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Ph.D Abstracts

'A culturally responsive pedagogy of relations': Coming to understand

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Introduction

This paper is positioned within a "culturally responsive pedagogy of relations" (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007) as I have come to understand this through my work in Te Kotahitanga. It is also positioned within what I understand about culturally responsive pedagogy from my own Samoan culture and what I have also written about in my Masters thesis (Siope, 2010). I begin by respectfully introducing myself and my Master's thesis on this journey of coming to understand what a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations might be. I continue by looking at some definitions of culturally responsive pedagogy, considering what it is and what it is not, and I add my Samoan understandings to this new learning. I conclude with a recent look inside a culturally responsive and relational teacher's classroom.

Introducing myself

To begin, I am a first generation New Zealand-born Samoan woman. My parents migrated to New Zealand in the early 1950s with education as a prime reason for their migration. My schooling began in the early 1970s in Otara, South Auckland. We lived under the shadow of the Dawn Raids when Pacific peoples were targeted as over-stayers and deported back to their island homelands. In 1976 my family moved to the eastern suburbs where I went to middle school and high school. In 1992 I migrated to Brisbane, Australia where I lived until my return in 2004 to pursue primary school teaching. In what I believed to be my final year of university I began work as a research assistant with Te Kotahitanga where I have been for the last six years.

In my Master's thesis, *Children of the Migrant Dreamers* (Siope, 2010) I compared the schooling experiences of 38 Pasifika students in two Te Kotahitanga schools with my own schooling some years earlier. It was my intention to seek out examples of culturally responsive pedagogy and consider their influence on the education of these students. I used "narrative research" as a way of identifying and reconstructing "turning points" (Bruner, 1990). These turning points or defining moments, as I remembered them, were used as important triggers to reconstruct themes and make more sense of what had happened for me when I was at school, and then for what was happening for

the groups of Pasifika students. Using Gay's (2000) definition of culturally responsive, I promoted Mr Johnson (pseudonym), a Palagi (non Pasifika) maths teacher in charge of lunch-time detention. I did this because he had done more to respond and relate to me and my wagging companions than any other teacher, thus helping us to become what we have become. However, I am often asked to defend him as my choice, to the point that at times I have had to go back and recheck my own understandings. In doing this I reconsider what I wrote in my thesis and compare my thinking then with a recent experience in my professional role.

This paper is my response to that particular niggling and recurring question about what I now think culturally responsive pedagogy is.

Culturally responsive pedagogy: What it is

Culturally responsive pedagogy is "complex, problematic and challenging" to both define and implement (Earl, Timperley, & Stewart, 2008; Milne, 2009). Moreover, there are many definitions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milne, 2009; Nieto, 2010; Sleeter, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). However, the one that I adhere to is the Te Kotahitanga definition (Bishop et al., 2007). Bishop et al. have coined the phrase a *culturally responsive pedagogy of relations*. To me the addition of the two words "of relations" is key to understanding and defining what culturally responsive pedagogy is and also distinguishing it as going beyond culturally relevant or appropriate pedagogy.

> From the theoretical position of Kaupapa Māori research, and an examination of appropriate Māori cultural metaphors, we suggested that this will be accomplished when educators ***create learning contexts*** within their classrooms; where ***power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence***; where ***culture counts***; where ***learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals***; where participants are ***connected*** to one another through the establishment of ***a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes***. We term this pedagogy a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations. (Bishop et al., 2007, p. 1; bolding and italics added for emphasis)

Why does culturally responsive pedagogy have to be so complex and overwhelmingly challenging to grasp and implement? The short answer is because potentially, as we have begun to discuss in Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga, it holds the key to changing the very fabric of society for underserved groups. For example, when my grandparents and father migrated here after the Second World War, "New Zealand was historically one of the developed world's more equal societies" (Rashbrooke, 2013, p. 23). However, today 50% of the population (largely made up of Māori and Pacific peoples) earn less than $24,000 a year, a full-time minimum wage salary equates to $28,600 a year while a 'living wage' is estimated at $38,270 (Rashbrooke, 2013, p. 20). Alarmingly, this inequality has soared within the last 30 years to today when Māori and Pacific peoples are the most disadvantaged (NZCCSS, 2013; Rashbrooke, 2013). From an educational perspective, the implications for changing the fabric of society must concern and involve more than just teachers and students but everyone and everything in and out of that school and its community. In short, it needs to concern everyone.

