Towards a Framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding for First Nations Students

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Abstract

First Nations students from remote communities frequently make the choice to move to boarding school to complete their secondary education because of the limited educational opportunities in their local communities. To do this, students leave their family and peer support structures during adolescence. Although governments have provided funding for First Nations students to attend boarding school long before the Closing the Gap targets were set, outcomes of boarding for many of these students continue to disappoint, with low retention rates and below-average academic outcomes. Building on the principles of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, a Culturally Responsive Boarding framework is proposed that reflects the unique needs of remote First Nation students. A rapid review included 21 peer reviewed articles about First Nations student experiences at boarding schools. The results were thematically coded to reveal that five Culturally Responsive Pedagogy strands were evident in the experiences of First Nations boarding students: having sociocultural consciousness; affirming views of students; acting as agents of change; learning about students and their communities; and culturally responsive teaching practices. Three additional strands emerged from the literature to generate an eight-strand framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding : building cultural safety in boarding; providing health and wellbeing services; and supporting aspirations. Most of the experiences analysed from the literature were negatively positioned relative to the strands in Culturally Responsive Boarding. The framework is limited because of the dearth of independent evaluations of boarding school outcomes for First Nations students. The proposed framework provides a pragmatic placeholder to support First Nations boarding students and their families until broader reforms happen across the boarding school sector in Australia.

Keywords: *First Nations, boarding school, remote, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive boarding.*

Introduction

Boarding school provides a range of educational opportunities for remote First Nations students that they would not have access to in their home communities. The colonial style of boarding, that the First Nations students are likely to face and the negative impacts this can have is well documented (Bobongie, 2017a; Mander et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pertl & Guerin, 2018; Rogers, 2017; Whettingsteel et al., 2020). Few students have the skills or support to manage the Institutional expectations at boarding school, which results in many withdrawing from the school (Guenther & Fogarty, 2020). Much of the current Australian boarding policy has a minimal focus on First

Nations student support and cultural safety (Standards Australia, 2015; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2017). The legacies of the Eurocentric teaching is well entrenched in Australia and this has created structures in boarding schools that disadvantage students with cultures not recognised as mainstream (Martin et al., 2017). To counter structural inequalities in teaching, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy aims to make learning more contextual and culturally relevant by recognising the cultural diversity each student brings to the school (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). What is missing from the literature is how Culturally Responsive Pedagogy may inform the students' additional needs identified in a boarding setting. The authors of this paper propose a Culturally Responsive Boarding framework based on evidence from First Nations students lived experiences as identified from a review of the literature. Such a framework could be used to inform policy and guide schools and teachers to improve the educational opportunities for all First Nations boarding students, opportunities they are entitled to under the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council 2019).

The paper begins with a review of Villegas and Lucas's (2002a) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy framework. Each of the six Culturally Responsive Pedagogy strands of this framework is used as the organising structure of the literature review. The strands used include sociocultural consciousness, affirming views of students, acting as agents of change, building student learning connections, learning about students and their communities and culturally responsive teaching practices. This is followed by a description of the rapid review methodology and thematic data analysis. While there is extensive research about the policy and experiences of First Nations students at boarding schools there is no framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding to support the retention and learning of the students in these programs. The rapid literature review was a way of collecting evidence to shape the proposed framework. The results of the rapid literature review are presented as eight strands of Culturally Responsive Boarding. In the discussion, the political context of the application of the proposed framework is presented.

Researcher Positionality

Healey is a non-Indigenous scholar living on Wadawurrung land. She works beside First Nations boarding school students in rural Victoria and continuously sees the inequities in education and extensive challenges they face. In pursuit of social justice, she believes she has a moral obligation to act as an agent for change.

Auld is a non-Indigenous teacher educator who specialises in literacy education. His research focuses on strength-based approaches to student learning which struggles to gain traction on stolen land in neoliberal times.

Terminology

As this research includes voices from the sovereign peoples across the Australian continent and Torres Strait Islands, the use of the nomenclature of First Nations is used in this paper to acknowledge this. However, when citing previous research, the authors respectfully use the specific nomenclature used in the published research. If multiple citations are incorporated into a sentence, First Nations is the commonly used term.

Background

Villegas & Lucas (2002b) have a vision where:

> culturally responsive teachers (1) are socio-culturally conscious, (2) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (3) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (4) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (5) know about the lives of their students, and (6) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (p. 30).

These six ideas were used to organise the background framing of literature on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

Sociocultural Consciousness

Sociocultural consciousness is understanding how social inequalities continue to exist in education through societal connections, systemic discrimination, power imbalances and through the continuous privileging of Western worldviews (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Culturally responsive teachers understand students will have different worldviews, based upon their varying cultural backgrounds, life experience (Perso & Hayward, 2020), social status and gender. The advantage of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is that it addresses systemic discrimination occurring where minority groups are not represented in mainstream pedagogy and organisational structures (Martin et al., 2017) and can disrupt the arrangements that reproduce social inequalities. This is important because a system discriminating against minority students, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, could arguably set many students up to fail (Guenther & Osborne, 2021).

