

**Examining Practice for Colonialism and Racism: A Self-Study of White-centric
Practices in Adult Education for Aboriginal Peoples**

A Thesis

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of the Requirements for the Degree**

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Abstract

The dynamics of colonialism, racism, and White privilege impact adult education, particularly with regard to Aboriginal students in Canada. However, for various reasons, these dynamics are sometimes unrealized by the primarily White adult educators manifesting them; until these dynamics are named it will be difficult to mitigate them in the field of adult education. The purpose of this study is to investigate my own practice in an effort to realize where and why I manifested colonialism, racism, and White privilege while working with Aboriginal students. In undertaking such a study, my intent is to stimulate a process wherein I can start decolonizing my practice. The methodology I use is self-study. I examine my own practice by studying documents that I produced as an adult educator. In these documents I find evidence of the attitudes and behaviours that characterize my practice. Using concepts I found in the literature on adult education, Aboriginal education, and White studies, I analyze and interpret these attitudes and behaviours, revealing that I perpetuated colonialism and racism in my practice, and link both colonialism and racism to my White cultural beliefs. I supplement this with an examination of the role of love and guilt in my practice and a critical reflection on both my attitudes and behaviours and how they are related to the greater social, economic, and political context in which my practice is embedded. The learning I gleaned from this study leads me to recommend a similar process for other White adult educators seeking to mitigate their contributions to colonialism, racism, and White privilege.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I worked as a community adult educator in a northern Canadian Aboriginal community in which I lived from January 2006 until June 2009. As a White adult educator working with only Aboriginal students, it was impossible not to be aware of racial and cultural differences and tensions between the students and me, the community and me, and Aboriginal peoples and White people in general. My consideration of these differences and tensions, however, did not become consistent or formalized until I began studies for a Master's degree in adult education. At this point, because of the literature I chose to study, I became increasingly conscious of the dynamics of power, colonialism, and White privilege present in the Canadian education system. I also recognized that because of my identity as a White adult educator working in the Canadian education system with Aboriginal students, these dynamics were inevitably present in my own adult education practice. As Johnson-Bailey (2010) remarked in a discussion of adult education and issues of race and racism, "In this universe it's not possible for any human who has grown up within these hierarchies to not have racist assumptions" (p. 14). I spent the next 2 years working, reading, and reflecting on my practice. I realized that I wanted to start transforming my practice in order to mitigate my contribution to the oppressive dynamics of power, colonialism, and White privilege in adult education; however, in order to do this I needed to acknowledge the ways in which I was being oppressive. This process ultimately resulted in the question I posed at the beginning of my study: What are some of the attitudes and behaviours involving dynamics of power, Whiteness, and colonialism present in my adult education practice that I may or may not

be aware of, an understanding of which could stimulate a process wherein I could start decolonizing my practice?

Background to the Study

The institution at which I worked as a community adult educator was a college that offers courses in the north of Canada. This college has several main campuses as well as several smaller regional sites. These smaller regional sites are staffed with a community adult educator, who is the senior staff member on site but who is typically responsible to a supervisor located either on the main campus of the corresponding region or in a larger regional site in the same area.

I was employed in the position of community adult educator at one of these regional sites for 3 ½ years. I reported directly to the chair of community programs, a position located at another regional site approximately 4 hours away by car. In turn, my supervisor reported to the chair of the program located at the main campus, approximately 8 hours away from her site and 12 hours away from mine. My personal contact with my direct and indirect supervisors, whom I thought of collectively as *the administration*, was infrequent. I generally saw them once during the annual three day professional development session located at another regional site, and once at the conclusion of the school year when they typically travelled to my location for one or two days to participate in our local graduation ceremonies. I usually saw my direct supervisor one more time during the year for random training, recruiting, or celebratory events.

The community in which I was situated is home to approximately 580 people. As recorded in Euro-Canadian history books, this region has been occupied by several First Nations tribes, including the Slavey Dene people who make up the current majority.

There is a small, transient population of Euro-American people from the Canadian south who typically move to the community for employment opportunities in health, education, law enforcement, or retail. These jobs require training that the local Aboriginal peoples generally do not have. Members of this demographic usually leave the community after 2-5 years. Typically, Aboriginal residents of the community experience high levels of violence, abuse, and alcohol addiction (Paletta, 2008). High school dropout rates, numbers of teen pregnancies, and the numbers of young offenders are all significantly higher than the national averages (Paletta, 2008). The average adult education student at the regional site where I was located has been affected intimately by these social conditions.

Problem

There has been extensive discussion of some aspects of the political nature of adult education and the manner in which it reproduces prevailing power structures of hierarchy and marginalization (Beder, 1991; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Heaney & Horton, 1991; hooks, 1994; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Pratt, 1998). Despite the attempts made in these discussions to identify avenues for reform, significant changes in the field have not been forthcoming, particularly with respect to Aboriginal education. Springing from what Hall (2001) described as “the narrow European-North American bias of our adult education theory base” (p. 119), many adult education processes have been accused of maintaining a White, middle-class, North American partiality (Hall, 2001; hooks, 1994; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam et al., 2006; Tisdell, 2001). Based on the assertion of Cervero and Wilson (1994) that “educational programs for adults emerge from the personal and

organizational interests of the people involved in planning” (p. 171), it might follow that this bias is due to the White, middle-class, North American positionality of those typically in authority in adult education programs. According to some authors, because adult education programming is prepared by and for a specific population, it is compromised in its ability to serve other populations (e.g., Beder, 1991; hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 2001).

Although the dynamics of power have received attention, there is consensus amongst some adult education scholars that, within the field, discourse on race and racism is incomplete (Baumgartner, 2010; Brookfield, 2003; Closson, 2010; Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Colin, Peterson, & Brookfield, 2010). Amongst, and in addition to these authors, are those who initiated this discourse with a focus on Whiteness, White privilege, and the dominant position of White adult educators in the field of adult education in order to stop the reproduction of colonial-based hierarchies in the field (Baumgartner, 2010; Brookfield, 2010; European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2010; Manglitz & Cervero, 2010; Shore, 2001). Many agree that it is incumbent upon White adult educators to start examining their racial identities as a first step towards deconstructing the embedded power inequities that afflict the field of adult education (Baumgartner, 2010; Brookfield, 2010; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Sheared et al., 2010).

Authors within the field of education have pointed to the need for White educators working with Aboriginal populations to become aware of issues of race and racism in the classroom (e.g., Howard, 2006; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Discussing her own experiences as a White educator, Starnes (2006) confessed that, despite what she

considers her best intentions, her own education within White systems renders her dangerously ignorant of Native American culture and Native American students. For similar reasons, Schick and St. Denis (2005) declared that White educators working with Canadian Aboriginal populations must examine their own racial positioning relative to their students; similarly, Howard (2006) stated that, when White educators working with American Indian students fail to acknowledge the effects of White hegemony, they inadvertently legitimize White dominance in the classroom. Given the urgency placed on these issues by the foregoing scholars, I felt a self-study of my own practice was necessary. Aboriginal students are certainly amongst those being marginalized by the White gatekeepers of adult education (Brookfield, 2010), making anti-colonial discourse imperative in the field of adult education. If I could become aware of my racial positionality and acknowledge the ways in which I was perpetuating prevailing power dynamics and, ultimately colonialism in my adult education practice I could contribute to the understanding of how White hegemony operates in the adult education classroom. Doing so might be an initial step towards enabling me and other White adult educators to start transforming our practices and mitigate our contributions to the oppressive dynamics of power, colonialism, and White privilege in adult education.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question posed above: What are some of the attitudes and behaviours involving dynamics of power, colonialism, and White privilege present in my adult education practice that I may or may not be aware of, an understanding of which could stimulate a process wherein I could start decolonizing my practice?

Research Methodology: Self-study

According to Loughran (2007): “How a self-study might be “done” depends on what is sought to be better understood” (p. 15). Given what I had learned in the literature about power, Whiteness, and colonialism, I surmised that I was possibly acting out these themes in my practice. What I sought to understand then, was whether: (a) I was perpetuating Whiteness and colonialism in my practice, and (b) if so, what did this look like and why was it occurring? In order to answer these questions, I turned to the artefacts of my practice: course materials I had developed, reports to the administration I had written, and a journal that I had maintained while teaching. I felt that these documents were the best repository of information about my practice; they were documented manifestations of the attitudes and behaviours that I had held during the execution of my practice. In studying them, I would be able to investigate questions like: what course materials did I choose? How did I choose to structure exercises? How did I choose to respond to questions about my practice? Finally, with respect to the literature, what did my choices imply about my practice? I would also be able to look at specific critical incidents that occurred during my practice, the corresponding descriptions in my journal, and analyze them according to the literature. Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) called this “a look at the self in action, usually within educational contexts” (p. 17). According to Laboskey (2004), this kind of self-study of an educator’s own biases is necessary because it is only through detecting and interrogating these biases that the educator is able to facilitate the student through a similar process and both are positioned to expand their horizons.

Limitations

The limitations of self-study, which have been deliberated by various authors, apply to my study. Wilcox (1998) discussed the potential for distortion in self-study: for example, I am both the researcher and the participant. Loughran (2007) stressed this point, claiming that this can lead to “complications in reporting that may not be so apparent to the individual researcher yet be disconcerting for others” (p. 12). This segues into the question of credibility raised by Ellis and Bochner (2000): if I am both the researcher and the subject can the academic community trust that the methodology and reporting in my study is reliable? Self-studies have also been accused of lacking generalizability and objectivity, characteristics commonly associated with credible research (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Although my goal is to contribute to adult education scholarship, do the extremely specific circumstances of my study limit its applicability to the general field? My concern is mitigated by Laboskey (2004), who stated that, with regard to the knowledge produced by self-study: “Granted it is knowledge of our context, but we also accept that all teacher knowledge is situated and contextual” (p. 843).

In addition to the broad limitations of self-study, my study was also affected by specific limitations. I undertook the study after concluding my tenure as an adult educator; therefore, I was limited in the kind of data available to study. For example, if I had known that I was going to do a self-study prior to concluding my tenure, I could have chosen to videotape myself or otherwise record my actions. I only had the materials I took with me and the option to do a post-practice interview. My study was also limited by the protracted time over which it was executed. My research and synthesis of the

literature took over two years, my study and report took over one year. During that time, new knowledge was published that could have impacted both my study and my findings, had I been able to integrate it. Finally, both Laboskey (2004) and Loughran and Northfield (1998) emphasized the necessarily collaborative nature of self-study – that to give dimension to self-study work, the self-study researcher must interact with colleagues and elicit alternative perspectives and understandings of self-study processes and findings. Although I did this on an informal basis, using a former colleague as a sounding board for my ideas, I did not officially incorporate this aspect into my study.

Positionality and Assumptions

I am a White, middle-class, middle-aged Canadian woman. Although I have experienced the world in ways that have made me realize that my position is just one among many, I remain rooted in my Whiteness, my class, and my national identity. I cannot escape who I am. My intention is to contribute to anti-racist work in adult education with this thesis. I hope to raise awareness of the active, insidious nature of colonialism with the aim that others might recognize aspects of themselves in this self-study and the field might be that much closer to eradicating racism. That said, it is inevitable that this thesis and the self-study it reports on will reproduce Whiteness in subtle ways of which I am not conscious. I cannot escape my Whiteness even when engaged in anti-racist work; therefore, I hope to use my positionality as a site of observation. In this thesis I will excavate it, pull the artefacts out of it, and put them on display. In this way, though I will inevitably perpetuate Whiteness, so I hope to use it as a tool; a site of learning.

Prior to this self-study I would have described my positionality as including my liberal, frequently left-leaning political and social views. This is who I assumed I was. I presumed that through self-study I would discover that my practice epitomized these views and that if I found evidence of colonialism, I would also find evidence that I had taken steps to eradicate it. I assumed that, although the political, social, and economic context that I was working in was characterized by oppressive and colonial features that, because I did not believe in it, I was autonomous from that context and that my choices were independent of it. I assumed that those responsible for reproducing this context were motivated by thoughts and feelings that I would find reprehensible and would never entertain, let alone render into action. Significantly, I assumed that my assumptions were reality and unreflectively carried out my practice according to this belief. As I show in this thesis, these assumptions were flawed; a fact that highlights the difference between assumptions and reality and explains why a self-study of my practice was necessary. Without this self-study I would not have realized the flawed nature of my assumptions. I would not have realized the discrepancy that existed between what I assumed I was doing and what I was actually doing.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this paper, I base the term *colonialism* on Battiste's (2000) description of cognitive imperialism; the enforcement of a worldview on a people who have a different worldview with the justifying assumption that the former worldview is superior to the latter. In terms of what colonialism looks like in the Canadian education system, I rely on Kirkness' (1999) description of it as, "A process of assimilation where

Indians are being absorbed into the non-Indian society” (p. 18). I use the terms *oppression* and *racism* to refer to both colonialism and its impacts throughout this paper.

I oftentimes refer to *Whiteness*, a term Doane (2003) identified as problematic. Citing historical contingency and the phenomenological, sociological, political, and economic forces that result in the constant revision of Whiteness, he cautioned against a rigid definition that would essentialize it, thus dismissing its ongoing variations. With this in mind, in this study I understand Whiteness as “always constructed, always in the process of being made and unmade” (Frankenberg, 1999, p. 16), while identifying attitudes and behaviours which posit the White identity holder exhibiting them in a superior manner socially, politically, and/or economically relative to other racial identities. According to McIntosh (1988), Whiteness is accompanied by a sense of *White privilege*, unacknowledged tools available to White identity holders that they use to leverage themselves into hegemonic, superior positions. In this thesis, I use McIntosh’s definition of White privilege to point out evidence of how I use my “location of structural advantage” (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 8) and manifest Whiteness in my practice.

Presentation Plan

Chapter 2 is a detailed review and synthesis of the literature on adult education, Aboriginal education in Canada, and Whiteness studies. I emphasize the macro context of social, economic, and political power dynamics that characterize the field of adult education, discussing how these dynamics manifest in Aboriginal education and the performance of Whiteness in Eurocentric culture. In Chapter 3, I describe the study and the research methodology and use concepts found in the literature as a framework to ground and present the findings. Descriptions, direct quotes, and reflections from the

self-study are inserted throughout this thesis. In Chapter 4, I analyze and interpret the findings in more detail; locating the self-study within the literature and the macro-context within which it was executed. I conclude by summarizing the salient points of this analysis and use them as a foundation for recommendations for future work.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As with any human activity, adult education is fraught with politics, biases, and certain prejudices. Inspection of the field reveals that these dynamics can be found in most aspects of adult education practices. In terms of Aboriginal adult education, these dynamics are exacerbated by an education system derived largely from European American values with little regard for Aboriginal experience, traditions, or perspectives. Various researchers have explored the ways in which such an education system has historically oppressed, and currently marginalizes, Aboriginal peoples (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hampton, 1995). Concurrent to this research are the enquiries being undertaken in the field of White studies. This field seeks to define and analyze White identity through an examination of White culture, with the purpose of raising awareness of the behaviours often associated with White identity that perpetuate the dominance of White culture at the expense of other cultures. As the research shows, adult education is not immune to these forces but rather exhibits many of the features associated with systemic racism. Examination of the power dynamics possibly present in adult education and their connection with Aboriginal peoples and White culture constitute this literature review.

Tracing Adult Education over the Past 40 Years

Some of modern adult education has its roots in the work of early adult educators such as Malcolm Knowles and Paulo Freire (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Despite the overlap that existed among these individuals' ideas, their seminal works stand alone and continue to serve as points of departure for much of the work being done currently in

adult education. These adult educators' notions have become the basis for some of the modern thoughts in the field, such as the concepts of andragogy, transformative learning, effectiveness in practice, and the political aspect of adult education.

Andragogical assumptions and transformative practices. Paulo Freire's writing influences many current practitioners. His most influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) was based on his experiences working with South American peasants. Freire rejected what he called the *banking* model of education wherein the teacher's "task is to fill the students with the contents of his narration . . . Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (pp. 71-72). Freire asserted that, in contrast, effective education seeks to create in individuals the ability to think critically about both themselves and their location in their world. He believed that, ultimately, such critical analysis would lead to action and subsequent transformation of any unjust circumstances that might exist in individuals' lives.

Knowles (1980) popularized the idea of *andragogy*, which he originally defined as a theory of adult learning specific to adults and the particular ways they learn, as opposed to the pedagogical models developed with children in mind. Knowles eventually retracted this differentiation between adults and children and stated that andragogy is "simply another model of assumptions about learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions" (p. 43). According to Knowles, the assumption upon which andragogy is based is that adults are autonomous, self-directed learners who are capable of defining and managing independent learning. In this model, the adult

educator is a highly trained resource person who acts within an institutional context with sensitivity to adults' unique capacities for self-directed action.

