

# Pedagogy and Post-coloniality: Teaching “Education” online

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The academic study of Education<sup>1</sup> (as a social, historical, and theoretical phenomenon) is complicated by the fact of our immersion in it. This paper combines Said’s idea of “contrapuntal reading” with Bourdieu’s notion of reflexivity to explore what happens when students on an Education course directly confront the fact of their everyday involvement in their object of study, Education. How do the questions raised by post-colonial and other critical social writers “appear” from such a position? How does the fact of our involvement complicate our theoretical or scientific knowledge of these? By means of an episodic, narrative form of writing, this paper describes a life history pedagogy for teaching a compulsory “social issues” course online to New Zealand pre-service teacher education students. As data I draw on online conversations with and between students as they engage in the production of contextualized life history interview narratives.

## Introduction

It is 8 a.m. and I am seated at the iBook in my home office. Drafts of McKinley’s and Moeke-Maxwell’s contributions to this series of articles are on my desk for editing, but must for the moment be resisted. For this morning, from this domestic space, I am teaching my level 200 course, “Social issues in New Zealand education.” My students are pre-service teachers enrolled in the Mixed Media Presentation (MMP) programme (Campbell, 1998). I met them for two 90 minute sessions last week during the second of two one-week block on-campus sessions they have this semester. Other than these two meetings, all of our interactions take place in our virtual classroom online.

I click on the Internet Connect button and dial in to the university. As I wait for the modem to connect, I turn to the books and papers strewn across the floor in preparation for writing this paper. Said’s *Culture and imperialism* lies open. Like other post-colonial writers, he interrogates literary, scientific, political, commercial, and artistic works in order to uncover the colonial “unconscious” of the Western (particularly English) canon. A musical metaphor, “counterpoint,” describes this approach:

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As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to re-read it not equivocally, but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. (Said, 1993, p. 59)

This “contrapuntal” manner of reading and writing was exemplified in the previous papers. Both juxtapose, intertwine, and only provisionally privilege visual images from works of “fine” and “commercial” art, printed text from authoritative academic books (science, history, etc.) and government policy documents, and oral testimonies from contemporary speakers of their own life stories. This paper applies this approach in a pedagogical arena, an online version of a compulsory undergraduate course for student teachers.

The “Social issues in New Zealand education” course is the sole compulsory remnant of a compulsory strand of social foundations Education courses in my university’s pre-service teaching degree. This reduction came about in response to market-driven demands for shorter and cheaper qualifications (Middleton, 2003a). Although unhappy about the shortened degree, I do not defend compulsory courses in the separate Social Foundations of Education disciplines. Students often encountered these as flat maps or typologies of “isms.” Fragmented and decontextualized, education’s theoretical and political debates often appeared remote and disembodied, “abstracted from particular participants located in particular spatio-temporal settings” (Smith, 1987, p. 61).

Course participants (both lecturers and students)—similar to policy-makers, theorists and researchers whose works they study—are protagonists in what Said referred to as “metropolitan histories” and “other” (or “subaltern”) histories. As exemplified in the previous articles in this symposium, from childhood our minds, bodies, and emotions have been “inscribed” with the colonial legacy in the texts we read, the institutions we “inhabit,” and the regimes of surveillance that monitor, regulate, classify, discipline, punish, and reward (Foucault, 1977). The academic study of education is complicated by this fact of our immersion in it. If this “embeddedness” (of students, lecturers, texts, researchers, etc.) is taken into account, pedagogical reasoning will necessarily be convoluted. As Fanon (1986) wrote, “What are by common consent called the human sciences have their own drama” (p. 22). To bring the “dramatic” dimensions of Education as a “human science” into view, Bourdieu’s<sup>2</sup> notion of reflexivity is useful:

In choosing to study the social world in which we are *involved*, we are obliged to confront, in dramatised form as it were, a certain number of fundamental epistemological problems, all related to the question of difference between practical knowledge and scholarly knowledge, and particularly to the special difficulties involved first in breaking with inside experience and then in reconstituting the knowledge which has been obtained as a result of this break. (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 1; Emphasis in original)

What happens when students in an Education course directly confront the fact of their everyday involvement, as students, as student teachers, and as teacher educator, in its object of study, education? What is implied if we study this “in dramatized

form"? How do the questions raised by post-colonial and other critical social writers appear from such a position? How does the fact of our involvement complicate our theoretical or scientific knowledge of these?

