Aboriginal educators at the intersection: Intimations of greater nuance in both-ways education

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The Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative sought to identify barriers and enablers in Aboriginal students' pathways to post-compulsory education, in six remote communities in Arnhem Land and central Australia. It identified known factors like colonial history, low English literacy, job prospects and cultural difference. Responses often focus on "both-ways" curriculum and pedagogy, and teachers' cultural competence. Another factor found was interculturality, the fact of living and working at the intersections of Aboriginal and other socio-cultural worlds. The initiative found that students' engagement with school and with pathways into further education were troubled by both cultural difference and intersection. The Aboriginal researchers involved in the initiative, living at the intersections in their own lives, exemplified the challenges of, and the capabilities needed to negotiate, cultural intersection. The authors propose an intercultural perspective as a refinement to the both-ways approach to remote education.

Key words: Whole of Community Engagement initiative, interculturality, intersectionality, remote Aboriginal education, cross culturality, both-ways education

Introduction

The WCE initiative[1] researched the effectiveness of schools in six remote Northern Territory Aboriginal communities in building students' engagement with schooling and motivation to pursue further education. This paper is an account of some of the findings from the initiative, based on data from ethnographic field work, whole-of-team meetings, and formal interviews and informal conversations with the Aboriginal educators who worked on the initiative. The paper focuses on the need to recognise greater socio-cultural complexity in remote schooling than is generally considered. The initiative identified the complexity through its field work, in which it benefited from the participation of 10 Aboriginal educators who had for many years been active in education and other development work in their communities, and who participated as senior researchers in the initiative. These individuals had

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[1] For detail, go to https://remotengagetoedu.com.au/about. The research was approved by the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HE14070).

navigated the cultural and social tensions that accompany remote schooling and further education, and enjoyed the fruits of a Western education. The tensions revealed are those of identity-based social pressure to comply with several sometimes-competing norms. The fruits include the ability to live and work successfully in their remote community and in cities and towns around the country, and to sustain their Aboriginal cultural heritage in its increasing interconnectedness with the Australian nation and the rest of the world. In doing so, they have negotiated the social, cultural and political dynamics that set education in apparent opposition to Aboriginality, when it is at the same time fundamental to its survival. As researchers and educators, these individuals prove that the apparent opposition is not so.

The paper explores these complexities, the individuals' resilience in negotiating them and the potential of their example. Our claim is that they reveal intercultural realities of remote Aboriginal schooling that are obscured by notions of "cross-culturality" in "both-ways" education. Those notions ground the approach to remote Northern Territory Aboriginal education, but the increasing intertwinement of Aboriginal and other cultures, such as those of white Australia, Christianity, teaching or AFL football, is making those notions less adequate than in earlier times, and suggests the need for greater attention to interculturality in schooling.

We begin by noting some of the known challenges to remote schooling and responses to them, which have been dominated for many years by both-ways education (Bat & Guenther, 2013; d'Arbon et al., 2009; Frawley & Fasoli, 2012; Ober, 2009; Ober & Bat, 2007; Yunupingu, 1991). We use the terms "cross-cultural" (c-c) and "both-ways" (b-w) together, as in c-c/b-w, as a shorthand reference to a set of linked concepts that comprise the paradigm that prevails in scholarly and policy rhetoric, though practice often differs. Though socio-cultural intersection (in the mangrove lagoon in the original both-ways metaphor) is a core dimension of the paradigm (Bat & Guenther, 2013, pp. 128–129), the paradigm rests on a foundational notion of distinct originary cultural sources. This is evident in terms such as "both sides", "two different cultures" and "distinguishable knowledges" (Ober, 2009) that recur in the literature. Even the apparently intersectional notion of "marbling" in the lagoon (Bat & Guenther, 2013, p. 128; Ober, 2009, p. 36) defaults to a persisting distinction.

We go on to outline some of the issues that revealed the inadequacy of notions of cross-culturality and moved our focus to the intercultural, which may be conceived as the condition that occurs in the metaphorical mangrove lagoon. We suggest that there, socio-cultural intersection, intertwinement and interpenetration is increasing with global connectivity (Casenada, 2016; Moore, 2020, pp. 4–6; Rizvi, 2009, pp. 257–258) to such an extent that, albeit less than in the cities, the notion of territorially bounded culture is less valid than it once was (Papastergiadis cited in Casenada, 2016, p. 330). Further, the "total ugly brew" of brackish water in the lagoon (Ober, 2009, p. 36) is becoming more the reality, and the brew is infiltrating back up the source tributaries. Those tributaries now contain the global. This means that it is less easy to separate cultures, and that selfhood is neither unitary nor composed of several identities additional to, less significant than, and subtracting from, the Aboriginal.