Although both of these authors influenced some subsequent work, their ideas are not without criticism. Freire has been accused of lumping all the world's oppressed under one cultural umbrella (Rasmussen, 2001), as well as assuming that the oppressed are without a significant power base and require external aid to achieve any expression of power (Blackburn, 2000). Scott (1985) further contradicted this Freirian tenet by showing the significant degree to which marginalized people worldwide resist oppressive circumstances. With regard to Knowles' contentions about andragogy, Brookfield (1986) pointed out that chronological age does not necessarily denote the facility for self-direction. He further commented that the ability to be self-directed is the result of cultural conditioning rather than an inherent trait that manifests itself upon maturity. This is echoed by Wlodkowski (2008) who stated: "Critiques range from whether it [self-directed learning] is a goal or a characteristic of adult learners to dissatisfaction with its individualistic, white middle-class male orientation" (p. 292). Referring to Knowles' description of the relationship between the self-directed learner and the sensitive adult educator, Cervero and Wilson (1994) discussed how Knowles identified this relationship as embedded within the educational institution, but pointed out that he failed to acknowledge the presence and consequent impact of the asymmetrical power relations that inevitably pervade such a context. Similarly, Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2006) commented: "Autonomy, however, is not necessarily context free; there is a relationship between the personal and situational variables that must come into play for a person to be autonomous in certain learning situations" (p. 123).

Despite serious criticism, traces of the work of Freire and Knowles can be found in some of the theories, analyses, and commentary on adult education that have been produced by several authors in the years since. Brookfield (1986) wrote of “participatory learning methods” (p. 12) and “critically responsive teaching” (Brookfield, 1990, p. 23); whereas, others discussed emancipatory education (Candy, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; Roth, 1991) and transformational learning (Hart, 1991; hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 1991). These four concepts imply that learning is the process of becoming, discovering, and realizing oneself as opposed to simply assimilating knowledge. In the words of Mezirow (1991): “A transformation theory of adult learning would have as its central focus understanding the nature of these meaning perspectives and how they can be changed to allow exciting new possibilities for realizing meaning and values” (p. xv). This definition is underscored by Deshler (1991) who explained that “for learning to be transformative, a change in the cognitive meaning of experience must occur” (p. 343), whereas Roth (1991) maintained that “becoming aware of habits of expectation and taking action to change them is at the heart of transformative learning” (p. 132). The idea of locating the individual (as opposed to extrinsic knowledge) as the heart of the educational process was introduced by authors such as Freire and Knowles. This has also been defined as consciousness raising (Hart, 1991), conscientization (Heaney & Horton, 1991), critical reflection (Kennedy, 1991), developmental learning (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998), and dialogue education (Vella, 2002).

Effective practices of adult educators. Most adult education authors define how an adult educator effectively fulfills his or her duties. Agreement is found among authors in that many feel an effective adult educator allows learners to influence the educational

process (Boone, 1985; Brookfield, 1986, 1990; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Knowles, 1980; Merriam et al., 2006; Wlodkowski, 2008; Vella, 2002). Although theorists differ in how they felt this is best achieved, many commented that consideration by the adult educator of the learners' perspectives is an effective method. Wlodkowski (2008) stated, "Instructors who use an intrinsic and macrocultural approach to motivation consider the learner's perspective fundamental" (p. 48). Vella (2002) explained that "an adult educator's first task, then, is to discover what mature students need and want to learn" (p. xiv). The authors who believed this was true supported their understanding. Wlodkowski (2008) noted that "when adults can see that what they are learning makes sense and is important according to their values and perspectives, their motivation emerges" (p. 27). According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991), unless current learning can be meaningfully related to previously achieved awareness, it will not anchor in the individual's cognitive structure and will therefore not be remembered. This insight was shared by Brookfield (1986), who discussed the need for adult educators to relinquish attachment to their own concerns and instead respond to learners' concerns. He argued that this is the only way to connect successfully with students across curricula.

An exhaustive discussion of how an adult educator effectively fulfills his or her duties is not possible here. However, it is essential to mention the dynamics of love and care in practice. Some adult educators believed that allowing emotional expression by both students and teachers was one of the hallmarks of an effective educator (hooks, 1994, 2003; Lin, 2007; Ngatai, 2006). In hooks' view adult educators tended towards maintaining a non-emotional atmosphere in the classroom because they believed this approach was safe; however, she rejected this claim, accusing those who practice it of

fearing “that classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained” (hooks, 1994, p. 39). Ngatai (2006) maintained that such emotionally sterile classrooms lack heart. She stated that in university settings without the presence of heart and its associated emotional spectrum, “the brain can’t function” leaving academia bereft and students exhausted (p. 237). She questioned why love is missing from educative discourse, indicating that this omission undermines the field’s ability to serve students adequately. In Tisdell’s (2001) estimation, whether caused by the drive for safety or a reaction to fear, the desire of many adult educators to limit emotion in the classroom might also limit the knowledge to which students have access. As adult educators strive for emotional neutrality they prevent the meaningful connection and kinship between students and teachers described by Ngatai (2006), thus precluding knowledge and learning experiences that might be associated with these dynamics.

The political aspect of adult education. Claims have been made that adult education is never neutral (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Heaney & Horton, 1991; hooks, 1994; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Pratt, 1998). Cervero and Wilson (1994) stated that “simply put, education cannot be a neutral activity; if it were, why would anyone care about it?” (p. 5). Further to this idea is the allegation made by some theorists that the motivation behind certain adult education processes is political, with the outcomes reflecting the interests of the dominant social classes present in greater society (Beder, 1991; Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam et al., 2006; Pratt, 1998). Pratt (1998) noted that, “Indeed there are many educators who suggest that the usual role of andragogical facilitator reproduces existing forms of power which privilege some people over others” (p. 3). Brookfield (1990) and Cervero and

Wilson (1994) suggested that adult education processes should be based on democratic tenets that foster equality, whereas Merriam & Caffarella (1991) observed that, “In practice, though, education in most societies functions to preserve society as it is, rather than to change it” (p. 274).

The foregoing discussion has concentrated on macro issues of how the adult education process is shaped by political dynamics. This also occurs on a more micro level within adult education institutions and classrooms. Some have accused adult education processes of maintaining a White, middle-class, North American partiality (Hall, 2001; hooks, 1994; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Tisdell, 2001). Merriam and Caffarella (1991) pointed out that the middle-class bias found in various studies of adult education is attributable to the fact that “adult education is organized by the middle class and the presentation of knowledge is middle class both in language and content” (p. 93). As per some authors, the fact that adult education is prepared by and for a specific population renders it incapable of successfully serving other populations (Beder, 1991; hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 2001). Beder (1991) looked at this issue from the point of view of illiteracy and culture by discussing how the literacy strategies of many adult education processes are at odds with the cultural values of some populations. He argued that this discrepancy precludes these populations from effectively participating in literacy programs. This alienation of different groups of people from adult education processes can be passive, as Beder (1991) described, or active, as in the exclusionary circumstances noted by Tisdell (2001), who stated that “those students and professors who do not conform to the proper ‘form’ in expressing knowledge risk being discounted by others in the higher education system” (p. 157).

Further narrowing the discussion of the political dynamics present in adult education processes are the following thoughts about the actual versus stated agendas of individual adult educators. It has been observed that a discrepancy can exist between an adult educator's explicit and implicit values and objectives (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). In the words of Merriam and Caffarella (1991), "one set of values may be advanced in public rhetoric while quite another may be operationalized in practice" (p. 270). In Boldt's (1998) opinion, this lack of congruency can be either intentional or unintentional and requires that adult educators identify their belief systems, which can only take place through observation of their actions (as opposed to verbal articulation). According to Johnson-Bailey (2001), the fact that adult educators maintain hidden agendas can have consequences. She reasoned that the hidden agendas of adult educators function to maintain the exclusionary and undemocratic features of the larger adult education process. She then linked this aspect to the previous points made about greater society's influence over the power dynamics of adult education, claiming that although students from the dominant social group will be oblivious to these forces, they will seem "obvious to minority students" (p. 139). In light of Johnson-Bailey's (2001) remarks and considering the words of Wlodkowski (2008) stating that "we need to be aware that there is clear evidence that those learners left at the roadside of adult education are generally culturally different from their teachers" (p. 79), it could be suggested that the hidden agendas of adult educators that serve to exclude minority groups embody the paramount White, middle-class values that inform the modern process of adult education.

Aboriginal Issues

Exploring the education of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The history of the education of Aboriginal peoples by European Canadians is a story of conquest, colonization, assimilation, and resistance (Antone, 2003; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Charters-Voght, 1999; Haig-Brown, 1995; Harris, 2006; MacIvor, 1995; Malatest & Associates, 2004; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). According to Battiste and Henderson (2000), European Canadians have historically used education as a means to modernize peoples they viewed as uncivilized. MacIvor (1995) suggested that assimilation through education was aimed at easing the process of government-led land expropriation and resource exploitation. Many of these scholars suggested that regardless of the intent, the effect was, and continues to be, attempted cultural eradication. Hampton (1995) wrote that “Western education is in content and structure hostile to Native people. It must be straightforwardly realized that education, as currently practised, is cultural genocide. It seeks to brainwash the Native . . . substituting non-Native for Native knowledge, values, and identity” (p. 35).

During the latter half of the 20th century, Canadian Aboriginal groups sought changes in the education of their peoples, through political channels. In 1969, in response to government-proposed changes in Aboriginal education, a policy paper called the “Red Paper Policy” was published by Aboriginal peoples. This response paper sparked discussion that eventually culminated in the 1972 document titled *Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE)*, which was issued by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB, Battiste, 1995). A “statement of the philosophy, goals, principles and directions” (p. iii) of how the NIB conceived of the education of Aboriginal Canadians, *ICIE* was accepted

in principle by the federal government in 1973. However, the federal government failed to execute the changes called for in the document. Battiste (2000) claimed that by 1998, “In effect, the government of Canada had failed to implement the 1973 policy as it was intended” (p. xi). Although subsequent calls for change were more successful, Aboriginal peoples still found the current state of their education objectionable. Battiste (2000) asserted that “there have been innovations in Aboriginal education in the past twenty-five years, both at the First Nations and at the provincial levels, but these reforms have not gone far enough” (p. 192). In the remainder of this section I explore both the impact of the imposed educational experiences and ideas on how to proceed.

Traditional Aboriginal education and the impact of imposed Western systems. In the opinion of some, Western European modes of thinking differ significantly from those of Aboriginal peoples (Antone, 2003; Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Chamberlin, 2000; Duran & Duran, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Harris, 2006; Leavitt, 1995; Little Bear, 2000; Nadeau & Young, 2006; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Stairs, 1995; Swisher, 1991). These differences in thought processes subsequently resulted in differences in the manner in which education was conceived and delivered by both Aboriginal peoples and Western European Canadians. Many of the authors cited pointed to how these two groups use education to either promote community well-being or exalt individual achievement. In the opinion of Harris (2006), traditional Aboriginal styles of education cultivated qualities and skills in the individual that would contribute to a community’s overall survival and success. She stated, “Harmony was fostered through cooperation and the priority of communal aspirations versus individualistic success” (p. 122). Swisher (1991)

commented that the virtue of humility was held in high regard, and that individual glorification came at the expense of the community and was a violation of this value. This contrasts with the notion of individual achievement that Hampton (1995) believes is encouraged in Western style classrooms. For Hampton (1995), this difference caused damage to Aboriginal communities who were forced to learn in this manner. In his words,

Western society and education too often promote and glorify individual options for achievement at the expense of the social connections that make achievement meaningful. There is an inevitable conflict between Western education and Indian education on this point. The competitive success of the individual is an implicit value of Western schools and, as such, is in direct conflict with the Indian value of group success through individual achievement. (p. 21)

Another difference between Aboriginal and Western thought processes affects forms of education: how the nature of knowledge is understood by both groups. Leavitt (1995) noted that in traditional Aboriginal thought, knowledge is viewed as an entirety, indivisible into categories or disciplines. This was echoed by Nadeau and Young (2006), who declared that the majority of Aboriginal worldviews do not disconnect the spiritual and physical aspects of human existence. The impact of this perspective on educational practices was voiced by Archibald (1995), who explained that “First Nations people traditionally adopted a holistic approach to education. Principles of spiritual, physical and emotional growth, as well as economic and physical survival skills, were developed in each individual to ensure eventual family and village survival” (p. 289). In contrast to these outlooks are those identified by different scholars as belonging to Western

Europeans. Ermine (1995) used the term *fragmentation* to describe how Western Europeans consider knowledge, whereas Duran and Duran (2000) referred to it as *compartmentalization*. Consistent with this description were the thoughts of Battiste and Henderson (2000), who maintained that in contrast to the holistic approach of Aboriginal thinkers, Eurocentric thought breaks up knowledge into discrete categories that can then be investigated and managed independently.

European Canadians have historically imposed, and continue to impose, their system of education (and therefore their mode of thinking) on Aboriginal peoples. This forced imposition has resulted in grave consequences for Aboriginal individuals and communities (Battiste, 1995; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Henderson, 1995, 2000; Kompf & Hodson, 2000; Malatest & Associates, 2004; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Battiste (1995) testified that “various boarding schools, industrial schools, day schools, and Eurocentric educational practices ignored or rejected the world-views, languages and values of Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. The outcome was the gradual loss of these world-views, languages and cultures and the creation of widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities” (p. viii). Hampton (1995) argued that the bulk of Aboriginal students experienced an erosion of hope and self-esteem as a result of exposure to European styles of education. He described the consequences that Aboriginal peoples have suffered as a result of being forced to undergo European education in physical, mental and spiritual terms, citing effects such as: (a) fetal alcohol syndrome, (b) economic impoverishment, (c) substandard housing, (d) poor health, (e) poor self-concept and self-worth, (f) language

extinction, (g) loss of spiritual practices, and (h) the ruination of Aboriginal families.

This analysis was confirmed by Battiste and Henderson (2000) who declared,

The military, political and economic subjugation of Indigenous peoples has been well documented, as have social, cultural, and linguistic pressures and the ensuing damage to Indigenous communities, but no force has been more effective in oppressing Indigenous knowledge and heritage than the educational system. (p. 86)

Possibilities for change. The differences described above and the consequences that have resulted for Aboriginal peoples made it difficult for Aboriginal students to succeed in European style classrooms (Battiste, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Henderson, 1995; Kompf & Hodson, 2000; Malatest & Associates, 2004; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Stairs, 1995; Swisher, 1991). According to Swisher (1991), the failure of Aboriginal students to succeed is a direct result of how “typical classroom learning environments interfere with the way Native children learn” (p. 3). Kompf and Hodson (2000) pointed to the discrepancies between many Aboriginal thought processes and the conflicting expectations of educational structures based on European values. They referred to the failure of Aboriginal students to meet these culturally inappropriate expectations and described how this reinforced “a sense of hopelessness in individuals, families and communities” (p. 187).

With this understanding in mind, some authors agreed that it is of fundamental importance that teachers of Aboriginal students be of Aboriginal descent themselves (Department of Education, Culture & Employment, 2008; Harris, 2006; NIB, 1972; Malatest & Associates, 2004). According to Harris (2006), only those who originated

within the cultural context can successfully relate to students of that context. The NIB (1972) stated that non-Aboriginal teachers do not have the cultural fluency to either “understand or cope with cultural differences” (p. 19). They alleged that placing a non-Aboriginal teacher in a classroom with Aboriginal students forces both parties into “intolerable positions” (p. 19). Upon reviewing the condition of Aboriginal education in Canadian post-secondary institutions, Malatest and Associates (2004) concluded that

universities and colleges are not consistently concerned with the effects of culture on students. Almost all faculty are from different cultural and socio-economic groups than Aboriginal students. Most do not have any depth of understanding of Aboriginal culture, traditions and core values, neither do they recognize the diversity of Aboriginal communities or understand that not all Aboriginal student [sic] needs are the same. There is little recognition and understanding of the different cognition and learning styles. (p. 15)

Differences in cognition were emphasised by the impact of language on thought processes—different language structures lead to different ways of thinking. According to Henderson (2000), the organization of Aboriginal languages stems from Aboriginal peoples’ understandings of their relationship with the compelling energies in their environments. He stated, “They derive most of the linguistic notions by which they describe the forces of an ecology from experience and from reflection on the forces of nature” (p. 263). Duran and Duran (2000) believed the effect of such language derivation was that Aboriginal peoples considered the world by “process thinking” (p. 91). Duran and Duran (2000) claimed that “process thinking is best described as a more action and ‘eventing’ approach to life versus a world of subject-object relationships. Some

Indigenous languages, for instance, are languages in which phenomena are experienced as the process of events” (p. 91). The NIB (1972) maintained that language was the site where composite internal knowledge, and the resulting conceptual understandings, are outwardly expressed. They declared that language “is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force which shapes the way a man [sic] looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life” (p. 15). For these reasons, some researchers argued that teachers of Aboriginal students must be speakers of Aboriginal languages (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; NIB, 1972).

