De/colonizing the Education Relationship: Working with Invitation and Hospitality

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Abstract

Our previous studies have shown that culturally responsive pedagogies (CRP) are not successful across all contexts: they have not been developed for culturally plural classrooms; white pre-service teachers have developed a teacher onto-epistemology that makes CRP unintelligible to them. In this article we report the findings of a Culturally Responsive Language and Literacy Education (CRLE) course that we revised to locate CRP within a broader, de/colonizing framework that aimed to disrupt pre-service teachers' colonial habits of mind and being. At the heart of this process was an eight-week tutoring element during which pre-service teachers worked one-on-one with a marginalized student who had been failed by the education system. We investigated how pre-service teachers opened up inviting and hospitable spaces for learning, how they maintained students' engagement over time, and whether this led to changes in their praxis. We invited pre-service teachers to withdraw allegiance to the hegemony of modernist/colonial models of education and to begin to let go of the socialized teacher onto-epistemology that they were invested in. Our findings show that the concepts of invitation and hospitality helped the pre-service teachers to begin to operationalize new teacher ontologies and to divest themselves of colonial ways of being, but that such fundamental changes to the self would be a lifelong process.

Keywords: *hospitality, invitation, de/colonization, culturally responsive pedagogy, critical interculturality, teacher education*

Introduction

We begin by recognizing and acknowledging the land and peoples of Treaty 4, the territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and the Métis homeland on which the research project took place. We include this context to locate ourselves and the research that took place between pre-service teachers and Indigenous adolescent youth. Our study investigated how pre-service teachers 'took up' different ways of being and doing in a Culturally Responsive Literacy Education (CRLE) course at a Canadian mid-western university. The course has run since 2009 and has a one-on-one tutoring element where pre-service teachers work with adolescents from marginalized communities who have disengaged from mainstream education. We gathered data from each annual iteration to (i) advance our understanding of how pre-service teachers develop their ability to

work with an increasingly plural student population, and (ii) to develop our own practice in culturally responsive and de/colonizing pedagogies.

We come to this work as two scholars with different life experiences. Fatima is a minoritized woman of colour, naturalized Canadian citizen, who was born in Tanganyika/Tanzania to African parents of South Asian descent. Fran is a white scholar who has lived all her life in southern England, born into a middle-class farming family. Through her birth and socialization in white British society she benefits from the privileges systemically afforded to people of her race. As teacher educators, we have witnessed (and participated in) practices which continue to re-inscribe white dominance. In our efforts to disrupt hegemonic practices that are the subject of the study reported here, we draw on critical race theory (CRT), postcolonial and de/colonial theories, and our differing onto-epistemologies.

In 2009, the course was based on Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995, Pirbhai-Illich, 2013), Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), Funds of Knowledge (FoK) (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), and relationality. Findings from each year demonstrated that pre-service teachers, predominantly from white, Euro-Western backgrounds, had difficulty putting the tenets of Ladson-Billing's (1995) CRP, and Moll et al.'s (1992) FoK into practice. Our conclusions centered around three interconnected working theories: (i) The education system in Canada (similar to other Westernized countries) is based on a historic system that has kept schools and the curriculum somehow free of influence of the world beyond it (Luke, 2018); (ii) CRP and FoK were developed for specific cultural contexts and students and may not apply to contexts where classrooms are culturally plural; (iii) since birth, white pre-service teachers have developed a socio-cultural onto-epistemology[1] and then a teacher onto-epistemology that makes CRP unintelligible to them (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete & Martin, 2017). We expand on these and theorize relationality using the concepts of invitation and hospitality, before presenting and discussing our findings.

Background

Neoliberalism and Education

Luke (2018) describes how his experiences of Australian schools over the years indicate a 'durability of practice' and that schools and their students 'remain, for better and worse, somewhat oblivious to the contexts of crisis, violence and displacement' (p. xi) that characterize the world today. Our experiences of schools in Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) attest to this. There have been many education initiatives on 'diversity' and 'inclusion', aimed at closing the attainment gap between mainstream and minoritized/marginalized students, that have had little effect.

We argue that although some teaching practices may have changed, the underlying system remains the same - a Euro-Western model of education (Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2016) that is part of a colonial world system (Grosfoguel, 2011). Exacerbated by neoliberalization, education has become a commodity the value of which is measured through standardized tests, attainment targets and league tables. We define neoliberalism as a political ideology (Harvey, 2005) founded on the economic model that emerged from the USA and the UK in the 1980's. In the belief that a free market economy enables greater efficiency, economic growth, and more equitable income distribution, the role of the state becomes minimal, and maximum emphasis is placed on individual

1. We use the term "onto-epistemology" throughout the article. This is, in part, to reject the Cartesian separation of mind and body, and to convey the entanglement of knowing-being that is central to relational thinking.

responsibility. Giroux (2004) writes how, 'central to the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology is a particular view of education in which market-driven identities and values are both produced and legitimated' (p. 494). Students who embody differences that adversely affect benchmark standards are pathologized and become the target of policies where inclusion means assimilation into the mainstream and an erasure of 'problematic' differences. Rather than a deficit in ability, our research shows that low attainment can often be accounted for by students of colour resisting schooling (Pirbhai-Illich, 2013), because while 'white students experience an education that is harmonious with their self-knowledge, … students of colour are alienated from theirs' (Leonardo, 2009, p. 94).

