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“CAUCUSING - CREATING  
SPACE TO CONFRONT  
FEARS ....TWELVE YEARS  
ON”

Tutors reflect on Tiriti o Waitangi education for  
social work and counselling students

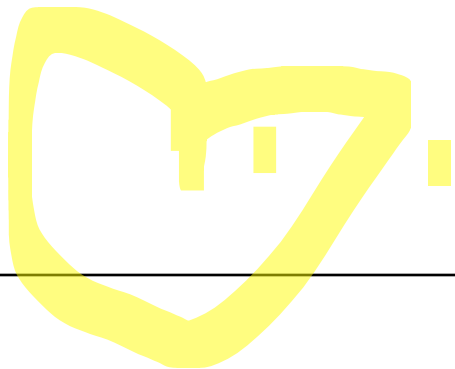
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# WHAKATAUKI

He toka tuu moana, araa he toa rongonui

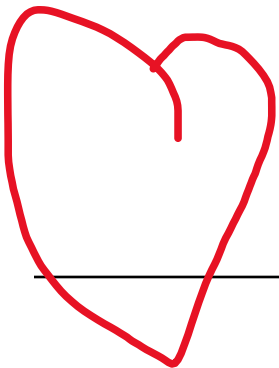
Your strength is like a rock standing in raging waters



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# KAUPAPA O TE RA

- Background to caucusing practice
- Previous research 2009 and findings
- New observations 12 years on
- COVID and zoom



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# KO WAI MAUA?

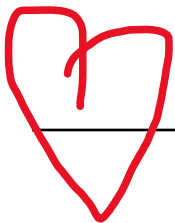
- Tiriti/ Treaty of Waitangi educators at Wintec, social work and counselling programmes
- Over 15 years of teaching Tiriti /Treaty in the programme: year one knowledge of, year two post tiriti treaty, year 3 critical analysis of contemporary context for Maaori
- Caucusing is the process of separating students into Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti groups for learning purposes



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# WHAKAPAPA CAUCUSING

- Challenge / wero from Hamilton tiriti treaty educational programmes who were facilitating in separate caucus groups – potential to retraumatise
  - “The Treaty should be understood historically but also in its contemporary expressions noting the extra demands placed on Maaori. Non-Maaori had an important role in demonstrating Treaty partnership and confronting white privilege (Mc Nabb, 2019).”
- “Walking the talk”
- Teaching practice of caucusing requires skills to manage the emotional tensions that arise from teaching this topic and intentionally separating the two tiriti treaty partners.
- The experiential learning provided through caucusing challenges students.
  - “Mezirow describes transformative learning as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.” (Mezirow, 2009)”



# 2009 RESEARCH FINDINGS IN BRIEF

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- 2009 research – “Caucusing - Creating space to confront our fears “
- Combined classes Maaori students felt unable to ask questions, learnt to be quiet, not to cause offence or be misinterpreted
- Foregrounding race and culture during caucusing forces students to consider who they are from a racial and cultural standpoint – cultural identity transformation (Rich and Cargile, 2004)
- During caucusing some non-Maaori students experienced intense often negative feelings about the practice – mostly relating to a disruption of a false sense of community: norm governed interactions (Rich and Carlile, 2004).
- Manglitz (2003) states that social position, privilege and its link to race that go unacknowledged in the classroom, risk perpetuation.
- Shift to a more empathetic engaged and sensitive position regarding the topic and its impact on Maaori by non-Maaori class members



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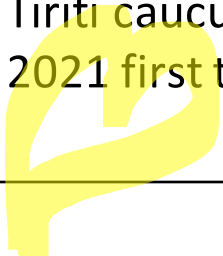
# CHANGES TO CAUCUSING PRACTICE SINCE 2009

- What has not changed is the teaching approach to both caucus groups to create safe respectful learning environment –including whanaungatanga, setting tikanga collaboratively for small and large group work, small group and large group discussions.
  - Major change was shifting the teaching to semester two, recognising that the process may benefit from students knowing each other more and tutors in preparation of caucusing
  - Teaching situated at marae, Tangata Tiriti in wharenuui, Tangata Whenua in wharekai
  - Less content delivery – students review material on line and process information face to face and via assessments
  - Introducing a new assessment requiring students to reflect on their experience of caucusing, learning the tiriti treaty and engaging in the challenging conversations
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# REFLECTIONS 12 YEARS ON

- Same responses as reported in 2009 research.
- Tangata Tiriti – students still arriving to tertiary institution some with limited engagement in the Tiriti Treaty and colonising history, still engaging in discourses, unconscious resistance, minimising of tiriti treaty value and place
- Tangata Tiriti –range of responses to learning Te Tiriti information evident – embarrassment, distress, guilt, dismissive, questioning, anger, frustration, defensiveness, uncomfortable – for range of reasons
- Tangata Tiriti – processing information in smaller groups provides safety, openness, vulnerability , to test thinking and learning
- Tangata Tiriti – larger numbers of students of colour - distinct differences in processing within Tangata Tiriti caucus including anger directed at non-coloured students resistance to confronting their racism – 2021 first time sub-caucus small groups for non-white Tangata Tiriti students