Affirming Views of Students

Affirming views of students is based around three key ideas: (1) Teachers validating the students' multiple ways of knowing, (2) ensuring students learn mainstream knowledge while (3) understanding that students bring valuable knowledge and experiences to the school which helps their learning to progress (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). When teachers value the cultural capital First Nations student bring to the school, student diversity can be treated as an asset or resource (Lowe et al., 2021) and the students' knowledge, experiences and understandings provide a strong foundation for continued learning (Morrison et al., 2019). The importance of supporting and valuing Indigenous culture and identity within the education system has been shown to positively influence Indigenous student resilience (Rutherford et al., 2020) and a strong sense of cultural identity is linked to positive wellbeing and socio-emotional adjustment (Dockery, 2020). Affirming student views in a boarding school context may add to the student feeling supported outside of school away from home.

Acting as Agents of Change

To be considered an 'agent of change', teachers recognise that they have a moral responsibility to make schools more culturally responsive, and to facilitate student growth in educational settings that can 'serve as sites for social transformation' (Villegas & Lucas 2002a). Transformation of the learning environments in schools that realise the political and ethical purposes of education can only be possible when teachers choose to engage in disrupting inequitable practices. Equity in schools could be achieved by believing all students are equal (Perso & Hayward, 2020) and ensuring all students can access and reach the same educational success regardless of their cultural background. Embedded in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy are the principles of social justice that make positive change possible. Thevenot (2021) explains a social justice education policy is needed to provide innovative ways to transform education by creating educational equity and removing systematic barriers to student success. Evidence suggests that many Australian boarding school structures have limited respect for First Nations culture and cultural understanding (Whettingsteel et al., 2020). In these schools there have been reports of racism (Rogers, 2017) and suppression of First Nationals student identity (Guenther & Fogarty, 2020). When staff in Australian boarding schools work to remove the structural inequalities facing students, they would be acting as agents of change.

Constructivist Views of Learning

Culturally Responsive Teaching is based on constructivist view of learning, where learners use prior knowledge and values to continuously make connections between pre-existing and new knowledge. Culturally Responsive Teaching approaches student cultural diversity as an asset and

integrates these assets into engaging and motivating learning activities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Teachers from privileged backgrounds often struggle to connect to students from marginal backgrounds who are learning new content that appears irrelevant to them (Perso & Hayward, 2020). This would likely lead to further entrenching educational disadvantage for First Nation students who may question the purposes of boarding away from home.

Learning About Students and Their Communities

Deeper understandings of students' home lives and community enable teachers to get to know their First Nations boarding students (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020; Perso & Hayward, 2020). This includes knowing about the student's life outside school, their family and social life as well as prior knowledge, history, primary language, belief systems and belief in education (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). By learning about students and their communities, teachers may avoid stereotyping First Nations students who often come to boarding school from home communities that may have very diverse lifestyles, geographic locations, histories, languages and cultural practices (Guenther & Fogarty, 2020). Where teachers have inadequate background knowledge of students, teachers have been known to assume what and how the students have been previously taught (Perso & Hayward, 2020) and how they can best learn. Morrison et al. (2019) identify the importance of being 'connected to students' life-worlds' and forming quality 'relationships' between teachers, students, student peers, families, and communities and these are as major components of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. By understanding similarities and differences between the students' cultural background and values, and those of the school, teachers can build strong relationships that pay dividends in learning outcomes.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Culturally Responsive Teaching practices include involving students in the construction of knowledge, making classrooms inclusive, broadening curriculum, providing varied assessments, building on students' personal and cultural strengths and drawing on expertise from community members (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Strength based approaches to First Nations student learning has been identified as an indicator of student success in remote communities (Guenther et al., 2015) and has been advocated in approaches to literacy teaching (Fogarty et al., 2018). Culturally responsive teachers may ask Elders into the school to share their cultural knowledge, bringing benefits to staff and students across the school (Rigney et al., 2020). Lowe et al., (2021) have argued that there are "*positive consequences arising from Aboriginal people actively mentoring non-Aboriginal educators in order to develop culturally responsive approaches to curriculum and pedagogy*" (p.473). First Nations student success in classrooms has been linked to the high expectations teachers have of their students in school classroom (Sarra et al., 2020).

Limitations of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Despite many advantages, previous studies have identified limitations of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Martin et al., (2017) identified the following structures working against Culturally Responsive Teaching in the context of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in teacher education; "*(1) abyssal (or colonial) thinking; (2) the hegemony of westernised versions of what counts as education; (3) discourses of marginalisation and othering; and (4) the hegemony of the English language*" (p.241). Furthermore, the way teachers interpret Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is not always aligned with its principles. Ladson-Billings (2017) suggests that teachers who think they are enacting Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, frequently focus on what the students are interested in learning rather than focusing on learning that matters in the lives of the students.