The Apparent Failure of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Two approaches designed separately to close attainment gaps from minoritized backgrounds have been particularly influential: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Funds of Knowledge. These work together in that a key tenet of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) is the use of cultural referents of students of colour (that is, the ideas and ways of being that only someone who is part of that specific culture could understand), while FoK are the knowledges students of colour acquire through engaging in their household/community economic and social relationships that Moll et al. (1992) argue teachers should access and integrate into the curriculum. We see three problems with these. First, these approaches/theories were developed in specific contexts and cultural groups (CRP in the USA for African American students; FoK in the USA for Mexican working-class students) and were not originally intended for use in culturally plural classrooms. Second, if teachers are from white, Euro-Western backgrounds, they are socialized into their own culture and FoK and find it difficult to recognize the cultural nuances of those whose onto-epistemologies are different from their own (Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2016). Third, CRP has frequently been taken up as a blueprint to follow, whereas Ladson-Billings argues that, the problem is not 'what to do', but rather 'how we think' (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The result is 'often a distortion and corruption of the central ideas' (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82) of CRP.

Teacher Onto-Epistemologies

Building on the second issue, the context of our study is a mid-Western Canadian University where the Faculty of Education has integrated anti-oppressive, anti-racist approaches into its teacher education programs. When pre-service teachers come to the CRLE course in their final year, they have had four years of anti-oppressive education and yet their teacher onto-epistemologies are still very white, Euro-Western. Most pre-service teachers have had little experience beyond their Euro-Western, cultural settings and their internships in schools have mostly reinforced these onto-epistemologies rather than disrupted them.

It is for these reasons that we shifted our approach in the CRLE course to one that is de/colonizing. In this move, we explicitly focus on the use of critical literacies (i) to unpack dominant classroom discourses, pedagogies and the relationships that flow from them, and (ii) to reveal the Euro-Western, colonial onto-epistemological terrain in which they are grounded. We then explore how alternative onto-epistemologies might lead to teacher-student relationships that do not continue to colonize. In doing so we do not reject the contribution of CRP and FoK, but relocate them within a broader framework of de/colonizing literacy education.

De/colonizing Literacy Education

Our understanding of what it means to de/colonize literacy education is founded on both our own experiences within the colonizer-colonized relation, and the work of southern scholars including Quijano (2007), Mignolo (2007) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) who distinguish between colonialism and coloniality. Colonialism is the expansion of a nation's power over territories beyond its borders through settler occupancy (e.g. Australia, Canada, USA) or administrative rule (e.g. India). Coloniality is not only the result of a historic series of events, but an ongoing onto-epistemological system of power embedded in modernity that is global in its reach (Grosfoguel, 2011).

Coloniality is a way of thinking based on a Cartesian onto-epistemology that creates binarized, hierarchical relationships that placed Europe and European knowledge as the (superior) gold standard against which all other cultures and knowledge systems were judged as inferior; and on the assumption that this way of thinking is universal. The colonial project was particularly effective in using systems of power, such as education, to impose Euro-Western onto-epistemology on the Other, known as the colonization of the mind (Thiong'O, 1986). Residential schooling in Canada removed children of First Nations descent from their families and communities to colonize minds and bodies through a process of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000).

For us, de/colonizing literacy education is therefore a process of disruption of Cartesianism and universalism and a deconstruction of modernity/coloniality, which implies dismantling not only colonial habits of mind, but also colonial habits of being (Mignolo, 2007). We acknowledge that this is a long-term goal and, in the context of the CRLE course, we started this process by using relational and plural onto-epistemologies in the 13 weeks of face-to-face taught sessions, and by incorporating an eight-week tutoring element where pre-service teachers worked one-on-one with a marginalized student who had been failed by the education system.

Relational Theory

That effective teaching is partly affected by teacher-student relationships is not new. However, from a de/colonial perspective, these relationships are based on coercion (Clarke, 2012) and the eradication of aspects of difference that mark marginalized students as "Other." The result is the alienated "Other," "the disengaged student, [and] the disaffected teacher" (Clarke 2012, p. 54). Clarke asks, "How can we put…the other into the speaking position, the position of agency, rather than the repression or colonization it suffers in the discourses of the master?" (p. 55) and argues that there is a need to rethink education through discourses of thinking otherwise. To help us imagine what a discourse of thinking educational relationships otherwise might entail, we turned to Martin Buber's (1958) relational ethics. Buber's central thesis is that humans are relational beings who have a two-fold attitude of relation towards the world: the "I" is always spoken in relation to either "It" or "Thou," I-It is a monologic relationship, subject to object, "doing to"; it is a partial relation and has an active "seeking to know" attitude; in this regard, it aims to use the other (e.g. as a source of knowledge). I-Thou is a dialogic relationship, "feeling with"; it is direct, present, mutual, open and authentic; it does not use, because it holds an attitude that is without agenda or objective. Buber (1958) argues that at a societal level the I-It dominates. In education, this is evident in the neo-liberal discourse of teaching to the students, accountability and standardization.

We were uneasy about building on Buber's theory alone for two reasons: (i) to draw solely on theory that is firmly located with the Western academy would be contradictory to our aim of thinking otherwise, which requires us to engage with literature from "other" locations; and (ii) Buber does not consider plural understandings of care and ethical relations (Matias, 2016). In a

critical race analysis of care, Matias argues that care as expressed by white, pre-service teachers in the US, disguises feelings of disgust for the Other. This form of care is a colonial objectification of the Other as someone to be pitied for not possessing those aspects of being human that characterize the hegemonic identity that is white, middle-class, male, heterosexual, able, etc. Our argument is not against Buber's scholarship, nor is it based on an assumption that Southern, Black and Indigenous theories are somehow "pure," 'authentic," or unaffected by the western academy. Instead it is a "post-oppositional"[2] (Bhattacharya, 2016)/de/colonial (Mignolo, 2007) argument for the inclusion of theories from Southern, Black and Indigenous scholars and their plural, hybrid, diasporic identities and the de/colonial insights these offer to our scholarship.