Accordingly, we take a "post"-intersectional approach that has developed out of Crenshaw's original conception of intersectionality (1991) to comprehend individuals' multiple interwoven categorical identities (their Indigeneity but also gender, religion, education level, etc.), the way they wax and wane in relevance, fluidly align, misalign and clash according to context, and require constant negotiation in social interaction. We see this intersectionality as co-existing with the individuals' inter*culturality*, their simultaneous immersion in multiple interwoven cultural groups and sub-groups that similarly shape their identities, fluidly subjugate and privilege them, and require negotiation. Negotiation involves manipulating the meanings attached to their own and others' categories and cultures, and managing the

interplay of subordinating and privileging social statuses. We aim through this approach to better account for the combinatorial complexity that flows from their lived multidimensionality (Carbado, 2002; Cho, 2013; Dietz, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2002; Hutchinson, 2002; Kwan, 1997).

With Frawley and Fasoli (2012), we find that the cross-cultural, intercultural (and intersectional) are associated (though we see them as entangled), that the entanglement is confusing and made more so by the "stickiness" of the c-c/b-w paradigm as explanatory model. That paradigm "works" for many researchers, teachers and community members, and they remain wedded to it, which makes it difficult for them to see interculturality, even where that is the lived reality. This is a key limitation to the both-ways approach to Indigenous education. We illustrate this effect with an intercultural reading of a study of female Indigenous remote school principals in the Northern Territory.

Following this, we see interculturalists as those individuals who are adept at negotiating intercultural dynamics. Becoming intercultural is difficult because it is resisted by many who fear it, and it is in this context that we note the challenges faced by students who are interested in education, and that have been negotiated by the Aboriginal members of our team. We propose that there is much to learn from their stories about how to manage the tensions associated with formal education for remote people. We disentangle the cross-cultural and intercultural, and explore implications for remote schooling. We conclude that a greater focus on interculturality in a more cosmopolitan education points the way, which is not to abandon, but to complement and refine the both-ways model.

Methodology[2]

The WCE initiative sought dialogue between Indigenous and critical perspectives, to do "critical indigenous qualitative research" in the terms developed in Denzin et al. (2008, pp. 1–20, and passim). It took a decolonising standpoint and, as liberation-oriented community research and action, sought to "contest universal master narratives" and to "disrupt essentialist understandings of cultural matters" (Sonn, 2018, pp. 10–11). It was grounded in each community's meanings, customs, social relations, aspirations and politics (Bainbridge et al., 2013; Hall, 2014; Nicholls, 2009; Williams, 1999), and sought to generate action desired by each community.

The initiative employed one or more local Aboriginal researchers from each of the six communities in which it worked and they worked collaboratively with "outsider", mostly non-Indigenous, researchers. Each team conducted ethnographic research, collaboratively observing and participating in school and community life, "yarning" (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010), collecting documents, photos and artefacts, and conducting semi-structured interviews. The local researchers also acted as cultural informants and mediators, translating local metaphors and other meanings for their colleagues, who listened carefully and deeply (Shore et al., 2014). At regular whole-staff meetings, each team led discussion of their findings and plans for action in their community. With another senior local researcher, the second and third authors comprised one of those teams.

Copies of all presentations were taken and annotated, discussions recorded and transcribed in full, and interactional dynamics noted. The first author used NVivo software to manage this data set and assist in generating key themes. As an experienced teacher and academic in Indigenous education, much of it in remote locations, he was familiar with both-ways education and with Indigenous social, cultural and political agency (e.g., Moore, 2015, pp. 69–72). His analysis was therefore informed by historic and

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[2] Further detail on the methodological approach of the initiative is provided in a companion paper by the same lead author and others.

contemporary "external" *and* "internal" power structures, hegemonic governing *and* counter-hegemonic Indigenous discourses, and *all* essentialisms in cultural matters. Early analysis of this data set revealed dynamics often associated with intercultural encounters, such as internal social pressure for loyalty. Subsequent key events (Fetterman, 1989, pp. 93–94) in which he was a participant observer (such as at Yirrkala, as below) strengthened the initial analysis. To complement the earlier research, he presented his working interpretations to two team meetings and (with co-authors) a conference, and explored them further in semi-structured interviews with colleagues and unstructured conversations with co-authors. "Zig-zagging" (Creswell, 1998, p. 57) between analysis and the additional data gathered from each interaction, and repeated member-checking with community representatives and co-researchers, firmed up the interpretation.

Barriers to remote schooling

In this section of the paper, we outline our key findings and the evidence on which they are based. In broad terms, those findings are:

- Social and cultural difference continues but is deeply if subtly impacted by intercultural intersectedness.

- Education continues to be understood in c-c/b-w terms, but those terms are becoming less adequate to the emerging intersectedness; the terms perpetuate the notion that schooling is contrary to culture, and so limit the targeting of responses, facilitate local fear and compromise engagement.

- Those Aboriginal people who have succeeded in higher education demonstrate that such education need not compromise, but can enable culture.

