



Embodying Difference: A Case for Anti-Racist and Decolonizing Approaches to Multiliteracies

SARA SCHROETER
University of Regina, Canada

ABSTRACT *This paper asks what pedagogies are needed as Canadians are invited to reconcile colonial pasts with contemporary forms of racism and enduring colonial structures. Sharing discourses of race from youth who participated in a year-long ethnography, and moments from a drama-based pedagogical collaboration, this paper suggests ways of updating multiliteracies frameworks so as to better account for the networks of power that circulate in classrooms. This project had the dual aims of exploring discourses of difference used by students, as well as drama as a multimodal, embodied, and (post)critical pedagogy for unpacking differences embedded in the Grade 9 social studies curriculum. Drawing on feminist pedagogies, critical race studies, and Indigenous critiques of education, the author argues that embodiment and subjectivity are central to teaching and learning, and illustrates through excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes, how race, intersectionality, and White supremacy influence interactions in the classroom. The paper concludes by proposing that multiliteracies and multimodal pedagogies would benefit from centralizing anti-racist and decolonizing approaches to learning, in addition to the networks in which literacy practices occur and through which meaning is made.*

KEYWORDS multiliteracies; race; decolonization; drama; social studies

Introduction

As Canadians engage with the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), what pedagogies might enable students and teachers to reconcile colonial pasts with contemporary forms of racism and enduring colonial structures? How might we move toward a future where Indigenous claims and other marginalized voices are respected and responded to? This paper shares what was learned about youth discourses of race as students participated in a multimodal, embodied pedagogical collaboration. In so

Correspondence Address: Sara Schroeter, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, Regina, SK, S4S 0A2; Email: sara.schroeter@uregina.ca

ISSN: 1911-4788



doing, it proposes ways that multimodal frameworks might be updated as we examine whether pedagogies of multiliteracies have accomplished the aims of inclusion and social justice laid out by the New London Group (NLG, 1996).

The year-long ethnography and teacher-researcher collaboration from which this paper emerges had the dual aims of exploring discourses of difference used by students in a Francophone minority language school, and exploring how drama might work as a multimodal, embodied, and (post)critical pedagogy (Lather, 1992) to unpack differences embedded in British Columbia's (BC) social studies 9 curriculum. A Foucauldian (Foucault, 1969) understanding of discourse as a series of utterances that are spread through language, signs, actions, beliefs, processes, and social structures grounded this study. Focusing on student interviews, a moment of "pedagogical failure," and ethnographic fieldnotes, this paper examines how youth named themselves in relation to the world around them and how these acts of naming were mediated by representational practices in popular culture and school curriculum. While multimodality is useful for broadening understandings of knowledge production, this paper suggests that it is insufficient for making classrooms equitable and just. Literacy pedagogies that explicitly address colonization, race, and White supremacy are needed for moving forward in the quest for greater justice in the classroom.

Drama as Multimodal, (Post)Critical, and Embodied Pedagogy

Multimodality, as conceived by members of the NLG (1996), views literacy as socially situated, rather than as the development of independent skills that aid in decoding and encoding neutral texts. Multimodality describes the process through which meaning is made by the interaction between multiple semiotic modes (Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Kalantzis, Cope, Chan, & Dalley-Trim, 2016). Understood as a way of pedagogically responding to changing literacy practices including digital, image-based modalities and increasingly diverse and multilingual student populations, the NLG's (1996) project of multiliteracies endeavoured to make literacy instruction more just by recognizing the validity of multiple languages and means of expression. Exploring drama as a multimodal form of meaning making aligns with scholars who study how drama supports literacy development in students of all ages (Booth, 1994; Gallagher & Ntelioglou, 2011; Medina, 2004, 2010; Perry, 2010; Rowsell & McQueen-Fuentes, 2017; Winters, Rogers, & Schofield, 2006). Furthermore, considering multimodality as a part of the NLG's multiliteracies project acknowledges that embodied interactions are also mediated or "networked." Comunello (2012) explains: "networked space accounts for all sites both physical and digital in which interactions occur" (p. 27). Accordingly, analyses of social interactions should consider the ways

that embodied face-to-face and digital interactions impact and influence one another.

