Social work kete: Designing social media use in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Social Work, Education and Social Development Conference (SWSD)

Dublin, Éire

Pre-presentation to Wintec colleagues 27 June 2018

He Pepehā

Tēnā koutou,

Nō Yorkshire ōku mātua.

I whānau mai ahau i Kānata

I tipu ake ahau i Kānata

E noho ana ahau ki Aotearoa

Ko Deb Stanfield taku ingoa.

Acknowledgements

The land of Éire and the people who live here

The connections between the lands of Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and Yorkshire

The fellow travellers from Aotearoa

The people of Aotearoa who participated in, guided and supported this research

The global social work community and those attending this presentation

The research project – Social workers and social media in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The research participants: survey, key informants, focus groups.
- Themes: Identity, knowledge, learning
- This presentation: The Social Work *Kete*

Social media & social work

Social media means many things to many people. For the purpose of this project it was more what it came to mean, which is really about how we use modern internet technology for the purposes of professional communication.

"Some say that all media are social because they are part of society and aspects of society are present in the technological artefacts we use" (Fuchs, 2017, p. 4).

Conference themes

ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY | HUMAN SOLUTIONS IN EVOLVING SOCIETIES

- Ensuring the sustainable and ethical use of technology in human services

- Relationship-based practice: promoting the importance of human relationships

Kete

Kete is a traditional Māori concept used widely in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. In English, it means basket or kit, is traditionally flax woven, and symbolises a vessel containing knowledge,"important stories, principles and practices that can guide us in our mahi and in our lives."

(Eruera, 2012, p.12)

Social work *kete*

- The ***social work kete*** represents the toolkit of the profession and is a metaphor commonly used by social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand to describe that which informs practice and reflects professional identity.

- This presentation describes how participants in an Aotearoa New Zealand study explored their *social work kete* to make sense of social media and its place in their practice.

I think we can rely on our social work knowledge, the methods that we use, the philosophy and the practice. So we can go back to our social work theories and think about working with person-centred approach or think about strengths-based social work and apply that to our social media. We have those tools there in our *kete* already, it's how we apply them, I guess, into a new way of working, to social media. (Focus group participant)

Four subthemes

- Technical skills

- Critical skills

- Interpersonal skills

- Ethical skills

The notion of a *kete* extends and enriches our understanding of how social workers use social media, specifically in relation to the way in which our sense of who we are is interwoven with knowledge:
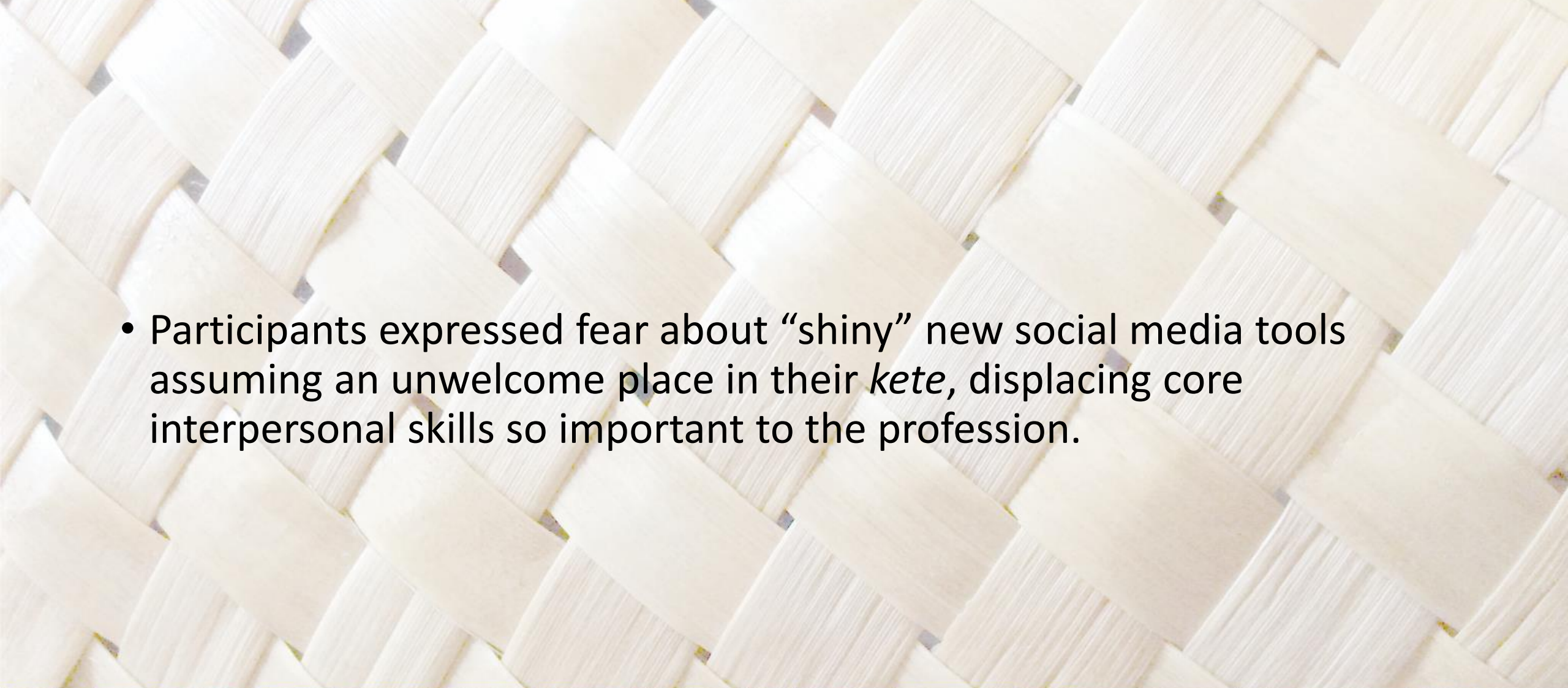
A *kete* in need of replenishment?