Barriers (i): Unaddressed cultural difference

The initiative's wider ethnographic research found known disincentives to educational engagement and achievement, including remoteness, which means that curricula can appear irrelevant and there are relatively few jobs to look forward to; lack of English in daily use; challenge of teaching literacy in local and English language; miscommunication; and school failure to bridge the mismatches with local culture. As well, funding has not been equitable, staff turnover is often high, teachers are untrained in catering to local needs and standard behaviour management practices can be counterproductive. Fogarty (2012; and see Guenther, 2013) summed up the disincentives as "neglect, infrastructure shortfalls and systemic underfunding", and added shared responsibility arrangements and "'carrot and stick' programs such as the … Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM) and formulaic literacy and numeracy testing regimes, best evidenced in NAPLAN" (n.p.).

Underpinning these is the legacy of assimilatory and discriminatory education, continuing deficit thinking and contemporary neoliberalism (Guenther et al., 2016, pp. 88–89; Morrison et al., 2019, pp. 10–11, p. 21, p. 24). And, schooling can damage local cultural knowledge, authority and social structure even where deficit is not assumed; for example, in the perception that ceremonial life detracts from schooling, the "north and south" do "collide" in such schools (Reid & Stevens, 2017). They are, as Guenther et al. (2016) state:

> Learning sites where local adults and adults from places that are geographically and socially dramatically different come together to teach and learn. The student cohort is

overwhelmingly local, and their histories, experiences and languages are distinct from those of the non-local staff. The experience and expectations of schooling, teaching and this interface of local staff, students and families is generally profoundly different from that of the visiting staff. (p. 107)

The wider ethnographic research found such cultural clash, as in the attitude of government attendance teams to students' attendance at ceremonies, an important part of lifelong cultural education. Community members told how parents can be penalised if their children miss school for this reason, which effectively penalises cultural imperatives. They told how schooling ignores local interpretations of historical events. And though efforts are made to enhance curricula relevance through experiential learning and learning on country, it still relies on abstract learning. It was reported that the divergence of school education and local culture, and the imposition of the former at the expense of the latter, alienates students and their families. Schooling becomes problematic for remote people in such situations, where substantive culture — language, social roles, kinship obligations and behavioural norms — is ignored, constrained or overridden.

Barriers (ii): Unexamined and resisted interculturality

The problems noted above persist despite the c-c/b-w approach (d'Arbon et al., 2009; Frawley & Fasoli, 2012; Ober, 2009) that has brought the perspectives of critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rigney, 1999; Taylor et al., 2016), culturally responsive pedagogy (Guenther et al. 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014; Morrison et al., 2019) and standpoint theory (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013) to Indigenous education (see Nakata et al., 2012, p. 123). The approach has to varying extents made schooling more responsive to students, their strengths and their culture (Brown, 2007); implemented a counter-discourse (Rigney, 2006); incorporated Aboriginal knowledges; provided experiential learning (Ober & Bat, 2007; Weuffen et al., 2017); built school-community partnerships; called for racially self-reflexive teachers (Benveniste et al., 2019; Walton et al., 2014); and ensured the cultural safety and self-esteem of students, staff and family (Purdie et al., 2000). As a model for remote Indigenous education, it remains valid, but is limited by persistent understandings of Indigenous culture as given, singular, self-contained and different; selfhood as unitarily Indigenous; and by its failure to examine internal power dynamics. As we show, these characteristics ensure that it misses much everyday socio-cultural, political and subjective complexity.

Some limitations of the c-c/b-w approach are acknowledged (Nakata, 2003, p. 9; 2007, p. 12; Morrison et al., 2019, pp. 46–48; Rigney, 2006, p. 42). Some greater complexity is recognised, cultural difference seen in more nuanced terms (Osborne & Guenther, 2013; Verran, 2002), intersection theorised and researched (Fitzgerald, 2003, pp. 432–435; Nakata, 2007; 2010; 2011), and standpoint, knowledge-making and politics examined critically (Nakata, 2007; Nakata et al., 2012; Paradies, 2018). The limitations persist nevertheless, in part because, as Narayan says of other contexts (1998, p. 90), anti-colonial responses (which are part of c-c/b-w) replicate the essentialised cultures and unitary selves (see Moodie & Patrick, 2017) that have been used to subjugate Indigenous people, and because insufficient work has gone into unsettling the replication (though note Nakata et al. 2012, p. 130). The rare considerations of intersectionality (e.g., Baldry & McCausland, 2009; Behrendt & Kennedy, 1997) see converging ethnic and gender (and, occasionally, also class) oppression, or, that is, compound discrimination, and rarely other outcomes. There is no sustained examination of intracultural difference, internal social pressure or individual responses, prolonged relationality at multiple dynamic interfaces, cultural change, or contradictory effects on inequity (though see Farrell, 2015; Haynes et al., 2014; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010). These — each an important aspect of interculturality — are missed in current conceptualisations of both-ways education. We suggest that, as Henze and Vanett (1993) say of an equivalent metaphor in

North America, the c-c/b-w approach as a result "masks the complexity of choices faced by [Indigenous] students [and] dangerously reduces their options" (p. 116).

