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Dialect speakers, Academic Achievement, and Power:
First Nations and Métis Children
in standard English classrooms in Saskatchewan

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation focuses on the negotiation of power in schools and the social and academic experiences of First Nations and Métis children who speak a non-standard variety of English called Indigenous English. Indigenous English is a dialect of English spoken by many Indigenous peoples in Canada; it is especially discernable in the Prairie Provinces, yet it is not widely recognized by the majority of the population. This thesis explores the experience of dialect speakers of Indigenous English in the standard English School and educator perceptions of their literacy and language abilities.

This classroom study was conducted in an urban community in Saskatchewan. The focus of the research was a Grade 3/4 classroom with 25 students, six of whom were interviewed for this study. Additionally, interviews were conducted with eleven educators. The results of this study indicate that the First Nations children of this study speak a dialect of English that differs phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically from the Standard English spoken in Saskatchewan. The results of this PhD research indicate that Indigenous English-speaking students use discourse behaviour that differs from that of their White settler classmates. In examining the children's speech and classroom behaviour, it becomes apparent that silence, teasing, and story telling are important discourse characteristics of Indigenous English.

The findings indicate that White settler educators demonstrate little awareness of the systematic linguistic and discourse characteristics of Indigenous English and that this lack of awareness is apparent in White settler educators' descriptions of their

approaches to teaching, literacy development, classroom management, evaluation, and referral of First Nations and Métis students for speech and language assessment. Other findings include denial of difference, and a race/class divide in the school and community.

Possible resolutions to the problems faced by these students may include teacher training and dialect awareness classes. This field has not been adequately explored and further research is needed to discover viable solutions to the issues experienced by dialect speakers of Indigenous English in the Standard English classroom.

Résumé

Cette étude explore les rapports de force dans les écoles ainsi que l'expérience sociales et académique des élèves Métis et Autochtones utilisant une forme non-standard d'anglais appelé « Indigenous English » ou anglais indigène. L'anglais indigène est un dialecte de l'anglais parlé par plusieurs autochtones au Canada. Il est particulièrement présent dans la région des prairies malgré qu'il ne soit pas généralement reconnu par la population majoritaire. Cette étude traite de l'éxpérience vécue par les enfants qui parlent l'anglais indigène dans une école d'anglais standard.

Cette étude a été réalisée dans une communauté semi-urbaine de la région centrale-est de la Saskatchewan. La collecte de données a pris place auprès d'une classe de troisième et quatrième année du primaire consistant de 25 élèves. De plus, des entrevues ont été passées avec six élèves ainsi qu'avec onze enseignants et assistants de classe. Les résultats de cette étude indiquent que les enfants Premières Nations de cette étude parlent un dialecte d'anglais qui diffère phonologiquement, morphologiquement, syntaxiquement, et lexicalement de l'anglais standard de la Saskatchewan. Les résultats de cette recherche indiquent que les élèves parlant l'anglais indigène ont des comportements langagiers qui diffèrent des comportements langagiers des élèves parlant un anglais standard. En examinant le discours des élèves en classe, on remarque que les silences, les taquineries et les discours narratifs sont les caractéristiques principales de l'anglais indigène.

Les résultats indiquent que les enseignants d'origine européenne n'ont pas conscience des caractéristiques linguistiques de la langue et du discours de l'anglais indigène. Des exemples de ce manque de sensibilisation sont observables dans les

descriptions que les enseignants font des approches pédagogiques, du développement de la littératie, de la gestion de classe, de l'évaluation, ainsi que des demandes de services en évaluation orthophoniques. Autre resultats incluent le déni de la difference ainsi qu'une division de race et de culture dans l'école et la communauté.

Des solutions potentielles aux problèmes vécus par ces élèves pourraient résider dans la formation des enseignants ainsi que dans une sensibilisation aux particularités du dialecte indigène dans le milieu scolaire. Cette problématique, encore relativement inexplorée, requiert une attention particulière du monde de la recherche en éducation afin que des solutions viables soient implantées auprès de ceux qui parlent l'anglais indigène.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Purpose of Study

The Canadian constitution recognizes three Indigenous groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The combined population of these people in Canada is roughly one million. In my home province of Saskatchewan, Indigenous peoples represent approximately 15% of the provincial population (http://www.gov.sk.ca/aboutsask). In Saskatchewan, one in four school-aged children is First Nations or Métis (Minister's National Working Group on Education, 2002). Findings from a June 2005 report issued by Statistics Canada highlight the need to improve Indigenous students' educational attainment in Canada (http://www.statcan.ca /Daily/ English /050623/d050623b.htm). This Statistics Canada report indicates that Indigenous youth across Canada were less likely than non-Indigenous youth to have completed high school. Specifically, this study explains that only three in ten of all Canadians aged 15 and older had less than high school graduation in 2001 in contrast to almost one-half of those who self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the same age group.

In his study related to Indigenous Peoples in Canada's labour market, Mendelson (2004) makes reference to the high school incompletion rate in the Indigenous community and explains that "we see a pattern of generally rising relative rates as we move from the east to the west, to reach their highest levels in Saskatchewan's cities and then diminish as we go further west" (p. 23). The current rate of educational success for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan is not adequate and current attempts to improve it seem to be insufficient. To create effective reform

that will lead to improvements in the educational experiences of Indigenous Peoples, it is important to explore the factors that contribute to the creation of this problem. Michaels and Collins (1984) explain, through reference to the work of Gumperz and Hersimchuk (1975), Erickson and Shultz, (1977) and Philips (1983), that "learning is mediated through complex interactive and interpretive processes. Whether learning takes place is a function of the appropriateness of communication in particular contexts, in light of participants' discourse backgrounds and expectations" (p. 218). Following this line of reasoning, it can be argued that differences between the Englishes spoken by Indigenous Peoples and White settlers in Saskatchewan is one contributing factor to the lower levels of academic achievement among Indigenous Peoples. In this dissertation, I will explore the differences between these Englishes, the problems of communication that result from differences in the discourse backgrounds of White settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan, and the relationships between the two speech communities.

The relationship between language and Indigenous Peoples has been a controversial subject in Canada since first contact. The legacy of the residential school, and its devastating effects on Indigenous Peoples in Canada, continue to echo through the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities of Canada (Frideres & Reeves, 1993). Indigenous languages were undeniably affected by this period of Canadian history. In 2001, 235,065 Indigenous Peoples in Canada, of a total possible 976,305, reported having knowledge of an Indigenous language (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/AP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=P R&Code1=47&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Saskatchewan&Se

archType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=&GeoCode=47). These numbers indicate that approximately 24% of the Indigenous population is able to speak or understand an Indigenous language. The remaining 76% of the population are, in large part, unilingual speakers of English, with the exception of roughly 5%, who claim French as a mother tongue.

While the focus of this dissertation is not Indigenous language revitalization, I do want to briefly mention the importance of such projects. Protection of Indigenous languages is all the more urgent because their preservation and revitalization are not simply about preserving a language for interest's sake or nostalgic purposes. Rather, language is directly related to "ways of knowing" or traditional learning and knowledge. Marie Battiste (2000), Mi'kmaw professor, explains that Indigenous languages serve as a transmitter or designer of Indigenous worldviews. From an Indigenous perspective language is alive, has a spirit and purpose of its own, and with the loss of an Indigenous language comes a loss in understanding the world. Battiste argues that "where Aboriginal knowledge survives, it is transmitted through Aboriginal language" (2000, p.199). Battiste's arguments reveal the extent to which it is imperative that schools are structured with the goals of revitalizing Indigenous languages. The importance of language revitalization projects cannot be understated.

There is, however, another reality of language use amongst Indigenous Peoples--also linked to learning--that receives little attention, that of Indigenous English. This variety of English, and its speakers' experiences in the school context, is the focus of my dissertation. In the field of linguistics, it is generally accepted that no language or dialect is more developed than another; there is no basis for the

evaluative comparison of languages or dialects. As such, no intellectual deficits can be attributed to speakers of non-standard varieties of language. These basic principles of linguistic equality are not necessarily as readily accepted by society in general. In the educational context, opposition and intolerance towards certain languages or dialects becomes problematic when ill-informed individuals rise to positions of power. Misconceptions regarding linguistic equality--when held by educational policy makers, administrators and educators--have devastating effects on the academic and social development of speakers of less desirable languages or dialects (Chambers, Schilling-Estes, & Trudgill, 2004; Tollefson, 2002).

The non-acknowledgement of the existence of Indigenous English is apparent in the Saskatchewan education system. First Nations and Métis learners who speak this variety of English are considered by many to be using a deviant, substandard form of English (Heit & Blair, 1993). The principal aim of my doctoral research and this dissertation is to promote a better understanding of the experiences of Indigenous English speakers in a system that is ignorant of, or refuses to acknowledge, the legitimacy of this variety of English. I hope that the findings of this study can be used to further address the educational structure and context provided for these children. Before continuing this discussion, it is important that I define the terms that I will use in this dissertation.

2. Definition of Terms

2.1. Dialects

Simply stated, a *dialect* is a non-standard variety of a language that differs systematically from the dominant standard variety on phonological, morphological,

lexical levels and, frequently, in terms of pragmatics, syntax, and non-verbal language as well.

2.2. First Nations

First Nations is a term, chosen by Indigenous Peoples, that refers to *status* or *treaty Indians* (those legally entitled to the benefit of programs under the Indian Act) and *non-status Indians* (those people who self-identify as First Nations but who, due to Canadian legislation, have either had their status removed or never held status).

2.3. Indigenous Peoples

The term *Indigenous Peoples* is used in this dissertation to refer to all three groups of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This umbrella term can be used to describe status and non-status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The plural *s* is commonly added to *People* to acknowledge the diversity that exists in the Indigenous population in Canada.

2.4. Indigenous English

The term *Indigenous English* refers to the English varieties spoken by First Nations and Métis people in Canada. As a result of geographical and historical differences, there are a number of such dialects among First Nations and Métis peoples. For the purposes of this discussion, *Indigenous English* will refer to all varieties of English spoken by First Nations and Inuit people in Canada. As a linguistic system, Indigenous English differs systematically from standard English (Dubois, 1978; Leap, 1993; Olson Flanigan, 1987; Schilling-Estes, 2000; Wolfram, 1984). The use of silence, story telling, and teasing are also important discourse

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characteristics of Indigenous English (Darnell, 1981; Ferrara, 1999; Leap 1993, Little Bear, 2000).

2.5. Community School

The Community School Program was introduced in Saskatchewan in the late seventies in an effort to address the problems of urban Indigenous poverty. Victims of unemployment, poverty, and discrimination are often alienated from social and community institutions. In response to these problems, the provincial department of education, Saskatchewan Learning, chose to implement the Community School model. This model requires each school to have, in addition to regular staff, a community school coordinator, First Nations educational assistants from the community, a nutrition advisor, and administrative support.

2.6. Bidialectal

Bidialectal, similar to the term *bilingual*, refers to an individual's ability to master two varieties of one language. Many educators and applied linguists advocate a bidialectal approach to teaching dialect-speaking children. The child's first dialect (D1) is valued in the classroom and, at the same time, concerted efforts are made to assist the child to develop the second dialect (D2) or standard variety of the language. Bidialectal programs have been implemented for Aboriginal English-speaking children in Australia as well as African American English-speaking children in the United States.

2.7. Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is succinctly defined by Jim Cummins as "ideologies and structures which are systematically used to legitimize unequal division of power and

resources between groups which are defined on the basis of race" (2000, p. 131). This term is an important concept that will be frequently addressed in the present study.

2.8. Worldview

Worldview can be described as the ways in which one sees and interprets the world. This collection of beliefs and understandings about life and the universe grows out of membership in a community and attachment to place.

2.9. White Settler

The term *White settler* is commonly used in Critical Race literature to describe the descendants of the original White Europeans who immigrated and settled in colonies in North America, South Africa, Australia, and other parts of the world (Peters, 2004; Razack, 2002). It is the term that I will use in this study to refer to Whites in Saskatchewan.

2.10. Discourse Behaviour

For the purposes of this study, the term *discourse behaviour* will refer to the behaviour or communication patterns derived from membership within a particular discourse or speech community.

3. Conclusion

This thesis is organized into nine main chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Social Construction of Race in Saskatchewan, (3) Educational Challenges for Indigenous Students, (4) Indigenous and Western Worldviews, (5) Methodology Research and Design, (6) Indigenous English in the Classroom, (7) Educator Perceptions, Behaviours, and Beliefs, (8) Race, Class, and Culture Divide in School and Community, and (9) Discussion. Through a review of the pertinent literature, the

second, third, and fourth chapters will seek to provide a description of Indigenous English; explore the challenges—linguistic, academic, and power-related--experienced by Indigenous students in standard English classrooms; examine how race was socially and historically constructed and maintained in Saskatchewan; and examine the differences between Western and Indigenous worldviews. The fifth chapter provides a detailed description of the context of the study, the materials and procedure, and the data analysis. The results of this study are reported in the chapters called *Indigenous English in the Classroom, Educator Perceptions, Beliefs, and Behaviour,* and *Race, Class and Culture Divide in School and Community* which are the categories which best reflect the findings of the study. Finally, this dissertation will conclude with a synthesis and discussion of this study's findings as well as possible implications for schools, teacher-training, and future research.

Chapter 2: The Social Construction of Race in Saskatchewan

1. Introduction

As Canadians, we are generally able to move about our daily lives safe in the knowledge that the ethnic conflicts that exist in other countries do not occur within Canadian borders. James (2001) explains that many Canadians believe that "equality of opportunity exists for all Canadians irrespective of their origin, color, and religion" (p.176). If one looks more closely, however, ethnic conflict, hate crimes, and discrimination because of skin colour are a visible component of the Canadian landscape. One place in Canada where discrimination and conflict between races are apparent is in the prairie province of Saskatchewan.

Detailed demographic data from the 2006 Census are not yet available. As such we must turn to the 2001 Census to understand the population numbers of Saskatchewan (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/standard/themes/). Results from this census indicate that 84% of people living in Saskatchewan self-identify as being of European origin (White settler). The next largest group is made up of those who identify as *North American Indian, Métis,* or *Inuit;* these three groups make up 14% of the Saskatchewan population. Finally, 2% of Saskatchewan residents self-identify as belonging to other visible minority groups. In Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis communities experience a myriad of social problems as well as discrimination in a number of forms in their interactions with White settler institutions (Adams, 1989). This painful existence is very unlike that of White settlers in Saskatchewan who generally enjoy a comfortable standard of living and a large number of educational and employment opportunities. Drawing on the

bodies of literature related to the social construction of race, power theory, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, this chapter will seek to describe, trace, and examine the historical construction of White settlers and First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan as well as the resulting imbalance in power between the two groups.

Before proceeding with this chapter's discussion of how race in Saskatchewan is constructed, I will first briefly describe the current imbalances in power that exist between ethnic and racial groups in Canada by drawing on the findings of a number of international and national studies related to issues of racial discrimination in Canada. A 2002 press release issued by the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) indicates that Canada's problems related to racial discrimination include: Indigenous Peoples' deaths in custody, Indigenous land title claims, high rates of Black and Indigenous Peoples prisoners, poverty rates among recent immigrants, "mass" deportation of the Jamaican diaspora, and the high number of Indigenous Peoples homeless in urban areas (CERD, 2002).

In response to CERD's 2002 press release, Amnesty International Canada (AMI) produced a report outlining a number of concerns related to racial discrimination in Canada. This report indicates that four groups in Canada experience the effects of discrimination: Indigenous Peoples, refugees, migrant workers, and communities targeted by hate crimes. Amnesty International Canada describes a number of human rights violations including the discriminatory attitudes and practices of police, arbitrary application of law, stereotyping of refugees and closing of borders, lack of access to legal services, migrant women in the sex trade, holocaust denial and prosecuting hate criminals (AMI, 2002).

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The 2002 CERD press release also inspired a report specific to the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This report, compiled by a group of community-based Indigenous Peoples and Canadian human rights organizations, addresses Canada's violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination affecting Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This document connects the "fourth" world economic, social, and cultural experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada with the oppressive treatment of Indigenous Peoples by Canadian institutions (CERD Report Ad Hoc National Network, 2002).

The issue of racial discrimination towards Indigenous Peoples in Canada is an urgent matter and, in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, the violations are particularly numerous and require serious attention. Indeed the racist and subjugated social experiences of Indigenous Peoples have long been the focus of Canadian novels, biographies, autobiographies, and works of non-fiction (Campbell, 1973; Culleton, 1983; Goulding, 2001, Johnson & Wiebe, 1999; Tyman, 1989). Similarly, television is increasingly used to explore discrimination towards Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan (Podemski and Milliken, 2003; Snook, 2004).

While the arts community has been active in exploring the social realities of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, Canadian governmental institutions have not been as attentive to this matter. Native rights activist, historian, and academic Howard Adams grew up in a Métis community in Saskatchewan; he describes the realities of Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian government's response in the following statement:

This is the life of the Aboriginal in Canada. The land of the strong, the free

and the horrid capitalist, semi-democracy and quasi-humanity. The nation

that cheers and applauds its international nature made of humanitarianism,

human rights, anti-apartheid, aid to the suffering third-world Native masses.

Bullshit--Canada's a liar. It's hypocritical and two-faced. Look in Canada's

back yard, its crimes, inequities and injustices are there to see. (vi, 1999)

While the goal of this chapter is not to enumerate the social problems

experienced by Indigenous Peoples, it is important that I state clearly that it is my

position that this group's subjugated social position is closely linked to its many social

struggles. James (2001) explains that the "notion of cultural democracy presupposes

that the norms, values, and principles, including the laws and policies by which the

state operates, are culturally neutral and therefore citizens are able to fully participate

in the society and institutions uninhibited by cultural background" (p.177). From this

perspective, I will argue in this dissertation that the social ills that plague the

Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan are the result of societal institutions that are

culturally biased in the favour of White settlers. Before delving into this chapter's

discussion of the theory behind the social construction of race, Saskatchewan history,

and race relations in the Saskatchewan context, it is next necessary to briefly describe

the current social contexts of Indigenous Peoples and White settlers in Saskatchewan.

Indigenous Peoples experience institutional racism in the educational system,

have higher levels of poverty within in their communities, and are less likely to be

employed and more likely to be incarcerated (Adams, 1999). Issues related to

institutional racism in schools will be further discussed in the next chapter of this

dissertation. For the purposes of the discussion presented in this chapter, I will begin

by describing some of the realities related to police enforcement and the judicial

system. In 1991, Indigenous Peoples comprised 12% of federal, and 19% of

provincial admissions while only accounting for 2.5% of the Canadian population

(Corrections Canada, 2005). Corrections Canada also indicates that in 1995, while

Indigenous Peoples represented 10.8% of the population in Saskatchewan, they

constituted 72.0% of Saskatchewan's provincial inmates and 34.3% of

Saskatchewan's federal inmates.

The pervasive nature of institutional racism in Saskatchewan is further

evidenced by a highly publicized incident that is indicative of the relationship

between Indigenous Peoples and Saskatchewan police. In October 2004, a provincial

inquiry into the 1990 death of Neil Stonechild, a 17-year-old First Nations man living

in Saskatoon, confirmed what the Indigenous Peoples community had long

maintained. On a night when the temperature fell to -28 Celsius, Stonechild was

apprehended by City of Saskatoon police and then abandoned outside the Saskatoon

city limits. Stonechild froze to death and investigations into this occurrence revealed

that the Saskatoon Police's practice of dumping Indigenous Peoples outside city

limits, or giving someone "the starlight tour", dates back to the 1970's (Commission

of Inquiry into Matters Related to the Death of Neil Stonechild, 2004).

In contrast, the White settler population in Saskatchewan enjoys a position of

privilege compared to that of Indigenous Peoples. Nationally, in 2001, 30.8% of the

non-Indigenous population aged 15 and over did not have a high school diploma

compared with 48% of the self-identified Indigenous Peoples population (Mendelson,

2004). In the Saskatchewan cities of Saskatoon and Regina, Indigenous Peoples are three times as likely to be unemployed as White settlers (Mendelson, 2004). If this ratio is compared to Ottawa-Hull, where the Indigenous unemployment rate is 1.3 times that of the general population, the intensity of the racial imbalance in Saskatchewan becomes more apparent. In discussing the Indigenous Peoples employment rates, Mendelson makes reference to the high school incompletion rate in the Indigenous community and explains that "once again, we see a pattern of generally rising relative rates as we move from the east to the west, to reach their highest levels in Saskatchewan's cities and then diminish as we go further west" (2004, p. 23). Based on these statistics, it can be argued that White settlers enjoy greater economic opportunity than Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan. Politically, economically, and socially, White settlers maintain a position of power in Saskatchewan.

Why is this so? Saskatchewan celebrated its centennial in 2005. In the society that has developed in Saskatchewan over the last 150 years, why have White settlers come out on top in terms of power? Is the response to this question as straightforward as discrimination because of skin colour and differences in culture? Those White settlers who live within the milieu may simply wish to attribute the current situation of Indigenous Peoples to what White settlers perceive as a lack of willpower, work ethic, or desire to change. Some may touch upon issues of genetics by referencing the common misconception that Indigenous Peoples are somehow less able to metabolize alcohol, resulting in related social problems. Others may argue that White settlers are White and Indigenous Peoples are not; therefore, White settlers

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enjoy the position of privilege afforded to them by racist North America. If this imbalance is ever to change, we must better understand the roots of the problem and the complex social mechanisms that are at play. How did the current situation develop? How is it maintained? How is race constructed within the Saskatchewan society? It is these questions, among others, that I will answer within this chapter.

2.   Wait a Minute; I'm One of those Racist White settlers...

Writing this dissertation is not the first time that I have considered aspects of myself in relation to my research topic. The topic of my doctoral research is deeply personal. Saskatchewan is my home, it is where my family continues to live, it is the place that offered safe haven to my immigrant grandparents, and it remains a large component of my identity. Since beginning my graduate studies, I have had to consider issues of subjectivity in my writing and research. In my initial departures from a more traditional style of writing where my own voice was not so clearly exposed, I can remember feeling a sense of urgency in my rush to completely expose any aspect of my background that might influence my research and writing. At last, I would be immune to the criticisms of those who question my place as a White settler in Indigenous research! After all, I was not like those quantitative researchers who hide behind their numbers and tables. My writing was raw and frank; I exposed all my secrets. Surely, having gone through the process of examining my subjectivity, I am permitted to explore the stories of others?

What I have come to realize is that that my stories and experiences as a White settler from Saskatchewan are part of the story that this chapter and dissertation explore. Examining my subjectivity is not a way to deal with my "White Guilt" or

obtain an Indigenous Research passport. Rather, this chapter includes stories from my life, beginning with a snapshot from one year of my childhood, because these stories provide insight into how White settlers socially construct Indigenous Peoples, as well as their own race, in the province of Saskatchewan.

I grew up in a small farming community of 900 people located east of Saskatoon. Looking back, the adults of my childhood universe were themselves children of Eastern-European immigrants, socially conservative, Roman Catholic, farmers, labourers, racist, and narrow-minded when it came to the roles of women in society. Like most children, I didn't spend a lot of time considering whether my circumstances were normal, I simply went about the life that was created for me by my parents and the adults of my community.

As the child of a teacher, as a student, and as an educator, I have been in a school environment since birth. My life has always revolved around schools; I often remember my school experiences more clearly than other aspects of my childhood. I was in grade six at my town's elementary school in 1984/1985. If you are familiar with Canadian history, you will recognize 1985 as the centennial of the Métis resistance at Batoche or the *Riel Rebellion* as we were taught to call it. Eighteen eighty-five is an important date in history in terms of the power imbalance that exists between Indigenous Peoples and White settlers in Saskatchewan and one that will surface in other sections of this chapter.

In school that year, my classmates and I learned about "The Plains Indians" in Social Studies. Our teacher assigned us to groups to work on presentations of the different First Nations groups that we had been assigned. I do not remember which

First Nations my group was given but I remember how we giggled and stumbled over their "foreign" names. I remember the giant map of Saskatchewan we created on the classroom wall, easily produced by an overhead projector as we only had to remember that our province was "in the shape of a skirt". I remember how strangely pleased and proud we all were that our province had none of the complicated natural borders of Alberta or Manitoba.

I am not sure that I made the connection between the people about whom we were learning and the Indigenous Peoples who lived in my community when I was in grade six. Adams (1989) explains that, after 1885, White settler colonialists forcibly ossified Indigenous Peoples' culture and society. Looking back, this ossification is visible in my Social Studies curriculum. The Indigenous Peoples customs, cultures, and languages that we learned and presented about were those of the late 19th century; a way of life that had been stolen because of the economic desires of the newly confederated Canada (Adams, 1989).

In my province, Indigenous Peoples tend to be represented in two ways. The first are the archaic cultural representations that my class learned about which included, but were certainly not limited to, teepees, buffalo hunts, and peace pipes. The second stereotype, the image that many White settlers in my province believe to be true, is that of a socially inferior race of people. Adams' (1989) description of the nature of a town where Saskatchewan's two solitudes live side-by-side highlights this second racial stereotype painfully well:

> There are always two distinct communities. The native section has no gas or running water, no paved streets or sidewalks, only trails and dirt roads. Many

of the houses are one- or two-room shacks. The differences are more than economic and cultural, they are vividly racial. According to the whites, the native section is a place of lazy, diseased, and evil people incapable of doing anything for themselves, a breeding ground for violence. The whites claim that natives have no culture, no ethics, no sensibility to morality, and no appreciation of law and order. To these colonizers, Indians and Métis destroy and disfigure beauty. The whites speak of their neighbours in bestial terms, complaining that "they breed like rabbits." They speak of the sinful and depraved behavior of natives, of shacking-up, of common-law marriages, of sleeping around (p.41).

While these words may seem harsh to the reader, this stereotype of Indigenous Peoples was commonly expressed by White settlers in Saskatchewan when I was in grade six and continues to be expressed today. While the majority of the adults in my childhood community believed this stereotype to be true it would have been difficult to find an adult who would openly admit to it. Masking or hiding such stereotypes persists today. Indeed, a 2004 survey by the Regina Leader Post indicates that 67% of Saskatchewanians agree or strongly agree that it is difficult to openly discuss Indigenous issues. In that newspaper article, Brock Pitawanakwat, an Indigenous Studies professor at First Nations University in Regina interprets this statistic in two ways: (a) it is possible that people don't feel they know enough to speak openly about their opinions, or (b) people keep their socially unaccepted opinions to themselves (Rhodes, 2004).

In my classroom in 1985, we didn't address the fact that one of our classmates was Métis nor that there were a number of First Nations and Métis children in our elementary school. Nobody asked why our schoolmates did not dress or behave like the Indigenous Peoples presented in our textbooks. We didn't travel to a First Nations reserve, an unthinkable excursion even though the closest reserve was approximately 45 minutes away. Our teacher did not invite First Nations elders to come visit us nor did he lead us in any critical discussion of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and White settlers. These activities would have been inconceivable even if our teacher had wanted to do battle with the other adults of my town and attempt to organize them.

The second stereotype, the one in which Indigenous Peoples are seen as socially inferior to White settlers, is the perception that most people in my town held, and continue to hold, as fact. In a recent Maclean's magazine report written by Jonathon Gatehouse (2007), Peter Gilmer, executive director of Regina's Anti-Poverty Ministry, explains that in Saskatchewan there exists a history of racism towards Indigenous Peoples, "poor-bashing, inequality, and exclusion" (p. 23). Gilmer's description mirrors my understanding of how White settlers' view and behave towards Indigenous Peoples.

As previously mentioned, Saskatchewanians do not feel comfortable discussing contemporary issues related to Indigenous Peoples (Rhodes, 2004). Adams argues that the image of the "Noble Savage" is more comfortable for White settlers because it corresponds with the stereotype of the authentic Indigenous Peoples (Adams, 1989, p.36). Furthermore, it allows us to distance ourselves from

our role in creating the social ills and subjugation experienced by Indigenous Peoples. In my sixth-grade class, to learn about the Indigenous Peoples who live in Saskatchewan, my classmates and I lay on our cool, tiled classroom floor, coloured our maps, carefully added the North and South Saskatchewan rivers, and copied outdated information about the Cree, Saulteaux, or another Nation from the Encyclopedia Britannica.

As an educator, I can guess that the pedagogical goals of this particular activity might have been to provide us with knowledge about the original peoples in Saskatchewan. As a critical researcher, I would argue that there was a more important, but hidden, objective to our unit on "The Plains Indian," one that as eleven-year-olds, my classmates and I couldn't have understood. The old ways of "The Plains Indian" became obsolete, something only to be studied, when Europeans arrived in Canada. The underlying message of the unit was that Europeans introduced and continue to maintain civility in Canada. Indigenous educator Angela Weenie explains that "European supremacy is based on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, and it effectively justifies colonization. The colonizers are depicted as the advanced civilization, while the colonized are depicted as backward nations" (2001, p.66). Weenie furthers her argument through reference to Edward Said (1978) who explains that the creation of such a dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized permits, and justifies, the dominance and control of the colonized people.