Local control. The 1972 document *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB, 1972) represented a landmark in the historic call by Aboriginal peoples in Canada for control over their own education systems. Stressing that it is a right of Aboriginal groups to control their own education processes, they stated in this document that “decisions on specific issues can be made only in the context of local control of education” (p. 4). The NIB reasoned that those who have historically been in control have not demonstrated success in educating Aboriginal peoples; therefore, the remaining alternative is to let Aboriginal peoples themselves control the process. This demand for local control has since been reiterated by numerous authors (Charters-Voght, 1999; Hampton, 1995; Harris, 2006; Henderson, 1995; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Charters-Voght (1999) argued that local control is necessary because current educational policies had not succeeded and Aboriginal peoples were culturally in a position to develop relevant and appropriate learning environments that would, in turn, contribute positively to the social, economic, and political circumstances of Aboriginal communities. In the words of Harris (2006), “the health and well-being of the community is dependent on their ability to

obtain control over their own health and human services” (p. 117). Employing a national survey of Aboriginal peoples and post-secondary education in Canada, Malatest and Associates (2004) found that in places where Aboriginal peoples had been given control of their own institutions and programs the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates had been higher than in those places where this was not the case.

White Studies

Whiteness and adult education. Scholarship on Whiteness, White identity, and its associated privileges focused on several areas, including how White identity is formed, conceptualized, and performed. Most researchers agreed that White privilege was a disruptive social force whose existence both generated and reproduced inequalities in North American society. Therefore, many authors have not only analyzed Whiteness and White privilege, but also strategized ways to combat or diminish its impacts. These topics, and how they relate specifically to adult education, are the subjects of this section.

Some general theories about Whiteness and White identity. Consensus existed in the field of White studies regarding the “unmarked” (Frankenberg, 1999, p. 6) nature of Whiteness. Called “naturalized” by Rodriguez (2000, p. 12) and “the norm, the expected, and the desirable” by Carter (2000, p. 37), Whiteness has been critiqued for its supposed neutrality and lack of a locatable identity (Frankenberg, 1999; Harper, 2000; McIntosh, 1988; Muraleedharan, 1999; Rodriguez, 2000; Sandoval, 1999; Twine, 1999). According to Frankenberg (1999), the invisibility of Whiteness was made possible because Whiteness asserted itself as the objective point of reference against which all other identities are compared and consequently defined. She stated, “Indeed, here we return to the proposition with which we began: that whiteness makes itself invisible

precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends” (p. 6). Twine (1999) stated that “thus, in addition to being a racially neutral site, White identity involves indifference to race(ism) or racialized issues. Blackness is conflated with being oppressed, and whiteness is conflated with the privilege of ‘normalcy’” (p. 228). McIntosh (1988) argued that this situating of Whiteness as the nonaligned center was not accidental, but rather safeguarded the agenda of those who were able to take advantage of the privileges that accompany such a slippery position. She claimed “the silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool [sic] here. They keep the thinking about equality of equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these subjects taboo” (p. 4).

Although Whiteness and White privilege were inevitably associated with the phenomenological aspects of race, many scholars identified the roots of these forces as social and historical in nature (Frankenberg, 1999; Fuller, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2000; Manglitz, 2003; Rodriguez, 2000). Rodriguez (2000) clarified “the important insight that race *is* a social construction, a process that has taken place over a long period of time and under varied and changing political circumstances” (p. 11). Fuller (2000) emphasized that Whiteness is “something learned, not related to biology” (p. 85), while Frankenberg (1999) insisted that Whiteness is “always constructed, always in the process of being made and unmade” (p. 16). This seeming disintegration of race from actual skin color was further illuminated by Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000), who maintained that allowing skin color or race to impose a social order is unnatural given what they called the “cultural hybridity” common to all people (p. 183). They cautioned that “not only is

race an unnatural category, but its cultural boundaries are constantly negotiated and transgressed as individuals engage the forces and discourses that shape them” (p. 183). Harper (2000) underscored this point when she affirmed that identity is not necessarily dependent on observable constants, but rather looks for its shape in the social and cultural dynamics at play at a given moment in history.

One of the keys to understanding the phenomena of Whiteness and White identity is found in observance of its execution. In other words, how does an individual, operating from the attitudes and habits associated with a White identity, behave? Frankenberg (1999) wrote “a third area of work asks how whiteness is performed by subjects, whether in daily life, in film, in literature, or in the academic corpus” (p. 3). Dubbed “the politics of performing whiteness” by Rodriguez (2000, p. 7), this area of study is important because, as he explained, it enabled researchers to compare levels of awareness to behavior and how an appreciation of their White identity influenced how a person expressed that identity, particularly with reference to minority groups. Given that Brookfield (2010) believed that racism is systemic and for Whites not to perform Whiteness would be impossible, Fuller (2000) asserted that studying these comparisons could lead to exposure of the invisibility of Whiteness and constitute a productive strategy for exposing it. She declared, “An understanding of how whiteness constantly structures how I move in the world might take away some of the erased, invisible powers of *being* ‘white’, interrupting how ‘white’ is the unspoken, taken for granted, right and normal way to be for ‘whites’” (p. 83). Maher and Tetreault (2000) confirmed that acknowledgment and exploration of an individual’s social location and identity are catalysts for critique and, finally, changes in attitudes and identity.

Whiteness and the new racism. Discussion of Whiteness and its invisible preservation of White privilege would be incomplete without remarking on what various authors have referred to as the new racism (Cross, 2005; Fiske, 1993; Hopkins, Reicher, & Levine, 1997; Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock, & Kendrick, 1991). According to Cross (2005), while the old racism was performed overtly, systemically, and by individuals seeking to marginalize explicitly along racial lines, the new racism is covert, built into institutions in such a way that its presence is undetectable while its power continues to marginalize and oppress. She stated that in the new racism “white privilege is maintained through invisible, insidious operations of power that foster whiteness and racism. This power is no longer enacted primarily through physical violence but is mostly achieved through more symbolic power” (p. 267). In her opinion, while the old racism and the new racism differed in their manifestations, they were “similarly powerful in effecting realities” (p. 268). Coates (2008) expanded the notion of covert racism beyond just institutions to include social dynamics such as politeness, political correctness, and expediency. He also clarified that covert racism, which does not carry the weight of law that overt racism did, was able to remain invisible because “traditions, norms, and customs typically uphold, justify, or obscure its operation” (p. 212).

Coates (2008) further explained the infinitely varied nature of racism, a point underscored by hooks (2003), who commented on the myriad but usually unconscious ways that White supremacist thinking shapes our daily perceptions. The subtle nature of racism was discussed by hooks (2003), who indicated that most White people are blind to the degree of White privilege they have been conditioned to accept and perpetuate. It is this situation, she argued, that leads liberal minded individuals consciously concerned

with ending racism to simultaneously hold onto beliefs and assumptions rooted in White supremacy, and of which they are unaware. This discrepancy bolsters the perpetuation of covert racism because, preoccupied with overt racism such individuals fail to identify the racism endemic in their thought processes and subsequent actions. It also enables White people to claim that racism is no longer a problem as overt acts of extreme conservative fanaticism such as “Nazi skinheads who preach all the old stereotypes about racist purity” are replaced by covert, subtle, unrealized, and unacknowledged racism (hooks, 2003, p. 29). As Misawa (2010) explained:

White Americans want to maintain the stance that racism is an isolated instance in our society, only perpetuated by those who are hateful towards others so that they do not have to wrestle with the fact that they can never escape their privilege. (p. 225)

Whiteness and the new racism not only create space for the existence of marginalization along racial lines, but allow it to be acceptable practice.

Strategies for disrupting the unjust impact of Whiteness. Understanding race as socially originated (as opposed to being defined in terms of physical characteristics) is a significant factor in disrupting the negative effects of Whiteness on society because what has been constructed has the potential to be deconstructed (Dass-Brailsford, 2007). Fundamental to initiating the transformation process is recognition of the fact that not all White people maintain a uniform White identity. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000) contended that assuming commonality amongst all White people is both “dangerous and highly counterproductive to the goals of a critical pedagogy of whiteness” (p. 182). They argued that despite the privileges that are generally associated with white skin, not all

White people are in a position to exploit those privileges. Kelly (2006) highlighted the importance of considering social groupings such as class, gender, and sexualities. Hartigan (1999) stated that “with whiteness, gaps continually emerge between whites in different regions, in distinct families and in various class positions. These gaps reveal distinct backgrounds of significance against which whites varyingly articulate and interpret the scope of their racialness” (p. 184). Garza (2000) alleged that not only are there degrees of White identity amongst White people, but that anyone, regardless of skin color or culture, can exhibit the associated behaviors. Twine’s (1999) study of middle class girls of African descent, some of whom “in the absence of a politicized African American residential community, acquired a white cultural identity and not a black consciousness before leaving home to attend college” (p. 214) corroborated this point. She described how her “essay expands the analysis of racialized gender identities in middle-class suburban communities by examining how white identities are constructed and enacted by African-descent women” (p. 216).

The importance of highlighting heterogeneity amongst those who display the often invisible behaviors associated with possession of a White identity is revealed when considering strategies for disrupting the negative impact of Whiteness. Many authors agree on the effectiveness of strategies that encourage individuals to reach greater heights of self-awareness regarding their possession and performance of White identity in its varied forms (Brown, Parham, & Yonker, 1996; Carter, 2000; Dass-Brailsford, 2007; Fuller, 2000; Harper, 2000; hooks, 1999; Manglitz, 2003; McIntosh, 1988; Rasmussen, 2001; Rodriguez, 2000). According to Rodriguez (2000), the value of such strategies lies in the capacity they create in individuals not only to weigh their actions, but consequently

to alter their actions and ultimately their identities. He emphasized that the point is not to abandon a White identity altogether, but rather to abandon those elements that cause social injustice. Manglitz (2003) believed “the onus is on us to continue to confront our own privilege and be willing to articulate and share our journey as we do so. We need to develop ways to rearticulate a way to be White without dominating and subjugating people in the process” (p. 131). Dass-Brailsford (2007) commented, “White people must accept their Whiteness and its cultural implications to develop a healthy, nonracist, White identity” (p. 75). According to the European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (EACCW, 2010) an effective way to reach awareness of one’s Whiteness is to engage in anti-racist dialogue. This view was supported by Manglitz and Cervero (2010) who stated,

As adult educators who profess tenets of inclusion, equity, and opportunity it is incumbent on us to engage in a dialogue as one step toward the actions needed to move us as a society away from an outcome of self-destruction. (p. 134)

A concurrent strategy for disrupting the negative impact of Whiteness is the relinquishment of an attitude of cultural superiority that often accompanies the possession of a White identity (Good, 2000; Rasmussen, 2001). As explained by Taussig (1987), this is because in pursuit of hegemony the expression of cultural superiority by those in possession of a White identity inevitably involves terrorizing those populations considered inferior. He stated, “Yet there is also the need to control massive populations, entire social classes and even nations through the cultural elaboration of fear” (p. 8). Frankenberg (1999) identified fear mongering as a political tool used to motivate individuals with White identities to exert their privileges and thus defend their position of

cultural superiority. “All black people in the United States, irrespective of their class status or politics, live with the possibility that they will be terrorized by whiteness” (hooks, 1999, p. 175). Rasmussen (2001) observed that until Euro-Americans abandon the belief that Whiteness is culturally superior they will forfeit their ability to live harmoniously alongside the rest of the world’s population.

Another strategy that has been suggested to combat the unjust impacts of White privilege is for those in possession of a White identity to have experiences that trigger awareness of how those impacts affect non-beneficiaries (Brown et al., 1996; Dass-Brailsford, 2007; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2000). In the opinions of Brown et al. (1996), such experiences would involve contact with diverse populations, thereby improving the ease felt by White identity holders with reference to those populations. They contended that an increase in comfort levels would enable individuals “to challenge beliefs about racial differences and worldviews” (p. 516). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000) remarked that such experiences would challenge long-held beliefs as well as lead to insight among those privileged by Whiteness “not only into racism and forms of oppression but into others’ ways of being, experiencing and living in the world” (p. 193).

Whiteness and adult education. When discussing Whiteness, White privilege, and White identity as they relate to adult education, scholars agreed on the importance of highlighting the pervasiveness of these “invisible” forces at the institutional level (Carter, 2000; Manglitz, 2003; Shore, 2001). Rodriguez (2000) cautioned that what he called the “embeddedness” of Whiteness at the institutional level must be taken seriously (p. 11). Similarly, Manglitz (2003) offered a recipe for progress: comprehension by adult educators of the extent of institutionalized Whiteness in adult education, accompanied by

strategies for challenging the consequent inequities. She emphasized that adult educators need to investigate how they unconsciously manifest the privileges of Whiteness and White privilege in both research and practice.

Some authors doubt that progress of this kind is possible given the unacknowledged nature of White dominance in adult education (Carter, 2000; Manglitz, 2003; McIntosh, 1988; Shore 2001). Both Manglitz (2003) and McIntosh (1988) identified the reason this seems impossible: the propensity of adult education to associate race with all colors and cultures except for White. With regards to adult education, Manglitz (2003) wrote that “Whiteness has been seen as neutral, the norm against which all others are taught and evaluated” (p. 127). Shore (2001) accused the authors of adult education literature of deliberately focusing on the “Other”, so as to divert attention from the power accumulated by Whiteness as the unacknowledged reference point. Commenting on distance education, Carter (2000) confessed that only negligible attention is paid to the culturally biased origins of computer software and computer instruction manuals. Calling them “sites of cultural imperialism, recolonization, racism, patriarchy or whiteness” (p. 37), he attested that “in many cases these circumstances are unconsidered and unintentional results of course material design and development framed by the commanding subjectivity of ‘all knowing’ professional designers, but they have the effect of exacerbating what is already a world actively sustaining white hegemonic positionality” (p. 37). McIntosh (1988) argued that many White students in the United States are naïve about the presence of racism in the classroom because “they are not people of color; they do not see ‘whiteness’ as a racial identity” (p. 4). Inevitably, such a positioning of Whiteness within adult education has an important impact on adult

education (Manglitz, 2003; Shore, 2001). Shore (2001) testified that both policy and pedagogy are impacted, and Manglitz (2003) noted the resultant unbalanced power relationships between adult educators and adult learners. In Rasmussen's (2001) estimation, Whiteness in education has resulted in a curriculum focused on money relations. He avered that "Education and economy sit side by side in the Rescuer's toolbox: print and price, alphabet and money, bankbooks and schoolbooks. All 'developed' people must be able to *spell* and *spend*" (p. 107).

Addressing the negative effects of Whiteness on adult education has been the focus of various authors (Manglitz, 2003; Shore, 2001). Shore (2001) believed these effects could be partially ameliorated by adult educators using an internal process of self-reflexive theorizing about the pervasiveness of White domination. This position is upheld by Manglitz (2003), who declared that

We in adult education need to continue to analyze our own diverse field in relation to the foundation of Whiteness and White privilege and develop concrete analyses of how we unknowingly engage the universality and norms of Whiteness within our research and practice. (pp. 125-126)

In her opinion, this would lead to an ability to reshape the expression of White identity so as to neutralize its oppressive character and offer White identity holders in adult education alternative ways of being and behaving. Manglitz also called on adult educators to investigate literature that discusses the processes involved in developing non-racist White identities. Additionally, she asked adult educators to add to the theorizing on Whiteness and adult education, writing that "we need to build on the

literature in adult education that names and foregrounds Whiteness and White privilege as invisible norms as well as the work done on positionality” (p. 130).

Summary of the Literature

I found considerable differences among authors in the field of adult education regarding what defines an adult learner and the consequent manner in which that learner should be educated. Although cohesion could be discerned among the theories, such as the importance of learner’s perspectives and the value of transformational learning versus banking education, each author presented a unique opinion on the subject, particularly with regard to what constitutes an effective adult educator. An important aspect of the literature I surveyed was the acknowledgement by some authors of the presence of power dynamics within adult education theories, institutions, and practices. Several of the authors I surveyed offered descriptions of these power dynamics and noted how they have impacted some adult education endeavours. Significant among the ideas was that adult education can be a capitalist undertaking with a White, middle-class bias and an unacknowledged goal to preserve the existing class hierarchies of greater society. Also of import in this section was the recognition by several authors of the discrepancies demonstrated by adult educators who profess one agenda but pursue another.

The general consensus amongst authors I reviewed for the Aboriginal Issues section is that forcing a European style of education upon Aboriginal peoples has been historically oppressive (Antone, 2003; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Charters-Voght, 1999; Haig-Brown, 1995; Harris, 2006; MacIvor, 1995; Malatest & Associates, 2004; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Most agreed that, although the intolerable nature of the situation has eased somewhat, the current system continues to marginalize these

learners. Of importance is the idea that this marginalization occurs because the current system fails to account for the differences in language between the adult education system and the Aboriginal peoples it purports to serve. As many researchers noted, linguistic differences denote differences in thought patterns and processes which, in turn, render European education practices alien and ineffective. However, great diversity exists in the prescriptions offered by authors on how to respond to the existing situation. Some called for the installation of Aboriginal teachers for Aboriginal students, while others insisted that teachers must not just be Aboriginal, but must also speak an Aboriginal language. The notion that the conception and delivery of education for Aboriginal peoples must be under Aboriginal control if it is to benefit its learners, however, was expressed almost unanimously.