The wider WCE ethnographic research identified some of the masked complexity and reduction of options in the teasing/bullying of children who are interested in school, and bias against adults who work with balanda,[3] on the grounds that they are selfish and less concerned with community. It found a fear that those who get an education and/or move away for higher education will become more individualistic and careerist and less caring for family, community and heritage (personal communication, Oct. 20, 2016). The Gunbalanya community report of the WCE initiative states that schooling is said to alienate students from language and ceremony, and that those who gain an education have "more balanda in [them]", which leads to them being "call[ed] … balanda" (Olcay et al., 2016, pp. 39–43). We interpreted these dynamics as grass-roots social sanction on the basis that schooling and Aboriginal culture are opposed, as in the dominant discourse, with the sanction imposing pressure for loyalty *to* culture, *against* education. In demotic usage, then, the totalising nature of the paradigm acts to restrict the choice of engagement.

The masking of complexity and restriction of choice is found in other research. Kamara's (2009) study of female Indigenous principals in remote Northern Territory schools instances the recognition of complexity and persistence of c-c/b-w assumptions in its interpretation. Her research is rich with evidence of intercultural/intersectional complexity. Three of the five principals she studied were Christian, and found great tension at the intersection of "day-to-day [demands] from families, the government people …, Catholic Education, the students and [their] people" (Kamara, 2009, p. 197). They had to negotiate the interface of community and bureaucracy, as well as demands from within their own community for more devout adherence to the faith, the jealousies of other women and husbands, preference for non-Indigenous principals and male leaders, and family. All commented on the major problem of being accepted in their role by their own community. One feared that she might be made "an outcast … because of the way that I dress or … the way that I am working now" and that she might also not fit in with her non-Indigenous male colleagues for the same reason (Kamara, 2009, p. 265). The parallels with the WCE researchers were instructive for our analysis.

This situation is not one of juxtaposed discrete cultures between which a unitary self might shift. Nor is it of simply compound inequity. It is of nonunitary individuals simultaneously positioned as insider and outsider on several fronts, "experienc[ing] both liberation and oppression simultaneously" (Clark, 1991, p. 45). Nor is it life at any position on a stable interface, but at an intra- and trans-cultural borderlands in constant flux (see Anzaldua, 1987) that demands sophisticated negotiation of highly fluid expectations and selfhoods. The women had to tactfully "work their difference" (Bloom, 1996, p. 189) in and through community and bureaucratic structures, manipulating gender- and clan-based reference groups (Kamara, 2009, p. 232), and presumably (as found by Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 211) enacting "manly" and "white" qualities at appropriate junctures, sometimes simultaneously. This complex *mestiza* positioning and negotiation is unaddressed in c-c/b-w literature and unconsidered in c-c/b-w education.

Despite its everyday-ness, the reality of cultural intersection, and its generativity (Canclini, 1995; Rizvi, 2009, p. 264), social pressure and individual negotiation goes largely unexamined. Even where researchers describe it, they erase it in c-c/b-w interpretation. Kamara (2009), for example, reduces the cultural and identity complexity of being local Indigenous, female, wife, clan member, teacher, administrator and Christian, and the tensions of being pushed and pulled in all directions, to a "divide"

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[3] "Balanda" is the Yolŋu term for non-Indigenous people.

between "polarised" and "oppositional" Aboriginal and Western (white) worlds. Those totalising cultures collapse into themselves all the others. The structures pressing on the women become top-down colonial Western (Kamara, 2009), simultaneity becomes distinct worlds and oppression additive: "Evidence points to the triple bind Indigenous women face due to exigencies of race and gender and the two worlds they occupy; the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous" (p. 232).

The conception of discrete static cultures, unitary selves and unidirectional power that emerges from that analysis perpetuates the c-c/b-w discursive reality rather than the lived. And in the context of Tiwi culture that is so deeply Catholic, to say of one of the principals that "*although* she kept many aspects of her traditional culture she had a strong devotion to the Catholic faith" (Kamara, 2009, p. 142, our emphasis) is to reduce a complex to a unitary selfhood dominated by the originary Tiwi and diminished by the Catholic. The actual identification with community, clan, gender and religion disappears. C-c/b-w analysis such as this is useful and amenable, but can misrepresent the complexities of intersection, and limit progress to be had from the research. The default is common. Fitzgerald (2006), for example, introduces an intersectional account of gender and ethnicity in Indigenous school leadership (pp. 204–205), but her analysis is of Indigenous women leaders who "'walk' and work within two systems (Indigenous and non-Indigenous)" (p. 207). She, too, sees but does not analyse cross-cutting community pressures. The adherence to a c-c/b-w analysis, on the cusp of realising that something more is at play, illustrates its problematic power. In consequence, little benefit can accrue from knowing the local cultural repertoire as "culture-based education" imagines (Morrison et al., 2019, p.15).