While Gramsci's concept of *hegemony* was not accessible to me at the age of eleven, it is this notion that probably best describes the lessons that we learned in our grade six classroom. We were taught that the cultural forms and ideas of the

Europeans who came to Canada are preferable and, therefore, as White settler descendants of Europeans, our domination over Indigenous Peoples is justified. While this message was not spoken aloud, through our lessons on "The Plains Indian" and our rural Saskatchewan childhoods, we were socialized into our positions of privilege and the comfortable knowledge that we were part of the superior and civilized race of Saskatchewan.

3. Understanding Race

When I begin writing about new ideas, I generally bombard my friends and family with my arguments. I phone my mom in Saskatchewan and rattle on about my theoretical concepts to which I usually am treated with extended moments of bewildered silence punctuated with questions like, "I guess you're writing something new, dear?" Annoyed with her patience, I then turn to assaulting my friends with pointed questions and delight over backing them into conversational corners with my newfound information and power. True to form, I have spent the last few years asking my loved ones about their conceptions of race. With few exceptions, my informal survey reveals that most of the people I know faithfully maintain that race is a biological construct.

Unfortunately for my friends and family, the study of genetics indicates that our human "races" are not biologically based (Banton, 1967; Banton & Harwood, 1975; Graves, 2004; Marks, 1995; Molnar, 1975). In fact, there actually exists greater genetic variance within "racial" groups than there does between these groups. The characteristics that are generally thought to be racial definers (skin colour, hair texture, and facial features, for example) account for only 4% of human genetic

make-up (Graves, 2004). So, if these characteristics constitute such a small part of who we are, why are we so preoccupied with defining ourselves, and others, by "race"?

Although it is difficult for many to shed the belief that race is not genetically defined, it is not. This does not mean that there are not groups of people that share physical characteristics, language, culture, and history; this is clear. If one begins, however, to think of these groups as social constructions and not as the result of biology, it is more difficult to be convinced of the validity of our beliefs regarding the other group. Viewing "race" as a social construct is an important place to begin in the process of working toward understanding the power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan. There is no biological reason that explains why White settlers enjoy the position of privilege that is denied to Indigenous Peoples. One race is not genetically inferior or superior to the other. This disparity is due to racial groups and beliefs that have been socially constructed over the past one hundred and fifty years.

Before continuing with this current discussion of race, it will be helpful to establish what is meant by the Western concept *social constructionism*. Accordingly, what follows is a brief overview of this theoretical orientation that underpins so many of today's social research approaches. Burr (2003) explains that social constructionism differs greatly from traditional psychology which looks at the attitudes, motivations, and cognitions of individuals to understand why people do what they do. Research that is grounded in social constructionism focuses on interaction and social practices because it is through these processes that we construct

our social world. Accordingly, there can be no given or determined nature (essence) to people. If we apply this idea to the topic of this chapter, it can be argued that, for example, a person who is White settler, Métis, or First Nations has no given nature. Rather, the meaning of what it is to be First Nations, Métis, or White settler in Saskatchewan is created through social interaction and social practice.

To summarize this overview of social constructionism, we can look to an outline presented by Gergen (1985) in which he explains that, while there are many differences between social constructionist research approaches, most share one or more of the following four assumptions: (a) it is necessary to critically examine taken-for-granted knowledge, (b) the common ways we view people and societies are culturally and historically embedded, (c) understanding is created and maintained through social processes, and (d) the societies and relationships we construct are intrinsically linked to power relations.

Operating under the notion that race is not a natural phenomenon but a socially constructed one, how do we go about dissecting the origins of people's racial beliefs? Hirschfeld (1996) explains that existing research on how humans develop racial beliefs generally falls under one of two approaches: (a) exploring the thought processes that formulate racial ideas and prejudice; and (b) viewing race as the product of social and historical forces.

The first approach is grounded in the Western psychological concept that humans create categories so that they can classify objects or, in this case, other humans. This notion of categorization is the basic premise for research focused on ingroups and outgroups. Humans see people of another "race," recognize them as

different from themselves, overestimate the frequency of a behaviour they attribute to this outgroup, and, as a result, a racial prejudice is born.

Initially, the first approach, exploring the thought processes that formulate racial ideas and prejudice, might seem the most straightforward approach to examining this problem. Applied to the Saskatchewan context, one might argue that White settlers see that Indigenous cultures are different from that of the White settler majority. As a result, they resent Indigenous Peoples for their unwillingness to acculturate and see them as inferior for their apparent inability to live as the White settler majority does. Still using this first approach, one might argue that White settlers cannot comprehend Indigenous Peoples' apparent refusal to live in nuclear families, attend school, hold jobs, and contribute to society. The White settler majority in Saskatchewan value hard work and self-reliance. They believe that these values are not reflected in the Indigenous Peoples community and, accordingly, judge them as inferior to themselves and internalize this as a racial belief.

Braroe (1975) indicates that the social problems experienced by many First Nations people reinforce, in the collective mind of White settlers, their inferiority in the hierarchy of morality. These feelings of moral superiority are strengthened by the fact that the social welfare of the First Nations people is provided for by the White settler Saskatchewan taxpayer. Again, this moral superiority is internalized and another racial belief is acquired.

As tempting as this first approach to understanding race relations in Saskatchewan might be, it ignores Saskatchewan's colonial history and issues of oppression. Western social constructionist theories support the importance of

considering the roles of power relations and history in how humans make sense of their surroundings, concepts, and categories, such as race. To not consider Saskatchewan's history would result in an incomplete analysis of how Indigenous Peoples and White settlers are constructed in this province. This argument is mirrored in the second approach to examining how humans develop racial beliefs which, as Hirschfeld (1996) explains, focuses on the combined effects of "cultural, political, and economic events that define a particular set of political relations (generally but not always involving colonized and colonizer)" (p.11).

In terms of this chapter and in taking into consideration my theoretical groundings in critical theory (Foucault, 1980; Said, 1978; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), using this second approach to understanding the construction of race in Saskatchewan is more appropriate. Whereas exploring the thought processes that formulate racial ideas and prejudice can certainly be revealing, social constructionist theories demonstrate the importance of considering the roles played by power and domination in creating racial beliefs; this need is best met by viewing race as the product of social and historical forces. Said (1978) explains that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied" (p. 5). Similarly, Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) indicate that, today, Indigenous Peoples in the United States experience high levels of suicide, homicide, accidental deaths, domestic violence, child abuse, and alcoholism. The authors attribute these social problems to historical events--loss of lives, land, and culture--that caused chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations. Indigenous researchers Kathy Absolon and Cam

Willet argue that "any illumination of past, present, and future First Nations conditions demands a complete deconstruction of the history and application of ideology and, most importantly, of the impact (personal and political) of racism. That is, we need to know how we got into the mess we're in" (2004, p.9). It is my goal in writing this chapter, then, to make sense of how Saskatchewan got into the mess that it's in. Accordingly, what follows is a description of the history of Saskatchewan that has led to the current social and economic disparity between Indigenous Peoples and White settlers.

4. A Collision of Events

Saskatchewan. I have heard it described as a place of extremes. I think whoever made that statement was referring to the weather but it could just as easily have been directed towards our landscape, history, politics, or people. While Indigenous Peoples and White settlers have crossed paths in history for the last one hundred and fifty years or so, the province has been inhabited for a much longer time, some say at least 30,000 years. In the context of this chapter, however, it is the shared history of White settlers and Indigenous Peoples that is of interest.

I know now that my own experiences learning about Saskatchewan's history have been decidedly Eurocentric. I was taught to believe that the signing of the treaties was done peacefully and honestly, I was instructed to refer to the Métis resistance at Batoche as the *Riel Rebellion,* and I received no information regarding residential schools or the slavery of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Another experience from my grade-six year that illustrates my Eurocentric experience of Canadian history was our "year-end party" that year. Normally, a good year meant a

walk to the town sand pits or a swim and hotdogs with another class at our town pool. Because 1985 was the hundred-year anniversary of the *Métis Resistance,* we received permission from the local school board to travel by school bus to the site of the former Métis village of Batoche to see first-hand where the event occurred.

Before leaving on our three-hour drive, I remember our teacher explaining the significance of this Federal Heritage Site and why we were going to see it that day. As a child, I remember having a strong sensation that Canadian history was something that happened in Ontario and Quebec; these places were certainly the topic of most of my textbooks. On that day in grade six, I remember being excited finally to see an important Canadian place in my own province. Similarly, I can still remember our collective disappointment when we arrived at Batoche to find a camper-trailer being used as a temporary information centre and one guide who offered to take us on a walking tour of a bald prairie field and a graveyard.

Today, Batoche is home to a wonderful interpretive centre complete with multi-media centre, museum, guided tours, and bilingual staff. In 1985, however, Louis Riel was still widely viewed as Canadian traitor (Flanagan, 1983) and the Batoche that I visited that year certainly conveyed that belief. At the time, I simply remember thinking that a party at the sandpits wasn't such a bad idea after all. As an adult, I can look back and now see that the federal government wouldn't necessarily want to spend money honouring the life and battle of the only individual ever tried for high treason in Canada (Bumstead, 2001).

Saskatchewan's current social conditions and particular racial beliefs did not develop in some sort of vacuum only to be unleashed into Saskatchewan in 2006, the

year that I conducted my study. Mohawk activist and writer, Alfred (1999), argues that, "without a good understanding of history, it is difficult to grasp how intense the European effort to destroy indigenous nations has been" (p. 5). The current power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan is framed in its history.

Absolon and Willet (2004) explain that "historical written texts by non-Aboriginal authors about Aboriginal peoples reveal more about the patriarchy, paternalism, racism, White supremacy, fear, ignorance and ethnocentrism of their authors than they do about Aboriginal peoples" (p. 8). My Saskatchewan experiences and much of my reading related to the development of the Canadian west have led me to view critically some of the commonly accepted historical depictions of this time (Flanagan, 1983; MacBeth, 1898; Owram; 1980). For these reasons, while other sources will be cited in this section, I have chosen to primarily use Métis scholar Howard Adams' writings (1989, 1999) as my reference material for this outline of Saskatchewan's history. I believe this choice will help better to expose the steps that have led to the current constructions of White settler and First Nations identities in Saskatchewan.

The beginning of Saskatchewan's shared history between Indigenous Peoples and White settlers finds its roots in what is today's Manitoba at an important trading centre which was then known as Red River. Until the 1860's, the Hudson's Bay Company held constitutional authority over the Northwest Territories, today's prairies provinces. Canadian industrialists and British financiers had comfortably secured their place in Eastern Canada and were looking west to the land and resources of the

Northwest Territories. Their desires were in opposition to the Hudson Bay's economic system and conflict was inevitable. This collision of interests would fuel the 1869-1870 clash that is today commonly referred to as the *Red River Rebellion* or, as Adams calls it, the *Red River Resistance.* Adams also indicates that while this resistance is commonly billed as a conflict between the Métis and Ottawa, at the heart of the matter actually lay the conflict between the two economic systems.

To summarize this important event is complicated. Essentially, the Métis and First Nations of the Red River, led by Louis Riel, decided to protect their interests and way of life and resist the colonial powers of Ottawa. The Hudson's Bay Company found it easiest to hide behind the Métis movement and simply allow the Métis to engage in the conflict rather than representing themselves in battle. In 1868, the British government ceded the Northwest Territories to Ottawa and a group of several hundred soldiers was sent west to enforce this exchange. When the forces arrived, it was clear to Riel that it was futile to resist. Adams (1989) explains that Ottawa's some four hundred troops arrived and violently seized the land and goods of the Red River Métis. In 1870, left with nothing, many of the Red River Métis moved west and joined a small settlement on the South Saskatchewan River called Batoche. Here, they built a life very similar to the one they had enjoyed in the Red River settlement.

After the events of Red River, the ensuing development of the Canadian prairies reads like a how-to manual for the colonization and subjugation of a people. First, the Canadian government wanted control of Saskatchewan's land and, therefore, needed to avoid a repeat of the troublesome Métis uprisings of 1870. The urgency of

preventing such an event led to the creation of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police in 1873 and to the establishment of a training centre in Regina, Saskatchewan, a facility which remains to this day (Adams, 1999).

Next in Ottawa's plans to push west was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. In order to accomplish this goal, it was necessary first to seize the land of the plains First Nations and confine them to reservations of land. This was accomplished through a number of steps. Adams (1989) posits that, like the government of the United States, it is possible that the Canadian government played a role in depleting the buffalo herds. This is significant as the loss of the buffalo, in turn, led to drastic changes in the Indigenous Peoples' ways of life. Starving, linguistically disadvantaged, and unable to resist Ottawa's forces, First Nations were left with little other choice than to sign unfair treaties that endowed with them with few rights and goods, little power, money, or land, which would strip them of their way of life. Today, there are 72 reserves in Saskatchewan. Reserve lands are scattered throughout the province and account for 2.1 million acres of the 161.1 million acre provincial land base, 0.01% of Saskatchewan's land (Government of Saskatchewan, 2005).

At roughly the same time that First Nations were being stripped of their ways of life, conflict developed again between Ottawa and the Métis (and their First Nations allies), now living at Batoche. In 1885, they clashed a second time over land parceling, language, and customs in a series of battles and strategic manoeuvres that finally ended with casualties of hundreds for the First Nations and Métis (Adams, 1989). After this second resistance, Ottawa chose to send a strong message to

Saskatchewan Indigenous Peoples by publicly hanging nine Indigenous Peoples and

imprisoning forty-four. Bumsted (2001) explains the importance of those events and

of the year of 1885 to the expansion of the Canadian West in the following citation:

> The military defeat of the Métis, the public execution of Louis Riel in
>
> November 1885 for treason, and the campaign of repression against the First
>
> Nations supplied only half the reason why that year (and even that month) was
>
> so significant, not only in the history of the West but in the history of Canada.
>
> For in November of 1885, the last spike was driven at Craigellachie in eastern
>
> British Columbia to mark the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (p.
>
> 316).

Ottawa's triumph at Batoche dehumanized the Métis sufficiently so as to

effectively limit them, financially and emotionally, to living in poverty-stricken

ghettos. Similarly, First Nations were confined to reserves where they required the

permission of an Indian agent to leave their community. With a coast-to-coast

railroad in place, the prairies were available for development and, thus, to complete

its expansion westward, the Canadian Confederation worked very hard to establish

European settlements throughout the province. In fact, Saskatchewan is the only

Canadian province where the majority of the population does not have a British or

French background (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight

/ETO/SelectGeo.cfm?T=501&Lang=E&GV=1). Many of its immigrants came to

Saskatchewan because of the Canadian Government's promise of free land, and

because of war and poverty in their home countries, countries the Canadian

Government aggressively targeted with posters promising prosperity and freedom in Canada.

The new immigrants to Saskatchewan--from places like Germany, Ukraine, Scandinavia, The Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, and Russia--experienced their own problems of discrimination in their new country. While Ottawa was pleased to have them develop the Canadian prairies for agriculture and occupy the former land of the Indigenous Peoples, less welcome were the old country ways and language. Until very recently, to be *White* in Canada meant to be well educated, well spoken, economically advantaged, and of an Anglo-Saxon background. I speak from personal experience when I say that, at an early age, I learned that last names containing the letter *z* or strange combinations of consonants would lead to questions about where "you're really from." My aunts and uncles were hit by their teachers for speaking Ukrainian at school and, while at teacher's college, my father was required to repeat his teaching practicum and receive treatment from a speech pathologist for his "Ukrainian" accent. These stories, and others like them, are significant because they offer insight into the construction of Whiteness in Saskatchewan. I will return to this concept and its ramifications for this chapter after discussing one final aspect of Saskatchewan's history, the residential school.

From 1879 to 1986, while the immigrant settlers were developing the west, thousands of Indigenous Peoples children were moving through the residential school system; many of these children were forcibly removed from their homes. Milloy (1999) tells us that the government's goal for these schools was to bring Indigenous children into the "circle of civilization." It is now common knowledge that what

these schools produced was a dismal education in an abusive and neglectful environment. Children were underfed, beaten for speaking their indigenous languages, physically and sexually abused, and stripped of their indigenous culture. Milloy argues that residential schools "have been, arguably, the most damaging of the many elements of Canada's colonization of this land's original peoples and, as their consequences still affect the lives of Aboriginal people today, they remain so" (p. xiv).

Looking back over the last one hundred and fifty years, the building blocks of Saskatchewan's current racial conflict are obvious. Initially, Indigenous Peoples were stripped of land as imperial institutions of domination such as the Royal Northwest Mounted Police were put in place. Next, First Nations were confined to reserves and White settlers acquired their seized land. Subsequently, First Nations children were processed through the brutal machine of assimilation, the residential school system. All of these components of Saskatchewan's history share the common goal of maintaining control and power over land and resources.

In order for White settlers to maintain control, to be dominant, another group must hold the subjugated position. Schick and St Denis (2003) explain that the White identity requires a subjugated partner against which their "own whiteness and goodness" is understood. In Saskatchewan, the current power imbalance between the dominant White settlers and the subjugated Indigenous Peoples is the result of a carefully choreographed dance, constructed by over a century of colonial activity.

5.   How and Why is this Situation Maintained?

In Canada today, we have determined that discrimination because of skin colour is wrong by making it illegal in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which prohibits it. Yet, the social realities of Indigenous Peoples and White settlers in Saskatchewan described in the introduction to this chapter suggest that something is greatly amiss. In spite of Canada's multicultural policies, reality shows us that racist systems continue to operate in Saskatchewan. How and why this situation is maintained?

The answer to the *Why* component of this question is straightforward. The power imbalance is maintained because it is profitable for White settlers; they benefit from the advantages that colonialism has created for them. Additionally, it is possible that there are issues of ignorance and miseducation in operation. What is more difficult and complex to understand is how White settlers justify their dominant position. In my province, there exists a strong belief regarding equal access to success for all. In effect, White settlers in Saskatchewan believe that one can achieve success through hard work and perseverance. This belief is intrinsically linked to how Whiteness came to be constructed in Saskatchewan, a concept I introduced in the previous section of this chapter. Schick and St Denis' (2003) explain that "Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and moreover are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (2003, p.6).

To become White, Saskatchewan immigrants endured long and arduous travel from their former countries before they reached Canada. Once there, and for years,

they lived meagre lives, often beginning in homes made from prairie sod, while they attempted to build farm lives that would sustain them. Finally, they eschewed the ways and languages of their old countries and acculturated to the newly shared culture of Saskatchewan. While these aspects of Saskatchewan's history are of inherent importance, what is most interesting for the purposes of this chapter is how White settlers use these stories to rationalize their power and privilege. In effect, White settlers maintain that their positions of privilege have been rightfully earned through the hard work of their grandparents, parents, and themselves. Consequently, White settlers are able to justify their power through the ideology that if Indigenous Peoples would simply choose to work as hard as White settlers, they could, effectively, be as successful as White settlers are. In Saskatchewan, White settlers are unable to perceive that the success they experience is at least partly the product of unearned White privilege (McIntosh, 1998).

This argument is echoed in Schick and St Denis' (2003) discussion paper regarding pre-service teachers in Saskatchewan universities. Three commonly-held ideological assumptions regarding racial inequality are examined: "1) race does not matter; 2) everyone has equal opportunity; and 3) through individual acts and good intentions one can secure innocence as well as superiority" (p.1). In Schick and St Denis' anti-racism classes, the authors experience great resistance from their White settler undergraduate students in discussions of racial inequality. The tradition of denying racial inequality runs deep in Saskatchewan White settlers. Over the last few years, when introducing the notion that not all races are equal in terms of privilege, I have triggered angry reactions in many of my family and friends. By denying that

race matters and that racial inequality exists, the privilege that we experience as White settlers disappears; it becomes invisible, and the power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples is perpetuated.

Returning to the initial question of this section, we can now examine *how* the power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples is maintained. In essence, Saskatchewan's racial inequality is preserved through institutional racism. Cummins (2000) defines institutional racism as "ideologies and structures which are systematically used to legitimize unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of race" (p. 131). In terms of ideology, we have seen that by denying that racial inequality exists and by perpetuating the belief that success is merit-based, White settlers are able to legitimize their power.

In regards to the structures or institutions which function as a means of maintaining the current power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples, we can look to this chapter's introductory discussion of Saskatchewan. Simply stated, practices employed by Saskatchewan schools, employers, police forces, and the judiciary system--seen as common sense--are used to legitimize the unequal division of power between Indigenous Peoples and White settlers. In addition, I would argue that is highly likely that institutional racism exists in other Saskatchewan social institutions not discussed in this chapter. To isolate the specific practices that are in place in each institution would require more analysis and research than is possible within the confines of this chapter.

6.   Conclusion

The arguments presented in this chapter draw on a review of relevant literature and my personal experiences growing up in Saskatchewan. In addition to theories related to the nature and construct of race, this chapter has discussed the colonial history of Saskatchewan. This historical examination discussed issues and motives related to land seizure, the creation of the RCMP, First Nations' confinement to reserves, White settlements of seized land and residential schools. Finally, with the goal of understanding the construction of race in Saskatchewan, this chapter has also examined why and how race relations in the Saskatchewan are created and maintained. In the next chapter, I will explore some of the educational challenges for Indigenous students in White settler schools.

Chapter 3: Educational Challenges for Indigenous students

1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored the social construction of race in Saskatchewan. The goal of Chapter 2 was to explain the history of oppression and colonialism in Saskatchewan and make sense of why and how the resulting power imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples is maintained. This chapter will build on the framework provided in Chapter 2 through the exploration of issues related to institutional racism and Indigenous peoples. Schools reflect the culture and beliefs of mainstream society. Children who are not members of dominant racial or ethnic groups routinely experience educational challenges that are not faced by those who are members of mainstream society (Ogbu, 1992). Because the challenges experienced by minority children are often invisible to members of the dominant society, mainstream educators have traditionally relied on deficit theories to explain the academic difficulties experienced by minority children. As outlined by Deyhle and Swisher (1997), deficit theories have been used to imply both biological and home environmental inadequacies in minority children, conveniently avoiding the examination of any role that schools might have in Indigenous students' academic difficulties. Traditionally, this argument has been supported through the results of racially biased standardized testing (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). Pewewardy (2002) explains that "the conventional deficit syndrome as an educational ethos and practice has been used to address the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native students despite evidence suggesting that American Indians/Alaska Native students have definite cultural values and traits that affect learning and academic achievement" (p. 25).

Deficit theories do not offer any real explanation of the challenges faced by Indigenous students. Instead, such arguments allow the systemic barriers to remain invisible and place the responsibility for the challenges faced by this student population firmly on the shoulders of the oppressed community. Delpit (1988) argues that "those with power are frequently least aware of--or least willing to acknowledge--its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (p.282). In the literature review presented in this chapter, I will make visible some of the challenges experienced by Indigenous Peoples within the education system.

In 2004, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples, made an official visit to Canada. During this trip, Stavenhagen met with federal, provincial, and territorial authorities; representatives of Indigenous Peoples organizations; academics; and members of Indigenous Peoples communities in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nunavut. The official report resulting from this visit discusses education, literacy, life expectancy, and income as they relate to Indigenous Peoples. This report indicates that while Canada ranked fourth among the world's nations in 2004 in terms of quality of education, literacy, life expectancy and income, when Indigenous Peoples in Canada were extracted from the larger population and evaluated using the same criteria, they received a ranking of 48, placing them at the same level as countries such as Croatia and Uruguay (http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?m=73&t=9).

This report includes the following recommendation pertaining to education and Indigenous Peoples in Canada:

That concerted action be undertaken by all levels of government to guarantee

the right to culturally sensitive and quality education of Aboriginal people and

to decrease the number of school drop-outs and increase the number and

quality of school graduates at all levels (p. 23).

In the introduction to this dissertation, I described the levels of educational

attainment among Canadians and contrasted these levels with those achieved by

Indigenous peoples. Before proceeding with the discussion of the factors that

contribute to this "gap," it is important to frame this discussion by briefly describing

the levels of educational attainment in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous

populations. Mendelson (2004), using statistics from the 2001 Canadian census,

explains that only three in ten of all Canadians aged fifteen and older had less than a

high school diploma in 2001. Of the Indigenous identity population in the same age

group, almost one half had less than a high school diploma. In terms of differences

between Canadian regions, the inequality between the two populations is lower in

Eastern Canada and higher in the Prairie Provinces and the North. Alarmingly, in the

province of Saskatchewan, a young Indigenous male is more likely to go to jail than

to graduate from high school (Thompson & Hubbard, 2004).

In the United States, the statistics related to comparing Indigenous students'

educational attainment to that of the American population are similar to those

reported in Canada. In 1989, the National Center for Education statistics "reported

that American Indian and Alaska Native students have a dropout rate of 35.5%, about

twice the national average and the highest dropout rate of any United States ethnic or

racial group sited" (Reyner, 1992, p. 38).

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Even this cursory look at North American statistics indicates that today's school systems are not effective in educating Indigenous students. Part of the problem may lie in the original goals of Indigenous education in North America. Traditionally, the Canadian and American governments sought not so much to educate Indigenous students as to assimilate them into dominant mainstream society (Milloy, 1999). As a review of research in American Indian and Alaska Native education indicates, many researchers argue that assimilation continues to be the goal of today's education system (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). While this may indeed be the case, one possible way to begin reform is to make visible the specific practices that are not working to the advantage of Indigenous students so that changes can be made that better allow for their academic success. Accordingly, through examination of relevant North American literature, this chapter will examine some of the challenges for Indigenous students in White settler schools.

It is important to understand that all of the issues to be discussed within this chapter fall under the overarching theme of institutional racism. That is to say, the challenges experienced by Indigenous students, similar to the students of any minority group, are the result of imbalances in power between the dominant White settler group and Indigenous Peoples. In a 2002 study of Winnipeg's inner city high schools put forth by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Manitoba, researchers describe an educational system that:

> marginalizes Aboriginal students, does not adequately reflect their cultural values and their daily realities, and feels alien to many Aboriginal people.

The incidence of overt forms of racism--name calling and stereotyping, for example--is high. Institutional forms of racism are common. The face that schools present to Aboriginal students is decidedly non-Aboriginal: for example, there are few Aboriginal teachers, and little Aboriginal content in the curriculum. These characteristics suggest to us an educational system that continues to be overly Euro-centric and even colonial (p. 3).

Unfortunately, this description of the "Euro-centric and even colonial" educational system that operates in Winnipeg is similar to the portrayals of schools in most of the studies related to exploring the school failure of Indigenous students. This chapter will highlight and discuss reoccurring themes in the body of literature related to Indigenous education in an effort to isolate the most significant or detrimental obstacles to academic achievement for Indigenous students in North America. Furthermore, the argument will be made that, in North American schools, the climate is such that Indigenous students do not so much drop out of school as they are pushed out by a hostile environment that is oblivious to and uncaring about their needs.

As previously stated, the challenges faced by minority students result from power imbalances between home and school cultures (Cummins, 1986). In an effort to better understand the effects of this power imbalance on North American schools, this chapter will examine two general challenges, both linked to institutional racism, that Indigenous students routinely face within North American schools: gaining written literacy skills and cultural discord between home and school cultures.

In the body of literature related to academic achievement among Indigenous students in North America, many other educational challenges are discussed, including the oft-noted difficulties caused by poverty and social problems. The three challenges to be discussed in this chapter were selected because they: (a) surface repeatedly in a number of North American studies; (b) are related to weaknesses in the educational system as opposed to deficits within the homes of students; and (c) are specifically reported by Indigenous parents, educators, researchers, and community members as being educational challenges for Indigenous students. Each of these selected challenges will be discussed through the examination of specific underlying practices that negatively affect Indigenous students.

2. Gaining Written Literacy Skills

In the early years of primary school in North America, classroom activities are primarily organized with the goals of providing students with the opportunity to gain literacy skills. There are different reasons why developing these skills can be more difficult for Indigenous students than for those children coming from mainstream families. These barriers include: (a) differences between home and school English varieties; and (b) inadequate assessment and evaluation of dialect-speaking children by teachers and speech practitioners. This following section will explore each of these two areas through the examination of relevant literature.

2.1   Linguistic Differences Between Home and School English Varieties

Before describing linguistic characteristics of Indigenous English, it is first important to establish the link between differences between home and school English varieties and literacy development. Being a dialect speaker of English within a standard English school system can affect students' literacy development in a number of ways (Roy, 1987; Wolfram et al., 1999). Children who speak non-standard dialects do not automatically become fluent in the standard variety of a language upon entering school (Roy, 1987). Many linguists and educational researchers argue that fluency of this kind can only be achieved through formal instruction and through explanations of the differences between the two varieties (Delpit, 1988; Wolfram et al., 1999). Lack of fluency in the standard language variety causes interruptions and delays in Indigenous students' mastery of literacy skills and, subsequently, subject matter.

Cecil's (1988) examination of black dialect and academic success in the United States considers the role of teacher expectations of dialect speakers. Her study found that the teachers surveyed expected significantly greater overall academic achievement, reading success, and intelligence from those children who spoke standard English than from those who spoke varieties of African American English. Goodman and Buck (1973) explored the influence of dialect differences on learning to read. Their study found that it was the rejection of the learner's dialect by educators, and not dialect differences, that created a special disadvantage for dialect speaking learners.

