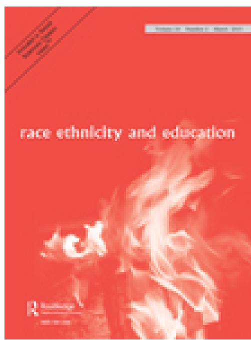

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Witnessing (halted) deconstruction: white teachers' 'perfect stranger' position within urban Indigenous education

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This article extends upon Susan Dion's theory of the 'perfect stranger' by exploring how this position is articulated and embodied by white teachers (N = 67) involved in urban Indigenous education reform. On the lookout for deconstruction, we think with Derrida around the interrelated self/other and familiar/strange binaries that uphold the perfect stranger. We argue that Eurocentrism simultaneously centres and obscures whiteness, resulting in teachers' misconceptions about culture. We also demonstrate how stereotypical representations of the 'imaginary Indian' that these white teachers 'know' inhibits their ability to foster and build upon relationships with Indigenous students. We conclude by conceptualizing a model for teacher education that, through a variety of teaching practices and policies, intentionally disrupts and destabilizes the perfect stranger position.

Keywords: Indigenous education; whiteness; Eurocentrism; deconstruction; Derrida; teacher education

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1. Introduction

There is a growing consensus within Indigenous[1] educational literature in Canada that most white teachers deliver a curriculum that is reflective of and is shaped by Eurocentrism and whiteness. When explaining their approach to teaching and learning, these white teachers state that such teaching practices are all they know, want to know, or feel comfortable knowing (Donald 2011; Schick 2000; Schick and Denis 2005; Strong-Wilson 2007; Tompkins 2002). Dion (2007, 2009) refers to this position as the 'perfect stranger' and argues that it is further characterized by denial of the role that whiteness plays in shaping white educators' lives as well as claims of knowing little to nothing about Indigenous peoples and cultures. Occupying and upholding the position of the perfect stranger acts as white teachers' protective 'colonial cloak' by shielding them from 'difficult knowledges' (Pitt and Britzman 2003; Simon 2005) associated with decolonization, integration of Indigenous

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perspectives into curriculum, and exploration of the ways in which colonialism and racism are reproduced in their own teaching and within schools.

During a research project that sought to explore how nine stakeholder groups (Indigenous students, non-Indigenous students, Elders, Indigenous families, Indigenous cultural support workers, school board administrators, elementary teachers, secondary teachers and principals) could engage to support Indigenous education[2] reform in one Canadian urban school board, we documented that most white elementary and secondary teachers articulated statements that reinforce the hegemonic position of non-Indigenous teachers as perfect strangers to their Indigenous students (Korteweg 2010). We agree with Dion that the perfect stranger position acts as a significant barrier to white teacher's engagement in Indigenous education reform.

Revisiting this study, we extend Dion's theorizing by working with(in)/against her notion of the perfect stranger, employing Derrida's theorizing around and through deconstruction (e.g. 1976, 1988) as our tool. We carry out this task by being on the lookout for snags[3] or 'tell-tale moments' (Spivak 1976) that comprise and compromise the articulation and embodiment of this position around the interrelated familiar/strange and self/other binaries that we later argue are integral to this position. We then follow these binary threads to where they snag in order to better understand how whiteness and Eurocentrism play out within these destabilizing, tell-tale moments.

Through an investigation of the snags in the colonial cloak, our (re) examination of our earlier study reveals new findings about the complex and often contradictory ways in which whiteness and Eurocentrism contribute to the position of the perfect stranger. Simultaneously recognizing that no 'text' is ever fully deconstructed/deconstructing and that deconstruction is always happening (Spivak 1976), we conclude this article by motioning for teacher education practices and reform that intentionally destabilize the perfect stranger position held by white[4] teachers as a means of creating space for this identity to be reconstituted in a way that facilitates white teachers' engagement in Indigenous education initiatives.

2. Methodology and methods

2.1. Elementary and secondary teacher engagement in urban educational reform

In this article, we revisit data from 16 elementary and secondary teacher focus groups that the Principal Investigator (Korteweg) directed and graduate research assistants (Higgins and Madden) helped facilitate during a larger research study focused on urban Indigenous education reform (Korteweg 2010). In an attempt to remain focused on the perfect stranger position in this article, we combined the 71 teacher participants who taught across a variety of disciplines and levels from focus group data during analysis. Throughout, we refer to participants by their pseudonyms and only provide

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minimal qualifiers such as gender and teaching level (elementary or secondary) when (re-)examining these teacher quotations. Teachers were invited to self-identify as Indigenous or non-Indigenous and share information about their ancestry (i.e. race, ethnicity) to assist the research team in exploring teacher motivation and engagement in Indigenous education reform. Although both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers were encouraged to participate in the larger research study, over 90% of teacher participants (n = 67, 94%) were white and of European heritage,[5] which is consistent with the demographics of the teaching staff of the school board where the research took place and the greater Canadian teaching population (Kanu 2011). As the result of only one participant identifying as a teacher of colour, our exploration of, claims about, and recommendations for the perfect stranger are limited to white teachers that occupy this position.

The majority of the teacher data (10 of 16 focus groups) was collected immediately following mandatory professional development (PD) sessions on urban Indigenous education delivered by the school board's Indigenous PD facilitators. Teacher focus group questions focused on three main themes: (1) their experiences as teachers of urban Indigenous students[6]; (2) teachers' perceived roles in the school board-wide Indigenous education reform; and (3) barriers to and supports for teachers' engagement in urban Indigenous education. Each focus group lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, resulting in 150 pages of field notes, 350 pages of focus group transcripts, and approximately 20 hours of raw audio and video data. Video data was collected to aid in the transcription process as, in some instances, focus groups had up to 20 teacher participants. Further, video captured participants' body language and facial expressions as well as information about the focus group location such as temporal and spatial conditions and environmental constraints such as background noise and interruptions (Shrum, Duque, and Brown 2005).

2.2. Re/searching (for) the perfect stranger

Findings from the primary data analysis (Korteweg 2010) and herein suggest the overwhelming majority of white teachers were occupying and upholding the position of the perfect stranger. While a small sample of white teachers made comments that indicated they were engaging in decolonization[7] and experimenting with integration of Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum and classrooms (Madden 2011), we argue that these decolonizing teachers also articulated and embodied the perfect stranger position in some instances. Accordingly, we include these 'decolonizing' teachers' comments in our further analysis as representative of our desire to trouble understandings of the perfect stranger position as a site of dynamic tension between both colonizer-perpetrator and colonizer-ally.