The WCE researchers/educators

On the basis of our working interpretation, our focus turned to the lives of the Aboriginal members of the WCE team, and we uncovered dynamics very similar to those in which students and Kamara's principals are immersed. The researchers told of confronting many challenges in their personal and professional lives at the intersection, including those of identity politics and social sanction at the hands of the education system and their own communities. While they could not avoid the pressures, they had negotiated them, without compromising and maybe strengthening their cultural loyalties. The evidence in their cases forced the authors to accept interculturality as helping to explain student (dis)engagement.

The energising spark was a comment by a senior Yolŋu teacher at a meeting of school council representatives in Yirrkala that hinted at remote people's awareness of a qualitative change in their worlds. She said, "I'm looking into the future and thinking broader, we [will] have grandchildren who are Spanish … one day I'll have a Samoan grandchild" (personal communication, May 5, 2016). This comment, and later discussion with another Yolŋu teacher, suggested an awareness of the social and cultural intersection and change into the future, and the need to carefully consider the issue. At the same meeting there was evidence of some reluctance to accept the emerging reality, when another local woman responded, light-heartedly but meaningfully, that that would happen over her dead body. The comment suggested an emotional resistance to the notion of future racially and culturally mixed Yolŋu, and a hint of the fear and social pressure that it might evoke.

Just as a Spanish Yolŋu grandchild, the WCE researchers were complex, assertively Aboriginal individuals. Many were cultural elders. They were also qualified professionals working with non-Aboriginal people in mainstream institutions, devout Christians, members of boards of management, school and land councils, and consultants to agencies around the country and globally. They were masters of their home cultures and the mainstream, especially in its expression in schools, tertiary institutions, community organisations, councils and the like. A hint of this was in comments about the

multiple "hats" they wore, as in, "I'm a committee head, I'm a parent, I'm a grandmother, I'm a local, I have the Yolŋu nation, I've got too many hats standing here". More suggestive was the awareness that the roles co-exist, as in the comment by one retired teacher (ELM personal communication, Oct. 27, 2016):

> When I came back to teach here [in my home community] I had to make a rule like because I was teaching all my grandchildren, sister's grandchildren, my grandchildren, other sister cousins, so I made a rule, I said when I'm teaching from 8 till 4 or 8 till 12 lunch time, I'm teacher, after lunch, after school that's when I'm <inaudible> or auntie, and that worked really well with the children and I kept encourage … children to do that.
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> Q: So when you're in the classroom you're in the teacher hat?
>
> A: Yeah.
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> Q: And when you step outside?
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> A: Gran, and things like that. There's no favouritism until I get home. In here you are all individuals and I'm your teacher. And that worked really well, it worked my teaching philosophy how to bring that together sort of thing and it worked.

We accept the cross-cultural validity of this interpretation, but suggest that it elides more profound intersection than it allows. There would surely have been moments when attempts to maintain a neat separation were impossible. A child of her own clan to whom she did not give the special attention expected because of kin position might sulk, with impact on learning. Surely some moments had to be negotiated with more care than mere switching between roles. Many around her may see her situation and help to find a resolution. A colleague may take over and set the sulking child to rights, or the teacher may give compensatory comfort outside class. The child's classmates may help out (or not, as many tease their classmates who are interested in school). Some may pressure the teacher to renounce her loyalty to the white professional norms of schooling, to more fully embrace her "culture". She may be vulnerable to such pressure, as those who go away for education and careers can find it difficult to gain cultural maturity, and suffer as a result. Such local politics seek to contain intercultural complexity by restricting engagement with the "white other".

An example of cultural intersection and the emergence of a new intercultural form is the incorporation by the entertainment group Djuki Mala of the music of *Zorba the Greek* into their own Yolŋu culture. Djuki Mala own their fused Greek/Yolŋu hybrid performance. They gave new meaning to both the notionally original Greek music and Yolŋu dance. Both were changed. This is culture emerging through interaction. A sign of the same was DM's comment that "AFL is part of Yolŋu culture now" (DM personal communication, Aug. 21, 2016). To DM and many others, AFL footy is not culturally strange. Yolŋu have taken it and incorporated it indivisibly into their own. They have naturalised it, as they have much else that was once alien, like Christianity (Catholicism in the Tiwi Islands, Lutheranism elsewhere, etc.). Yet the sticky notion of a master uni-dimensional difference remains in most attempts to understand and accommodate this intertwinement. DM said at another time that "I can think balanda, but I go back to my house as a Yolŋu man", which seems to imply a c-c/b-w perception and elide the footy culture and Christianity that have been seamlessly integrated into the Yolŋu-ness to which he returns. It is a *contemporary* Yolŋu man to which he returns. The c-c/b-w discourse of "lost between worlds" can have relevance, but is inadequate to the personal transformation that Kim (2008) tells us occurs almost unconsciously with the prolonged and extensive intercultural experience that DM and others of the WCE team describe (and see Kim et al., 1998, in respect of American Indians in Oklahoma).