In her discussion article, Eller (1989) examines the perpetuation of the deficit theory amongst educators. The author claims that the view of a dialect speaker's

language as being substandard is based on "questionable assumptions about language and how it is used" (Eller, 1989, p. 670). Eller argues for a re-evaluation of educators' biases and suggests that the tendency to label children as being verbally inept is a result of the majority's need for these children to conform to their own linguistic models. Wolfram, Temple Adger, and Christian (1999) explain that proponents of the deficit theory "believe that speakers of dialects with non-standard forms have a handicap—socially and cognitively—because the dialects are illogical, or sloppy, or just bad grammar" (p. 20). The authors argue that if educators believe that only one particular dialect is acceptable, it is then obvious that students entering school already speaking the valued dialect will achieve higher levels of academic performance than their peers who speak an undervalued dialect.

Having briefly reviewed the relationship between dialects and literacy development, I now turn to literature related to Indigenous English which describes some of the linguistic characteristics of this English variety. A number of American linguists have established that systematic differences exist between the English used by White settler settlers and the English used by Indigenous Peoples in the United States (Dubois, 1978; Leap, 1974 and 1993; Olson Flanagan; 1987; Schilling-Estes, 2000; Wolfram, 1984). In Canada, research into the variety of English spoken by Indigenous Peoples is limited and, thus far, has only been discussed in the writings of Heit and Blair (1993) and in my MA study (Sterzuk, 2003) which revealed similar findings to those described in the work of the above-mentioned American linguists. These linguistic differences are briefly discussed in the below review of studies of American Indian English and Indigenous English.

Leap (1993) argues that American Indian English differs systematically from Standard English on phonological, morphological, and lexical levels, and in terms of pragmatics, syntax, and non-verbal language as well, thus classifying it as a dialect. Other American Indian English researchers frequently cite his extensive work in the area of this dialect. His study of grammaticality in the American Indian English of First Nations people living in Isleta, New Mexico, examines how this dialect differs from Standard English at a sentence construction level (Leap, 1974). Wolfram (1984) conducted a study, which sought to better understand unmarked tense in American Indian English. Schilling-Estes (2000) explores the variable patterning of /ay/ in the American Indian English spoken by the Lumbee First Nations in North Carolina. Olson Flanagan (1987) examines language variation in general in the English used among the Sioux of South Dakota. Finally, Dubois (1978) presents a case study of an American Indian English speaking child in New Mexico and analyses the phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences in relation to standard English.

Dubois' (1978) examination of the speech of a four-year old "Native American" shows an absence of marking of the past tense. Wolfram (1984) explains that in American Indian English, mechanisms such as temporal adverbs and linguistic clauses are used more often to "set the temporal/aspect framework" (p. 43). Olson Flanigan (1987) also mentions the evidence of tense shifting within a sentence. When the first clause in a sentence establishes the past tense, the second reverts to the present, as seen in the example, "So I came back and I stick with the elementary" (p.184).

Both Leap (1974) and Olson Flanigan (1987) describe a lack of subject-verb agreement in American Indian English. The example that is provided from the work of Olson Flanigan is "My brother, he do that everyday, painting" (p.183). Leap presents the following utterance, "This old ladies down there is awfully poor" (p.83). Dubois (1978) observed non-standard indefinite article usage, as did Olson Flanigan (1987). This phenomenon is demonstrated in an example from Olson Flanigan's work with the South Dakota Sioux, "We have bacon in morning" (p.184).

An additional aspect of the English spoken by Indigenous Peoples that has been observed on the morphological and syntactic levels is the use of the double negative, also frequently seen in other non-standard forms of English. This characteristic is described by Leap (1993) and is shown in his example, "He was never hurt by no ants" (p.83). This trait is also depicted by Heit and Blair (1993) as being apparent in the speech of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan.

Turning now to evidence of phonological differences between Indigenous and standard English, it would appear that this area has not experienced as much research. Dubois (1978) states that the phonology of the English dialect spoken by "New Mexico Indians" varies from standard English in three ways: "syllable, as opposed to stress, timing; extensive use of glottal stops; and two, as opposed to three, pitch levels" (p. 3). Olson Flanigan examined the differences in the English pronunciation in the Sioux of South Dakota, a group of people whose heritage language is Lakota. She comments on three noticeable differences. The first is in the stress patterns, which Olson Flanigan links to the frequent deletion of function words such as *in* and *the*. Secondly, the researcher explains that "intonation contours are often flattened

out, probably in hyper corrective reaction to switching from Lakota, which is a tone language" (p. 188). Finally, Olson Flanigan remarks that "syllable length appears to be shorter but this is caused by vowel glide reduction so that the normal pattern of alternating monophthongs and diphthongised vowels is lost" (p. 188).

Another phonological difference observed in a number of varieties of English spoken by Indigenous Peoples is that of "consonant cluster reduction" (Olson Flanigan, 1987, p.183). This is discernible in the Sioux First Nations of South Dakota and the Cree First Nations of Saskatchewan (Olson Flanigan, 1987; Heit & Blair, 1993). An example of this characteristic is found in the following example, "When I firs' start' workin' here" (Olson Flanigan, 1987, p. 183)

All of these previous studies establish significant differences between standard English and the English spoken by Indigenous Peoples in the United States and in Canada. The dialect characteristics outlined in the above studies are mirrored in Indigenous English, the variety of English spoken by the urban First Nations participants in my MA study (Sterzuk 2003). The dialect used by these Grade 3 children differs phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically from the standard English of the White settler children of the study. The Indigenous English-speaking children construct their speech differently than do the standard English-speaking children. Some of the differences observed in this study include: the use of multiple negation, lack of subject/verb agreement, the conjugation of the verb *to be*, omission of function words, consonant cluster reduction and stressed pronunciation of words ending in *ing*, variable pronunciation of words beginning with *th*, lack of plural

marking, omission of the possession marker *'s*, conjugation of certain verbs (*came*, *became* and *upset*) in the past tense, and lexical differences.

2.2. Biased Assessment and Misdiagnosis

In North American schools, when a child experiences difficulty in acquiring literacy and language skills, they are referred, by their classroom teacher, to any number of specialists for assessment. The classroom teacher bases this decision to refer a child to a speech and language specialist on his or her beliefs regarding appropriate classroom discourse and narrative skills. A study conducted by Crago (1992) illustrates the marked effect that culturally derived perceptions of appropriate language behaviour can have on a child's school performance. Crago explains that the Inuit value learning through "looking and listening" whereas the non-Inuit teachers place more importance on "question asking and answering." The following excerpt (Crago, 1992), is taken from a report card interview between an Inuk parent and a non-Inuit teacher:

| Non-Inuit Teacher | Your son is talking well in class. He is speaking up a lot |
| Inuk Parent | I am sorry (p. 498) |

In a conversation such as the one cited in Crago's study, differences in culturally derived perceptions of appropriate language behaviour are apparent. It is evident how a situation could develop whereby a child who does not conform to a mainstream educator's understanding of appropriate language discourse could be potentially unnecessarily referred for speech and language assessment.

Speech and language pathologists, resource room teachers, psychologists, and special educators generally perform these assessments by subjecting students to a battery of standardized tests. While the creators of such tests have certainly attempted to address concerns related to problems of culturally-biased norming, Long and Christensen (1998) argue that no standardized test can ever be completely unbiased, making the use of such tests questionable in the high-stakes situation of directing the educational path of a minority student. In spite of warnings regarding standardized tests that have not been appropriately normed or modified for use with a local population, such instruments continue to be used when assessing minority populations (Long & Christensen, 1998). Biased assessment can result in misdiagnosis of speech, language, and learning difficulties, which, in turn, can potentially further exacerbate Indigenous students' attempts to develop literacy skills in mainstream classrooms (Harris, 1985).

Harris (1985) describes two errors that a professional may make when assessing the English language performance of Indigenous students. The first mistake that can be made is "to assume that a child has a speech or language handicap when, in fact, he or she is using a dialect of English that is appropriate to his or her culture and community" (p. 43). Harris goes on to explain that it is also likely that the full language proficiency of the child will not be tested during assessment. The author explains that a misdiagnosis such as this can result in a number of educational challenges which include: negative self-esteem for the child as well as inappropriate placement in resource room programs, special education classrooms or modified programs.

The second potential error that can occur when a speech and language professional is not skilled in assessing an Indigenous student's speech and language in a non-biased manner is to conclude that no problem is present when one indeed exists. Harris attributes this error, through reference to the work of Terrell and Terrell (1983), to the result of "lack of confidence in test instruments, the assumption that a nonverbal child is behaving in a culturally appropriate way, or an absence of information regarding aberrant versus dialectal linguistic forms" (p. 43). An error such as this can result in serious long-term effects for a student which include: dropping out, being retained, and the frustration of having to live with an undiagnosed language disability.

Harris (1985) explains that the language clinicians and researchers must learn to contemplate cultural differences in assessments of Indigenous students' performances on speech and language tests. Cultural differences that may affect test performance include differences in child-rearing and cultural expectations for language use. Clinicians who work with Indigenous populations must familiarize themselves with cultural sensitivity and understanding so as not to improperly assess Indigenous students' performance. Harris lists five aspects of a child's language that may result in misdiagnosis if practitioners are not adequately informed about differences between home and school language behaviour: (a) willingness to speak, (b) mean length of utterance, (c) response time, (d) frequency of conversation initiation, and (e) turn-taking behaviour.

The most alarming effect of biased assessment and misdiagnosis of speech and language disorders is that children do not receive the treatment they require or

receive treatment that is unnecessary that removes them from other important literacy-building classroom activities. Many of the "errors" that are diagnosed in the speech of Indigenous students are potentially the result of differences in home and school English varieties and appropriate speech behaviour. Moreover, rather than assuming that Indigenous students have a speech or language disorder, a more effective approach might be to review and modify mainstream classrooms' bias towards majority culture speech behaviours. In being more mindful of the appropriate speech behaviour of Indigenous homes, educators and speech and language clinicians could potentially avoid inappropriate assessments and misdiagnoses with harmful long-term effects on students' educational success.

3.   Cultural Discord

This final section discusses an educational challenge that is more abstract in nature than those discussed in the previous section. In some ways, the intangible nature of this particular challenge makes it more difficult to examine than issues related to gaining literacy skills in schools. However, the difficulty that comes with isolating the challenges to be discussed in this section may be indicative of the "invisible" quality of culture, making this discussion even more essential to understanding the education challenges of Indigenous students.

It is commonly acknowledged, by both educators and researchers, that differences in cultural frames of reference can influence the academic experience of minority students (Cummins, 1986; DeVillar et al., 1994; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Obgu, 1992). Indigenous students describe not feeling "welcome" in schools

(Silver et al., 2002) but where exactly does this feeling originate? Taylor, Crago, and McAlpine (2001) provide one possible explanation:

> For most mainstream North Americans, the notion that school somehow represents "a culture" would seem bizarre. After all, the values and patterns of interactions among students and teachers in the school are intuitively comfortable and understood. This is so for white, middle-class North Americans because the values and patterns of interaction found in the school are mirrors of those found in the home, in the world of work, and in the community as a whole (p. 178).

In discussions of "cultural conflict", it is important to identify or uncover the specific ways that systems discriminate against minority populations. As noted by the authors of the previous citation, it can be challenging, however, to isolate the school practices that are reflective of this discrimination due to how deeply imbedded these practices are in the culture of educational systems.

How do differences between home and school cultures specifically influence the educational experiences of Indigenous students? This section will examine three aspects of school environments, related to culture discord between home and school, which negatively affect the educational experiences of Indigenous students: (a) Indigenous representation; (b) culturally inappropriate materials; and (c) teacher and administrator beliefs. While this list of challenges related to cultural discord is not exhaustive, it focuses on three issues most frequently discussed in the studies reviewed in the writing of this chapter.

3.1.   Indigenous Representation

The extensive examination of Winnipeg's inner city schools conducted by Silver et al. (2002) portrays a school system that is decidedly foreign for the Indigenous students who attend its schools. The researchers of this study conducted interviews with 47 Indigenous students, 50 Indigenous school leavers and 25 members of Winnipeg's Indigenous community with the goal of better understanding the challenges faced by students within this particular school system.

Researchers designed a series of questions to discern how students perceived the overall climate of their schools. In response to the question "Based on your experience, do you feel that Aboriginal students feel comfortable and welcome in school," of the students and school leavers interviewed, 70% responded no to this question. Upon analysis of their interview data, the authors of this paper attribute this response to the existence of a "cultural/class/experiential divide between Aboriginal students and primarily White middle class teachers and institutions" (p. 23).

This study indicates that the overwhelming majority of non-Indigenous educators and support staff is a form of institutional racism. One of the results of this predominance of non-Indigenous personnel is that Indigenous students feel unwelcome and perceive their culture and peoples as undervalued. The researchers maintain that an Indigenous student in such an environment will experience his or her school as an "alien institution."

Deyle and Swisher's (1997) extensive review of research in Indigenous education in the United States examined three American studies that report similar findings. These authors indicate that in Bowker (1993), the majority of the 991

Indigenous students interviewed described their educational experiences as negative and attributed these feelings to oppressive school policies and poor school climates. Similarly, another study mentioned in the authors' review of relevant research, Deyle and Margonis (1995), found that "feelings of rejection from their teachers and racial hostilities in schools were central reasons that lead young Navajo women to leave school" (p.134). A third study, Deyle (1992), again described a cultural divide between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous teachers. This author found that for Indigenous students, White settler teachers represented the dominant White settler community, a community that had historically controlled and oppressed members of the Navajo community. This historical relationship created tension between White settler teachers and Indigenous students that had detrimental effects on Indigenous students' abilities to feel welcome in their schools.

Based on the findings reported in these particular studies, it would seem important to significantly increase the number of Indigenous educators in schools with Indigenous students. Silver et al. (2002) posit that increasing the presence of Indigenous educators to significant levels would have a "huge impact on Aboriginal students" (p. 49). Drawing on the findings of the previously discussed studies one can make the argument that such a practice could potentially contribute to making the environments of North American schools more welcoming to Indigenous students.

3.2. Culturally Inappropriate Materials

Reyhner (1992) argues that North American schools are guilty of providing a curriculum that is inappropriate for Indigenous students and that is unreflective of Indigenous students' "unique cultural background". He explains that textbooks that

are used are not created in consideration of Indigenous students and that this omission

further widens the cultural division between home and school cultures. Reyhner also

posits that North American textbooks are largely culturally inappropriate for

Indigenous students and that there is an over reliance by teachers on such commercial

materials.

The study conducted by Silver et al. (2002) found that Indigenous students,

school leavers, and community members perceive Indigenous content in Winnipeg

schools' curriculum as an "add-on." In other words, interviewees of this study felt

that the Indigenous content included in the school curriculum was not meaningful.

The authors of this particular study support a full integration of Indigenous content

into school curriculum. They suggest that this integration would mean including:

Aboriginal novelists, dramatists, and poets into the English literature

curriculum; including Aboriginal perspectives and issues in the history and

social studies curriculum--treaties, the Indian Act, residential schools, Oka, as

well as the 'living culture' of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg: including

Aboriginal perspectives on the relationship between humans and the

environment in science and geography classes; and making use of elders-in-

the-schools programs, Aboriginal artists-in-the-schools programs, Aboriginal

speakers, and Aboriginal films and film-makers (p. 47).

In short, more needs to be done to include meaningful Indigenous content in

North American school materials. It is not enough to include cursory mention of

traditional Indigenous practices such as drumming or Pow Wow dancing. In order to

create more equal balance between the dominant White settler majority culture and

Indigenous peoples in North American schools, more needs to be done to highlight the contemporary realities of Indigenous Peoples as well as the historical relationship of colonialism in the material that is used in North American schools. The benefits to the educational experiences of Indigenous students resulting from providing an anti-racist curriculum in schools cannot be underestimated. Such a reformed curriculum would emphasize "the political, historical, social, and economic aspects of all knowledge and subjects. It exposes the dominant ideology, provides alternative perspectives to the predominant Western worldview, and exposes the social construction of race and gender" (Ghosh, 2002, p. 116).

3.3. Teacher and Administrator Beliefs

The final element to be discussed in this examination of cultural discord between home and school is the role that teacher and administrator beliefs about Indigenous students can have in creating educational challenges for Indigenous students. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the difficulties experienced by minority students in mainstream classrooms are frequently not visible to mainstream educators. Due to this inability to perceive the challenges created by cultural discord between home and school, mainstream educators and administrators tend to view problems experienced by Indigenous students as "imbedded in the individual, though they are more likely derived from structural and social conditions in the environment" (Wilson, 1991, p. 379).

This perception creates lowered expectations of Indigenous students which, in turn, leads to lower levels of performance in Indigenous students. Wilson (1991) describes a school in which teachers prejudge the academic abilities of Sioux

students. Before ever knowing them, Sioux students are classified by their teachers as being unable to handle upper-level academic courses. The author indicates that "this misperception is created not by the students but by the nature of the sociopolitical system. These critical findings help to explain the underperformance of the students" (p. 379).

Since the 1960's, the link between teacher expectations and student performance has been a source of discussion among researchers (Ghosh, 2002). As the previous sections of this chapter have illustrated, many differences exist between appropriate home and school varieties of English, discourse behaviour, learning styles, interaction between children and adults, and narrative skills. These differences can potentially influence a mainstream educator's perception of an Indigenous student. Educators value participation in classroom activities (Crago, 1992). Children who are vocal and raise their hands to answer questions are seen as active and independent learners. Those who remain silent are perceived as not understanding the discussion or as not being interested in learning (Plank, 1994). A child's behaviour in the classroom affects the perceptions of his or her teacher. These perceptions influence the teacher's expectations of the student, which, in turn, influence the performance of the child (Cecil, 1988; Ford, 1984).

Educators and administrators operating with misinformation regarding differences between the cultural frameworks of home and school are affected by their beliefs and this can lead to negative assumptions regarding Indigenous children. These lowered expectations have a self-fulfilling effect on the school performance of Indigenous students in that these expectations lead to lower levels of performance.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Indigenous students in North American schools face particular challenges that have detrimental effects on their academic success. Access to literacy development and general cultural discord between home and school cultures are problems that are compounded by school institutions that are cultural reflections of White settler mainstream society.

The studies reviewed in this chapter present a picture of North American schools that provide hostile environments in which Indigenous students are expected to learn and succeed at the same levels as White settler children who do not have to concern themselves with issues of cultural discord. This challenge is difficult at best and, for many Indigenous students, potentially impossible. The hopelessness of the task of learning in such a climate leaves many Indigenous students with no option but to leave school; thus, they are effectively pushed out of a system that many describe as "foreign" to them.

Yet, for many schools and educators, it is easier to attribute the difficulties of Indigenous students to deficiencies in their home environments. The prevailing belief of educators and administrators that Indigenous students can succeed academically if they choose to is assimilatory at best. Within North American schools, colonialism has not ended; Indigenous students are expected to conform to the White settler mainstream ways of schools if they wish to succeed.

This chapter has argued that there is much that can be done to improve the educational environment that Indigenous students experience in North American schools. Creating a shift in the power imbalance between the dominant White settler

culture and Indigenous Peoples that exists in today's educational institutions is the first step towards invoking the necessary changes. This shift in power can be linked to Eurocentrism, a notion, among others, that will be explored in the next chapter which examines issues related to conflicting worldviews.

Chapter 4: Indigenous and Western Worldviews

1.   Introduction

Through a review of relevant literature, the previous chapter explored some of the educational challenges of Indigenous students in North American schools. This chapter examines another facet of the story that I am telling through my writing of this dissertation: the collision of Western and Indigenous worldviews. This chapter, like the previous one, is integral to understanding the social and academic realities of Indigenous English-speaking children in Saskatchewan schools.

Yupiaq educator, Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (1995) explains that a "worldview consists of the principles we acquire to make sense of the world around us" (p. 7). All humans carry with them a cognitive map that is particular to their community where they have learned to make sense of the world. Some people have grown up with a Western worldview and others carry with them cognitive maps that are very different from the Western way of viewing the world. Blackfoot scholar, Leroy Little Bear (2000) explains that "no matter how dominant a worldview is, there are always other ways of interpreting the world" (p.77). While I am only beginning to understand the ways the world can be viewed from an Indigenous perspective, it is important that I attempt to describe this model as it has become apparent to me that the values linked to Indigenous worldviews inform the discourse behaviour of the children involved in this study.

My original research plans, surprisingly, did not include an exploration of Indigenous worldview literature and the insights it might offer about Saskatchewan education and Indigenous English-speaking children. Initially, I planned to ground

my study in Western theory and research but my theoretical framework began to expand, so as to include other theories, during the first month of my data collection. From a Western perspective, I could explain the change in my theoretical leanings as the result of my fortunate, albeit unexpected, involvement in a research project related to Indigenous science. This project permitted me to explore literature related to Indigenous worldviews, Indigenous ways of coming-to-knowing, and Indigenous science. It is this literature that now plays a key role in providing the framework for this study and my understanding of the findings of my research.

Little Bear (2000) explains that "no one has a pure worldview that is 100 percent Indigenous or Eurocentric; rather, everyone has an integrated mind, a fluxing and ambidextrous consciousness, a precolonized consciousness that flows into colonized consciousness and back again" (p. 85). Western physicist, David Peat (1994) explains that it is possible to develop an "ability to leave the boundaries of our own egos and worldview and temporarily enter into those of another" (p. 12). Similarly, Maori education activist, Graham Smith (2000) explains the cultural interests and values of Maori and *Pakeha* (White New Zealanders) as a spectrum and that "both Maori and Pakeha individuals may be found anywhere along the continuum" (p. 218).

In accordance with this line of thought, I choose to make use of my "fluxing and ambidextrous consciousness" and explain my introduction to the concepts related to Indigenous worldview literature in a different way. As I have come to understand it, intuition and learning spirits guided me to the information and teachers I needed to know in order to better understand the experiences of the participants involved in my

study. As a result of my readings and discussions about Indigenous worldviews, it is now apparent to me that the values and belief systems inherent to Indigenous worldviews are intrinsically connected to the discourse behaviours used by Indigenous English-speaking children in the classroom where I collected the data for this study. It is because of the link between worldview and behaviour that this next chapter will explore Indigenous worldviews.

Drawing on relevant literature, I will explain the concept of Eurocentrism, describe the general differences between Western worldviews and Indigenous worldviews and discuss the values linked to Indigenous worldviews. I hesitate to make the claim that I will capture a complete image of Indigenous worldviews as this action contradicts the notion of flux and change found in Indigenous communities. Indeed, Indigenous scholars avoid defining Indigenous knowledge because the practice of classifying, naming, and defining a phenomenon is in direct conflict with Indigenous worldviews. Hopi scholar, Wendy Rose (1992) argues that someone who is not an Indigenous person cannot produce an Indigenous perspective. As such, I am also mindful of that my description of Indigenous worldviews will not produce an Indigenous perspective; it will be another viewpoint. Also, while the worldviews of Indigenous nations share many commonalities, these cognitive maps are unique to each Indigenous community and place. In sum, I do not seek to present the definitive explanation of Indigenous worldviews; this would be an arrogant claim and impossible feat.

This chapter attempts, rather, to broadly paint the portraits of Indigenous and Western worldviews. This is a necessary discussion because of how these

worldviews and their fundamental differences influence the learning experiences of Indigenous students in the Eurocentric schools of Saskatchewan. The White settler educators of this study seem to have limited or erroneous understanding of Indigenous students' differences in terms of language or worldview; this concept will be examined at length in Chapter 7 of this dissertation. This unawareness is all the more alarming because the resulting teaching practices not only reflect linguistic imperialism but seem to indicate cognitive imperialism, that is, "the imposition of one worldview on a people with an alternative worldview" (Battiste, 2000, p.193)

I am cognisant of the complicated task I am undertaking by attempting this exploration, however necessary it may be to the discussion of my study. Mindful of my own Western worldview and the contradictions between Indigenous worldviews and what I am attempting to accomplish with this chapter, I humbly choose to draw on the writings and ideas of bi-cognitive Indigenous academics, and trust in the learning spirits that accompany me in my writing, in this exploration of the values that accompany Indigenous worldviews.

2.   Eurocentrism

Europeans who first arrived in what is today known as Canada brought with them many beliefs, customs and their own ways of viewing the world. It is important to note that Indigenous communities have never been static and were in flux long before Europeans arrived with the goal of occupying Canada. Indeed, Little Bear (2000) explains that, from an Indigenous perspective, "the only constant is change" (p. xi). This being said, North American colonialists attempted to forcibly introduce many unnatural, painful, and cross-generational traumatizing changes to Indigenous

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communities' ways of being (Yellow Horse Braveheart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Kawagley (1995) explains that the "incursion of Western society has brought about many cultural and psychological disruptions to the flow of life in traditional societies" (p. 1). Today, colonialism continues to pervade all aspects of Canadian society and its heritage is experienced in many ways by Indigenous peoples and settler societies. James [Sakej] Youngblood Henderson of the Chicksaw Nation and Cheyenne Tribe in Oklahoma (2000) explains that "among colonized peoples, the cognitive legacy of colonization is labelled 'Eurocentrism' (p. 58).

It is important to begin this chapter by examining the concept of Eurocentrism because this exploration can help to shed light on why educators with a Western worldview react negatively to or are ignorant of alternative worldviews. Not only is this discussion important but it could also be described as necessary. Kawagley (1995) explains that the "the issue of the long term consequences of the collision of contrasting worldviews on the survival of indigenous peoples takes on an urgency that can no longer be ignored" (p. 3). My research experiences lead me to share this sense of urgency and to want to better understand the fallout of this collision of worldviews. The notion of Eurocentrism encompasses more, however, than simply being unaware of these alternative ways of making sense of the world.

Youngblood Henderson (2000) argues that "Eurocentrism is a dominant and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans" (p. 58). Especially relevant is Youngblood Henderson's assertion that this movement lives inside the policies, practices and procedures of our educational institutions. His arguments add to the sense of urgency described by Kawagley

(2000) in terms of examining how the collision of these two worldviews affects

Indigenous peoples. Based on my readings and on my teaching and research

experiences, it has become clear to me that Canadian schools are indeed Eurocentric.

Initially, however, it took time for me to understand this concept and what it

concretely means or entails. The term "diffusionism" and the ideas it explains has

helped me to better understand Eurocentrism and its dangers.

Diffusionism reveals Western beliefs to be only assumptions about how the

world should be structured. Mi'kmaw professor, Marie Battiste, and Youngblood

Henderson explain that diffusionism is at the core of understanding Eurocentrism and

that this concept rests on two assumptions about the world: "(1) most human

communities are uninventive, and (2) a few human communities (or places, or

cultures) are inventive and are thus the permanent centers of cultural change or

'progress'" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 21). The authors go on to

explain that Eurocentrism is grounded in the belief that Europe is the centre of our

world and all else is on the periphery. Working from these assumptions, diffusionism

posits that Europeans are superior to Indigenous peoples. Diffusionism also "explains

any progress made by non-Europeans as resulting from the spread of European ideas,

which flow in the non-European world like air flows into a vacuum (Battiste &

Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 22).

If these are the assumptions upon which our school systems have been built

then these beliefs pervade every aspect of a teacher's belief system since educators

are products of Eurocentric elementary, high school, and university classrooms.

Eurocentric teachers in Saskatchewan are charged with educating Indigenous and

White settler students yet they do so in a system that assesses Indigenous students to be void of "ideas and proper spiritual values" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 21). Negative perceptions or ignorance regarding a community's way of viewing the world creates conflict between Western educators and Indigenous students. Youngblood Henderson explains that "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" (p. 58). Eurocentric schools have been one of the most disruptive attempts at subjugating Indigenous knowledge and ways of being (Kawagley, 1995).

3.   Indigenous Worldviews

Having discussed colonialism's attempted suppression of Indigenous knowledge and beliefs about the world, I now turn to describing Western and Indigenous worldviews. While I have begun to be aware of these ways of viewing the world and their differences, it remains important for me to draw on the work of scholars who are vastly more familiar with these concepts. Many of the researchers whose writings I explore in this chapter have spent their lives acutely aware of the differences between Indigenous and Western worldviews. These authors have experienced the impact of these differences in almost all aspects of their lives whereas I have remained blissfully unaware of the significance of these ideas for the majority of my life. As such, the following section will present a brief overview of the general characteristics of Western and Indigenous cognitive maps, or worldviews, drawing on the ideas shared in the writings of scholars engaged in this important work.

In this section, I will initially focus on presenting both Western and Indigenous worldviews and briefly describing how they differ. As my argument progresses, however, I will increasingly focus solely on the description of characteristics unique to Indigenous worldviews. My choice is deliberate; I am attempting to explore Indigenous worldview without measuring it in terms of how it differs from Western worldview. Indigenous worldview is not a deviation or tangent of Western thought; it is its own system and can be described without lengthy comparisons to Western worldviews.