If schools and learning institutions are the spaces where the tools for social mobility are to be accessed so that we can relate, live and learn alongside diverse cultures in an equitable and fair manner, then education success for all groups needs to become a moral vision and imperative. Schools need to be more than just teaching the 3Rs, they also need to be society's honest critics (Snook, Clark, Harker, O'Neill, & O'Neill, 2010) and the critical conscience of society (Berryman, Nevin, SooHoo, & Ford, (2013) A culturally responsive pedagogy of relations could become a pivotal platform for making this moral imperative a reality. However, its implementation requires school leaders and teachers to take an honest look at, and investigate, the personal beliefs that guide and inform their practice. For as trite as it sounds, teachers cannot teach what they do not know (Howard, 2006).

To change the fabric of society is to recognise and understand that currently ours is largely driven and defined by a narrow focussed monocultural mindset. This means that what is considered to be regular, status quo, mainstream or normal may not necessarily be right or just or fair for all who live in it, and, unfortunately for some our society has been unjust, inequitable and morally unfair. It comes with a hegemonic one-size-fits-all mentality and a default inclination to assimilate all cultures into the dominant discourses (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Consedine & Consedine, 2005). In reality, two specific examples to consider are that one in five Māori and Pacific households live in poverty compared to one in ten Pākehā households; and Māori, Pasifika and new immigrant women are over-represented in low-paid work (Rashbrooke, 2013). If education is to result in more students being able to join the knowledge economy, then cultural responsiveness requires an agentic and determined consciousness from teachers and school leaders to replace the existing monocultural expectations. Once the mind is open to new possibilities there is much in the literature to guide us. For example Earl et al. (2008) suggest that being culturally responsive is

> … much more than introducing myths or metaphors into classes. It means interacting with the students and their families to understand their reality; it means understanding the socio-political history and how it impacts on classroom life; it means challenging personal beliefs and actions; and, it means changing practices to engage all students in their learning and make the classroom a positive learning place for all students. (p. 12)

Fundamental to being culturally responsive is in the intent of implementation, in other words, in terms of 'the relations'. For teachers this begins between themselves and their learners. Adding the relational intent to Earl et al.'s definition means it becomes more than just student-centred pedagogy or learner-centred pedagogy; it becomes a *relations-centred* pedagogy.

Culturally responsive pedagogy: What it is not

Because there are few one-off answers for what culturally responsive pedagogy is, it may be helpful to understand what it is not.

For example, I contend that it is not just culturally appropriate or culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, it is not just the introduction of "myths and metaphors into classes" (Earl et al., 2008, p. 12) as may be manifested in the

tokenistic compliance checklist tick-off attention that culturally appropriate pedagogy can become.

I contend, it is not Critical Pedagogy, derived from Critical Theory. However, both Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Critical Pedagogy question where 'power' is positioned and both deliberatively seek ways to create dialogic spaces, and expose and break down institutions that have historically marginalised and oppressed in order that they may share power (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Freire, 1972). Both pay attention to the fabric of society.