Still, elements of education and Indigenous cultures do conflict, and have done for the WCE educators. Each had suffered the tensions. They had lived through times when speaking their own language in school was forbidden, to now when it is at least rhetorically valued. Professional training slowed their cultural education. They had worked with teachers and principals with the authority of the state and majority culture who were unresponsive to difference. At the same time, they had been bound by kinship obligations, and so had to negotiate role dissonances. They had compromised, induced compromise on the part of others and found common ground to bridge difference. One Yolŋu teacher from Galiwin'ku said, for instance, that she negotiated the conflict between funeral ceremonies and school routine by participating only in those for close family and even then by limiting her participation in time so that it does not overly interrupt her work (personal communication, Nov. 15, 2016). These are ways of agentically "speaking from between the boundaries of [their multiple] subject positions" (Bloom, 1996, p. 189) to realise their unique individualities, just as Kamara's principals did.

Near the end of the WCE project, the balanda first author presented his understanding of interculturality to a team meeting, and afterwards spoke with DM, who told him that what he had expressed was similar to what DM's sister often talks about.[4] In response to the follow-up query about his sister, DM said in a hushed voice, behind his hand, "I shouldn't say this, but it was …". In this, DM enacted intercultural personhood (see Kim, 2008). He negotiated mundane socio-cultural difference from a knowledgeable position. He temporarily set aside his Yolŋu law, moderated its specificity and breached the norm that he not say her name in order to communicate with someone not of his own cultural background, to negotiate shared meaning. He allowed the author some forbearance. He did all this out of knowledge of his particular cultural norm and that of his colleague, and his preparedness to bridge that which separated them. When this analysis was explained to the group, DY thought it unexceptional; its "just the way it is," he said. And the authors agree that it is routine intercultural sociality in remote Aboriginal lives, and unnoticed because of that.

Like Djuki Mala's indigenising of elements of Western culture, the Aboriginal WCE staff had welcomed Western education into themselves, despite its air of threat to culture and self. Over time, they had internalised it, without compromise to their cultural integrity. Engagement has meant integrating a professional identity into their local Aboriginal identity, retaining and adapting it. They did not add other selves on top of a set-in-stone Aboriginal self. Nor did the one corrupt or detract from the other. Their educatedness and religiosity became indistinguishable elements of their still Aboriginal selfhood. And as Reid and Stevens (2017) suggest, the order of incorporation may be reversed; they may have begun with a neutral professional identity and integrated their Aboriginal knowledges into it. Their educated, professional and religious selves do not detract from their Aboriginality. In the face of identity challenges imposed because of their expansive identities, their work with non-Indigenous colleagues has had its challenges. But their softening of hard difference to enable interaction has not threatened their particularity. In fact, for them education is a way to strengthen culture. It was clear to all WCE colleagues how assertive of local cultural interpretations they were, and how they sought to make a fit between their Indigenous and wider worlds. Theirs was a generous, inclusive negotiation of social, cultural and subjective interaction with Western culture, society and people, unlike the image conjured by the c-c/b-w trope of lost souls torn between two worlds, though, as GJS reveals and Kim (2008, pp. 363–364) explains, the reference to stress is valid.

These individuals' knowledge of the cultural influences at play on them, and their capacities to negotiate the intersections and realise transformed selves, refute the idea that cultural heritage is threatened by

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[4] DM gave his permission to relate this story.

schooling and needs stronger defence and/or rejection. Though it is not possible to transcend the discursive positioning or the social sanctioning that makes it real, they have successfully challenged both.

GJS

A short biography of the second author affirms much of this story. GJS has grown up and lived in socially and culturally intersected worlds for 40 or more years, and successfully negotiated the "conflict, contradiction and ambiguity" (see Bloom, 1996, p. 182) that has attended his construction of a nonunitary selfhood over the time. He is an advocate for the power of education to both sustain traditional culture and permit equality. He attended pre-school and primary school at Warrabri Settlement. He went to boarding school at Kormilda College in Darwin, followed by a year at Darwin High School, then Yirara College in Alice Springs for senior secondary. He was good at school, rebelled for a period, but completed year 12 in 1978. He worked as assistant teacher at Yirara for two years, and in the early 1980s completed assistant teacher training at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE). In 1986 he graduated with a Diploma of Teaching from the forerunner of Charles Darwin University. Since then, his professional roles have included principal-in-training at Alekarenge, night patrol officer, men's liaison officer, community cultural advisor and court interpreter in Tennant Creek. He is an active participant in youth issues and sits on the local high school and primary school councils.

Primary schooling was a positive experience for him, but secondary schooling was lonely and assimilatory, and he struggled with the identity tensions it produced. His indoctrination in Western thought, including binary representations of "civilisation" and Aboriginal primitivity, threatened his identification with his Aboriginal way of life. It led him into a "trance". He was "torn" between his home world and that of education:

> I was in the dark, and I went home asking "Who am I? Am I a white boy, a black boy? What am I going to do? How can I speak my language? I'm ashamed of my language. … It belongs to uncivilised people, savages."