The screech of the modem interrupts my reading. I open my web browser, log into Class Forum, and enter the space delineated for the "social issues" course. Red flags beside the discussion titles alert me that new contributions from students await me. But this paper has assumed control of my attention. With one click of the mouse, I absent myself from the classroom by hiding the Class Forum window behind the Microsoft Word document into which these thoughts are spilling through my typing fingers. Said's (1993) idea of a contrapuntal reading suggests that it could be counter-productive to fight this pull out of the virtual classroom and into my theoretical writing about it. If pedagogies are informed by the haphazard realities of (face-to-face or online) classroom practice, it makes no sense to treat the two as incompatible or in competition. I shall move freely between theory and online engagement with students. As Said observed,

In the counterpoint of western classical music various themes play off against one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organised interplay that derives from the themes, not from a vigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. (Said, 1993, p. 59)

I want to fix in print the counterpoint, the intertwining themes, of pedagogic theorizing. This demands an episodic form, more like the lateral leaps of hypertext than the disciplined hierarchies of headings characteristic of the linear progression of conventional academic writing (Middleton, 1993; Poster, 1995). To compose my contrapuntal score, I shall interweave texts: online conversations of current<sup>3</sup> and former students; the course documents that elicit these conversations (set readings, course outlines, etc.) and academic theorists. My counterpoint will not have the tight discipline of a classical fugue. Rather, it will resemble a jazz improvisation.

The words on my screen freeze. The cursor won't move. I push the control, option and shift keys, but this fails to crash me out of the program. Cursing quietly, I push restart. The CD ROM drive whirs as it boots up the CD I have made for this course. It contains the course outlines and hyperlinked PowerPoint slide shows that include many graphics. Students are required to obtain their own research data by conducting and recording a life history interview, summarizing it, interpreting it sociologically, and contextualizing it historically. This approach is designed to transcend "the stubbornly different levels of explanation usually known as the 'sociological' and the 'psychological', and with a clue to the secret... of its operation" (Hoskin, 1990, p. 52). It is also intended to blur the boundaries between sociology and history. Like Bourdieu, I believe that "the separation of sociology and history is a disastrous division, and one totally devoid of epistemological justification: all sociology should be historical and all history sociological" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 90).

The first five weeks of the course are a historical overview of “situated theory” and the students complete four two-page assignments in each of which they answer two or three specific questions based on readings in the history of schooling in New Zealand. The “periodization” of this history is based on the broad discursive shifts that general historians and educational historians have identified as dominating the social theories, policies, and research paradigms of an era (Beeby, 1986; King, 2004; Middleton & May, 1997). As Bourdieu (1988, p. 241) expressed it, “In the social sciences, as we well know, epistemological breaks are often social breaks.” Module 1 covers the period from colonization up to World War II. Social Darwinist discourses of “race” (as described in McKinley’s article in this symposium) and policies of assimilation receive special attention. Slide shows and readings contain “racial images,” such as “racial trees,” ethnological postcards, and orientalist art (see, for example, McGeorge, 1981). Module 2 deals with the post-World War II years up to the end of the 1960s. Deweyan notions of “education for democracy,” the impact of developmental psychology and associated definitions of individual and social need are discussed. With respect to Maori, integrationist policies are outlined. In Module 3 students discuss the demography and associated (conservative, liberal, and radical) social and political movements of the late 1960s and the 1970s, including feminism, “neo-progressivism,” and Maori demands for cultural visibility in schools. (It was a reading for this module that provoked the discussion of Maori language I refer to later in this paper.) Module 4 takes them from the final years of the Muldoon era (late 1970s), through the neo-liberal restructuring of the state (mid 1980s) and the curriculum reforms and “third way” politics of the 1990s and 2000s.