In this project, drama was also understood as a (post)critical (Lather, 1992) and embodied pedagogy (Ellsworth, 2005; Perry, 2010; Perry & Medina, 2013). (Post)critical pedagogies (Lather, 1992; Perry, 2010) were conceived by feminist scholars who take the limitations of Freirean (Freire, 1970) critical pedagogy as their point of departure. Influenced by the call to ground education in the lives and experiences of students and sharing a commitment to social justice, these scholars are wary of patriarchal practices within critical pedagogies and underlying ideas about rationality, dialogue, and empowerment (Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1992, 1998). Building on Ellsworth's (1989) critique of the ways that critical pedagogies can problematically reassert dominant power structures in the classroom, Lather (1998) argues that they are impossible to implement in schools. (Post)critical pedagogy engages this impossibility by exploring the places where critical pedagogy gets stuck. Lather (1998) notes that feminist pedagogies interrogate pedagogical encounters that "go wrong" in order to expand ideas of what socially just education looks like.

Ellsworth (2005) writes that learning is influenced by what can be absorbed by minds/brains as they exist within the sensate body moving through time and space, and interacting with social discourses. Drama re-centers the body in learning (Perry & Medina, 2013), which requires acknowledgement of the affordances and limitations that bodies offer. Bodies impose limitations that constrain our abilities to perform certain physical tasks, as well as to have our bodies read in ways consistent with our subjectivities. Yet, bodies also amaze and inspire, proving highly adaptable and often expanding our ideas of what, at times, appears impossible.

Race and Racialization

Consideration of embodiment necessitates looking at how bodies are read and already present in the spaces they move in and, thus, articulating an understanding of race and racialization. Following Hall (1996), race is understood as a "floating signifier;" it is but one discursive category that emerged during the Modern era to classify people according to a system of difference that placed White Europeans on top. Hence, although race is understood as a floating signifier, it is also "a constructed category that justifies dominance and privilege and other forms of oppression" (Battiste, 2013, p. 125). The establishment of race as a category of difference was an exercise in positive power (Foucault, 1976) that created ideas about racial differences that Europeans internalized and exploited to justify the use of negative, disciplinary power against those they colonized.

As a signifier, race has no predetermined meaning. Rather, sense emerges through the meaning-making function of language and other modes of

expression, which are largely dependent on history and culture and are never “finally fixed” (Hall, 1997). Winant (2004) elaborates:

Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race appeals to biologically based human characteristics (so-called phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. (emphasis in original, p. x)

James (2007) adds that racial identities are forever evolving amid changing cultural and structural circumstances. These understandings inform the perspective brought to this study. Acknowledging the instability of race is not meant to deny its persistence and the material impact that ideas about race have on individuals, and for how societies organize (Hall in Jhally, 1997). In fact, concepts of race are deeply ingrained and integral to the ways that individuals interact with one another and with institutions.

Racialization describes the practices through which individuals and institutions come to be associated with racial groups based on physical characteristics, social practices, and identifications. While the interplay between discursive practices and material structures is generally acknowledged as the process of racialization (Omi & Winant, 1994), the way this concept is taken up varies significantly across different contexts. In Canada, recent theorizations emphasize the ways in which all people are racialized (Rogers, 2014) by and through procedures set-up under the country’s colonial regime in order to subordinate Indigenous peoples and maintain the White settler image of the nation (Battiste, 2013; Razack, 2002; Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011). This conceptualization of racialization highlights how the social processes involved in racialization work on everyone and render visible those whose race is constructed as the invisible norm in Canada’s White settler society.

The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981), developed by Black feminists, describes how multiple categories of difference like gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, religion, etc., work in interlocking ways to impact life experiences and subjectivities of marginalized people. Originally, intersectionality referred specifically to ways that Black women had been marginalized in both anti-racist and feminist discourses and political actions; more broadly, intersectionality describes experiences of being simultaneously marginalized along various axes of difference. For Loutzenheiser (2005), “contingent primacy” explains how one category of difference may take precedence in one situation, whereas under other circumstances, another category of difference will be more significant. In this paper, the categories of difference that participating youth identified as important to their subjectivities are analyzed to explore the complex ways that ideas about race intersect with other categories of differences and how these influenced the networked interactions the youth had in class.