In the context of these structural and practice limitations of Culturally Responsive Teaching, the proposed framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding is offered to support staff in their enactment of the dimensions of care to First Nations boarding students.

Methodology

The methodology chosen to address the research aim is a rapid review. Rapid reviews contain the elements of a systematic review, however the process is streamlined to produce the required information on a shorter timeline (Tricco et al., 2015). A rapid review was used in this unfunded project that aimed to propose an argument for Culturally Responsive Boarding. While authors acknowledge the limitation of the scope of rapid review compared a more substantial systemic review, there is enough evidence in the literature generated from the rapid literature review to propose the Culturally Responsive Boarding framework.

The preliminary literature search was conducted through the ERIC, EBSCOHost and Informit databases, as well as Google scholar. Additional sources were identified by utilising relevant references found in the literature of the preliminary search. The searched literature included the use of academic journals and books and the following search terms were used:
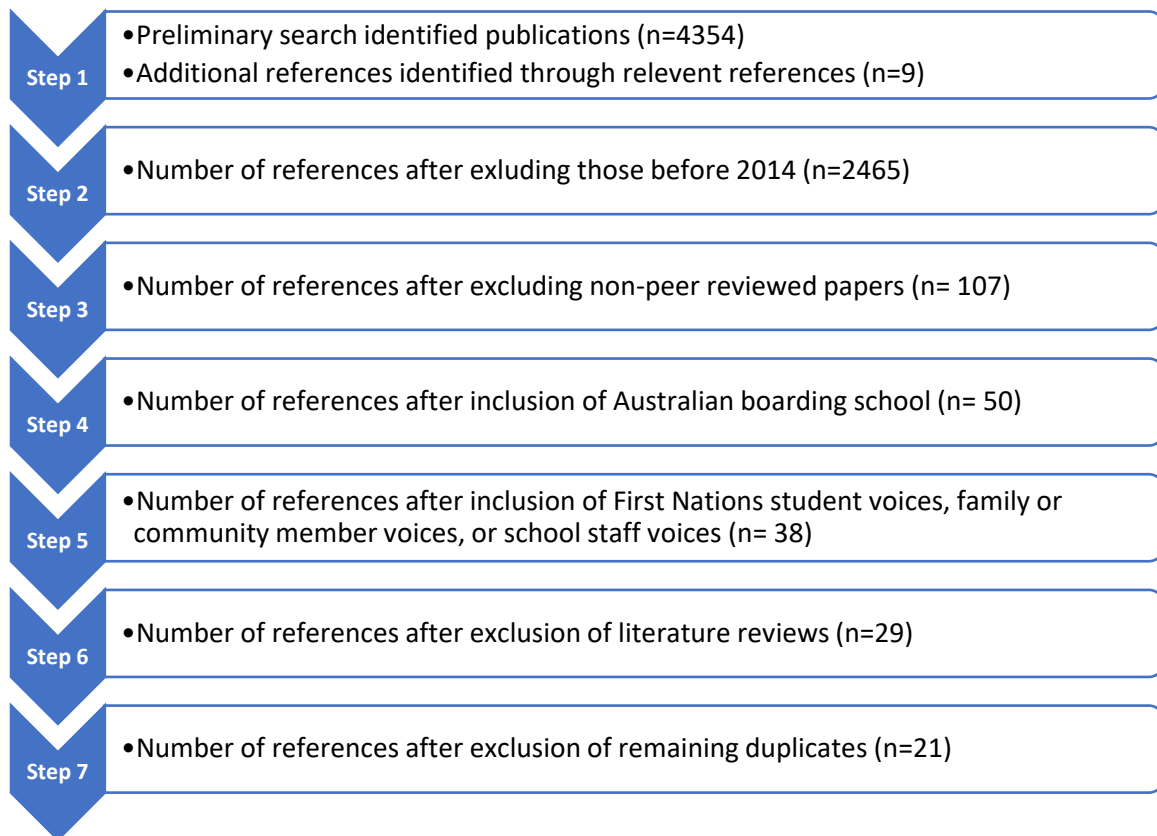"Boarding school" AND "Indigenous Australians" OR "Aboriginal Australians" OR "Torres Strait Islanders" OR "First Nations Peoples".

The preliminary search identified 4354 records (see Figure 1). To assess the eligibility of the publications the following inclusion criteria was used: (a) published between 2014 – 2023; (b) is peer reviewed; (c) boarding school is Australian; (d) included First Nations student voices, family or community member voices, or school staff commenting on their reflections of caring for First Nations students. Following the application of inclusion criteria (a) and (b), the titles and abstracts of papers were read to determine if they met inclusion criteria (c) and (d). Publications were excluded if they were literature reviews and duplicate references were removed. This resulted in the exclusion of 4342 publications, leaving 12 relevant publications to be included. Nine additional records identified in relevant references met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and were included in the sample. A final sample of 21 relevant publications that addressed the criteria were included in the research.

Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis procedure was used to analyse the included published articles using a deductive approach with the themes generated from the Villegas and Lucas's (2002a) six strands of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy . Although there are numerous Culturally Responsive Pedagogy frameworks, Villegas and Lucas's (2002a) framework was chosen as it resonated with the authors' understandings of the outcomes of students in Australian boarding schools as indicated in the Boarding School Standards (Australian Standards 2015). Additional themes were created that did not fit into any of the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy strands.

This research project used a rapid literature review method using publicly available published peer reviewed data and is therefore exempt from ethics approval. Ethics exemption for the study was granted by the Deakin University Faculty of Arts and Education Human Ethics Advisory Group. Exemption reference number: 2022-289. We are conscious that this work is intended to impact First Nations boarders and we have tried to use respectful language in the terminology in this study that reflects the complexity of Australian boarding context.

Figure 1: *Search Strategy*

Step 1
- Preliminary search identified publications (n=4354)
- Additional references identified through relevent references (n=9)

Step 2
- Number of references after exluding those before 2014 (n=2465)

Step 3
- Number of references after excluding non-peer reviewed papers (n= 107)

Step 4
- Number of references after inclusion of Australian boarding school (n= 50)

Step 5
- Number of references after inclusion of First Nations student voices, family or community member voices, or school staff voices (n= 38)

Step 6
- Number of references after exclusion of literature reviews (n=29)

Step 7
- Number of references after exclusion of remaining duplicates (n=21)

Results

This rapid review aimed to identify how well First Nations student experiences in boarding schools are aligned to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and what needs to be adjusted and added into Culturally Responsive Pedagogy to generate the proposed Culturally Responsive Boarding framework. Using a deductive approach, five of the six interconnected strands of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy were highly visible in the literature. The strand that was omitted was *constructivist views of learning*. Within the literature reviewed, there was no evidence to suggest that it was a determinant of success in the boarding school experience, despite being an important strand to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Three additional themes emerged as important dimensions to boarding schools that are not covered by Culturally Responsive Pedagogy which include building cultural safety in boarding, providing health and wellbeing services and supporting aspirations. Table 1 maps First Nations boarding experiences with the strands of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and those identified in Culturally Responsive Boarding.

Table 1: *First Nations Boarding Experiences as Culturally Responsive Boarding*

Publication	Culturally Responsive Boarding							
	Having sociocultural consciousness	Affirming views of students	Acting as agents of change	Learning about students and their communities	Culturally responsive teaching practices	Building cultural safety in boarding	Providing health and wellbeing services	Supporting aspiration
Benveniste et al., 2020	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Benveniste et al., 2019	√	√	√	√		√	√	
Bobongie, 2017a		√		√				
Bobongie, 2017b		√	√	√	√			
Guerin & Pertl, 2017	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Lloyd, 2020	√	√	√	√	√			
Macdonald et al., 2018	√	√	√	√	√			√
Mander et al., 2015a	√	√	√	√	√	√		
Mander et al., 2015b	√	√		√	√	√		√
Mander, 2015	√			√	√			√
McCalman et al., 2020				√			√	
O'Bryan, 2021	√	√	√					
O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020	√	√	√	√	√			√
Pertyl & Guerin, 2018		√	√			√		√
Redman-MacLaren et al., ,2021		√		√				
Rogers, 2017		√	√	√				√
Rutherford et al., 2020	√	√		√	√	√	√	
Seymour & Guerin 2018		√		√				√
Stewart, 2021	√	√	√	√		√		√
Walker, 2019				√				
Whettingsteel et al., 2020		√				√		

√ = included

Having Sociocultural Consciousness

The theme of having sociocultural consciousness, or lack thereof, was one of the more dominant themes identified in the literature. This section highlights the occurrence of culture shock for First Nations students, as they experience a change in value systems and the social inequalities that come with structures of systemic discrimination.

The literature review highlighted common challenges that make flourishing for First Nations boarding students incredibly difficult. Boarding schools were found to embed Western based educational and social values (Benveniste et al., 2019) and practices of institutionalised racism (Macdonald et al., 2018). Mander et al., (2105a) identified that some staff expressed prejudice, stereotypes and racism to varying degrees in interviews. One study by O'Bryan & Fogarty (2020), found that some staff understand the complexities faced by First Nations students; identifying language barriers, distance from home, health, parent communication, and the challenges brought about by years of "*intergenerational exclusion from education systems*" (p. 59). Culture shock was recognised by both staff (Mander et al., 2015b) and students (Mander et al., 2015a) as a common occurrence when First Nations students transitioned to boarding school. Aboriginal students in one study (Mander et al., 2015b) found they needed to 'code switch' between their cultures, with some students feeling as though they needed to suppress their cultural identity while at school. Some staff believed students needed to accept the change and switch between systems, while other staff were concerned about the impact it had on the students' identity and wellbeing (Mander et al., 2015a). In another study, a staff member valued the opportunity to visit a First Nations community which ultimately made the staff member question and change their perceptions of Western values (Lloyd, 2020). This identifies the shift in thinking that occurred with greater contextual understanding. Although student involvement in the decision to attend boarding school varied between students, for many students, attending boarding school was ultimately a choiceless-choice as local schools did not have the resources required to complete their secondary education (Mander et al., 2015b). Parents were faced with the ethical dilemma of sending their children away. Many felt frustrated that keeping their children in their local community was simply not a viable option (Stewart, 2021). In a study of parental perceptions of boarding schools, Mander (2015) found that some parents experience emotions of "*guilt, stress, loneliness and sadness*" (p. 176) and question their worthiness as parents.