Bhattacharya chooses post-oppositional[3] thinking as a way to move "beyond politicized academic camps to spaces of imagination and possibility without the need to place this work in opposition to that which came before," and aligns herself "with Minh-ha's (1989) notion of blurring the boundaries between self and other, while still holding space for the unique ways in which self and other could function" (Bhattacharya 2016, p. 198). Bhattacharya's work explicitly addresses how power is operationalized within the relation, and how a post-oppositional approach serves to work with differences in ways that are non-binary, non-hierarchical and not seeking consensus. Pedagogically, educators are called on to work in the borders between onto-epistemologies and ideologies, and to "support learners in the development of their abilities to hold paradoxes, and not be overwhelmed by complexity, ambiguity, conflict, uncertainty and difference" (Andreotti, 2014, p. 88). Buber, Bhattacharya and Andreotti provided a way of responding to Clarke's call to rethink education through discourses of thinking that are non-binary, non-hierarchical, and non-oppositional.

De/colonizing the Educational Relationship: Working with Invitation and Hospitality

For the one-on-one tutoring element of the CRLE course, we started to theorize how a non-coercive relationship might be established between the pre-service teacher and student in the first meetings, and how this might be maintained and developed as the weeks progressed. Reflecting on a specific incident related to a birthday party in Fran's family to which Fatima was invited brought us to the concepts of invitation and hospitality, and issues around acceptance to invitations (agency/power), investment, and trust. Seen through our different lenses we wondered whether it might be useful to think about the teacher-student relationship in this way.

The concepts of invitation and hospitality have been applied to education independently of each other but not, as far as we are aware, together. As theories, they have very different lineages. Invitational theory in psychology was developed within a counselling context, the core ideas of which have subsequently been applied to education from policies to classroom relationships (Schmidt, 2004). Hospitality is a philosophical concept developed by Jacques Derrida (2000) in the context of individual relations in France and the reception of immigrants and refugees by the state, the core ideas of which have most commonly been applied to educational relationships in

2. Post-oppositional theorizing is driven by the need to move where we justify our ideas as better than what was presented, as if to create some sort of intellectual victory. (Bhattacharya 2016, p. 198).

3. We use the term de/colonizing with a slash in the same sense as Kakali Bhattacharya, 'to denote the lack of a pure utopian decolonizing space by being in an always already relationship with colonizing discourses and materiality. Therefore, de/colonizing denotes a movement within, in between, and outside colonizing discourses and decolonizing desires' (Bhattacharya 2018, p. 15).

culturally plural settings (Langmann, 2014). In both theories, consideration is also given to the apparent binaries of guest/host, inclusion/exclusion, unconditional/conditional, active/passive, inside/outside, familiar/unfamiliar, and unknown/known - apparent because each is dependent on the other to be understood, and will therefore be embodied by host *and* guest, albeit in different ways.

Invitational Theory

Invitational education theory was developed specifically for application to settings where students are disempowered, alienated and disengaged to create learning environments where they felt welcomed (Haigh, 2011). It emphasizes the affective side of learning and has a goal of positive intentionality on the part of the teacher, through verbal and non-verbal messages and signs conveyed to the student, to 'expunge the negatives that inhibit learners' (Haigh, 2011, p. 299). It emerged as a set of principles for teachers to systematically consider how they invite students to work with them; how they establish a non-coercive relationship and includes respect (for people and their differences), trust (that is mutual and shown through development of a sense of common purpose), optimism (about the untapped potential contained within each learner), and intentionality (creating a learning environment that intentionally invites engagement with each learner) (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Although popular in education, it has been criticized for being apolitical, saccharine and romanticized and for not attending to 'discourses of ideology and power' (Haigh, 2011, p. 305). Findings from previous renditions of the CRLE course (Pirbhai-Illich, 2013) support this criticism.

Invitational education theory emphasizes the role of the teacher and does not address the student's agency and their power to accept or refuse the invitation. Additionally, what we have seen in many schools are western, liberal interpretations of what it means to be inviting, e.g. using superficial approaches such as displaying posters from/of various ethnic and racial groups. Such approaches are considered to be universally relevant as if they are culturally neutral and enable teachers to evade the more challenging work of learning to relate with difference in the educational relationship. These liberal approaches construct a relation that is monologic (how teachers are inviting) rather than dialogic (how might teachers invite in such a way that encourages a reciprocal response that invites teachers into the *students'* cultural space or domain). Derrida's (2000) concept of hospitality, that explicitly theorizes power in relations, provided us with a way forward.

Hospitality

Derrida (2000) constructs hospitality as an ethical orientation between self-other, as aporetic (paradoxical) and as emergent. He identifies two types of hospitality: conditional hospitality, that is regulated by the rights, duties and obligations of a citizen, governed by laws in the judicial system with its origins in western Judeo-Christian traditions; and unconditional hospitality, that goes beyond duty and rights where there is no debt or exchange involved—the guest is free of any subordination. It is in the unconditional form that Derrida discusses the aporia of the host having an orientation towards the guest that is both open to the unexpected and the differences that might be encountered *and* recognizes that in order to be hospitable there is an assumption of ownership of the space into which the guest enters, over which the host has the power to extend or not extend hospitality.

We see parallels between this and the classroom space which is, from the perspective of the student, 'owned' by the teacher. Due to the legal contract that governs the teacher, s/he does

not have a choice over whether students enter the classroom, but s/he does have a choice over whether to create a relationship that "is not primarily whether or how to include or exclude those who are not the same as 'us,' but embraces the possibility of keeping open the question of *who the other is*" (Langmann, 2011, p. 401 italics in original). The teacher cannot abandon all claims to property (the classroom) but s/he can approach the educational relationship with the intention to be unconditionally hospitable, with "an orientation that attends to otherness, listening and learning, valuing and honoring" (Burwell & Huyser, 2013, p. 14) the unexpected as well as the expected gifts that the students bring with them. Langmann (2011) explains how, for Derrida, hospitality is not therefore about hosting the other, but about an ethical response to the demand of heterogeneity—to ask how teachers might respond to students' differences in ways that resist categorization, that blur the limits of the boundaries between inside and outside, and that challenge us to rethink mainstream ideas of inclusion and exclusion.