The students then go on teaching practicum for six weeks and take a break from this course. They return in mid-semester for their second on-campus session. Here I brief them on research ethics and interview protocol and techniques. They have to go through the formality of gaining written consent from their interviewees. Module 5 is a discussion of methodology and a summary of the interview. The feedback I give students at that stage helps them identify the themes they will address in their final report. The final report is a 2000–3000 word essay that weaves together the interviewee’s account of schooling (as a pupil), relevant historical details (of policy, etc.), and a sociological analysis that elucidates relevant structural dynamics (class and/or race relations, etc.).

The course is positioned at the interface of the sociology of (educational) knowledge, the history of (educational) ideas, and social theory more broadly. Its focus is educational theory’s multidimensional existence—as a body of academic theory, a site of political contestation and policy-making, and as enabling and constraining teachers’ professional knowledge—the rules, maxims, guidelines, and hunches that underpin everyday practice. It explores how educational theories help shape, and are shaped within, the cultural and institutional realities of their time and place, how, as students, parents, and/or teachers, we live “inside” theory. Rather than learn about theory in the abstract (liberalism, progressivism, Marxism, etc.), students are encouraged to see these in “dramatized form”, as staged, or enacted, in the theatre of policy. I want my student teachers to explore the “locatedness” of

their personal educational assumptions (historical, cultural, political, geographical, biographical, etc.). Bourdieu described this as follows:

History thus uncovered is inspired not by an antiquarian interest but by a will to understand how one understands. To avoid becoming the object of the problems that you take as your object, you must retrace the history of the emergence of these problems. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 238)

I do not use journals or students' first person narratives as teaching material or for assessment. I regard these as private and respect students' right to keep personal lives away from pedagogical surveillance. My students approach an "insider" analysis at one remove, in the "third person," by means of the life history interview research exercise. In their online discussions of the course readings for Modules 1–5, however, many students choose to write (non-assessable) first person comments, electing to place themselves personally inside the era, theory, institution, or set of social relations (class, race, gender, etc.) that is the topic of inquiry.

I log into e-mail. Last week I e-mailed some of last year's students, eight months after the completion of their course, to ask their permission to quote from a discussion that arose during Module 3 (week 4 of the course) in response to a reading by Maori educationist Ranginui Walker (1985). The discussion had polarized around the opposing views of two students, Sarah and Chris. Unlike students' and teachers' ephemeral utterances in face-to-face tutorials, this online conversation has endured; it hangs suspended in time and space, electronically archived, yet still accessible to me as last year's course coordinator. Ding! A reply from Sarah: "I have never really put that discussion behind me. It is still talked about between my peers". She informs me that during the course she had "received some quite interesting e-mails" (outside the monitored space of the online Classroom) "from other members of my class over this discussion." Although ten months have passed since the class conversations in question took place, "aspects of this discussion are painful for me. It is always difficult when your peers begin to reject you for your views." Opposition to her stance had been so strong at the time that she had felt as if some classmates "would have quite happily run me over with their cars."

I click back into last year's Module 3 conversation. Sarah had started this discussion of Maori language (Te Reo Maori) in a response to a course reading by Ranginui Walker (1985). Walker viewed colonial policies of suppression of te reo Maori and enforced schooling in the medium of English as a primary tool of colonial oppression. As Maia, a student, explained in a later posting,

Policies of assimilation were advocated and implemented by the government. Colonisation of Maori was bought in with such power that New Zealand society is now reaping huge negatives as a result particularly Maori, eg: poverty, unemployment etc.

In agreement with Walker, Maia wrote that: "Maori were seen as 'those savages to be shown better ways of life'. The assumption here was that colonization was superior and Maori culture less important." Like Walker, Maia related this to her own "present": "There is no choice in the curriculum. What we learn is always forced

upon us. Unless Te Reo Maori is made compulsory then many New Zealanders will continue to underestimate its worth and forever place it on the backburner.”

Sarah, however, described herself as personally positioned negatively within this discourse:

Oh my goodness some of these readings are a bit strong for me. I am all red in the face for being such a Pakeha (capital P) oppressor! My goodness!! Who knew? Don't know if I can struggle through much more of this.

