

The Critical Role of Student Voice in Schools for Bringing up the Next Generation of Women Leaders

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Purpose of Research

- Examine impact of neoliberalism on status of girls and women
- Explore ways women leaders create safe space and enrich curriculum to uncover girls' and young women's accounts of lived realities
- Surface strategies to bring girls and young women to feminist consciousness, develop voice, practice leadership skills, and enact activism
- Demonstrate ways students engage with metaphoric tools and visual images to describe their feminist leadership and community activism



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Developing Voice → Critical Consciousness

- Embraces history, philosophy, dignity, humanity
- Develops self-respect, self-worth, and agency
- Transfigures the act of learning and teaching
- Transforms institutions and organizations where it is centered
- To find one's voice → To speak against → To listen to others

(Bolstad, 2011; Bourke, 2014; Fielding, 2011; Fielding & Rudduck 2002; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011; Larson, Walker & Pearce, 2005; Mitra, 2006)



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Student Voice and School Leadership

- Genuine centering of student voice in school culture
- Intentional positioning of students as change agents and leaders
- Actively creating student voice opportunities
- Divvying up leadership duties and roles vs. reciprocal dialogue
- Creating safe space comes first

(Bertrand, 2014; Lac & Mansfield, 2018; Mansfield, 2015; McNae, 2014; UN Women, 2012)



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Creating Safe Space

- Noticing and interrogating influences which minoritize and marginalize girls' and young women's lived experiences and ways of leading
- Disrupting, amplifying and realigning systems, rituals and practices:
 - Physical Architectures
 - Relational Architectures
 - Emotional Architectures
 - Pedagogical Architectures
- Preparing young women to enter into and bring their 'full selves' to these spaces
- Supporting young women and girls to actively shape these spaces
- Providing a 'third space' for safe sense making – between agency and compliance

(Bertrand, 2014; Butler, Kane & Morshead, 2017; Mansfield, 2015; McNae, 2014; UN Women, 2012)

Findings:

Safe Space, Student Voice, and Critical Consciousness in Action



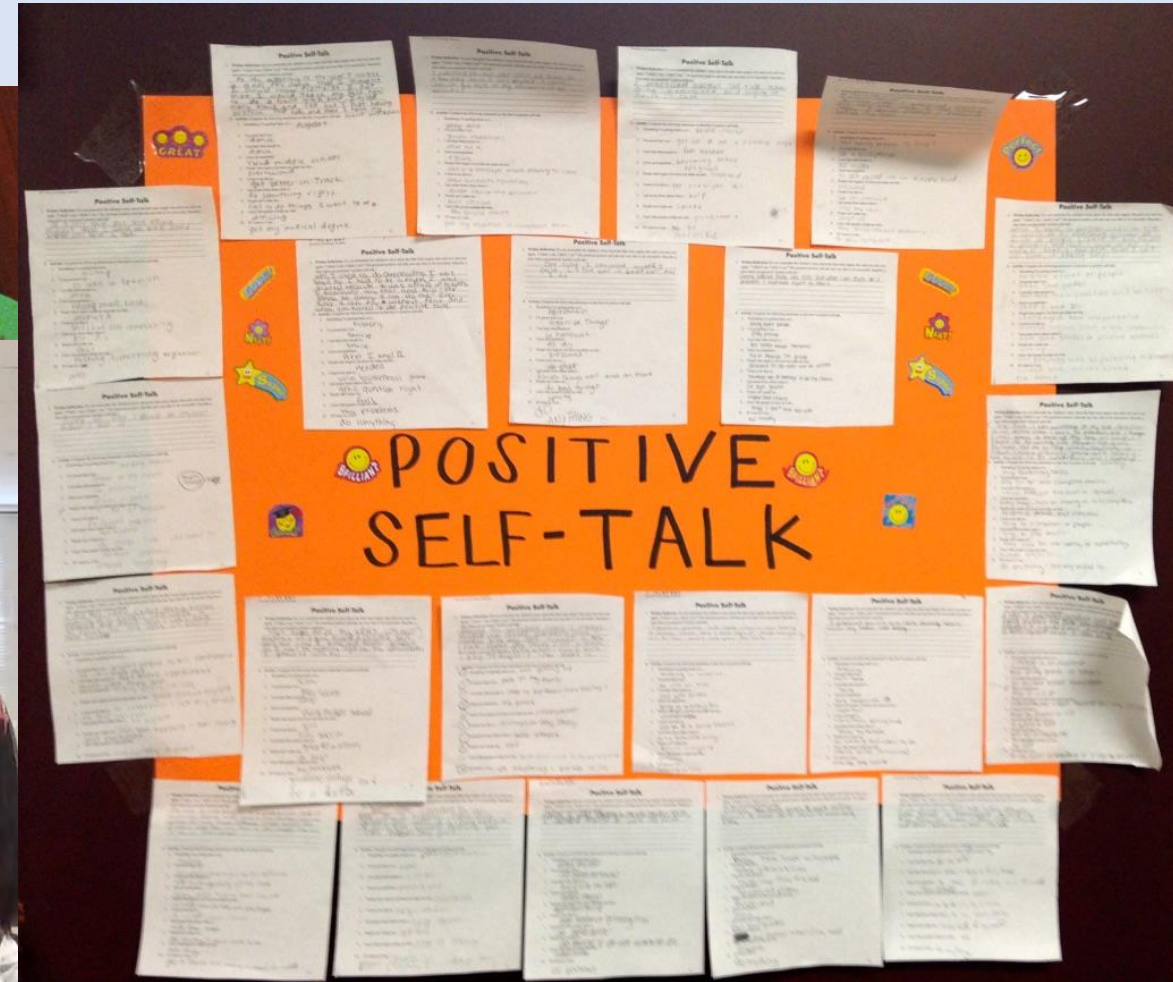
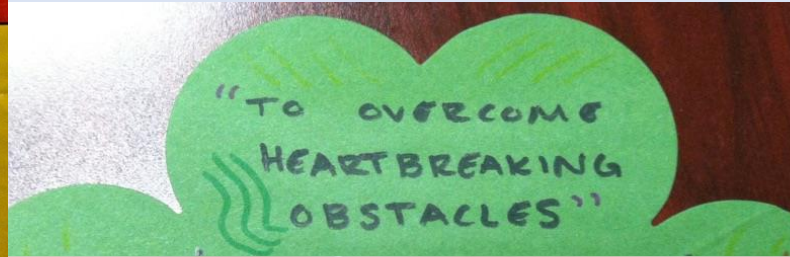
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Creating Safe Space



Young women's voices- Who am I?



In this activity 30 high school students were asked to use images and texts from a pile of used magazines to create a magazine cover of themselves, what best describes them. This cover was to represent them and their current feelings about themselves.

Moana* created this cover and spoke to it – her sense of identity and feeling overwhelmed. The importance of her Māori culture to her, but how, when she arrived at school she felt she had to ‘leave this at the gate’. She ‘walked two worlds’ of Māori and Pakeha (European heritage), and felt this was confusing. She described not being able to bring her ‘whole self’ to school each day.