Culturally responsive is not the missionary approach to teaching with the notion that marginalised or minoritised students need to be rescued from their own culture and be converted to taking on the culture of their teacher or the school in order to achieve. Wearmouth, Glynn and Berryman (2005) and Bishop and Berryman (2006) describe this best in noting how engaged academically successful Māori students told of sacrificing their cultural identity by leaving themselves at the school gates, instead taking on the school's identity in order to achieve. My own research (Siope, 2010, 2011) is built on theirs as well as the research of Hawk and Hill (1998), who found that Pasifika students could live in up to five to six different worlds that ranged from their homes, schools, church, part-time employment and teen culture to social friendships. However, these students had taken the leaving of their identity at the school gates to a new level by never letting any of these worlds interconnect. They appeared to work hard at keeping them separate, especially the worlds of school and homes. One consequence of their leading these almost double lives was that none of these worlds would be lived in wholeheartedly, or to their fullest. In my thesis Pasifika student participants shared how they, as children of migrant dreamers, often felt exhausted, tired, burdened and at times angry that they had all these expectations placed upon them. The Ministry's monitoring report of the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2012) for the years up to 2010 concurred with previous findings that Pasifika students stayed on longer at school than any other ethnicity (Ministry of Education, 2008). Taking these two points together then, the situation that Hattie (2002) describes of students being "physically present but psychologically absent" (p. 5) rings true for many Pasifika and perhaps Māori students today.

The importance of spaces

Cultural responsiveness begins by creating relational "dialogic spaces" (Berryman et al., 2013). Sometimes these are metaphoric, within an existing body or institutional structure, or in the education context such as pedagogy. Dialogic spaces between students and the teacher provide a specific purpose: to listen to; to learn from; to work in; and to share amongst and alongside others. Often, teachers who believe in their positional power as authoritarian expert can be the biggest barrier. In terms of behaviour management in the classroom, Nuthall (2007) talks about four cultures existing in the classroom, the first three being the culture of the teacher, the culture of the students, and the student peer culture. The student peer culture Nuthall showed to be the most overlooked but if left unchecked this focus can shift the balance of power in the classroom from a focus on active learning to a battle of wills as students resist having their behaviour managed. Such teacher comments as "I treat all my students the same" and "no smiling till April" are telling signs that this battle to dominate the cultural spaces has begun. Nuthall cautions that if the teacher tries to pit their culture

against the culture of their students they will lose every time for teachers are not experts of their students' cultures, and nor do they need to be. What Nuthall suggests is needed is to create a fourth culture in the room, an overall classroom culture. I would add that this fourth culture can be developed by using relational and culturally responsive pedagogies.

Culturally responsive contexts for learning can be achieved when new learning contexts arise and this can take many different forms. It differs from cultural appropriateness, which is about *imposing* an existing predetermined learned context or piece of reified knowledge from outside. It promotes instead *growing* from within, using all of the existing knowledge and expertise from within the cultural experiences of the learners themselves. It begins with building that relational space so that all the students feel safe about bringing their own cultural toolkit (Bruner, 1996) to the table as the means of further developing and understanding their own existing knowledge and taking that learning further. It is within contexts such as these that new learning and new knowledge can be co-constructed. Within this context understanding who has the power to define and how this plays out or not is most important.

Understanding power through a Samoan lens

'O le ala i le pule 'o le tautua
(The way to power is through service)

Using the above proverb I shall endeavour to define what power and service are and illustrate it as explained to me by my parents. The complete translated definition of tautua is service as carried out by the taulealea, who are the young men of the village who serve their aiga (family), matai (chief/chiefs) and nuu (village). They have two service responsibilities: the first being preparation and distribution of the ava for the kava ceremony; and secondly, gathering, fishing, hunting and preparation of food for the umu (oven). While this is strenuous work, it is not the measure of the workload or work output that characterises the taulealea but rather the manner in which they serve and perform that counts here. It is their work ethic that will define them rather than their work output. I like Apulu's (2010) definition of Tautua Faatamalii: to serve as a taulealea means to serve with absolute integrity.

What then does integrity mean in this respect? When these young fishermen go out to fish, it is not merely the lone or few fishermen in the va'a (canoe) that are credited with the final catch, but also the reconnaissance group who went up the mountain several days beforehand to check on weather conditions and who then sent the smoke signals to the villages below saying where and when to begin. It is also the young boys who climb the coconut trees to read those signals and who then call down to the drummers and chanters below for the songs that will best encourage those out on the water to paddle and in what direction. For they all know if they do not heed the correct signals, no one will be eating today.