Affirming Views of Students

Affirming views of students included teachers having a belief that all students were capable learners with mainstream knowledge. Validating student perspectives recognised the multiple ways of knowing, valuing culture and enabling connections with First Nations peers.

For many students, having a teacher believe they could achieve was crucial to their engagement, self-belief, and academic success. An Indigenous student explains *"Teachers here are real helpful; they want to get you somewhere. If you put in you get out"* (Pertl & Guerin, 2018, p. 84). Students felt teachers showed respect for their culture when they were not penalised for being different, but rather demonstrated an understanding of their cultural norms and *"allowed them to think and act in Aboriginal ways"* (Macdonald et al., 2018, p. 206). In the boarding house, students identified that they didn't belong when they were not allowed to speak their native language, there was a lack of culture in the boarding house, or other students responded negatively to Indigenous cultural norms (Bobongie, 2017b). Other students described the boarding house as 'unwelcoming', and that there needed to be more connection to Aboriginal culture to give them a greater sense of belonging (Whettingsteel et al., 2020). Students also worried that their cultural identity was lost around the boarding school (Rogers, 2017). Some students felt that acknowledging Indigenous events at schools was a sign of inclusivity (Rutherford et al., 2020), while others felt it must go beyond this (O'Bryan, 2021). Several teachers felt a genuine whole school inclusive approach was essential for Indigenous student retention and recognised the need to have more cultural activities and greater support for cultural practices such as 'sorry business' at the school (Bobongie, 2017a). Students felt their culture was respected and valued when teachers showed interest in them and were prepared to help them learn (Bobongie, 2017b). Learning their peers' culture was something some Indigenous and non-Indigenous students valued (Lloyd, 2020) and when culture and cultural identity was valued, student resilience at boarding schools was shown to increase (Rutherford et al., 2020).

Students believed a crucial aspect of their success was their connection and strong friendships with other Indigenous students at the school (Pertl & Guerin, 2018; Redman-MacLaren et al., 2021). These connections improved retention (Stewart, 2021). First Nations student mentors were also perceived to be highly useful (Benveniste et al., 2019; Mander et al., 2015a), excellent role models (Mander et al., 2015b) and helped build the new students' social skills (Rutherford et al., 2020). Older First Nations students who had experienced much of what the new students were going through were able to offer support. Boarding provided First Nations students with the opportunity to learn mainstream independent skills (Rogers, 2017), achieve education qualifications and secure employment (Macdonald et al., 2018). The literature revealed that schools varied in how they valued First Nations student views. There was strong evidence that when students completed their secondary education, the mainstream knowledge that they gained from their boarding school experience was beneficial for their future success (Macdonald et al., 2018, Rogers, 2017).

Acting as Agents of Change

Acting as agents of change included the importance of having the right staff and support for staff to enact social change, and a recognition of the inequalities, power imbalances and reproductive tendencies in boarding schools. To act as agents of change, boarding staff needed to be culturally responsive to the specific needs of First Nations boarders and the inequities that contextualise their learning away from home. One study found that working with Aboriginal boarding students was effective when there was support from leadership, when the 'right' staff were employed and when plans were in place to specifically support the students (Benveniste et al., 2020). Further to this, another study found that students valued staff who were relaxed but still had boundaries, could empathise with the Indigenous students' circumstances and could respond in ways to best support them (Stewart, 2021). Teachers found it challenging when they had not worked with Indigenous students before, had not had the cultural training to grasp the complexities of the situation or did not have support from the school (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). In one study, a teacher believed that they had the obligation to better support oppressed groups and another wanted to empower Aboriginal students to speak up with confidence and address the injustices they had faced (Mander et al., 2015a).

The reproductive nature of schools often resulted in a continual cycle of inequality whereby First Nations students were disadvantaged. In one study, a student described their hope for a neutral power balance in education with more connection between community and the school (Lloyd, 2020). Some staff believed that building this connection and strong relationships was challenging due to the *"intergenerational exclusion from education system"*, as well as language barriers, geographic distances, internet access and digital literacy in First Nations communities (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020, p.59). The literature identified the power relations between teachers and students impacted student agency in boarding schools. O'Bryan (2021) described the power dynamics in Australian education as *"visible to the naked eye"* (p. 16) and levels of power and cultural biases were made clear to a First Nations student when his request of having the First Nations flag up at the school was rejected. Parents were made to feel *"powerless"* when their children were suspended in what they feel *"unjust"* circumstances and communication with the school was limited (Stewart, 2021, p. 125). All the while several Indigenous students believed a good school was one that was simply respectful, empathetic and treated them fairly (Stewart, 2021). It was believed by both parents (Mander, 2015) and staff that the educational disadvantage Aboriginal students faced was linked to wider social issues, with staff feeling *"anger"* or *"frustration"* about this ongoing issue (Mander et al., 2015a, p. 318). For some students, attending boarding school brought into focus the disadvantage and inequalities they faced, making them question if they even belonged in such a privileged environment (Mander et al., 2015b).

