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Living Well Together
in Our Oceanic "Sea of Islands"

Epistemology and Ontology in Comparative Education

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ABSTRACT

By its nature, comparative education values diversity. Respectfully studying how different groups pursue education provides opportunities to learn about the variety of human experience, expand the boundaries of the field, and ultimately re-understand ourselves. At its core, the field leverages the dynamic space between life as culturally located and being human. This chapter contributes value to comparative education from an Oceanic viewpoint. Oceania is the world region with more water and languages than any other. Because of its diversity and colonial histories, Oceania is a site of creative tension between regionalism and self-determination. Unsurprisingly, conflict exists in the region. However, a key need in our "sea of islands" for sustainability is to live well together. Faced with the uncertainties of the future such as climate change, mutual understanding and support are at a premium. The collaboration of writers; Solomon Islander, Tongan, and Anglo-Welsh, embodies this, as does the chapter's woven mat-based structure. The thrust of this chapter is that through walking backward into the future and embracing solidarity through diversity, we can promote a sustainable educational journey that offers the hope of continuity in the face of the challenges ahead.

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In his introduction to a previous edition of this book, Arnove (2013) describes the contribution of comparative and international education (CIE) to "international understanding and peace" as significant but "previously underemphasized." In his account, the relative diminution of this strand has been somewhat rectified as some have recognized "how forces from areas of the world previously considered distant and remote" (p. 17) have affected their lives. This chapter presents ideas from an area that some may consider far-flung, but which is home and the center of the world to those of us who live here. We offer ontological and epistemological gifts from what Hau'ofa (1994) called our "sea of islands" (p. 148) to those near and far who are interested in the dialectic of the local and global.

Ontology refers to the committed study of what might exist, embracing approaches that are substantialist hence, ontology as a substance or thing, and fluxist, ontology as occurrents, events, and processes. In this chapter, we assume ontology as subjective, intangible, "soft" and internal to a person's perception and experience. Epistemology refers to the grounds for knowledge, and epistemological debates center on how people know or understand their social reality (Sanga, 2004). That is, what is known, how, by whom, why and what can be passed on as "truth" to others. In the Pacific region social and cultural diversity implies multiple ontologies and epistemologies.

The organization of the chapter represents a woven mat. Such artifacts, often made from pandanus, are ubiquitous across Oceania. Separate strands are woven together from two directions to create a coherent and useful whole. Mats can be made by individuals, but often groups undertake the preparatory work as well as make contributions to weaving if the mat is large. Here, we weave sections organized around universal aspects of education together with strands that give salient accounts from specific locations. The final section attends to the wider context of such weaving. This mat is a cooperative effort, unrolled in Oceanic welcome to those from near and far.

The chapter starts by describing the dynamic diversity of Oceania. In a fractal of the global-local dynamic, both conflict and potentially creative tension between regionalism, nationhood, island-based societies, and specific language groups and clans (Bray, 1993) play out here. However, Oceanic relationalities, the state of being related, are ontologically unavoidable and always a matter of negotiation. Thus, we introduce ourselves as authors and friends who exercise mutual responsibility for our education and growth.

Next, colonial legacies are dealt with in relational terms. This does not deny the violence of the past (or present). However, the approach supports working for a future where relationships between knowledge systems are not made sense of through the metaphor of an eclipse (Turner et al., 2013), but through a *motutapu*, a sacred island space of negotiation (Johansson-Fua, 2016). Values, pedagogy, and curriculum are all areas of education where fruitful Oceanic negotiations can be seen.

Then, three diverse case studies are woven into the chapter. Two are island-based; one from the Solomon Islands in the area known as Melanesia, and the other from Tonga, a Polynesian kingdom. The third looks at education in the Pacific diaspora as it has developed in Aotearoa New Zealand, a space home to Indigenous Kaupapa Māori education. Having woven into the mat the strands of these case studies, we offer examples of Oceanic responses in the context of the ecocide of climate change.

A SKETCH OF OCEANIA

The ocean named Pacific by the Spanish-employed Portuguese-born navigator, Ferdinand Magellan, in 1519, was calm as he experienced it. He was lost in a vast body of nearly 165 million square kilometers that contains more than half the free water on the planet (NOAA, 2020). However, this vast reserve, this Moana (Ferris-Leary, 2013), had been a familiar home to many for generations. Crossing its vastness from at least the time of the Lapita people whose migrations began around 1500 BCE (Irwin, 2005), voyagers made their homes both on and off the water, spreading out in a series of migrations. Oceania is the term we chose to employ in this chapter for our region. The word focuses on the water that connects us all. For many, as Hau'ofa (2000) pointed out, the water of the "ocean in us" serves to trace Oceanic collectivity, both physical and imagined.

Oceania is home to around 25% of the world's languages (Tryon, 2009). Solomon Islands, for example, is home to approximately 80 language groups (Guy et al., 2000). On some maps, Oceania is conveniently divided into three: Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia. However, this erases histories of exploration, migrations, alliances, and trade. There are "Polynesian" populations on so-called Melanesian islands such as Rennell and Bellona in Solomon Islands (Kuschel, 1988), and close trade and marriage links between Melanesian Fiji and Polynesian Tonga (Barnes & Hunt, 2005). Oceanic interactions have roots that go back in time and are evident in mythology (Ka'ili, 2005), concepts, and language (Wendt, 1999).