Questions for the profession:

- whether the social work *kete* contains the **correct** tools relevant to social media use

- whether the profession has enough knowledge of these tools and the skill to **apply** them critically to its work.

- Participants expressed fear about "shiny" new social media tools assuming an unwelcome place in their *kete,* displacing core interpersonal skills so important to the profession.

One size fits all - not

This conversation reflects a larger ongoing professional tension between macro (ie, social activism, community development) and micro social work practice (direct work with individuals, whānau and families). Each area of practice demands different and at times conflicting ethics and skill-sets that do not exist together easily in the same social work kete. The use of social media is evident across all levels of practice, highlighting again the inadequacy of a 'one size fits all' social work approach to social media use.

Kanohi ki te kanohi
Face to face

I think as well though, that's kind of making me feel a bit resistant to it because I'm thinking about efficiency taking priority over engagement. Particularly in New Zealand, for Māori, face to face is so important. Whanaungatanga, engagement – we don't want to lose that, we don't want to devalue that or see a Facebook message as being efficient so that's great, but never actually getting off your bum and going and visiting somebody. (Focus group participant)

It was nice to hear a Māori voice

- The need to attend to the voices heard on social media platforms, and to the inherent power of the strength of these voices is a key social work task. Taking into account the words of the above participants, it would appear the social work *kete* must be designed to allow for a balanced and critical social work voice to be generated:

Critical skills – challenging the binary

Economist Klaus Schwab, author of *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* asserts that "technology is not an exogenous force over which we have no control. We are not constrained by a binary choice between "accept and live with it" and "reject and live without it" (Schwab, 2016 p.4).

This polarity was evident at times in this study – survey participants either used or didn't use social media professionally, it was either inside or outside the social work kete.

The *kete* of mastery

So if the definition of social workers are kaitiaki alongside people in the pursuit of wellness in social relationship and purpose, then social media has got to be part of the *kete* of mastery if we want to maintain a relevant presence. (Focus group participant)

Summary

- If social media is simply a place where we communicate as people, then new questions for social workers will be about how we sustain our focus on who we are as professionals, as members of society and as cultural beings, and how we wisely and competently make this known to others.

He aha te mea nui o te ao
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

What is the most important thing in the world?
It is the people
It is the people
It is the people

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