Studying Discourse in Francophone Schools

A feminist ethnography (Buch & Staller, 2007; Gallagher, 2007) was undertaken to examine youth discourses of difference and whether drama could provide the means for deconstructing these categories in social studies classrooms, where fixed notions of difference have long been maintained. Although gender was not the primary focus of this project, my research questions reflect feminist interests in “the ways difference is organized across lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality” (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 194). Furthermore, the analysis examines the circulation of power and discourse, and how discourses of race intersect ones of gender ethnicity, indigeneity, and class.

In a previous study (Schroeter, 2013), students used Theatre of the Oppressed to present experiences of racism within Francophone minority language schools. Following the findings of that study and research suggesting that race is rarely addressed in Francophone schools (Carlson-Berg, 2011; Jacquet, 2009), this study sought to explore youth ideas about difference in a Francophone secondary school, and was conducted over the course of a school-year at École Gustave-Flaubert in BC. The Grade 9 social studies curriculum presented many opportunities for examining the discourses of differences circulating in the school, and in Canadian society, because it stipulates that students learn how identities – the term used by the Ministry of Education – are formed based on multiple factors such as family, gender, belief systems, ethnic origin, and nationality (BC Ministry of Education, 1997).

A guidance counsellor at Gustave-Flaubert with whom I had worked previously suggested that I approach Rose,¹ one of the social studies teachers at the school. She believed that my research interests and Rose’s emphasis on indigenization and education for social justice would be compatible. Rose and I had not met previously; however, we became friends as a result of our collaboration. Rose worked to ensure that current events and multiple cultures, ethnicities, and races were represented in her classroom and in the school. While the school’s administration benefitted from this work, celebrating and expecting it, Rose received little institutional support for her endeavours.

The students in Rose’s Grade 9 classes were between 13-16 years of age and of Canadian, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee backgrounds. They came from different provinces like British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, and other countries such as Algeria, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Tahiti. The youth participating in this study were at minimum bilingual, if not multilingual, and represented a wide range of racial, ethnic, linguistic, national, and religious

¹ All names are pseudonyms selected by participants.

origins within each class. Nine youth claimed “Canadian” heritage, and three declared First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI) heritage.²

Multiple methods of data collection – participant observation, fieldnotes, video footage, artefacts, individual interviews, focus groups – were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the ways discourses of difference circulated in Rose’s social studies classroom, and the significance of these discourses for the participating youth. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, video footage of focus group interviews and classroom activities during a unit on first contact between Indigenous and European peoples were most useful to my analysis of discourses of difference, because they best captured the ways I observed Grade 9 students interacting and some of their thoughts about race.

The pedagogical approach that Rose and I adopted made use of multimodal drama techniques: tableau, improvisation, role play, spatial analyses, re-enactments, interviewing, writing-in-role, drawing, reading, and viewing videos. We often planned a large drama activity each month, and each week two of three social studies classes integrated one or more drama strategies. As the students worked, I observed their interactions and produced fieldnotes, audio and video recordings.

A “Typical White Girl”: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class

The youth often used categories like “girl,” “boy,” “Black,” or “White” to describe themselves and refer to each other in and out of class. Curious to learn what these categories meant to them, I asked the youth to explain the meaning of social categories during interviews. My questions were often met with laughter and answers like: “I don’t know, a girl!” However, at times they stimulated fruitful discussions that provided insight into the ways the youth use categories and how their meanings are entangled in complex webs of relations, as in the following interview excerpt.

<p>Tournesol: J’suis un enfant, un « teenager »</p> <p>Sara: OK, adolescente</p> <p>Tournesol: Adolescent, um, j’sais pas, fille typicale? « <i>Typical</i>. »</p> <p>Sara: OK, typique... .. ‘Pis qu’est-ce que ce serait une fille typique?</p> <p>Tournesol: Y’a comme une expression, « <i>typical White girl</i> », comme tu aimes Starbucks, tu aimes le maquillage, tu aimes les cheveux, t’as un iPhone...</p> <p>Sara: OK, je l’ai jamais entendue celle-là.</p> <p>Tournesol: Uh, ça va, ben, pour</p>	<p>Tournesol: <i>I’m a kid, a teenager</i></p> <p>Sara: <i>OK, teenager</i></p> <p>Tournesol: <i>Teenager, um, I dunno, typical girl? Typical.</i></p> <p>Sara: <i>OK, typical... .. And what would a typical girl be?</i></p> <p>Tournesol: <i>There’s like an expression, “typical White girl,” like you like Starbucks, you like makeup, you like hair, you have an iPhone...</i></p> <p>Sara: <i>OK, I’ve never heard that one.</i></p> <p>Tournesol: <i>Uh, it, well, it goes like that</i></p>
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² In this paper, “Indigenous” is used interchangeably with FNMI.