Encountering the unexpected can cause "moments of interruption" (Hall, 1996/2005); not an unfolding and refolding of the already known, but a complete break/a rupture by something outside the current system that is completely new and therefore unexpected. Moments of interruption decenter "the accumulating practice" (Hall, 1996/2005, p. 267) of the profession, shifting "the boundaries…of what we thought we knew and understood" (Langmann, 2011, p. 406); a process in which "the self is never left unchanged" (ibid). Such a view of ethical relation provides an alternative to the colonizing teacher onto-epistemology discussed earlier. We therefore propose thinking of the teacher-learner relationship as a form of hospitality, in which the teacher "host identifies with the [student] guest and chooses not to live out of any privilege those resources offer, but rather to understand himself or herself as a recipient, too" (Burwell & Huyser, 2013, p. 21). In such a relationship the teacher and student would both be host *and* guest, on a joint process of exploration, finding answers to shared questions that are authentic, the answers to which emerge from the relation and thus cannot be known in advance.

Methodology

A study that focuses on de/colonizing CRLE requires a de/colonizing methodology—from the articulation of the research questions through to the analysis and presentation of findings (Chilisa, 2012). This does not mean a rejection of Euro-Western methods, but a decentering of the overall approach within which we use those methods; doing research "otherwise" requires a break with dominant Euro-Western methodologies. We thus ensured that, at every step, our enacting of these was "informed by relational ontologies, relational epistemologies and relational accountability" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 20). Our roles as researchers are therefore those of provocateurs "guided by the four Rs: accountable responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and rights and regulations of the researched" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 20). Accordingly, the study reported here utilizes a post-critical approach (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004), to understanding how CRLE might be re-envisioned as a de/colonizing educational practice. As participants, we are materially and socially entangled in the course that we are also researching. We are consciously working with theory in our everyday practice; "getting lost in the aporias of research, 'in paradoxes that trouble' beyond the hubris of perpetual mastery" (Hart et. al. 2018, p. 78).

Participants

The participants in this study included 15 teacher candidates registered in the CRLE course, 15 young adolescent students of First Nations backgrounds from Prairie Grange School (pseudonym), Fatima (principal researcher) and Fran (co-researcher) as participant researchers who engaged in gathering and analyzing data to inform the annual cycles of action, reflection, and evaluation that were designed to improve their decolonial practices. Of the 15 teacher candidates, seven were undergraduate pre-service teachers who had elected to take the course in their final semester prior to graduation and 7 were post-graduate pre-service teachers including one who was an in-service teacher completing a Certificate in Special & Inclusive Education (CESIE); for this student the course was mandatory. All but one identified him/herself as being from white European descent. They are from varying socio-economic backgrounds and aged between 20-45 years. The 15 young adolescent students were from various Indigenous backgrounds and of Métis heritage. They were selected to participate in the tutoring program at the university by their home room teachers on the basis of their struggles with academic literacy.

Fatima and the director of Prairie Grange have worked in partnership since 2009 to ensure that the tutoring component of the course was mutually beneficial: the students benefit from personalized literacy tutoring while the pre-service teachers learn how to utilize culturally responsive and decolonial approaches in their teaching. Each year they reflected on its successes and challenges from which the following research question was identified:

> What might it mean for pre-service teachers to de/colonize their literacy education practices when working one-on-one with a student who has disengaged from formal education? Supplementary questions included:
>
> - What approaches do pre-service teachers use to open up an inviting and hospitable space for interaction and learning?
> - Once open, how do teacher candidates work with their students to maintain that engagement over a period of time?
> - How do teacher candidates' understandings of their praxis change as a result?

Methods

The course consisted of three key steps that are outlined below with the methods of data collection for each step:

> 1. De/colonizing habits of mind (epistemological step): weeks 1-4 focused on theoretical perspectives and preparation for tutoring—face-to-face lectures and workshops[4] on CRP, FoK, relationality and the concepts of invitation and hospitality; weeks 5 – 12

4. One workshop was devoted to a visualisation exercise of a special place from childhood recorded in an annotated drawing (as individuals) which was then used to create a special place in a shoebox (as a group) in which there was a sense of communal place and identity as well as each person being able to recognise their individual contribution. This activity aimed to show pre-service teachers how they could access students' funds of knowledge and home literacies without "interviewing" them.

focused on literacy tools and strategies for teaching using multiliteracies, using FoK, inquiry learning and authentic assessment. Digital discussion (DB) board reflection data (DB1, DB3, DB5) were gathered and selected for data analysis.

2. De/colonizing habits of being (ontological step, week 5-12): this consisted of an eight-week, one hour a week tutoring session with a young adolescent. Pre-service teachers wrote about how invitation and hospitality were used in their first session (assignment 1, A1) and had to audio-record, transcribe and critically reflect on their third session (assignment 2, A2)

3. Reflection on praxis (Self-reflexive step throughout the course): A final reflection on learning from the whole course was provided in assignment 3 (A3).

With the exception of the audio-recordings of tutoring sessions, all data were generated through the tasks that were integral to the course. We did not comment on their digital discussion board entries so that pre-service tutors could reflect without fear of judgement. During the tutoring sessions we made observation notes, read the pre-service teachers' informal lesson plans to guide instruction and learning. We kept weekly reflections which informed the adaptations we made to the course content in light of how pre-service teachers were responding. We used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) principles and procedures (van Dijk, 2009, Wodak, 2001) to interrogate the data at the micro level of social action and the macro level of social structures.

As post-critical researchers, we were attentive to our own onto-epistemological positions and how these interacted with the data during the analytical process. Data were therefore analyzed separately, and we then put our different interpretations into "conversation" not to provide triangulation in the Euro-Western tradition, but to notice the differences between interpretations and to relate them to the socio-cultural, political and historical factors that influence the lenses used—in other words, to be attentive to the "who" that is speaking (participants) and the "who" that is listening (researchers).