For me, the most momentous of all the findings in the section on White Studies was the idea of Whiteness as the unacknowledged point of reference against which all other colors and cultures are measured. McIntosh (1988) asserts that this situation is not an accident, but rather fulfills a political purpose. However, I observed divergence in the specific nature of the agendas researchers claimed are being served—some saw it as a means to excuse White identity holders from engaging their responsibilities to end racism, whereas others maintained that this particular positioning of Whiteness represented a safeguard for White privilege. Common to all the authors surveyed was the conviction that Whiteness and its accompanying oppressive behaviours must be disrupted. With regard to Whiteness and adult education, the same opinion was expressed by all researchers. Strategies collectively considered effective both within adult education and for Whiteness in general included promoting self-awareness among

White identity holders of their unacknowledged attitudes and accompanying behaviours (Brown, Parham, & Yonker, 1996; Carter, 2000; Dass-Brailsford, 2007; Fuller, 2000; Harper, 2000; hooks, 1999; Manglitz, 2003; McIntosh, 1988; Rasmussen, 2001; Rodriguez, 2000). An additional suggestion was for those involved in adult education to concede publicly the presence of White bias within the adult education system (Carter, 2000; Manglitz, 2003; Shore, 2001). Conflict was found, however, as some researchers doubted the effectiveness of this strategy, citing the impossibility of conquering something so overwhelmingly pervasive (Carter, 2000; Manglitz, 2003; McIntosh, 1988; Shore, 2001).

Chapter 3

Introduction to the Self-study

An Examination of Self-study Research Methodology

A relatively new method of inquiry, self-study methodology is increasingly represented in academic literature. Researchers use the methodology to investigate subject matter, and they also describe the methodology in an effort to make it more accessible and credible. In much of the literature on self-study reasons for its use are given and major criticisms are discussed. Most authors who explore this area either defend self-study against these criticisms or identify possible responses to them. An examination of these themes is presented in this section.

What Is Self-Study?

Some researchers describe self-study as individuals researching their practice in order to improve their practice (Cole & Knowles, 1998; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007; Pinnegar, 1998). Feldman (2008) stated that “the first feature of a self-study methodology is that it brings to the forefront the importance of the self” (p. 46); Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) declared that “self-study is the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas” (p. 236). Cole and Knowles (1998) referred to self-study as “qualitative research focused inward” (p. 225), an idea supported by Laboskey (2004), who wrote that self-study is a “self-initiated and focused” qualitative methodology (p. 842). Kitchen, Parker, and Gallagher (2008) identified self-study as the investigation of how the self functions during the course of a research project.

Despite general agreement on the nature of self-study, many acknowledge the broadness of its scope (Barnes, 1998; Feldman, 2008; Wilkes, 1998). Demonstrating this

breadth are the varied definitions of self-study used. Hamilton et al. (2008) looked at self-focused methodology from what they saw as the narrative, self-study, and auto-ethnographical perspectives. Ellis and Bochner (2000) stated that self-study is an umbrella under which three sub-categories can be found: autoethnography, personal narrative, and reflexivity. Loughran and Northfield (1998) noted that although reflexivity is a feature of self-study, it is not a stand-alone definition of self-study. In their opinion, a definition of self-study is not complete without a stated problem and an action component wherein “the problematic situation is not only reframed and redefined, but also changed as a result of the intended action designed to resolve the problem” (p. 15). Russell (1998) defined self-study in the teaching profession as the process of teachers learning from past experiences in order to positively impact the future through improved practice.

Why Do a Self-Study?

One of the more common reasons given as to why self-study is a worthwhile undertaking, specifically in the field of education, is that it enables the identification of areas of concern in both perspective and practice (Clarke, Erickson, Collins, & Phelan, 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, 2005; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Russell, 1998). The point of such identification is to generate constructive change in perspective and practice. Kitchen et al. (2008) claimed that “self-studies can develop our individual practices” (p. 165). Oda (1998) considered the effect of self-study on her own perspective and practice by reflecting that “self-study can facilitate the next steps to my professional development” (p. 123). Tidwell and Heston (1998) argued the necessity of self-study by contending that “in order to understand how to change, one must look at

what is being done and why (examining the beliefs underlying the practice being examined)” (p. 45). In the opinion of Clarke et al. (2005), the failure to generate constructive change through self-study can lead to practice becoming “perfunctory and repetitive, duplicative and routinized” (p. 161).

Many agreed that key among the positive changes to be engendered in the individual through self-study is a decrease in discrepancies between educational theory and practice (Freese, 2008; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007). Laboskey (2004) asserted that it is our “pedagogical responsibility” (p. 839) to examine ourselves for incongruities because “though there is a close connection between our beliefs and our actions, we can sometimes behave in ways contradictory to our values, we accept that to better understand and improve our practice, we must incorporate self-analysis and tools of self-transformation” (p. 843). Gipe’s (1998) interest in self-study began with the recognition of tension between her beliefs about teaching and the manner in which she functioned as a teacher. Johnston, Anderson, and DeMeulle (1998) explained that their self-study project originated with Johnston’s realization that “he was using instructional methods that were inconsistent with his teaching philosophy” (p. 208). According to Loughran and Northfield (1998), if a self-study refuses to acknowledge inconsistencies between beliefs and practice, the ability to implement change is neutralized.

In addition to the advantages accrued by individuals from engaging in self-study, several authors commented on the benefits such studies bring to their respective fields of inquiry. Specifically with regard to the field of education, many pointed to how self-studies contributed to improvements in education theory and pedagogy (Clarke et al.,

2005; Cole & Knowles, 1998; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Kitchen et al., 2008; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007). Freese (2008) wrote that a major ambition of self-study is to improve the field of education. As Clarke et al. (2005) wrote, “We engage in self-study in order to learn something about and improve our practice but also to contribute to the broader landscape of teacher education” (p. 162). Johnston et al. (1998) concurred: “We engaged in self-study to become aware of our beliefs and practices, and to develop our professional knowledge as teacher educators and to contribute to the knowledge base in teacher education” (p. 209). As maintained by Cole and Knowles (1998), the purpose behind expanding education theory and pedagogy is so that it can ultimately be transformed. With reference to the data generated by their self-study, Kitchen et al. (2008) commented, “we hope that the discussion arising from this new content will lead to deeper understandings of teacher education, enabling us to develop further our professional practices and contribute to program reform” (p. 166).

Limitations and Criticisms of Self-Study

Proponents of self-study acknowledged that limitations of working with this methodology exist. For example, Smith (1998) interrogated the cultural biases inherent in self-study. Wilcox (1998) recognized the potential for distortion as researcher and participant are one and the same. This point was underscored by Loughran (2007), who held that this can lead to “complications in reporting that may not be so apparent to the individual researcher yet be disconcerting for others” (p. 12). Cole and Knowles (1998) called attention to the vulnerability experienced by those engaged in self-study. They claimed that this vulnerability extended to the context wherein the self-study researcher was situated, namely the individuals and institutions among whom he or she was located.

This is because “self-study researchers lay bare for public scrutiny aspects of themselves, their practices, and their institutions” (p. 228).

In addition to identifying limitations, various authors have highlighted criticisms levelled at self-study methodology. Both Feldman (2008) and Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) noted the self-absorbed aspect of self-study; Cole and Knowles (1998) acknowledged some descriptors that have been applied: “narcissistic”, “self-indulgent”, “egocentric”, and “solipsistic” (p. 225). Skinner (2003) explained that critics see the reflexivity of self-study as an act of self-indulgence wherein research loses “meaningfulness and confidentiality as it gains in personality and vocalness” (p. 514). Self-studies have also been accused of lacking generalizability and objectivity, characteristics commonly associated with credible research (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). In Loughran’s (2007) opinion, many of the criticisms of self-study stem from an incomplete understanding of the nature of the methodology. In addition to citing critics’ failures to investigate the rigor demonstrated in many self-studies, he alleged that much of the negative confusion comes from misinterpretation of the label *self-study* itself. He declared that “in some cases, the allure of the concept of self-study may inadvertently militate against a pursuit of scholarship . . . because the term itself invites interpretations that unwittingly favour private over public theory” (p. 13).

Responses to critics of self-study include Skinner’s (2003) statement that self-study is not a euphemism for self-absorption, but rather it is “a justifiable mode of research [that] does go some way towards overcoming the problem of the self—quite literally self denial—in the social sciences” (p. 514). Additional defences against critics include the claim that self-study displays the same level of scholarly integrity exhibited

by traditional research methods (Cole & Knowles, 1998; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007). As Loughran (2007) testified, “Self-study certainly has established methodological expectations that when carefully and appropriately applied, illustrate the hallmarks of quality research” (p. 16). Further justification comes from those who asserted that no process wherein knowledge is created is free from subjectivity or bias (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Laboskey, 2004). Laboskey (2004) maintained, “Granted there are needs for checks on the biases and limited perspectives of the researcher self, but all research is necessarily constrained and influenced by the subjectivity of the investigator(s), at the very least by the questions deemed worthy of study” (p. 859).

Defences of self-study have been accompanied by suggestions for improving the methodology and strengthening its position relative to other forms of scholarship. It is commonly contended that although the name implies individual activity, self-study methodology is significantly strengthened by the inclusion of external perspectives (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Hamilton et al., 2008; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Russell (1998) clarified, “Those who engage in self-study often confront an apparent contradiction, for self-study is not the private and personal affair that the label might suggest” (p. 5). He explained that self-study necessarily involves colleagues as well as outside ideas and perspectives. Laboskey (2004) insisted that self-study must include interactive elements “in order to guard against the inevitable limitations of individual interpretation” (p. 821). Ellis and Bochner (2000) recognized that although “every story is partial and situated” (p. 826) it is possible to defuse this reality through the inclusion of multiple sources, and thereby improve representation.

A further recommendation for strengthening self-study methodology has to do with the accessibility of findings. Clarke et al. (2005) advised that genuine scholarship requires the public disclosure of research methods and conclusions. Loughran (2007) proposed that in making the data generated by self-studies publicly available researchers open the methodology up to critique. This allows others to “begin to use, build on, develop, adapt, adjust, and innovate the work in meaningful ways” (p. 19). Laboskey (2004) concurred; she stated that “self-study methodology demands that we formalize our work and make it available to our professional community for deliberation, further testing, and judgment” (p. 860). Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) took a broader view, pointing out that increasing the rigor with which self-study is applied overall will result in attainment of a more secure position for the methodology within academia. They explained, “Sharpening our approaches to methodology in self-study research can strengthen our work and clarify questions that arise for readers unfamiliar with this research genre” (p. 17).

Research Question

Using the literature as a point of departure, and with the intention of learning from my past in order to better my future, the primary question driving the self-study was: what do I not know about my practice as a White adult educator working with Aboriginal people in a northern context? As I engaged in the process and it became clear that discrepancies existed in my practice between my articulated values and my observable behaviour, this question became more nuanced: what do I not know about my motives for why I do what I do? In order to answer this question, I found that I needed to ask several more discrete questions: what strategies do I use in class? Why do I engage in certain

strategies in the classroom? What are my particular expectations of students and the community? Why do I have these expectations? How do I position myself towards students? Why do I position myself the way I do relative to the students? How do I truly feel about the students? What is my racial identity? What does it look like when I perform my racial identity in my practice? How does my racial identity impact how I feel about the students and how I respond to them? My intention was to investigate these questions and use this self-study to become aware and understand aspects of my practice that I would not normally observe.

Initially, self-study seemed indulgent. My adoption of the self-study methodology was not motivated by the intrinsic value I saw in it, but rather because I did not feel other methodologies were acceptable options. I acknowledged that it might not be possible to confront people who happen to be white about the ways they may use that coincidental feature to assure cultural dominance in their classrooms and not expect them to be resistant, defensive, or uncooperative. My project results would likely have been either distorted, dishonest, or non-existent. As I explored the implications of my questions around White privilege, colonialism, and adult education, it became apparent that the only way to address them was to engage in a self-study. I was the only willing participant that I was going to find.

Once I decided to engage in the process of self-study and researched its implications, its value became apparent. I came to understand that precise answers to questions about my own practice would only be realized through study of my own practice. Although I could have studied other White adult educators in similar positions, extrapolating from their experiences would have yielded limited and less efficient results.

Why would I focus on someone else's practice if the point is to promote reflection on, and positive change in, my own practice? This is congruent with Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy, and Stackman's (2003) argument that self-study allows teachers to actively investigate the specifics associated with their particular contexts to create knowledge about teaching. Laboskey (2004) claimed that in teacher education "knowledge develops through a better understanding of personal experience" (pp. 827-828) and Loughran (2007) confirmed that "quality self-study aims to develop and better articulate a knowledge of practice" (p. 19).

With regards to colonialism in Canadian society, Henderson (2000) stated that:

In systemic colonization, no single source of oppression of dominion can be assigned causal or moral primacy. Colonization theories are embedded in every consciousness and work as routine or normal activities. Instances of intolerance are so pervasive in modern society that scholars cannot individualize them.

Systemic colonization cannot be reduced to one essential definition or a unified phenomenon; instances of oppression operate together as a collective consciousness and infect most modern theory. (pp. 29-30)

I realized that through self-study I would put myself in a position to discover whether the dynamics of power, colonialism, and White privilege described in the literature had become normalized, or embedded, into my practice. Awareness could consequently enable me to better articulate knowledge of my practice and work on transforming my practice and mitigating my contribution to these dynamics. This objective is reinforced by Bass (2002) who, in considering issues of race, Whiteness, and teacher education, maintained that self-study (in her case as a narrative) provides education practitioners

with a “process and a pathway toward change” (p. 20). Furthermore, East, Fitzgerald, and Heston (2009) claimed that self-study (in their case a dialogue) generates opportunities for paradigm shifts which are necessary for improving practice. While discussing adult education and issues of race and racism, Baumgartner (2010) opined that through critical self-reflection White adult educators can become aware of racism in their own practices so that solutions to personal and institutional racism can be initiated. Manglitz and Cervero (2010) underscored this point, maintaining that White educators are actually obliged to investigate how we contribute to maintaining systems of power so that we can then find ways of challenging those systems. A self-study offered the opportunity to examine my practice and hopefully come to understand and ultimately change it.

Scope of the Study, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

My intention was to observe my practice by examining three of its facets: (a) my andragogic practice when I engaged students academically in the classroom (see Table 1), (b) my administrative practice when I engaged the administration (see Table 2), and (c) my learning practice when I engaged literature on adult education, literature by Aboriginal scholars, and literature on White privilege (see Table 3).

Data collection. Sources of data were found in the following documents that I produced in my practice: (a) two separate book studies that I developed and delivered, one composed in spring 2006, and one composed 3 years later in the spring of 2009 (see Table 1); (b) the administrative documents that I produced and submitted to the administration between the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2009, all of which were annual reports with questions from the administration about the preceding academic year (see

Table 2); and (c) a series of journal entries I made from April 2007 to June 2009 while engaging the literature on Aboriginal education, White privilege, adult education, and self-study (see Table 3). I designed a final component of my project, an interview, to create a space where I could generate verbal reflections on my actions as an adult educator between January 2006 and June 2009. The questions were formulated by a former adult education colleague. This same person video-recorded my responses to the questions on November 12, 2010, and I transcribed the recording November 17 to 19, 2010 (see Table 4). Thus, the data considered in the study consists of four components: three types of documents plus the interview. Table 1 outlines the details of the two documents I used with students in the classroom as sources of data for the purpose of investigating my andragogic practice. Table 2 outlines the details of the three documents with which I engaged the administration as sources of data for the purpose of investigating my administrative practice. Table 3 outlines the details of the one document I used as a source of data for the purpose of investigating my learning practice: a document through which I engaged literature on adult education, literature by Aboriginal scholars, and literature on White privilege. Table 4 is an interview in which a former adult education colleague asked me questions he/she had formulated about my adult education practice.

Table 1

My Andragogic Practice—Documents with Which I Engaged Students Academically in the Classroom

Document name	Date developed	Date delivered	Purpose of the document	Structure of the document
" <i>The Education of Little Tree</i> Book Study"	Spring 2006	Spring 2006	To impart the reading, writing, comprehension, vocabulary, and research curriculum outcomes of the adult basic education English course I was teaching at the time.	This book study was comprised of a series of handouts based on corresponding chapters from the book with exercises designed to engender writing, comprehension and vocabulary skills. After chapter 13, I started doing mini-lectures to instruct students in doing research. I developed and assigned corresponding handouts.