beaucoup de gens ça va comme ça. Comme, si tu aimes Starbucks, les iPhones, les MacBooks, t'as une chambre comme, toute belle, 'pis tu mets pas le linge de l'année passée, c'est comme...

Sara: OK.

Tournesol: ...ils t'identifient comme ça

Sara: OK, hmm! Tu m'apprends quelque chose, c'est bon, c'est très bon. Euhm, est-ce qu'il t'arrive de t'identifier, euuum... ben en fait, si tu t'identifies comme « typical White girl » ton identité ce serait, tu te vois en tant que fille blanche?

Tournesol: Wwwwwelll... well, c'est pas vraiment, comme, à propos de la race.

Sara: OK.

Tournesol: Ils disent plutôt que si tu as la peau noir tu vas pas être comme, Starbucks et iPhone, Cléo des fois elle dit comme « Argh! You're so White! » C'est juste les gens Blancs ils font ça apparemment, j'sais pas pourquoi. C'est comme, t'sais quand tu vois dans les films, y'a comme la belle blonde...

Sara: Ouais.

Tournesol: ...elle est souvent blanche, 'pis comme ça, ça c'est un peu où ça vient de.

Tournesol : Façon de vivre, j'sais pas. Comme parfois, Cléo, elle veut comme un iPhone 'pis elle a [incompréhensible]... 'pis elle veut aller à Starbucks, 'pis elle est comme... moi parfois j'suis plus comme « tough », 'pis comme, Black, comme elle est, parfois...

for a lot of people. Like, if you like Starbucks, iPhones, MacBooks, you have a room that's all pretty, and you don't wear clothes from last year, it's like...

Sara: OK.

Tournesol: ...they identify you that way.

Sara: OK, hmm! You're teaching me something, that's good, that's really good. Um, does it happen for you to identify... uuuum... well, in fact, if you identify as a "typical White girl" your identity would be, you see yourself as a White girl?

Tournesol: Wwwwwelll... well, it's not really about race.

Sara: OK.

Tournesol: They mostly say that if you have Black skin you wouldn't be like Starbucks and iPhones, Cléo sometimes she says, like, "argh! You're so White!" It's just that White people do that, apparently, I don't know why. It's like, you know when you see in a movie, there's like the pretty blond...

Sara: Yeah.

Tournesol: ...often she's White, and it's like that's, that's kinda where that comes from.

Tournesol: A way of life, I dunno. Like sometimes, Cléo, she wants like an iPhone and she has [incompréhensible]... and she wants to go to Starbucks and she's... sometimes I'm more like tough, and like, Black, like her, sometimes...

Tournesol's answer of what it means to identify as a "typical White girl" reflects how "knowledge is linked to power by the microprocesses through which individuals construct their sense of self and their relations to others" (Popkewitz, 2000, p. 17). Tournesol drew on social practices to answer my question, suggesting that she understood Foucault's proposal that "subjectivity is not a state we occupy, but an activity we perform" (Taylor, 2014, p. 173). Her practices – buying drinks from Starbucks and wearing the

latest fashions – where construed by various institutions and social actors as expressions of “typical White girlhood;” therefore, Tournesol identified in these terms. This identification was entangled in powerful discourses about heteronormative sexuality, gender binaries, Whiteness, and social class. While Tournesol was not obliged to identify in this way, her knowledge of these norms and values was an *effect of power* (Foucault, 1990; Popkewitz, 2000) that worked with her desires and influenced her relations with peers, enabling her to discern who was and who was not White.