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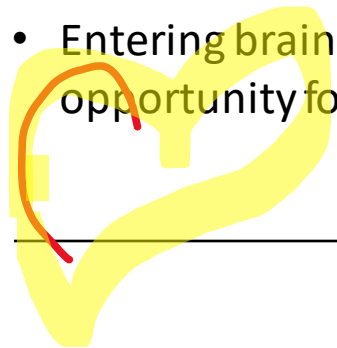
# REFLECTIONS 12 YEARS ON

- Tangata Whenua – still experiencing a wider spectrum of emotions – students still feeling guilty about enjoying caucusing, wanting to rescue Tangata Tiriti not recognising this detracts from their needs, being angry at hearing history and implications, being angry at racism in society, enjoying the sense of collective community, being in a safe environment and trusting enough to make themselves vulnerable
  - Tangata Whenua – recognise the need to decolonise their thinking, let go of their anger and work through strategies to not take on board discourses that stereotype and marginalise their identity
  - Tangata Whenua students of mixed heritage still challenged in choosing between caucuses – concerns “not Maaori enough”, impacted by negative discourses
  - Tangata Whenua – understanding the benefits of caucusing in developing their knowledge of this topic in the context of their heritage / whakapapa / and practice as social workers and counsellors
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# IMPACT OF COVID ON CAUCASING

- Both caucus groups were unhappy not to be meeting face to face at the marae
- Tangata Whenua noticed that the wairua was not present in the zoom environment. Whanaungatanga provided a good start to making connections however physical and wairua aspects of the environment were missing
- Moodle became the key vehicle for students preparation for engaging in 6 one hour zoom classes spread over 3 days, minimising zoom fatigue and maximising student energy
- With a large Tangata Tiriti class it was important to put students into breakout rooms with a tutor allocated to each room. The smaller groups provided for more intimate processing of the resource material
- Entering brainstorming onto Padlets on moodle sites during caucus sessions provided for the first time an opportunity for each caucus to share with each other ideas on the same topic



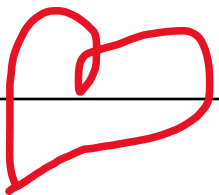
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# REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSIS FROM TUTORS

- Having maintained the process of caucusing for 15 years tutors recognize that similar dynamics exist in each caucus form when this process started. The repeated different responses observed between caucus groups in this process indicates our on-going commitment to the original reasons for adopting caucusing.

“The effects of colonisation are pervasive, and the contemporary context of neoliberalism and globalisation only serve to strengthen Western pedagogies (McNabb, 2019).”

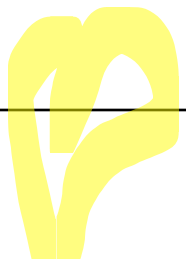
- This pivotal topic requires an approach that disrupts students’ views of the world so they can interrogate New Zealand history from their own cultural perspective.
- Topic itself (Te Tiriti o Waitangi and colonizing history) along with caucusing provides this disruption
- Tutors are continually challenged in facilitating students’ emotional distress within this learning environment. We are conscious that each student cohort brings its own dynamics requiring full engagement by tutors. Tutors need to be self-aware, emotionally robust and compassionate when navigating the discourses / distress of students and to be confident that the process does provide transformational learning.



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# REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSIS FROM TUTORS

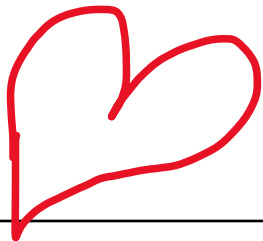
- Non – white students have struggled or felt unsure, unheard within Tangata Tiriti environment, issues relating to their experiences of racism and colonization – including with classmates. The first sub- caucus for non-white students 2020 and 2021 – beneficial
  - “At the same time, it was considered important that students and staff with migrant experience be supported to claim a safe migrant space, “where we can talk about settling in and finding resources”(McNabb, 2019)
- Students mature as they progress in the degree, they see the bigger picture and their own growth and responsibilities more clearly
- Institutional context creates challenges in maintaining this practice – disruptions created can attract student complaints about practice, more tutors needed, extra physical space needed.



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# QUESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- We are curious to research what methods and practices are used by other educators of social work and counselling programs as a comparative study to support our on-going programme development.



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# REFERENCE LIST

- Giles, R. & Rivers, S. (2009). Caucusing: Creating a space to confront our fears. *AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND SOCIAL WORK ISSUES 1 AND 2*, 2009.
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