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented and discussed in three parts: preparing for the relationship; developing the relationship; changes in praxis. These map roughly to supplementary questions 1, 2 and 3 respectively. In this section we refer to pre-service teachers throughout, unless a point relates specifically to the in-service teacher. Where extracts from participants' reflections are quoted in the findings section pseudonyms are used, and the data source code is provided.

Preparing for the Relationship

During the first two weeks of the course the pre-service teachers are prepared for the tutoring component through a series of lectures, workshops and independent tasks that are designed to deconstruct how power and privilege work and to raise awareness of settler colonial mindsets. They are also introduced to the key ideas of relationality, invitation and hospitality.

The DB entries in weeks 1 and 2 which focused on their engagement with these theories and praxis demonstrate a good awareness of power and it operates with respect to the racialization and oppression of peoples of First Nations descent, Métis, and other minoritized groups. Two pre-service teachers refer to whiteness (Leonardo, 2009) as a racial category, but in a way that distanced themselves from it. For example, Melissa, makes a connection between course content and

the Oscars: *"*The Oscars are such a sign that so many people in our society ignore different stories. I've been loving #OscarsSoWhite on twitter this morning*"* (DB2).

In a faculty of education that has developed its teacher education programs to be anti-racist and anti-oppressive, one would expect that many more of the pre-service teachers would have referred to their own whiteness and privileges as white settler Canadians. However, the discourse was overwhelmingly liberal—stereotypes are discussed, but not framed within a race discourse. Susan acknowledged that she easily falls into the trap of stereotyping, "When we did our activity we automatically thought of the stereotypical otherness of each country" (DB1) but does not explicitly connect this to racism. However later, using a critical lens she writes about "residual effects left by the colonial influence…in Canada with our First Nations groups" (DB1). Kevin, of Métis descent (Canadian with mixed European and Cherokee heritage), acknowledged that "Saskatchewan is a racist province," and that this finds its way into the curriculum. He states, "the dominance of 'white' North American history is still the norm in many schools" (DB2). Kevin's world experience and his mixed First Nations heritage enabled him to recount many personal and institutional occurrences of racism and inequity in the educational system however, for both these pre-service teachers, acknowledgement of their own complicity in these power structures was missing. Similar findings were found in the data from the other pre-service teachers. The separation of self from those aspects of their white identity that are both inherently racist and give them unearned privileges are an issue often discussed in anti-racist education (Matias, 2016; Jupp, Berry & Lensmire, 2016). This is not necessarily a deliberate evasion, but one that is the product of socialization processes. Whilst this might be expected in the early stages of the course, for us it presented a problem in terms of their preparation for working with students from First Nations or Métis heritage.

The lack of awareness of their own complicity was also evident in responses to the visualization and shoebox activity workshop in week 3. "I visualized the farmhouse where my great grandparents homesteaded. There was nothing there, absolutely nothing when they [homesteaded] and called the road "Little Poland" because so many people came from overseas to homestead" (Sally, DB3). Her family continue to live there, and Sally has a sense of "all the stories that have been passed onto me" and how family and friends "helped everyone to succeed on the farm" (DB3). It was a place where she "felt carefree." In the reflection there was no acknowledgement of how her family had acquired the land. Sally's comments are reflective of the settler colonial "terra nullius" position that contributed to justifications for taking possession of Indigenous lands (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

Pre-service teachers were introduced to the concepts of relationality, invitation and hospitality. Practical applications of relationality in our own work on object-based and relational logics (Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2016) were shared to aid their understanding of Buber's I-It and I-Thou relations. Half the pre-service teachers made direct reference to the alternative logics. Susan thought "the [object and relational] ways of thinking about similarity and difference will be present within us at any given time. I don't believe we have the capacity to view the world around us in only one lens" (DB1) demonstrating a nuanced, non-essentialist view, while Melissa thought that they were interesting ways to think about how "we approach diversity…we haven't found a system that is problem-free. As a result, we need to be open to testing alternative systems" (DB1). The dangers of only thinking and being in object-based ways were highlighted by several pre-service teachers and they were able to connect these to practices they had witnessed or even taken part in during their school internships:

> I found the explanation of the second model [a critique of "celebrating diversity" [practices] particularly sobering and felt that the authors criticism resonates well with ideas of Treaty education…teachers are commonly asked to make bannock or teach a traditional dance. (Evie, DB1)

Despite our intentions, the pre-service teachers did not explicitly connect the different logics to de/colonialism. They owned that they thought in object-based ways, but did not appear to connect this to the possibility that their thoughts and actions could be construed as colonial and racist. It is possibly evidence of the ways in which white people are protected from their own privilege and racism by the liberal discourses that enable them to construct their "race-evasive white identities" (Jupp et. al. 2016, p. 1154) as caring which enables them to evade their complicities in racist and oppressive systems (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). It is perhaps the aporia Jupp et. al. (2016) refer to in their review of second-wave whiteness studies, where race is both acknowledged (at a systemic, institutional level) and denied (at a personal level).

In preparation for the first meeting with the student they would be tutoring, pre-service teachers demonstrated a broad theoretical understanding of invitation and hospitality but did not show much differentiation between the concepts. Key themes in their constructions of invitation were reciprocity, modes of communication, intentionality, and power. Evie described invitation as a reciprocal relationship, one that is "genuine, not a superficial means to an end," indicating that authenticity (Buber, 1958) was something to strive for. She also recognized the importance of body language and aimed to exude "a warm and approachable state with my body language, diction, tone" (A1). Alexis, in her mid-40s with 15 years of teaching experience, and Kelsey, a 34 year old postgraduate student, referred to trust in the relationship: "It is key to have a relationship with our students in order for him or her to trust and to take risks about his or her learning" (Alexis, A1), and "How can you have a student trust you and open up to you if you do not do the same?" (Kelsey, A1). Alexis and Kelsey perhaps because of their more extensive teaching and life experiences, demonstrate an understanding that trust is crucial when working with historically marginalized students who have experienced mainstream education as violence, and that it cannot be taken for granted.