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While there were many instances in which the perfect stranger was articulated during data collection, we have chosen the following teacher quotation to examine characteristics of this position as observed during an elementary teacher focus group:

> I have a different cultural background. I'm not opposed to learning different cultures. I love all cultures. However, I don't think we are doing them [Indigenous students] a service, by myself, with a Polish/French background, to be teaching something [Indigenous perspectives] that I just barely understand, because I'm not immersed within that culture. (Denise, elementary teacher)

When referring to her (lack of) engagement in Indigenous education, Denise uses discourses of culture to construct her argument around ethnic/ancestral categories that distinguish her from Indigenous students she teaches (e.g. 'different cultural background,' 'Polish/French background'). In addition to 'justifying' her resistance to integrating Indigenous perspectives in curriculum, remaining focused on culture shields her from the difficult knowledges around the impact of race and racism in Indigenous-settler historical relations as well as how whiteness shapes white teachers' engagement in Indigenous education. As we are exploring the intersection of whiteness, (perceived) culture, and teacher identities, our understanding of white privilege is largely influenced by Frankenberg's (1993, 1997, 2001) feminist theory of whiteness. She defines whiteness as a set of three linked dimensions that shape white people's lives: (1) a location of structural advantage, of race privilege; (2) a 'standpoint' from which white people consider themselves, others, and society overall; and (3) a set of cultural practices that usually go unmarked and unnamed. We recognize that whiteness is neither fixed, nor homogeneous. Material and discursive dimensions of whiteness are historically constructed and internally differentiated (Frankenberg 1997, 2001). As such, whiteness emerges as a multiplicity of identities that inhabit local custom and national sentiments and, moreover, are spatially and temporally dependent, gendered, class specific, and politically manipulated (Twine and Gallagher 2008). Further, as a site of privilege, whiteness 'is not absolute but rather crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage and subordination; these [axes] do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it' (Frankenberg 2001, 76). Within the teacher quotation presented above, leaving whiteness unmarked, unnamed, and unquestioned allows this teacher to continue upholding white privilege in order to remain 'perfect.' Comments such as: 'I'm not opposed to learning different cultures. I love all cultures,' suggest that Denise sees herself first as neutral and then eager to learn about new cultures, however, she feels as though she is lacking in opportunity to do so. The strangeness of this type of suggestion (e.g. 'I'm not immersed within that culture'), articulated immediately following a full day of school board-wide

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professional development focussing on Indigenous education reform, will be explored in a later section. One could also read the statements: ‘I'm not opposed’ and ‘I love all cultures’ as the desire to differentiate herself from other white teachers who voiced opposition to participation in mandatory cross-cultural professional development and/or made comments that were overtly racist (Schick 2000).

Denise's quotation above also demonstrates that she sees herself as a stranger to Indigenous students: ‘I have a different cultural background.… I just barely understand [that culture (*sic*)],’ and views aspects of Indigeneity as unfamiliar (e.g. ‘them,’ ‘something,’ and ‘that culture’ [*sic*]). This comment could be read as an example of resistance to confronting what she knows, what she does not know, and what she refuses to know about Indigeneity and Indigenous-settler relations (Dion 2007). However, it also suggests that her hesitance to engage in Indigenous education stems from a primary concern for Indigenous students: ‘I don't think we are doing them [Indigenous students] a service, by myself, with a Polish/French background, to be teaching something [Indigenous perspectives] that I just barely understand.’ Similar statements were common in teacher focus groups and indicated concern for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' learning (e.g. ‘I'm worried about [when] talking about the different clans, what if I don't have [the information], or I give them the wrong information?’ [Christina, elementary teacher]) as well as anxiety and, in some cases, anger (e.g. ‘And they want us to teach culture? Who am I to be teaching Aboriginal culture to Aboriginal kids?’ [Katie, elementary teacher]) as the result of being mandated to integrate Indigenous perspectives. As none of the teachers interviewed received mandatory Indigenous education during their Bachelor of Education and teacher education sessions offered by the school board resulted in a maximum of 20 hours of professional development, we argue that these statements can also be read as emotional responses of white teachers being tasked with the challenge of decolonizing and indigenizing curriculum with very little exposure to Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies during their own Eurocentric education. These comments reflect but one of the difficulties of enacting Indigenous education reform policy within structures that have historically centred European cultures, languages, histories, and epistemologies while alienating Indigenous knowledges, languages, teachers, ceremonies, and connections to place (Battiste 1998, 2005; Hookimaw-Witt 1998; Kirkness 1999; Marker 2000, 2004, 2006).

2.3. Thinking with theory: Derrida, deconstruction, and the perfect stranger

In order to make meaning productive from rather than protective of (Derrida 1976) the perfect stranger position exhibited by white teachers, we fixed our gaze on examining this notion of resistance displayed by teachers in our

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study, how it is constructed, and how it is upheld. Looking for theory with which to (re)think (Jackson et al. 2012) the perfect stranger position, we encountered Derrida whose theorizing around and through deconstruction offered the possibility of opening this position up in a manner that might permit the disruption or displacement needed to examine its construction without 'demolishing' the identity under examination (see Derrida 1988). We work with(in)/against the perfect stranger recognizing that its destruction (i.e. full deconstruction) is an impossibility and not a desired outcome. The position itself is useful in furthering understandings of how the perfect stranger is reified and reconstituted as white teachers continue to simultaneously engage in and resist Indigenous education.

Of deconstruction, Derrida would state that it is 'neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens' (Derrida 1990, 85; see also Derrida 1988). Deconstruction is what happens when an 'unresolvable contradiction' surfaces in a 'text' in which 'one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning…coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability' (Spivak 1976, lxxv). It is what happens when the binaries that uphold a 'text,' either in the literal sense or the metaphorical sense (i.e. any set of signifiers that can 'read' such as concepts, institutions, identities), exhibit their simultaneously hierarchal and porous nature. In these (always present) self-transgressive moments, texts never achieve unified meaning as the structures upon which they are built are simultaneously constructed and deconstructing. In these instants, the text goes beyond being ambiguous or uncertain in that it exhibits 'a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system' (Spivak 1976, lxxv).

Not only does deconstruction 'happen,' but it 'it is *always already* happening' (Jackson et al. 2012, 21). It is for this reason that Biesta (2009) states that 'while it's not up to us to let deconstruction happen or prevent it from happening, what we can do…is to show, to reveal, or…to witness the occurrence of deconstruction' (394). Witnessing deconstruction has been an act that has been effective in disrupting and displacing conventional concepts and categories (e.g. data, voice, reflexivity) that have the potential for upholding problematic relations of power when left unchecked within both educational and qualitative research (see Biesta 2004, 2009; Jackson et al. 2009, 2012; Pillow 2003; St. Pierre 1997, 2011). Through a critical and complicit use of these concepts (Lather 2007), they are not unravelled and undone, but rather opened up around their binaries in ways in which new meanings can take hold (e.g. Mazzei (2007) strains the voice/silence binaries inherent within 'voice' in order to make new meanings of what is [not] said). For us, engaging in the witnessing of deconstruction is an act of troubling while simultaneously using the identity of the perfect stranger.