That said, any idyll of a totally pacific Oceania region is a construct of selective blindness. Regionalism can both support and obstruct self-determination (Bray, 1993). The region is no stranger to collisions between diversity and the homogeneity implied by the carving of nation-states; nor to the injustices of ongoing dominance based on colonial claims. Close examination reveals conflict in the region of many kinds: struggles between settler and indigenous peoples such as in West Papua (Mollet, 2007); histories of inter-island tensions within nation-states such as in Solomon Islands (Burnett & Dorovolomo, 2007); the need for conflict resolution, often an educative role of Oceanic women, in circumstances sharpened by successionist calls as in Bougainville/Papua New Guinea (Tankunani Sirivi & Taleo, 2017); and political activities that produce conflict as in Fiji (Halapua, 2008).

Conflicts also emerge at conceptual and philosophical levels as traditional thinking meets introduced perspectives. Such conflicts, however, are not uniform; the forces that are introduced may resemble each other across contexts, but the effects they have are singular. This is because points of both alignment and variation can be drawn between the way key concepts are understood and made significant in social life within multiple Oceania ontologies and epistemologies. Gender, for example, is always present but appreciated and represented in diverse, nuanced ways. Nanau (2017) describes the way gender, naming, and knowledge are connected in the matrilineal structure of the Tathimboko region of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands; Taumoefalau (2017) shows the complexities of gendered relationships through the cultural-linguistic making of the Tongan female self, and Borja-Quichocho-Calvo (2017) presents the power of Chamoru women as leaders through traditional song narratives and their application in

modern Guam as survivance. In all three contexts, introduced ideas and practices in the form of patriarchy or conceptualization of gender (Angoro, 2018) cut across long-standing thinking. The effect is the erosion or other alteration of the way gender plays out as the traditional conflicts with the introduced.

The actuality and aftereffects of various conflicts, political and philosophical, exist in the here and now. Thus, it is important to imagine the potential of cooperation and unity to shape the future. After all, education exists in the present but is valuable for its potential contribution to an imagined better world. Recent imaginers of the region include Crocombe (1976), whose *Pacific Way* speaks of collectivity as "a product of common environmental and cultural experience" (p. 38); and Hau'ofa (1994) who, when confronted by relational "belittlement" (p. 149) in a postcolonial world, says "[t]here is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as *islands in a far sea* and as *a sea of islands*" (p. 152) in which one belongs. Bevacqua (2010), from Guam, reminds us that the idea of regional collectivity "can be a powerful force, but it is not a magic spell, it cannot alone be the goal or the hope, but rather we should focus on what it can promote or help push into being" (p. 87). Hope requires action and commitment, individual and collective. Despite and because of our diversity as authors, not hiding from but valuing our differences, this imperative for action inspires our relational ontological approach to weaving this chapter and to CIE more generally.

A further complicating factor in any conversation regarding Oceania is the way its nature and boundaries are understood. That space is not a simply held idea in this region can be exemplified in three ways. First, Gegeo (2001) from Mala'ita in Solomon Islands describes the Kwara'ae perspective of place as a matter of indigeneity that involves inhabiting a Kwara'ae ontology and epistemology. This is less a geographic and more a philosophical positioning. Understood differently, space is "the location a Kwara'ae person occupies while in motion or circulation" (pp. 494–495). When Kwara'ae shift in space, such as through migration, movement can be understood as an act that expands place through its portability. Gegeo (2001) continues, "because of the possibility of space, a person can be anywhere and still be inextricably tied to place" (p. 495). This has implications for the way Oceania is viewed, especially given the number of Oceanic people who spend their lives in territories such as Utah, California, and beyond.

Second, from a Tongan perspective Ka'ili (2005) describes space as relational. He discusses socio-spatial links across the distances between Hawai'i and Tonga, and across the time between generations. These relational links traverse temporal and physical space and maintain or renew connection through recognition, obligation and mutual assistance. Exchanges are a key aspect of renewal. These can be in the form of remittances, cultural knowledge, goods, or people. Relational space is not bound to physical location, not to the cartographic boundaries of Oceania.

Third, in a call supported by McHugh (2000), Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009) advocates for cultural ways of understanding migration to include cultural conceptions of movement, space, and time. Most literature embodies a Euro-American vision of space in diasporic migration (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). The Euro-American view is negotiated through a dichotomy between local and global where movement is toward or away from the center. This vision is generally focused on an economic analysis using key concepts of development and

remittance (e.g., Brown et al., 2014). It has the potential to portray remittances as a one-way economic support for certain economies by others.

However, in a way that relates to the observations of Gegeo (2001) and Ka'ili (2005), Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009) discusses the intersections between the concepts of *malaga* (movement back and forth; migration) and *va* (relational space between) to point to "the importance of thinking about migration more socially than territorially" (p. 22). Through this lens, the migration of people in Oceania is creative and circular. Migration as *malaga* is not focussed solely on destination. It has metaphysical dimensions and is part of a "moral economy" (p. 19), albeit partially achieved through economic means. In this economy, *malaga* implies an expansion of relationally defined space.