Tournesol said she drew her ideas about Whiteness and girlhood from popular culture, particularly movies featuring “the pretty Blond.” In film, “typical White girls” are often portrayed as spoiled, materialistic, helpless, ignorant, and petty (Kelly & Pomerantz, 2009). This is echoed in Tournesol’s comment that “White girls” like “Starbucks, iPhones, MacBooks,” products known for being over-priced, top-of-the-line, and inaccessible to many. According to her, White girls also “have a room that’s all pretty, and you don’t wear clothes from last year.” Therefore, not only is gender racialized in Tournesol’s definition of “typical White girls,” wealth is as well. Disposable income is associated with Whiteness, specifically White girlhood. Notions of girlhood thus intersect ideas about class and material wealth and were intricately entangled in Tournesol’s subjectivity, which she claimed was “not really about race.” For Tournesol, identifying as a “typical White girl” appeared to signify identification with dominant gender and class norms more than racial ones.

However, race, class, and gender intersect in Tournesol’s definition of “typical” girlhood. In a society where Whiteness dominates (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2004), to be “typical” is to be White. This idea surfaced in other student interviews, where youth identified as: “average,” “normal,” and “not mainstream.” Fleur and Anna, who identified as White, also identified as “average.” Mike’s upper socio-economic status and fair skin enabled him to benefit from some privileges associated with Whiteness, and identify as “normal;” yet, he felt distanced from Whiteness ethnically and linguistically (his mother was Ecuadorean and he spoke Spanish at home). Mia did not identify as White; therefore, when she said she was “not mainstream,” her statement also implies “not White.” In spite of her disavowal of the significance of race, Tournesol’s awareness of and preoccupation with racial markers were evident in the comparisons she made between herself and Cléo, another mixed-race student. According to Tournesol, Cléo was more frequently racialized as Black and associated with Black culture. Tournesol actively participated in this racialization, claiming that, at times, she also identified with stereotypical ideas of Blackness: “sometimes I’m more, like, tough, and like, Black, like her.” In contrast to the delicate femininity inscribed in Tournesol’s description of “typical White girls,” “Black girls” were characterized as “tough,” thus, distant from the dominant norm.

Although these sentiments were not expressed during drama activities, the interviews were conducted in the middle of the school year when the students

had routinely been engaged in embodied drama work. Moreover, Tournesol's comment names the multimodal, networked texts that also influenced the way she perceived herself and others. Tournesol's answer indicates that the youth were aware of racial signifiers and circulating logics about racial categories, and that these signifiers were never absent from interactions.

Embodying Difference

The following fieldnote presents a moment (also recorded on video) when the social justice orientation of the embodied multimodal drama pedagogy that Rose and I adopted got stuck, failing to achieve our objective of deconstructing difference. I share this moment to illustrate how (post)critical pedagogies engage moments when dominance is reasserted in the classroom (Lather, 1992). In this excerpt, Rose was filling time after a drama activity I facilitated proved ineffective. Tableau work intended as a unit review unexpectedly led to competition, othering, and possibly the solidification of ideas about Indigenous cultures as static relics of the past. I cut the activity short and Rose showed *Heritage Minute* videos produced by the government to teach Canadian history. While unpacking these videos, the following exchange occurred.

Rose tells the students that Aboriginal groups have the highest birth rate in Canada, and are the fastest growing group. The teacher's assistant asks: "So they are reproducing?" "Yes," Rose answers. Sherlock says: "Oh, I thought you meant that they are the biggest group (motions with her hands to indicate height)." Rose says, "Oh, no! No, I mean they are reproducing."

While everyone is laughing, Bob turns and calls: "Brook!" R. K. is sitting behind Bob. He perks-up exclaiming: "Yeah Brook is, like, pregnant right now." He laughs and looks at Brook expectantly. Is he searching to get a rise out of her? Rose either doesn't hear his comment or chooses to ignore it. Brook appears to laugh off R. K.'s comment. She rolls her eyes and replies something I can't hear.

Rose clarifies her meaning. During this time, Samantha turns to the back of the room and says: "Brook, you're gonna have four kids!" Brook appears to say that she doesn't want to have any children. It looks like this statement is made for Samantha and R. K.'s benefit, even though she is addressing Cléo, who is sitting in front of her. Samantha retorts: "Yes you do, you're gonna have, like, eight!"

