

Pathways to the Past: Effective Pedagogies for Māori and Pasifika Students in the Historical Disciplines

TLRI grant holders:

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Project start date: 1 January, 2018

Project finish date: 31 December, 2019

Project Description:

History studies promote vital skills for indigenous students, allowing them to see history as open to their knowledge, critique and ownership. So why do so few Māori and Pasifika students enroll in history-based courses at university, and why are their pass rates typically low? We propose that choosing appropriate pedagogies is crucial. We employed *talanoa* (conversations) as our main research methodology to better understand Māori and Pasifika students' characteristic ways of knowing and learning in the historical disciplines. The new knowledge that we gained is enabling us to develop effective face-to-face and online pedagogies to foster their historical literacy and improve their educational outcomes in these disciplines.

Aims:

1. To understand what historical literacy means in Aotearoa/New Zealand, for first-year Māori and Pasifika students;
2. To understand how historical literacy should be taught in Aotearoa/New Zealand today;
3. To implement and assess pedagogies that Māori and Pasifika students find effective for learning historical literacy;
4. To provide guidelines for teaching historical literacy at tertiary level, especially in those historical disciplines in which Māori and Pasifika students have achieved less well;
5. To enhance the teaching and research capabilities of teachers in the historical disciplines at the University of Auckland and beyond especially regarding the use of indigenous methodologies.

Why is this research important?

Drawing on Māori and Pasifika student views, this project re-thinks 'historical literacy' from a more culturally aware standpoint. We synthesised new knowledge from cross-disciplinary enquiry, and thereby opened up history studies to a more diverse group of learners. We built on knowledge of best practices in teaching Māori and Pasifika with a view to better engaging and retaining these students in the historical disciplines. And we fostered critical conversations about history pedagogies across the disciplines and levels, which led to curriculum review, and promoted a culture of knowledge sharing among history educators at the University of Auckland. As we disseminate this knowledge through articles and conference papers, the project will influence the teaching and learning of history more widely, in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally.

Methods:

We employed *talanoa* as a research methodology for exploring the perspectives of Māori and Pasifika students. We learned that time is of the essence: researchers must carefully balance the need for the *talanoa* to run its natural course with the need not to overburden the participants. Secondly, we learned that where the researchers undertake the *talanoa* is less important than attending to the relationships (the *vā*) within and between the researchers and participants. And, finally, in keeping with what some Māori researchers and their allies have argued of Kaupapa Māori research methodology, we learned that indigenous methodologies like *talanoa*, when employed with care and in recognition of their emergence out of decolonial struggles for indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, can foster a fruitful intercultural research conversation.

Results:

In *talanoa* with Māori and Pasifika students and teachers of a range of ethnicities from across the historical disciplines, we asked: how can we inspire indigenous students to feel at home in the historical disciplines, do well in them and make them their own? The students and teachers saw historical literacy as predominantly textual in nature, and critical historical literacy as often culturally alien to Māori and Pasifika students. They revealed that what worked to foster critical historical literacy in Māori and Pasifika students was multimodal performance. Accordingly, we argue that pedagogy in the historical disciplines that sustains Māori and Pasifika students culturally enables them to *perform* their culture through historical literacy – and thus to see history (both history per se and their histories) as open to their knowledge, critique and ownership.



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