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While there is no singular way to witness deconstruction, we began from Spivak's (1976) articulation of deconstruction in the preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*:

> Deconstruction in a nutshell…[is] to locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier; to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed. (Spivak 1976, lxxvii)

Since, for Derrida, 'the signifier and signified are interchangeable' (Spivak 1976, lxv), we began (re-)examining white teachers (signified) who were exhibiting the perfect stranger position (signifier) in order to look at what they could tell us about this often exhibited teacher identity (i.e. 'to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier' [Spivak 1976, lxxvii]). When focusing on the white teachers articulated and embodied instances of this identity, there were many examples in which there was a strong correlation between self/other and familiar/strange binaries. This relationship is characterized by a direct correspondence between familiarity and the self (i.e. white teachers knowing themselves as cultural beings) as well as strangeness and the other (i.e. white teachers knowing little or nothing about the Indigenous other and their cultures) as illustrated in the previous section (2.2 Re/searching [for] the perfect stranger). However, we noticed a few examples of the perfect stranger that were ambiguous and threatened to collapse the very position itself. These snags were our entry point for 'locating the promising marginal text.' In order to 'reverse the resident hierarchy' (Spivak 1976, lxxvii), we used this relationship (i.e. familiar + self/strange + other) as a 'positive lever' through a reversal of the relationship between both binaries[8] (i.e. strange + self/familiar + other). With this lever in hand, we would be 'on the lookout for deconstruction' (Jackson et al. 2012, 22), for tell-tale moments which uphold and unravel the perfect stranger by fixing our gaze upon instances where white teachers' discourse demonstrated the strangeness of the familiar (i.e. white teachers not knowing about themselves as cultural beings) as well as the familiarity of the strange (i.e. what white teachers 'know' about Indigenous peoples and cultures).

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3. Findings: on the lookout for the deconstruction of the perfect stranger position

3.1. The strangeness of the familiar: white teachers as cultural strangers to themselves

Several instances in which white teachers' comments suggested that they did not know themselves as cultural beings provided the empirical data to witness the strangeness of the familiar in order to reveal new findings about how Eurocentrism and whiteness overlap, producing white teachers who are

cultural strangers to themselves. When reflecting on a PD session in which the school board's Indigenous PD facilitators modelled how to integrate Indigenous perspectives into the Grade 5 language curriculum, one white teacher participant stated: 'I felt hypocritical…who am I to do a good job [of incorporating Indigenous perspectives] if I don't know myself [culturally]?' (Diana, elementary teacher). This comment illustrates that this teacher has minimal knowledge of her personal ethnicity and ancestry and, we argue, she feels that if she did possess such 'cultural' knowledge she would be better positioned to engage with and teach about cultures that differed from her own, including Indigenous cultures.

A few additional teachers made distinct yet connected statements that also suggested they were unaware of or not heavily influenced by their ethnicity and ancestry, however, their race (i.e. white) shaped their lenses onto the world: 'I teach from a white perspective, that's all I know' (Brandon, elementary teacher). Drawing on Frankenberg's (1993) three-part definition, Brandon's statement reveals that whiteness is the 'standpoint' from which he considers himself, others, and society overall. Similarly, when discussing the challenge presented by whiteness to utilizing traditional teachings in her high school classes, Jordan stated, 'We're not trained in it [the seven grandfather teachings], we are expected to use it, but we're not trained in it. I mean, how many people, really, from a historical white background understand the seven grandfather teachings?' (Jordan, secondary teacher). In these participant quotations, Brandon and Jordan point to whiteness (e.g. 'white perspective' and 'historical white background') as the culture they identify with and differentiate between white culture and Indigenous cultures overtly and also more subtly in making no mention of their own ethnicity and their understandings of how historically they have come to live on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. Further, and of importance to our project of being on the lookout for the deconstruction of the perfect stranger, both teachers assert that it is their race that shaped their (lack of) engagement in Indigenous education. Beyond resistance to knowing about and seeing themselves connected to Indigeneity, comments such as 'that's [white perspective] all I know' and 'how many people, really, from a historical white background understand the seven grandfather teachings?' suggest an inability to learn about Indigenous perspectives and traditional teachings respectively. Here we returned to Diana's comments that imply if she knew herself culturally, she would be better positioned to teach about cultures in general and asked: How does whiteness operate to override one's own distinct ethnicity, ancestry, and historical connection to Indigenous peoples through colonization, while simultaneously making it seem to white teachers that they have no culture and, by implication, understanding of what it means to exist as a cultural being?

In order to explore how these white teachers became the 'non-defined definers of other people' (Frankenberg 1993, 197), we focused on

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Eurocentrism to make links between the conceptualization of culture and the legacy of European colonial expansion. Eurocentrism, the ideology that 'Western European cultures are superior and a standard against which other cultures should be judged' (Lewis and Aikenhead 2000, 53), is upheld by claims of universality and thus objectivity and is intimately linked to aspirations of domination (Battiste 2005). The 'colonizer's model of the world' (Blaut 1993, 10): their epistemology, knowledge systems, history, and language, is constructed as the universal norm and projected onto other cultures that possess different worldviews and localized knowledges. Differences of the dominated are then constructed as inferior, and often negative, only appearing relevant if they have a (often manufactured) positive relationship to Western culture (e.g. The First Thanksgiving) (Battiste 1998, 2005; Blaut 1993).

In Canada, 'epistemic violence' (Frankenberg 1993), the assertion of Eurocentric modes of knowing that rationalized colonization from the standpoint of the West, was largely carried out in government-funded mission day schools and residential schools. When most residential schools were phased out in the 1960s, many Indigenous students began attending public schools under a policy of integration (Kirkness 1999). Many scholars argue public schools remain founded on Eurocentrism and operate as cites of 'cognitive imperialism' (Battiste 2005). Such a system centres European epistemologies, knowledge systems, languages, and histories; operates within an educational framework that fragments knowledge into disciplines and intervals; and positions teachers as 'specialists' responsible for distilling, deciphering, and delivering objective knowledge to students (Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg in press; Battiste 1998, 2005; Hookimaw-Witt 1998; Kirkness 1999; Marker 2004). The effects of a Canadian educational system that devalues, delegitimizes, and ignores the holistic paradigm of Indigenous knowledges as well as Indigenous pedagogies and knowledge holders have been reported as: (1) a considerable educational achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at both secondary and post-secondary levels (Statistics Canada 2007); and (2) empirically as accounts of negative schooling experiences by Indigenous students (Korteweg 2010; Hare and Pidgeon 2011; Kanu 2011; Marker 2006) and their families (Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg in press; Friedel 1999).