In the ensuing discussion Sarah questioned the “reversal” of colonial linguistic assimilation policies (Te Reo’s forced “replacement” by English) by means of contemporary Maori language immersion classes and schools. Quoting statistics on Maori “underachievement” and economic “disadvantage”, she questioned te reo’s “usefulness” to both Maori and non-Maori: “What are you going to do with it? How will it be utilised?” Quoting census statistics on the ethnic composition of New Zealand’s population, she argued that it would be “detrimental to only learn the language of the minority when you need to survive in the world of the majority.” Economic self-sufficiency within New Zealand and in the wider world requires English, an “international” language: “If I could only speak Maori, count in Maori or only read Maori is that going to enhance my chances of leading a productive life outside this country?”

Chris’s response to Sarah’s reasoning was passionate as she “shouted” (in capitals) back at Sarah:

NO ONE SAID YOU SHOULD ONLY LEARN TE REO AND MAORI ALREADY KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO SURVIVE IN AN OPPRESSIVE MAJORITY! Your own personal view might be “Speaking Maori will not be any use to me personally outside of this country” but again, you presume what others will need, or use Te Reo for. What about your future students? Quite frankly I don't really think you get it. Te Reo is not just a language, it is a way of being.

While Sarah felt “positioned” by Walker as “colonial oppressor,” Chris identified with his opposing subject position as “oppressed.” Both students positioned themselves personally “inside” Walker’s binary analysis. The discussion became increasingly personal as Chris challenged Sarah:

I did not want to rock the boat any further than it has been rocked already, but your comments have offended many, both Pakeha and Maori. From my perspective you need to take a serious look at what your intentions are regarding teaching because the negativity you exude regarding Te Reo is, for a better word, shocking.

In support of this, another student, Mere wrote: “I do think people miss the point of some of our readings and lack empathy for what has happened not just to Maori but to indigenous races all over the world.” She wrote:

I think that the readings of Walker and Jenkins have gone over some people’s heads and that sensitivity and tact still needs to be taken into account when commenting on such strong issues, even if you are not a Te Reo Maori supporter (or even if you are).

Sarah countered this by explaining that she does believe that te reo has intrinsic value—if not “economic” value, it has aesthetic value: “I respect the Maori culture and I love the artistic opportunities it presents.” She had “read many many books written about Maori, written by Maori. . . My art work reflects our cultural diversity.” As an individual she “would like to be able to speak fluent Te Reo. I have tried to learn several times as an adult.” When other students challenged her claim that Te Reo has no “value” outside New Zealand, citing the demands for, and success of, Maori performing arts groups overseas, she agreed that: “New Zealand has beautiful kapa haka groups. It is the melody and harmony, the action songs and the way they tunefully utilise their voices. The Maori people of this county are incredible at that.” However, learning the language should be a matter of freedom of choice; “making the language compulsory is pointless in my view. Free choice is what it is all about.” Furthermore, she noted, “Our curriculum is overcrowded now . . . where does it fit in and what do you take away to make room for it? PE? or maybe art?”

Another student, Kate, joined in at this point: “It need not become an extra burden on an overcrowded curriculum—it is easily integrated into most, if not all, the other areas.” Similarly, Anne wrote:

Sarah, there are plenty of studies that say that once children learn two languages, learning more becomes much easier—so even if that is the only justification to have basic Te Reo Maori in our schools, to my mind it is sufficient. It is really interesting to look at the Welsh example—nowhere else is their language spoken, but it has enjoyed a huge revival in Wales—NOT detrimentally to anyone.

In response, Sarah agreed that “learning two languages is beneficial to the function of the brain, I learnt French and I can still remember and speak it quite well.” However, bilingualism did not need to be English–Maori: “making the language compulsory is pointless in my view. Free choice is what it is all about”.

This theme of “freedom of choice” comes through in many of Sarah’s postings: “If my children choose not to learn Maori then I will not push them” and “don’t make people learn a second language if they don’t see a use for it themselves personally.” But other students countered this with the notion of informed choice. For example, Kate argued that total freedom for young children can be harmful: “Sarah, your ‘beef’ seems to be about freedom of choice. Do you let young children choose to eat lollies all day?” And Anne wrote:

I see freedom of choice is the issue, but how can people make the choice as to whether it is for them or not if they are not exposed in the first place? The inclusion of Maori in all its forms through playcentre, kindy and school will give children something to base their choice on. What harm is it going to do to our “English” speaking children? To my way of thinking, it will make them richer human beings and for Maori it gives them a place of belonging.