Rose isn't paying attention to this exchange. She is focused on ensuring that the students understand that the Indigenous peoples of Canada are different from the depiction presented in the "Heritage Minute" video. (Excerpt from fieldnotes)

This exchange illustrates how various social discourses overlap and how the intersection of multiple categories of difference resulted in the marginalization of one student. Elsewhere (Schroeter, 2017), I explore how this excerpt also reveals that White educators are complicit in reasserting dominant power structures in the classroom. I also acknowledge that in a context where Indigenous peoples and their stories have been exploited by

White settlers and researchers, analyzing this particular moment risks exoticizing Brook. My aim is to illustrate how intersecting discourses worked on this student, exacerbated by multimodal texts, and how discourses of White supremacy were taken up by others.

Brook was academically successful, athletic, and appeared to be well-liked. She was one of the few Grade 9 girls who crossed the division between “boy” and “girl” ways of socializing. Using the youth’s terms, Brook’s style could be described as “girly-sporty,” as she often wore dresses on top of shorts, paired with sneakers; a style choice that may have facilitated her boundary crossing. Her tendency to challenge her teachers and ability to joke with her peers made her valued and respected. Brook was also vocal about her Indigenous heritage, regularly providing anecdotal information about the Tsimshian people and practices carried out by her family. She was quick to point out times when students expressed stereotypical ideas about Indigenous peoples. Yet, she resisted attempts to turn her into an “authentic native” (Buddle, 2004; King, 2003), explaining that she could not speak for all Indigenous peoples and that she had never lived on reserve. On the one hand, other students were likely to explore their burgeoning understandings of Indigenous cultures with Brook because she was their friend. Paradoxically, this proximity made her an easy target for racist “jokes,” as captured by the fieldnote above.

Brook’s fluency in English and French, her skin tone – she identified as White – and Canadian roots enabled her to pass as an insider to dominant nationalist discourses of Canadianness circulating in the school; discourses actively constructed as part of the social studies curriculum (Rogers, 2014; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Willinsky, 1998). However, throughout the year she increasingly disrupted this perception by naming her indigeneity. Ironically, Brook’s rootedness in the land constructed as “Canadian” uprooted her from nationalist discourses invested in a White settler framework (Battiste, 2013; Razack, 2002). Brook’s ancestral ties to the land and practice of naming stereotypes were dissonant with a popular imaginary that constructs Canadian land as justly obtained (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) and Canadians as tolerant settlers who turned “wild” land into something productive and profitable (Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011). In this instance, the students discursively policed the borders of the nation by othering Brook and placing her outside its metaphoric borders. King (1991) explains dysconscious racism as “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given” (p. 135). By emphasizing Brook’s indigeneity, the youth dysconsciously reaffirmed the dominant White norm.

Highlighting Brook’s indigeneity was fed by multiple discourses that position White people as the rightful owners and occupants of academic spaces, “in groups,” and legitimate boundary crossers. I do not mean to suggest that the students intentionally tried to strip Brook of her

achievements and privilege. However, analyzing this class from the perspective of discourses of difference necessitates a consideration of how discourse circulates and the relations of power produced. While R. K. and Samantha were not trying to be racist, their actions repeated the historical process of policing and silencing Indigenous bodies.

Both R. K. and Samantha took up positions that reified Whiteness, though only Samantha presented as White. This illustrates that Whiteness is reinforced and brought into being not only through the privileges that people with White skin enjoy, but also through discursive, symbolic, and social practices that can be taken up by non-White people (Kuoch, 2005; Leonardo 2004). Through “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1976), social practices through which individuals constitute their subjectivity and are constituted by others (Kelly, 2013), R. K. accessed Whiteness through the performance of heteronormative masculinity. R. K. and Samantha’s comments can be seen as *microaggressions* (Delgado & Stefancic, cited in Hayes & Juarez, 2009), ways that dominance and racist sentiments are expressed through means that are “innocent, subtle, and transparent, but harmful nonetheless” (Howard, 2008, p. 973). This incident can be read as perpetuating the symbolic violence of colonization and re-establishing racial differences developed to create and reinforce colonial order.