The evidence of the first three weeks as preparation for entering into the relationship shows a mixture of critical and paternalistic positioning of the who (other) pre-service teachers would meet, little awareness of the subjectivities they would take into that meeting (self), the beginnings of a plural understanding of the educational relation (I-It and I-Thou), and a nascent, theoretical understanding of how they might establish a non-coercive, ethical relations (invitation and hospitality).

Developing the Relationship

This section is in two parts: the first two tutoring sessions in which the focus was establishing an I-Thou oriented relationship, and the remaining six tutoring sessions when the focus was achieving a balance between this and the I-It orientation while teaching language and literacy skills.

Establishing the Relationship

In week 5, to develop a relationship in their first meeting with the student that was inviting and hospitable, the pre-service teachers were encouraged to use the visualization and co-creation

of a special place in a shoebox activity (see methods section), or to devise another activity that would work in a similar way. Of the fifteen participants, 10 did the shoebox activity and 5 chose not to use either the visualization or the shoebox.

Where the visualization and/or shoebox activity were used, evidence shows that this supported the beginning of an educational relationship in which the pre-service teacher and the student were able to participate equally. Seven of the twelve pre-service teachers commented on how working together on the shoebox, sharing their funds of knowledge and co-creating a single outcome helped to develop a positive relationship in a low-stakes environment. April, who had lived in Cameroon for most of her childhood, viewed this task as being intentionally inviting by "not jumping straight into teaching her [the student] a lesson" (A1). Low-stakes comes through not having a formal educational objective and approaching the relationship with an I-Thou orientation which is sincere rather than strategic. For example, "the shoebox helped to have something for us to do when we first met that was low-stakes" (Melissa, DB5), "it didn't seem to be one-sided, we shared about ourselves in a neutral setting" (Beth, A1), it helped the relationship "to be genuine – not a superficial means to an end" (Evie, A1) "…it facilitated a collaborative rather than hierarchical relationship" (Evie, DB5) and it "helped us to communicate authentically" (Susan, A1). Of the five who chose not to do the shoebox, there was a gender divide in that Adrian and Kevin did not engage with it at all or devise an alternative; Alexis devised a different activity; Eleanor and Janette, planned to do the shoebox but abandoned it in the face of resistance from their student.

Adrian, a male post-graduate teacher candidate whose concentration was in Science education had been resistant to the course content from the beginning of the course. At every opportunity, when presenting de/colonizing approaches to literacy education, Adrian provided science-based counter theories/explanations for why educators need not engage in different ways of thinking and doing. It was not surprising that he did not use the shoe-box activity when meeting his student. His justification was: "We didn't use the shoebox, mainly because I didn't want to carry it along with one of those huge boards [a carrel to provide some privacy and to display the student's work] things" (DB5). In his reflection later on, he stated that

> I found the shoebox rather constraining in a way. I usually don't make objects…or "craft-like" things so it was pretty uncomfortable for me. Our own culture and histories matter too [and] I don't think it helps if we completely neutralize ourselves. (DB5)

The field of science and its strong evidence-based approach to understanding nature and humanity had strongly taken hold of Adrian's ways of doing and being. He had strong expectations that society had to change its ways with regard to the Othering of difference, and yet his own resistance to thinking and doing 'otherwise' could be an indication that he is unable to de-centre from his own emotional needs and rationalizes this using a binary logic – evident in the either-or assumption that if he attends to the student's culture and history he would need to 'neutralize' his own.

Maintaining the Relationship

Whether able to establish a non-coercive relationship to access the students' funds of knowledge or not, all found the transition from the first sessions to the subsequent sessions (when the focus was developing students' literacy skills) challenging, as if when thinking about teaching to specific objectives their ontological ground shifted from relational to object-based. As their teacher identities have been socialized in a neo-liberal educational context it is not surprising that they were challenged by *both* engaging the student in relational ways *and* being responsible for

improving the students' literacy skills. These apparent paradoxes, or aporia (Derrida, 2000) were evident in their assignments (A2). Nadine, a postgraduate pre-service teacher had initially connected with her student, but in the third session encountered resistance to what was planned. She noted that, "my agenda seems to be totally focused on what I needed to get done to complete my assignment. [Student] said it feels like a test—I was not creating a very hospitable environment" (A2). Susan began the session in a hospitable manner but after about ten minutes she moved onto her planned activities and her student ceased to participate beyond giving one-word answers. Susan reflects that the transcript

> shows the unbalanced exchange that [we] were having. At one point she asked what time it was and displayed fatigue…It did shock me when she disengaged. I felt like I was fumbling through the middle section of this lesson but I realized I needed to me more hospitable and let her show me what she knows (A2).

It is possible to argue that Susan is demonstrating that she is keeping open "the question of who the other is" (Langmann, 2011, p. 112) in these reflections.

Negotiating between needing to have an agenda (I-It, conditional hospitality) and being without agenda (I-Thou, unconditional hospitality) was a constant struggle. Rather than holding paradoxes and accepting that one can be "both-and," the pre-service teachers seemed to unconsciously adopt the conditional position when in the formal teacher mode. The evidence suggests that conscious awareness was necessary for the I-Thou/"being with" orientation and that slipping back into the I-It/"doing to" orientation was unconscious. It was only through careful attention to the students' body language and verbal responses that they became consciously aware of this.