As Smith (1999) commented, framing research through the epistemology of research participants is an act of decolonization. It can also be an attempt to avoid the imposition of (outsider-) researcher or hegemonic paradigms, ontologies, and structures on research. These three perspectives suggest that migration from and to Oceania is more nuanced than might be seen at first by observers from distant shores whose thinking is cartographically framed. Ontologically speaking, many Oceania people understand the boundaries of the region to be less fixed and more fluid than the maps would have us believe. Relationality is the key to these viewpoints.

A RELATIONAL APPROACH

Positionality involves accounting for who one is; relational positionality (Crossa, 2012) accounts for who one is in relation to others (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019). This is consistent with the Oceanic idea of the relational self (Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Thus, we offer brief statements about ourselves and our relationships as weavers and writers.

Kabini: At the time of writing, I am teaching at Victoria University of Wellington and living in Aotearoa New Zealand while I remain the principal *alafa* (leader) of the Gwailao tribe of East Mala'ita, Solomon Islands; a role I was socialized for since birth and while growing up in my indigenous tribal community. In theocratic indigenous tribal Mala'ita, my daily upbringing was within a theonomous or deity-centered culture. While attending schools in Solomon Islands and elsewhere, my socialization was influenced by an autonomous or locally self-regulating cultural worldview. As an adult working within formal organizations including schools and government departments, I also learned to live by the dictates of a more heteronomous culture. This meant adapting to patterns of behavior derived from multiple sources. In sum, throughout my life, I have been a straddler of value tensions and conflicts from multiple ontological-epistemological worlds and a student in building bridges in such worlds. Writing with my friends Martyn and David is therefore an absolute joy.

David: At this moment in time, my wife 'Elenoa, our son, Daniel, and I have returned to Aotearoa New Zealand after spending six years of educational and voluntary service in Tonga and other parts of Oceania. Although many Tongan people have journeyed into the diaspora, they maintain and continue their sense of service and provide provisions for their *kāinga* (extended family) back in their ancestral homeland. As a teacher-educator at a university in Aotearoa New

Zealand, I honor my ancestors by choosing to practice and share my Tongan ways of being and knowing through research engagement, publications, workshops, and mentoring of the next generation. It is my hope that through me, Daniel will be able to value and honor our *kāinga*'s legacy of love, service, leadership, hope, determination, and resilience. *Koe ngaahi taumu'a ia na'e tatala 'ehe fanga tamai moe fanga fa'ē mei he kuo hili. Tu'a 'ofa atu.* [These are our ancestral aspirations imparted and unfolded by our fathers and mothers from the past. With love and humility as a *tu'a* (commoner).]

Martyn: As an Anglo-Welsh person brought up in south London, I am a relatively recent arrival in the Oceanic region. However, taking the view that leadership is service, I seek to give where I can. In the recent past, I have extended my educational efforts beyond the secondary sector, my field for over three decades across the jurisdictions of the United Kingdom, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Aotearoa New Zealand. I now provide educative support and research services in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the Oceania region, including through coauthoring. I write as a learner in the field of education in Aotearoa New Zealand in order to honor developments in Māori and Pacific education with which I have engaged as a practitioner. I am happy to join with Kabini to contribute to this chapter and as a consequence to be reassociated with my friend and colleague of many years, David.

Together we represent elements of the diversity of those who reside in Oceania. We embrace the common purpose of CIE: living well together.

THE COLONIAL AS RELATIONAL

Oceania carries negative colonial legacies such as blackbirding (Summy, 2009) in which Pacific islanders were captured and taken as forced labor to plantations, and the depopulating effect of influenza (Tomkins, 1992). As Bevacqua (2010) reminds us, some Oceanic islands remain colonial territories. Here we approach colonialism with an educational focus centered on relationships.

Before Oceania was visited by Europeans, education existed here, both formal and informal. For example, there was a center of great learning at Taputapuatea Marae on Ra'iatea (Salmond, 2005). Clan knowledge was, and still is, transferred through pedagogic means such as storying and discussion (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020a). However, formal schooling arrived with missionaries and colonial administrations (Bray, 1993; Jensz, 2012) and remains as a testament to the longevity of prefabricated expressions of European thinking exported around the globe (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020b).

The nature of classroom space, seating arrangements, a competitive ethic, written examinations, and curriculum content are architectural features of colonial practice. Where Oceanic developments in formal education take place, they are negotiated within these parameters. Thus, the configuration of relationships between local and other traditions and knowledges is significant. Key questions for CIE include: Whose epistemology counts and how? In whose ontology should education make sense and why? What might it mean for traditions to live well together?

One initiative that seeks to reshape the relationships between knowledges is the Tree of Opportunity (Pene et al., 2002). This imagines education as a

tree rooted in home soil producing locally valued fruits, but capable of receiving and nurturing grafted stems and their fruit from elsewhere. Embedded in the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (Nabobo-Baba, 2012), this image of forward-looking equitable relationships between knowledges and traditions has informed thinking across the region (e.g., McDonald, 2001; Otunuku, 2011) despite critiques (Moli, 1993, cited in McDonald, 2001; Burnett, 2013).