Brook’s indigeneity racialized her in a way that made her the Other in the classroom, which was compounded by her identification as a girl. Her intelligibility as a cisgender heterosexual “girl” intensified the attention she received from her peers. The students made assumptions and drew on stereotypes about who Brook was as a girl and as a partly Indigenous person, both of which are entangled in patriarchal and colonial discourses and practices surrounding the reproductive capacities of Indigenous female bodies (Ralston-Lewis, 2005; Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Brook actively contested this representation, asserting that she did not want to have children, introducing the possibility of diversity within the “Indigenous” category being constructed in the classroom; however, her objections were not acknowledged. Furthermore, the use of *Heritage Minute* videos as a multimodal text visually reinforced stereotypical ideas about the collaboration between subservient Indigenous people and naïve, but well-intentioned colonizers. The drama activity that preceded this discussion had heightened the students’ awareness of their physical bodies, possibly setting the stage for the scrutiny Brook faced. Although Rose attempted to critically deconstruct representations in the videos, the discussion was hijacked by racist and sexist stereotypes, as the youth drew on multiple semiotic modes and circulating discourses to synthesize Rose’s meaning (Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Kalantzis et al., 2016) and relate the subject matter to the people in their class.

Questioning Representational Practices

The following fieldnote exemplifies how drama worked as an embodied, multimodal, and liminal and pedagogy that created spaces in which youth questioned representational practices in class. This moment occurred during a field trip on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam nation. There, I facilitated a process drama on first contact between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers that involved guided visualizations, writing, map drawing, role-play, tableau, and oral debate, among other strategies.

The kids are spread out on the grass, sitting or lying in groups of four, and developing arguments in favour or against letting the Rabbits enter their village. Rose, a teaching assistant, and I are circulating among the groups. We don't have to intervene much; the students are engaged in playful conversations about whether or not to let these 'foreign Rabbits' into the village. Some students are not taking the possible threat posed by the Rabbits seriously, while others are trying to get into character as villagers and making compelling arguments within their groups.

As I am walking around, Brook calls me over and tells me that she doesn't understand. Thinking that she's referring to the process drama, I ask her what she doesn't understand. We are speaking in French, and she says that it's hard to explain, but she doesn't understand the way that Indigenous people are portrayed. Part way through her explanation she asks: "Can I just say it in English?" I say yes, of course, and she switches languages and asks: "Why are natives always portrayed as having dark skin? Because I don't." I don't have a chance to respond before Brook goes on to ask: "How come we all have different skin colours if we all live in the same place and we're all acclimated?" While she is speaking, Brook motions with her hands to indicate the students sprawled across the lawn. (Excerpt from fieldnotes)

Working in an informal space, where Brook could easily observe the bodies of her peers on the lawn, engaged in the embodied dramatic work she was doing, Brook raised questions about inaccurate representational practices. Drawing on all the interactions she had had throughout the year, and multiple semiotic texts, Brook engaged me in a discussion about race, racialization, representation, signifying practices, and evolutionary biology. This interaction illustrates how youth often ask important questions when involved in the liminal space of play created by drama and supported by the use of multiple modes of meaning making (Gallagher & Ntelioglou, 2011). By demanding answers from me, Brook revealed her knowledge of the misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and suggested that the curriculum, and our teaching of it, failed to address her and the youths' complex subjectivities. In the informal and social environment created by the field trip and the creative work of process drama, Brook was able to point this out.

Brook's meditation on representational practices had begun earlier and did not necessarily come *from* the process drama. However, the embodied inquiry she did that afternoon propelled her to solicit the help of an adult in seeking

answers to her questions. Drawing on Massumi's (1995) work, Ellsworth (2005) writes that thoughts are activated by the body's movement, which "*challenge(s) educators to shift how we make bodies matter in pedagogy*" (emphasis in original, p. 17). Echoing Ellsworth, Massumi, and Perry and Medina (2013), I argue that this is precisely what drama compels educators and students to consider. As an embodied medium, drama necessitates attention to the bodies and subjectivities involved in learning, as well as a reimagining of learning spaces in order to create curricular engagements that elicit creativity (Nicholson, 2005), and a deep engagement with the topics under investigation. Brook's questions point to the ways drama can bring deep inquiries to the surface and how embodied dramatic practice can provide entry points to conversations about racial and ethnic representational tropes. Even as they interact in the "as if" (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) world of drama, students engage the imaginary from perspectives drawn from their situated subjectivities and the networked relationships they have with other students, teachers, and the objects in their classrooms or informal learning spaces.