Although that previous sentence may sound contrived, I believe it to be true. Likewise in the classroom, the teacher can be likened to the lone fisherman in the canoe who waits, listens, scans and then acts. Therefore teachers need also to remember why they entered this *service* profession in the first place. Many will profess to 'making a change for good in society' or to 'making a difference'. So like the taulealea they need

to continually look back towards the island in order to collectively think of the best ways to utilise their combined talents and expertise. For the teaching profession, like nursing in the health profession, both began as service professions. I believe Florence Nightingale saw a need and used her societal and educational capital to fill that need. Likewise the taulealea, the young, strong and vibrant, use their cultural knowledge and capabilities to serve and to strengthen the village.

My own learnings

I have reflected deeply about the silo-ed worlds that the Pasifika students and I experienced and why we withheld our school world from our families. In my Masters thesis, one of the students, a Samoan Year 12 student, shared how in trying to tell her parents about what she experienced as teacher harassment, she was told to "harden up" and to show more respect. Of utmost importance for Samoans is fa'aloalo (respect). Others echoed her account with their own stories, saying it was pointless trying to share with family when the prevailing belief at home is that teachers and schools are always right. I noted in my 2011 article how these students learnt that "hardening up" meant shutting up psychologically. Another example of this happened last year. It involved my nephew, in Year 10 at the time, with a female teacher who repeatedly mispronounced his name despite him, my sister and then me telling her that this was having an adverse effect on him. However, to our incredulity she simply disregarded us. She responded by telling me that nicknames are a term of endearment, that this was the nickname his friends called him, and that she had asked him on several occasions if he minded her calling him that. Then by way of excusing herself, "with my accent I just can't pronounce 'islander' names".

As a sign of fa'aloalo or respect, sometimes yes really means no, in that it is considered disrespectful to question or deny a request from someone in authority. So when she had repeatedly asked my nephew for his permission, of course he respectfully replied with a yes. But as much as I tried explaining this to her, I too was shut down and she would not listen. My hope is that one day she may read this and when she does she will understand that it wasn't so much the mispronunciation of his name that hurt him but the hypocrisy of her actions. Her refusal to listen to him meant she wasn't prepared to learn and to change accordingly. In her doctoral thesis, Berryman (2008) talks about how pervasive an effect mispronouncing names can have on students.

This experience showed me why these students choose not to even bother, for why would you tell your family members and expose them to the same disrespect that they as students may encounter on a daily basis. However, in remaining silent, the hegemonic culture of dominance is perpetuated. I had thought I had experienced my share of "people talking past each other" (Metge & Kinloch, 1984), not listening and acting non-agentically. However, I have learned that listening to each other only happens when all the participants of the conversation are perceived as respected and able to be self-determining individuals. It is really difficult to conduct a two-way conversation when the power to define is not balanced, when one group feels they have the right to hold power over the other, to dominate. For many indigenous peoples this will not happen until there are dialogic spaces to allow for reciprocal relationships to develop so that everyone can speak and be heard equally.

Personal experience

As discussed, Mr Johnson is the culturally responsive teacher in my thesis. My three friends and I became acquainted because he was the teacher in charge of lunchtime detention when we were in our School Certificate year. This acquaintance turned into a learning relationship after he caught us out of school grounds without permission at the Greenlane Georgie Pie, eating buzz-bar sundaes. I remember his first words to us were that we had two choices: the first was to return with him to school lunch detention where he would help us pass School C maths; and the second was his accompanying us to our parents' workplaces to explain in person the reason for our unannounced visits. Obviously we chose the first.