Other metaphors also reimagine relational configuration. For example, the *motutapu* (Johansson-Fua, 2016) is "a place for negotiations, a middle ground, a place for rejuvenation as well as a place to launch new journeys" (p. 36). The key to progress in renegotiating relationships in education is not to turn back the clock but to honor local pasts as a way to move forward. Values, pedagogy, and curriculum are all strands of education where fruitful Oceanic negotiations can be seen. Examples of each will be given.

(RE)NEGOTIATED RELATIONSHIPS

Values

Turning first to the strand of values, an indicative example of renegotiated relationships underpins the work of Solomon Islander Billy Fito'o (2016). He describes *kastom* (customary thinking) about values and citizenship and describes Kwara'ae rural villagers explaining "a good citizen was someone who can *saungailana kwaima'anga* (create a space for love and respect for everyone in the community), through creating *tuafiku'anga ani kwaima'anga ma aroaro'anga* (living together in love, peace, and harmony through mutual relationships)" (p. 177). Fito'o (2016) suggests that such values do not necessarily sit well with Citizenship Education as practiced in Solomon Islands, discussed later. He argues for a "*wantok*-centric citizenship framework" that embraces Melanesian ethics of relationality and obligation, and "recognizes . . . culture, spirituality, and modern institutions as complementary" (p. 62). This act of balance looks both forward to fast-changing aspects of life and backward to *kastom* values. It has potential to delineate a space in which to articulate the complexities that exist in Solomon Islands between nationhood, regionalism, and clan identity, significant in a state previously riven by ethnic tensions.

Pedagogy

Education is a relational activity in which knowledge is socially constructed (Brownlee, 2004). Social construction is significant in Oceania where groups hold the self to be social (Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Sanga, 2017; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). The use of space can properly be viewed as an ontological expression of the significance of relationships in education. As an example, Naisilisili (2012) draws on the model of the Fijian *kava* or *yaqona* circle (Naisilisili, 1998) to organize classroom space. *Yaqona* consumption is a time of learning through conversation. *Yaqona* is traditionally consumed in a circle of distribution with a "top end" at one side. In the pedagogic model, this is the place for the teacher.

Naisilisili's (1998) classroom arrangement diverts power from the colonial structure of the dominant teacher through a pedagogy of exchange in the space of the circle. Understanding this arrangement has the potential to "encourage an exchange of views and ideas as everyone, including the teacher appears to

operate from the same level [and because] the circular arrangement could denote respect for the teacher as well as between students" (Naisilisili, 1998, p. 210). As a space for exchange, the classroom circle expresses an ontology where learning is enhanced through collaboration and each person is recognized as part of the collective process. Similar processes practiced on a wider scale have reaped political benefits in conflict situations in the Oceania region (Brigg et al., 2015; Halapua, 2008).

Curriculum

Epistemology is central to developments in curriculum design and implementation; beliefs about knowledge structure are encoded in content, sequence, and values in the curriculum. Two examples are given of creative tension playing out in curriculum negotiation between putative universality and diversity. First, Panapa (2014) represents the concept of well-being as an octopus in Tuvaluan education. This avoids the narrowing of the concept to introduced ideas of physical health, hygiene, and diet. The octopus arms reference multiple aspects of traditional understandings of well-being such as relational and spiritual wellness. The image also references integration and interrelation between all aspects of the concept as it emphasizes holism. Second, the language of science and the practice of traditional agriculture are brought in a complementary relationship where Tonga science embraces the *ufi* or yam garden (Otunuku & Thaman, 2018). This notion can be extended by the inclusion of social ranking as an aspect of food beyond nutrition. It bridges science and social science through traditional knowledge that supports deep-level sense-making of Tongan food cultivation and consumption (Tu'inukuafe, 2019).

Harnessing and honoring Oceanic wisdom in education requires balanced relationships (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2017). These examples of (re-)negotiated relationships organized through the widely utilized strands of values, pedagogy, and curriculum show how the global and local can exist together productively in Oceanic education. However, much work remains to be done to realize the rich diet available from the Tree of Opportunity (Pene et al., 2002), or the full range of possibilities pregnant in a *motutapu* (Johansson-Fua, 2016).

CASE STUDIES

Having presented strands organized around universal aspects of education, we now cross-weave three place-based case studies to contextualize ways that ontological and epistemological considerations of value to CIE are developing in situ.

Solomon Islands

The modern state of Solomon Islands with its population of 680,809 people (Solomon Islands Government, 2020) comprises an estimated 1,000 tribal communities, the majority of whom continue to live on ancestral lands/islands in clan-tribal settlements throughout the archipelago of 900 islands. These tribal communities can be classified superficially as Melanesian, Polynesian, and Micronesian and anthropologically as patrilineal or matrilineal. A vast majority of Solomon Islanders follow their distinct clan *kastom* or customary land tenure systems outside of the confine of the land laws of the modern state of Solomon Islands,

largely following a subsistence and semi-subsistence lifestyle. There is potential value to CIE in learning about these ways of living, understanding the similarities and dissimilarities of these tribal indigenous communities compared with others globally, and obtaining newer understandings that might enrich global CIE scholarship and methodologies.