Eventually, his elders helped him to clear his confusion by teaching him his kinship place, connection to country and more, and impressing upon him his responsibility to the younger ones. It helped him to realise that he must embrace school education, but also that, "I am not a whitefella. I've got a white man's education. I speak English. I've studied in a white man's university. But I'm not … I'm Aboriginal."

His elders' insistence that he do both helped him negotiate secondary schooling, in part by developing (as Anzaldua did, 1987, p. 101) a facility for behaving as he intuited his teachers wanted him to behave.

He is a strong advocate for a formal education that balances its privileging of the Western with accommodation of, teaching through, and support for, the Aboriginal. Having overcome its identity challenges, his education has provided him with a reflexive knowledge of his home culture, a critical knowledge of how the outside/white world is imposed and the agency to manage it. It has been important in helping him hold onto his cultural roots, incorporate new identities and become a more complex person. Knowing that "we've got to use both sides [culture and the Western, because] it's a changing world and we need to adapt", he says that schooling must teach mainstream skills and contribute to cultural sustainability. Both are necessary; cultural health as the basis of self-esteem, identity and knowledge will allow engagement with the outside world. As with his colleagues, this is assertion of distinction, not separatism. It is a vision of a more self-sufficient Aboriginal engagement in wider affairs, especially those on Aboriginal land. It is a way to overcome the alienation that leads an

educated local to be "looked at strangely", as "black outside but inside … white". He (and his sister, VNSW and the other Aboriginal WCE researchers) are empowered by having strong cultural foundations and formal education, and so an overall perspective. As other intercultural persons, they are open to cultural others, flexible in their thinking, willing to negotiate differences, and able to integrate diverse cultural elements into a coherent whole, and achieve identity extension (Dai, 2009, p. 1; Kim, 2008).

The potential of an intercultural lens

The WCE research and stories of Aboriginal lives at the intersection reveal the intercultural realities in the communities studied and the challenges they pose to learning. They reveal the schools as sites of intersection where people from several cultures interact across shifting socio-cultural and subjective positionings, negotiating their understandings and searching for shared meanings. The research suggests that relationship at the interfaces is doable, since the educators considered here do it, and that with further work their ways may inform policy, practice and training. An intercultural lens reveals how the notions of culture and cross-culturality, and the particular versions of intersectionality, standpoint and critical race theory (as adopted) that ground the c-c/b-w approach gloss the lived intercultural complexity and perceptually reduce it to discrete, static and opposed monolithic categories and cultures, and unitary individualities. They (those notions) privilege the Indigenous so understood, and marginalise other identities (like those of profession and religion raised in the paper). They highlight the oppressive side of identity dynamics and pay little attention to the privilege that also flows from the combination of identities and the ways in which individuals manipulate it. This flags the emphasis in the c-c/b-w approach on imposed external structural power and its neglect of internal or intracultural power, its neglect of the dynamism generated by the simultaneity of members' several social statuses, and its neglect of individual agency. In these ways, the theoretical underpinnings of both-ways education have begun to limit its relevance to the lives of people whose multiple identities are seamlessly interwoven and fluidly deployed. Though valuable in many ways, they now impose a limiter on the efficacy of remote education. Moreover, they are central to the discourse that establishes community and school as mutually exclusive, which is the nub of the social pressure that makes it socially costly for individuals to engage with formal education, and so compromises their interest in it.

An interculturality-informed reading of Kamara's research concretises these issues. It shows how interpretation through a c-c/b-w lens can make it difficult to see interculturality. Her principals' stories are accounts of cultural difference, and of interculturality and intersectionality, even if they themselves did not articulate it. For instance, to write "even though she had a strong Catholic upbringing and was influential in spreading the faith, she believed it was time for Aboriginal leadership" (Kamara, 2009, p. 194) is to separate out the Catholicism that is central to the personhood of the woman involved. It is to deny her incorporation of Catholicism into her sense of self, that is inextricably part of her Aboriginality and her leadership. Christianity is a component of the Aboriginality of the place and time. It may be that some people's behaviour offends her religious personhood, in which case a response limited to an originary Aboriginality may be improved by incorporating her religion.

This is not to argue that c-c/b-w logic be abandoned, but that it be known as informing of the cultural, in a partial way, to be refined with the intercultural. The idea is not to displace difference, but to know and respect it and nurture the creative tension where it "abut[s], enmesh[es] and abrade[s]" (Verran,

2002, p. 730), including recognising where it both produces difference and gives way to sameness. Difference and sameness co-exist.[5]

Conclusion: An interculturality-oriented both-ways remote education

We have argued that disengagement from school and further education is due in part to known but unmet cultural difference and in part to unconsidered interculturality. The latter is felt and partially understood but also, where interpreted through the lens of binary cultural difference, denied and resisted. The Aboriginal WCE researchers have engaged with it and experienced the obstacles associated with that engagement, like those experienced by students who are interested in education. They have, though, successfully negotiated the obstacles and benefited from that. Both-ways education addresses very little of this complexity; indeed, where it interprets and responds to it in its reductive terms, it makes such address impossible, and to that extent can actively disadvantage students. This interpretation suggests that careful address of the complexity can help build student engagement with formal education and benefit their everyday adult lives.