Table 2

My Administrative Practice

Document name, date written and submitted	Purpose of the document	How the document was used
"Developmental Studies Annual Review Report", June 2006	To reflect on the school year September to June and write down my perspectives, judgments, and opinions of the year's events in response to specific questions on the document, as they had been formulated by College administration.	My supervisor gave me a copy of a blank template of the current year's report, containing all the questions that the College administration required feedback on. Once I had answered all the questions, I forwarded the report back to my supervisor. Once my supervisor had reviewed the report, she forwarded it on to the Department Chair who then collated the information and used it to inform future policy.
"Office Administration Annual Review Report", June 2006		
"Developmental Studies Annual Review Report", June 2007		
"Developmental Studies Annual Review Report", June 2009		

Table 3

My Learning Practice

Document name	Date written	Reason for the document	How the document was used
<i>Personal Observations Journal</i>	April 2007 – June 2009	The Master of Adult Education program suggested that I keep a journal while I was working through my program courses.	I used the journal as a place to record my thoughts, ideas, reactions, epiphanies, and so forth to the literature as I worked on my annotated bibliography and subsequently on a review of the literature. I wrote daily while working through the literature.

Table 4

Reflection on My Practice

Document name	Date recorded	Purpose of the interview	How the interview was used
<i>Interview</i>	November 12, 2010	I designed the interview as a space where I could reflect generally on my adult education practice. I intended it to add dimension to the document data as it would: (a) be a verbal source of data as opposed to written, and (b) be generated after I had resigned my position and therefore afford a different vantage point from which to view my practice.	I used the interview to respond to questions formulated by the interviewer regarding my adult education practice.

Data analysis. Data analysis occurred in two phases. In Phase 1, I read each document in its entirety, stopping frequently to write thoughts triggered by the material. These thoughts comprised a form of raw, uncensored analysis in which I wrote descriptions, interpretations, epiphanies, and speculations. In Phase 2 of my analysis I read material written in Phase 1 to identify patterns, combinations of perceptions, and consequent attitudes and behaviours revealed in the data. Using the knowledge gleaned from the literature, I studied these patterns and combinations to identify major themes and tease out insights about my various practices. As I intended to focus solely on my practice in my research project, approval from the Research Ethics Board was not necessary.

Findings

According to some authors, White racial identity and its associated attitudes of Whiteness are socially constructed (e.g., Frankenberg, 1999; Fuller, 2000). Garza (2000) stated that although “trying to extract whiteness from all the other quirks and tics people carry is a particularly difficult task” (p. 60), it is possible to identify an individual’s performance of a White identity by assessing the degree to which that person subjects others. She stated that “people who act out of whiteness do so with the surety of their own assumptions, and without a second thought to how others might or might not fit those assumptions” (p. 61). This conflation of an individual’s assumptions with truth as a marker of Whiteness is confirmed by the European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2010). Good (2000) argued that a White racial identity is indicated by dualistic, hierarchical thinking in which the world is broken down into different, unequal categories in which White is considered superior. In both cases, and according to

Frankenberg (1999), Whiteness is therefore an attitude, a way of being in the world which reproduces social hierarchies that position White people as superior to all other racial identities. However, this reproduction does not conform to specifics but rather, according to Hartigan (1999), is performed in infinite variations depending on an individual's environment, family, and class position. Furthermore, Garza (2000), Frankenberg (1999), and Paxton (2010) agreed that the attitudes of Whiteness are not necessarily confined to White people. Frankenberg (1999) revealed the prevalence of White identities among African American girls raised in predominantly White suburbs in southern California. However, along with Fuller (2000), both Garza (2000) and Frankenberg (1999) discussed how Whiteness is predominantly performed by White people.

In keeping with Alfred (2010), "I, as a subject in this dialogue, must situate my position" (p. 190). My position is that I am a White person. I was raised by White people, educated by mostly White people, and surrounded by mostly White neighbours. I am currently raising White children with a White husband, being educated by White people, and living next to White people. However, although I live in a context of White culture, given the assertions by the authors above of the socially constructed nature of racial identity, my context and skin color do not automatically confer upon me a White racial identity and its associated attitudes of Whiteness. In the first of several sections below, however, according to concepts of Whiteness found in the literature, I present instances that reveal attitudes of superiority and power-grabbing, patronising behaviours in my practice. Using concepts from the literature I then analyse my practice for how these attitudes and behaviours confirm my White identity and whether they are evidence

of my practice's colonial nature. In the final section I consider additional factors and tensions such as my love for the students, my aspirations to not perpetuate Whiteness and colonialism in the classroom, and the role of context and fear and how these dynamics impacted what I came to understand as my performance of Whiteness in my practice.

Assumption of superiority. Graveline (1998) discussed how in the Western education system Aboriginal people are taught about themselves not from their own point of view but rather by using the language and voice of Western peoples. My analysis showed that I not only taught the Aboriginal students in my classroom from the perspective of the White culture in which I was raised, using its Western-derived language and voice, but I presumed to know their intentions for engaging in adult education. Data from my interview revealed that I believed that students signed up for programming at the college out of an unconscious desire to assimilate Western cultural values. During the interview¹ I spoke of my desire to:

Accurately respond to the holistic needs of my students not just their unconscious desire to assimilate, disguised by their conscious desire to take an Office Admin course.

My assumption that I knew more about students' intentions than they did disclosed my unconscious belief that I had a superior understanding of them. I responded to the students based on my own unreflective views and convictions about them. Paxton (2010) described an incident in which he confronted senior management about issues of racism, claiming to be speaking "on behalf of people of color:" upon reflection, he stated that "the paternalistic superiority was undisguised" (p. 5). Similar to Paxton, my assumption

¹ All subsequent quotes from the data sources that present my voice (the interview, my learning journal, and my answers in the administrative reports) will be formatted in italics.

that I knew the students better than they may have known themselves revealed an attitude of superiority over the students.

I found that this belief in my own superior perspective permeated my practice. According to Yazzie (2000), “those who occupy positions of power and authority think they have the right to make decisions for Indigenous peoples, and they assume that their decisions are correct and acceptable” (p. 43). My analysis showed that because I was in a position of authority with respect to course and material development, I believed I had the right to act autonomously without soliciting student input. Believing that my decisions were correct and acceptable, I used curriculum objectives set by my employer and my own priorities as the sole rationales for the development of course materials, to the exclusion of student perspectives. This was confirmed in the interview when I described what I did to prepare for engaging Aboriginal adult learners:

I did a lot of photocopying. I read through the curriculum. I tried my best to locate resources that I thought matched the curriculum. I made a lot of phone calls and emails to people who had taught these courses. I did not make any contact with the clientele themselves. I looked at the college's mandated program and did my best to proficiently meet it and did my best to advertise to local people to come in and engage that program.

This behaviour contradicts Wlodkowski's (2008) comment that unless adult educators engage students and their cultural contexts in the planning process, they are unlikely to motivate adult learners effectively. More importantly it indicated how I assumed the superiority and rightness of my perspective over that of the Aboriginal students in my classroom.

Additional data shows that I structured exercises to prioritize my interpretation of course materials and did not offer space for students to express alternate interpretations. For example, a passage in the document *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), on which one of my book studies was based, stated that:

The Indian people are expressing growing concern that the native languages are being lost; that the younger generations can no longer speak or understand their mother tongue. If the Indian identity is to be preserved, steps must be taken to reverse this trend. (p. 15)

I interpreted this statement to mean that Indian identity was in the process of being lost and correspondingly formulated exercise questions based on this passage, asking students: “Do you think that the Indian identity could ever be completely lost?”, “Write down 3 ways that you see Indian identity being lost in (name of town)” and “For each one that you wrote above, write down a strategy for reversing that trend.” Reflecting now on this passage it is clear to me that it is not explicitly stating that Indian identity is being lost (as my exercise questions imply). Rather, it states that if Indian identity is to be safeguarded certain steps must be taken. The questions I asked, however, reflected my own assumptions and did not allow for students to interpret the passage according to their own experiences and perspectives. Lack of reflection on my assumptions led me to enforce my interpretation because I believed I was more capable of understanding the material than my students. I believed that they needed me and my superior understanding to mediate the material for them.

This example evokes Chamberlin’s (2000) assertion that Aboriginal peoples’ thoughts and imaginations are “sites of struggle for authenticity and authority” (p. 127). I

not only controlled the information they had access to, I controlled how they were supposed to approach, navigate, and consider this information. I further emphasized the authority of my interpretation and rightness by following the exercises with an evaluation process in which I assessed the correctness of their responses according to my interpretation of the passage. Borunda (2010) defined my assumption of superiority over correct knowledge as enslavement of the Indigenous mind through *edification*; Aboriginal students are educated—enlightened—by Euro-American ideas, subjugating their minds to Euro-American definitions of reality in order to supplant their heritage and cultural identities. Referring to her own experiences as an Indigenous child educated in the United States she stated that the imposition of European interpretations of reality upon her were “skilfully designed to ensure that the world in which I lived reflected the reality of the conqueror, the subject, and not the vanquished, the subjugated” (p. 50). The less my students and their culture existed, the more space there was for me to be right.

Power. According to my analysis, my assumption of superiority led me to assign blame to the students and the community for the challenges I experienced in my practice. In reports to the administration I blamed students for challenging my ability to deliver programming because I felt they weren’t responding adequately according to my expectations with regard to attendance, work habits, participation in the classroom, and overall commitment to their respective programs. For example, I wrote that the “instructor’s expectations of the students were not always met” and that there was a “lack of interest from the community in regards to program offerings despite community input into programming offered”. I concluded the report by declaring that: “We² try not to take

² During the academic year that I wrote this report, I job-shared the adult educator position with a colleague. Therefore, I used the pronoun *we* in this report.

it personally when things don't work out, but with the list of failures we experienced this year, we definitely dealt with a certain amount of frustration, especially when it stemmed from a lack of follow-through on the part of others." Upon reflection, I see that rather than taking responsibility myself, I believed that the students and community were at fault for the failures in my practice. When things went wrong it was because they were wrong. Even when faced with my own failures, I was still right.

Vella (2002) contended that "the power relationship that often exists between a 'professor' and learners is a function of a system where power is often used to dominate" (p. 86). I would argue that I categorized the students and community as wrong and myself as right in order to preserve my sense of power, and therefore my dominion, in the classroom and in the community. My desire for power was further demonstrated by an incident in which I manipulated students and community members into taking actions that I had identified as beneficial to me. In my learning journal I described how I made an appointment with the Band Chief after learning that a program applicant had secured employment with the Band and consequently dropped out of my program. My purpose was to discuss the applicant's options with the Chief. I did not ask the applicant himself to be present at the meeting. In the following excerpt from my journal written immediately following the incident, I described my growing awareness of my motivation for bypassing the applicant himself in my drive to have him remain in the program:

I want the program to run, I want the recognition that the program was here, that the partnerships went through and worked, that I am responsible for this achievement. And this interest and concern is what drove me to go the Band office and ask the Chief myself if the student could have release time. I didn't

trust the student to know himself or his goals well enough and I put myself in the middle. And when the Chief referred me to the student's boss and I went down to talk to his boss, not realizing that the young man on the couch that I had given only a cursory glance was the student himself, and I talked to his boss about whether or not the student could have release time with him sitting there listening to me talk about him like he was dumb and stupid and couldn't make his own decisions or run his own life.

Cervero and Wilson's (1994) following comments are poignantly applicable:

As planners negotiate, they can expect to construct the visible educational program that will affect the world in a certain way and reconstruct, less visibly, power relationships and interests in regards to "knowledge" (who knows what), consent (who exercises power and who obeys), trust (who cooperates with whom), and the formulation of problems (who focuses on and neglects which problems). (p. 160)

In the instance described above, I deliberately engaged someone who held power over another person for the purpose of acquiring power over that person myself, in order to ensure my agenda was successful.

Patronage. Given the previous examples, it is not surprising that my analysis also revealed that I believed that the Aboriginal students I was teaching were naive and unsophisticated and that I consequently assumed a patronizing stance towards them; I believed I understood things about them that they did not and I needed to help them see what I saw. For example, I thought that the students were marginalized and therefore not politically astute. I judged them as a conquered people with no discernible awareness of

themselves as such and consequently developed exercises designed to motivate them towards political thought and action. For example, in both book studies I chose documents that explicitly featured Aboriginal content and formulated exercises that asked students to focus on issues of race and racism:

Research systematized racism on the internet. Briefly describe what systematized racism means in the spaces below.

What is the difference between the way the white farmers feed themselves and the way that little Tree and his grandparents feed themselves?

My intention at the time was to promote consciousness raising amongst the students. I wanted them to associate dysfunction in their personal lives with the race-related oppression that Aboriginal people have historically and currently suffered in Canada. This is further evidenced by the questions I formulated for the study of *The Education of Little Tree* regarding issues of Indian identity such as: “Think about your own experience as an Indian child in school. Do you think the lessons you were taught reinforced the image you had of yourself as an Indian?” Another question later in the assignment directed students to “Think about what you learned in school. Come up with 5 topics or areas that you didn’t learn about, that you think would have helped you understand yourself, as an Indian.” Use of this question illustrates how I thought that if students considered themselves in possession of a racial identity and understood how racism operated in their lives they would be better equipped to address it and consequently make healthier personal choices. However, Hampton (1995) stated that a patronizing attitude from a White educator towards Aboriginal students constituted an act of war. In his words, “Cultural genocide is the open but unacknowledged policy of every

white educator who says, ‘These people must learn what we have to teach’” (p. 35). The link between my seemingly benign objectives and their potentially destructive effects is further clarified by Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2000), who observed that the aspirations of educators to empower adults to engage in full citizenship often results in unintentional and unacknowledged confinement of disenfranchised populations along racial lines.

In retrospect, my patronizing attitude also manifested in a belief that students would interpret exercise questions according to my expectations, and that I did not need to account for their own thought processes influencing the outcomes of the exercise. For example, in the *Indian Control of Indian Education* book study, I asked indirect questions—“If you wanted to attend post-secondary education, could you afford it?”—without consideration of the potential repercussions of the negative ways they might perceive this question. Although at the time I was asking the question to elicit a discussion of what resources were available to students so that they would not feel that post-secondary education was out of reach, my motivation was not obvious, and consequently the students were not necessarily aware of it. It is possible that because I did not explain this intention (I did not provide context) the students could have taken this question in any number of ways including as a possible reproof for their ignorance and lack of means. That my patronizing language was fraught with subtle, yet insidious racism was confirmed by Flowers (2010), who discussed how curriculum in adult education is often written in language that covertly impresses upon marginalized students of color the superiority of those in power. My analysis also highlighted how a lack of self-reflection and an accompanying patronizing attitude towards students resulted in my failure to account for student’s perspectives. This runs counter to the writings of Boone

(1985), Brookfield (1990), Cervero and Wilson (1994), Freire (1970), Merriam et al. (2006), Vella (2002), and Wlodkowski (2008), all of whom argued that effective adult education incorporates learners' perspectives in the education process. When the learners being ignored are also Aboriginal, the result is an example of a finding by The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1991) that Aboriginal perspectives, values, and issues are often ignored in training and education programs for adult Aboriginal learners.

Practice as colonization. It is now clear that in my previous practice I acted as though my values and my understanding of the students—their learning and their perspectives—were superior to those of the students themselves. I do not believe that my superior, patronizing attitudes and actions, as well as my desire for power over my Aboriginal students were coincidental with the fact that I am White. Rather, I would argue that I was manifesting the attitudes associated with a socially constructed White identity in the execution of my practice. As per Garza's (2000) definition identifying Whiteness as acting on the surety of one's assumptions without regard to how others may or may not fit those assumptions, I assumed I knew the right way to do things and I rewarded students for doing things according to my definition of the right way. At the time, however, I was not aware of this. I thought my practice reflected values common to the majority of people and was rooted in common sense. The following excerpts from Hampton (1995) and the learning journal I wrote during my practice exemplify these points:

The structure of the chapter is iterative rather than linear. It progresses in a spiral that adds a little with each thematic repetition rather than building an Aristotelian

argument step-by-step. Working with other editors of the *Harvard Educational Review* on a special Third World issue, I became aware of how deeply ingrained this iterative structure is, not only in my own thoughts but in those of Third World writers. Almost all the pieces by Third World authors were criticized by the other editors as repetitious, while I found new meaning in each turn of the spiral. An iterative structure is made explicit in the six-directional patterns of heaven, earth, east, south, west and north that I use in this chapter. (Hampton, 1995, p. 6)

Not more than an hour after I read this, I found myself reading over an assignment of one of the Aboriginal students. She was writing a sample cover letter to a fake employer. It's part of the curriculum section "Functional Writing". Before I even realized it I found myself congratulating her for saying things once, saying them sequentially and not being redundant; I think my exact words were "You did an excellent job of not repeating yourself." And she felt good afterward because she was finally catching on, finally learning to think like the white, Eurocentric curriculum dictates that she should think. She was starting to understand in unarticulated terms that thinking like an Indian was wrong and thinking like a white person was right. And when I saw her understanding this, I praised her. I praised her.