According to Sanga (2009), Solomon Islanders' daily lives are influenced by three overlaying domains of relationships: *kastom* (Indigenous and multiple cultures/customs), the Christian church, and formal organizational/institutional life. While existing side-by-side for more than 100 years, these societal domains of influence in the modern-day Solomon Islands have not been fully explored or understood by researchers. CIE can benefit from exploring more relational models of community living based on deeper understandings of principles, storied expressions of living, straddling of ontological-epistemological worlds, and authentic adaptive CIE methodologies.

Represented by a closer look at the island of Mala'ita, this Solomon Islands case study offers a peek into the range of opportunities and challenges for CIE research in these new times. As an island in the Solomon Islands archipelago, Mala'ita is home to 160,000 indigenous Melanesian peoples, speaking 13 languages and members of an estimated 150 tribes. As explained by Sanga and Walker (2012), the Mala'ita mind sees the social world as socio-physical-spiritual; all existing together and in an integrated fashion (Sanga, 2019).

The Mala'ita tribal belief systems are theocratic, hence the societal indigenous cultures are theonomous. As such, the Mala'ita mind values a universe that is both physical and metaphysical and accepts living by rules which are vertical (spiritual, principles, and ordered) and horizontal (spatial, human, located, and other physical-environmental). Accordingly, when residents of the islets of Kwai and Ngongosila in East Mala'ita had to rebuild their houses closer to each other as a response to the environmental issue of sea-level rise, the act of proximal relocation resulted in newer challenges to the theocratic and anthropologic-axiological mind of the Mala'itans. Besides being ethnic and religious, the tribal communities are economic and political units as well. Moreover, the tribes are distinct epistemological communities and are governed by their morality systems.

Epistemologically, Mala'ita subscribes to different clan-based knowledge systems; all of which are part of what Gegeo (1998) sees as "part of the *kula* [place] system" (p. 297) or a pattern of cultural knowledge that includes the whole person, their family, and wider society. Mala'ita knowledge creators use indigenous systems of discourses and apply sophisticated knowledge-creation strategies in the three domains of knowledge; public, secret, and sacred (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020a). Even today, Mala'ita learners are still sensitive to their different sites of learning such as the *bisi*, a female-only private knowledge domain, or the *beu*, a men-boys-only private knowledge domain, or the *lalabata*, a shared communal teaching and learning public knowledge domain. Those involved honor the various forms of teaching and learning, and the rules of conduct and engagement in the different sites.

The Mala'ita Island example offers numerous implications, opportunities, and challenges for CIE research in these new times, as represented by the following research questions: What could be an authentic Mala'ita or Solomon Islands education? What are potential comparisons with other authentic education cases

elsewhere? Based on a deeper understanding of the Solomon Islands situation, what insights might be used to enhance the authenticity of another case? How might a communal, theocratic Indigenous Mala'ita mind/thought enrich contemporary notions of education? How might CIE be more inclusive to embrace the diversities of the Indigenous Mala'ita mind? How does the Indigenous Mala'ita mind shift within and between knowledge domains? How does the Mala'ita mind negotiate ontological-epistemological tensions? What are the defining actions or approaches for negotiating ontological-epistemological competing worlds?

A Mala'ita education is potentially concerned with clan members, value systems, knowledge structures, properties, processes, and relationships, which in every way are more likely to capture and explain Mala'ita realities and educational visions. The potential of a Mala'ita authentic education is highlighted here only because the current Solomon Islands education (including for Mala'ita students on Mala'ita Island) does not include indigenous Mala'ita education ontologies, categorizations, and epistemologies. The questions posed point to the potential futures of CIE research that the Mala'ita case study offers. As yet, CIE research in Oceania has not explored these questions on Mala'ita or other islands in the Pacific region. Rather than offer preferences on the directionality of future CIE Oceanic research(ers) on authentic education, we leave these to Oceania researchers to explore such questions relationally.

Tonga

Dialectic reasoning questions "logic" and its place in the vast terrain that encompasses Indigenous knowledges and understandings in Oceania. From a Tongan perspective, like many indigenous Oceanic cultures, knowledge is fundamentally a relational concern that is intimately connected to *tu'ungava'e*, the land (place and space) in which one makes sense of their genealogical and diasporic groundings (Pulu, 2002). The continuous mobilities of Tongan *kāinga* (extended families) show us their fluid understandings and connections that are symbolic of shifting boundaries in which they make sense of their world including notions of "logic" and "tension" as Tongan.

CIE is not only a comparative analysis of intercultural educational relations, but also the intracultural education relations that shift across boundaries, take form, and are shaped transnationally. Such complexities and nuances in how indigenous Oceanic people make sense of education and learning are often missed in international literature and scholarship because quite often "logic" is already predetermined and predefined within Western notions of education, even across the diaspora.