While Eurocentrism and claim of its universality are obviously detrimental to Indigenous students, we argue it is also the key to understanding the strangeness of the familiar: why white teachers are cultural strangers to themselves. In exerting dominance through objectivity over other worldviews, all of the Western sub-theories that assemble Eurocentrism (e.g. historical, geographical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical) become centred in schools. This produces the illusion that a Eurocentric epistemology is 'neutral' and based on 'Truth,' resulting in Eurocentrism often remaining invisible to white teachers. Such a system causes white Euro-Canadian teachers too to

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become centralized as the curriculum privileges their identities, languages, and epistemologies, as well as settler versions of history. Through false notions of universality and meritocracy, whiteness becomes the norm, the standard, the good, and in the process overrides one's own distinct culture as a recognizable, articulated quality. Much educational research reports that when teacher candidates and in-service teachers are presented with difficult knowledge that threatens the invisibility of Eurocentrism, demands an interrogation of white privilege, and/or asks teachers to position themselves historically in relation to Indigenous peoples and lands, the overwhelming response of white teachers is resistance (Dion 2007, 2009; Kanu 2005; Schick and Denis 2005; Tompkins 2002)

Our (re-)examination of data collected from teacher focus groups supports Frankenberg's (1993) assertion that 'the self, where it is part of a dominant cultural group, does not have to name itself…it [is] easier to know others and to know, with certainty, what one [is] not' (196). As illustrated above using quotations from teacher participants, we recorded several instances where white teachers stated that they knew little to nothing about their own cultural background or shared a superficial understanding of their ancestry and heritage. Several of the same teachers, as well as additional teacher participants, made comments that revealed that whiteness profoundly influenced their teaching practices and their relationships to knowledge and (perceived) knowledge acquisition. We have argued that Eurocentrism in schools acts as an often invisible force that centres white teachers and is upheld through false notions of universality, meritocracy, and resistance as a means of leaving white privilege unexamined and unchallenged. Positioned within 'the dominant cultural group,' whiteness overrides white teachers' distinct ethnicities and ancestries while concurrently obscuring whiteness as the 'culture of the dominant peoples of the world' (Patterson 1998, 104). We argue that from this position, some white teacher participants saw themselves as 'cultureless' and, as a result, did not have a clear understanding of culture. As cultural strangers to themselves, these teachers' (perceived) abilities to engage in Indigenous education were diminished because they felt as though they lacked awareness of what it means to exist as cultural beings. As articulated by Frankenberg in the quotation that opened this paragraph, paradoxically, some white teachers made comments that illustrated that they thought they 'knew others' and described Indigenous students and their families as cultural beings who were involved in the sharing of stories, songs, ceremonies, traditions, and rituals. Similar to Frankenberg's theorizing on white women and their partners of colour, notions of the 'white cultureless teacher' and the Indigenous student as a 'cultural being' are co-constructed and exist in complex relationships whose 'realness' depend on one another: 'discourses of whiteness are very much like those of Westerness in that both "white" and "Western" subjects are distinguished in part by being "not Other"' (Frankenberg 1993, 193). In the following section, we build on our

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discussion of white teachers as cultural strangers to themselves by exploring a second snag: the familiarity of the strange: the 'Indian' white teachers have in mind.

3.2. The familiarity of the strange: the 'Indian' white teachers have in mind

Our research findings from the original study (Korteweg 2010) and herein agree with the well-documented statement that white teachers have a paucity of knowledge of Indigeneity (Agbo 2004; Dion 2007; Heyer 2009; Kanu 2005; Tupper 2005). However, divergent from the way in which the perfect stranger position has been theorized (i.e. a lack of knowledge of Indigeneity [Dion 2007]), there were multiple examples of white teachers' discourse that indicates that white teachers felt that they held 'knowledge' of Indigeneity, thus comprising and compromising this position. Within this section, we pay attention to the snags representing the familiarity of the strange in order to understand how white teachers' 'knowledge' of Indigeneity is shaped in order to reveal the 'Indian' white teachers have in mind.

During an elementary teacher focus group, teachers were asked about how they were integrating Indigenous perspectives into school curriculum. With regards to his elementary science class, one teacher made the following comment:

> We were looking at energy conservation in science…[and working on] posters and slogans for energy conservation. I said, 'From an Aboriginal perspective, what sort of slogan might you do on a poster for energy conservation?' and we came up with some ideas, like 'Use what you need.' (James, elementary teacher)

In outlining a science project 'from an Aboriginal perspective', this white teacher is articulating and embodying a position in which he is a complete stranger to Indigenous peoples. Rather, his discourse indicates that he believes that he holds enough knowledge of Indigeneity to facilitate a project that captures 'an Aboriginal perspective' within a 'slogan for energy conservation.' Moreover, James' use of the singular indefinite article 'an' (i.e. when referring to 'an Aboriginal perspective') implies that a singular Indigenous perspective can be articulated. Further, James' example implies a singular perspective is sufficient to explore the intersection of Indigeneity and 'energy conservation' and that he is familiar with such a perspective. The students' suggestion to the teacher's question of slogans from an 'Aboriginal perspective' (i.e. 'Use what you need') is evocative of a stereotypical image of Indigenous peoples: Indigenous peoples as 'stewards of the land.' This teacher reinforces this notion in 'accepting' 'steward of the land' as the 'correct' singular perspective and positioning Indigenous peoples as

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role models for practices around 'energy conservation' by stating that they only 'use what [they] need.'