*pseudonym used

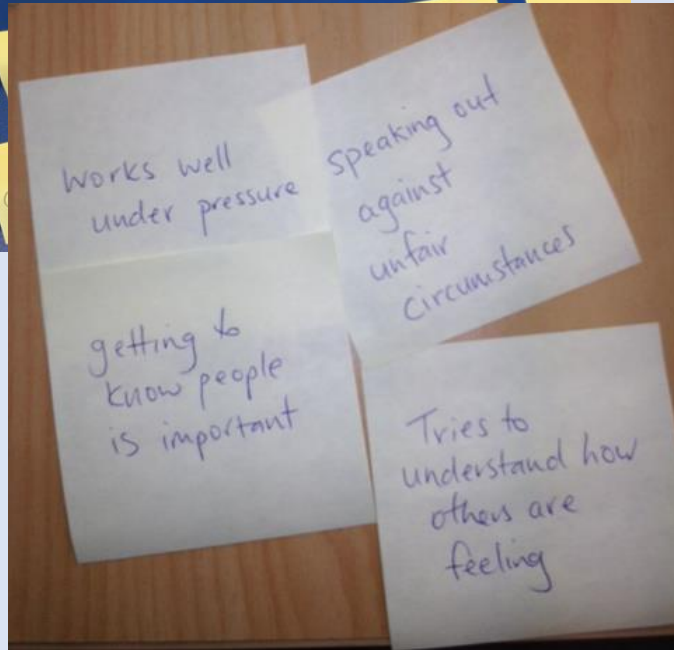
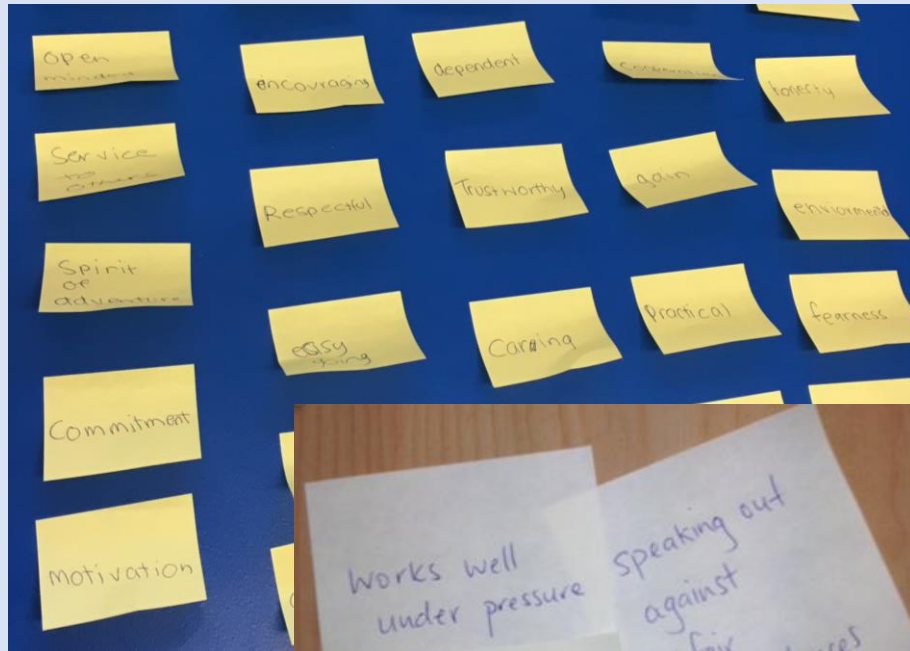
Young women's voices- What has shaped me?



Working together, 84 student leaders from the Waikato region examined their leadership journey (whakapapa – history) and used the river (Te Awa) as a metaphor to describe what they had encountered and how it had influenced them in their practice.

They joined their individual rivers together, articulating their experiences to the young women on either side of them, coming to see vast experiences and the collective storying of leadership in their region.

Young women's voices- What do I value?