While the majority of writings explored in this chapter are written by Indigenous scholars, I think it wise to begin this discussion with an exploration of some of the ideas examined in the writings of a man named F. David Peat. I use his work as my starting place because this is how I first was introduced to the concepts of Indigenous and Western worldviews. Peat is a White settler and traditionally trained in Western science and research methodologies as a physicist. He has conducted research in solid state physics and the foundation of quantum theory. Of interest for this chapter is his appreciation of the important work that can occur when Western and Indigenous scientists come together to share their understandings of the world. In his own words, Peat (1994) explains that "change can come from dialogues between different cultures and forms of spirituality" (p. 9). I find Peat's work to be helpful because his writing is accessible to someone operating with a Western worldview. Moreover, his writing creates clear bridges for the novice reader of Indigenous worldview literature. For these reasons, I will begin this section by describing some of his ideas regarding the "dialogue between worlds."

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, a Western worldview includes the practices of comparison, measuring and categorization of things that occur in the natural world. In this way, we are able to objectively decide what practices or ideas are better or worse. Peat (1994) introduces another way of examining the world through his telling of an anecdotal story. Peat explains that in Labrador there is a traditional Indigenous way to hunt beaver and another method that was introduced by European trappers. Today, Indigenous Peoples in Labrador make use of both ways and there is "no sense that one method is better than the other, or that one should replace the other. Rather, both methods are used, side by side" (p. xiv).

Now, if you have read this story and ask yourself "what does this tell me about the differences between worldviews," then your reaction is similar to how I felt when I first began to read Peat's book. What I now understand about this story is that it is representative of some the key principles of Indigenous and Western worldviews. Indigenous worldviews can be described as "being holistic and cyclical or repetitive, generalist, process-oriented, and firmly grounded in a particular place" (Little Bear, 2000, p.78). Indigenous peoples see the world as being in constant movement; everything is animate and has a spirit. Indeed, this notion of constant change and flux is reflected in the verb-based languages of many Indigenous communities (Battiste, 2000; Inglis, 2004). Using Peat's example as our starting place, we can see that the Indigenous Peoples in Labrador are able to accept the changes in how they hunt beaver and that there is no need for assessment of method. The world is in flux and it is normal and acceptable to change along with it.

"In contrast to Aboriginal value systems, one can summarize the value systems of Western Europeans as being linear and singular, static, and objective" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 82). Due to the need for objectivity and the sense that we are outsiders looking at the natural world--meaning that we are not part of it--we create the need to classify and measure what occurs in the ecology of our universe. The linear and objective aspects of our cognitive maps lead us to want to decide which beaver hunting method is superior to the other. In the presence of two systems or methods, "our natural tendency is to compare them, like the latest model autos, and see which one comes out on top" (Peat, 1994, p. xiv). This need to compare isn't limited to hunting methods; it extends to all areas of Western thought, including the measurement of other cultures. Peat explains that "when it comes to other people's cultures we are generally the ones who are doing the measuring, and are supplying the yardstick as well!" (p. xiv).

When I first began to read Indigenous worldview literature, I felt confused about how I was supposed to be able to understand something that wasn't meant to be measured or classified. How could I make sense of something without analyzing it, reasoning about it, or attempting to accumulate facts in an effort to make sense? This approach, after all, is how I moved through school and university and achieved the educational success that allows me to be writing this dissertation. When I began to learn about Indigenous worldviews, I wasn't sure how I could set aside these beliefs that had served me so well and begin to look at the world in a different way.

Peat's (1994) explanations helped me to understand that "we can come to some form of knowing, albeit in a strictly limited way, through an actual change in

consciousness. If we remain as observers, objective scholars of another society, we will never enter into its essence. However, if we approach it in a spirit of humility, respect, enquiry and openness, it becomes possible for a change of consciousness to occur" (p. 11). It was this statement that allowed me to begin to approach the necessary "change in consciousness" that permits me to arrive at my limited "form of knowing" regarding Indigenous worldviews and the resulting discourse behaviours. The Western world needs to listen to Indigenous scholars, now perhaps more than ever (Battiste, 2000). If we as Western-thinkers do not begin to move towards a change in consciousness, how can this exchange grow? In writing this chapter, I am hopeful that readers and, perhaps more importantly, that White settler educators in Saskatchewan can also begin to move towards this change.

As previously stated, Peat (1994) presents ideas that make the newness of Indigenous worldviews more easily understandable for those with a Western worldview. I would now like to turn this discussion to Indigenous scholars' descriptions and writings regarding Indigenous worldviews. This is a new and growing body of literature that spans many disciplines. I find many of the ideas to be exciting and relevant to my own work in terms of understanding the classroom communicative patterns of educators and children in Saskatchewan. These links between Indigenous worldviews and discourse behaviour and educator perception will become even more apparent in the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

The notion of connectedness is an important aspect of many Indigenous worldviews. Connectedness, or the importance of relationships, is an idea that seems to be common to all literature and theories of Indigenous worldview. Tewa educator

from the Santa Clara Pueblo, Gregory Cajete's (1994) descriptions of Indigenous education as having a communal foundation echoes the importance of connectedness as do the writings of Peat (1994) and Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000). Youngblood Henderson (2000) explains that "the Aboriginal worldview asserts that all life is sacred and that all life forms are connected. Humans are neither above nor below others in the circle of life. Everything that exists in the circle is one unity, of one heart" (p. 259). Similarly, Little Bear (2000) explains that we exist in a "spider web network of relationships"; everything is interrelated.

Further to this concept, Youngblood Henderson (2000) goes on to explain that humans "exist to care for and renew the web of life, and therefore they must respect and value all the forces of life" (p. 259). He explains that this notion is often referred to as the "process of humility." Kawagley (1995) also acknowledges the importance of connectedness or the value of relationships between humans and the relationships between humans and the natural and spirit worlds. Finally, E. Richard Atleo of the Nuu-chah-nulth (2004) tells us that the universe is "unified, interconnected, and interrelated" and that these beliefs about the natural and spirit world are represented in the origin stories of the Nuu-chah-nulth, fifteen separate but related First Nations located on Vancouver Island's west coast. Atleo's theory of *Tswalk* (one) describes life as integrated and whole and as the result of necessary connections between the physical and metaphysical worlds.

Previously, I made mention of the notion of flux that is inherent to the system of life from an Indigenous worldview. It is important to clarify that this state of flux is not thought to be created by human design or decisions (Youngblood Henderson,

2000). Little Bear (2000) also describes processes of renewal and flux as being important characteristics of Indigenous worldviews. This understanding of the world in flux "gives rise to the view that creation is a continuous process but certain regularities that are foundational to our continuing existences must be maintained and renewed" (p.xi). This awareness of flux and renewal is part of why place is so important to Indigenous ways of being. It is the observation of "events, patterns, cycles, and happenings" which happen at specific places that permits renewal for Indigenous peoples. If these patterns of change are not observed, Indigenous peoples are at risk of being "consumed by the constant flux" (p.xi). Another way of stating this concept is that "there is significance to each natural place because each place reflects the whole order of nature" (Cajete, 2000. p. 65).

This brief examination of Indigenous worldviews will now be followed by an exploration of the community values that are informed by Indigenous ways of viewing the world. At first read, some of the ideas presented in the previous section may have seemed abstract to the Western-minded reader. I make this statement because I know that this is how I felt when I first began to explore this body of literature. What I wish to stress is that I believe that the ideas presented in this section will become more understandable once I begin to make the connections between Indigenous worldviews and the values and community norms of many Indigenous groups. This discussion of Indigenous worldviews is integral to understanding the foundation of these values and, in turn, to understanding the discourse behaviour that grows out of these community values.

4. Values

It is through the development of our worldview that we are able to identify ourselves as belonging to a particular group or community. Kawagley (1995) explains that "worldview enables its possessors to make sense of the world around them, make artifacts to fit their world, generate behaviour, and interpret their experiences" (p. 8). This section will briefly examine some of the values and behaviour that are generated through the possession of Indigenous worldviews. These values include: the importance of family, non-interference, and humour. I see these values as being strongly linked to one another and to the notion of connectedness previously examined in the section on Indigenous worldviews. In some sense, it is difficult to separately discuss these values as they are so closely interrelated.

The values that I have chosen to describe are presented in the writings of a number of Indigenous scholars but they seem most clearly articulated by Little Bear (2000). As such, this final section will draw heavily on his ideas in conjunction with some reference to the work of other Indigenous authors. I have chosen to examine these particular ideas because I believe that they best explain the discourse behaviour that will be examined in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. The Indigenous values discussed here are by no means representative of all those values or behaviours that are formed out of Indigenous worldviews. The ideas I present in this section are a beginning point of making sense of Indigenous children's discourse behaviour and of attempting to understand why this behaviour is misunderstood and undervalued by White settler educators.

Little Bear explains that "maintaining good feelings is one reason why a sense of humour pervades Aboriginal societies" (2000, p. 79). The idea that sharing is not simply about giving and receiving goods but also about "sharing good feelings" will be useful in understanding the teasing and laughter that is so bountiful in the relationships between the classroom teacher and students involved in this study. Similarly, Atleo (2004) explains that "having fun provides relief from one serious activity and a healthy transition to another" (p. 48). Atleo (2004) goes on to describe the joy of having fun as transformative, cathartic, healthy and deliberate. Humour serves a purpose; it helps to maintain the connectedness of relationships and is viewed as healthy and important.

Family is also highly valued in Indigenous communities and does not limit itself to immediate families but extends itself to include larger groups. Battiste (2000) explains that the extended family is the foundation of Mi'kmaw knowledge. Similarly, Cajete echoes the value placed on family and describes it as "the place where one comes to know what it is to be related. It is the place of sharing life through everyday acts, through song, dance, story and celebration of learning, making art, and sharing thoughts and feelings where each person can, metaphorically 'become complete'" (p. 86). Smith (2000) also highlights the importance of family and the role that learning plays in terms of one's family. Smith explains that "individuals do not hold knowledge for themselves; they hold it for the benefit of the whole group. Individuals have a responsibility to share knowledge with the group (p. 218).

Children are highly valued in Indigenous communities; they are seen as gifts. It is also believed that each child is born to a particular life and that it is their responsibility to "celebrate it with joy" as the connection to one's life allows the individual to give back to the community through the sharing of all that has been given to the individual through life (Cajete, 2000). Each of us is on a deeply personal and spiritual journey to attract learning spirits to us; this process can be achieved in a number of ways. This attraction of the learning spirit and the gifts it bestows can be achieved through community, learning from experience, from others, from spirit of plants, learning ceremonies performed, through building capacity, learning place, through story, and learning through the physical, spiritual and Indigenous creativities.

Because each of us is on this deeply personal and unique journey, the value of non-interference is especially important in many Indigenous communities. To tamper with an individual's spirit or experience is tantamount to potentially disrupting their learning journey. This idea of non-interference supports Cajete's (2000) statement regarding self-reliance, which "even in young children, is based on the belief that all persons have the ability to know and to share, to bring forward great studies in understanding and knowledge" (p. 102).

Each of the values discussed in this last section will be useful to understand the communication patterns and discourse behaviours of Indigenous English-speaking students. As previously stated, this is not an exhaustive list of values that grow out of Indigenous worldviews. Rather, I have attempted to highlight some values which seem to be most closely related to the discourse behaviour I observed among Indigenous English-speaking children. Finally, it seems apparent to me that these

values are linked to the notion of connectedness that is inherent to most Indigenous worldviews.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present an overview of Indigenous worldviews. In examining this concept, I discussed issues related to Eurocentrism, aspects of Western worldviews, characteristics of Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous values that are informed by Indigenous worldview. This chapter will serve to inform Chapter 6 of this dissertation, which examines characteristics of Indigenous English in the classroom. The concepts discussed in this chapter will further the analysis of the Indigenous English-speaking children's discourse behaviours of teasing, sharing through storytelling and the use of silence. In the next chapter, I will explain the research design and methodology that inform my doctoral research and the findings discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Research Design

1.   Introduction

In Saskatchewan, Indigenous English, the variety of English used by some

First Nations and Métis peoples, is described as a dialect in documents created by the

provincial department of education or *Saskatchewan Learning*

(www.sasked.gov.sk.ca /docs /indlang /adapt). Regardless of acknowledgement of

Indigenous English in Saskatchewan Learning documents, some Saskatchewan

educators consider First Nations and Métis learners who speak in non-standard ways

to be using a substandard form of English (Heit & Blair, 1993; Sterzuk, 2003.) The

principal aim of my research is to better understand the academic and social

experiences of Indigenous English-speaking students that result when educators do

not acknowledge the legitimacy of this variety of English.

As a researcher who draws on critical theory, another goal of my research is to

create change through my research. As a result, many of my interviews and meetings

with educators and administration included introducing them to the idea of

Indigenous English as a dialect, discussing what implications this can have for

English Language Arts programs and presenting them with Saskatchewan Learning

documents regarding Indigenous English.

One aspect of teaching where teacher perceptions of language can affect

teaching and learning is in the area of literacy development (Wolfram et al., 1999).

As such, I focused on this particular area of teaching in my classroom observations

and in discussions with educators. Developing as a reader and writer provides greater

access to society. Some students are cut off from their full potential by institutional

racism in schools – practices and procedures that are so ingrained that their danger and power remain invisible (Delpit, 1988). Peeling back the layers of these practices and making them visible is another goal I have as a researcher interested in the literacy development of minority-language students.

This chapter outlines the methodology that informs my study as well as the design and methods used to conduct my research. I begin with an outline of the research questions that guided the design and direction of my study. Next, I discuss the theoretical foundations in which I ground my research methods. Finally, I turn my attention to explanations of how I collected and analysed data from this study.

2. Research Questions

Six main research questions were investigated in the study. The decision to investigate these particular questions was influenced by the need to further explore findings from my MA study (Sterzuk, 2003) related to discourse behaviour and teacher perceptions of Indigenous English. Data from my first study reveals that storytelling, silence, and teasing are represented in the communicative patterns of Indigenous English-speaking children. While these patterns are evident and dialect research into linguistic aspects of the varieties of English used by Indigenous Peoples in North America is available, I have not found many studies related to discourse behaviours. Some academic discussions of the use of silence and storytelling do exist but these studies are limited in their scope due to the absence of any consideration of Indigenous worldview or issues of power (Darnell, 1981; Ferrara, 1999; Plank, 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). As such, my research questions seek to fill this gap by

examining how the use of silence, teasing, and storytelling shape the communicative patterns of Indigenous English-speaking children.

Motivated by my review of literature related to educator expectations of dialect speakers and, in particular, a study of educators' perceptions of silence as used by Indigenous students (Plank, 1994), my research questions also seek to investigate how the discourse characteristics of silence, teasing, and storytelling are perceived by educators. Finally, these questions are not solely informed by linguistic studies of dialects but also draw on a review of literature in the areas of Indigenous and Western worldviews and the relationships between power and race. The questions that grow out of my readings and previous research experiences include:

- How does the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom?

- How does the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom?

- How does the use of sharing through storytelling shape the Indigenous English-speaking children's general communication patterns in the classroom?

- How is the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school?

- How is the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school?

- How is the use of story-telling by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school?

Findings related to these questions, as well as other patterns that emerged in the data, are presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. In these chapters, I explore the data resulting from my study in an in-depth manner. Additionally, the final chapter of this dissertation provides explicit answers to each of these six research questions.

3. Methodological Framework

When examining language in the classroom, I use a poststructuralist approach in the design of my research. I could most likely also use terms such as postmodernism and critical inquiry to describe how I study language. As I understand it, what these approaches to the study of language have in common is a focus on language as the centre of social organization, power, and individual consciousness (Pavlenko, 2002.) Viewing language-related research in this manner allows me to examine power relations and pushes me to engage in qualitative research that seeks to permit participants' voices to be heard.

The understanding that language and power are intrinsically linked vibrates throughout how I make sense of the literature, the ways in which I conduct research and interact with participants, and I how I write about the findings of this study. This connection can be found in many areas of society where power is negotiated through social interactions ranging from exchanges between employer and employee to contact between language test-takers and language testers and makers (Kouritzin; 1999; Miller 1999; Norton Peirce, 1995).

The value of a particular linguistic variety grows out of how well it can provide access to more prestigious forms of education and desired positions in the workforce (Bourdieu, 1991). From this perspective, language can be seen as

symbolic capital. From a theoretical point of view, linguists agree that all languages have equal potential to fulfill any purpose that is required of them. Socially, we know that all languages or language varieties do not enjoy the same status and, therefore, their speakers are not treated equally. This reality, in turn, constructs the identities of those individuals who speak a lesser-valued variety.

The relationship between power and language also makes itself known in Saskatchewan schools. My MA research indicated that the Indigenous-English-speaking participants were experiencing institutional racism or "ideologies and structures which are systematically used to legitimize unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of race" (Cummins, 2000, p. 131). The evident imbalance in power relations between the standard-English-speaking educators and the Indigenous-English-speaking children, the discursive nature of identity construction, and my beliefs regarding minority-language rights, lead me to theoretically situate myself in critical pedagogy (Cummins, 2000; Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1970; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 2001; Said, 1978; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995).

Like the poststructuralist scholars who inform my research, I advocate language and educational policies that ensure equal access to linguistic and educational resources, promote multilingualism without imposing acculturation and raise consciousness about shared responsibility for understanding in cross-cultural encounters between minority and majority speakers. These beliefs regarding the importance of social justice in language education feed my goal to involve myself in socially responsible research.

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As I have grown in my role as a researcher, I have increasingly sensed the importance of drawing on both Western and Indigenous research methodologies in the structuring and grounding of my work. In terms of Indigenous theories regarding ways of *coming-to-knowing*, it is understood that each individual has her or his own path, knowledge, and gifts whose presence are made known over the course of his or her life (Atleo, 2004; Ball & Simpkins, 2004; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 2000; First Rider, 1994; Little Bear, 2000; Peat, 1994; Pepion, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

Values such as nurturing, caring, and non-interference are central in terms of how a community goes about helping people to learn. Drawing on Indigenous learning theories is important in terms of understanding how many Indigenous peoples perceive learning and community. I also see valuable links between these values and the discourse behaviour described in this current study as well as how I approached the participants involved in my study. I was mindful of respecting the value of non-interference with others in my interviews and classroom interactions.

From an Indigenous worldview perspective, this attentiveness means I was aware of the spirits of each person and careful not to say or do anything that could affect or remove something from that person. In Western terms, this might be best described as engaging in ethical research that is not harmful to participants. What this concept meant for me was frequently stopping to ask myself why I was asking the questions I asked, being aware of how my questions might affect the person with whom I was talking and taking care to respect the stories and information that were shared with me in generosity throughout my time in the school community.

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4. Gaining Entry: My Journey into the "Core Neighbourhoods"

Acquiring permission to conduct research in this school was achieved through contacts I have through family friends. I first contacted the Catholic school board in this community but my repeated requests were ignored so I turned to the public school board and made some cold calls to the individual in charge of approving research. The process to have my research approved was made up of many small steps. Prior to applying for approval from the school board, I needed to first have the ethical approval form from McGill University. I received permission to conduct my study from McGill University in September 2005 (see Appendix A) and began to complete the research approval forms for the school board in which I planned to conduct research.

The next unexpected step came when I discovered that I needed to have a school agree to allow me to conduct research before I could submit the applications to the school board for permission to conduct data collection. Therefore, again through family friends, I made contact with the elementary school principal of my future research site. This school provides education from the pre-kindergarten level through to grade 8. Each classroom has roughly 20-23 students. In terms of the student population, 67% self-identify as First Nations or Métis. The principal of this school put me in contact with the main classroom teacher of my study and, after explaining my research, she quickly agreed to allow me into her classroom for three months.

With the principal's and classroom teacher's permission in place, I was able to proceed with applying for approval of research by the school board which I received in November 2005. Throughout November and December, the classroom teacher and

I were in contact so that the coordination of the letter of permission letters could take place prior to my arrival in January, 2006. Letters were sent home to parents and guardians in December 2005 and most were returned to the classroom teacher prior to my arrival at the school on January 9, 2006 (see Appendix B).

5.   Context and Participants

My first impressions of the area surrounding the school were made on a cold winter day. When you enter this neighbourhood, you immediately sense that life there is difficult; you feel the toughness of this place as soon as you make the turn into what is considered the inner-city of this urban community. The people you see walking on the streets are the "undesirables" of this province's unspoken caste system (Adams, 1989). The neighbourhood consists of mainly low income families: White settler, Métis, and First Nations. There is some gentrification occurring in one area of the neighbourhood but this is not within walking distance of the school. Urban planning websites for this community indicate that the average family incomes for homes in the three neighbourhoods in which this school's students live range from $26,753 to $32, 690; the average family income for the city is $62, 451.

As you drive along the streets, hints of how decades of oppression affect marginalized peoples can be glimpsed in the dilapidated state of houses and the complete absence of any commercial enterprise. There are no grocery stores, no banks, no corner stores or restaurants; the closest thing to a store is the Salvation Army thrift shop. What you find in this community are rundown homes and, at the centre of the neighbourhood, the school which was my research site.

The research site for my site is a Community school. The Community School

Program was introduced in Saskatchewan in the eighties in an effort to address the

problems of "Aboriginal poverty" (www.learning.gov.sk.ca/branches

/pol_eval/community_ed/docs/buildcomm/ofhope). Victims of unemployment,

poverty, and discrimination are often alienated from social and community

institutions. In response to this problem Saskatchewan Learning implemented the

Community School model. This model requires each school to have, in addition to

regular staff, a community school coordinator, First Nations educational assistants, a

nutrition advisor, and administrative support. Saskatchewan Learning describes the

visions of this program as follows:

> Saskatchewan Community Schools are centres of learning and hope for their
>
> families and communities. The diverse learning needs of children and youth
>
> are met by incorporating a comprehensive range of effective educational
>
> practices. Community Schools are responsive, inclusive, culturally affirming
>
> and academically challenging. The learning program and environment
>
> effectively build on strengths to address the needs of the communities they
>
> serve. As hubs for the delivery of an array of services and supports, they use
>
> collaborative approaches to achieve learning excellence and well-being for the
>
> entire community.
>
> (www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/community_ed/commschools)

In brief, the Community School program consists of four parts: the learning

program, family and community partnerships, integrated services, and community

development. In 2004, 98 designated Community Schools were operating in

Saskatchewan, representing 12% of schools in the province

(www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/community_ed/commschools).

The study was conducted over a period of three months in a grade 3⁄4

classroom in a K-8 Community school. The school day began at 8:55 am and ended

at 3:20 pm. In addition to an hour break for lunch from 11:45 to 12:45, there was a

recess break in the morning and in the afternoon. I was present in the school and

classroom for the full school day, Monday to Friday, from January 9 to April 1.

The children of this school were not dropped off by soccer moms in shiny

mini-vans. Some arrived by bus but many were walked to school by parents and

family members and came from all directions. You saw them marching along the top

of giant snow banks in their mismatched snowsuits. Some of the children were

laughing and smiling, others were play-fighting, some arrived early to take advantage

of the free school breakfast, and other children arrived late into the morning.

Into this scene, I entered as an outsider. I am from Saskatchewan but was

initially perceived as an "Easterner" by the adult educators in the school. I can only

hypothesize but I imagine that my McGill credentials as well as some of the changes

in my speech since I last lived in Saskatchewan contributed to this perception of me.

It took time to gain the staff members' trust, to have them believe that I went to the

same universities as they did and that I am a teacher like they are. Additionally,

juggling the dual roles of involving myself in school and classroom activities while

attempting to reveal underlying racist practices, made me feel uncomfortable at times.

Looking back, and listening to how I speak during interviews, it seems that I worked

hard to access that facet of my identity linked to my prairie childhood and I

sometimes experienced this process as painful. Reconciling my identity as a Saskatchewan settler meant having to be keenly aware of the racial imbalance between White settlers and Indigenous Peoples and my privileged place as a White settler woman in Saskatchewan.

The class I entered was an inviting and warm place for students and for me. I felt safe there and my work unfolded easily with the support and interest of the classroom teacher, a First Nations woman named Deborah Desjarlais (a pseudonym) with over ten years of teaching experience, herself a bi-dialectal speaker of Indigenous English and standard English as well as fluent in her native Saulteaux. Student participants in this classroom study included First Nations, Métis, and White settler children, ages 8-10. The total number of students in the classroom throughout the three months that I was present was twenty-five. This number, however, fluctuated as four students arrived later in the study and two students also left at different times of the study.

I did not have permission to observe or interview all students involved in the study. Of the twenty-five total students, I was not given parental or guardian permission to include observations of three students; these three students were First Nations. In terms of conducting interviews, I had permission to talk with all but six children, five of whom were First Nations (this number includes the three above-mentioned students) and one who was White settler. In the end, I conducted interviews with eight students: six First Nations children named Crystal, Chantelle, Destiny, Danika, Starr, and Kenny and two White settler girls named Hannah and Phoenix. Classroom observations were made in relation to those students for whom I

had permission to do so. In addition to the children mentioned above, I also draw on my observational notes to discuss the classroom experiences of the following students with whom I did not conduct interviews: two White settler children named Jessica and Devon; one Métis child named Sean; and First Nations children named James, Cody, and Lawrence. All names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants. Interviews were conducted with four Indigenous educators named Tom, Deborah, Nicole and Larissa and with seven White settler educators named Rachel, Lisa, Melissa, Karen, Corinne, Elaine and Anita.

Surrounding this school, its teachers and students, and the neighbourhood was the long dark winter that is so distinctly of the Prairies. This school—with its resident bats, missing ceiling panels, leaking roof, police lockdowns, migrating students, issues related to poverty, individual and institutional racism, laughter, celebration of successes, caring educators and administrators, focus on literacy programs and sense of community—is where I arrived as a researcher during the first week of January 2006 and involved myself as a classroom assistant until the first week of April 2006.

6. Data Collection

6.1. Participant Observation and Field Notes

Throughout the three months that I spent in the classroom, I maintained a daily observational logbook in which I chronicled the development of the research project, described my impressions of student and educator interviews, and maintained observation, methodological, theoretical, and personal field notes. Each entry is dated and the log also includes notes about relevant literature or possible analyses of my observations. Field notes taken of my observations in the classroom are useful in

documenting evidence of the use of silence and other verbal and non-verbal characteristics of Indigenous English. At times, I made note of conversations between students and marked down interesting aspects of their language. I paid close attention to instances of teasing, sharing and the use of silence. I also made notes about the teacher's interaction with her students and conversations that she and I had at different times of the day. The logbook also includes notes about my own reactions and thoughts throughout the three months I spent in the classroom.

6.2.   Student Interviews

Oral interviews were conducted individually with eight children. Interviews with students were audio recorded and took place in a room separate from the classroom. At the beginning of each interview, I verbally explained by study and then gave students time to read and sign the letter of assent (see Appendix C). Children were aware that our conversation was being recorded and were encouraged to become familiar with the equipment. The interviews were unstructured and conversations were designed to elicit samples of speech and discourse behaviour, specifically stories and teasing. Stories were elicited through the asking of open-ended questions related to the children's likes, dislikes, and activities. After spending time with the children, I began to know more about them, their families, and their typical activities. In this way, I had sufficient knowledge about them to choose appropriate questions and prompts that successfully elicited narrative samples. Our conversations were lengthy if the child seemed inclined to share stories or if their answers were particularly revealing. The interviews lasted anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes, depending on the child.

6.3.	Educator Interviews

Upon arrival at the school, I initially met with Elaine, the school principal, in regards to recruiting staff to participate in my interviews. We decided that I would attend the first staff meeting of January to introduce myself, explain my presence in their school and present them with the possibility of participating in my study. Next, I met with the principal a second time to brainstorm possible participants from among the school staff. I wanted to have a range of years of experience, representatives from different grade levels as well as White settler, First Nations and Métis groups. Working with these variables, the principal and I created a list of educator names. I then emailed these teachers and educational assistants to explain my study again and to ask if they would be interested in participating. Of the educators contacted, ten agreed to participate: four First Nations and Métis educators named Tom, Deborah, Nicole and Larissa and six White settler educators named Rachel, Lisa, Melissa, Karen, Corinne and Anita. Their interview transcripts, and the school principal's, are a valuable source of data in terms of answering my research questions and are also rich with new information.

At the beginning of each interview, I described my study to the educators and then gave them time to read and sign the permission form (see Appendix D). Semi-structured interviews using questions adapted from Plank (1994) were conducted with educators (see Appendix E) in an effort to discern attitudes and perceptions of language. When meeting with classroom teachers, the interviews took place in their classrooms. In some cases, these interviews took place over the lunch hour, after school and, in two cases, during the school day during preparation periods. Interviews with educational assistants took place

in the small group room closest to the Grade 3/4 classroom and my meetings with the principal took place in her office.