What does leadership mean to Tongan people in all areas of life? This is a worthwhile question for comparative research. Yet, it does not always feature as being an important aspect of formal educational learning. 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki (2014), a Tongan scholar and the first woman Minister of Education in Tonga, has exercised her *fua fatongia*, a sense of duty and service, by mentoring and inspiring many Tongan postgraduate students and leaders. Seu'ula Johansson-Fua has benefited from Taufe'ulungaki's mentorship and exercises her responsibilities in her role as director of the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific.

Similarly, Kabini Sanga, who values the *ivi moe mālohi* (potency and potentiality) of leadership and mentoring, has also shared much of his wisdom with Johansson-Fua's (2016) notions of leadership capacity. The result has been engagement in contexts in Oceania such as with local, regional, and international aid funders. These situations provide interest for CIE. Such leadership and mentoring practices are meaningful learnings that are expressed through *talanoa mālie* and *māfana* (Manu'atu, 2000), oral engagements that produce relational warmth, shared pleasure, and love. These are ways in which Oceania's indigenous knowledge and practices have been realized and operationalized in formal education contexts that are not always expressed in CIE scholarship. Education and schooling for Tongan people, therefore, is fundamentally a relational concern that takes into account the diversity and specificities in the contexts across the diaspora.

The "Pacific diversity" label itself misses the specificities that are inherent in how cultural knowledge and practices are utilized and realized within the diaspora of New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Equally, so-called Pacific Education can be conceptualized and realized similarly. While Tongan communities take with them their cultural knowledge, practices, and aspirations, how they are operationalized in formal schooling in the diaspora varies (Fa'avae, 2018). At the same time, the "rural-urban," "small island–cosmopolitan island" contexts construct understandings of education that are becoming even more pressing with the growing population of Tongan people living outside of Tonga.

Konai Helu Thaman (1995), a Tongan scholar, educator, and poet, has articulated the benefits of culture and language in Tongan peoples' education across the diaspora. A key claim she makes is that education often ignores the informal learning that is a lifelong process for many Tongan *kāinga*. Education that includes such learning is for cultural continuity and survival (Thaman, 1995). *Fua fatongia* is embedded in how Tongan people exercise their *fakapotopoto*, learning to be wise and utilizing their knowledge to benefit the collective. This is more than just *'ilo*, the acquisition of knowledge and qualifications (Thaman, 1995).

In light of cultural continuity and survival, the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge through *koloa 'o e to'utangata Tonga* is a construct that encompasses the deep and layered cultural capital inherent in Tongan extended families; a point that is not always articulated in CIE scholarship (Fa'avae, 2019). Realizing the true potential in the cultural wisdom and learnings within *koloa 'o e to'utangata Tonga* requires an appreciation and affirmation of Tongan concepts and language, as constructed and contextualized through *tā* (time) and *vā* (space).

Hūfanga 'Okusitino Māhina (2010) utilizes *tā-vā* as a theoretical construct, grounded in Tongan language and philosophy, to make sense of the *ivi moe mālohi* (potency and potentiality) of our indigenous knowledge, ideas, and practices that transcend generations and spaces across the diaspora. It is how we understand the fluid and shifting nature of education and learning that is also aligned to *tu'ungava'e*, and how we negotiate and define our identities and pluralities across the diverse contexts within the diaspora. These and other lessons promise much for CIE as it negotiates with Oceanic realities.

Aotearoa New Zealand

The political structure of Aotearoa New Zealand is framed by the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi, an accord (or accords) signed in 1840 between the

representatives of some Indigenous Māori groups and the British Crown. Despite disputes over the interpretation and implementation of versions of the Treaty/Tiriti, recent years have seen moves toward a national vision of two peoples, Māori and non-Māori (Orange, 2012). This has had implications in education of relevance to those interested in CIE.

Historically, separate educational practices within formal education involved schools established under the Native Schools Act. More recently, Kaupapa Māori education, an education founded on Māori principles and developed by communities, has provided formal school-based Māori education aimed at sustaining language, culture, and other aspects of Māori life.

Among the understandings of the role of formal institutional education in Aotearoa New Zealand from Māori perspectives is that of Mason Durie (2003). He wrote of multiple educational aims: of Māori to live as Māori; to actively participate as citizens of the world; and, to enjoy good health and a high standard of living. He argued that since success for Māori involves a solid foundation in a Māori reality, "[e]ducation should be as much about that reality as it is about literacy and numeracy" (Durie, 2003, p. 200). Kaupapa Māori education can be seen as an answer to this call.

Kaupapa Māori educational research now forms a substantial corpus (Pihama et al., 2004) that examines education through Māori lenses and includes work on politics and knowledge (Royal, 2012), e-learning (Tiakiwai & Tiakiwai, 2010), leadership theory relevant to education (Barnes, 2019), sector-specific frameworks (Wilkie & Whakataukī, 2005), and professional development (Bishop, 2012; Bishop & Berryman, 2010). This body of work, resting on indigenous ontological and epistemological platforms, simultaneously provides contextual sense-making, challenges to hegemonic approaches to education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a rich resource for CIE.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific people are among those groups whose relationship with the indigenous Māori population is subject to the Treaty of Waitangi (Orange, 2012). Pasifika or Pacific education is an umbrella term (Samu, 2006) used in Aotearoa New Zealand in many contexts such as Tapasā, community-informed documentation to support teachers of learners of Pacific origin (Ministry of Education, 2018). It is a term of convenience (Airini et al., 2010) although it remains a moot point as to whose convenience it serves (Reynolds, 2017). This field also offers value to CIE.

