

ANALYSING JOKES AND COMMENTS FRAMEWORK

What teachers told us:

Teachers who were interviewed to provide insight into racism in education helped us to see that:

- responding to racist comments or jokes was challenging
- some felt these individual comments or jokes, when delivered as quiet asides or away from larger gatherings of teachers were not very harmful
- some did not want to challenge colleagues publicly for fear of disrupting the professional environment
- often they were so stunned at what they heard, they could not find a response

What Our Code / *Nga Tikanga Matatika* says:

Our Code / *Ngā Tikanga Matatika* is intended as a learning tool “to assist us to engage in professional learning conversations about our practice.” It is also to help others understand our expectations for ourselves of ethical behaviour and practice.

The Code of Professional Responsibility Examples in Practice (p9) Contributing to an inclusive, supportive and respectful workplace culture that promotes teacher and learner wellbeing (p5).” “Taking action to stop harmful unethical or unlawful actions of a colleague where their behaviour may be in breach of the Code (p9).”

I will work in the best interest of learners by respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners p.10

I will work in the best interest of learners by affirming Māori learners as tangata whenua and supporting their educational aspirations p. 10

1. Czopp, Monteith, *Confronting Prejudice (Literally): Reactions to Confrontations of Racial and Gender Bias*

Research shows¹ that blunt, calling-out statements such as “That’s racist,” can result in defensive reactions, which can limit an individual’s capacity for reason, empathy and self-reflection. Calling out doesn’t enable us to effectively address or rectify any damage.

Instead, try calling people in when you hear a racist comment or joke. By calling in, we can speak up, but without tearing others down.

There are many different ways to start a calling-in conversation (link to calling in content in guide to safe and productive conversations)

A framework for analysing your own jokes and comments

Sometimes it’s easier to reflect on our own jokes and comments to understand how other people may hear or interpret them. That way we may be more confident in talking to others in a safe and productive manner.

“It was only a joke...”

“But...”

- is my joke or comment aimed at a distinct ‘group’?
- is anything negative implied?
- do my jokes or comments foster or affirm superiority of any group?
- is the targeted group marginalised in any way?
- would I make this joke about another group? Would I make it about a group I belonged to? Why or why not?
- do I share the focus of my jokes or comments equally making sure all groups are targeted?
- are other members of groups I represent present, when I make my comments or jokes?
- are members of groups I target present, when I make my comments or jokes?
- have I asked/observed how members of the targeted group respond?
- why do I feel safe to make these jokes or comments?
- could my humour be feeding discrimination, stereotyping or racism?

Intention vs Impact

When it comes to racist jokes, inevitably we will be confronted with “But it’s just a joke! I didn’t mean any harm!”

In our calling in conversations, we want people to understand the difference between intention and impact – just because we don’t intend to do harm, doesn’t make it so. Explain that you are not questioning their intentions you’re questioning the impact of their actions. What might seem like one harmless joke to them, could actually be one of hundreds of microaggressions experienced by marginalised individuals every day.

Let’s be in this together and Unteach Racism.