Kate argued that adults should require the exposure of small children to Te Reo:

I think that along with the rest of the curriculum we need to make decisions for children based on what we see as appropriate. Personally I see it as absolutely

appropriate that ALL children (beginning at Early Childhood level) are exposed to Te Reo (and Tikanga) Maori, learning some of the basics especially how to pronounce it correctly. If this doesn't happen, I believe their choice when they get older is limited as they are not "tuned in" to the Maori language—ears and tongue—and it becomes a struggle to learn it. Also the more it is "out there" the more easily it will be "picked up" by littlies.

Chris supported Kate's position: "I agree Kate! English was never an option for me, so why should Maori be an option for others?" She has found and read a further paper by Ranginui Walker and quoted from this in support of her case:

Walker (1996) stated "The Native schools established by Governor Grey in 1867 were driven by the political ideology of assimilation. English was the medium of instruction to the exclusion of Maori . . . the education authorities banned the Maori language altogether within school precincts. . . . The power to punish and suppress the native language, was just another manifestation of domination". (pp. 264-265)

Now, many many years down the track the Maori language is trying to make a comeback, something that would not have been necessary if it hadn't been squashed in the first place.

In response to a further barrage of criticism, Sarah continued to assert her right to freedom of speech:

I am merely discussing my thoughts and opinions. . . . I believe that is what this forum is for. I am pleased that you have your views. I love the way we can all express them . . . that is truly freedom of choice.

Although Sarah does not use the current popular term "political correctness," the comments she made in Class Forum and the retrospective reflections she sent in her e-mail nine months later suggest that she felt (and still feels) "censored." In her e-mail she wrote: "There were many others who supported my view but lacked the courage to say so in an open forum." This had been signalled during the course when Anne wrote:

You may find that Sarah's opinion could be shared by a large number of the parents who put their children in your care each day, and those parents may have rights as to what they want their children to be learning. The world is becoming more of a global community and parents want their children best equipped to survive in that community, and for many it's about financial survival for their family, to be educated so you are an employable person. Yes, it's about the market, be that right or wrong, but that is one of the values of a capitalist, democratic society. Is the education system not veering towards parents having more input in what their children learn? What would these parents choose if there was a vote on the issue? Or do we end up with a separatist system?

As a teacher, I was floundering. The seeming violence of the interchanges felt destructive. I "deflected" the issue by diverting the questions of freedom of choice, "colonial" legacies in social relations, and current inequalities away from "race" and towards what today is safer ground, the role of women. The discussion topic shifted,



the time devoted to Module 3 ended, and the class moved on to Module 4, in another chat room. But unbeknown to me, at the same time, a few students were lingering to chat in the Module 3 space.

An e-mail alert tells me that new messages are being posted in my current virtual classroom, so I log back into Class Forum. This year it is not questions of "race" or language, but the relevance of readings to the lives of rural women that most passionately engage my students in the early modules. I look back at Modules 1 and 2. Maureen,<sup>4</sup> a post-World War II baby boomer, identified herself as a product of the First Labour government policy:

I have just finished Module 1 and am about to send it, but thought I would comment on the Fraser article (1939) in the course readings. I am amazed at several things in this article: its vision and the manner in which it articulates that vision. Stunning stuff. Remarkable to think that we are a product of that vision, for better or worse!

Another student, Diana, made connections between the 1950s ideology of feminine domesticity and community expectations of herself as a farmer's wife 50 years later:

I have a real struggle with the comment from Watson quoted in Middleton's article (Middleton, 1988): "women . . . work as a means of supplementing the family income . . . for a woman it is her marriage that is pivotal". This is an issue I struggle with constantly and I wonder if people in town have the same thing. The general idea out here in the "backblocks" is that women don't have a career, they stay at home and help on the farm, especially as "labour units" (yep! that's what they call 'em!) who have the "cheek" to demand decent wages these days . . . women's pay is mostly a book keeping exercise, they are a form of slave labour as far as I'm concerned. See the ads in the paper "wife to relief milk and rear calves as needed". Did you know that the pay for this is included as part of the man's salary in the farming culture in general? Why does it bother me that people think I should be "helping" on the farm, and that I am kind of selfishly looking after my own interests by studying, or maybe just getting out of the more grotty jobs with the weak excuse of "an assignment" to do? I hate it that I feel guilty for seeing myself as a student just as much as I see myself as a mother/wife.