First Nations boarding students faced racism and cultural ignorance. Indigenous students described being treated differently because of their skin colour, given funny looks, called names

and treated like five-year-olds (Pertl & Guerin, 2018) as well as feeling unwelcomed, being left out (Bobongie, 2017b) and being subject to drug use stereotypes (Macdonald et al., 2018). Indigenous students felt that some non-Indigenous students had no understanding of the socioeconomic disadvantage they faced and had no interest in trying to understand it (Macdonald et al., 2018). A lack of understanding and support towards Indigenous cultural practices such as *"sorry business"* caused anxiety, anger and distraction in students when they were not allowed to go home to grieve with their families (Rogers, 2017, p.9).

Learning About Students and Their Communities

Learning about students and their communities was another dominant theme in the literature which included a strong focus on the importance of relationships, understanding student life outside the school and how they previously learned. Relationships between students, student and staff, staff and family and the school and community were crucial to successful outcomes for First Nations boarding students (Lloyd, 2020; Mander et al., 2015a). For staff, building strong relationships with the students was essential (Benveniste et al., 2019; Guerin & Pertl, 2017). This was achieved through conversations and showing interest in where they come from (Mander et al., 2015a) and having a flexible approach (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). Students also indicated that building strong friendships with other First Nations students in the boarding house through social events was vital (Mander et al., 2015b). In another study a school nurse explained the importance of having good relationships with students so that they could 'yarn' in a safe place and then receive the care needed (McCalman et al., 2020). Along with relationships at the school, relationships with First Nations communities were also imperative. Studies identified that school or staff visits to their students' First Nations community was important (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020; Stewart, 2021) where they could experience First Nations culture 'on country' (Lloyd, 2020). One family member interviewed by Steward (2021) commented on the limited knowledge boarding school staff had about caring for Aboriginal children. They stated 'Do the teachers and boarding parents in these schools even know how to look after Aboriginal boys and girls? They need to come here and talk to us, show us who they are and talk to us about looking after our kids' (Stewart, 2021, p.125). This research highlighted the stress felt by the family when sending their children away, the importance of building strong relationships and knowing about the student's life.

Knowing Aboriginal student cultures through professional learning has been found valuable (Benveniste et al., 2019; Mander et al., 2015a) in the context of school boarding. Without professional learning on cultural responsiveness, staff indicated that they felt ill-equipped to manage the students and made *"cultural mistakes"* (Guerin & Pertl, 2017, p.59). Being responsive to the challenges many students faced such as homesickness (Walker, 2019), missed cultural obligations (Bobongie, 2017b) and the trauma that some may carry with them from their lives at home (McCalman et al., 2020) would be integral to the care and flexibility required to support the students. Knowing the students also included understanding their previous educational experience. Some students at boarding school described their previous primary schooling experience in their home community where they attended only one to two days per week, not bothering to go or getting up around noon (Pertl & Guerin, 2018). There were also complex reasons for students leaving boarding school. Some of the reasons students discontinued boarding included family responsibilities, exclusion, fighting, difficulties with staff and wanting to go home to their community as they had no other community members at the school (Walker, 2019). Interestingly, students across two studies regretted dropping out, (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020; Walker, 2019). First Nations parents described drop out as *"normalised"* and Elders raised the concern that when this happened, students were not learning to work through their problems (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020, p.63).

CRT Practices

The theme CRT practices highlighted the challenges many First Nations boarding students faced when moving to boarding school including academic disadvantage, difficulties connecting to the curriculum and language barriers. It also identified the importance of having a culturally inclusive school and curriculum to support motivation and engagement.

With much of the curriculum *"white-washed"* (Macdonald et al., 2018, p.210), First Nations students found it difficult to connect to the content to make learning relevant. Students described the academic schoolwork as *"really hard"* and *"stressful"* and felt unmotivated and unprepared, with some developing low self-esteem in the classroom (Mander et al., 2015b, p.31). Staff recognised how the limited previous educational experiences available to remote First Nations students (Guerin & Pertl, 2017) left the students underprepared for boarding school (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020). Both teachers and students indicated that a major barrier for many First Nations boarding students was that English was not their first language (Bobongie, 2017b; Mander et al., 2015a). One student in Bobongie's (2017b) study commented *"My biggest challenge was speaking English because I didn't—I've had a few sentences here and there in primary school, but I've never actually spoken a whole paragraph of English"* (p.1146). Culturally Responsive Teaching would value this linguistic capital as a way of making the shift to content delivered in English.

