already chosen to undertake tertiary study. Additionally there is the potential that parents could be included in this earlier presentation of careers information which would encourage the

ongoing involvement that has been noted as providing an influence on students regarding educational outcomes. While it is acknowledged that there will never be a 100 percent rate of participation in university education; this would be impractical and damaging to society, there is however a need for the rates of participation by some groups to increase.

Although this thesis is far from the final word on this ongoing problem, it is hoped that it has uncovered some areas that may be worked on in future studies to develop strategies to help participation. Below is a list of recommendations that I consider would prove useful developments from the work that has been undertaken in this thesis.

- The government policies of financial assistance through the student allowance and the student loan need further research work undertaken regarding access to student allowances and the impact of taking on debt through student loans. Although the students in this study were largely ineligible to receive any financial assistance had still undertaken university study, for many students the lack of financial support may cause them to choose not to attend, or have to work a large number of hours in paid employment which may negatively impact on their ability to study.
- There is a need for further research to be undertaken on the factors involved with getting students to make the decision to attend university, and actually getting there. Currently research seems to focus on issues of getting students to remain in compulsory education, or the decisions that influence them while they are at secondary school, however very little is done on the issue of transitions to university.
- Research into the actual participation rates of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds needs to be undertaken to ascertain the real rates of participation based on class rather than decile. This study indicated the potential that higher SES students are sometimes attending low decile schools and then being counted in enrolment statistics that track student enrolments by school decile rather than individual SES. If this is a wider trend than just this study, the number of students who are actually from lower class backgrounds is even less than the statistics are showing.

- Further study into the impact of careers advice and the age for which it is useful to introduce university as an educational option would be valuable. This study seemed to indicate that the students found very little worth in the careers information they had given to them, and it seemed that the information about university may have been provided after they had made a decision regarding their futures. There is the potential that introducing tertiary study information to students at an earlier schooling age would be of some worth, however it needs further investigation.
- The level of influence parents exercise and the types of influence would be another area of work that would benefit from further investigation. Students in this study appeared to report that they felt they were supported by their parents. Although parental support seems integral for any type of encouragement for students any further work on the ways that families can continue their support throughout secondary school and through career related choices may be of assistance.
- The link between peer groups is an area that could well be developed in further research in an attempt to find whether students can be encouraged to positively influence each other about the importance of education. It was seen in this thesis that peer groups are largely unrecognized as being potentially influential yet it seems that their ability to categorize people by appearance into expectations regarding academic ability can influence the creation of friendship groups. Although this research did not present any indication that the sorting of peers into groups done by students or schools necessarily has an impact on individual's outcomes, it would seem useful to pursue further research to address this.

Any further work into the area of encouraging participation should be encouraged in New Zealand. The areas that are suggested above are merely a small selection of areas that could be developed in the hopes that they are able to identify areas which can be changed that will encourage greater participation by those groups who are largely underrepresented in tertiary education, particularly university study. Any research finding is unlikely to create change automatically, however, informed study into the topic of access and participation to tertiary education, it is hoped will

eventually create change for the positive so that perhaps the Fraser and Beeby quotation can be finally realized in regard to access to education, although a free education may well be forever unattainable.

Every person, whatever his (sic) level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind to which he is best fitted and to the full extent of his powers. (Dale, 2000, p.107).

Appendix

Table 6: Participation of students younger than 24 and older than 24 based on decile.

Decile	Age Group	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1 - 4 (lowest)	24 years and younger	697.0	621.0	580.6	567.0	526.4	556.0
	25 years and older	342.1	305.0	292.7	297.5	254.1	259.5
	Total	1,039.1	926.0	873.3	864.6	780.5	815.5
5 - 7	24 years and younger	2,590.5	2,387.1	2,428.0	2,361.8	2,370.9	2,355.7
	25 years and older	790.0	785.3	743.1	751.6	724.8	664.8
	Total	3,380.5	3,172.4	3,171.1	3,113.4	3,095.7	3,020.4
8 - 10 (highest)	24 years and younger	4,364.8	4,176.1	4,161.3	4,264.0	4,317.9	4,469.3
	25 years and older	730.5	737.3	696.2	676.8	685.5	695.7
	Total	5,095.3	4,913.3	4,857.5	4,940.7	5,003.3	5,165.0
Overseas School	24 years and younger	369.1	396.1	569.0	749.5	1,159.2	1,477.7
	25 years and older	510.2	520.5	566.4	596.2	677.0	830.5
	Total	879.3	916.6	1,135.5	1,345.7	1,836.1	2,308.2
Unknown	24 years and younger	947.2	872.9	830.5	842.7	903.6	875.7
	25 years and older	271.2	248.0	249.8	240.9	297.2	257.5
	Unspecified	148.0	153.4	135.4	170.7	471.7	288.4
	Total	1,366.5	1,274.3	1,215.7	1,254.4	1,672.6	1,421.6
Total EFTS		11,760.6	11,202.6	11,253.1	11,518.7	12,388.2	12,730.8