Here Diana was beginning to do what Foucault (1980) referred to as an "ascending" mode of analysis when he argued that the role for theory in social research was "not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge" (p. 145). Similarly, Bourdieu described the logic of research as: "*inseparably empirical and theoretical*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 159, original emphasis).<sup>5</sup>

At present the students are working on Module 5 (the draft of the interview). In the Module 5 discussion Janet is "theorizing upwards" as she puzzles about how she might create an academically acceptable narrative that melds what her interviewee said with previous research accounts. At this early stage of the assignment (immediately after conducting her interview) Janet expressed her technical dilemma

as a question of “correlation” between the interview narrative and other research “evidence”:

I have just had the privilege of interviewing my husband’s 86 year old Grandfather. What an experience! He felt his memories were a bit sketchy, but we came up with some great stuff. It was wonderful the way that things correlated with the works we have read. He talked about how rigid the curriculum was, the same day in day out, how they had garden plots to tend (this was a rural school), the only source of reading was from the school journals that came out once a month. I found it great the way it all seemed to fit together. Of course there were all the wonderful stories that I am not sure how to put into my report! It seemed that the biggest difficulty in the 1920s for rural children was transport to and from school and because of this lack of transport there were no interschool sports. I have found several books relating to this school and the general area. Do I use these books to help “weave” the information from the interview into the historical recollection of others? Does this make sense? In books that I have read it discusses the transport and tiredness of children due to the fact that many of them had to milk cows before school. Grandfather told these same stories, so now do I correlate the two?

My eye is drawn to a flashing red sign at the bottom of my screen: “Live Message.” Julie has seen my name at the bottom of her screen in the “who’s here” list of those currently logged in. I can never resist a live message. Julie says, “have a look at the discussion in the Sociology folder. Are we on the right track?” I’m always disturbed by the phrase “right track.” I click into the “sociological theme” discussion that is beginning to take shape as students begin writing their final reports. Diana has written:

As to whether schools enhance inequality . . . I feel there is an attempt to do this. However secondary and primary have so much political influence, attempts at equality are sometimes unintentionally distracted. To say every child has an equal education or the same choices is fair, however not all children have the same responses to those opportunities related to previous experiences and home influences.

This has stimulated a group discussion on Bourdieu. I do not require students to read Bourdieu in the original, although some of their set or recommended readings quote him (see, for example, Nash, 1993). Diana continued:

I believe that Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic and cultural capital, in their most simple form, represent peoples’ worth in a predominantly service economy. This notion of “worth” suggests a model of class which is based on “capital” movements through social space.

She then placed herself “inside” this analysis:

I see the word “capital” firstly in an economic sense. But now I am going to stick my neck out, and say that we all make sure we do these educational things with our kids, we teach them manners, we wash them and dress them to the best of our ability. Why is this kind of stuff important to us? Why does my son get a bad reaction when he says that he wants to be a pizza delivery man? Why do we spend hours listening to our kids reading etc, when they “do it all at school”? Why bother?! . . . This imposter is going to say that when I was a farm worker’s wife with

no money AT ALL, living in a cold, damp and grotty farm cottage, depressed and miserable with no status, I was damned sure that success IS measured in money. Perhaps if we had had more money coming in I would've seen it differently. I think it depends on the partner's job/status/career.

Several students then took up this line of thought to help them think sociologically about their life history interviews. For example, Jane wrote:

The traditional definition of working class is that you don't have inherited wealth or title, or a university education. You attain middle class status when you have a tertiary education. . . . Even though we might like to think we have a classless society I would beg to differ. It is more difficult for working class kids to succeed on the terms the middle and upper class have set for them. They are more unlikely to attend university and more likely to end up "following in their fathers' footsteps". My interviewee came from a working class background and did get a university degree—he said in his interview that he never felt as though he belonged there.