Epistemology and Multimodality

Rose's classroom was a complex site where multiple, competing, and networked discourses about race, class, and gender circulated and shaped social interactions, bringing particular relations into existence (Foucault, 1969). Tournesol's comments reveal that popular culture mediated her subjective positioning as a "typical White girl." Her thoughts expose the ways that discourses of race are intricately intersected by discourses of gender and class (Crenshaw, 1991). These intersections were represented in popular culture and the social media sites the youth accessed for entertainment, socializing, and as creative outlets. Furthermore, the interaction between Brook, Samantha, and R. K. illustrates how intersectionality impacts student interactions and classroom experiences.

As exemplified in the fieldnote from the process drama, the youth began to question representational practices during and immediately following drama activities. The insights and interactions presented in this paper resulted from a context in which drama was consistently adopted as a multimodal and embodied pedagogy (Gallagher & Ntelioglou, 2011; Perry & Medina, 2013; Rowsell & McQueen-Fuentes, 2017). With its focus on embodiment, drama asks us to pay attention to the bodies in which teaching and learning occur and how they interact with circulating discourses. How racialized bodies interact in the classroom can be as important as the modalities used. Although Rose and I consistently used multiple modes of meaning making, we were constituted by Whiteness and Eurocentric teaching methods that value competition and are more engrained in our practice than we realized. This was true in spite of our commitments to decolonization and anti-racism, and

our desire to trouble White supremacy in the curriculum. The way Brook was othered reveals that our conscious and dysconscious decisions, as well as those of the youth, led to the reification of Whiteness in the classroom. Embodied work can, therefore, highlight racial markers in ways that are not easy to manage, and the opportunities for informal group work that drama affords creates conditions in which youth take less care to edit their discourses, as illustrated by Samantha and R. K.'s comments. While problematic, this may be necessary in a context where youth have questions about race and racialization, yet few curricular opportunities to ask them. It is important to find ways of openly discussing racialization and prejudice in social studies classes, which are also primary sites for teaching about truth and reconciliation. Without honest discourse, reconciliation is impossible. Therefore, problematic though stereotypes are, educators must seek ways to unpack them with youth and help them identify and navigate those found in online spaces and popular media. The multiple modes used in drama may bring about new insights that help youth find answers to troubling questions; however, ample space and time must be set aside for these processes.

In this study, drama was approached in a way largely consistent with the NLG's (1996) pedagogy of multiliteracies. It endeavoured to engage youth in an exploration of the social studies 9 curriculum, rooted in critical practices that made use of many modalities. Rose and I believed that this would create rich learning experiences for the youth and hoped that it would allow us to deconstruct the differences embedded in the curriculum. However, we learned that the pedagogical tools we used – drama/multimodality – were not as significant for achieving our goals. The students did engage with the course in meaningful ways; however, our commitment to social justice and equity proved more significant. The times when Rose and I felt we met our objectives were ones when our political commitments guided our practice, and we took the time and care necessary in lesson planning.

Finally, I propose that classrooms may not be ideal sites for reconciliation. Given Canada's history of cultural genocide and the integral role education played in it, institutional spaces, with their historic significance and discipline, are poorly suited to the task. Perhaps what is needed is the creation of more liminal spaces like those created by drama and field trips, where youth and adults feel more able to express their thoughts and learn about the connections between us. Better yet, perhaps we need to focus on embodied land-based approaches, rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and highlighting the relations between all living beings. Rose and I emerged from this study with a renewed sense that race matters in education and that the social studies curriculum and our teaching practices need to change. Approaches to multimodality that explicitly focus on decolonization and anti-racism might be what is needed as we continue to strive for greater equity in education.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Rose and the students at École secondaire Gustave-Flaubert, without whom this work would not be possible. I am also grateful to my doctoral committee, Drs. Annette Henry, Theresa Rogers, Lisa Loutzenheiser, as well as Dr. Stacey Crooks and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this manuscript.

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