He was not the most charismatic or sociable teacher I had, neither was he the most authoritarian or fearsome. But my friends and I respected him because we believed him to be genuine in his interest and care of us and he showed this through his unrelenting determination to share his passion of maths with us and his belief that we would succeed. His sessions started with the sometimes preachy but inspirational sayings or quotes that he put up on the board each day. We would enter his room and check out the feel-good, the feel-deep or the feel-what-the-heck quote of the day he had written up. We would then ask him to share why he chose it, where it came from and what significance or relevance it had to maths. For he had an amazing talent to tie everything back to maths and in turn bring maths alive for us by making it relevant to our own prior knowledge and experiences. He would not always share his thinking about the quotes and this would trigger our curiosity, spiralling into conversations where we tried to come up the answers ourselves. There were days when we felt lax or rebellious and chose not to turn up, but despite our best efforts to wag, he would come and seek us out, saying how he had found two new cool quotes. It was his unwavering belief in us and that quiet persistence that eventually won us over.

Through my work as a research assistant I have come to understand that much of Mr Johnson's pedagogy was indeed relationships-centred. Responding to us "as culturally located beings" for me was manifested with his keeping our confidences by not outing us to our parents and ensuring that we met our end of the bargain by attending and learning maths. His choice of response is as Gay (2003) suggests, that teachers need to have developed "deeper knowledge and consciousness of what is to be taught, how and to whom" (p. 181). It seemed to me that he cared for us individually as much as he did about teaching us maths. Having culturally responsive relationships with anyone is not expecting that it will be a unidirectional thing. In a cultural sense, it also brings with it responsibilities to those with whom you have or are seeking to form a relationship with (Berryman, 2008).

Professional experience

Te Kotahitanga is an educational reform initiative carried out through iterative professional development and research processes. One iterative process of the reform is promoted through the use of Te Kotahitanga 'smart tools', such as Rongohia te Hau. An English meaning of rongo is to listen, and te hau are the winds. Put together this metaphoric process is about listening to the winds of change. How it looks in practice is that through a number of processes, a snapshot of the classroom pedagogy across the school is taken each year. Through this evaluation process, evidence is gathered,

reflected upon and then through co-construction, the action plans for each individual school are set. Through the triangulation of data from teacher surveys, student surveys and 20-minute classroom observations (walk-throughs), the evidence of relational and culturally responsive pedagogies (R&CRP) are gathered and evaluated from across the school. The 20-minute walk-throughs begin with an initial 5 minutes of getting a 'feel' for what is happening in the class, followed by a 10-minute chunk observing and recording teacher and student behaviours. The remaining 5 minutes is spent noting down any final pieces of evidence from the classroom environment. At the completion of the walk-throughs each teacher is collectively ranked according to a five-point Likert scale. Practices in this case refer to an attempt to observe teacher praxis, that is their demonstrated understandings and knowledge of R&CRP as manifested during their observed classroom practice. Within this scale, a 5–4 ranking indicates an *integrated* level of praxis; a 3–2 ranking indicates praxis as *developing* and a 1 ranking indicates only a *basic* level of praxis. This year I participated in Rongohia te Hau and was part of the classroom walk-through observations, the co-constructed rankings and the analysis of the evidence across the process.

It was through this process last August that I saw my first ever teacher who was clearly a five. For me the clearest indication was the fact that I didn't want to leave the room when the observation had ended. Not only did this teacher tick all the components that make up a R&CRP, but in her class I saw and felt that 'you-can-just-tell' buzz to the point that it was almost palpable. I will attempt to capture and articulate this in a way that hopefully won't diminish, abbreviate or pigeonhole what I witnessed but that respects the relational space between this teacher and me.

The class were Year 9 students in an all-girls secondary school. The ethnic mix of the school is predominantly Pasifika, with Samoans making up 28% and Tongans 7%. The next largest ethnic group is Māori at 18%. Eleven other ethnicities are represented in this school with New Zealand European/Pākehā identified as 6%. The teacher, Ms Tiffen, is Pākehā with 6–10 years of teaching experience. She has asked for her real name to be used; however, the students' names are pseudonyms.