Jane then applied her discussion of class to league tables, decile rankings, and popular perceptions of schools in low socio-economic areas today:

I've seen published "success" rankings of schools in newspapers. We were always amazed at these when we lived in (a low socioeconomic multicultural urban area). The success that school had with the kids was phenomenal—if you looked at how far they had come. They didn't start on a level playing field with the more successful schools. If it was ranked on how big the leap you had made was they would have been top dog. But it wasn't.

The exercise of thinking sociologically can force some students to consider the constructed nature of the neat separation of the taken for granted categories of social analysis. Race, class, and gender begin to appear as analytic categories rather than as discrete phenomena in the "real world." For example, being Maori, being rural, and doing manual work are not "separable" experiences. It is social science itself that "splits and fragments our history this way, as though we did not live our class, our gender and our race simultaneously" (Walkerline & Lucey, 1989, p. 206). Mary's account illustrates her problematizing of categories:

I am having trouble putting it all together! I have 4 sheets of A3 paper with headings and notes and references and stuff . . . but just how do I put it all together? I thought I was smart making a plan first with different headings "History", "Rural Ed" and "Ngatea in the 1920s". Now I have all these notes that cross over and tangle into one big mess!! It is really neat to see how things tie in from the interview and then you read things in the history and they correlate with one another.

Social scientific knowledge, gained through reading of previous research and interviewees' commonsense understandings may not always be consistent. For example, Margaret described her experience of at first finding consistency between her interviewees' and the historians' accounts, then having to deal with an inconsistency:

Isn't it amazing how many links come up between the interviews and the readings. It's quite satisfying to be reading through sections of transcript and think "Oh! I

read about that in such-and-such". Funnily enough, when I asked my interviewee if there had been any differences between the genders (educationally) when at school, she said no, but as the interview unfolded, many differences emerged.

Maureen responded to Margaret as follows:

When I interviewed my Mum she declared that the genders were treated equally. Then she proceeded to tell me that the girls couldn't do woodwork but did do cooking which the boys couldn't do, that the senior boys got to empty the toilet buckets on Friday afternoon (one occasion I'd be happy not to have equality I think!!), and then she drew me a picture of her school—boys' play shed on one side, girls' on the other side and never the twain shall meet!

These students are grappling intuitively with one of the key problems in the social sciences—what Schutz (1970) described as “second order constructs”. By this he meant the scientific layer of interpretation added by the researcher to a research participant's commonsense account.

Other taken for granted social science categorizations may also be thrown into question. In the following example, Roger questions the analytic split between school and society and the conventional periodization of history according to decades:

I must say I'm enjoying the research, it's so interesting but it's a matter of knowing what to include and what not to. I've found things happening outside education whether it be nationally or internationally that could have had or did have an impact on education. The era I'm looking at is the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s. I am finding it difficult not to include changes that happened prior to this time e.g. the 1930s as I feel some of it impacted on the era I'm looking at, so where do you draw the line? This weaving is not as easy as it looks! I'm looking at rural education and there is not as much information as I first thought there would be relating to that era.

In other words, some students begin to experience social scientific analysis as a more complex process than the description or discovery of “facts.” I want them to begin to engage with the historicity of social science itself and to produce writing “which is more aware of its status as narrative and which is at least suspicious of, if not rejecting outright, the universal and disengaged subject of empiricism” (Hennessey, 1993, p. 101).

I reply to my hardworking students, click out of their discussion, and return for one last look at last year's argument on Te Reo Maori.

I scroll to the end of last year's Module 3 discussion and notice some late postings by students that had remained unread. When a topic is of burning interest, debates sometimes continue in that space after the class and the teaching have moved on. Preoccupied with helping students with the next module, it is easy for a teacher to overlook continuing “chat” in older spaces. I find a late contribution from Sarah. Nine months ago I had read Sarah's emphasis on individual freedom, choice, and “economic utility” as abstract and rational. But here Sarah related a personal family history of oppression, persecution, and cultural and linguistic assimilation in circumstances of economic and political necessity:

Both my parents had to leave school at very early ages. My father was 12 and my mother was also. It was during the Depression in Canada and they needed to help out at home with money. My Grandparents on my Father's side were Jewish immigrants from Poland. There was no question of integrating their culture into this new life . . . it was simply sink or swim. They did retain chunks of it through food traditions, etc. I feel sad about this because it is difficult to know where your traditions and cultures lay when you have been totally assimilated, as my culture was.