Francis (1992) refers to such stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples as the 'imaginary Indian' (see also Diamond 2009[9]; King 2003). According to Francis (1992), the imaginary Indian was a European invention that originated from Christopher Columbus' mislabelling of the peoples (Arawak) he met when he believed himself to have landed in the East Indies. However, what began as a mistake quickly became a fantasy. 'Through the prism of [w]hite hopes, fears, and prejudices, [i]ndigenous Americans…have become 'Indians'; that is, anything non-natives wanted them to be' (Francis 1992, 5). With white 'hopes, fears, and prejudices' projected onto them, Indigenous peoples were attributed deeply conflicting and contrasting notions such as 'noble' and 'savage,' 'stoic' and 'dull-witted and void of emotion.' Indigenous peoples were simultaneously romanticized and pathologized when these representations were propagated through the public imaginary. Through art, literature, film, newspapers, and schooling, the fiction of the imaginary Indian became readily accepted as fact. While it has been argued that contemporary stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples are articulated in subtle ways (e.g. 'protestor' rather than 'savage warrior'; see Clark 2007), as Francis (1992) asserts, 'our views of what constitutes an Indian today are as much bound up with myth, prejudice and ideology as earlier versions were' (6). Some teachers shared how their early understandings of Indigeneity were built around constructions of the imaginary Indian. For example, in reflecting on childhood memories, some teachers recalled attributing characteristics such as 'adventurous' and 'free' to Indigenous peoples as a result of Hollywood-based representations (e.g. Tonto and Pocahontas) and mimesis (e.g. 'playing Indian'):

> The favourite game when we were kids was to pretend that we were Indians. It seemed kind of romantic and dangerous and fun. Playing at being Indians meant that we could be free; that we could break free from any of the constraints of adult supervision. (Stephanie, elementary teacher)

> I grew up thinking I didn't know or hadn't seen any real Indian people in Toronto…but I just didn't recognize them as such because they weren't wearing feathers and banging tom toms. (Lindsay, elementary teacher)

Although teachers were able to recognize the strangeness of the imaginary Indians of their childhood and often commented on their humorous absurdity, we documented several reconstitutions of these images which continue to surface as teachers are encouraged to engage in Indigenous education.

One example of a reconstituted stereotypical representation of Indigenous peoples that arose during focus groups is that of all Indigenous people as 'gifted artists.' One visual arts teacher was noticeably frustrated (e.g. furrowed

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brow, aggravated tone, eye rolling) during a focus group because guidance counsellors continually (mis)placed Indigenous students in her art courses. Her comments indicated that administrative staff insisted that Indigenous students be referred to art courses justifying the decision upon their Indigeneity (i.e. anticipating Indigenous students' success based on their perceived artistic abilities) rather than an expressed interest in learning art:

> I'm a visual arts teacher and there are stereotypes [amongst school staff] that Aboriginal students are naturally gifted in the arts and all these sort of preconceived ideas. Frankly.… I have a regular visual arts class with a small percentage of native students who are failing. (Rachelle, secondary teacher)

When notions of the imaginary Indian structure schooling systems (i.e. lesson/unit development, guidance counselling, student streaming) these stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples are perpetuated in a manner that deeply tokenizes and decontextualizes Indigenous perspectives. Consider the 'steward of the land' evoked earlier. While it may be that many Indigenous peoples 'used what they needed' and continue to do so, it is important to understand the context in which such a teaching and practice operates. Without an understanding of how Indigenous peoples, in heart, body, mind, and spirit, form relationships with the natural and supernatural world that are honoured through ceremony (Apffel-Marglin 2011), what remains is an imaginary that acts as a blank slate onto which white, Eurocentric values are projected. The steward of the land and other romantic stereotypes like it present 'an Indian to respect and admire' while other stereotypes pathologize by presenting 'an Indian to fear and to pity' (Francis 1992, 168). As the imaginary Indian is largely an assemblage of fictional, as well as deeply contrasting and contradicting images, encountering a 'real' or 'authentic' Indigenous person framed under these terms becomes a task of impossibility. Furthermore, 'non-native Canadians can hardly hope to work out a successful relationship with native people who exist largely in fantasy' (Francis 1992, 224).

For most of the white teachers attending the focus groups, Indigenous peoples should not have only existed largely in fantasy as they comprised over 25% of the student population in teachers' classrooms. However, when teachers hold their Indigenous students' image up against that of the imaginary Indian, the students are viewed as 'not the Indian[s] they had in mind' (King 2003, 31). We explore and elaborate upon this idea within the two quotes below.

Similar to James' comment explored earlier within this section, the following quotation illustrates a white teacher's attempt to incorporate Indigenous culture and perspectives in her classroom. Below, Wendy discusses using *White Mist* (Smucker 1987) as an indicator of her attempts to integrate Indigenous perspectives into her curriculum:

> We have a high population of Aboriginal kids, so I did the novel *White Mist* with them because I thought they would connect to it. I was flabbergasted at how little they knew about their culture.… I have been exposed to all sorts of teachings for a long time.… I thought they should know a little bit about their culture and heritage. (Wendy, elementary teacher)

Within this quote, the snag that comprises and compromises the articulation of the perfect stranger is the mention of having 'been exposed to all sorts of [Indigenous] teachings.' Interestingly, when this teacher states that her Indigenous students 'should know a little bit about their culture and heritage,' she is not only articulating that she is 'familiar' with the 'strange' but also that she holds more knowledge of 'authentic' Indigeneity than her students by virtue of having learned about it 'for a long time.' However, in positing 'how little [her students] knew about their culture,' we argue she is revealing: (1) that she falsely perceives all of her Indigenous students as being of the same culture ignoring the complicated and complex demographics of urban Indigenous peoples; and (2) that the 'Aboriginal teachings' she has been 'exposed' to should comprise the 'culture' she perceives her students as possessing. Wendy, like James above, is strangely familiar with 'an Aboriginal perspective,' a perspective that is singular yet indefinite (i.e. 'pan-Indian'). Consider her selection of the fiction novel *White Mist* (Smucker 1987), which is a young adult book that details the adventures of two Indigenous teenagers transported from a contemporary time back to the 1830s to their Native American tribe located along the shores of Lake Michigan via a mysterious white mist. In choosing *White Mist* as a means of connecting Indigenous students to 'their culture and heritage,' this teacher assumed that urban Indigenous students (predominantly Anishinaabe) in a Canadian school board would identify with the culture possessed by a Native American (Potawatomi) tribe, located on the shores of Lake Michigan (1500 kilometres away from the research site), more than two centuries ago. We cannot ascertain with certainty whether the 'teachings' Wendy has been 'exposed to…for a long time' are subsumed within the imaginary Indian or whether these stereotypical images largely figure within the 'teachings' Wendy has learned. However, as a result of either, or through a combination of both, we argue that her understanding of Indigeneity becomes spatially conflated and pan-Indigenous.

In *Reel Injun*, Diamond (2009) makes the argument that for many non-Indigenous peoples, the representation of Indigenous peoples that has been engraved is that of plains Indians (e.g. Cree, Blackfoot) due to the singular, essentializing, and monolithic representations of Indigeneity within Hollywood movies. In addition to misrepresenting peoples of the plains, Hollywood movies and other media that have subscribed to this popular fiction have instilled the image of a pan-(imaginary)-Indian (Diamond 2009; Francis 1992), an image that is distilled and distorted, yet transferable.