7.   Data Analysis

7.1.   Analysis of Transcribed Interviews

The transcribed student and educator interviews are an extremely rich source of data. The tapes of the interviews were transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis of the students' speech as well as analysis of reoccurring patterns in educator responses to my questions. Initial analysis began as I listened to the interviews while transcribing. During these transcribing sessions, I made preliminary notes of aspects of speech or educator responses that seemed to be frequently emerging, that triggered thoughts of relevant literature and that seemed related to the notes in my logbooks. These preliminary notes were helpful in guiding me when I returned to the transcripts to conduct my in-depth analysis. For this more exhaustive examination of the documents, I read through each transcript and made further notes in the margins of the transcripts when comments were particularly revealing or, again, reminded me of related literature or patterns in other interview transcripts.

Interview transcriptions were examined at length on two separate occasions and, in many cases, I returned to individual transcripts multiple times to confirm thoughts or emerging patterns. My goal in reviewing the transcripts in this manner was to extract any evidence of recurring phenomena that were then examined in an effort to fully respond to each of the six research questions.

7.2. Analysis of Field Notes

The classroom field notes also contain significant information regarding the classroom behaviour of the children and their speech in a natural setting. My method for analysing these field notes is similar to how I approached the analysis of interview transcripts. During my three months in the school, I filled two hardcover notebooks with observations, reactions and thoughts. After the completion of data collection, these logbooks were set aside while I turned my attention to the transcribing of student and educator interviews. When I completed the transcribing of all the interview cassettes, I then turned to rereading my field notes. In this way, I could make links between patterns that had begun to make themselves visible in my interview transcripts and the observations and feelings that I wrote about in my logbooks.

As I worked through the reading of the logbooks, I made notes regarding emerging patterns in a separate notebook and marked important passages through a combined system of highlighting and small post-its that allowed me to easily return to these pages when necessary. The patterns found in these field notes, combined with the information extracted from my interview transcripts, will be discussed in the following three chapters.

8. Conclusion

From the data collected, categories were created for the discussion chapters. These areas of discussion include: (a) patterns in discourse behaviour, (b) educator perceptions, behaviours, and beliefs, and (c) the race, class, and culture divide in the school and community. Information for these categories was gathered from all of the

above described data sources. These three areas of discussion will be examined in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 and will provide insight into the reality of this school as well as answers to the six research questions that guided this study.

Chapter 6: Indigenous English in the Classroom

1.   Introduction

This chapter will present a description of the linguistic characteristics and discourse behaviour of Indigenous English-speaking children's language in the classroom. My area of inquiry stems from the prevailing stigmatization of Indigenous English, perceived by the majority population as a substandard, deviant form of Standard English (Heit & Blair, 1993). As discussed in Chapter 3, however, as a linguistic system Indigenous English differs systematically from standard English on phonological, morphological, and lexical levels, and in terms of syntax and discourse behaviour as well. While establishing these linguistic characteristics does not directly address any of my research questions, I do see links between these linguistic findings and my discussions of educator perceptions' of Indigenous English and their approaches to literacy development. My goal in this chapter, therefore, is not to present a complete analysis of the rules that govern Indigenous English. Rather, drawing on interview transcripts and field notes, I will present and discuss samples of Indigenous English-speaking children's speech in order to demonstrate some of the more salient characteristics.

This overview will present examples of aspects of speech and language which surface repeatedly in interview transcripts and my classroom observations. These perceptions of language, as well as other educator beliefs, will be discussed in Chapter 7. Additionally, educator descriptions of Indigenous English and the discourse behaviours of teasing, silence, and storytelling will also provide further evidence of the findings described in this chapter.

In the first section of this chapter, I will examine examples of Indigenous English-speaking children's speech from my dissertation data. Examples of these characteristics, taken from the oral interviews and classroom observation, will be presented and discussed in relation to existing linguistic literature related to Indigenous English. In this way, a description of Indigenous English will emerge making apparent the differences between this dialect and the variety of English spoken by White settlers in Saskatchewan.

Other features of Indigenous English, not related to the above-mentioned phonological, syntactic, morphological, and lexical characteristics, also became apparent during my MA study conducted in Saskatchewan (Sterzuk, 2003). These less explored facets of Indigenous English—teasing, sharing through stories, and the use of silence—are an integral aspect of this study and relate to three of the research questions described in Chapter 5. Increased understanding of these elements of Indigenous English is important because of the potential for the occurrence of communication breakdown and the potentially harmful repercussions that can be created when the pragmatics and patterns of communication of two discourse communities intersect.

Bussman (1996) explains that we all have social networks within which we participate in interactional exchanges with other group members. "In such networks social cohesion develops and culture- and group-specific systems of values, shared knowledge, shared attitudes, as well as patterns of behaviour are established, which in turn manifest themselves linguistically" (Bussman, 1996, p. 325). Patterns of behaviour, or discourse behaviour, resulting from a shared worldview become

especially interesting in the educational context when minority students enter into a school system where other patterns of behaviour are considered the norm. First Nations and Métis students' use of the discourse behaviours of teasing, sharing of stories, and silence—the result of Indigenous "systems of value, shared knowledge, and shared attitudes"—conflicts with the discourse behaviour of White settler students and educators. This reality is best described by Little Bear's (2000) expression "jagged worldviews colliding."

Particular to this study is how I choose to examine these three discourse behaviours. As described in Chapter 3, speech and language clinicians and researchers explore aspects of language using a variety of tests, instruments and scales normed on different population groups. This body of research is informative and I initially considered using these studies and approaches in my examination of how teasing, silence, and narratives are used by First Nations and Métis students. As described in Chapter 4, however, I have chosen to examine the use of these discourse behaviours by linking them to Indigenous worldview. This is not to say that the body of research that examines language from a Western, linguistic, or clinical view does not have merit or is irrelevant. Rather, in choosing to examine the discourse behaviour of First Nations and Métis students using Indigenous worldview literature as my starting point, I hope to add a new dimension to how language can be explored and, thus, contribute new ideas to an already existing body of literature.

Following the initial examination of the phonological, syntactic, morphological, and lexical characteristics of Indigenous English-speaking children, the second section of this chapter will present and describe examples of all three

discourse behaviours. Examples of these behaviours are primarily taken from my field notes, because attempts to elicit examples of teasing, sharing of stories and silence proved artificial and contrived. Natural examples of these behaviours occurring during classroom activities were observed and recorded in field notes during my three months in this school. Examples of teasing, sharing through stories, and silence are presented in the second section of this chapter.

2. Phonological, Syntactic, Morphological, and Lexical Characteristics

In this discussion of the children's speech, areas to be examined include: lexical choices, non-standard syntax and morphology, and non-standard phonology. My goal in describing some of these linguistic differences is to advance understanding of the characteristics of Indigenous English. Additionally, as I increase my understanding of the rules governing Indigenous English, it becomes more evident to me that educators and speech and language practitioners need to be especially aware of these differences. This awareness is important so that dialect-speaking students have equal opportunities for literacy development and so that they are not misdiagnosed with speech and language delays or referred for unnecessary assessment.

The English used by First Nations and Métis in the classroom where I conducted my research differs phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically from the English of the White settler children in this study. The Indigenous English-speaking children construct their speech differently than do the standard English-speaking children. This section will discuss and provide examples of these differences taken from the speech of First Nations and Métis children in the grade 3/4

classroom where I spent three months. These characteristics include: consonant cluster reduction and stressed pronunciation of words ending in *ing*, variable pronunciation of words beginning with *th*, the conjugation of the verb *to be*, conjugation of certain verbs in the present and past tense, marking of the past tense through the use of temporal adverbs, omission of function words, and lexical differences including the use of the quantifier *much*. These characteristics are mirrored in studies conducted on American Indian English in the United States (Leap, 1974, 1993; Wolfram, 1984, 1986; Olson Flanigan, 1987; Schilling-Estes, 2000) and in the results of my MA study (Sterzuk, 2003).

2.1.   Consonant Cluster Reduction

Many of the Indigenous English-speaking children pronounce words ending in *ing* as *in*. Consonant dropping in this way is common practice for most informal speech in English. What is different about this pattern in Indigenous English is that once the *g* is dropped, the pronunciation of the syllable is stressed as opposed to the unstressed *in* of Standard English. This phonological difference is observed in a number of varieties of English spoken by Indigenous Peoples (Olson Flanigan, 1987; Heit & Blair, 1993) as well as in the children involved in my MA study. Amber, a grade 4 student, pronounces most words ending in *ing* with alveolar rather than velar nasalization. Additionally, pronunciation of this final syllable is stressed. An example of this characteristic is found in the following utterance taken from Amber's interview: "Um, I forgot that one word, it, I forgot how to say that one word, it means um, um, forgot, um, it means, I'm tryin' to remember it." On the audiotape, the dropped consonant *g* is evident as is the stressed pronunciation of this final syllable.

Similarly, in this excerpt taken from Starr's interview, we see evidence of the final *g* being dropped and the final syllable being stressed: "Um when, I have a step-brother, and um, me and my dad and my brother and his brother went there one time, go swimmin', and we played swimmin' pool basketball."

There are also many examples of consonant dropping in Lawrence's speech. This trait is seen in the following utterance taken from classroom observations of Lawrence talking with his teacher: "We went to bed at eight but I'm till tired." In Lawrence's first utterance, he drops the consonant *s* from the word *still* and he pronounces it as *till*.

2.2. Pronunciation of *th* as a Stop

Many of the First Nations children in this study pronounce words beginning with *th* as a stop. In taped interviews with Chantelle and Amber, both girls displayed this characteristic in their speech at different moments. The following utterances show evidence of words beginning with *th* being pronounced as a stop:

Chantelle	*Dey're bigger, dey have kids already*
Chantelle	*I like de tv's there, in there, hm-hmm*
Chantelle	*My mom, we went dere for a pow wow, we go lots of places for a pow wow*
Amber	*And der's a, I got a friend dat's named Chastity*

There are also instances when the children use the Standard English pronunciation. I cannot be certain as to what motivates this choice. It is possible that both sounds are interchangeable; the variation is not systematic but, rather, free.

2.3.   Uninflection of the Copula "to be"

It would also appear that Indigenous English rules govern the use of the verb *to be*. This pattern of the uninflected copula is also found in the Indigenous English of American First Nations (Olson Flanigan, 1987) and in the speech samples taken during my MA study. Crystal's speech shows evidence of this characteristic. On two occasions, when explaining a punishment system to newcomers to the class, Crystal made the following utterances: "If you be bad, you get your name on the board" and "When we be bad, we get our name on the board." Both utterances show evidence of an uninflected copula. Additionally, during my interview with Crystal, I asked her about why she had walked out of her Arts Education class and she responded with the following utterance: "Cause I get bored and then people be rude and then I'll say everybody's mean." Similar to the previous two statements, this utterance demonstrates the use of an uninflected copula.

2.4.   Non-standard Conjugation of Verbs in the Present and Past

Also noticeable in children's speech are the different ways that some of their verbs are conjugated in the present and past. Each of the following utterances—some from our interview, some from classroom interaction—is an example of how Indigenous English's verb usage differs from standard English.

Lawrence:	*How come he have my thing*
Lawrence:	*It mean when you're givin' something to somebody*
Lawrence:	*My sister going to go play hockey tomorrow*
Sean:	*Our school gots bats*
Chantelle	*An' Destiny gots a period*

In the above utterances, we see evidence of non-standard subject-verb agreement, including non-standard conjugation of verbs in the simple present tense, and dropping of the auxiliary verb in the present progressive tense. Both Leap (1974) and Olson Flanigan (1987) describe non-standard subject-verb agreement in American Indian English.

Another difference between the Indigenous English-speaking students' verb use and that of standard English is how verbs are conjugated in the simple past tense. What follows are examples of non-standard conjugations found in utterances made by many of the First Nations and Métis children in the class:

Crystal: *I seen it*

Cody: *We done this Miss Desjarlais*

Chantelle *She teached me how to do my hair, hmm*

Amber *He, he, blowed, he blowed up a balloon, it was, it wasn't the same shape though,*

Starr *I seen pictures of her when she was a baby*

Kenny: *I seen that one*

Cody: *I drawed one*

Sean: *I brang this one*

James *I done it wrong*

Crystal *He et his food*

In some of the above examples, irregular verbs are conjugated in the simple past following regular verb rules as in the examples of *he blowed, I drawed,* and *she teached.* The other verbs appear to be past participles being used in the place of

standard English simple past conjugations. This is this case in the examples of *I done*, *I seen,* and *we done.* Finally, in the examples of *I brang* and *he et*, we find non-standard variations of the simple past for the irregular verbs *to bring* and *to eat.*

2.5.   Past Tense Marking With Temporal Adverbs and Linguistic Clauses

Dubois' (1978) examination of the speech of a four-year old "Native American" shows an absence of marking of the past tense. Wolfram (1984) explains that in American Indian English, mechanisms such as temporal adverbs and linguistic clauses are used more often to "set the temporal/aspect framework" (p. 43). Olson Flanigan (1987) also mentions the evidence of tense shifting within a sentence. When the first clause in a sentence establishes the past tense, the second reverts to the present, as seen in the example, "So I came back and I stick with the elementary" (p.184).

I found two similar examples of an absence of marking of the past tense in the transcripts of my interviews with Crystal. In the first example, Crystal's utterance follows the pattern described in Olson Flanigan (1987):

> *Crystal   So say, I went there for like 2 years, then I stay there with my*
> *grandma.*

The past tense is established in the first clause "I went there for like 2 years" and in the second clause, Crystal does not mark the past tense in the verb *stay* (not stayed) which remains in the simple present. In my logbook, I noted that often the temporal adverb *then* in a two-clause utterance signaled that the second clause would be said using the present tense. In the following example from my interview with Crystal, she and I are co-reconstructing an event that took place the previous day.

| *Andrea* | *I saw your little head sticking out of the top of the stall* |
| *Crystal* | *Huh! And then you see my pencil case* |

I begin by explaining to her how I knew that she was in the bathroom stall and I use the simple past in my utterance. Her response to me, which includes the temporal adverb *then,* is conjugated using the simple present even though our story continues to occur in the past.

2.6.   Omission of Function Words

Another pattern found in the First Nations and Métis students' speech is the tendency to omit function words in their utterances, a characteristic of other Indigenous English speakers in the United States (Dubois, 1978; Olson Flanigan, 1987). This tendency to omit words that are not essential in conveying meaning is evident in the following utterances:

Cody:	*Ah, you got (a) new jacket?*
Lawrence:	*I'm making my (beyblade) smaller, smaller. (It) is more lighter*
Amber:	*But I have (a) five letter word*
Cody:	*That (is) what I did Miss Desjarlais*

In each of the above examples, I have inserted the omitted word back into the utterance and signaled this through the use of brackets. In some cases, the utterances have been dramatically reduced as in the example describing Lawrence's beyblade. His utterance is context-dependant; without having observed the boys at play, it would be difficult to discern his meaning. In the other cases, the omitted words do not affect the meaning or understanding of the utterance.

2.7. <u>Lexical Items</u>

Heit and Blair (1993) explain that "there are many expressions in Indigenous English that differ from Standard English" (p. 119). Two examples provided by the authors include "We really suffered him" (instead of "we really made him suffer) and, "Those kids are always meaning on him" (instead of "being mean to him") (Heit & Blair, 1993, p.119).   I found similar examples in my MA study such as the word *scrap* being used as a verb to describe picking on someone. This usage is seen in the following utterance made by a nine year-old boy named Gary: "Yeah, she tries to always scrap me."

In the data collected for my PhD study, I found other examples of expressions in Indigenous English that differ from Standard English. The following utterance was made by Crystal in a discussion that she and I were having about her clothes being too small for her:

Crystal: *I'm comin' big eh?*

If she were to make this statement using standard English, I would argue that it would probably be said as "I'm growin' up" or "I'm getting' big."

Another example of an Indigenous English expression that differs from standard English is found in the following utterance made by Amber when asking Crystal about a problem she was having.

Amber: *Are you still buggin' about this?*

Amber was trying to discern whether Crystal continued to be upset. I would argue that it would be likely that the utterance, expressed in standard English, would be something such as: "It that still buggin' you?" Instead, the expression above is

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similar to the example of the non-standard usage of *scrap* found in my MA study or Heit and Blair's examples described in the first paragraph of this sub-section.

Another non-standard feature of Indigenous English is use of the quantifier *much* when *many* would be used if the speaker were following standard English rules. The following three examples demonstrate Indigenous English usage of the quantified *much*:

> Crystal: *How much pages?*
>
> Cody: *How much reds are there? How much blues are there?*
>
> Amber: *How much aunties did I say that might have kids?*

In all three utterances, the nouns which are preceded by the determiner *much* are countable. In standard English, the speaker would choose *many* because the nouns *pages*, *reds*, *blues*, and *aunties* are all items that can be counted.

One final lexical difference that I would like to discuss is the substitution of *is* for *does* when asking a question. In both of the following utterances, one made by Crystal and the other by Cody, the children begin their question using the word *is*:

> Crystal: *Is that look better than before?*
>
> Cody: *Is this look like a "9"*

In standard English, these questions would begin with the word *does*. I heard this pattern of question-asking often throughout the three months I spent in the classroom with the students and Deborah.

3.   Discourse Behaviour

Another consideration in understanding how Indigenous English differs from standard English is that of nonverbal and sociolinguistic differences, or discourse

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behaviour. Michaels and Collins (1984) explain that, in classrooms where children are not from similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, interaction restrictions can be created by differences in discourse characteristics and expectations. The three discourse characteristics of Indigenous English that are of most interest in the present study are the use of silence, teasing, and story telling. Through reference to Indigenous worldview literature, these discourse features will be discussed in this section.The idea that language and worldview are intrinsically linked is important. The more I explore the growing body of literature related to Indigenous worldview, the clearer it becomes to me that the First Nations and Métis students involved in my study operate with a worldview that differs from my own Western worldview and that these worldviews shape the discourse behaviour they present in the classroom. The following three sections will describe examples of this behaviour as noted in my observational logbooks and, in some cases, as found in the transcripts of student interviews.

3.1.   Silence/Value of Words

I can remember reading Crago's (1992) study which describes the Inuit practice of "looking and listening" as an integral part of learning. I think the reason that this article sticks in my memory is because it reminded me of my experiences teaching First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. In Crago's (1992) study, one of the participating southern White settler educators describes her frustration at not being able to engage her Inuit students in verbal participation in lessons. As an elementary school teacher, I can remember similar feelings when I experienced my First Nations and Métis students' silence as a

response to my questions or during classroom discussions. At the time, I was not entirely sure where the problem originated or what I should or could be doing differently. Through my research, readings related to Indigenous worldview, and conversations with generous First Nations educators, I've come to understand the discourse behaviour of silence in different ways. This section will explore these understandings of silence in the classroom.

Even a cursory glance at the classroom where I spent three months demonstrates that the value placed on choosing words and silence in Indigenous communities is different from my Western ways. I do not mean to say that First Nations and Métis students are silent or stoic. On the contrary, many of the First Nations children in my study were gregarious and often had to be chastised for talking too much. There are, however, instances where home and school culture seemed to be at odds; I attribute this mismatch to a collision of worldviews. There were times when I did not understand the use of silence between children or between children and Deborah. At these times, I asked Deborah for explanations and she was able to provide insight into the students' and her behaviour. My understanding of how silence and words are viewed through an Indigenous worldview grew through my reading of this literature and through discussions with the First Nations teachers at my research site. The discussion presented in the following section, illustrated through examples taken from my logbooks, represents my understanding of the value of silence and words from an Indigenous perspective.

From an Indigenous perspective, language, like everything in the world, has a spirit and purpose of its own; it is animate and alive (Battiste, 2000). As explained to

me by Deborah, the grade 3/4 classroom teacher in my study, words have value and should be chosen and shared with consideration as they affect the experiences of those with whom we speak. Little Bear (2000) explains that "no one can ever know for certain what someone else knows. The only thing one can go on is what the other human being shares or says to you or others. And, in all of this, there is an underlying presumption that a person is reporting an event the way he or she experienced it" (p. 80). Deborah's understanding of the value of words seems to line up with Battiste's (2000) and Little Bear's (2000) explanations of the importance of choosing words carefully.

Learning can occur without speaking, and classrooms and discipline can be managed without unnecessary speech. These practices and beliefs were demonstrated to me over the course of the three months I spent in Deborah's classroom. In addition to observing her teaching methods, I also asked her about her beliefs regarding classroom management without relying on speech. She explained that she believes children become unaware of the words around them if these words are used too often. This belief was fostered by her own experiences as a child and carried over to how she raised her own children and to how she engages with her students.

Over the three months I spent in Deborah's classroom, I noted many examples of the use of silence between Deborah and her students in situations where I know that I would have responded with questions or attempted to engage the students in conversation. The following two situations demonstrate the use of silence in ways that seem reflective of the Indigenous worldview value of speech and of non-

interference with others. I have many such examples and my reasons for selecting these two are that I wrote about my confusion in my logbook and followed up by speaking to Deborah so as to understand what had occurred. The first example involves an exchange between Deborah and Lawrence. I have taken it directly from my logbook and transcribed it for the purposes of this discussion:

> *At lunch, Lawrence tried to get Deborah to let him use the phone. When she asked him why, he stayed silent and then walked away. When I asked her afterwards what he wanted and why she let him walk away without answering her, she said that she figured he was trying to phone his foster mom so he could play with friends after school. She said that he knows that he is not allowed to so he didn't answer when pressed and Deborah said he had a little smile so she knew that he knew that he was doing something bad.*

At the time of the exchange, I could not understand why Lawrence hadn't answered his teacher or why Deborah had not followed up with further questions. It would seem that by using Lawrence's smile as an indicator of mischief, Deborah knew why he did not answer and Lawrence knew that Deborah understood his motives for using the phone. As a former teacher, I feel certain that I would have pushed the child to explain his request and then chastised him for attempting to break school rules. Instead, Deborah and Lawrence seemed to accomplish this negotiation through silence and, in doing so, neither individual was affected or needed to use unnecessary words.

The second example that I would like to describe is an instance that occurred between Crystal and Deborah. Again, I have taken it directly from my logbook and transcribed it for the purposes of this discussion:

Crystal just came to sit at the table next to my desk. It's Math time and I guess she's working on her worksheet. No one else is working away from their desks so I asked her if Mrs. Desjarlais knew she was working there. She looked at me and said "Yeah, she saw me" in a tone of voice that made it seem like she thought I was stupid for having missed their obvious communication.

To be honest, I didn't see Deborah or Crystal look at one other and I wouldn't have thought that permission could be granted to leave one's desk without asking a teacher by using words. Certainly, in the classrooms where I spent my childhood and in the classrooms that I managed as a teacher, students had to ask me if they wanted to work at a different desk or work station. Yet, in Deborah's classroom, this permission was granted through eye contact and no other student was affected by Crystal moving or by Deborah and Crystal needing to engage in a verbal conversation about the move. This permission and the resulting move were accomplished through silence.

Similar to Deborah and the students' use of silence, the children involved in this study demonstrated to me that activities can be experienced and enjoyed with peers in shared silence. Kenny does not speak very much during classroom activities. He does, however, communicate a great deal with Cody, another First Nations boy in the classroom, but this communication is not always through speech. Their desks are close to one another and while they do speak quietly to one another from time to time,

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they seem to be able to enjoy one another's company through a lot of smiles, eye contact, and giggling. I focused on Kenny and Cody's behaviour because it reminded me of the ways in which two First Nations boys in my MA study worked and played together. The following three excerpts, describing three different instances, are taken from my observational logbook:

> *Cody and Kenny are playing a game. Cody watches Kenny choose his character and neither says anything.*
>
> *Cody and Kenny are working on finishing their human body worksheets. Cody goes over to look at Kenny's work but no comments are made.*
>
> *Cody and Kenny look at each others work in silence. They watch the teacher and then Kenny goes to teacher's desk at the back of the room, takes a paper and returns to his desk. All in silence.*

In Darnell's study (1981) of the use of silence among the Cree of Northern Alberta demonstrates that "potential interactors must have a shared understanding of the meaning of the actions of others, whether or not those actions are verbal. They must have the ability to extract information from person and situation" (p. 56). I would argue that Kenny and Cody have this "shared understanding", and they are communicating their ideas to one another in this less verbal way that allows them to maintain connectedness while not interfering with classroom activities or their own work.

Demonstration of acquisition of knowledge through correctly answering questions is not always necessary. The following notes from my logbook help to explain how Deborah allows for the use of silence in her classroom:

When a child is silent in response to a question, Deborah does not assume the

child does not understand or does not know the answer. She helps by

rephrasing her question, getting a peer to help or by offering new information.

She's also comfortable to wait and allow the silence.

Knowledge is not something we can possess; rather, we come to knowledge that

exists whether we have banked it or not. When answering questions, the need to

choose words carefully often results in an increased silence between utterances. This

silence can be misunderstood by those with a Western worldview as a reflection of

uncertainty or confusion because the interlocutors do not share the same

understanding of choosing words carefully.

3.2.   Teasing/Humour

As discussed in Chapter 6, Little Bear explains that teasing and humour are

indicative of sharing of *good feelings* and linked to maintaining connectedness and

building relationships. Through his telling of Nuu-cha-nulth origin stories, Atleo

(2004) describes having fun as healthy and deliberate. The more time I spent in

Deborah's class, the more evident the value of humour became to me. The First

Nations and Métis children, in particular, welcomed me by teasing me and reacted

with laughter and more jokes and outlandish stories when I teased them back. I want

to be careful not to essentialize; many children enjoy teasing and laughter and

Indigenous Peoples do not hold the monopoly on teasing and laughter. I do, however,

notice a difference on the part of White settler educators and students when it comes

to teasing. The overall sense that I was left with was that teasing and jokes should be

reserved for appropriate moments. From Deborah and other First Nations educators, I

was given the sense that teasing helped to build relationships with the students and that there was always a time for laughter in lessons and work. Indeed, teasing was described to me by Deborah as being necessary for strong relationships between children and teachers. At the same time, she also described White settler teachers at the school as not always being aware what teasing meant and, as a result, not understanding First Nations and Métis students' intentions.

In my research, I began to notice that teasing moments were usually marked by the words *just jokes*. There were many moments when I heard these words over the course of the three months. In the following paragraphs, I will provide excerpts from my logbooks which illustrate moments of the children teasing me, teasing newcomers to their classroom, teasing and being teased by Deborah, and teasing one another. Whenever possible, I will attempt to explain the purpose for teasing by drawing on literature or by referring to my discussions with Deborah.

The first two instances that I will describe involve the teasing of newcomers to the classroom. The first circumstance involves Kenny, Cody and me. It happened during my first week in their classroom and the boys were participating in "Choice Time" which occurs during the final fifteen minutes before lunch. The children are allowed to choose an activity and work on it or play with whomever they choose. Kenny and Cody frequently played with *Beyblades*, a toy that spins like a top. The boys did not own any store-bought Beyblades but improvised by making them out of building blocks. Then, they would spin their Beyblades into one another to see whose Beyblade could withstand the impact. I watched what the boys were doing and then asked them a question about what they were playing. The following is taken from my

observational logbook and demonstrates what I see as the children teasing me with the goal of establishing a relationship:

I asked Cody and Lawrence what they were playing. Cody told me

"Beyblades but only boys are good at playing Beyblades"

After Cody made his comment, both boys laughed and looked at me. I responded by laughing with them and asking them some more questions about their game. What is interesting to me is that prior to that exchange, I hadn't spoken with the boys or engaged in any jokes or teasing with them.

After that initial conversation, we began to speak to each other each day and most of our exchanges included humour, especially with Cody who seemed to delight in telling me outlandish stories and teasing me at every possible moment. I would argue that teasing was used to welcome me and to establish our relationship. I discussed this exchange with Deborah and she confirmed my interpretation of the event. In contrast, my relationships with the standard English-speaking children developed through exchanges of information regarding books and movies and seemed to respect the boundaries of politeness until more time had been shared together. While I am not claiming that teasing never occurred between the White settler students and me, I do feel that it took several weeks before they were comfortable to take the risk of teasing me because of my perceived role as an authority figure.

Another example of an Indigenous English-speaking child teasing a newcomer to the class occurred during group work I conducted with three students in the hallway. We were working on literacy activities and the Pow Wow dancer who was coming to teach the male students arrived at our classroom door. Crystal, an

outgoing child by anyone's standards, decided to talk to this young man, who was quite handsome, and asked him if he was the Pow Wow teacher for the boys' class that afternoon. He told her that he was and then Crystal looked him up and down and said *"Oh la la!"* The Pow Wow dancing teacher, the students and I burst out laughing at Crystal's cheeky and unexpected comment and, while I somehow felt that I should chastise Crystal for speaking in that way to an adult who was a guest in our school, I decided to say nothing and enjoy the humour of the moment.

Initially, as I stated before, I did not interpret Crystal's teasing of the classroom guest to have any significant meaning. Later, I discussed this instance with Deborah and she explained to me that this teasing was done in the spirit of welcoming someone new to the class and with the goal of developing a friendship or a relationship. She told me that Crystal had spent a lot of time living on the reserve and that, there, there are not so many rules about how adults and children can joke with one another. She related this experience to a time when she was joking around with some grade 8 students at the school and another teacher (White settler) asked her why she allowed the students to talk to her in that way. Deborah interpreted this teacher's remarks to indicate that there was something wrong with children teasing adults. She explained to me that that value is not shared in her community and that laughter was always allowed. I equate these communicative values with Little Bear's (2000) description of maintaining connectedness. By teasing newcomers, Cody, Kenny and Crystal were able to begin building a connection through their use of humour.