In the incident described here, it did not occur to me until I was writing about it afterward that I had formulated my criteria for assessing this student's assignment according to my culturally derived understanding of what is right; I just assumed that it was common sense that linear is right and redundant is wrong. According to Schick and St. Denis (2005), this unacknowledged quality of rightness felt by White identity holders is because

Whiteness itself is invisible—it is assumed to be the objective point of reference against which all other cultural values and identities are compared and consequently defined. Seminal Whiteness scholar Frankenberg (1999) stated, “Indeed, here we return to the proposition with which we began: that whiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends” (p. 6). I displayed superior and patronizing attitudes and at times looked to establish power over my students. I was White and right, unreflective as to the privilege of being a White educator, and unknowingly reproducing and reinforcing the values of my culture in my practice.

As I sought to inculcate my own perspective in Aboriginal students, I devalued their own perspectives, consequently devaluing the basis of their perspectives: their culture. That my actions were therefore colonial in nature is confirmed by the following assertion from Battiste (2000): “Cognitive imperialism, also known as cultural racism, is the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview” (p. 193). My unacknowledged attitude of rightness, grounded in the values of my White culture and acted out in my educational practice, defined me in part as a colonizer. Sandoval (1999) refined this understanding, asserting that it is the unacknowledged element of behaviour that renders it an effective colonial weapon. He maintained that the sense of unarticulated rightness, such as I demonstrated, can be explained by the dominant position that White identity confers. He wrote that:

the statement of fact is a form of authority supported by the structure of the dominant social order, but its confidence and knowledge are not spoken, heard, or

experienced by its users as socially constructed but rather as rising out of the nature of how-things-are-and-should-be. Thus, this figure for knowing and power creates a peculiar certainty-of-being felt by its practitioners to be only the honest, straightforward expression of what-is, of common sense. This is why the statement of fact and its devices, the aphorism and the maxim, wielded as though they are the most innocuous, innocent, and straightforward containers for common sense, contain all the force of supremacism. (p. 94)

Common sense rightness rendered the actions I took worthy, justified, and “normal” in my eyes at the time, allowing their colonial nature to remain embedded in my practice and allowing me to continue colonizing the Aboriginal students in my classroom.

Care in practice. The picture of my practice is unflattering and unforgiving. It is also incomplete. I carried out a practice that was often oppressive; however, it was also characterized by love. While hooks (2003) pointed out the taboo nature of discussing love in relation to teaching, Ngatai (2006) emphasized the necessity of doing so, writing that unless students feel loved and cared for in the classroom they will be unwilling to engage the emotional risks inherent in the learning process. In Lin’s (2007) opinion, education must be grounded in love, which in action means rather than “teaching to the test” (p. 363) education instead should embrace universal love, forgiveness, care, respect, and compassion for all people. Identifying with the sentiments of Ngatai (2006), in my practice I manifested Lin’s (2007) definition of love to a certain degree. I was respectful of students’ career goals, concerned for their academic challenges, and willing to accommodate their related needs. I was compassionate of their personal circumstances, which often involved addiction and violence, and sensitive to the way

those circumstances impacted their experiences in the classroom, for example, customizing course work for students with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. I cared for the students and I showed it in part by working hard to ensure their success (albeit according to my notion of success).

My love for the students is revealed in the data that shows I frequently advocated for the students with the institutional administration, asking the administration to change policies that I felt were barriers to student success. For example, with reference to entry requirements that I felt were too inflexible, I wrote on the 05/06 report:

I recommend that the ABE (Adult Basic Education) levels necessary for program entry be re-evaluated. For example, entry to Computers in the Workplace requires a student to function at a 130 level in both Math and English, however the course-work can be successfully accomplished by a student functioning at the 120 level.

My administrative reports indicated that in both 05/06 and 06/07 I argued for case-specific acceptance criteria that would be more efficient than current criteria, thereby expanding access to courses. I also looked for ways to improve my ability to serve student needs, petitioning the administration for training that would help me respond to students' different learning styles. In 06/07 and again in 08/09, I requested training for working with people affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In a similar vein, believing that a discrepancy existed between the English language used by the students and the English language used by the curriculum, in 05/06, 06/07, and 08/09, I asked the administration to provide me with ESL training.

My analysis detected additional evidence of my desire for student success where I advocated for myself and the improvement of my practice. Feeling that I was not fulfilling the potential effectiveness of a community adult educator, I asked the administration to provide additional supports so that I could become more capable of executing my mandate. For example, I requested that the administration have more detailed assessment rubrics so that I could more effectively place students within adult basic education courses. I also asked for clearer links to be made between curriculum requirements and course resources so that I would, for example, understand which texts and materials would facilitate which curriculum outcomes. In the interests of efficiency I also asked for greater collaboration with main campus. My intention was to avoid situations such as the time I faxed in student registration forms and they were not properly filed so I had to re-send them. Finally, I petitioned for more streamlined procedures for ordering and acquiring course resources so that I could purchase resources as quickly as possible.

I have no way to prove that the advocacy I undertook for the students was generated, at least in part, by love. However, while reviewing material for this self-study, I experienced grief over the inadequacy of my care for my students. I loved my students and yet it was not enough to keep me from colonizing them. I learned that self-reflection is required for an effective practice and that feelings are not always sufficient to guide sound practice. Hampton (1995) discussed the phenomenon of White educators, passionately concerned for their students, perpetuating oppression against them:

I have heard countless white educators passionately, even desperately, argue for their vision of Native education. Their desperation to save the Indian on white

terms makes me believe that it is their own world-view that the existence of Indians threatens. 'We are victims of the best intentions of white educators. (p. 34)

I would argue that the dichotomy of this situation—I loved my students and yet I oppressed them—was made possible in part by the colonial nature of my practice and my assumption of common sense rightness. As I adhered to common sense values, I assumed the integrity of my practice; therefore, I was not conflicted about its harmful effects (because I was largely unaware and ignorant of them) and I was free to love and serve my students as I saw fit. I believe this dichotomy was further supported by the fact that the professional context in which I was working—the institution, the curriculum, the country—was predicated on what Henderson (2000) called *Eurocentrism*.

In academic professorate, Eurocentrism is a dominant intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans. Modernists tend to think of Eurocentrism as a prejudice that can be eliminated in the same way that attempts have been made to eliminate racism, sexism, and religious bigotry. However, Eurocentrism is not a matter of attitudes in the sense of values and prejudices. It has been the dominant artificial context for the last five centuries and is an integral part of all scholarship, opinion, and law. As an institutional and imaginative context, it includes a set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality. Habitually educated and usually unprejudiced Europeans accept these assumptions and beliefs as true, as propositions supported by “the facts.” (p. 58)

Not only was I Eurocentric, but my professional context was Eurocentric—the context including the institution that I was working for—making it that much more difficult to discern the colonial impact of my practice and to see how I was hurting the people that I loved.

My conclusion was that being passionate about the students' success was an inadequate expression of love—my feelings of care towards the students motivated me to advocate on their behalf but were not enough to compel me to examine my feelings of superiority or my context, and thus I colonized them. Reardon (2001) claimed that education that fosters peace must teach students to see one another as linked by their humanity. In her call for new forms of education that focus on love, peace, and wisdom, Lin (2007) asserted that students “should be able to take the standpoint of others and treat each other as equal human beings” (p. 363). Given Pratt's (1998) explanation that teaching is an ideological activity in which educators' personal beliefs impact their actions in the classroom, I would expand both Reardon (2001) and Lin's (2007) understandings and claim that in education focused on love teachers must also realize that they are connected to students in a common humanity and treat them as equals. Such a perspective, however, is in contradiction to the messages of my personal history and racial identity which posit me as superior to the students. The question I am faced with is: as someone who genuinely cares for the students, how do I reconcile my intellectual belief in equality with a lifetime of contradictory conditioning? I believe that the answer to this question involves critical reflection, a theme I will discuss further on.

Aspirations to transform practice. During my studies I came across literature on Aboriginal experiences, colonialism, adult education, and White studies and I was

receptive enough to the arguments presented that my perspective on my practice was influenced and changed. This process of revising my ideas took place throughout the course of attaining my degree and is visible in the following excerpt from my journal in which I dialogued with several authors (the non-italicized font contains quotes from other authors, the italicized font is my own response). This excerpt refers to an early period when I was still considering working on the idea of holding a workshop for White adult educators to help eradicate their racism:

Positive emotion however sees the existence of racism and asks what can I do to resolve, transcend, process this part of myself. How can I use this part of myself as a springboard into growth for myself? For my practice? For my world?

How does all this relate to Freire's comment? –

The revolutionary's role is to liberate and be liberated with the people (Freire, 1970, p. 95).

If I'm the revolutionary and I want to liberate and be liberated with the people (the people being my similarly privileged white adult educator colleagues), I have to ask whether or not the people I want to liberate and be liberated with, actually want the same thing!!!

The teacher must be able to link her or his motivations to those of the other participants as an oppressed group and share with them their interest in liberation (Hart, 1991, p. 64).

What are the implications of this theoretical tenet for the situation I am interested in – linking my motivation as a white adult educator/oppressor to other participants who are also white adult educator/oppressors interested in acknowledging our role in blocking the liberation of the oppressed?

New ways of thinking about the world become possible, when the promise of those 'ways of thinking' can be realized in action—when there is a political apparatus at hand into which the energy of a transformed learner can flow.

(Heaney & Horton, 1991, p. 74)

This is exactly why I changed direction in my project—I realized that in my original intention there was no political apparatus, there was nothing that I could use to turn my energy. I felt like a damned up river, so much energy and willingness and personal resources and nowhere to direct them.

Doomed to failure from the start are the efforts of those who attempt to create emancipatory education with no vision of the future grounded in present or emerging events and organizations [*i.e., the political apparatus mentioned above*]. the ethical dilemma of the adult educator developing emancipatory education in the absence of concrete political options. (Heaney & Horton, 1991, p. 87)

However, this does not have to be complicated and highly structured etc,

Our notions of social change were not fancy. There was no elaborate postmodern political theory shaping our actions. We were simply trying to change the way we went about our everyday lives so that our values and habits of being would reflect our commitment to freedom. Our major concern then was ending racism. (hooks, 1994, p. 26)

Finding the literature on white privilege was like raising the dam, actually it was like dynamiting it. Well, to be perfectly honest it was like laying the dynamite around the dam. Reading the literature on Eurocentricity from an Indigenous point of view and then reading the literature on white privilege were all sticks of

dynamite. Researching the attitudes of other white adult educators will be like lighting the sticks of dynamite. Responding to my results in my future endeavours will be like blowing the dam. This is my political apparatus.

As the excerpt shows, I was captivated by these ideas. They helped me to understand that as a White adult educator I was probably exploiting the advantages inherent in my White identity. Upon reflection of this excerpt I can identify the nascent thought processes that ultimately lead to my self-study—a project predicated on my desire to change my practice. The literature greatly contributed to the realization that my practice was riddled with colonialism and instilled in me a desire to transform my practice and mitigate my contribution to these dynamics.

During the interview I was under the impression that I had, in fact, transformed my practice as a result of reading the literature. I clarified the difference between the career-based goals I had when I started as an adult educator and a goal I had at the time of the interview that would “*reflect my desire to mitigate my role in perpetuating White privilege.*” I went on to diagnose systemic ills caused by colonialism and prescribed solutions, describing how Aboriginal peoples are being affected by Western education and explaining how this could be remedied:

as far as I’m concerned a majority portion of the education system is dedicated towards assimilating Aboriginal people. Not educating them, assimilating them. Colonizing them...And that’s why we need to give education back to Aboriginal peoples so they can educate themselves; for themselves, by themselves.

I could re-articulate these ideas using the language of the theories because I had absorbed the literature; I thought I had transformed my practice. However, with reference to

Hampton's (1995) quote referring to the passionate White educator unwittingly perpetuating oppression, the very fact that I thought my opinions were progressive and constituted appropriate education for Aboriginal peoples marks me as still using an oppressive practice. In 1994 hooks declared that:

It's also really important to acknowledge that professors may attempt to deconstruct traditional biases while sharing that information through body posture, tone, word choice, and so on that perpetuate those very hierarchies and biases they are critiquing. (p. 44)

I had the appropriate words but by prescribing for Aboriginal peoples what I thought they needed, I used them in such a way as to render them a colonial weapon. With specific reference to adult education in Aboriginal settings, Haig-Brown (1995) described behaviour in which hidden agendas (conscious or unconscious) are masked by articulated agendas as "lip-service" (p. 91). In her view this is a strategy used by some adult educators so that we can continue to dominate and colonize, whether we think we want to or not.

Regardless of how much I might have wanted to change, I still felt superior to the Aboriginal students in my classroom. I felt that I was more advanced culturally, socially, and intellectually than the students I was serving. Not just my culture, *me*. I believed that I, as a person, was smarter, more savvy, more sophisticated, and overall more capable than they were. An excerpt from my journal written during my practice in which I dialogued with the literature demonstrates this attitude:

My perception of one of the Aboriginal students in particular--when she speaks English and her words, grammar are wrong and backwards according to

curriculum standards etc, it gives me a distorted perception of her, sort of like she's wrong and backwards. As she was speaking this morning I started to think about what she sounds like when she speaks Slavey. She's as fluent and as correct in Slavey as I am in English. Meaning that she is as right and forward facing as I am. Only in a different context. But I don't see that when I speak and interact with her, all I see and hear is the wrong and backwards English; the wrong and backwards Aboriginal person that I have been mandated to correct.

We set out in a rather broken down old truck, shot a few kangaroos for food and went to Wingelina. There they took me to the sites, sacred to them and to their ancestors and to see the damage that had been caused...As the day progressed there was an obvious increase in stature, an increase in authority in these men. Increasingly I became conscious of being a learner, someone who was being instructed in a mystery of infinite complexity...We went out that night and sat in a circle in the sand with two or three fires between us as they sang [one of the song cycles about their ancestors]. The songs were sung in a kind of Gregorian chant style melody while the rhythm of the song was beaten into the sand with a stick...In that circle I realised that these people, whom I had presumed to pity, had dignity and authority backed by a tradition infinitely older than our own.

(Coombs, as quoted in Chamberlin, 2000, p. 137)

Could I ever be humble enough to acknowledge that I could learn something from someone like this student? Could I ever acknowledge enough of my own conception of her as backwards to let myself see her in a position of holding equal or even superior knowledge? Or am I too convinced that I have all the answers

and if I don't have them then my culture does. I act under the misconception that I don't need her but she needs me – teacher as expert, students as ignorant. What a skewed dynamic this gives our relationship.

My culture positions itself as right and superior and so did I when I automatically overlooked the dignity, abilities, and inherent worth of this student. My actions here are reminiscent of Monaghan and Hansom's (2010) observation that during group projects, White adult education students frequently take over because they automatically assume that they are more capable than their Black counterparts, even when the Black students have greater education, higher skill levels, and more important positions in their workplaces. My comments in the excerpt about the student's language skills reflect Flowers' (2010) assertions that the English vernaculars or dialects used by some African American populations are commonly condemned by White English language speakers as deviant and/or defective. With regard to both capabilities and language, I did not see this student in terms of what she had to offer me, but rather in terms of what I needed to impart to her in order to correct her and make her better; in order to make her more like me. Henderson (2000) declared that "Eurocentric thinkers do not understand the elegance of Aboriginal thought and do not question the negative myths of colonial thought. They easily conclude that Aboriginal knowledge, consciousness, and language are irrelevant to contemporary Canadian thought (p. 252). So long as I believed that this student was irrelevant and I was right, there was no reason for me to change. That said, in acknowledging my superior attitude I believe I started a process of questioning its integrity and interrogating it for its harmful effects on both myself and the students I was intending to serve. I believe that this act of questioning and interrogation disrupted my

belief in my own superiority—I was no longer certain that I was right—and instilled in me a desire to change, but it did not necessarily offer me the alternative attitudes and behaviours essential to enact change in my practice.

Once I started reading the literature, I gained some awareness of how my practice was manifesting colonialism. I did not, however, know how to address such a monumental crisis; how to adjust and adapt myself beyond the limitations of my culturally imposed perspective, much of which I had always assumed was common sense. Harris (2006) argued that in Aboriginal communities non-community members “do not have the needed cultural frame of reference” (p. 124) to appropriately educate Aboriginal peoples. In part this is because of the differences in the thought processes between European-based cultures and Aboriginal cultures (Duran & Duran, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Harris, 2006; Little Bear, 2000). Leavitt (1995) described how differences in language alone cause massive distinctions between the two groups:

Speakers of North American Native languages do not necessarily organize reasoning according to a linear sequence of cause-and-effect, or axioms-theorems-corollaries, as do speakers of European languages. Instead they may keep a number of related ideas in mind, without assigning them an order or hierarchy. To linear thinkers, this approach may seem scattered and unfocused. Native-language thinkers, on the other hand, may find logical sequences rigid and narrow, because they themselves commonly approach an idea or a topic from many different directions. (p. 131)

The differences between my own cultural frame of reference and thought processes from the Aboriginal people I was engaging is apparent in the following excerpt from the journal written during my practice:

I've had 3 meetings with the Band to try and organize a partnership on the upcoming Job Readiness–Carpentry program. My first 2 meetings were with the Chief alone. At the first meeting I asked him to tell me what he wanted to see us doing. He talked about trades and career education and drug and alcohol education.