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Wendy's quote above illustrates how the imaginary Indian continues to play out and overwrite knowledge of Indigeneity even as white teachers begin to learn about Indigenous peoples from Indigenous peoples. Without a recognition of the diversity across and within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as well as American Indians and other global Indigenous peoples, understandings of Indigeneity are often collapsed spatially in a way that fails to recognize how Indigenous epistemologies (i.e. coming-to-knowing[10]) and ontologies (i.e. coming-to-being) stem from long-standing relationships with the land they are from. Furthermore, Wendy's statement of 'how little [her students] knew about their culture' when talking about an Indigenous culture from the 1830s hints at a misunderstanding of Indigenous culture as temporally fixed. We explore further how constructions of the imaginary Indian are interconnected to an understanding of Indigenous traditions as stagnant and often moribund in the following paragraph. The white teacher quotation that follows comments negatively about Indigenous students' lack of appreciation for an annual Indigenous cultural day organized by the predominantly white Euro-Canadian staff of the urban Canadian school board where the research took place:

> I found, in watching, that the Aboriginal kids were the least engaged by these things. They [Indigenous cultural instructors] were showing fish preparation and skinning and drumming and story-telling. I was very surprised that some of those kids that are Aboriginal could care less whether they saw it or not. That's not their cultural upbringing anymore. (Katie, elementary teacher)

Similarly to Wendy, Katie's comments not only represent a snag within the perfect stranger position through the assertion of Katie's knowledge of Indigeneity, but also suggest that Katie is engaged in the process of determining what counts as 'authentic' Indigenous culture. Katie distinguishes between the 'Indigenous culture' presented to the students (i.e. 'fish preparation and skinning and drumming and story-telling') and the lack of culture she perceives her Indigenous students having (i.e. 'that's not their [Indigenous students] cultural upbringing anymore.' Katie implies that the longstanding Indigenous practices displayed at the cultural day (e.g. drumming) are 'authentic' forms of Indigeneity. Conversely, when she explains that the 'Aboriginal kids were the least engaged' and that they 'could care less whether they saw it or not,' she suggests these traditional practices of culture, which she perceives as 'authentic,' are no longer part of Indigenous students' 'cultural upbringing anymore.' We argue that this distinction between 'authentic' culture possessed by 'real' Indigenous peoples and the 'lack of' culture demonstrated by Indigenous students indicates Katie's inability to see Indigenous cultures as plural, dynamic, and evolving as well as differing between individuals, communities, and nations. In the absence of an understanding of Indigenous knowledges in flux and accounting for

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the social, political, and historical complexities that may shape Indigenous student engagement in a one-time token special event on Indigenous cultures, Katie claims that since Indigenous students are not displaying or engaging in the 'authentic' forms of culture at the event, they are less 'authentically' Indigenous than those who practice longstanding traditions.

While we want to acknowledge that these Indigenous students' perceived lack of engagement might have much to do with the systemic and day-to-day racism that they face within schools (Korteweg 2010; Hare and Pidgeon 2011; Kanu 2011; Marker 2006), we also want to bring attention to how Katie's understanding of culture may be shaped by the familiarity of the strange: the Indian white teachers have in mind. Her negative surprise around her perception of students' lack of engagement is coupled with a grievous tone for a 'vanishing' traditional culture in her statement: 'That's not their cultural upbringing anymore.' Francis (1992) explains that through upholding images of Indigenous peoples on the brink of extinction, white teachers such as the one above are '[taking] for granted that Indians [are] vanishing and [seeking] to preserve an idealized image of them, and not the reality of native people' (38). When white teachers hold 'knowledge' of the 'vanishing Indian,' it has the effect of downplaying the devastating impacts of ongoing colonisation on Indigenous peoples and assuaging feelings of guilt through preservation of that which is perceived as destroyed (see also Regan 2010). Through upholding and acting upon this image, 'by a curious leap of logic, non-natives [become] the saviours of the vanishing Indian' (36). As a result, the image of the 'vanishing Indian' that has historically been constructed in the Canadian psyche is intimately linked to an ongoing rationalization of colonization from the standpoint of the West.

Within all of the examples above, the imaginary Indian has deeply problematic implications for relationships between white teachers and Indigenous students and families in schools. White teachers' 'familiarity' with Indigeneity is shaped by stereotypical images that historically have been, and continue to be, moulded by dominant discourses and perpetuated by media rather than through experiences with actual Indigenous peoples, namely their students, through direct relationships and dialogue. As Indigenous cultures are often consumed outside of the classroom context and rarely reflected upon by white teachers (Rivière 2008), Indigenous 'cultures' continue to be perceived as essentialized, monolithic representations that are constructed largely in the absence of tangible Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships. Through such a reductionist approach, this pan-imaginary-Indian is one that is both temporally and spatially collapsed. From white teachers' perspectives, their familiarity with the imaginary Indian often makes their Indigenous students strange because they are 'not the Indian [they] had in mind' (King 2003, 31).

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4. Discussion: witnessing (halted) deconstruction

As deconstruction is always and already happening, the perfect stranger should be deconstructing around snags that comprise and compromise its articulation. While on the lookout for deconstruction, we noted that the familiar/strange and self/others binaries that shape this position are far from hermetically sealed. Rather, the relationship between these binaries is porous and unstable, as demonstrated through exposing the familiarity of the strange (i.e. white teachers not knowing themselves as cultural beings) and the strangeness of the familiar (i.e. the imaginary Indian that white teachers have in mind). Around these binaries, the deconstruction of the perfect stranger would entail that white teachers become familiar with themselves as cultural beings and that they see the strangeness of the familiar perceptions of the Indian they have in mind. White teachers working with Indigenous youth are presented with multiple opportunities on a daily basis to encounter and learn about their own historical and cultural relationships with Indigenous peoples, and, more importantly, to perceive Indigenous students as cultural beings whose lives and identities are not that of the essentialized, decontextualized, and monolithic imaginary Indian. Despite these opportunities in which multiple contradictions in the construction of the perfect stranger should surface, where we should witness deconstruction, we witness a lack thereof.[11] While it has been argued elsewhere that the term '"white teacher" has become virtually synonymous with resistance' (Strong-Wilson 2007, 115), we argue that the knowledge that shapes the perfect stranger position is also written across the locations in which this position is comprised and compromised, and that this knowledge acts as resistance (see Britzman 1995). When paying attention to the snags in the colonial cloak draped around the perfect stranger, we noted many other binary threads woven into the fabric that uphold this position and resist its unravelling at the seams.