I observed many instances of the children teasing one another and engaging in the telling of silly stories. Deborah's classroom was a place that filled with laughter

at all moments of the day; it was one of the most peaceful classrooms that I have been in. I did not hear Deborah raise her voice during the three months that I spent in her classroom and regardless of many of the difficult situations in which these children lived; their classroom was a place of happiness. Their teasing extended beyond joking with teachers or newcomers to peer interactions. What follows is a silly exchange that I overheard take place between Kenny and Lawrence:

Kenny: *I been to swimmin' place*

Lawrence: *YWCA?*

Kenny: *Yeah, that place where you swim. But I never knew that I can*

                swim but I can (both boys laugh)

I think this conversation is a nice example of laughter and sharing of humour being used in a "healthy and deliberate way."

James was another student who joked and teased a lot. Although James only spent one month in the class, I also saw him tease other students on a number of occasions. On one occasion, Kenny was explaining to a group of students about a time when he was beaten up at his old school. James smiled and told Kenny that he was the one who beat Kenny up at that school. Kenny was confused for a moment and then all the children burst into laughter at James' joke. James also seemed to delight in teasing me. Each time I would walk past his desk, James would stick his foot out and say "trip" and then laugh uproariously. He also enjoyed sharpening his pencil at the pencil sharpener next to my desk. He liked to do so frequently and as slowly as he could so the noise would be drawn out so as to better annoy me. Eventually, I would reach my tolerance level for that noise and beg him to finish.

James would laugh each time and happily return to his desk. Similarly, Danika liked to tease me about not sharing her chips with me at lunch break. She seemed to enjoy this particular joke so much that she went to the trouble of creating a chip bag out of paper, colouring in the chip logo, and colouring and cutting up pretend chips out of paper to place in the bag. The preparation of this gag gift must have taken her hours but when I found it on my desk and reacted in fake horror, Danika's pleasure over her joke lasted for the rest of the week.

My observational logbooks are full of examples of the children using teasing and humour. White I am not sure if describing all these instances is sufficient to make them understood as discourse behaviour, I argue that my observations are supported by the writings of Little Bear (2000) and Atleo (2004) and by the conversations I had with Deborah, the classroom teacher. Using humour and teasing are deliberate actions and serve the larger purpose of maintaining connectedness. Additionally, findings discussed in Chapter 7 will demonstrate that teasing, while understood in a positive way by First Nations and Métis educators, is not understood in the same way by White settler educators. This collision of educator perceptions supports my argument that teasing and humour serve different purposes for those with an Indigenous worldview.

3.3. Sharing/Storytelling/Narrative

Sharing and teaching through the telling of stories is a value described in the many Indigenous scholars' writings related to Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous ways of coming-to-knowing (Atleo, 2004; Cajete, 1994; Little Bear, 2000). Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) state that life is made "understandable through

demonstration and observation accompanied by thoughtful stories in which the lessons were embedded"(p. 10). Similarly, Cajete (1994) tells us that stories can "teach us about the nature of human life in all its dimensions and manifestations" (p.117). The value accorded to sharing through stories was evident in Deborah's teaching as well as how she scheduled the school day. Each day began with a half hour of "Sharing." Every morning, each student was given time to share something with the rest of the class. Sometimes, students brought pictures or toys but often what was shared was a description of an activity or a story. Particularly, in the cases of First Nations and Métis children, these sharing moments involved the telling of stories involving immediate and extended family members. Deborah listened to each story attentively and never pushed a child to finish up. Rather, Deborah always waited patiently for the children to speak and then asked them, "Anything else?" and waited for them to speak. She never cut them off or filled in their silence. Instead, she gave them all the time they needed, waited patiently through silence, asked questions which allowed the children to continue building their stories and, at the end of each child's turn, she would respectfully thank them "for sharing."

After a month or so of "Sharing," I began to wonder why we spent a half hour listening to these often outlandish stories. I decided to ask Deborah why she felt it was important to give the children this time to speak. Her answer was not what I expected to hear. Deborah explained that "Sharing" was an opportunity for her to know who each child was at the beginning of the day. She went on to say that if she didn't have "Sharing" then she wouldn't know who she was teaching or how she should adjust her behaviour to accommodate each child's changing spirit. These

comments are in line with the Indigenous worldview notions of the world being in flux and the need to maintain connectedness. Deborah's descriptions of the importance of sharing through storytelling echo the descriptions of Indigenous worldview discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

In terms of the types of stories told, the children often tended to talk about parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins and aunts and uncles. These stories were often full of humour and impossible scenarios. A good example of this is a story Crystal told me while we played a board game during "Choice Time." Crystal told me that she and her cousin went to the ocean (keep in mind that she lived in Saskatchewan) and that her cousin went in too deep and fell off her surf board. Then Crystal finished off her story with a great flourish by telling me very seriously that a shark swam under her cousin's board, it bit her head off, and that her cousin was now dead. We both laughed at the end of the story and, later, I asked Deborah why Crystal's stories were often so far-fetched. Deborah explained that it was very important that stories entertain and that elders try to make stories interesting to listen to so that the lesson inside the story is heard. Smaller children's stories may not yet contain valuable lessons but they have learned to make them humourous so that listeners pay attention. I definitely was interested to hear about Crystal's cousin's demise.

A similar example is found in a story that Cody shared with me during math one day. Cody told me that his little brother was diving into the snow banks headfirst. At first, Cody told him to stop but then when his little brother did not listen, Cody decided to leave him stuck in the snow bank for an hour. When Cody

returned to dig his brother out, his nose was frozen into an icicle. Cody explained

that it was his job to teach his little brother the lesson that you're not supposed to dive

headfirst into the snow bank and that leaving him stuck and letting his nose freeze

into an icicle made him learn that lesson. Cody claimed that it was his job to be mean

to his little brother to help him learn a lesson. This story contains the same elements

of humour and family as described by Deborah and as found in the story told by

Crystal. Additionally, it also relates to the values of self-reliance and non-

interference discussed in Chapter 4.

Sharing through stories is not simply used for entertainment. In Deborah's

classroom, she often taught lessons through stories and encouraged students to

respond to questions by sharing about their own experiences. One instance that

comes to mind is when Deborah asked the class if they were familiar with otters and

Kenny responded by talking about a time he and his family were at a river and saw a

beaver. While the story wasn't completely related to the question, Deborah seemed

to understand that Kenny was sharing the knowledge he did have about a similar

animal and she allowed him to finish his story. Another instance of stories being used

during lessons is when Deborah would begin reading a story or assist the children

with the reading of a story. Deborah frequently used the triggering of schema

through their family stories to assist them in understanding the new stories. Deborah

knew each child's family and was able to relate a story of a family taking a trip to a

child's lived experience by reminding them of a trip their family had taken. In turn,

the child shared the story with the rest of the class and all children were then better

equipped to understand the new text before them.

4.   Conclusion

This chapter has examined samples of Indigenous English-speaking children's speech taken from my database made up of interview transcripts and classroom observations. Characteristics described included: non-standard conjugation of verbs, omission of function words, consonant cluster reduction and stressed pronunciation of words ending in *ing*, variable pronunciation of words beginning with *th*, and lexical differences. Additionally, the discourse characteristics of teasing, sharing through stories, and the use of silence were examined through the use of samples from my dissertation data and through reference to supporting Indigenous worldview literature and discussions with Deborah, the classroom teacher.

This next chapter will explore teacher perceptions of linguistic variation, literacy development and discourse behaviour in White settler, First Nations, and Métis students. The chapter will draw on interviews conducted with eleven educators and examine patterns that emerged from their descriptions of their approaches to teaching, classroom management, evaluation, and referral of students for speech and language assessment. Additionally, findings related to issues of power and denial of difference will also be examined.

Chapter 7: Educator Perceptions, Beliefs, and Behaviour

1.   Introduction

The previous chapter examined Indigenous English in terms of linguistic characteristics as well as discourse behaviour and their connections to Indigenous worldviews. While describing these aspects of language is an important contribution to understanding classroom communication patterns of Indigenous English-speaking students, the initial exploration of the linguistic characteristics of Indigenous English as presented in the previous chapter is not sufficient. The next step is to examine educator perceptions and beliefs regarding Indigenous English as this sheds lights on how these belief systems and expectations affect the school experiences of these children.

As discussed in the literature review of Chapter 3, educational research shows a link between teacher expectations and student performance (Cecil, 1988; Crago, 1992; Eller, 1989; Ford, 1984; Ghosh, 2002; Wolfram et al., 1999). A child's language and behaviour in the classroom influences a teacher's perceptions of the student's potential. The teacher's expectations of the student, in turn, influence the performance of the child. My awareness of the link between educator perceptions and student performance is what initially made me decide to interview educators regarding their awareness of Indigenous English.

In addition to perceptions of Indigenous English, this chapter will also explore other educator beliefs that emerged from the interview data upon analysis of salient patterns. In conducting interviews with teachers, literacy development tended to surface when I asked questions related to language and discourse behaviour. As such,

educators' descriptions of student literacy development and their teaching programs and approaches have become an important area of discussion in this dissertation. Additionally, as the study progressed, it became apparent to me that I needed to explore the underlying current of 'denial of difference' that surfaced in many of the educator interviews (Dei, 1999).

As described in Chapter 5, I interviewed eleven educators over the three months of my study. Of these educators, four self-identify as First Nations or Métis and the remaining seven self-identify as non-Aboriginal or White settler. Two of the White settler educators discussed discovering Métis heritage upon adulthood. In this chapter, I will draw on interviews conducted with these participants as well as my observational field notes, to examine (a) educators' awareness and understanding of Indigenous English, (b) educators' perceptions of literacy development, and (c) educators' denial of difference between White settler and First Nations and Métis students. In interviews, some of the educators answered my questions with frankness and candour but expressed concern that their comments could, in some way, be tied to them in spite of my use of pseudonyms. To accommodate these concerns, in this chapter, I have chosen not to discuss participants' positions in the school or provide any descriptive information about them beyond a pseudonym, race, and gender.

2.   Educator Perceptions of Indigenous English

The White settler and First Nations and Métis educators involved in this study are all aware that First Nations and Métis peoples speak a variety of English that differs from the English spoken by White settlers. This statement is supported by a number of comments which I will discuss in this section. While awareness of

linguistic and discourse differences is apparent, this consciousness does not necessarily extend to an understanding of Indigenous English as a dialect or to appropriate interpretations of discourse behaviour. This section will explore educator responses and comments regarding language and the discourse behaviours of teasing, use of silence, and sharing through stories.

2.1. <u>Educator Awareness of Indigenous English as a Dialect</u>

Eller (1989) claims that the view of a dialect speaker's language as substandard is evidence of educator bias and suggests that the tendency to label children as verbally inept is a result of the majority's need for these children to conform to their own linguistic models. This explanation of the perpetuation of the language deficit theory amongst educators is a good starting point for the findings that I will explore in this chapter. None of the educators with whom I spoke in the school had any awareness of the notion of dialect or that a dialect could be rule-governed. Despite Saskatchewan Learning documents that discuss Indigenous English in this manner, I found educators who openly discussed the "deficit" in First Nations and Métis students' language. Alternately, I also found educators who, while not familiar with the idea of a dialect, were open to my explanations of Indigenous English and very surprised that they had never been provided with a copy of Saskatchewan Learning's *Language Arts for Indian and Métis students: A guide for adapting English Language Arts.* This section will examine some of these educator perceptions of Indigenous English.

The following educator comments came out of interviews with Anita and Lisa, both White settler educators. In the first utterance, Anita's statement regarding

language was in response to my question addressing factors that possibly contribute to higher rates of *retention*, holding a child back from advancing to the next grade, among Indigenous students than among White settler children in the school. Anita explained this pattern in the following way:

> *Anita*   *I think that, again,(this) is because of difference in level of language skills because they do present very different levels, in the past, here, we don't usually retain kids anymore, they, um, I probably have it somewhere if you want, the research done, retaining does not improve anything*

Anita's statement reveals a belief in lower language skills among Indigenous students. While it is possible that some students may have delays, I do not think it is fair to describe this as a characteristic common to all Indigenous students. Instead, it is more likely that language assessments and teaching methods used are not appropriate for students who do not speak standard English. Also interesting is Anita's statement regarding the retention of students. She was not the only educator to inform me of this school policy, yet I found evidence of student retention in conversations with children and educators.

The following statement, made by Lisa whose class is made up of Indigenous students, save one, is similar to that of Anita in that it attributes limited language skills to First Nations and Métis students.

> *Andrea*   *Ok, is there anything that you'd like to add that we haven't already talked about or anything that you just want to mention?*

Lisa   *I, just uh, the importance of the early language because we're*

feeling the deficits when they get up to grade 2 or 3. They just

can't write a proper sentence because they can't speak. They

don't speak with complete sentences or they don't, we can't

anticipate what word would come next because they don't

really use proper grammar necessarily and uh, how do you

spell 'gonna', well it's 'going to', how do you spell 'grewed',

'growed.' Well, so it's just a lot, I'm all for the full time

kindergarten for the children that need it, not everybody, but

those kids that aren't getting enough language. So starting

sooner and keeping the play in the day as well though, so just,

all about language development in as many different ways as

we can

Lisa's description of her students' language, in this and other excerpts, indicates that she attributes their difficulties to language deficits or delays. As discussed previously, misconceptions regarding language deficits can contribute to educators' lowered expectations of minority language students.

The following two educator comments present ideas that differ from the above descriptions of Indigenous English as evidence of a language deficit. The first is taken from an interview with Tom who is a Métis educator at the school:

Tom   *So if we're trying to encourage these children to speak but*

every time, you know, they're saying something improperly

because it doesn't flow with that certain type of sentence

structure that we're expecting. You're closing that bridge um and you're not going to have that language development with that child. You're just going to see deficit because every time you set them down for testing, well, they have presented with that opportunity to grow, when you work with elders and stuff, and they're working with children, you'll see that constant interaction with them. And, again, that is broken when we get here, um, you know, when it's time for adults to speak, kind of thing, is when kids are meant not to be heard, they're just supposed to sit there and listen. But during traditional teachings there will be that constant interaction with the elders, with the kids, and nobody's going to sit back and the elder's not going to criticize a kid for not speaking properly, because it's not as important as the kid being able to learn, you know, from the story. If you're following me...

In his comments, Tom explains that, from an Indigenous point of view, focusing on learning is more important than being concerned with what might be perceived as proper grammar by some educators. I heard similar comments from other First Nations educators at the school. While they did not use the linguistic term *dialect* or describe Indigenous English as rule-governed, they did talk about it simply being the way people speak in their communities. That is not to say that attention is not paid to literacy development or the importance of developing the ability to write in standard

English.   Rather, "not speaking properly" is simply not seen as the largest stumbling block to a child's progress in school.

Similar to Tom's comments, the following statement made by White settler educator Rachel demonstrates awareness and acceptance of the variety of English spoken by her Indigenous students:

Rachel   *I point that out all the time and I don't penalize them for it, when they speak like that. We're writing essays right now and I was just talking about this with somebody the other day because I was stuck between, I know that's the way she speaks and I know that's the way they speak at home and that's the way they speak on the reserve and great. And so, when I talk to her about her essay, I said, in formal writing, for example, if you went beyond elementary school and into high school and college and you were writing a formal essay, you would be asked to change these words. And it should look like this. And then I said, in speaking, speak however you want to speak but recognize that when we're writing the essay it needs to look like this. Just like, when you're doing a title page, and that's the example I used, when you're doing a title page for your short stories, put pictures all over it, any font you want but when you're doing a title page for your essay, it's in Arial 12 font and we do it like this. Was that right or wrong?*

Rachel's comments demonstrate an understanding that Indigenous English should be accepted and encouraged as a child's first dialect. Moreover, she also understands that her students require explicit instruction in standard English. Furthermore, her final question indicates a desire to serve the best interests of her students and to modify her teaching approach if it is not effective in bridging her students home and school languages.

2.2. Educator Perceptions of Discourse Behaviour

The following section examines educator perceptions of First Nations and Métis children's use of silence, teasing and sharing through stories. The first educator utterances are taken from my interview with White settler educator Anita. My question regarding whether First Nations and Métis children use silence in different ways than White settler children produced her initial comments and our resulting conversation is also included in the following excerpt:

Anita   *I can certainly recognize reasons they use silence. I would have to think as to whether or not they're different [*from how White settler children use silence*] but they certainly use it for power. Uum, you can't make me talk, um, if I'm quiet then I don't have to admit to doing something or take responsibility. I guess often, non-Aboriginals will give more excuses, come up with more reasons and the Aboriginals are just quiet. Um, when I think about adults, actually, that we have on staff who are Aboriginals, um, it was very disconcerting when I first came because I actually thought that they didn't know*

something about a subject or were being standoffish by not

participating in their silence but now, it was just because they

didn't feel that they had something to offer. They just didn't

have something to say so they didn't just talk for the sake of

talking. When they wanted to share their opinion and

thought they had an opinion to share, then they would. So that

was a difference, when I first came here, thinking about

working with the adults

Andrea	**But you wouldn't think that would be the same reason for the children?**
Anita	*I don't know, actually, I've never considered it in that way*
Andrea	**Okay, no, that's fair, um and when you experience silence in this way with the adults or silence however the children are using it, how do you feel inside, what's your reaction when faced with a silence?**
Anita	*Um, sometimes it depends on the situation, if it's a situation where, let's say we're talking about a story, we're doing something that's curriculum-related, um, I often question do they understand what I'm asking them or the vocabulary and I often find their vocabulary is very lacking if I rephrase the question or take out a specific word that was in the story and say well do you know what this means? Is it this or this? I'll find out, I can't just assume that they know it because they*

don't. It even comes down to simple things like some different

kinds of fruits, they've never experienced it so it didn't mean

anything to them and so their silence was just because they

didn't know and other times, their silence is anger, if

it's in a situation about a recess incident or some behaviour,

correcting them for as part of a group then they're acting out

um the silence, almost like sullenness and sometimes, I just let

it go because you know that you're not going to force them to

do something they don't want to do and if you just let it go

they'll usually come around and join back in or some ways

show that they're sorry or they're willing to try. You don't

often get I'm sorry from them but they'll often show you in a

way that they are or that they want to try again, some the, if

you keep picking on them about the silence and try and push

them to get an answer, you're just pushing the buttons that

you're going to get an explosion, it just doesn't work, it's a

very strong tool for them. I think they can remain silent for

much longer periods of time than White children can and not

necessarily a stoic way but just they're, some of their

body movements, it's not as fidgety as White kids start to

squirm when they know they're in the hot seat, they don't, you

can almost just see their body language just deflate, you know,

and their head will come down and they'll just, hmm, whatever,

you can't make me, so they're very strong in that way

Anita's initial answer regarding First Nations educators' use of silence in the school indicates that she does, indeed, understand some of the reasons behind why silence is used differently by First Nations and Métis peoples. Yet, when I push her to make the same link to children's language behaviour, she attributes their silence to not knowing answers, feelings of anger, or a play for power.

In contrast, First Nations educator Deborah describes the use of silence in Indigenous communities in the following way:

Deborah *One of the things when I was, as a child in my family, we were,*

the term, where children are seen and not heard was not

anything that we ever experienced in our homes or in our

families. I would have been insulted if I was expected if

I was expected to use some of that model or whatever for any

of my students. It wasn't, the silence thing, wasn't something

that was told to us, taught, or explained why we have to be

silent, it was just a matter of us observing and eventually we

just, we just naturally start using it because you see it all the

time. And for us it's a matter of respect, and giving people the

opportunity to talk because we are taught that listening is

equally as important as sharing knowledge and in order to

learn you have to listen

Deborah's statements demonstrate her value and understanding of silence as a way of listening to others, a means to learning, as well as a form of respect.

Similarly, the following comments taken from my interview with Métis educator Tom demonstrate his understanding of how silence can be used by First Nations and Métis students:

> Tom *I, again, being raised in that type of cultural environment, nonverbal cues is extremely significant, a sign of respect is not to look someone directly in the eye, sometimes when you're talking to them but still able to show and reflect in your body language that you're paying attention to what they're saying because it's obviously important*

Remembering some of the White settler educators' comments which do not demonstrate an awareness of how silence can be used, I then asked Tom if it was difficult to know when a child was using silence as a way to learn. I was interested to know if it was easy to discern when a First Nations child was being respectful and listening in a culturally appropriate manner or whether they were simply choosing not to participate in classroom activities. The following comments are his response to my question:

> Tom *...Um, no, it's not hard at all, it's when you're having discussions and stuff like that, the kid may not be the one bouncing all the questions and dialogue back and forth but they'll, see, be the person whose nodding in response to the answers, um, every once in a while looking in the direction of a*

different classmate who's speaking and stuff like that. Whereas

a kid who's daydreaming, they kind of tend to not be moving,

have that glazed look in their eye, maybe or just doodling or

something like that and again. Those negative body languages

are going to be reflected in their behaviour as well, you know,

the kid who has the dropped shoulders and is leaning off to the

side, you know pretty well that they're just not with you

Tom's comments indicate the need for educators to pay close attention to non-verbal cues which indicate whether or not a child is listening. When I examine some of the interview transcripts, I am not convinced that White settler educators know, for example, that watching to see whether a child is looking at his or her peer can be an indicator of participation in a classroom discussion. The following statement made by White settler educator Corrine demonstrates this misunderstanding of silence:

Corrine   *Just more, um, when you're speaking to them, just like, very*

little eye contact and just, yeah, it's almost whether they're

unsure of whether they shouldn't answer or should answer so,

just the unsure

Corrine's comments indicate unawareness of the respect that is shown through the avoidance of eye contact. Additionally, like Anita, she attributes their use of silence to lack of certainty in terms of an answer.

Turning now to educators' perceptions of First Nations and Métis students' sharing through stories, we see similar patterns of conflicting communicative patterns. The following exchange is taken from my interview with White settler

educator Corrine. Our topic of discussion is Indigenous students' frequent sharing through the telling of stories.

Andrea	***When that happens or when it first started happening to you in the beginning when you started working here, what was your feeling or your reaction to the stories?***
Corrine	*Generally, to get back on task, I mean even now, I still kind of like, okay, I'll listen for awhile, like I'll listen longer now than I did when I first started and I'll listen and then wait until they're kind of done and say okay, can you get back to work and you can tell me the story later or finish or tell me more later*
Andrea	***Do you ever find answers to your questions in their stories or does it just seem like a deviation from the topic***
Corrine	*Usually, it's a deviation from the topic, just with the students I work with more, small groups*
Andrea	***So what do you believe causes First Nations and Métis children to tell more stories than other groups***
Corrine	*It's there, I think they just tell a lot of stories in their culture*
Andrea	***So they see the adults doing it?***
Corrine	*Yeah actually*

Corrine's final statements demonstrate that she understands that the children are operating under culturally-appropriate norms modeled for them by adults from their

communities. Yet, she still perceives their telling of stories as simply a deviation from the topic of discussion.

In the following interview excerpt, Deborah describes her perceptions of the differences between how and why Indigenous and White settler students tell stories:

Deborah   *Yes, it's very evident, um I find, the non-Native students are very blunt, precise, and to-the-point storytellers, ideas gotten across and that's it. Whereas um, in our, with the First Nations or Aboriginal students, it's uh, yeah (laughter) there's a story behind everything, it's progressive yeah, it grows. It might not necessarily even get to the main idea until something else has been thrown in like humour or, and that's always kind of like a goal with our young ones, like they like to have some humour in their stories and unless it's something, of course, that affects them in a, that really affects their personal well being or those around them that, yeah, there's a difference. I find the First Nations students will come up to me anytime they have the opportunity and start to share and anytime they're comfortable. I think the biggest thing is the comfort zone for them whereas the non-Native are more prone to the routine of the classroom and they're not so, not so, it's not as regular a thing for the non-Native students to come up and start sharing with me at any point, there are a few that will, given the opportunity, it's usually quite random. Something*

exciting is happening in their lives whereas for the First

Nations it's just an opportunity of connecting

Deborah's final statement regarding storytelling as an opportunity for connecting is in keeping with the discussion of Indigenous worldview in Chapter 4. The following statements made by Métis educator Tom also demonstrate elements of connectedness through the sharing of stories of family:

Tom   *From my teaching experience, I can't say I'd notice a*

difference um, from a non-teaching experience, yeah. Y'know

(laughs) that's part of what you grow up with, 'I remember the

time when me and my brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, did this'

and you'll use that in your conversation a lot um because the

extended family idea is a lot broader so I don't, can't really

speculate on how deep the family units go around here for the

non-Aboriginal students. I don't know, just personally, the

family connection goes a little bit further, I know fifth cousins,

you know and I still consider them my extended family

The final discourse behaviour to be discussed in relation to educator perceptions is that of teasing. As was demonstrated by educator comments relating to silence and storytelling, the following comments are also indicative of differing communicative patterns colliding. In the first exchange, I ask White settler educator Lisa if she notices teasing used more frequently among First Nations and Métis children than by White settler children. What follows is her response:

Lisa   *I do, um, I can remember that I can hear "just jokes"*

"teasing" but I guess I find some things funny and some things

not, you know the little boy who comes and stands behind me

when I'm teaching, I don't consider teasing, he may have

intended it that way but I find it annoying

Lisa's description of her students' uses of teasing indicates limited understanding of the relationship-developing goals of this discourse behaviour. Students do use the expression "just jokes" to indicate when they are teasing in non-malicious ways. From my observations, I argue that these moments of teasing are about building relationships and maintaining those connections through laughter.

Similarly, White settler educator Anita's description of what she considers to be rude behaviour in a child shows a limited understanding of the importance of teasing and humour for many Indigenous students.

Anita   *Mocking, um, teasing other kids, um, some of the, even some of*

the simple things in terms of talking when someone else is

talking or reading, that is being rude to them in terms of what's

your job as a listener/speaker. Many times, for the older

students, they figure if they just doodle it or sketch it, you

know that doesn't mean as much as hitting, saying it or

punching somebody? That's 'just jokes', they'll say it or if

they do say something, oh 'just jokes' that kind of somehow is

the magic marker and that just makes it disappear um, so I still

consider that rude, it's probably my top.

In the following statement, First Nations educator Deborah responds to my questions regarding White settler educators' apparent lack of understanding of the role that humour and teasing plays in maintaining relationships.

Deborah   *That's something that I really have a hard time with when I walk around and do like supervision, for example. I'm out there and I hear the First Nations kids communicating for and talking to one another and joking and laughing and I pick up on the humour and the fact that the way it is presented didn't cause the other children or child involved to feel like they were ridiculed or criticized but the humour is brought out that person is made to laugh at his silly behaviour or his mistakes. And I've seen so many different situations where I'll walk by like that and other teachers are very quick to jump on and treat what they just observed as being something that is rude or have, or send the student into the principal basically for being rude or disrespectful, or however they identified the problem*

The comments discussed in this section show that educators are aware of Indigenous English but, at the same time, do not understand the systematic linguistic aspects of Indigenous English. First Nations and Métis educators seem to accept students' speech as culturally appropriate and White settler educator Rachel understands the distinction between spoken and written English and adjusts her teaching accordingly. Alarmingly, a number of White settler educators attribute linguistic differences to the notion of language deficiency. In addition, none of the

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educators interviewed were familiar with the Saskatchewan Learning document which describes Indigenous English as a dialect. In terms of educator perceptions of discourse behaviour, First Nations and Métis educators exhibit understanding and acceptance of discourse behaviour appropriate to First Nations and Métis students. In contrast, White settler educators describe the discourse behaviours of teasing, sharing through storytelling and silence/listening of First Nations and Métis students through a "White lens."

3. Literacy Development

This section examines educators' perceptions and beliefs as they pertain to literacy development. Much of what was discussed in the previous section is linked to this next area of inquiry. In examining reading and literacy education in schools, it is important to question power relations, discourses and the construction of student identities with the larger goal of challenging inequality. As described in Chapter 3, misconceptions regarding linguistic equality--when held by educational policy makers, administrators and educators--can affect the literacy, academic, and social development of speakers of less valued languages or dialects. The findings of the previous section demonstrate that many educators at my research site are operating under misconceptions in regards to Indigenous English. Berlin (1987) explains that when we teach writing, and I would add reading, that we are teaching a version of the world and the students' places in it. With this argument in mind, understanding educator perceptions of literacy development becomes all the more urgent.

My biggest source of information regarding how literacy and reading programs are structured in the school was Deborah, the classroom teacher with whom

I worked. From my time with her, I was able to see how she worked with the children and also gain insight into their past literacy experiences in previous grades. I was also able to discover that, of the approximately 25 students in her class, three had been retained in earlier grades and these three were all Indigenous students. Additionally, with regards to speech and language assessment, seven children had been referred in earlier grades and only one of these children was White settler. These findings are similar to reports I received from other classroom teachers. While I did not conduct an empirical review of student retentions or of speech and language referrals, based on my interviews with children and adults, conversations and observations, I believe that First Nations and Métis children experience these things more frequently than White settlers. Deborah, who has been teaching in the school for almost ten years, as well as other educators when asked, confirms my belief.