This was a health lesson on puberty. The students had to distinguish the different changes that occurred throughout puberty and relate these changes to the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of both the boys and girls experiencing these changes. The class was prepared with the relevant resources and equipment and the students were seated in what appeared to be six self-appointed groups. The walls were covered with current student work, purposely displayed and organised on tapa cloths, brightly coloured 'ie lavalava (sarongs) and bordered with decorative Māori kowhaiwhai patterns. The next section is taken initially from my 10-minute behavioural running record, which was then discussed with this teacher when I sought her permission to write about my experience in her class and strengthen my observations by including her perspectives. The lesson began after Ms Tiffen had finished the instructional set-up of the lesson and the students were ready to begin

> Abbey: [asks enthusiastically] Can we start now?
>
> Teacher: Go for it!
>
> [Teacher moves to a group of girls, crouches low, listens, scans students' workings.]

Teacher: These are really good questions to ask. I don't know it all but I can help you understand …

[Moves to next group, crouches low beside a student, reads, listens, scans students' workings.]

Here 'culture counts' is manifested by the simple small act of Ms Tiffen crouching low beside each group of students and listening to their experiences as valid and authentic rather than merely checking to see that they are following her instructions. In her crouching low she was signalling a switch in roles. This is known as a'o in Samoan and ako in Māori, the reciprocal dynamic nature of teaching and learning, of her now coming to the table as a learner and they now being her teachers.

"A common vision for what constitutes excellence" (Bishop et al., 2007, p. 1) is captured in the following examples where Ms Tiffen will accept any language but not if the words are slang or derogatory. This shows the students that she has high expectations of them and their learning. For me it also connects to the high aspirations for learning that as daughters of migrant dreamers and future mothers of a new dawn generation these girls have brought with them from home.

Teacher: So what do these words describe?

Bekah: Boner.

Teacher: I'm looking for the correct language.

Cynthia: Erection, ejaculation.

Teacher: Very good. [Teacher stands, moves to front of class and counts down to one from five.]

Teacher: Girls, there are some awesome things I have learnt. From the back group of girls I learnt some correct terms in Tuvaluan.

[To a student seated in another group] How do I pronounce them correctly?

When the next segment of work was to begin, Ms Tiffen overheard one of the students asking another for clarification.

Michaela: [muttering to the girl next to her] I don't get it.

Teacher: OK stop! Back up! Thank you, Michaela. Social? What does social mean?

Fetaui: Friends and relationships

Gina: They might start liking each other

Elena: [to the teacher] Isn't that emotional?

Teacher: Could be, what's the difference?

Ms Tiffen stopped the class, thanking the student for asking the question and apologising for not explaining herself more clearly. Her thanking the student was in no way perceived as patronising or sarcastic. This displayed that this was indeed a class where learning was valued and, more so, that there was an interplay of relationships of trust and mutual respect. From here she asked for more clarification from the students

themselves. Again, the conversation was interactive, it was dialogic and spiralling. Hers was not the final voice or the dominant voice in the room. I saw that buzzing, humming sound that I was told to look out for. This teacher had indeed activated all of the brains in the classroom.

> Elena: Emotional is feelings.
>
> Fetaui: Social's like friendships and doing things together.
>
> Teacher: Michaela?
>
> Michaela: Then physical's like height and weight, and emotional's my feelings?
>
> [Class members, including teacher, all smiling.]
>
> Aww, and social's like getting together!
>
> [Teacher and class nodding, smiling. Students already discussing.]
>
> Teacher: Good work girls. OK, five minutes left. Looking for the correct terms, even in your own language, Pink, Green and Blue for Social, go!
>
> [Teacher starts again moving around the class, group to group, crouching low at each stop]

Discussion

I had observed this same class of students earlier in two other subjects and it was as though I had earlier seen some students' evil twins. Many of the students behaved very differently in their previous classrooms.