Following the binary threads that are intertwined around the snags in the articulation of the perfect stranger, we noted that many (e.g. static/dynamic, real/fake, universal/relativistic) were entangled around constructions of culture. As these threads reinforce the fabric of the colonial cloak that is the perfect stranger position, we explore one of these threads below to demonstrate how it is that knowledge acts as resistance in tandem with the self/other and familiar/strange binaries. Of particular interest is the modern/traditional binary woven into both sets of snags in the articulation of the perfect stranger explored within this article (i.e. strangeness of the familiar and familiarity of the strange). As Frankenberg (1993) explains, there is 'a sharp distinction between modernity and tradition in which "traditional" societies were deemed repositories of culture, and modern societies not so' (193). Within such a construction of the modern/traditional binary, the path to modernity is often paved with remnants of culture that have been shed

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along the way. Furthermore, modernity is often constructed as singular rather than plural (i.e. modernities; see Harding 2008). Harding (2008) explains that in the shift towards and across interrelated and intertwined disciplinary conceptions of modernity, the perception was that modernity was something 'distinctively different from the past…something new and valuable' whose valuation 'became more plausible through a contrast with backward, intellectually, and socially regressive tradition and the pre-modern' (177). As a result, the way in which tradition is constructed as modernity's 'other' affects both the strangeness of the familiar and the familiarity of the strange. With regards to the first, the singularity of modernity allows Eurocentrism to be centred in a way that gives it the appearance of a monolithic universal (Battiste 2005; Blaut 1993). Furthermore, as a modern form of 'culture,' it is often read as a civilization rather than a culture as its traditions have been cast off in order to reach the status of modernity. For white teachers whose understandings of culture are framed with/in a modern/traditional binary, the resulting situation is often one in which they are unable to: (1) see themselves as cultural beings who have their own ancestral traditions; and (2) distinguish between the various 'white cultures' which are homogenized and collapsed into a universal and singular understanding of modernity. With respect to the latter, a construction of modernity that is built upon the shedding of tradition disallows what is understood as 'culture' to become modern or contemporary without, by implication, its very dissolution. Through this lens, 'Indigenous culture' remains something of the past, something 'pre-modern' whose modernization through dialogical evolution with the world around it can only be read as a loss of culture. Furthermore, the singular expression of modernity does not allow an understanding of the plurality of modernities that have emerged through the suturing across the modern/traditional binary and across a variety of cultural contexts (Harding 2008). Nakata (2007a, 2007b) refers to this space as the 'cultural interface,' the space in which the tensions, systemic as well as daily and embodied, between Indigenous and Western worldviews manifest, as well as the space in which these tensions are navigated and negotiated in ways in which new forms of what constitutes Indigenous culture can emerge. We argue that the modern/traditional binary and other similar binaries that are written across the snags in the articulation of the perfect stranger position shape knowledge that acts as resistance to the unravelling of this position. Such knowledge as resistance diverts white teachers from exploring colonial legacies, written across shared histories with non-imaginary Indigenous peoples (e.g. genocide, cultural and linguistic violence, stolen land), that have impacted the 'Indian they have in mind,' as well as the role(s) they play in these (neo)colonial legacies (see Bishop 2002; Dion 2007, 2009; Heyer 2009). Furthermore, it deflects attention away from knowledge that positions them as a cause and beneficiary of systemic racism which would in turn unravel another of white teachers' oft

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constructed and upheld identity: that of the teacher as helper or positive influence (Britzman 2000; Rivière 2008; Schick 2000). Lastly, as mentioned throughout this article, it is knowledge that prevents white teachers from knowing themselves as cultural beings and knowing Indigenous students in their classroom as something other than a spatially and temporally fixed imaginary pan-Indian.

5. Conclusion

'Deconstruction is more than working within/against a structure. It is also the overturning and displacement of a structure so that something(s) different can be thought/done' (St. Pierre 2011, 613). In working towards witnessing deconstruction, we sought to open up the perfect stranger around two binaries in order to both better understand this position as well as create space for teachers to occupy a new stance (even if this new stance is but a small move from the original). We conclude this article with reflections on how what we have (not) witnessed can inform teacher education through teaching practices and policies that intentionally disrupt and destabilize the perfect stranger position.

'Given that the education system – as a social institution – preserves whiteness and, thereby, perpetuates social inequalities such as racism, it makes sense to investigate how white teachers are implicated in this process' (Rivière 2008, 357) or, in other words, how whiteness breeds more whiteness (Carr and Lund 2009; Sleeter 2005). Drawing on focus group observations that supported Dion's (2007, 2009) assertion that the overwhelming majority of white teachers articulated and embodied the perfect stranger, we readied ourselves to be on the lookout for instances in which this position was deconstructing. Working around the interrelated strange/familiar and self/other binaries, we explored and then connected two snags within the perfect stranger position: instances of white teachers as cultural strangers to themselves (i.e. the strangeness of the familiar) and examples in which white teachers suggested they 'knew' Indigenous peoples (i.e. the familiarity of the strange).

In following the snag of the strangeness of the familiar, we explored the position of white teachers as cultural strangers to themselves by examining instances where white teachers stated they knew little to nothing about their own ancestry and heritage and/or suggested that whiteness shaped their epistemologies and ability to learn. We argue that Eurocentrism, coupled with false notions of universality, meritocracy, and resistance, simultaneously centred and obscured whiteness as the dominant culture possessed by white teachers resulting in teachers who saw themselves as 'cultureless,' did not have a clear understanding of culture, and/or considered themselves ill-equipped to teach students about cultural matters. These findings point to a need to conceptualize teacher education that: (1) assists teachers in making connections between colonization, Eurocentrism, and whiteness; (2) supports

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teachers in the exploration of the ways colonization, Eurocentrism, and whiteness shape the current education system (including their teaching practices) in ways that marginalize Indigenous knowledges and peoples; (3) gives rise to the visibility of whiteness as a culture; and (4) encourages teachers to uncover information about their own ethnicity and ancestry in a historical manner that connects them as settlers to the Indigenous land on which they live as well as the peoples and knowledges of the land.