Children in this school have their reading tested through the use of two standardized tests: Benchmark and Dolsch. These tests are used to discern whether a child is at grade level in reading and to uncover which areas of reading are most difficult for a particular child. If a child scores below grade level early in the year, they are tested again in the winter months to ascertain if improvement has been made. What I found particularly interesting during my time in Deborah's class was being able to observe this second series of testing. Interestingly, on the first test, almost all the First Nations and Métis children were one to two years below grade level in their reading abilities. While one or two White settler students had some reading struggles, none of them were a full grade level behind where they were expected to score.

At the time of the second series of testing, conducted by Deborah and the resource room teacher, all the First Nations and Métis children had made huge improvements in their reading abilities to the point where some were at grade level and others were only considered to be a half year behind. These test results were what made me choose to focus on literacy development. It became apparent to me that Deborah was doing something differently from the primary teachers who taught these children previously and that Deborah's approach was working.

I discussed the test results with Deborah and asked her if she could pinpoint one area where First Nations and Métis children seem to generally experience difficulty. All the children had lower scores in the area of reading comprehension. Word recognition and oral reading were not challenges to them but when it came time to retell stories or answer comprehension questions, the children struggled. The children have the ability to decode language but have not been taught strategies to achieve comprehension. What this tells me is that previous teachers most likely focused on reading attack skills--sounding words out, memorizing words, teaching phonetics—which, when not combined with the teaching of comprehension strategies, results in students who can read but not make sense of what they are reading.

In addition to these reading attack skills, Deborah, in contrast, explicitly teaches her students the comprehension strategies they can use to understand a text. She teaches them to pay attention to titles, to examine pictures, she reminds them of previous experiences they might have had with their families that are similar to what they are reading about, she stops reading to do comprehension checks and she leads

the children in a discussion of the text topic before, during, and after reading. In short, she uses all possible means to "front-load' the story and to trigger previous schemas in an effort to enable comprehension and so that comprehension strategies are modeled for and explained to her students.

I asked Deborah about her ideas and goals behind the strategies she uses. She explained that a lot of the texts her students are expected to read are not culturally appropriate. Whenever possible, she chooses texts that are related to the lived experiences of her students. Deborah is also keenly aware that her students will not always be provided with culturally relevant material and, as such, wants them to have the skills to tackle any new reading material.

In large part, I attribute her students' improvements to her intense focus on teaching reading strategies. Additionally, like the White settler teacher Rachel, Deborah seems to have an awareness that her students need to be able to recognize differences between Indigenous English and standard English. Interestingly, Deborah makes use of many explicit feedback moves described in second language research (Lyster, 2004.) On a number of occasions, I witnessed Deborah drawing student attention to their utterances through the repetition of their non-standard language in a questioning tone of voice. Sometimes, the children were able to reproduce the utterance in standard English, other times they needed her explicit instruction. In other instances, I heard her explicitly indicate to a child that a word was not used in standard written English by asking a student a question. For example, on one occasion, I heard her ask the following to Crystal, "Do we say *et*?" At this point, Crystal was able to erase *et* from her text and replace it with *ate*.

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My impression of Deborah's classroom was that rich learning was taking place in the area of Language Arts. I wondered what was happening in the earlier grades that could help to explain the children's first Benchmark and Dolsch scores. It was clear to me from my conversations and interviews with educators that educators were not familiar with the Saskatchewan Learning document *Language Arts for Indian and Métis students: A guide for adapting English Language Arts*. This well-crafted document acknowledges the legitimacy of Indigenous English and provides guidelines and sample lesson plans which could positively contribute to developing literacy in dialect-speaking children. To better understand what was possibly happening in other classrooms, I chose to enter into discussions regarding beliefs and practices related to literacy development in my interviews with educators. The following excerpt is from an interview with White settler educator Lisa whose class consists of 18 First Nations students and one White settler student:

Andrea	*And have any of these children repeated kindergarten or grade 1?*
Lisa	*Let me, I always have to go through the class, one, two, three, four, five, five off the top of my head, this one is going to repeat this year, six, without checking their files I would say 6 out of 19 have repeated already*
Andrea	*And you say that that's mostly due to literacy development?*
Lisa	*Yeah, yeah, they come in, they have significant delays in all literacy areas, in speech patterns, articulation, vocabulary, um,*

	listening skills, if you read a story, they just don't get it, they don't have the kind of background
Andrea	**Hm-hmm, what kind of stories do you use?**
Lisa	*A lot of the early, who do I like, I like Dr. Seuss for all the rhyming, I like Robert Munsch for the repetition, and they usually find his are funny, they most often can grasp that situation, anything more imaginative is tough, anything slightly removed from their world, which I find has been quite narrow, is tough. I'll read some Aboriginal stories and it's fun to see their eyes light up at something familiar, or we've made bannock or something like that, you can really see there's a link, but I find a lot of times, there aren't*

Lisa's description of the literacy skills of her students seems to indicate lowered expectations of their literacy and language abilities, little if any understanding of their language as rule-governed, and a lack of awareness of the difficulties that rhyming texts can create for dialect-speaking children. Additionally, I am left wondering why, if she finds her students have difficulty understanding material that is different from their lived experiences, she does not provide them with the strategies that could help them to make sense of a new text.

In my interview with Deborah, I asked her about how White settler educators perceived the literacy skills of Indigenous students. The following comments are her response to my question:

> *Deborah,*   *(sigh) it's always like, they don't understand, the*
>
> *comprehension's not there, the vocabulary's not there, and it's*
>
> *always, the understanding's not there, they're not quick*
>
> *enough for recall, their attention, there's always...*

My sense is that Deborah's description is accurate. My short time in the school left me with the impression that First Nations and Métis students are perceived, by many White settler educators, as arriving at school with limited language abilities. Additionally, these children are not expected to do well in developing literacy skills and, often, the blame is placed on the home environment. What is also clear to me is that educator approaches need to be modified and teachers need to be aware of differences in dialect and how this affects literacy development. I will discuss this further in the next chapter of this dissertation.

4.   Denial of Difference

As I collected my data and as I have engaged in the writing of the dissertation, it has become apparent to me that my study lies at the crossroads where race and educational policies and practices intersect. While the focus of my study is language, it is also clear to me that I must talk about race. As described in Chapter 2, it is my stance that race cannot be subtracted from negotiations between White settlers and Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. Schools are not exempt; race is tied to language and to educator perceptions of students. The examples provided in the previous two sections show evidence of this relationship. It is impossible to remove issues of race from the story of language that I am telling. In fact, to do so would be tantamount to not telling the entire story.

As I write, I am reminded of Prendergast's (2003) re-examination of Brice Heath's (1983) study of child language development in three class groups in south-eastern United States. With the cooperation of Brice Heath, Prendergast was able to analyze letters and drafts written at the time of Brice Heath's study. This analysis revealed the extent to which race was imbedded in the original research project and how pressure from outside sources pushed Brice Heath to remove discussions of race from her study and to focus on issues of class. I am mindful of Prendergast's re-insertion of race into Brice Heath's work and these thoughts push me to broach the topic of race and the ways in which it is implicated in my study.

Talking about race can be tricky business; writing about it feels no easier to me. Upon reflection, I believe that this area of discussion is, in part, difficult to articulate because the participants in my study worked very hard to omit conversations of race from our interviews. Additionally, in my experience, this pattern is representative of provincial norms regarding talking about issues related to race. Indeed, this avoidance of talking about race is supported by the findings of a Saskatchewan newspaper survey first described in Chapter 2 which found that 67% of Saskatchewanians agree or strongly agree that it is difficult to openly discuss Indigenous issues. As my data collection progressed, it became clear to me that a number of strategies were being used to sidestep questions pertaining to race. To be clear, my interview questions were not about *racism*; I hit brick walls with some interviewees as soon as I described students as *White* or *First Nations*. Yet, if one of the larger goals of my research is to contribute to countering the reproduction of

societal inequalities in our schools, remaining silent about race and its place in my study is not possible.

George Dei (1999) argues that analyzing the intersections of race, class, gender and sexual oppression is essential if we are to fully address educational equity, social justice and change. In keeping with this thinking, the race divide in the school and community will be examined in the following chapter. In regards to this exploration of educator perceptions and beliefs, what I have come to realize is that educators' denial of difference and claims of colour-blindness is also something that warrants examination. Their attempts to avoid discussions of race are related to their perceptions of their students. Drawing on my field book notes and interview transcripts, this section explores educators' avoidance of discussion of race.

Conducting my interview with Karen, a White settler educator, was when I first came to the realization that denial of difference would most likely become an area of discussion in this dissertation. Karen was unwilling to discuss the students in terms of race because she explained that she did not think of them "like that." Her reticence to discuss her students' language behaviour in terms of group membership forced me to discard the majority of my questions. In our interview, I initially tried to navigate around her avoidance of race as can be seen in the following exchange:

Andrea   *And do any of the children see speech and language*

                       specialists?

Karen   *I've got one, two, three, four*

Andrea   *Uh-huh, okay, and of your group, you said 18, did you tell*

                       me? Um, and I know you maybe don't think about them this

way, but just for the purpose of my interview, would you be

able to tell me how many have an Indigenous background?

Karen   No, I can't but I can get my register

Karen was surprised when I took her up on her offer but did retrieve her class register and was able to rapidly scan the list and give me the names of her First Nations and Métis students who see speech and language specialists. Her ability to quickly provide me with the answer to my question indicates to me that she does, indeed, know which children are First Nations or Métis and which children are White settlers.

What I infer from our conversation is that Karen thinks it is unjust or indicative of biased teaching to acknowledge a child's race. I would argue that Karen's position is that by not seeing children "in that way" she is somehow able to be more just in her approach to teaching in a diverse classroom. Our interview ended quickly and I was not able to explore many of the issues that I initially hoped to discuss with her. Karen's reactions to my question also bring to mind Schick and St-Denis's descriptions of the ideological assumptions commonly-held by White settler teachers-in-training in Saskatchewan. Certainly, Karen's behaviour provides evidence of assuming the positions that "1) race does not matter; 2) everyone has equal opportunity; and 3) through individual acts and good intentions one can secure innocence as well as superiority" (2003, p.1).

Karen was not the only teacher to deny awareness of race. Some were uncomfortable with my use of the term *White*, preferring to use non-Native. One First Nations educator named Nicole also stated to me that she was "beyond race" and another First Nations educator explained to me that "kids are just kids." With each

new interview, I became more skilled at explaining my study and why I felt it necessary to link language and race but many of my interviewees remained uncomfortable discussing students in terms of racial groups.

Moreover, I also began to understand that the term *poverty* was often used as code to avoid discussing race. In my interviews and conversations around the school, the issue of poverty was often indicated to be the primary source of students' problems. While I cannot argue against the impact of poverty on a child's life, I couldn't help but wonder why poor White settler children in the school do not prove to have similar problems in terms of language testing and literacy development to those of Indigenous students. Is the answer to all the students' problems as simple as First Nations and Métis families are poor? What I came to understand is that discussions of poverty were often ways of discussing problems related to Indigenous students without having to mention race. The following exchange with Corrine, a White settler educator, shows evidence of this pattern:

Andrea   *Do you have any feelings about literacy development in grade 1, grade 2, why there is this discrepancy between First Nations and White children?*

Corrine   *A lot of the problem in this area is poverty and poverty is a huge issue, and I think that has so much more bearing on the gap between reading, not reading, math but whatever else...a lot of the them don't have access to transportation to get them to the library. There's no library in this area, public library. I don't know if they feel even comfortable going to the library*

because there's always someone saying, did you bring your

book back, you know, and kids don't have books in their

home, which to me is just wild, cause I grew up with books in

my house but to a lot of people food is more a priority or rent

or whatever, than books

Much of what Corrine describes is valid but the conditions she describes are the same

for all children in the neighbourhood, regardless of race. Additionally, while there is

no library in the neighbourhood, students are able to borrow books from the school's

library and from their classroom collections. It seems to me that, while poverty is

certainly a contributing factor to the children's problems, her response doesn't fully

explain why First Nations and Métis students score lower than White settler students

on reading and language tests used by the school or why they are more likely to be

referred for speech and language assessment or held back a grade. Instead, I believe

Corrine's introduction of poverty to our discussion was simply a means to avoid

discussing literacy development along race lines as well as a familiar topic of

discussion surrounding this school's concerns regarding student literacy development.

5.   Conclusion

Educator perceptions and expectations of students affect student performance.

Since the sixties, this relationship has been the focus of many discussions in the field

of education. My research questions were designed to better understand educator

perceptions of Indigenous English but other patterns regarding teacher perceptions

also emerged from the resulting data. In this chapter, I examined three areas related

to educators' beliefs, expectations and classroom practices: (a) educators' awareness

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and understanding of Indigenous English, (b) educators' perceptions of literacy development, and (c) educators' denial of difference between White settler and Indigenous students. The next chapter will build on this third area of inquiry and will explore issues related to the race divide in the school and community.

Chapter 8: Race, Class, and Culture Divide in School and Community

1.   Introduction

As explained in other parts of this dissertation, I grew up in Saskatchewan and my understanding of the collisions of culture, race, language, history, and power specific to this prairie province is derived, in part, by personal experiences and observations. Additionally, as I have increasingly focused on my research topic throughout my graduate studies, I have become acutely aware of the negotiations of power and the race, class, and culture divide in Saskatchewan schools and communities. While Indigenous peoples and White settlers in Saskatchewan interact in many areas of their lives, these two communities, however diverse they may be internally, manage to remain isolated from one another. In my research project, this reality became glaringly visible to me as I went about observing school activities, interviewing students and educators, and participating in school field trips outside the classroom. I began to understand that this divide affects the lived school experiences of educators and children and that it is an important aspect of my study that needs to be discussed. This chapter will highlight some of the ways that participants in my study are affected by, and contribute to, the divide between Indigenous peoples and White settlers in the school and community.

This chapter will draw on observations noted in my logbooks, interviews and conversations with educators and children and some of my personal experiences in the school and community. The three areas that will be explored in this chapter include: (a) the geographical divide in the community and its contributions to separation of the two groups, (b) White settler strategies for maintaining the divide,

and (c) the children who perpetuate the cycle of division as a result of socialization into appropriate power roles.

The issues surrounding these three areas of discussion are complex and difficult to tease apart. As discussed in the previous chapter, those who live in Saskatchewan are taught not to discuss race and the divide between the two communities. Discussions of race and difference interfere with the message of equality that is more palatable for many Saskatchewanians. As an insider, I can attest to the existence of this divide and to my White settler community's attempts to suppress discussions of it by focussing on other issues related to government policies and socio-economic factors. Yet, the divide between these two communities surfaces in many areas of my research and it is important to discuss it because, like language differences, this divide affects the children's classroom experiences.

2. East Side Meets West Side

The community where I conducted my research is divided into the "West Side" and the "East Side" by a river the splits the city in two. In general, the East Side of the city is considered to be affluent, safe, and the area of the city where middle and upper class White settlers live. In contrast, the West Side is where we find the small downtown core, the inner city neighbourhoods and residential areas populated mainly by First Nations, Métis, and working class White settlers. Curiously, the more affluent residential and commercial developments in the Northwest area of the city are not considered to be part of the West side even though this area is, indeed, located west of the river. The terms "West Side" and "East Side" are not simply geographical markers; they convey messages about the class, race, and

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culture of the people who live in those areas. Educators and students at the school where I conducted my research are affected by the community perceptions of their school.

When I confirmed my research site and explained to my friends and family where I would be for the three months of my study, I was teased about my safety in the school neighbourhood. Prior to beginning my study, jokes about gangs, drugs, and bar shootings pervaded these conversations. On a personal level, I wasn't bothered by their comments because my time in the school neighbourhood was limited; my identity wasn't strongly tied to my experiences there. Initially, I didn't stop to consider that the minor comments that I experienced are something that must be regularly endured by residents of this neighbourhood and others areas like it on the West Side. It was during an interview that I conducted with Larissa, a First Nations educational assistant-in-training, that I first began to think about how the community's perception of this neighbourhood might affect the students and educators. The following excerpt is taken from this interview which I conducted with her in the second week of my study:

> *Andrea*   *The reason I ask is part of the stuff I write about is um the*
>
> *culture conflict or divide between First Nations and Whites in*
>
> *Saskatchewan, how the two groups don't really mix, even to*
>
> *the point of in this city like you know what areas like where*
>
> *White people live and where First Nations people live, like*
>
> *it's not as clear as that, like there's people who live wherever,*

	but in general there's this huge divide between the two
	groups
Larissa	*The river*
Andrea	**Yeah**
Larissa	[laughter]
Andrea	**Pretty much, yeah eh?**
Larissa	*Yeah, cause when I started school, they [*her college
	classmates*] said 'So where do you live' they thought I lived*
	around the West Side, 'The East Side' 'Why do you live on the
	East Side? You're supposed to live on the West Side', I was like
	'Okay then'

When I began speaking to this participant about the divide between Indigenous peoples and White settlers, I had something more philosophical in mind. I was surprised when she so clearly verbalized the real and important role the river plays in dividing the two communities. This participant was originally from a northern reserve and had moved to the city to attend college and, like any newcomer to any community, was unaware of the community norms surrounding where White settlers and Indigenous peoples typically live. As she explains in our interview, it was assumed by her classmates that she would have chosen to rent her apartment on the West Side because she is First Nations. The statement made by one of her classmates "you're supposed to live on the West Side" expresses this community norm and expectation.

After this interview, I began to pay more attention to how this neighbourhood is perceived by the community. It is considered by the city's urban planning department to be one of four "Core" neighbourhoods. City planners may choose to use the term "Core" but locals simply refer to it as the "Inner-city," an expression that conjures up any number of images of destitution. In my interview with Corrine, a White settler educator, she describes some of the ways that the school and surrounding community are perceived by the larger city community:

Andrea	***Community members in the city, how would they describe this school?***
Corrine	*Oh, oh my God, you work there?* [Laughter] *It's like "whoa"*
Andrea	***Yeah? Is it considered among the worst?***
Corrine	*It's considered an inner city school and that it's, I don't think it's that bad but lots of people, there'd be no way they would work here, you know, there'd be no way they'd work here*
Andrea	***Is that because of the student population or because of the area?***
Corrine	*I'm not sure, I think it's both, the area and the student population, yeah, and the perceptions out there of this area and there's a lot of really negative perceptions of this area*
Andrea	***So would you think that that kind of city perception of this school would affect how teachers feel about working here?***

Corrine   *Oh probably after a while yeah and I think it affects the way*

the community, the parents see the school, the kids see the

school

I would agree with Corrine's statements on many levels. The school in my study is located in a poor neighbourhood and life is undeniably difficult for residents in many ways related to socio-economic factors. This does not necessarily mean that teaching or working in a school in this neighbourhood is an unpleasant experience. In my time spent in the school, I witnessed many wonderful exchanges between students and teachers and heard many educators describe their work in favourable tones. Yet, Corrine's statement indicates that the school's reputation in the city is that it is dangerous or unpleasant to work at this school because of its neighbourhood or its students. Additionally, she also brings attention to another of my concerns: how the school's reputation in the city affects educators, parents, and children.

A statement made by Elaine, the school principal, echoes Corrine's description of how city community members view this school and its students and families. The principal of this school is White settler and lives in the East Side of the city. What follows is a statement taken from an interview with her:

I thought I had a bit of a sense, you know, until you get over into this

community, and these community, into community schools, I don't think you

have any idea sense of what's going on and now when I listen to [my] *friends*

and neighbours talking, you really, now it really hits me just how much they

don't get it and there's so much good here and they don't get that, they don't

get the poverty issues, there's a real sense, well people control their own

destiny

The closing line of the above excerpt is especially telling. Those who live in the more affluent areas of the city choose to believe that "people control their own destiny." This statement reflects my arguments in Chapter 2 regarding White settler privilege and the notion that privilege is earned through hard work. It is commonly accepted that those who live in the economically depressed areas of the West Side choose to do so and could, just as easily, choose to make better lives for themselves.

The children who attend the school where I conducted my research live just west of the river that divides this city in half. Some of them rarely, if ever, travel to the East Side but they are able to see it from across the river. I didn't, at first, realize that they were aware of the divisive nature of the river or that the East Side is considered superiour to the West Side. In a conversation with Starr, I began to understand that the children of this neighbourhood, even at a young age, understand how their area of the city compares to the East Side.

Starr	*Can't go in back alleys at night-time, can't go far away from home but me and my friend do, all the time, we went across the river once*
Andrea	***Across the river?***
Starr	*Yeah*
Andrea	***On what bridge?***
Starr	*Hamilton Bridge*
Andrea	***On that scary bridge? You went across?***

Starr	*I said to her and she was like "I'm not going on Hamilton Bridge." I said "We're going on Hamilton Bridge or train track bridge" and then she said, "Let's go across"*
Andrea	**You made her go?**
Starr	*She went after me and she says "Is that where we're going cause it looks scary to me" and then I'm like "Hurry up"*

We continued to discuss her trip across the bridge to the East Side and I asked Starr what made her want to bike across to the other side. She explained to me that she had heard about the good parks on the other side of the river and wanted to see what they were like. I am not sure whether the parks of the East Side are better kept than those of the West Side. What is important is that Starr believes that they are; by age nine, she already displays behaviour and statements that are reflective of the negative perceptions of her home neighbourhood.

The previous interview excerpts highlight the geographic divide between the West and East Sides of the city. Additionally, the interviewees' comments indicate that the members of the city community generally perceive the school and surrounding neighbourhood to be an undesirable and dangerous place to live and work. This negative perception of the school community isolates the neighbourhood residents from the rest of the city. Moreover, this segregation is geographically maintained by the river that separates the West Side from the affluent East Side of the city populated, in large part, by middle class White settlers.

3. White Settler Resistance

The city's urban planning website indicates that homes in the school neighbourhood have an average selling price in the range of $53, 170 to $59,542. These numbers contrast drastically with the city's average home selling price of $124,514. The lower cost of real estate in the school neighbourhood has led to some gentrification of the neighbourhood, specifically in areas closer to the river and further south of the school. This change means that there are some middle class White settler families living in the area which surrounds the school. Yet, while there are White settlers and Indigenous peoples living in the neighbourhood, White settlers have developed strategies to resisting inter-group interaction.

In the neighbourhood where I conducted my research, there are two elementary schools to choose from: the school where I conducted my research and another school within a short distance. Additionally, there is a Catholic school further south of the neighbourhood. In the school which is the focus of my study, roughly 67% of students self-identify as First Nations or Métis. In the other neighbourhood school, Vincent Brown (a pseudonym), nearly 90% of students self-identify as First Nations or Métis. During my three months in the school where I conducted my research, I observed and discussed with interviewees some of the ways in which White settler parents in the neighbourhood resist the presence of Indigenous educators in schools as well as how they avoid sending their children to schools with a high number of First Nation and Métis students. Additionally, I will discuss some ways in which White settler parents' and community members' strategies and behaviour affects Indigenous educators. In this section, a number of other schools in

the city will be mentioned; all school and neighbourhood names have been changed for the purpose of this discussion. This section will explore how these resistance strategies used by White settlers contribute to maintenance of the divide between White settlers and Indigenous peoples.

The easiest way for White settler parents to circumvent having their children come into contact with Indigenous students or educators is simply to avoid sending them to one of the two neighbourhood schools. This can be accomplished by simply choosing to enrol one's child in a school which offers French Immersion. There are no schools which offer this program in the neighbourhood and school boards are required to provide bus transportation for students who attend French Immersion schools outside their school zone. I discussed this reality with Elaine, the school principal, in the following exchange:

Elaine	*Anyways, the other thing within this area is we do lose some families to immersion because kids are then bussed out*
Andrea	**That's a solution out eh? Because they have the right to be**
Elaine	*And they do get transportation for that and so and on this side it's James Murray* [French Immersion school] *and I know we have kids within the general community who are bussed there*

It is not only at the elementary school level that children's parents choose to have them leave the neighbourhood. During a conversation with Phoenix, who lives directly across from the school, she explained to me that her oldest brother drives to a high school on the East Side. I mentioned this reality to Elaine in the following conversation:

Andrea	**And at the high school level, do they have the choice to go where they want?**
Elaine	*At the high school level, they can go wherever they want, um, they basically, they're responsible for their transportation, there's subsidy bus tickets but...*
Andrea	**Phoenix was telling me, and they live across the street, her brother drives to Laurier High everyday**
Elaine	*Hm-hmm, yeah, go figure and as much as possible I think the system has tried to balance programs east and west so there is an advanced component at Highland Mill so there's the tech programs at Victoria Road as well as at Laurier High*

Highland Mill and Victoria Road, the two high schools mentioned by Elaine, are within five to ten minutes driving distance from Phoenix's home. Yet, curiously, Phoenix's brother chooses to attend Laurier High, an East Side high school located roughly 20 to 25 minutes away by car.

While I suspect that there is more involved in these decisions than simply a desire for a better school, parental decisions regarding schools and French Immersion programs could be justified by describing these choices as the best options for their children. It is my sense, however, that these decisions reflect deliberate decisions to minimize contact between White settler children and Indigenous educators and students but this position could be difficult to prove. The following conversation with Elaine describes parents objecting to their children being taught by First Nations teachers and pulling their children out of the school to send them to the Catholic

school south of the neighbourhood. While the previous excerpt describes situations with blurred undertones of racism, the following conversation describes situations where parents' choices of schools visibly reflect their discomfort with First Nations educators.

Elaine   *When we talked about what would you do or would you do anything if parents were, I guess, when you knew that they were being racist in the sense that that they handled the teacher, and uh we lost two families last year and one in kindergarten and that one was, both cases, were about the teacher and they had an issue and couldn't get them, they didn't have a real curricular issue at all, but in their minds, they just, it was all about the teacher and you knew it wasn't the teacher, you knew it was about the person and*

there would certainly be a smaller First Nations population [at that school]

Andrea   **Yeah, when I looked at the demographics, there were no First Nations, well according to self-identifying, there were no First Nations homes in that area really**

Elaine   *And I'm guessing there would be a few now but minimally and again in a different economic bracket so which makes some difference so we lost a couple families there and I mean, they did say the teacher, and one had a discussion with the superintendent and again, you provide the support here and*

bottom line, you have a great teacher, this isn't about the

teacher and with the one, I had a phone call and I identified

what it was about but you know, I guess my next thought, it's

interesting to watch as our population, our Aboriginal

population is increasing, in my mind, here in Saskatchewan

what would be nice is if you get the kids being able

to be comfortable with each other and to some extent, that

happens here but, as you pointed out, to some extent in that

classroom, there's a group and we have families that we draw

from in Hillridge that should be going to Vincent Brown and

they don't go there because   Vincent Brown is almost

exclusively Aboriginal population so, yeah, it's almost dilemma

how much do you do here to try and make everybody

comfortable because in the long term, that's what you want

In the above conversation with Elaine, she reveals, albeit indirectly, that some parents resist having their children instructed by First Nations teachers to the point that they choose to remove their children and send them to the Catholic school south of the neighbourhood. Additionally, she also explains that children who should be attending Vincent Brown, a school where roughly 90% of the students self-identify as First Nations or Métis, choose to attend the school of my study due to its lower number of Indigenous students.

The school of my study is a small community; the choices made by parents are known to educators and staff. In addition to parents removing their children from

the school, I began to wonder how First Nations educators might be affected by White settler parents' whose children continue to attend the school. Another incident that occurred outside the classroom also contributed to my curiousity regarding the experience of First Nations and Métis teachers and their relationships with White settler parents and community members. As part of a unit on community, I accompanied Deborah and the students to a local hospital to attend a play. While at the hospital, I twice had to explain to White settler hospital staff that I wasn't the classroom teacher and point them in the direction of Deborah. In both cases, the individuals could not mask the surprise on their faces when discovering that they had mistaken me for the classroom teacher. I attribute their surprise and embarrassment to our shared understanding that they overlooked Deborah as the classroom teacher because she is First Nations. While I wasn't surprised by their assumption, I did find it curious given the defined roles Deborah and I held during the visit. Deborah addressed the students as a group, the children directed their questions to her, and Deborah directed me and the other educational assistant in our interactions with the students. Yet, even with all these indicators, the two hospital staff members still sought me out as the classroom teacher. This experience added to my interest in exploring how First Nations and Métis educators are affected by the behaviour of White settler parents.

During my time in the classroom, I observed Deborah being unfairly treated by White settler parents on two occasions. The problem originated, on the surface, from some English Language Arts worksheets that were incorrectly marked as correct by one of the White settler educational assistants in the classroom. These worksheets

were then sent home with students to give to their parents. Instead of raising their concerns with Deborah, the parent circled mistakes, added sarcastic comments questioning whether rules of the English language had somehow changed and then went to the school principal with the worksheets as "proof."