Building bridges between previously learnt and new concepts was particularly important, with teachers explaining how the use of relational learning was an effective teaching strategy (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). In one study a teacher described the difficulty of getting any work out of a student, while when other students completed an assignment relating to their culture, motivation increased significantly (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). In another study, the benefits of a boarding model where the Indigenous students learnt from non-Indigenous students and vice versa were considered mutually empowering (Lloyd, 2020), creating more culturally inclusive spaces in the boarding house.

Building Cultural Safety in Boarding

The theme 'building cultural safety' in boarding considers the time students spend in the care of boarding house staff when they were not in the classroom. This included weekends and time before and after school each school day. First Nations students faced challenges when there was no respite from operating in a non-Indigenous context. It also addresses the essential need for a flexible boarding approach and for giving students a high level of ownership to provide them with a sense of belonging.

The sheer contrast between the two worlds First Nations students' experience, from living in their home community to a boarding school cannot be underestimated. One parent described this as sending their son to Mars (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). The highly structured boarding and school environment was frequently mentioned as being significantly difficult for students. Across several studies, students referred to the structures and rules as challenging to adjust to (Guerin & Pertl, 2017), that there were too many rules (Pertl & Guerin, 2018), they struggled with the lack of freedom (Mander et al., 2015b), and that the structure was a barrier to a sense of belonging (Whettingsteel et al., 2020). In one study, where structural challenges were recognised, a staff member identified Indigenous students having trouble managing time and another student felt a more flexible approach would lead to greater productivity (Guerin & Pertl, 2017). This was supported by a student explaining how there needed to be balance between essential structures in the boarding house and giving the students autonomy and flexibility (Whettingsteel et al., 2020).

Providing Health and Wellbeing Services

The second theme that emerged outside Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was providing health and wellbeing services. This included the array of health conditions First Nations students needed at the school, the barriers that limit the health provision and strategies that support health and wellbeing.

A recent study by McCalman et al., (2020) found that many Indigenous boarding students reported a lower social wellbeing than their non-Indigenous peers and they brought with them *"diverse and complex physical health and social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) issues that impacted their ability to participate in school life and learning"* (p.4). The study found that although schools acknowledged that they had a duty of care to look after Indigenous students' health and wellbeing, several staff described the barriers as being the lack of resources, associated costs, lack of staff Indigenous cultural training and alternative worldviews (McCalman et al., 2020). This warrants the ethical question of why schools can enrol First Nations students in boarding and accept government funding, when they were not able to provide the health care required to support the students. Despite these barriers, strategies that were found useful in supporting First Nations students health and wellbeing included having a pastoral care plan for each student, liaising with transition support staff (Benveniste et al., 2019), having older students mentor younger students, using a daily check-in app (Rutherford et al., 2020), developing strong relationships with people providing health care and offering access to health education (McCalman et al., 2020).

Supporting Aspirations

The final theme that emerged from the literature important to boarding schools was supporting aspirations. First Nations students and their families enrolled in boarding school for the opportunities and aspirations it provided, yet many First Nations students from remote communities faced significant challenges when they dropped out or were not supported with post-secondary school transitions.

Acknowledging student and family aspirations was important where staff are charged with realising these aspirations. The research suggests that parents send their children to boarding school thinking it was a safe environment that provided children with a more worldly education, knowledge of other cultures, access to tertiary education and opportunities for positive social mobility (Mander, 2015). For students, boarding school provided opportunities to finish Year 12, gain employment, make 'something good out of life' (Macdonald et al., 2018, p.199), play competitive sport, go to university and build a career (Pertl & Guerin, 2018). It was also thought to allow students to become more educated so that they could return to their home community, empower others, and help build a better future (Mander et al., 2015b). However, extending the care for students returning to their home community after boarding school has been a challenge. In a study by Rogers (2107), a student stated s/he is unlikely to return to his/her community because of drug, alcohol, and employment issues. Findings by O'Bryan & Fogarty (2020) reported that one community member explained the challenges First Nations graduates faced when trying to integrate back into a community where there was nothing to do and limited jobs. Dropout rates were reported as high as 59% in the first year of boarding school and 74% by the end of the second year (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020). There were cases where students who left boarding school had difficulty integrating back into their home community, often feeling unsupported. In one study, a student reflected on their own experience and explained that when a First Nations student dropped out of boarding school, they wouldn't be let back into their home and may have had to live on the street (Pertl & Guerin, 2018). Further to this, a principal highlighted that despite the best efforts of the school to maintain contact with graduate students and offer mentoring, often graduates reverted to their old lives, were unemployed and caught up in the wrong crowds (Macdonald et al., 2018). Therefore, despite both parents and students hoping that boarding

school would provide opportunities and meet their aspirations, the reality was that for many the issues associated with retention and integrating back into home communities were significant.