Critical reflection on the audio-recordings and transcripts gave pre-service teachers a constant feedback loop as they progressed through the weeks, enabling them to continuously adjust their plans. Some pre-service teachers' language began to change from "I" to "we" showing a real sense of joint ownership of the project they were engaged in. "We can work together on a comparative written response" (Evie, DB8), "It was a neat project to work on because [student] adapted our design [for an ice-rink] as we went so it would work" (Melissa, DB10), "We were making videos…we discussed having a script" (Kelsey, DB10). For others, the discourse remained one in which teacher and student are separate entities who struggle to relate, "We changed directions three times in order to try and do what he wants" (Janette, DB10), "I have let him take the lead…but I insisted we have an outline written down" (Eleanor, DB10).

Although liberal discourses continued to dominate the pre-service teachers' descriptions and reflections, there is evidence of nascent understandings of how to reduce the power imbalance that is inherent in the educational relationship. However, the forms of critical reflection that are attentive to the "who" that is teaching and the biases and subjectivities that are brought to each tutoring session were largely missing and thus compromised what it was possible for the pre-service teachers to learn from their reflections.

Changes in Praxis

During the tutoring weeks, pre-service teachers were necessarily engaged in mostly instrumental thinking (Muraca, 2011), while the final assignment (A3) gave the pre-service teachers the

space to critically reflect on the tutoring component and to relate back to the overarching theoretical framework of the course. In these, we see evidence of areas in their thinking and practice where there was some change and areas where there seemed to be little or no change.

The most significant change was that most pre-service teachers, whether their tutoring had been successful or not, seemed to have moved from a position where they saw theory and practice as a binary, to a position where theory and practice were entwined as praxis (Muraca, 2011). We argue this is indicative of nascent understandings of what it might be like to teach "Otherwise" and to step outside of socialized teacher ontologies. For example, many had taken this course thinking they would be given "recipes" for teaching in classrooms with diverse students. By the end of the course they were concerned with understanding how to build spaces for learning that were invitational and hospitable to students' diverse ways of being and knowing. Their orientation towards students as knowledgeable rather than deficient had also changed. Sharon reflected on how she would need to be consciously aware of being invitational and not using "pressing" language in her interactions with students; Eleanor and Susan shifted from previously thinking of classrooms as neutral, to now being aware of how they were "Othering" of difference, and that to *not* be othering required a different approach to teaching. Rather than thinking she had to invite the student into "her" space, Susan had

> begun to realise that by entering the students' space you give up some of your dominance and control…I found this is in fact a form of hospitality, by shifting the circumstances and placing yourself in a position that alters the dynamics. (A3)

Susan seems to be envisioning a different reality in which she understands herself as a recipient of the student's hospitality, so both are host *and* guest which, we argue, opens up a space for more non-coercive, de/colonizing educational relationships.

However, the data also present a complex picture of individuals who were convinced by the need to teach "otherwise," but who were struggling with how to operationalize this in their practice. Some of their end of course reflections indicated that some pre-service teachers were well-meaning but unconscious of the persistence of binary, liberal and racist discourses they used in their writing about their learning. Beth indicated that she had developed more knowledge about how white European settler students generally perform better and are more likely to finish school than students of First Nations descent. She questioned herself about knowing very little about peoples of First Nations descent before this course saying that it was "quite a new thing for me to ask these questions" (A3). In this we see Beth moving from a race-evasive to a race-visible position. In her practice though, she was unable to access her student's FoK and although she wrote that she had a "better understanding of how to teach these students" her ideas were largely expressed using a liberal, caring discourse, "I can ensure all students feel valued and that I care about them for who they are" (A3).

Adrian and Jessica, on the other hand, did not appear to have changed in their perspectives as a result of the tutoring sessions. Adrian, whose resistance to the core concepts of the course were noted earlier, was unable to access the student's FoK at all. Our own observations were that he let the student take control of the situation. Adrian's view was that the student "was inadvertently teaching himself, he got to maintain the expert role" (A3). At the same time Adrian stated that "the course didn't challenge me much," and that working in intensive ways with marginalized students might be amazing but that it was "a larger drain on resources than students that 'go with it,'" which we take to mean "toe the line." Jessica similarly had difficulty accessing the student's funds of knowledge, but unlike Adrian, she continued to use a deficit discourse in her discussion

that showed race-evasiveness, "if I had had a longer period of time each day," "if he was in school rather than at the university" and "if he had his friends around for support" (A3) then she would have had more success. However, her final thoughts indicate a move towards being race-visible, saying that if she had had the student in a class of thirty she "may just have viewed him as defiant rather than realizing his past has affected his view of education and teachers."

Kelsey and Evie wrote passionately about the need to show they care while Nadine was convinced that a relational approach "can be used to show these students that they are valued, respected and appreciated" and that "we can validate their sense of who they are" (A3). We argue these forms of care are colonial in nature. They continue to use saviour discourses that are both othering and patronising. From a white, Euro-Western perspective the saviour discourse is a positive ethical stance, relying on notions of whiteness as caring, innocent and moral (Matias, 2016). This liberal discourse has been passed down through the generations and has become an unquestioned norm in white societies. From a colonial perspective, saviourism is the palatable rhetoric (Narayan, 1995) that maintains the status quo, while Pete (2017) argues that pre-service teachers "care in ways that are laden with colour blindness, and laden with not taking on difficult topics." Melissa still believes, at the end of the course, that "students from diverse communities are not that different from any other student" and that "teachers need to give students space to assert their identities but [they] cannot force students to do this and should not make students uncomfortable by paying too much attention to their background." She seems unaware of her colour-blindness possibly demonstrating her own discomfort and fear of engaging with the Other.

To sum up, the CRLE and the combination of course components that focused on de/colonizing ways of knowing, being, and doing had some successes in leading to changes in their orientation to practice. However, we found little evidence of a more fundamental onto-epistemological awareness and the need to change the "self." This is hardly surprising in a course of thirteen weeks, when the literature shows that in one school it took four years of an anti-racist program to successfully change the persistence of white supremacy among the staff (Blaidsdell, 2018). In our study we found instances of pre-service teachers showing awareness of the need to change the self, and a recognition that this is the start of a lifelong process (e.g. Evie). It would require a follow-up study once they are in the profession to understand whether the seeds sown in the course led to further growth and change, or whether the reality of the school system was not sufficiently fertile ground to support such growth.