In following the snag of the familiarity of the strange, we explored examples where white teachers suggested that they 'knew' Indigenous peoples as 'stewards of the land,' 'free spirits,' 'gifted artists,' 'pan-Indian,' and 'doomed to extinction' respectfully. The Indigenous peoples these white teachers 'know' are stereotypical images moulded by dominant discourses and perpetuated within the public imaginary, rather than their actual students and their families who have distinct and varying cultures depending on, but not limited to, the individual, community, and nation. When the imaginary and the actual images (i.e. Indigenous peoples who interact with teachers) are simultaneously read by white teachers, the imaginary overwrites and overrides the actual, resulting in Indigenous students and their families being read as stereotypically-informed spatially and temporally collapsed pan-Indians. We argue that in order to challenge the familiarity of the strange, teacher education should include opportunities to: (1) identify and dislodge stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples written across touchstones (Dion 2007, 2009; Strong-Wilson 2007); (2) develop and strengthen relationships with members of the Indigenous community; (3) gain exposure to contemporary and hybrid cultural practices (e.g. Beat Nation [2012], *Red: A Haida Manga* [Yahgulanas 2009], satellite-assisted salmon tracking, contemporary Indigenous architecture); and (4) increase familiarity with the diversity across and within First Nations, Métis, Inuit peoples, as well as American Indians and other global Indigenous peoples.

As local, provincial, and national policies (e.g. ACDE 2010) are advocating for and making mandatory the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within schools and teacher education programs, there has never been a better opportunity for the development and delivery of programs which assist white teachers and teacher educators to 'come to recognize themselves as something other than "perfect stranger"' (Dion 2007, 340) by building upon previous work in this area (see Belczewski 2009; Dion 2009; Higgins 2010; Nicol and Korteweg 2010; Oberg, Blades, and Thom 2007; Strong-Wilson 2007; Tompkins 2002). Through the continuation of such work that also addresses the aforementioned recommendations, we argue that the threads that are woven into and sustain the colonial cloak (i.e. familiar/strange, self/other, as well as modern/traditional binaries) will loosen and allow for new threads to be sewn in. It is our hope that these new knowledges will support and sustain white teachers' processes of coming-to-know themselves as cultural beings who have a longstanding shared history with Indigenous

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peoples and unravel their deeply held stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples, so that they are better positioned to attend to the relationship building and honouring of Indigenous knowledges and peoples which is at the heart of Indigenous education.

Notes

1. As this article draws on global Indigenous perspectives and is intended for an international audience, we use the term Indigenous when referring to our research. In Canada, the Indigenous peoples are often referred to as Aboriginal and include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. When referring to scholarly work of others as well as teacher quotations, we retain the authors' language choices. As such, the terms Indigenous, Aboriginal, and Native American are used interchangeably.
2. The term Indigenous education refers jointly to the process of educating Indigenous students in schools and integrating Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in schools for the benefit of all students.
3. While there are many synonymous expressions and terms that Derrida and others utilize to describe the 'absent presence' that comprises and compromises the articulation of each and every 'text' (e.g. 'trace, diff[é]rance, reserve, supplement, dissemination, hymen, greffe, pharmakon' [Spivak 1976, lxx]), we refer to these contradictory tell-tale moments as snags throughout this article.
4. Our claims and recommendations are limited to white teachers as our teacher participants were overwhelmingly white (N = 67 out of 71, 94%). Three teachers identified as Aboriginal and one as a teacher of colour.
5. While we cannot confirm or deny claims of racial (e.g. white) and ethnic (e.g. Polish, Italian) self-identification, we feel confident in making and working from the claim that 'over 90% of teacher participants (N = 67, 94%) were white and of European heritage' on the basis that: (1) these 67 teachers self-identify as such; and (2) they deploy associated 'strategies' of whiteness and Eurocentrism.
6. The Indigenous population in the city where this research took place was approximately 8% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2007). It can be assumed that a significant proportion of the Indigenous population are students, as Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing population in Canada with 48% of people under the age of 25-years-old (Statistics Canada 2007).
7. White teacher decolonization is distinct from the global Indigenous project of decolonization (e.g. Smith 1999) focused on Indigenous healing, reclamation, sovereignty, and resistance to ongoing colonization. It generally involves three key processes: (1) confrontation of colonial legacies and investigation of resultant privilege; (2) examination of belief in Eurocentric ontological, epistemological, cultural, philosophical, and economic superiority; and (3) acknowledgement and reverence of the complex web of relationships that connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples with each other and with the natural and supernatural worlds (Biermann 2011; Strong-Wilson 2007; Regan 2010).
8. Usually, the witnessing of deconstruction occurs around a singular binary and the moments around which it is reversed. However, since 'the deconstruction of even one concept/category disrupts other related structuring concepts/categories' (St. Pierre 2011, 613), we opted to conjoin two deeply interrelated binaries and fix our gaze upon the snags in the reversal of their relationship.
9. *Reel Injun*, a film directed by Neil Diamond in 2009, within the references.

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10. Coming-to-knowing and coming-to being are ongoing and interconnected forms of epistemologies and ontologies that are holistically interwoven into the fabric of everyday life (Aikenhead and Michell 2011; Cajete 1999; Ermine 1998; Peat 2002). As Peat (2002) defines, 'coming-to-knowing means entering into relationship with the spirit of knowledge, with plants and animals, with beings that animate dreams and visions, and with the spirit of the people' (65). Coming-to-knowing reflects that learning is an on-going process without an end point and the knowledge learnt is relational and in flux. As Higgins (2011) has stated elsewhere, 'it is experiential learning with a built-in consciousness' (sec. 4.3 par. 4). Furthermore, as Peat (2002) describes, coming-to-knowing:'has supporting metaphysics about the nature of reality, deals in systems of relationship, is concerned with the energies and processes within the universe, and provides a coherent scheme and basis for action… it is not possible to separate Indigenous [knowledge] from other areas of life such as ethics, spirituality, metaphysics, social order, ceremony, and a variety of other aspects of daily existence' (241). This way in which coming-to-knowing is inseparable and interwoven into the fabric of the whole is reflective of the process of coming-to-being.
11. We are hesitant to refer to this project as deconstructive on the basis that we witness a lack of deconstruction (rather, we have referred to it as 'being on the lookout for deconstruction' or 'thinking with Derrida). The failure in translation from theory to practice in this article however can be a meaningful space in which productive questions emerge about the perfect stranger and deconstruction itself (which are beyond the scope of this article). For example, is there still much to be learned about the perfect stranger position before its deconstruction can be witnessed given that 'without an intimate knowledge of the tradition with which one engages, a prying loose [of meaning] is not possible?' (Jackson et al. 2012, 25). Also, is the absence of a deconstructive event within a deconstructive conceptual framework the signalling that even the discontinuity that is deconstruction is discontinuous (see Barad 2007)? Would this be an indication that deconstruction is itself deconstructing (i.e. deconstruction is what is (not) always and already happening?), that 'Derrida doesn't have the final word on deconstruction?' (Jackson et al. 2012, 26).

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