Discussion

The Culturally Responsive Boarding framework can be a useful tool to inform policy and guide schools and teachers towards the enactment of quality practice in support of First Nations boarding students beyond the classroom. By considering the role that boarding schools occupy in the structures and arrangements of the settler colonial state, boarding staff could play an important role in building sociocultural consciousness. Boarding staff work at the interface of valuing Indigenous worldviews and understanding societal inequalities, systemic discrimination in schools and the 'choice-less-choice' many students face. It was clear from the findings that the boarding experience for First Nations students, their families and community, as well as the boarding staff and schools was incredibly complex and contextual. Weaving First Nations students' ownership of the boarding school space and routines gives an agency over the mainstream school environment so they can feel a sense of belonging and cultural respect is normalised in the boarding house. The Culturally Responsive Boarding framework could be used to facilitate this ownership and to provide staff with the tools to support the balance between flexibility and structure. A flexible approach is recommended (Guerin and Pertl 2017; Macdonald et al. 2018) and may support students in negotiating the contrasting rules and expectations. Structures could also be built to support long absences from school as well as provide the cultural safety for when students stay at school and miss significant cultural events. By not providing the support required, schools are arguably setting these students up to fail.

A focus on staff learning about the students' background and communities in Culturally Responsive Boarding enable the development of respectful relationships between staff and students. This could be done through communication with the First Nations students, their family, community and previous schools (Benveniste et al., 2019; Guerin and Pertl 2017). However, without structural reforms in boarding schools, teachers may feel powerless to effectively support First Nations students. Staff are charged with ensuring students learn mainstream knowledge and societal norms. Lowe et al., (2021) argue that Indigenous students are found lacking when their individualisation of student achievement of the White performance benchmarks are mapped against the broader student population. Boarding staff who show a positive interest in First Nations students' culture are seeking out connections between culture and discipline curriculum learning. Boarding schools should support staff with cultural professional development (Bobongie 2017a; Guerin and Pertl 2017; Mander et al., 2015a) as well as training in health and wellbeing (Macdonald et al., 2018; McCalman et al. 2020). Ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to staff training and student health and wellbeing is critical if schools are to continue enrolling First Nations students. Student aspirations can be challenged when success is limited due to the broader structural inequalities in education. By focusing on student aspirations, staff in the boarding house can engage in an ontological dimension of Culturally Responsive Boarding, that includes providing a continuity of high expectations of student engagement in education outside of the classroom. The Culturally Responsive Boarding framework would highlight the importance of supporting the short-term goals of each student as steppingstones towards their future aspirations.

Like Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Boarding also has limitations, including the impact it can have on the structures that situate the practice of care and pedagogy. In an analysis of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy's limitations , Martin et al., (2017) argue that a culturally responsive teacher can only have limited impact while there is still work to be done to "*decolonize the structures, knowledge systems, and institutional processes that support the status quo*" (p.248). Recent research framing by Weuffen et al., (2022) highlights how the Australian schools subscribe to colonial hospitality, where Indigenous students are penalised from entry and

then expected to conform to the colonial way of learning if they are to succeed. Although First Nations students are 'invited' to attend boarding schools, the results of this review suggest their culture is often not recognised in a context where it is vital to do so, particularly for the well-being and care necessary for retaining students. A limitation of Culturally Responsive Boarding is that the teachers and staff may not be able to enact lasting change on a boarding system that was originally designed to silence First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing. While this non-ideal and unjust arrangement is a reality for many First Nations students facing secondary education, the proposed framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding may play a role in reforming boarding schools.

Conclusion

It was clear from the findings that the boarding experience for First Nations students, their families and community, as well as the boarding staff, is incredibly complex and contextual. For the most part, the evidence suggests that First Nations student experiences were negative and the antithesis of Culturally Responsive Boarding, ultimately demonstrating what doesn't work, rather than what works. Where First Nations students are exposed to negative experiences in boarding, retention rates are likely to be low. We acknowledge that negative experiences are not reported in all studies reflecting the complexity of boarding in Australia. The framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding is proposed in a time when there is limited accountability for funds provided to boarding scholarship organisations.

The proposed framework of Culturally Responsive Boarding may support teachers and staff to notice how they make judgements in their professional practice. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was conceived to address the cultural inequalities in education, challenging the colonialism embedded in Western education and valuing the cultural diversity each student brings to the school (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). A Culturally Responsive Boarding framework contextualises the student experience and aims to care for and value the whole student. This is particularly important especially when care is extended beyond the classroom, away from home, and in a boarding context. This includes the students 'academic, psychological, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing' (Taylor & Sobel, 2011, p.10). Like Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Boarding can be used to understand the inequalities in education, but the proposed framework extends Culturally Responsive Pedagogy so staff can be culturally responsive as they provide care to First Nations boarding students. After being adopted and with a program of evaluation, Culturally Responsive Boarding could be a steppingstone to make boarding a better place to support First Nations students and their families.

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