Conclusion

The research question that underpinned this study was: What might it mean for pre-service teachers to de/colonize their literacy education practices when working one-on-one with a student who has disengaged from formal education? This was investigated during a language and literacy course (ERDG 425) in winter 2017 when we adjusted our own practices to provide an explicitly de/colonial framework for the course in which we explored the concepts of relationality, invitation and hospitality as ideas that might be applicable to the goal of developing non-coercive ethical educational relationships. Our aim was to "create conceptual openings for possibilities of 'thinking differently' and for 'becoming spaces' where thinking and doing may be less conflicted" (Hart et. al. 2018, p. 77). This involved working with pre-service teachers to develop different imaginaries of education, schooling and curriculum; it involved "thinking from the spaces that modernity could not and still cannot imagine, thinking from epistemologies that were sub-alternized in the process of colonization" (Fregoso 2014, p. 587). In this study we invited pre-service teachers to withdraw allegiance to the hegemony of modernist/colonial models of education and to begin to let go of the

socialized teacher onto-epistemology that they were invested in. We further invited them to take risks in trying plural ways of thinking and being in the teacher-student relationship and to utilize the concepts of invitation and hospitality seemed to be productive in supporting them to take up this invitation.

At the beginning of the study we had the belief that understanding the self, the "who" that teaches is a precursor to changing "how" one teaches at an ontological level. Given the demographics of the pre-service teachers who participated in our study, our focus was on developing their consciousness of their "whiteness" and its influence on their personal and teacher selves. Because their whiteness is normalized, they have usually not had to think about it or its contribution to the permanence of race and racism (Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2016). As we worked with the pre-service teachers to reveal how their ways of being and knowing are located in whiteness we discussed among others, readings on race, whiteness, CRT, and CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014), sharing our own experiences of race as a scholar of colour and a white scholar and how that affected the dynamics between us in our own work. Our hope was that bringing our own vulnerabilities into the classroom would act as an invitation for the pre-service teachers to do the same. We experienced many emotional responses to the work which ranged from confusion, tears, frustration to anger and denial. These emotions were variously engaged with from those who were open to being unsettled, such as Evie and Susan, to those who were completely resistant, such as Adrian. However, even those who acknowledged their whiteness continued to present themselves as caring and helpful when talking about their relationship with their students and resisted acknowledging their coloniality which presented possible alternative narratives of being patronizing, exploitative and othering. This could be seen as the product of the object-based, binary logic that is inherent in coloniality because from such a logic to own their colonial self would mean to cease to own their liberal self, rather than considering that it might be possible to be both. Britzman (2000), in her analysis of the difficulties inherent in ontological change, makes a distinction between "lovely knowledge" and "dangerous knowledge." In asking pre-service teachers to question the "lovely knowledge" they hold about themselves we are positioning them in a vulnerable situtation; the knowledge we present is dangerous to their white identities, as it demands a shattering of self—"one's lovely knowledge of the world—to make way for the construction of something not yet defined" (Britzman, 2000, p. 37). During the tutoring, dangerous knowledge acted both ways (Pirbhai-Illich, 2008). One could look at pre-service teacher's identity and present knowledge of how and what education is enacted as being dangerous to the students because of what it represents to the students regarding their collective trauma around their histories of residential schooling. Some of the students' identities and knowledges can also be seen as dangerous to the teacher (e.g. experience of and knowledge of historic and current onto-epistemological violence, other ways of knowing and being) because it places the knower (student) outside dominant norms of acceptability. If pre-service teachers privilege their own knowledge and value system and are not open to the potentially dangerous knowledges of the Other, then the cycle of violence that First Nation peoples have experienced through education will continue. The CRLE course was our attempt to interrupt this cycle.

The pre-service teachers were in a self-self-other dialogue of I-It and I-Thou orientations. They engaged in an *inner* (self-self) dialogue between different ways of being and doing as they examined their habits of mind, and in an outer dialogue (self-other) in the moment of teaching as they examined their ways of being. In this relationally accountable venture, the pre-service teachers had a responsibility to themselves as well as to the students that they were in relation with, and from a critical perspective, this necessarily included a responsibility to the "hidden others" (Benuik, 2016), or dangerous knowledges (Britzman, 2000) that self and other are also related to. This

is why for us conceptualizing the space where educational relations take place as dialogic is insufficient. Dialogic focuses on the two groups in conversation and does not necessarily include the socio-historical, political and cultural relations behind them; a plural understanding of the relation brings in *all* the relations—a perspective that can be informed by Indigenous, southern and diasporic knowledges. For example, "*All My Relations* is a Métis teaching that speaks to the interdependence of human and non-human beings and the responsibilities we have to those relations" (Benuik, 2016, p. 165) and invites us to consider the material as well as the social in our ethical relations.

Our study is a contribution to how a pluralist understanding of educational relationships, which we see as necessarily de/colonizing, might be put into practice. A pluralist understanding is not about inter-relations between multiple *perspectives* within the same universe (e.g. modernity/coloniality), but about inter-relations between multiple onto-epistemologies, which requires a pluriversal view of the world and an understanding that the outcomes of such relations cannot be pre-determined, neither can the approaches in the study reported here be put forward as a blueprint for others to follow. We offer the study as *one* example of what it might mean to begin to de/colonize a language and literacy education course. The findings that emerged have undoubtedly shifted the boundaries of what we thought we knew and understood, and in our continuing work we focus on the spaces, places and boundaries within which de/colonial educational practices might more successfully engender non-coercive, post-oppositional educative relationships.

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