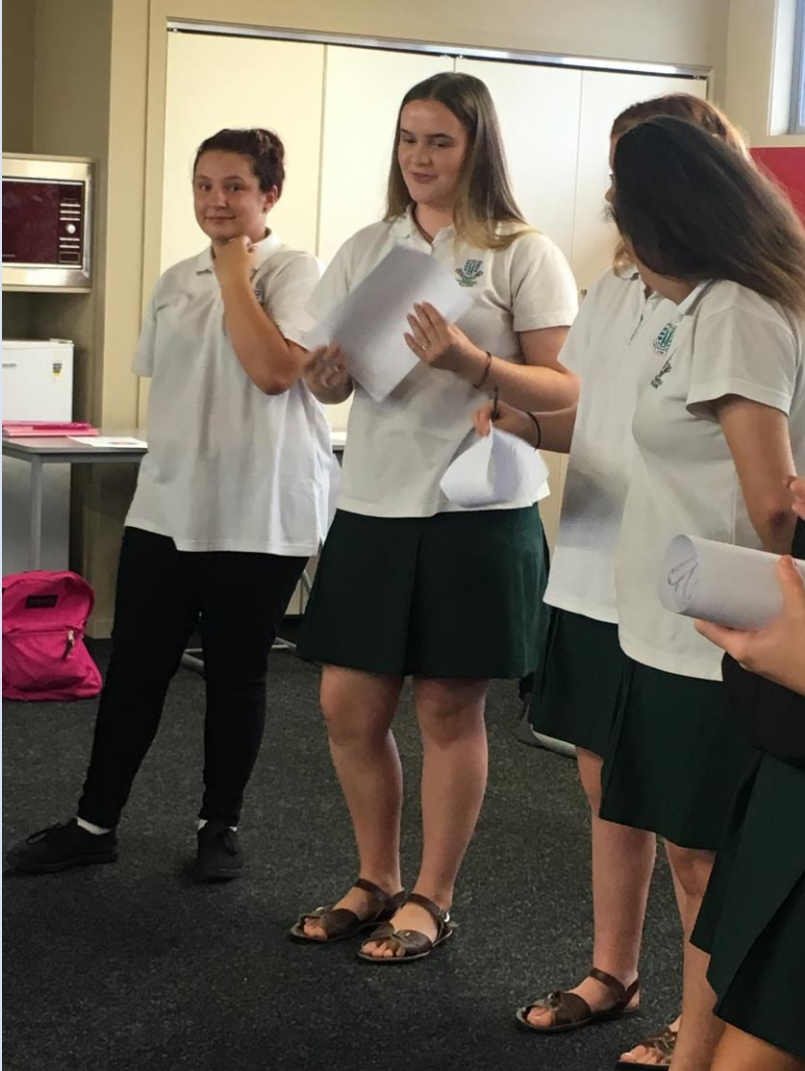
In one NZ high school using Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 2002), 24 young women (aged 15-16) shared 4 small narratives each of when they were leading at their best (300-500 words each).

Peers worked with them to analyze the stories and look for common themes to identify key attributes and values which emerged from the leadership encounters.

These were turning into provocative propositions (essence statements)

I am leading at my best when I know the people I am working with and can feel their trust

Young women's voices- Growing in confidence



As a concluding activity to leadership learning and to demonstrate their leadership in action, 12 students had to identify a community need and develop ideas for a social justice project for their community.

Four groups of three submitted their business plans and strategies along with a rationale why their project was important. They had to show how it aligned to their personal values, as part of their 'sales pitch' for funding.

Groups also had to demonstrate that they had the skills, knowledge and abilities to make the project happen, or show how they would seek to develop these skills and knowledge. Many of these young women had not spoken to large groups in public before. In the end , they were all wanting to speak from the front!