The suggestions to follow need further work, and though the WCE establishes something about the communities in which it worked, it establishes little about Indigenous schooling in other parts of Australia, where the broader context—colonial impact, cultural substantiveness, social location and post-colonial politics—is so variable, and with it the interculturality in each (see Moore et al., 2017, pp. 109–126). The research does, though, offer a rider to Fogarty's (2012) summation of what needs to be done in order that Indigenous people have a full Western education; he says it must "value who the students are, the culture they come from and respect their identity" (n.p.). We agree that schooling should be responsive in those ways (see Guenther et al., 2016, pp. 90–93), but extend the notion of the cultural and the identity to which it should be responsive to include the intercultural that emerges from the intersection of local and external—national, global, transnational (Casenada, 2016)—cultures and discourses. This would imply that looking after who students are and respecting their culture would be to value and respect their full subjective complexity. Indigenous education must support students' full cultural foundations and build their critical knowledge of their multifaceted interactions with all other dimensions, and the capabilities to do that interaction. Taking the example of the WCE researchers, this suggests that Indigenous education take a planned, developmental approach to teaching interculturality.

A further refinement would be to moderate the idea that a full Western education is the "great and deep [Aboriginal] dilemma". Some of the reality of the dilemma has to be admitted (see Osborne & Guenther, 2013), but it is a dilemma principally of the logic of cultural and subjective contradiction and Indigenous people's inability to deal with that. At present, that logic prevails, which enables identity politics and means that people are confused. Yet the WCE educators dissolve contradiction and are able to deal with it. Like those noted by Reid and Stephens (2017), Fitzgerald (2006) and Kamara (2009), they are cosmopolitans in nonunitarily incorporating otherness and in negotiating their simultaneous differences and samenesses, as well as the pressures from the education system and their own communities that seek to frustrate them.

Discursive and social pressure have real power nevertheless, and the WCE research suggests an approach that can help teachers and students to negotiate the dilemma. A cosmopolitan education as envisaged by Rizvi (2009) would retain the c-c/b-w focus on local cultures and identities, but equally stress that they

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[5] See Verran (2002) on the complex relationship of difference and sameness in the case of Yolŋu and scientific burning practices. See also the many case studies around the world in Bekerman and Kopelowitz (2008).

must be understood in the context of the global shifts transforming them. A cosmopolitan education would develop students' reflexive awareness of the forces in which they are immersed; the ways in which they themselves and their communities are constituting their culture (Rizvi, 2009, p. 266); the specific history out of which each instance of connectivity emerges (Nakata, 2011, pp. 3–6; Rizvi, 2009); its impacts on emerging culture and subjectivity; and the fact that they and their community make choices about what of the external they want to accept into them and what to resist, and in that engage differentially, with differential outcomes. It would include comparative studies of other communities' responses and outcomes.

To illustrate, such an education may examine the experiences of those who have left for career or married outsiders, the forces involved with the Spanish or Greek impact, the history from which experiences of connectivity like Djuki Mala arises, and their cultural impacts and negotiation. It may explore how the global relations of colonial times influenced their culture. (Here, the desire in Galiwin'ku to include Bible studies in cultural studies would be explored.) It may consider how scientific understandings of global warming affect older practices of caring for country, and how to accommodate them. It may examine how universal human rights align or otherwise with the local. This approach would aim to develop a consciousness that is open to "knowing as always tentative" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 264), to cultures as "deeply interconnected" and emerging, and to reflexivity, implying individuals who can reflect critically on the "assumptions [that are] often linked to official and popular discourses of cultural difference" (Rizvi, 2009, pp. 266–267).

This vision takes its lead from the WCE educators' confidence to "welcome in" other cultural views, their personal resilience, and ultimate cultural and subjective security. They insisted that the inclusion of cultural priorities, language, sociality, history and country in school routine is the bedrock of students' emotional engagement with teachers and school. That is, consonance with the local socio-cultural world is the emotional basis on which numeracy and English literacy can proceed. It provides the security and confidence to do so. An interculturality-oriented both-ways approach would overlay that in the ways suggested, aiming to equip students with what these individuals have struggled to realise over their lifetimes. It would teach the categorical and cultural realities, and equip them with the skills to manipulate—impose, invoke, overlay, deflect, obfuscate, silence—the assumptions embedded in them, in order to gain control of the dynamics and their social interactions. This would include teaching the several axes of subordination and privilege, their varied impacts, the exaggeration of oppression their intersections can generate, how to manipulate them (to exercise their agency), and the like, all in order to enhance their intercultural competence and empowerment.

Realising these outcomes will require that the goal of intercultural consciousness is institutionalised in the education system and teacher training, and operationalised in schools. This institutionalised engagement is the bigger challenge, but it may eventually undo the discursive knot that represents schooling as contrary to Aboriginality, and so release remote people to fuller engagement with schooling and higher education.

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