Table 7: Participation by different ethnicities based on decile.

Decile	Age Group	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1 - 4 (lowest)	Asian	98.8	98.1	101.5	119.0	125.4	119.5
	European	745.4	658.1	606.2	556.4	476.5	459.5
	Indian	7.3	8.6	3.7	2.8	3.2	5.8
	Maori	121.4	101.7	105.1	108.4	81.6	90.7
	Other	19.3	21.3	16.0	19.5	20.3	15.4
	P Islander	35.1	29.1	21.9	18.4	13.3	19.4
	Unknown	11.7	9.2	18.9	40.0	60.2	105.2
	Total	1,039.1	926.0	873.3	864.6	780.5	815.5
5 - 7	Asian	432.6	423.8	446.8	453.3	447.9	432.3
	European	2,589.6	2,390.0	2,337.1	2,221.9	2,121.7	1,956.1
	Indian	24.2	23.0	20.7	12.3	15.8	15.9
	Maori	183.5	182.1	171.3	175.0	174.7	147.1
	Other	78.2	69.0	65.2	70.6	71.8	68.5
	P Islander	38.1	43.2	44.8	35.6	38.2	48.4
	Unknown	34.3	41.3	85.1	144.6	225.6	352.1
	Total	3,380.5	3,172.4	3,171.1	3,113.4	3,095.7	3,020.4
8 - 10 (highest)	Asian	681.7	657.3	701.4	779.9	789.2	830.9
	European	3,974.8	3,827.7	3,685.0	3,594.3	3,493.1	3,413.9
	Indian	27.0	30.4	24.5	25.4	24.3	19.9
	Maori	222.9	204.7	194.1	170.0	161.4	186.5
	Other	101.9	101.9	103.9	116.0	99.5	101.6
	P Islander	58.2	55.9	51.4	45.0	52.3	53.4
	Unknown	28.8	35.5	97.2	210.2	383.5	558.8
	Total	5,095.3	4,913.3	4,857.5	4,940.7	5,003.3	5,165.0
Overseas School	Asian	323.1	318.1	434.2	540.1	876.5	1,112.8
	European	317.6	331.4	391.6	424.0	467.3	538.4
	Indian	18.5	27.1	30.6	46.3	66.7	67.3
	Maori	14.2	13.8	16.5	13.4	10.6	8.1
	Other	158.5	144.5	190.4	220.5	215.0	277.1
	P Islander	36.3	44.1	43.9	38.5	39.4	33.2
	Unknown	11.1	37.5	28.1	62.9	160.7	271.3
	Total	879.3	916.6	1,135.5	1,345.7	1,836.1	2,308.2
Unknown	Asian	100.9	82.4	85.0	84.4	123.5	113.7
	European	1,004.1	935.1	875.4	841.0	874.9	810.7
	Indian	9.5	5.2	2.3	3.2	4.8	5.4
	Maori	51.8	47.8	52.8	59.1	53.2	40.8
	Other	20.8	15.0	18.2	14.9	35.1	28.2
	P Islander	20.1	12.8	12.6	9.3	10.9	6.7
	Unknown	11.4	22.5	34.1	71.7	98.5	127.7
	Unspecified	148.0	153.4	135.4	170.7	471.7	288.4
	Total	1,366.5	1,274.3	1,215.7	1,254.4	1,672.6	1,421.6
Total EFTS		11,760.6	11,202.6	11,253.1	11,518.7	12,388.2	12,730.8

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