So I went back to my job at the learning center and I came up with a program that met all this criteria. 2 months later I had another meeting with him where I presented the program and asked him for 4 things – input for changes, an instructor for the drug and alcohol component, whether or not the Band had a specific building in mind they would like us to build, and a contribution either financially or in-kind.

He responded by talking about how the youth need to be better public speakers, they need to learn to present themselves well and participate in public meetings. I tried diplomatically, tactfully, gently, to bring the conversation back around to my agenda so that I could get answers. He would come around momentarily until he led off into another 'tangent' that in my mind, had nothing to do with what I was trying to discuss.

I left the meeting frustrated, not knowing what kind of conclusions we had even come to and, in my mind, without any answers. I was annoyed because I thought I had responded to his initial desires expressed in the first meeting and

yet now he was focused on public speaking and civic participation. I already had 2 months invested in developing the program.

I let another 2 months go by, vaguely annoyed and frustrated and finally got in touch to schedule another meeting. At this third meeting it was myself, the Chief and the Band Manager, a southern educated, white woman.

As far as I was concerned, this meeting was productive, stayed on track and all my questions got answered and then some. When I left I knew who was responsible for what, I knew where I stood in relation to the Band—I knew whether or not they supported the program—and I could predict how the relationship was going to appear in another 2 months. It was a totally different experience. The major difference? I spent most of my time in discussion with the Band manager with the Chief offering various comments and suggestions, but not participating fully in the conversation.

Later that same day: I just had a conversation with one of the Aboriginal students about some community issues. I ended up on a rant about social services and how appalling they are. At the end I looked at her face and I don't know if it was incomprehension or what, but I'm often not sure that local people understand what I've said after I've said it. It made me think of my experiences with the Chief. Do my students feel the same frustration and annoyance springing from incomprehension after I've completed a lecture or tried to answer their question or whatever?

I knew my practice was fundamentally flawed, but I did not know how to reconcile my inescapable cultural influences, the differences between my culture and the culture of the

students in my classroom, and my growing desire to change. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972) stated that non-Aboriginal teachers do not have the cultural fluency to either “understand or cope with cultural differences” (p. 19). They alleged that placing a non-Aboriginal teacher in a classroom with Aboriginal students forces both parties into “intolerable positions” (p. 19). It is indeed intolerable to know that my practice perpetuated colonialism and that I did not change it; that I did not necessarily know how to change it.

The role of context and fear. Immersed as I was, however, in a Eurocentric context, even if I had been able to conceive of alternative, non-colonial pathways in my practice, would I have been in a position to act accordingly? How much leeway did I have to decolonize my practice if doing so would leave my practice at odds with the colonial context that I was working within; the colonial context reproduced by the Eurocentric based institution that I was working for? Ultimately I was not hired to decolonize my practice; I was hired to carry out my duties as outlined by my employer. Is it even possible to decolonize my practice if the structure that I am working within requires me to serve its culturally biased, colonial priorities? Cervero and Wilson (1994) called program planning “a social activity in which people negotiate personal and organizational interests” (p. 4). They added that “pragmatic planners must be able to read organizational power relationships in order to anticipate conflict” (p. 115). If I had tried negotiating for non-colonial practice would I have created conflict between myself and my employer, particularly if it contradicted the mandate they had assigned me?

I did not know whether or not conflict would have emerged, but I believed it was a possibility. Personal pragmatism left me unwilling to risk losing my job. Although I

might have understood and agreed with much of what I read in the literature, I did not feel I could carry out actions consistent with this literature without contradicting the mandate of my position, upsetting my employer, and jeopardizing my job security. This echoes Boldt's (1998) assertion that teachers must buy into institutional ideology when they are hired and throughout their careers, and confirms Schied, Carter, and Howell's (2001) contention that "If management is able to define what behaviours are not only appropriate but also natural and unchangeable, then any questioning of those definitions becomes impossible" (p. 53). The link between my concern for my career and personal security and my reluctance to question the administration as a step towards decolonizing my practice is evident in the following excerpt from my journal written at that time:

To even suggest that this institution is perpetuating systemic racism in an official meeting with my official superiors is terrifying and unrealistic in my perspective. First of all, I have no proof: Second, I have no alternatives to offer and third of all, I would alienate my bosses and risk my career. I may bitch about the ideology but by perpetuating it, I accept it. I believe I need the job for financial and professional reasons.

I found that much of my practice was motivated by my concern for the administration to have a favourable opinion of me because I believed that I needed the job. I was determined that the administration should see me as a successful adult educator. In my interview I declared how

I was really excited to have a real job. I'd never had a real job. I'd been serving, waitressing and treeplanting since I finished university, since before I started university. This was a real job. Somebody finally said to me "You are capable

and I am giving you all of this responsibility. I'm giving you a learning center of your own with your own office and ten computers and a budget and you are the boss! You are the senior staff member on site and I'm going to pay you 90,000 dollars a year to control adult education in the entire community." I didn't have any goals, I was elated and revved up to show the people who had given me this opportunity that they had made the right decision. That was my goal.

Unarticulated, but that was the overriding feeling I had at the time. So all my energy went towards that. I think there were some overlapping effects of that goal in that I ended up serving some of the wants, needs, desires of some of the people in the community. But I don't think that was my overriding goal.

In fact, I was so concerned with the quality of my performance as an adult educator, and how that performance would be perceived by the administration, that due to both this anxiety and my inexperience in the classroom I generally followed traditionally accepted Eurocentric methods in my practice for their seemingly straightforward nature—I was familiar with them and, therefore, felt that I could perform them successfully. Brookfield (1990) called this equating “effective teaching with how well teachers perform a previously defined set of behaviours” (p. 193). Given the colonial nature of traditionally accepted Eurocentric methods of education (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hampton, 1995), this finding revealed that my fear of not receiving administrative approval motivated me to emulate practices that perpetuated colonialism.

Furthermore, I found that when I did attempt to decolonize my practice, I camouflaged my activities so that my employer would not realize that I was possibly diverging from my mandate. In my interview I describe how:

I would look at individual students and see their circumstances and see how and if there were ways that I could surreptitiously break down barriers for them without the administration knowing and thereby help them progress through the programs, then I would do that.

Shore (2001) argued that some adult educators, in an effort to cope with their lack of cultural fluency, seek ways to include “the Other” which, rather than allowing for cultural differences, obscures them in order to preserve harmony. Breaking down barriers for students without the administration knowing (e.g., coaching them through assessment tests as part of their application process) does not indicate radical divergence—or decolonization—from the mandate of my position. If anything, it shows me looking for ways to bring more students into institutional programming without creating conflict with my employer. However, as I felt I was acting in students’ best interests and (covertly) thumbing my nose at what I thought were unjust institutional standards, I felt like I was taking a radical action; that I was decolonizing my practice. In retrospect it seems like a reasonable response to the tensions I experienced as a result of my conflicting feelings: I wanted to decolonize, I did not know how to decolonize, and I was too scared to decolonize. In these camouflaged, surreptitious activities I found an outlet for my desire to decolonize, in ways that I could understand, but for which I did not have to be accountable.

Summary

The findings from this self-study show that in my practice I demonstrated an assumption of superiority over the Aboriginal students, made plays for power in order to situate myself in a dominant position with respect to the students, and frequently

patronised them as I sought to instill in them my own values and perspectives. When considered in the light of the literature that describes and defines colonial behaviour, it is clear to me that my practice was characterized by the oppressive dynamics of colonialism. At the same time, however, as I was engaging in oppressive, colonial practice against the students, I also genuinely cared for them. It is possible that my feelings of care helped me to be receptive when, upon reading the literature on Whiteness and colonialism, I recognized aspects of my practice as representative of these concepts. In any case, as the findings show, my recognition of my practice as having oppressive features stimulated a desire in me to change in order to mitigate these effects. This desire, however, was constrained by fear that changes I might make would contradict the mandate my employer expected me to fulfill. Due to this worry, when I did try to make changes that I thought were anti-colonial, I used methods that helped me disguise my activities and which, upon reflection, were still oppressive. This is because my ultimate priority was to preserve my employment and as such I was committed to carrying out my employer's Eurocentric mandate. Therefore, even when my activities might have contradicted that mandate, I still had to make it appear as though I was serving it; even the surreptitious things I did ultimately had to have a colonial outcome or I would have drawn unwanted attention to myself and risked my job security. This highlights the bearing of context on practice, a theme I will explore more extensively in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of undertaking this self-study was to examine the attitudes and behaviours involving dynamics of power, Whiteness, and colonialism present in my adult education practice of which I may or may not have been aware, an understanding of which could stimulate a process wherein I could start decolonizing my practice. In pursuit of this purpose I pored over documents (course materials I had developed, reports to the administration I had written, and a journal that I maintained while practicing) that I produced during my time as the community adult educator at the regional site, and the transcripts of an interview conducted by a former colleague more than a year after resigning this position. During these hours, I reacted and responded, writing down what had occurred to me. I then identified patterns of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours that would indicate the overall nature of my practice. Once I had identified the patterns, I then compared and analyzed them according to concepts found in the relevant literature for evidence of power dynamics, Whiteness, and colonialism. These stages were filters, or sieves, through which I ran the data in order to distill it down to the point where I could answer the project's ultimate question with clarity, precision, credibility, and authority.

In this exhaustive process, I focussed intently on my thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviour as I read through the documents, naming and describing them, complicated by the fact that none stood alone, but rather were all related in some way. Ellis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) commented on the extreme difficulties presented by the introspective, observant nature of auto-ethnographic work. However, she also quickly extolled the

rewards that accrue from navigating these difficulties as the auto-ethnographer gains meaningful understandings of both self and others. Loughran (2007) confirmed her remarks, discussing how “a central purpose of self-study is uncovering deeper understandings” (p. 12). My experience with self-study corroborates these claims. Upon the conclusion of the project, I had identified some of the attitudes and behaviours involving dynamics of power, Whiteness, and colonialism present in my adult education practice, thus answering the first half of my question and partially fulfilling my purpose.

I now understand my practice as passionate, committed, intelligent, and thoughtful. I understand that I loved my students and I loved my job and I tried to do what I thought was my best. At the same time I also understand how being gripped by fear affected my practice, which was characterized by power plays, Whiteness, and colonial behaviours. I had personal debts and obligations that made me anxious and concerned over job security; and I was steeped in White culture, causing me to exercise Whiteness in my practice in ways that were oppressive but of which I was unaware. In Brookfield’s (2010) opinion, racism is a systemic phenomenon, embedded and routinized in White people’s practices, habits, and structures from an early age. He claimed that “for whites not to have learned racism is impossible” (p. 314). I now realize that using the weapons of dominance afforded me by my culture (which I learned to use as I was socialized and educated in White-dominated systems), I perpetuated colonialism and racism in my practice because of a need for self-preservation; to ensure that my fears did not come true and that my ambitions were satisfied. I now better understand my practice, good and bad, beautiful and awful, inspiring and appalling, in ways that I never saw

before. This mirrors Bochner's (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) assertion that in autoethnography:

Our accounts seek to express the complexities and difficulties of coping and feeling resolved, showing us how we changed over time as we struggled to make sense of our experience. Often our accounts of ourselves are unflattering and imperfect, but human and believable. The text is used, then, as an agent of self-understanding and ethical discussion. (p. 748)

With an enhanced understanding of my practice, I believe that I am now in a position to make changes in my practice, thus answering the second half of my question and fulfilling my purpose. Despite my extensive exposure to relevant literature on colonialism in education in general, prior to this self-study I was unaware, and possibly in denial, of the oppressive aspects of my own practice. In this state I could not address these qualities because, ostensibly, they did not exist. The literature helped me name and define the character and effects of my practice and I now have the understanding necessary to address them. Bochner (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) asked: "What are the consequences my story produces? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?" (p. 746). Through use of self-study methodology and the concepts I found in the literature, I problematized my practice (Feldman, 2008) and raised pertinent questions about it in order to formulate possibilities for making changes in my practice. Thus my experience also confirms the value of what the literature on self-study urgently declares is one of its primary purposes—the creation of specific knowledge about educators' own practices (Clarke et al., 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, 2005; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Russell, 1998). Supported by theoretical concepts,

generating knowledge about my own practice put me into the best position for developing greater awareness and understanding with a view of changing my own practice. As one participant in Freese's (2008) study on pre-service teachers engaging in self-study commented: "The most important thing I learned about was, believe it or not, myself. And this isn't something that anyone can just read out of a book to learn about" (p. 74).

My experience with self-study also supports claims in the literature regarding the effectiveness of this methodology in uncovering inconsistencies between an educator's articulated values and demonstrated behaviour (Freese, 2008; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Laboskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007). This self-study revealed how my practice was characterized by contradictions: I loved my students and yet I engaged in oppressive practices towards them; I had an intellectual grasp of what colonialism in education looked like, was theoretically opposed to it, and yet routinely committed it. Laboskey (2004) commented that until these kinds of discrepancies are uncovered by self-study, educators are unable to properly understand their practices and work towards improving them. For my own practice, understanding is the first step in a process wherein I can start decolonizing my practice.

What This Self-Study Contributes to the Field of Adult Education

While executing my project I was challenged by anxiety because I felt that I was not doing it properly. However, according to Pinnegar (1998), there is not one right way to do a self-study. As Loughran (2007) suggested, "Rather, how a self-study might be 'done' depends on what is sought to be better understood" (p. 15). Loughran (2007) went on to argue the necessity of documenting learning through self-study in ways that demonstrate both rigorous scholarship and the applicability of personal theories to the

teaching field. Examples of how and why a self-study might be done can facilitate understanding for those who would otherwise be too fearful of making mistakes, or might not realize its applicability to their own practices. Documenting the process I went through in a self-study contributes to the self-study literature by providing an example of when, where, and how a self-study might be undertaken.

This self-study also demonstrates the effectiveness of using academic structures during the self-reflection process. Prior to undertaking this study, I thought I was performing self-reflection on a casual and informal but still regular-enough basis, and that I already knew everything that I might find out in a self-study, namely, that due to my reading I was aware of colonialism. Sitting down with my work and writing about it in depth—as opposed to just randomly thinking about my impressions of my work without recording anything—yielded new and important information about myself that indicated that not only did I manifest colonialism in my practice but I did so using the rhetoric of decolonization theory; my language was anti-colonial but my accompanying behavior was colonial. Only by engaging in a self-study was this knowledge revealed. This occurred because the accountability demanded by academic research compelled documenting, analyzing, and naming how my Whiteness resulted in colonial behaviours and power plays so that I could no longer pretend that my assumptions and beliefs about myself constituted reality. Rather, I was obliged to concede the illusionary nature of my assumptions and acknowledge the fact that my articulated values and my observable actions were contradictory. Therefore, in addition to describing the mechanics of how a self-study might be undertaken, this self-study highlights how integrating the features and

supports of formalized, structured learning into the self-reflection process offer the researcher more honest, realistic—and therefore more meaningful—results.

Self-Study and Adult Learning

I learned a tremendous amount while undertaking this self-study, a process which I will now analyze. Knowles (1980) characterized self-directed adult learners as individuals who manage their own learning. Given that the self-study required that I investigate problems specific to my practice, I believe that parallels can be drawn between Knowles' definition and the self-study researcher. I defined and managed my learning, simultaneously developing the kind of effective education promoted by Freire (1970) with which I learned to think critically about myself and my location in the world. Given Cervero and Wilson's (1994) discussion of the role of power dynamics in determining an adult learner's potential for self-directed learning, and Merriam and Caffarella's (1991) comments on how autonomous learning can only occur if the appropriate combination of circumstances is present, I conclude that doing a self-study was predicated on being in a favorable position that made it possible to arrange the right combination of circumstances for that learning.

All three positions that I hold in this self-study – researcher, learner, and adult educator – are invested with a certain amount of power. Given that both my project and employing supervisors had granted me significant autonomy, in these three positions I was able to choose what to learn and had the authority to arrange circumstances in the classroom to follow through with these choices. For example, using my rights as an employee, I arranged for my employer to pay my tuition and travel expenses, to hire a substitute adult educator, and to grant me 3 weeks of paid leave to attend the Foundations

Institute. Upon my return home, I scheduled class time in such a way that I could spend the first hour of every work day reading and reflecting on adult education, aboriginal culture, and colonialism in education in preparation for my project, because I deemed it worthwhile to my practice and nobody in the vicinity had the authority to contradict me. It is important to note that during this period I was not intending to do a self-study for my project, however, the self-study I eventually undertook was made possible by this preparatory work.