Research into the field of Pasifika/Pacific education has progressively embraced Oceania-origin frameworks. Many of these honor Samoan, Tongan, and other relevant cultural references. These thought traditions open education to scrutiny in ways that contrast with prior deficit approaches (Nakhid, 2003) by providing strengths-based alternatives that recognize community capital (Yosso, 2005). As observed by Refiti (2015), processes of construction and reconstruction are involved in the ways that ideas and concepts originally embedded in Oceania village life come to be enacted in other spaces to produce a result that is "interesting" (p. 18). While not lost in translation, the effect can be that for some concepts, meanings and nuances can shift or become muffled (Simati, 2011; Tuagalu, 2008). A brief consideration of the *va* (Samoan) or *vā* (Tongan) is offered as an example present in the literature of Pasifika/Pacific education.

The *va* or *vā* is a concept to be found in the literature of Samoa (Aiono-Le Tagaloa, 2003), Tonga (Koloto, 2017), and elsewhere (Hoem, 1993). It is a spatial, multidimensional understanding of relationships across the domains of the spiritual, social, and physical. The *va* has been described as "the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things" (Wendt, 1999, p. 402) and as emphasizing the space in between. "This is fundamentally different from the popular western notion of space as an expanse or an open area" (Ka'ili, 2005, p. 89). Every relationship involves a *va*. This connects and separates people (and/or other entities) and is conditional, affected by actions, words, and so on. In the literature of Pasifika/Pacific education, there are many references to *va* (e.g., Airini et al., 2010; Reynolds, 2016; Silipa, 2004; Tuagalu, 2008).

Central to those progressing the understanding of education by reference to the *va* is the New Zealand-based Samoan academic Melani Anae. In concert with others (Airini et al., 2010), she has provided sense-making in Pasifika/Pacific educational research from the stance of "native anthropology" (Anae, 2010b). Through the Samoan cultural reference of *teu le va*, to tidy/care for/make clean the sacred relational spaces, she has addressed relational ethics (Anae, 2016) in ways relevant to the enhancement of Pasifika/Pacific education (Anae, 2010a). This thinking, which supports a challenge to the conceptualization of success in education, has been developed to attend to the micro-environments of classrooms (Reynolds, 2017; 2018), educational research (Airini et al., 2010), digital education (Enari & Matapo, 2020), and beyond.

WEAVING THE STRANDS

An approach that unites diverse groups because some view them as the "distant and remote" does not do justice to what is available in the centers of our worlds. Variety in both the case studies and the approaches taken by each author indicates the centrality of context, an essential consideration if CIE is to gain from Oceanic wisdom. That said, a common aspect of the diverse material is relationality, albeit manifest in various ways.

One way of understanding identity is as a form of social representation which is a mediation between the individual and the social world (Chryssochoou, 2003). Identity involves negotiation in a journey that requires clarity, transparency, and reflexivity (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017). Individualism as an aspect of identity is not a significant element of the Solomon Islands case study. Clan and tribal positioning are the keys to the relational self in Mala'ita (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020a). The nation-state gains strength where the relational idea of being a *wantok* is drawn into its fabric and notions of communal identity at scale are woven into socialization through education (Fito'o, 2019). However, such developments have potential only to the extent that they are complementary to *kastom*, traditional thought and practice, and do not seek to replace long-held values. Where they occur, epistemological collisions (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002) and intergroup tensions (Brigg et al., 2015) require strategic *kastom*-derived relationally negotiated solutions.

In the account of Tonga, relatedness and mobility are mediated by understandings based on the family. The case study traces the work of individuals whose leadership is modeled on the kinds of relational activity that have been practiced in Tongan families and communities across space and time (Ka'ili, 2005). In this way, mentoring practices provide family-framed pedagogical cultural transmission through the guiding influence that values collective and multifaceted well-being rather than the career paths of individuals.

The literature of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika/Pacific education centers relationality and collectivism in ways that challenge the individualistic logic of colonial hegemonic understandings of education. Instead, education is a relational space that demands relational pedagogies (Bishop, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2018) akin to those advocated for by Naisilisili (2012), and the valuing of local lenses and knowledge that can also be referenced against, but need no justification from, globally sourced categories.

Perhaps future productive grounds for CIE might include investigating the revelatory potential of weaving *wantok*ism, a Melanesian expression of relationality, and other aspects of Solomon Island *kastom* into productive relationships with concepts at home further east in the Pacific such as *va* (relational space), *poto* (wisdom), *fua fatongia* (duty and service), and other Oceanic-origin relational understandings; and learning from the various ways transmission and adjustment of relationality are constructed in regional diasporic processes, particularly through the way relationships are configured in formal and informal education. Relevant too are the ways the major threat of our time, the ecocide of climate change, is understood and responded to through Oceanic wisdom and resources.

AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT

Higgins et al. (2013) discuss ecocide as a range of environmental crimes that "need to be responded to through both informal and formal means of resolution and restoration" (p. 252). In Oceania, the most evident results of ecocide are climate change generally and sea-level rise specifically. While some bodies advocate for education as a means of understanding and responding to the causes and effects of climate change (The Commonweath, 2016), practitioners at the edges of Oceania report pressure to maintain an as-you-were approach to curriculum and to downplay ecological problems to reduce the emotional burden on students (Reynolds, 2020; Stevenson et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Oceanic people continue to think and act in support of their sustainability. In this section, examples from Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Tuvalu suggest the significance of local ontologies and their transmission and narrativization in the face of globally generated but locally experienced threats.

An example of resilience in the face of pressures arising from ecocide centers on the relational structure of the *wantok* system by which obligations and responsibilities are mediated through kinship and other forms of connection Solomon Islands (Ha'apio et al., 2019). Following severe floods, villagers identified the strength of existing social structures embedded in the *wantok* system and pooled nonmonetary wealth as valuable to sustainability. The general advantages Fito'o (2016; 2019) identified for drawing the *wantok* system directly into the

curriculum are made more salient if relational strength is understood as a significant resource for future sustainability and adaption (Ha'apio et al., 2019).

In Fiji, Lagi (2015) found the complex and long-standing environmental knowledge of Fijian elders to be a source of climate change knowledge, for example, through appreciating decreased harvests of pandanus, a staple used in mat weaving, and fish for consumption and sale. Gucake (2016) points to oracy as a main intergenerational transmission mode. However, Lagi (2015) notes that the transmission of traditional knowledge is becoming less effective, a finding echoed in Vanuatu (Hetzel & Pascht, 2017). Consequently, she recommended educators construct a database of community experts to assist the passing of valuable ecological knowledge. Through re-resourcing the school curriculum in this way, the ontologically founded wisdom of Indigenous Fijian knowledge may become increasingly apparent in classrooms.

Falefou (2017) shows how responses to climate change can be located in culturally framed narratives. He describes Tuvaluans' self-perceptions as incorporating ancestral voyagers and explorers. Tuvaluans are rooted to the *fenua*, the land, as coconut trees but are also the floating fruits of the coconut. However, as sea levels rise and reshape these ideas of rootedness and fluidity, uncertainty is produced. A Tuvaluan reinterpretation of the Biblical promise of the rainbow responds to this uncertainty by refocusing from the promise of no future flood to Tuvaluan awareness that an "ark" or solution must be constructed. However, as Falefou (2017) points out, the construction of a successful solution requires the support of the wider world to avoid Tuvaluan society and identity vanishing over time. While the ark must make sense locally, the resources required are more global. It is only when local actions are integrated into a wider mat of global change that Oceanic sustainability can be assured.

CONCLUSION: LIVING WELL TOGETHER

The mat of welcome, constructed by the weaving of globally defined strands and local case studies, has been unrolled throughout this chapter. Although the region of Oceania is as susceptible as any other to division and rancor, our deliberate focus has been on ways forward, a strengths-based approach. We have addressed the significance of naming through questions around who might be considered distant or remote, the origin of "Pacific," and by asking who is lost and at home in Oceania. We pointed to the significance of metaphors to guide the relational position of local and more global knowledge in education in pursuit of relevance, effective sense-making, and thus the usefulness of education. As we re-roll the mat, as authors and friends we offer the blessing that through walking backward into the future and embracing solidarity through diversity locally and globally, we can promote a sustainable educational journey that offers hope of continuity in the face of the challenges ahead.

The field of CIE can learn from Oceania to appreciate the context behind the context (Sanga, in Airini et al., 2010). Beneath the visible practices of the multiple peoples of Oceania sit the worldviews and knowledge systems of sense-making people. These are as unique and various as the languages, costumes, artifacts, and islands of those who live and love here. CIE research that honors the nonmaterial and the philosophical is that which can truly claim to promote international

understanding and world peace. It goes beyond mere comparison by risking a journey into relational territories where the researcher is posed fundamental challenges regarding the nature and meaning of social life. As a consequence, engagement can change people, relationships, and ideas of a good life.

We leave the last substantive words to Selina Tusitala Marsh, Poet Laureate of Aotearoa New Zealand between 2017 and 2019. Of Samoan, Tuvaluan, English, Scottish, and French descent, she reminds us of our responsibilities to the past and to the future as we journey in the present.

> *What we leave behind, matters to those who go before*
> *we face the future with our backs, sailing shore to shore . . .*
> from "Unity," Selina Tusitala Marsh (2016)

In a world where the dialectic of the local and global is salient, the dialectic of the past and the future must also be part of our journeys. For without the local, the global has no constituents; and without the past, the future has no precedents. Our thinking about Oceania ontologies and epistemologies has taught us that we need to pay holistic, relational attention to our surroundings to live well together.

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