In the fleeting, multiple, and ever changing dynamics of online teaching as a class we had missed the opportunity to explore a connection between this story from a (self-identified) "Pakeha" and Ranginui Walker's account of assimilationist policies imposed on Maori by colonial authorities.

On my computer screen, next to the Class Forum window framing Sarah's message, is an opened e-mail from Chris, the other main protagonist in last year's "Te Reo" argument. Chris recounted an intense and lasting emotional and intellectual response to it:

I wanted to tell you that the material you placed in your course did stir up a lot of questions for me. I am a half-caste, my mother full Maori, my father half Irish and half English. . . . I was raised between two worlds in one home. My mother was fluent both in speaking and writing Maori yet said it would do me no good in this European world. My mother was well educated.

Here Chris's reflections on last year's course ironically resonated with Sarah's family experience of assimilation. Chris's story also echoed the conflicts of the women in Moeke-Maxwell's article (in this symposium) on "bi/multiracial Maori hybridity". Like some of them, Chris mourned

the loss of my birth right to know both my languages (Te Reo and English), for one reason or another, has caused me many years of shame and hardship from those (fluent speaking Maori) who believed me to be a "Pakehafied Maori" or just plain "Maori" (from non Maori). I grew up not belonging to any part of New Zealand's culture.

Chris described how reading sociology had given her new knowledge of, and theoretical tools to engage with and interweave, the historical, political-structural and biographical-personal dimensions of her experience:

Your course opened many thoughts and closed memories of my mother's words and made me angry in the respect that I had shut off to the knowledge that a race of people (Maori) could have been manipulated to the point of extinction by another and I had not done anything about it. When I say that I mean not investigated it further, therefore all I could concentrate on was learning more about the past, my whanau and ensuring through education that I did not let this happen to my own children.

Usually submerged in classroom encounters, glimpses of a "sociological unconscious" occasionally shimmer into visibility online. While it is not, and should not be, the role of teachers to act as therapists, Education courses that weave history,

sociology, and biographical approaches can have an indirectly therapeutic effect. Bourdieu regarded this as one of sociology's most important pedagogical attributes:

I believe that when sociology remains at a highly abstract and formal level, it contributes nothing. When it gets down to the nitty gritty of real life, however, it is an instrument that people can apply to themselves for quasi-clinical purposes. The true freedom that sociology offers is to give us a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimising the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 175)

For these reasons, it is crucial that we protect the ever-threatened and rapidly diminishing spaces available for the critical social sciences in pre-service teaching degrees—to create possibilities of bringing to view the contradictions, ambiguities, undercurrents, inequities, and liberatory spaces in the post-colonial settings in which we live, love, argue, think, and do our work.

## Notes

1. A capital E is used when Education refers to Education as an academic subject or discipline. A lower case e is used to refer to education as a process.
2. See footnote 4.
3. The strand I refer to as “current students” is in fact a composite made up from discussions posted in the course from 1999 to 2002 and was created for the first paper upon which this one builds (Middleton, 2003a). The strand I refer to as “last year's students” is extracted from discussions posted by the 2003 class and subsequent e-mailed comments from the students about this in response to my request to quote from it in this paper. The process for obtaining this written consent was approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee at Waikato University. All names of students quoted are pseudonyms.
4. This and the following discussion contributions were written by students in the “social issues” online MMP classes of 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. See footnote 2.
5. Bourdieu and Foucault are often seen as incompatible. However, both argued against “grand theory” in the social sciences and both wrote at length about social theorizing as grounded in the minutiae of empirical research. Bourdieu's sociological/anthropological reinvestigations involved the statistical analysis of homologies, or structural correspondences, between phenomena such as the hierarchies of academic institutions and the embodied dispositions of social class groups. Foucault's “data” were archival documents, such as the academic textbooks, professional handbooks, and rules and regulations of professional bodies such as medicine, criminology, and psychology. While these theorists' analyses of power may differ, they are largely in agreement on key pedagogical issues such as the process of theory making and teaching (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1988; Foucault, 1977; Middleton, 1998, 2003b).

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