Wlodkowski (2008) observed that self-directed learning is a cultural skill that not all adults automatically possess; therefore, I must conclude that I was from the right culture for a self-study. This is supported by both Hampton (1995) and Stairs (1995) who, in contrasting Aboriginal learning styles with Eurocentric learning styles, identified independent, individualistic attitudes as characteristic of Western learners like me. Without these culturally derived skills, it would have been more of a challenge to pursue a project that required a fair degree of independence. I conclude, therefore, that my learning process was not just supported, but actually made possible, by an intersection of independence and conducive power dynamics in which I enjoyed a favorable degree of power, and the exercise of my White cultural skills.

This conclusion highlights the political nature of adult education (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Heaney & Horton, 1991; hooks, 1994; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; Pratt, 1998), and supports Pratt's (1998) remarks regarding how adult education reproduces societal power structures that provide privilege for some people over others. Would another individual who wanted to learn through a similar process of academic self-study, but who did not enjoy the power granted me by the status and rights

of my employment or the skills and identity of my White culture, be positioned to proceed with a self-study? In light of Tisdell's (2001) opinion that students and professors who vary from accepted ways (typically White and Eurocentric) of expressing knowledge risk marginalization in adult education, and several author's (hooks, 1994; Hall, 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) assertions that adult education preserves power structures that promote White interests, I would speculate that learning through a similar process of academic self-study would be difficult for non-White learners. This in turn raises the ironic observation that this self-study, the purpose of which was to stimulate a process in which I could start decolonizing my practice, was made possible by, and executed using, colonial structures. Exploring this observation is beyond the scope of this paper but I believe that further inquiry that seeks to understand the relationship between the reproduction of colonialism during the decolonization process would be helpful to anti-colonial work in the field of adult education.

Motivation and Transformation

Given the independent nature of a self-study project, internal motivation is required in order to complete the process. As both Wlodkowski (2008) and Vella (2002) explained, adult learners are more likely to be motivated if their perspective is the point of departure for the learning process and curriculum is based on what they need and want to learn. In my case, an interest in decolonizing my practice within the context of being a White adult educator working in an Aboriginal community was at the heart of this self-study, and so I was not only motivated to engage in this learning process, I was excited and invested in the learning process outcomes.

I believe that because I was motivated and invested, my learning was inevitably transformational, a process described in adult learning literature as that of becoming, discovering, and realizing oneself (Hart, 1991; hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 1991), challenging the pre-existing frame of reference, and making changes. Roth (1991) described transformational learning as “becoming aware of habits of expectation and taking action to change them” (p. 132). Although this self-study could not lead to the implementation of immediate changes in my practice due to circumstances, the essence of my self-study experience matches Roth’s description. I became acutely aware of how ideas, feelings, attitudes, and behaviour associated with Whiteness influenced my practice; because of this awareness my perspective has been transformed in terms of how I perceive my former behaviours, which I considered common sense, but which I now understand were culturally motivated and at times oppressive to members of aboriginal cultures.

Whiteness, Racism, and Adult Education

Based on the generally agreed upon notion that White privilege and racism are endemic to adult education (Carter, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Manglitz, 2003; Shore, 2001), it is inevitable that these dynamics are present in classrooms where White adult educators are teaching Aboriginal students. There is, however, very little scholarship by White adult educators on how we might be perpetuating White privilege and racism against Aboriginal students in our practices. I believe that such studies are necessary, particularly with regard to what Cross (2005) referred to as *the new racism*—the invisible, insidious operations of power that enable the preservation of White privilege by White people through covert, often unconscious actions that protect and perpetuate the ideology

of White supremacy. Referencing Haney Lopez (2007), Misawa (2010) succinctly described the process involved in the new racism:

because people do not talk explicitly about race or skin color, racial discrimination has become implicit. Racism or race-based crimes used to be explicit, but now these crimes are subtle, invisible, and oftentimes even more damaging to people of color than explicit crimes. (p. 179)

As I found in this study, the things I did in my practice were so *normal* that I was unable to recognize them as racism. My experience is congruent with many authors' observations of the unmarked, normalized nature of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1999; Harper, 2000; McIntosh, 1988; Muraleedharan, 1999; Rodriguez, 2000; Sandoval, 1999; Twine, 1999) and reveals that covert acts of racism are often not intentionally racist, but rather result from an unarticulated, unacknowledged belief in the superiority of White culture, often referred to as common sense by members of the culture. Closson (2010) argued that in adult education this kind of perspective "allows white faculty to escape responsibility and accountability; once racism is defined as an overt act, faculty can exempt themselves as having committed no such act" (p. 171). In this study I sought to expose how I engaged this new racism in unintentional, implicit ways. The conclusions offer other White adult educators working with Aboriginal students an opportunity to reflect and examine what the new racism might look like so that they may be more prepared to identify when and where we are responsible for its perpetuation. This is akin to what Bolgatz (2005) referred to as *racial literacy*, a skill set that enables individuals to think critically about racism in order to challenge it. In offering other White adult educators an understanding of the language and concepts identified as colonialism, White

privilege, and dynamics of power in my own practice this study contributes to a form of racial literacy in the field of adult education.

Discrepancy in a context of Whiteness. This self-study exposed discrepancies in my practice between my articulated ideals and my actual behaviours. For example, although I had read the relevant literature and my perspective was enhanced by it, during the reading process preceding the self-study I did not shift my overall paradigm and change the way I practiced. As revealed in the self-study, my reading enabled me to articulate what colonialism in adult education looked like and why it needed to be eradicated while I simultaneously continued feeling and behaving in a colonial manner towards the Aboriginal students. Using the language I learned by studying the theory, I was able to sound as though I was not racist or colonial while still practicing in a racist and colonial manner. According to hooks (2003), the covert, insidious nature of the new racism creates space wherein liberal-minded White people can be consciously concerned with ending overt acts of racism while unconsciously maintaining White supremacist beliefs and assumptions that perpetuate racism in implicit, difficult to identify ways. Several authors (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998; Boldt, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) noted that this kind of discrepancy between adult educator's articulated agendas and their observable behaviour is common in the field of adult education. The discrepancy that I displayed served to marginalize students who were not from the dominant social group and supported Johnson-Bailey's (2001) remarks that the hidden agendas of adult educators are often a means to maintain White power in adult education by reproducing exclusionary power dynamics.

The discrepancies apparent in my practice could be seen partly as the inevitable product of the context in which I was working. During the course of my employment (which spanned the period of my reading), I do not recall ever discussing racism, colonialism, or White privilege formally or informally with my primarily White colleagues or supervisors. This is consistent with the literature as Ngatai (2010) commented how in academic environments “no one wants to talk about racism” (p. 95). Alfred (2010) commented that because they are not aware of the commission of observable, overt acts of racism most Whites do not consider racism an entrenched problem in workplaces, schools, and public service agencies. The irony of this situation is that many authors agreed that Western adult education institutions are agents of Whiteness, reproducing White privilege in a myriad of ways whether talking about it or not (Baumgartner, 2010; Brookfield, 2010; Manglitz & Cervero, 2010; Shore, 2001). As an employee working in this environment, it is logical that I reproduced a similar dynamic in my practice.

The difference between my employers and me is that to my knowledge, my employers were not aware that they were reproducing White privilege. I, on the other hand, was becoming increasingly aware that my practice was doing just that. However, given my position in the chain of command relative to my employer, I did not feel financially secure enough to try to resolve the contradictions I observed in my practice. As my actions demonstrate, I was so concerned with job security that I went so far as to camouflage my attempts to decolonize my practice because I did not want my employers to feel threatened by these actions. I had no evidence that they would have been threatened, but my perception that this was the case was sufficient to motivate me to

engage in subterfuge. With regards to the preceding discussion about the discrepancies in my practice and my failure to address them, in my view trying to reconcile my pro-decolonizing perspective with my colonial actions would have been a visible activity that might have put me at odds with my employer's priorities. Though not necessarily grounded, this fear was encompassing enough that it neutralized my motivation to bring my ideals and practice into greater, non-colonial congruency. However, this would imply that my practice operated outside the pressures of the racialized, colonial environment in which I was employed. Andersen (2003) stated that, "there is an assumption here that if white people would only become conscious of their whiteness, more just behavior would follow" (p. 25). She argued that anti-racist work is more complicated than individual action, as racism is reproduced by forces beyond the individual. In the case of my practice, although I became aware of how I was reproducing White privilege, I could not conceive of how an anti-colonial practice could be initiated without putting me at odds with my employer, potentially triggering personal financial consequences.

My fear that decolonizing my practice might jeopardize my career's duration with this employer is supported by Manglitz's (Manglitz & Cervero, 2010) description of White colleagues whose anti-racism activism has rendered them pariahs in academic settings because other Whites now view them with suspicion or as radicals. I believed that decolonizing my practice in an environment in which Whites avoided discussing their own social, political, economic, and cultural investment in their Whiteness (Yancy, 2004) would have put me at risk of displeasing my employer, a situation that I felt would be tantamount to risking my job. Sheared et al. (2010) commented that "it is important in this resistance movement to understand that power is used to determine the norms and to

influence what is examined and what goes unexamined, to determine acceptable and unacceptable behaviour” (p. 288). Fear of acting on my personally felt priorities and an environment not conducive to anti-colonial practice limited my behaviour and the questions I asked in order to conform to real or perceived institutional norms.

This situation recalls Frankenberg’s (2001) observation that “whiteness as a site of privilege is not absolute but rather crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage and subordination; these do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it” (p. 76). In my practice, there were axes where I had power over others and axes where others held power over me. In both cases, whether I exercised White privilege in my practice as a right or a compulsion, I did it to achieve ends which were congruent with the context I was working in. My behaviours reflect Andersen’s (2003) thoughts about the inseparability of White choices from the social, political, and economic systems in which they are embedded.

However, this self-study also shows that in between these axes I found space to examine my practice and articulate the dynamics of which I had been previously unaware. In this process, I disrupted my beliefs and became conscious of my context, identifying as per Birt (2004) the ways in which my context was limiting. Through the lens of Whiteness, I observed my practice in terms of power and my location relative to others, questioning my so-called common sense behaviours. As I came to recognize the Whiteness and power dynamics at play in my practice, so did I begin to question what I had formerly assumed to be its normal nature, which I had measured by how well it conformed to the seemingly common sense ideals of good practice I had been taught. I now realize that while many of the things I did were constituted as common sense ideals

of good practice, they were often vehicles through which I perpetuated colonialism and benefited from White privilege in a context that promoted power inequities and expected this kind of behavior.

Context and choice in anti-racist work. Manglitz (Manglitz & Cervero, 2010) noted that as beneficiaries of White privilege, White adult educators have a choice as to whether or not they want to confront racism, unlike people of color who are forced to confront it as its unwilling victims. This choice is not simple but rather is made complex by the context of Whiteness and power dynamics. In this vein, Paxton (2010) suggested that due to the tensions inherent in the process of being White and challenging Whiteness, if he had not had the loving support of colleagues of color he would have retreated from examining his Whiteness. I have concluded that given these tensions and in light of Paxton's comments, White adult educators need to locate the spaces in their practices, between the axes of power by which they are constrained, where self-reflexive work is possible. This process, which Brookfield (2010) called foundational to eradicating racism in adult education, is a necessary starting point. Without it, the axes themselves remain invisible and un-interrogated, dictating adult education practices that continue under the guise of common sense.

Ideally, I would have changed my practice immediately upon becoming aware of its oppressive nature, but the reality was a more progressive awareness of the situation and the possibilities; the choice to enact immediate change was not as black and white as Manglitz (Manglitz & Cervero, 2010) implied. Manglitz's (Manglitz & Cervero, 2010) implication is potentially naive and counterproductive as it tends to ignore the systemic tensions that White adult educators face when undertaking decolonization work. These

systemic tensions include the political, economic, and social power hierarchies that situate Whiteness as the hegemonic center and enable White perpetuation of racism (Andersen, 2003). I believe that greater strides in anti-racist work in adult education will be made if connections between educators' personal situations and their political, economic, social, and global contexts are included in the relevant discourse. This suggestion is in keeping with Andersen's (2003) argument that anti-racism work is not as simple as Whites denouncing White privilege and identity. To reduce it to this simple decision and action "does little to unseat the apparatus of racial power," which she argued is located in both the individual and institutional reproduction of Whiteness (Anderson, 2003, p. 30).

The idea that whites just individually give up their whiteness seems ludicrous if one understands that racial identity is not just an individualized process but involves the formation of social groups organized around material interests with their roots in social structure, not just individual consciousness. (Andersen, 2003, p. 30)

The question I am left with is not concerned with why did I not decolonize my practice upon realization of my oppressive practice, but rather what extent of decolonization of my practice was possible within a colonial system and, given my recognition of the contextual constraints on my practice, how can effective anti-racist work in adult education be undertaken in this contradictory setting?

This is a question which I believe could be explored through the use of anti-racist dialogue. In writing about effective anti-racist work in adult education, many authors stressed the necessity of engaging in dialogue with others (European American

Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2010; Manglitz & Cervero, 2010; Monaghan & Hansom, 2010) in order to understand the way race and racism influence and direct our behaviour, and most importantly, to inject this work with accountability. Discussing the importance of maintaining authentic relationships with others while attempting to perform anti-racist work, O'Brien (2003) stated, "it is in interpersonal relationships that accountability is sustained. The personal is indeed political, as one's political action is inspired and adjusted by the personal connection of authentic relationships" (p. 260). With this quote O'Brien highlights the importance of relationships and supports the helpful nature of dialogue; O'Brien also makes the connection between individuals and their political environments. This begs the question: is anti-racist dialogue influential enough to change the political actions of White adult educators to the point where they are able to impact their racialized contexts and mitigate the systemic reproduction of White privilege? I believe this topic requires future research.

Love and guilt in anti-racist work in adult education. The findings clearly show that I felt a tremendous responsibility to care for students. I advocated for them and I tried to improve my practice in an effort to serve them better. The findings are also clear that I simultaneously engaged in what I now realize were oppressive and colonial practices. Clearly, love is not enough to transcend the contextual constraints. My love for the students did not safeguard me against hurting them; neither did it offer an antidote once I had realized the colonial nature of my practice. This is an important point as it again highlights the systemic aspect of racism (Brookfield, 2010); as my acts of love bear out, my colonial practice existed not because I am a bad person intent on hurting students. Rather, my colonial practice was an inevitable consequence of the racist,

colonial systems which socialized and educated me to wield my Whiteness as a tool to preserve my personal priorities.

Nonetheless, I am not divested of responsibility to address such colonial practice, but I am in a position to relinquish personal guilt for it, guilt which, as pointed out by the European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2010), can serve to make White people like myself defensive, alienating us from anti-racist work. I have had to learn to extend compassion and understanding to myself and avoid the pitfall of unproductive guilt. I agree with Brookfield (2010), who emphasized the destructive nature of individuals identifying themselves with their racism. "If racism is seen as an act of individual choice or individual sin, then acknowledging one's racism becomes mixed up with viewing oneself as an evil purveyor of hatred and bigotry" (p. 314). I conclude that White adult educators need to see themselves as products of a system in which the priority is to preserve White privilege. Such a realistic perspective is necessary if adult education is to conceive of realistic anti-racist strategies conducive to dismantling White privilege in the field.

Conclusion

The new racism is insidious and pervades society and the field of adult education and the practices of White adult educators. The fact that it is disguised as common sense normalizes it and renders it elusive; easy to overlook and easy to deny. White adult educators socialized by the dominant culture and working with Aboriginal students inevitably maintain attitudes that reproduce colonialism and oppression. I loved and advocated for my students, read about Whiteness and colonialism in adult education, and still perpetuated countless, subtle *microaggressions* (Brookfield, 2010) of colonialism in

the classroom every day. As a White educator I can no longer deny that attitudes of Whiteness only prolong the problem, entrenching racism and colonialism further and passively condoning the ongoing oppression of Aboriginal adult education students.

More menacing, however, is the possibility that White adult educators will assimilate theories about racism, colonialism, and Whiteness without shifting paradigms and actually changing their practices. As I demonstrated, my ability to cloak my racism and colonialism in anti-racist rhetoric and the cutting-edge language of White studies led me to believe that I was not perpetuating racist practices. It enabled me to submerge my racist actions, making them difficult to recognize and harder to discontinue. I was only able to identify racist and colonial behaviour through rigorous self-study. However, even with the transformational awareness I gained through self-study I did not have the opportunity to change significantly my practice due to circumstances. I believe that my experience points out the necessity of a three-pronged approach to anti-racist work by White adult educators: (a) individuals must examine, understand, and acknowledge their own socially instilled racist and colonial attitudes without taking on the debilitating feelings of guilt; (b) individuals must engage in sincere studies of their practices to uncover the specific form these practices take in their specific contexts; and (c) individuals must incorporate dialogue and its attendant accountability in their efforts to eradicate such practices and remain vigilant.

I loved the students and I engaged in colonial adult education practice. I am now knowledgeable about how I did this and I believe that I need to begin dialoguing with others in order to initiate changes in my practice and my context. I am hopeful about

these preliminary steps on my path as an anti-colonial worker in the field of adult education.

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