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New Zealand:
Differences in Maori and Pakeha Cultures as They Relate to
Motivation, Academics, and Socialization

Introduction

New Zealand is unique in the sense that it is truly a bicultural country. For centuries before Europeans arrived, the native Maoris had established themselves and prospered on New Zealand soil. Now, both cultures, the Europeans (Pakehas) and the natives (Maoris) coexist on the same land and find a way to maintain their backgrounds while keeping peace. Both cultures operate their lifestyles in very different ways, yet they are able to learn together, work together, and socialize together within the country. In my research, I want to study the cultural and social differences between the two groups as it relates to education and college life in New Zealand. In the subsequent paragraphs, I will explain what I have learned and what I plan to achieve through my research.

Central Question

I plan to study the cross-cultural differences in motivational systems and education at the University of Auckland in New Zealand between the Pakehas and Maoris. Previous research has shown some basic differences between the culture, and I plan to extend that by comparing the interaction between the two in a collegiate setting.

Project Description

A considerable amount of research has been done comparing Maori and Pakeha cultures, and my plan is to take the information gathered from previous research and connect it to cognitive development and educational differences between the two groups. In research reported in New Zealand in 2002, it was found that Pakeha students exhibited a strong orientation towards individualism, while Maori students leaned more towards collectivism (Harrington & Lui, 2002). This finding is the basis for differences between Western and Eastern cultures as well and has strong implications on child-rearing as it relates to behaviors, attitudes, and values (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). A fascinating result is that Maoris exhibited a higher level of self-esteem and a higher level of self-enhancement, according to the Self-Attributes Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Harrington & Lui, 2002). This result brings up interesting questions concerning motivation and socialization, as it varies from previous knowledge concerning Western and Eastern cultural differences.

In my project, I am teaming up with Professor David Uttal, Professor Wendi Gardner, and psychology graduate student, Selin Kesebir, who are all currently working together on a pilot study that examines “the socialization of motivational systems that may partially underlay academic performance differences between Asian and European American students” (Gardner & Uttal, 2004). I proposed my plan to expand their research to cultural differences in New Zealand to Professor Uttal, who is keen on me collecting this data to turn into a senior thesis project when I return from my time abroad.

Past research has shown that, in relation to valued goals, Pakehas tend to have more future-oriented goal setting (delayed gratification) while Maoris tend to have more immediate goals (instant gratification) (Bray, 1971). This finding relates strongly to the individualistic versus collectivist research done, and has great implications concerning educational systems in New Zealand. Putting this research together with research done about motivations systems is a central focus of my project.

Gardner and Uttal’s (2004) study examines the regulatory focus theory, which analyzes two motivation systems. One is the promotion system, which drives motivation towards potential gains and the accomplishment of one’s ideals, while the other, the prevention system, drives motivation towards the avoidance of potential losses and the fulfillment of one’s responsibilities. Questionnaires are administered in this study to determine which motivational system each participant has and how it varies between Asian and American cultures. I plan on using similar questionnaires in analyzing the differences between Maoris and Pakehas. Pilot research has been done in

the past among college students in the US, and I plan to conduct my study among the college students at the University of Auckland, where both Maoris and Pakehas are present. My subject pool will be 50 Maori students (25 F, 25 M) and 50 Pakeha students (25 F, 25 M), ages 18-22. Each participant will be given a questionnaire to fill out evaluating their motivational and promotional systems followed by a short interview conducted by myself that will evaluate their encounters and experiences with the opposite culture in an educational environment. Gardner and Uttal's (2004) pilot data has shown that promotional systems are linked with creativity, independence, and imagination while prevention systems are linked with being well-mannered, obedient, and responsible to a greater degree. Based on this research and previous research, I hypothesize that Maoris will exhibit a prevention focus while Pakehas will exhibit a promotion focus.

Aside from my conversations with Professor Uttal, I have been greatly influenced by my Developmental Psychology class, taught by Professor Sara Broaders, and my Social Psychology class, taught by Professor Eli Finkel, which both focus on cross-cultural differences in motivation and socialization. Research that is involved with Uttal's study has been covered in my classes, which has given me a strong base, making me confident that I will be able to successfully expand on the previous research done on these topics.

Before I depart for the University of Auckland, I plan to meet again with Professor Uttal and Professor Gardner to better formulate the details of my research and better prepare my final materials and procedures. I also have briefly discussed my research plan with Social Psychology Professor Niki Harre at the University of Auckland and plan to discuss with her more the logistics of myself conducting research while I am at the university. Once I return from New Zealand, I hope to turn this research into a senior thesis.

I think that my research could lead to groundbreaking results concerning similarities and differences between Maoris and Pakehas and I hope that it will have a positive affect on the understanding of both cultures as it relates to education, motivation, and socialization.

Budget Proposal:

\$500—compensation for participants (\$5 each)

\$60—tape recorder and lapel microphone

\$20—tapes

\$20—supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, clipboards, etc.)

\$600—total estimated budget

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