In her typically direct and fair manner, Elaine supported Deborah and advised the parent to discuss the issue with the classroom teacher and apprised Deborah of the parent's complaint. I saw these particular worksheets; some of the parent's complaints were valid and some were evidence of her own limited understanding of the English language. The main point of concern for Deborah was not that the parent had concerns about the correction of the homework but, rather, that the parent had not contacted her over the concerns. Over the next weeks, a similar issue with worksheet corrections arose with the same parent and with another White settler parent in the classroom. This involvement of a second parent leads me to believe that these two parents had begun to discuss Deborah and her corrections. Deborah chose to address the issue by phoning the parents to apologize and to begin personally correcting all the worksheets produced by these White settler children in question. In addition to her multiple tasks as classroom teacher, Deborah also has to spend time and energy "protecting" herself from the criticism of White settler parents.

These incidents, and Elaine's comments regarding parents pulling their children from classrooms with First Nations teachers, led me to ask Deborah and other educators about how White settler parents treat First Nations educators in the school. In the following discussion, Corrine describes how some White settler

parents interact with Deborah, other First Nations educators, and another instance of a

White settler parent objecting to Indigenous content in one of the classes:

Andrea	***Have you seen White parents treat Deborah differently?***
Corrine	*I would tend to agree that that would happen, yeah, yeah, I mean I've seen parents treat her differently because she's a female um, so yeah, there's definitely that in this neighbourhood, there's most definitely that in this neighbourhood, racism, in this neighbourhood, I mean we've had, last year we had a parent come in, nice skinhead-looking guy too, with sunglasses on his head and were just going to do tepee raising in the library, well he came he was just like, no way, and it wasn't even an Aboriginal teacher, it was a White teacher but I mean there was an Aboriginal woman coming in to show them about a tepee and what the poles mean and represent and whatever and this guy was adamant that no way are my kids taking any kind of Aboriginal education. Like, okay, but I mean he comes to the door, like a skinhead, shaved head, sunglasses and just like*
Andrea	***Did the children hear him say this?***
Corrine	*He was out in the hall but I mean yeah, no the kids didn't hear him but I mean, just very racist you know and I know there's been other parents in here with issues with Aboriginal teachers in the school. Yeah, I think that's why there are some parents*

that are harder on Deborah than they were on the previous

teacher because the previous teacher is very White but she has

low expectations for them. I mean I respect Deborah way

more than any teacher I've worked with, she's an amazing

teacher, she is very good with them and it boggles my mind

that people can pick on her just because she's Aboriginal or

because she's female, it's like, okay whatever, I mean she's got

two strikes against her with some parents, she's a female and

Aboriginal, they cannot see past it and see that's she's an

awesome teacher. They don't ask the kids they just, it's

amazing

Having heard Corrine's descriptions of some of the White settler parents'

treatment of First Nations teachers and their objections regarding inclusion of

Indigenous content in subject areas, I wondered how this might affect Deborah's

experiences in the school. In the following exchange, I ask her how or if she is

affected by her interactions with White settler parents:

Deborah	*I am, totally, and absolutely comfortable involving anything involving my First Nations and Métis students whereas with the others, I find that there's an invisible kind of barrier that I really can't go beyond*
Andrea	***Like you need to be careful with them?***
Deborah	*I need to be careful*

Andrea	*And why do you feel that, because of the kids' response or the parents?*
Deborah	*I guess, I don't know, maybe it's a personal, maybe not myself personally but I think it's something that, all those of us who are First Nations and teachers are still learning to work through and I guess that has to go back down to equality and uh and the question of whether the parents of these children actually recognize us as being...as being as capable as a White teacher, I guess, so I find that yeah, I don't teach them differently but when it comes to dealing with issues of personal nature, then I do, whereas with the First Nations children, I would never hesitate to call, never hesitate to drop in on a parent and because they're so much more open, no criticism, to where their kids are at...*

The previous interview excerpts show evidence of how White settler parents' resistance contributes to the race, culture, and class divide in the school community. Additionally, there is evidence that White settler parental behaviour influences teacher and student interaction. In the next section, I will examine how adult behaviour in the community school potentially influences students' behaviour and relationships.

4.   Children Modeling Adults' Beliefs and Behaviours

Not surprisingly, children in the school are influenced by adults' behaviour and comments. The relationship between parent and child belief systems can be highly visible. Such is the case in an anecdote shared with me by Deborah where a grade two child, not in the class that I observed, realised that Deborah was First Nations and loudly exclaimed to her classmates "You're an Indian? Wait until I tell my mom!" Other examples of adult beliefs influencing children's choices and behaviour can be less visible yet contribute, nonetheless, to the perpetuation of the race, class, and culture divide in the school and community.

I never observed any instances of students treating Deborah with disrespect. In fact, all of Deborah's students appeared to adore her, trust her completely, and worked hard to please and to be close to her. My area of discussion stems, rather, from the divide between Indigenous and White settler female students and from one of the White settler male student's growing disdain for his school. Both of these situations will now be discussed in this section.

The Indigenous and White settler female students operate as separate friendship circles. With the exception of two girls, one First Nations and one White settler, who live next door to one another, the two groups of girls do not mix. I spoke with Deborah about my observation early on in my study. She explained to me that Crystal, a First Nations student, had attempted to befriend Hannah and Jessica, two White settler girls, early on in the school year. Deborah explained that Crystal's overtures of friendship were rejected and that, since then, the two groups of girls simply did not mix. In the following excerpt from our interview, I attempt to discuss

with Hannah why she does not play with Crystal, Chantelle, Amber, Starr and two other First Nations girls:

Andrea	***But would your mom let you play with them if you wanted to?***
Hannah	*Hmm, no*
Andrea	***No, she thinks they're bad girls?***
Hannah	*So do I, I just never play with them, I don't know why, I don't really, like I notice them, but I don't really play with them because they're not really my friends because um, they don't like me and I don't like them*
Andrea	***Do you think that they don't like you?***
Hannah	*Well they don't*
Andrea	***Well I don't know, I see Crystal over there sometimes trying to hang out with you and Jessica***
Hannah	*Hmmm*
Andrea	***You've never noticed that?***
Hannah	*Hmm*

While Hannah is not able to verbalize why she does not play with Crystal or the other First Nations girls she does seem aware that she is not friends with them. She also seems aware that her mother would not approve of a friendship with these girls. Hannah does not explain why and does not seem to wish to discuss the matter further. In discussions with Deborah, she and I both agreed that the girls' friendships were divided along lines of race and class.

The other event that I would like to discuss in this section relates to Devon, a White settler male student. In January 2006, the school where I was conducting my study experienced "lockdown" because of a child who brought a realistic-looking toy gun to school. As I understand it, someone saw the toy, told a teacher and the RCMP were called in to investigate. The lockdown lasted roughly an hour and then classes resumed regularly. As a result of the event the school received media coverage that day; indeed, when Deborah asked me to pull the blinds at the beginning of the lockdown, media vehicles were already parked outside. Aware that parents needed to be updated on the events of the day, each child was given a note from the school principal to take home with them at the end of the day.

Devon was very troubled by the lockdown that day and understandably so. It seemed to take a number of weeks for him to settle into classroom routines and to feel comfortable when the classroom lights were turned out or the classroom door was closed. I find these to be normal reactions to the events that occurred at the school. What I had problems with was the message Devon was receiving at home and, in turn, bringing to school with him. Devon's mother, one of the parents who had had problems with homework corrections, seemed to indicate to Devon that it was the nature of his school that had caused the lockdown to occur. Devon began to tell his classmates that "Community schools are bad" and that this type of event wouldn't occur at another school in the city. Incidentally, other staff members explained to me that there had been lockdowns at other city schools in the fall months of that school year. Sensitive to Devon's concerns, Deborah attempted to calm Devon by discussing his concerns and by explaining that the incident could have occurred at

another school; it was simply chance that it had happened at this school. Nonetheless, Deborah's discussions with Devon did not seem to dissuade him of his belief regarding his school.

Beliefs and feelings are difficult patterns to isolate; one must make inferences based on the comments and behaviour of an individual. Based on the children's utterances in both situations described in the above section, I argue that Hannah has negative feelings towards to her First Nations peers and that Devon is developing a negative opinion of his school community. It is my belief that their behaviour stems from ideas and behaviour modeled by their parents. Their behaviour is demonstrative of how the pattern of division between Indigenous and White settler communities is perpetuated by the socialization of children into appropriate roles and positions of power.

6.   Conclusion

The previous section has described the race, culture, and class divide between Indigenous peoples and White settlers. This division is aided, in part, by the river that separates the city into East and West. Comments by educators and children indicate that the West side is considered to be poor, dangerous, and the area where First Nations, Métis, and working class White settlers choose to live. In contrast, the East side is considered to be safe, affluent and the domain of a mainly middle class White settler population. This divide is, in part, maintained by White settler resistance to inter-group interactions. White settler parents use a number of approaches to avoid sending their children to schools with high Indigenous populations or where their

child may potentially be instructed by a First Nations teacher. Additionally, these parental strategies affect the teaching experiences of First Nations educators and their relationships with White settler parents and children. Finally, it would seem that White settler parents' behaviour influences the beliefs and behaviours of their children, thus further perpetuating the cycle of division. These results, as well as their relationship to those of the previous two chapters, provide a framework for the next, and final, chapter which presents a discussion of the findings of my doctoral study.

Chapter 9: Discussion

1.   Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I presented findings related to Indigenous English in the classroom; educator perceptions, behaviours and beliefs; and the race, culture, and class divide in the community and school. This chapter is divided into two parts: a summary and discussion of the findings of my doctoral study and implications for schools and future research. The discussion of this final chapter begins with a synthesis of the key points and arguments presented in Chapters 6, 7, 8. Additionally, I highlight relationships between my findings and some of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Furthermore, as I summarize the key points of my findings chapters, I address each of the six research questions which were presented in Chapter 5. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of possible implications for schools, pre-service teaching programs, and future research in this field.

2.   Summary of Key Points and Responses to Research Questions

This section summarizes and discusses the arguments presented in the previous three chapters. Moreover, in my summary of the key points, I respond to each of the six research questions. The responses to these research questions are located in the key findings of the chapter related to Indigenous English in the classroom. As previously mentioned, other patterns emerged in my analysis of the data; these patterns make up the findings discussed in the chapters related to educator perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours and the race, culture, and class divide in the community and school. I begin this discussion by summarizing the key ideas described in Chapter 6 and, in this way, attend to each of my six research questions.

In *Chapter 6, Indigenous English in the Classroom*, I present and discuss samples of Indigenous English-speaking children's speech taken from my interview transcripts and classroom observations. The English used by First Nations and Métis in the grade 3/4 classroom where I conducted my research differs phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically from the English of the White settler children in this study. Some of the characteristics I noted include differences related to: consonant cluster reduction and stressed pronunciation of words ending in *ing*, variable pronunciation of words beginning with *th*, the conjugation of the verb *to be*, conjugation of certain verbs in the present and past tense, marking of the past tense through the use of temporal adverbs, omission of function words, and lexical differences including the use of the quantifier *much*. These findings are similar to those discussed in the literature review of Indigenous English as presented in Chapter 3 of this dissertation (Dubois, 1978; Heit & Blair, 1993; Leap, 1993; Olson Flanigan, 1987; Schilling-Estes, 2000; Wolfram, 1984).

Another key focus of Chapter 6 is the discussion of the use of silence, teasing, and sharing through stories, apparent in the communicative behaviour of First Nation and Metis students. These patterns of communication are also described in the work of linguists as well as Indigenous scholars' descriptions of Indigenous worldviews discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation (Atleo, 2004; Cajete, 1994, Darnell, 1981; Ferrara, 1999; Leap 1993; Littlebear, 2000). Drawing on my observations of the students and discussions with their classroom teacher, I posit that these discourse behaviours are linked to Indigenous worldview and values and not solely the product of differences between home and school language varieties. Rather, as described in

Chapter 4, the roots of these communicative patterns can be located in Indigenous communities' ways of viewing the world (Atleo, 2004; Ball & Simpkins, 2004; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 2000; First Rider, 1994; Little Bear, 2000; Peat, 1994; Pepion, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

I now turn to answering the first three of my six research questions which are related to students' use of the discourse behaviours of silence, teasing, and sharing through stories. These questions grew out of my previous research experience, readings, discussions with committee members and others, and my own experiences and thoughts regarding Indigenous English in the classroom. The questions are: (1) How does the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom; (2) How does the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom; and (3) How does the use of sharing through storytelling shape the Indigenous English-speaking children's general communication patterns in the classroom? The answers to these three research questions provide descriptions of the discourse behaviours used by First Nations and Metis students in the classroom.

In response to the first research question, *How does the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom*, my classroom observations indicate that the First Nations students in my study use silence and listening in a number of meaningful ways. Moreover, drawing on my discussions with Deborah and classroom observations, I ascertain that she and her students operate with a shared understanding that learning and

communication can occur without speaking, and classrooms and discipline can be managed without unnecessary speech. Some examples of this use of silence and listening include First Nations students seeking adult permission or approval through eye contact with Deborah, choosing to remain silent when they understand that Deborah is aware of their attempts to not follow classroom rules, bowing their heads to listen to speakers and watching other students as a means of participating in classroom discussions and peer activities.

None of my observations should be interpreted to mean that these children are uncommonly quiet or do not engage in conversation with their peers or their classroom teacher. Rather, I argue that there are times when silence and listening are used as a means of communication that seems to differ from how the White settler children use silence. Moreover, I maintain that using silence in this way allows for the Indigenous value of non-interference with others and, thus, the maintenance of connectedness. Choosing silence over speech is a sign of respect for language and for others and a way of building and strengthening relationships.

Turning now to the second research question, *How does the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom*, my classroom observations and conversations with educators indicate that the First Nations and Metis students, and educators, use teasing for specific purposes and in a number of ways in their classroom interactions. In discussions with First Nations educators, it was explained to me that teasing helps to build relationships with the students and that there is always a time for laughter in lessons

and work. Deborah went so far as to describe teasing as being necessary for strong relationships between children and teachers.

Interviews with educators and my own observations helped me to notice that these students' teasing moments are often signaled by the words *just jokes*. I maintain that teasing and humour can be used by students as a way to welcome someone new to the class and with the goal of developing a friendship or a relationship. Additionally, humour and laughter can be used as a method to draw attention to someone's silliness without hurting them; in this way, the integrity of relationships is not affected. Overall, humour and teasing are deliberate actions and serve the larger purpose of maintaining connectedness through the development and maintenance of relationships.

In regards to the third research question, *How does the use of sharing through story telling by Indigenous English-speaking children shape their general communication patterns in the classroom*, my classroom observations indicate that the First Nations students' sharing of stories serves a number of communicative purposes. From an Indigenous worldview, adults can use stories as a way of teaching valuable lessons; these stories often contain humour so that the listener is interested and remains focused. Similarly, the First Nations and Metis children involved in my study attempt to make their stories humourous so that listeners are inclined to pay attention. Often, in the cases of First Nations and Métis children, these sharing moments involved the telling of stories involving immediate and extended family members. The use of humour in stories and the involvement of family members in narratives are also indicative of the importance of relationships and the maintenance

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of connectedness. First Nations and Metis students also make use of stories to answer educators' questions. The students' use of stories is understood and accepted by Deborah, their First Nations classroom teacher who sees the sharing of stories as a means of understanding the changing nature of her students and their needs.

The remaining three of my six research questions relate to the discussion of educator perceptions, behaviours and beliefs of Chapter 7. These questions are: (1) How is the use of story-telling by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school; (2) How is the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school; and (3) How is the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school?

My research questions were designed to better understand educator perceptions of Indigenous English but two other patterns regarding teacher perceptions also emerged from the resulting data: educators' perceptions of literacy development and educators' denial of difference between White settler and Indigenous students. This area of discussion will summarize the findings related to educator perceptions and, in doing so, address each of the remaining three research questions.

When interviewed, White Settler, Metis, and First Nations educators demonstrate awareness of Indigenous English. None of those educators interviewed describe this variety of English as a dialect. Furthermore, none of the educators interviewed are familiar with the Saskatchewan Learning curricular document that establishes Indigenous English as a dialect with systematic differences. As such,

educators, First Nations and White settler, who are helping students to bridge between home and school varieties are doing so by trial and error or drawing on previous personal experiences. Additionally, a number of White Settler educators perceive dialect-speaking First Nations and Metis students as operating with a language deficit or with language delays. Educational research shows a link between teacher expectations of minority language students and student performance (Cecil, 1988; Crago, 1992; Eller, 1989; Ford, 1984; Ghosh, 2002; Wolfram et al., 1999). I argue that the lack of dialect awareness among educators, combined with biased perceptions of speech and lowered expectations of Indigenous English-speaking children, contributes to ineffective teaching practices resulting in literacy development difficulties for First Nations and Metis students. Benchmark and Dolsch test results, combined with Deborah's success in improving her students' literacy abilities, lend support to my beliefs regarding educator bias.

Turning the discussion to matters related to educator perceptions of First Nations and Metis students' discourse behaviour, we find educator understanding and behaviour divided along race lines. Taking into consideration the imbalance of power between Indigenous and White settler communities as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, this division along race lines is not unexpected. Generally speaking, First Nations and Metis First Nations educators exhibit understanding and acceptance of discourse behaviour appropriate to First Nations and Metis students while White settler educators describe the discourse behaviours of teasing, storytelling and silence used by First Nations and Metis students through a "white lens."

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In terms of my research question *How is the use of story telling by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school*, White settler and Indigenous educators maintain that First Nations and Metis students use stories more frequently than their White settler classmates. White settler educators tend to perceive Indigenous students' telling of stories as unrelated to classroom activities or as evidence of a student being unfocussed on work. First Nations and Metis educators describe themselves as using stories in the teaching of lessons and their informal interactions with students. These educators also describe First Nations and Metis students' as enjoyable and a source of information regarding a student's wellness.

In regards to the research question *How is the use of silence by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school*, White settlers and Indigenous educators perceive First Nations and Metis students as using silence in different ways than White settler students. As with the discourse characteristic of story telling, educator perceptions of the use of silence are divided along race lines. Indigenous educators describe the value of silence and listening and see it as an integral part of learning. They describe themselves as being able to perceive when a student is silently participating in a group discussion through reliance on observations of students' body language such as lowering the head and watching peers. Additionally, Deborah's classroom interactions with her Indigenous students provide evidence of teacher and students using silence and eye contact as a means of gaining permission to move about the classroom. In contrast, most of the White settler educators interviewed describe Indigenous students' silence as evidence

of lack of comprehension, defiance, anger, or an attempt at gaining power. One White settler educator named Rachel acknowledges awareness of the use of silence but describes not knowing what it means or how she should respond to it.

Turning to the final research question *How is the use of teasing by Indigenous English-speaking children perceived by the adult educators of the school,* we also find educator perceptions split along race lines. Indigenous educators describe the use of teasing and humour as appropriate in school settings. They use teasing to establish relationships with their students and are comfortable with their students' using teasing in the classroom and on the playground. White settler educators are aware of Indigenous students' use of teasing; a number of them discussed the use of the term *just jokes* as a signal of teasing moment. Their descriptions of teasing, however, indicate a limited understanding of their students' communicative goals regarding developing and maintaining relationships.

Another pattern discussed in Chapter 7 is educators' attempts at avoiding discussions of race. A number of the educator participants involved in this study were uncomfortable with discussions that separated students into groups according to race. I was told by several educators that they did not see their students "in this way." Others were uncomfortable with my choice of the term *White*, preferring to describe White settler children as *non-Native*. The educators' discomfort is in keeping with Dei's (1999) description of "denial of difference." Addressing issues of race with my participants pushed me to choose my words carefully in order to ease participants' discomfort. With one White settler participant, I was unable to complete my interview because of her refusal to answer questions regarding differences in

Indigenous and White settler students' communicative patterns. This denial of difference is in keeping with Schick and St-Denis's (2003) descriptions of the ideological assumptions commonly held by White settler teachers-in-training: race does not matter and everyone has equal opportunity. Indeed, I was informed by a number of educators that they do not "see" race or that they are "colour-blind." These educator positions regarding discussion of racial differences and equality leads us to the final area of discussion: the race, class, and culture divide in school and community.

The final findings chapter of this dissertation addresses the race, culture, and class divide between Indigenous peoples and White settlers. This division was first described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, *The Social Construction of Race in Saskatchewan,* and also reflects the descriptions of Saskatchewan race relations by several Saskatchewan educators and scholars (Adams, 1989, 1999; Heit & Blair, 1993; Schick & St-Denis; 2003). This division is created, in part, by the river that separates the city into East and West. Comments by participants indicate that the West Side of the river is considered to be poor, dangerous, and where First Nations, Métis, and working class White settlers choose to live. In contrast, the East Side is considered to be safe, affluent, and the domain of a mainly middle-class White settler population. This division is not limited to a geographic divide in the city; it is also found in the neighbourhood surrounding the school. In the school community, this divide is, in part, maintained by White settler resistance to inter-group interactions. White settler parents use a number of approaches to avoid sending their children to schools with high Indigenous populations or where their child may potentially be

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instructed by a First Nations teacher. Moreover, these parental strategies affect the teaching experiences of First Nations educators and, in turn, their relationships with White settler parents and children. Finally, there is some evidence that White settler parents' behaviour influences the beliefs and behaviours of their children, thus, continuing the cycle of division.

3.   Implications for Schools, Teacher-training, and Future Research

This section will consist of three areas of discussion. First, I propose a number of changes to facilitate reform at the school level. Next, I discuss possible implications for teacher-training programs at universities. Finally, I discuss some of the possible implications for future research. While none of these suggestions can immediately affect the division and power imbalance between White settler and Indigenous communities, if we begin to make changes in schools then it is more likely that the results will be visible among younger generations of Saskatchewanians.

My first recommendation is that schools and teachers begin to make use of the Saskatchewan Learning document *Language Arts for Indian and Métis students: A guide for adapting English Language Arts*. This well-structured document is readily available online and provides guidelines and sample lesson plans for use with Indigenous English-speaking children. In terms of in-service educators, I suggest that a professional development day be allocated for dialect awareness training and that this day include a workshop on the effective use of this Language Arts document. This day of workshops should also include critical discussions of language and power and issues of race and educator bias in schools. Discussions of this nature can be emotional and difficult for participants. Organizers of this professional development

day will need to involve group facilitators well versed in critical pedagogy. Furthermore, some of these topics may be best addressed in small groups. Large group discussions may prevent some educators from feeling comfortable enough to participate fully and openly.

Additionally, I also recommend that school administrators follow up this day of workshops by scheduling meetings with teachers to discuss and review their English Language Arts plans and goals. While change does not always occur quickly, with proper support and encouragement, educators can begin to be made aware of their biases and, at the same time, be provided with pedagogical tools that help them to change their approaches to working with Indigenous English speaking children.

One of the findings of my study is that school practices which systematically marginalize Indigenous students can be countered by the presence of Indigenous teachers. As such, I would recommend increasing the presence of Indigenous teachers and support staff in Saskatchewan schools. School boards may wish to actively recruit applications from Indigenous pre-service teachers. My study also revealed that Indigenous educators teaching experiences in Saskatchewan schools can be isolating and difficult for a number of reasons. As such, it is important to provide these educators with the support they need to do their important work. This support may include meetings with school administrators and support groups within the school or in conjunction with other schools. Additionally, it is also important to note that stronger efforts need to be made to involve Indigenous elders in school programs. Some Saskatchewan school boards have salaried positions for Indigenous elders;

more school boards may need to look towards this example in order to increase the presence of Indigenous elders in Saskatchewan schools.

Turning now towards pre-service teacher training programs, it seems wise to focus on including dialect awareness courses in required literacy and language arts courses. Such courses need to address the topic of Indigenous English in a critical manner as is demonstrated in the type of course described in Schick and St-Denis (2003). In this way, new teachers can receive dialect awareness training at the university level which should contribute to dispelling dangerous biases towards students' language and discourse behaviour.

In terms of possible future studies, a number of potential studies come to mind as a result of the findings revealed by this study. First, there is the possibility for future linguistic studies of Indigenous English with the goal of establishing the rules of this language variety. Better understanding the characteristics of this variety of English could lead to the creation of improved and varied pedagogical tools. Another possible implication for future research is an intervention study which introduces a literacy program that includes additional steps for dialect speakers. Such programs are used with dialect speakers in countries such as the United States and Australia. Examining the effects of a bridging program could be of interest to researchers and educators.

Another possible study could make use of participatory action research methods with educators. This type of research could be used to address and counter language biases or to examine the experiences of First Nations and Metis educators in

Saskatchewan schools. Both options could provide insight into practices and policies that are indicative of institutional racism.

The range of studies described here are only some of the possibilities for future explorations in this field. My investigation of Indigenous English in Saskatchewan schools began with my MA study and continues with my PhD work. I do not believe that research and reform to educational practices end here. I see my studies of dialect-speaking children, power, and academic achievement as part of a larger research agenda, one that will extend into the future. It is my hope that some of these ideas, and others that I have not considered, can contribute to improving the school experiences of Indigenous English-speaking students in Saskatchewan schools and minority language children elsewhere.

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Appendix B: Letter Requesting Permission from Parents

Dear Parents,

Andrea Sterzuk, a PhD student from McGill University, is conducting a research project in Community School classrooms in the XXX School Board. The study has been designed to study how children interact and communicate in the community school classroom. Aspects of the children's communication that are of interest to this study include their use of story telling, teasing, and silence. The results will be analysed and published in the form of a doctoral thesis and potentially in future academic journal articles.

Class X has been selected to participate in this study. This means that students may be asked to participate in an oral interview that will be audio recorded.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to have your child participate in the interviews. The interviews will be used for research purposes only and will not be used by the school in the calculation of your child's marks. As is appropriate in such research studies, neither student names nor even that of the school will be reported. Finally, even if you agree to have your child participate, you or your child may decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

Please return to your child's teacher before _____

I will allow _____

        -to be observed. Yes _____/No_____

        -to be interviewed individually. Yes_____/No_____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Appendix C: Student Letter of Assent

Dear Student,

My name is Andrea Sterzuk. I am a university student at a university in Quebec called McGill University. One of my responsibilities as a student is to do a research project in an elementary school in X province. I have chosen to do my project in your Community School classroom. I am interested in learning about how children in your classroom work together and talk together. Once I am done my work in your classroom, I will return to my university in Quebec and write a big paper for my university teacher. If I do a good job on my paper, it's possible that some other university teachers might read it too.

Since your class has been chosen to participate in my project, it means that I may ask you to participate in an interview with me that I would tape record so that I could listen to it again when I am back at my university in Quebec.

The reason I am writing this letter to you is to ask your permission for you to participate in the interviews with me. The interviews with me will only be used for my university project and will not count towards yours marks from your teacher. I also want to explain to you that no one who reads my university project will know your real name. I will change your name when I write my university paper. We do it like this so that anything you say is kept secret. Finally, even if you agree to participate in my interviews, you can decide to not be interviewed at any time. It's your decision to make.

Please return to teacher x before: _____

I want to participate in the interviews with Andrea Sterzuk:

Yes: _____   No: _____

    Student's signature: _____

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Appendix D: Letter Requesting Permission from Educators

Dear Teacher:

With the support of the Quebec Government Research Agency, Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture, I am conducting a study about how children interact and communicate in the community school classroom. Your participation in the study would help me to better understand teachers' perceptions of their students' communication patterns.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for one audio-recorded interview session that will last approximately one hour. Each session will take place in Room X at a prearranged time during the month of February.

The interview will consist of a series of eleven questions. The results will be used for research purposes only. the results will be kept completely confidential; your name will not be used in any of the reports describing the results of this study. Even if you agree now to participate, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

If you are willing to participate in these sessions, please sign and return the consent form at the bottom of this letter. You will also need to provide your email address so that I can contact you to arrange your appointments. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact me directly by phone or email.

Sincerely,

Andrea Sterzuk

PhD Student, McGill University

Consent Form

I have read the description of the research project and hereby agree to participate. I am aware that the results will be used for research purposes only, that my identity will remain confidential, and that I can withdraw at any time, if I so wish.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Appendix E: Educator Interview Questions

1. Have you noticed more silence, or silence used in different ways, among First Nations and Metis children than among other groups of children?

2. If so, what were the circumstances that surrounded the event/events?

3. What were your feelings/reactions to this silence?

4. What do you believe causes First Nations and Metis children to be more quiet during class than other groups of children?

5. Have you noticed the use of more story telling among First Nations and Metis children than among other groups of children?

6. If so, what were the circumstances that surrounded the event/events?

7. What were your feelings/reactions to these stories?

8. What do you believe causes First Nations and Metis children to tell more stories than other groups of children?

9. Have you noticed the use of teasing among First Nations and Metis children more than among other groups of children?

10. If so, what were the circumstances that surrounded the event/events?

11. What were your feelings/reactions to this teasing?

12. What do you believe causes First Nations and Metis children to tease more than other groups of children?

13. What do you consider to be rude behaviour?

14. What do you believe to be behaviour worthy of praise?

15. What accomodations in the classroom have you made for teaching First Nations and Metis children?

16. How well do you believe that you were prepared for working with this population?

17. Would you like to add anything that you have not already mentioned?