   To have learning discussions about puberty openly and respectfully with students who themselves were going through puberty and who came from a range of different cultures required a special kind of relationship between the students and the teacher. I remember myself at that age and not daring to have these kinds of conversation in the open. Yet these students were encouraged to use the correct terms, the correct pronunciation and correct grammar, and they were able to do this in their own languages.

   I had read Bruner's (1996) writing on the "cultural toolkit" and I thought I had a grasp of what this meant and how and what to look out for within my observations. But as I first started these observations, I began to doubt my own understandings and definitions of what a "culturally responsive pedagogy of relations" really was. Worse still, I began to doubt whether it did in fact exist. I began to wonder if perhaps my memories of Mr Johnson's teaching practices were nothing more than an over-imagined nostalgic-romanticised recollection where everything looks better in hindsight. My doubts were beginning to override my definitions that maybe there was no such thing as a '5' on the Rongohia te Hau scale, or consistently effective pedagogy throughout but rather just pockets of it, and therefore a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations could not be learnt or taught. You either had it or you didn't. Up until Ms Tiffen's class, what I had been seeing were lots of mediocre transmission-type lessons with smoke signal glints of relational and culturally responsiveness pedagogy, but nowhere near a five.

So what made Ms Tiffen different? I thought I had observed teachers 'sharing power' with their students. I also thought I had seen teachers allowing their students to bring their "cultural toolkits" into the classroom. However, I found that there is a difference between students being able to use their prior knowledge as the basis for new learning and students rehashing yesterday's or last week's or even last term's prior learning. I learned there is a big difference between the students' own prior cultural knowledge and their prior curriculum learning. I have found that a common misconception for teachers in trying to be culturally responsive is having the students recall their prior learning, or what they were taught in previous lessons. This can come across as checking up that the prescribed knowledge has been learned or instructions have been followed. In situations such as this, learning is not being socially constructed with the student, power is not being shared and therefore the lesson is not responsive to the students' cultural toolkit. Often these lessons end up being culturally relevant, or culturally appropriate, learning about the culture but through someone else's lens. In Ms Tiffen's class I observed a teacher truly sharing the teaching power in the classroom and learning alongside her students.

Ms Tiffen was present. She was tuned into her environment and into her students. She read the signs and acted accordingly. She allowed the group of Tuvaluans students to discuss the terms in their own language but they too had to use the correct terminology. She thanked the students for teaching her something new and she asked a Tuvaluan student who was seated in another group if the terms were correct and not slang. In so doing, she allowed the students to bring their own expertise and she did not step in and become the expert of their culture. Her actions support the findings of Nuthall (2007), who was emphatic about teachers not being the experts of their students' cultures. Glynn (2013) would suggest, however, that while you should not try to be the cultural expert, you should be a learner of other cultures if you are to develop relational respect for others.

Conclusion

Both Mr Johnson's and Ms Tiffen's pedagogies support the oft quoted catch-cry from Te Kotahitanga of "what works for Māori, works for all; however, what works for all will not necessarily work for Māori". In this paper I have attempted to show how Ms Tiffen's pedagogy worked for this group of Pasifika students. I declared earlier that a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations can promote a pivotal platform for beginning to change the fabric of society. That might sound overly ambitious and naïve considering the enormity of the disparities and inequities existing today. But the moral and socially just imperatives that guided Mr Johnson's and Ms Tiffen's culturally responsive pedagogy of relations shows that the teaching profession can be the tuatua (service vehicle) to creating this fairer and equitable society. The pule (the power) that holds everyone together in this case is that relational collaboration or culturally responsive approach to attaining a "common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes" (Bishop et al., 2007, p. 1). As in the proverb, this common vision is applied at distributed points and levels within the school. But with everyone knowing the vision and doing their part, just as with the taulealea (fishermen), or the school teachers and school leaders of today, the vision is that their work will result in promoting a new hope that will ripple out and transform the wider society.

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