Young women's voices- Understanding Diversity

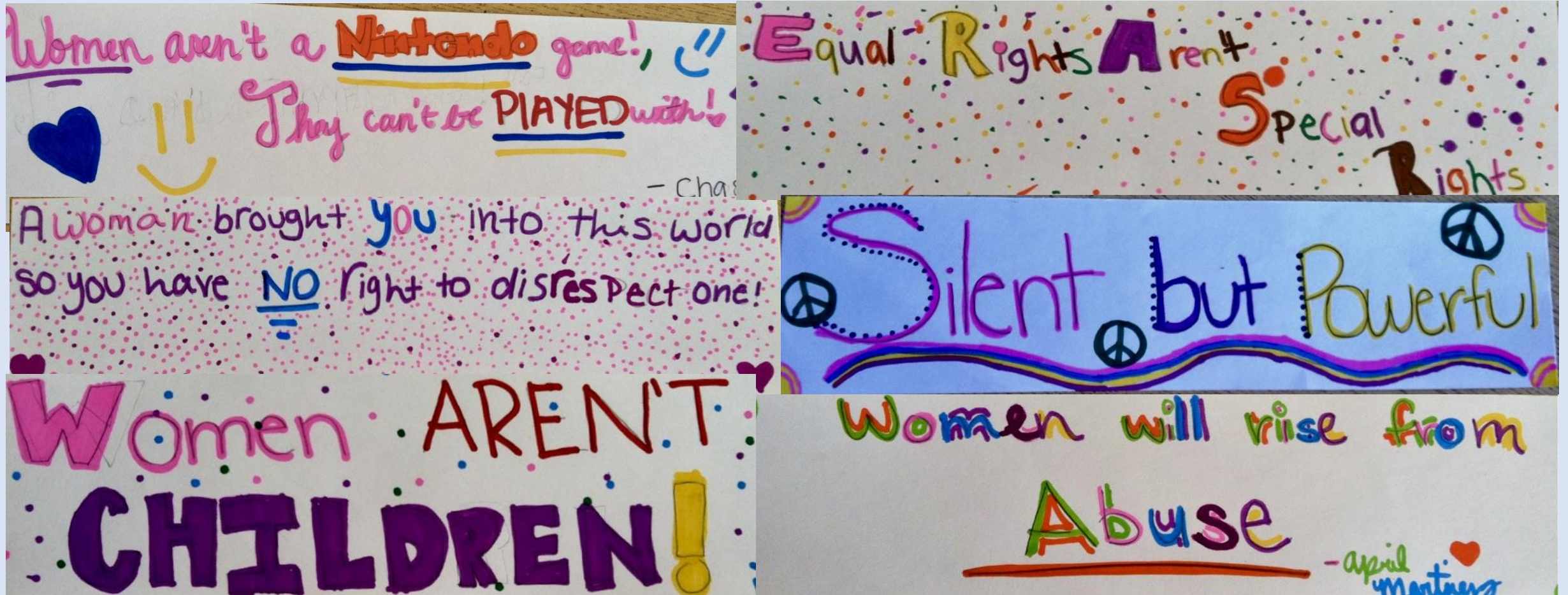


Making sense of diversity was an important aspect which the young women felt they needed as leaders. We co-constructed an activity together which could be used to explore what diversity looked like using features in the natural environment. Descriptive words filled the boxes – eg: smooth, opaque, light, coarse, burnt, hard, brittle.... Students found objects from nature to match the words.

‘Noticing’ what was found and comparing and contrasting the different findings which people used to represent the language allowed discussions to flow about acceptance, inclusion, variety, difference, choices and embracing the ideas and actions of others.

- *“Our flowers are the same but we have used them differently”*
- *“Before we could start we had to work together to share our understandings of the words”*
- *“Understanding diversity depends on what eyes you see through”*

“What’s Your Slogan?”



Bumper Sticker: a label carrying a slogan or advertisement fixed to a vehicle's bumper

[illegible]

Assemblage: 3-D art made by assembling disparate elements scavenged by the artist

“Women’s Movement”



Sculpture: representation by carving, casting, or other shaping techniques

Senior Thesis by Anamina Hancevic



Key Take-Aways

- The process of exploring and challenging traditional notions of schooling and leadership becomes central to supporting the development of young women as global citizens with critical consciousness.
- Creating spaces for young women to share their voices gives us insights into how we can work alongside young women and create safe spaces to “confront the past, interrupt the present, and revolutionize the future” (Mansfield, 2014).
- To learn about leadership, girls and young women require opportunities to share ideas, develop their viewpoints and be involved in productive relationships that aids their learning. The uniqueness they bring to the relationship adds richness and this diversity allows for greater impetus for future change (McNae, 2014).



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Conclusion

We must insist that schools enable all young people to have their
ethical, political, social and emotional selves welcomed;
their spirits uplifted;
and their capacity for active meaningful learning fully engaged.
These exceptional practices need to become the norm.

Compassionate, insightful, and committed young people and adults
will learn how to tackle the profound
political, emotional, social and spiritual issues of our time.

Preparing young people to be global citizens
is to make sure that no child is left behind
and that every aspect of the human being is welcomed into our schools.

(Carlsson-Paige & Lantieri, 2005)



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