Indigenous Representations in Novels Used in The Ontario Secondary English Classroom

by

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Education.

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO

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2020

Abstract

This study analyzes representations of Indigenous Peoples in novels used in the Ontario secondary English classroom. This research identifies the impacts that inaccurate or limited representations of Indigenous Peoples can have when used as curriculum material. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze the 20 most commonly used novels used in the secondary English classroom, drawn from the Ontario Book Publisher's Organization's (2017) study. Representations were found in two of the top 20 novels and an analysis was conducted based on physical representations, social representations, representations of racial inequality, terminology use, and author background. The two novels included in this analysis are Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005). The analysis addresses representations of Indigenous characters, leading to a deeper analysis of the representations within two novels for the development of recommendations to increase Indigenous Peoples representations in the secondary English classroom. Analysis of the two novels indicates a narrow and similar representations of Indigenous Peoples. The findings support the necessity for increased and diverse representations of Indigenous Peoples in secondary English curriculum, specifically fiction.

Acknowledgements

Indescribable appreciation is owed to Dr. Gerald Walton for being my supervisor, my guiding light through this learning journey, and an inspiration as an educator who is *moving mountains*. I also extend my thanks to my committee member, Dr. Paul Cormier, for his expertise on the Indigenous Education component of my research, and for increasing my attention to Indigenous authors, escalating the quality of my thesis. My Internal Examiner, Dr. Jenny Roth, and External Examiner, Dr. Dawn Burleigh, both played a critical role in shaping the final draft of this thesis.

To my family, friends and colleagues who have shared words of encouragement and support throughout this journey, thank you.

To my loving sister, Keshea, and my soul sisters, AG, DH, and JV, who have endlessly supported me through the last year, thank you.

To my mother, thank you is not enough, as you are the power that drives me each day; as a motivated, empowered, smart, and driven woman. I am proud to walk in your footsteps of strength and embody you through my successes.

To Zoey, my puppy, thank you for being my cuddle buddy on days that were just too tough and a goof ball on days that I needed to smile.

To my husband, Joshua. I am indebted to you, for your kindness, patience, support, encouragement and love, throughout my graduate studies. Thank you for your understanding on the days I spent countless hours behind my computer screen. Thank you for making me tea and bringing me snacks. Thank you for the little surprises to brighten my day. Without you, I would never have achieved such greatness and success.

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Chapter One: An Introduction to Issues of Equality in Education

A fundamental human right for Canadians is education, expectedly attainable through publicly funding schooling, allowing achievement of a secondary school diploma by all (Townsend, 2013). Unfortunately, a diploma is not currently accessible to all Indigenous youth for two significant reasons. One is the limited funding available for remote schooling (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017). The other is the sense of alienation from schooling that many Indigenous students experience because of Eurocentric narratives that are engrained in the education system (Battiste, 2017; Griffith, 2018). In effect, Indigenous students experience forms of cognitive imperialism, as Eurocentric worldviews force cultural oppression upon Indigenous Peoples, connected to poverty and powerlessness of cultural and racial status (Battiste, 1998, 2009). Cognitive manipulation occurs through the institutional education system that takes the form of forced homogenization and discrediting of Indigenous knowledges and approaches to life and education (Battiste, 1998, 2017). In other words, Indigenous students are taught that Eurocentric, dominant ideologies are the only way of knowing, learning and living. The Eurocentric ideologies are deemed appropriate for all cultures, allowing the ideologies to shape any process in the Western mode (Walker, 2004). Thus, it is imperative to alleviate the current dominant practices in the secondary school system, which impose upon Indigenous students' opportunities to be successful in their education.

For my thesis research, I investigated how Eurocentric ideologies exist within fictional literature used in English classrooms within the Ontario secondary education system, to better understand the representations of Indigenous perspectives. Due to the longstanding dominance of colonizers in Canada and historical oppression of Indigenous Peoples, the education system has overwhelmingly maintained a linear, colonial perspective (Bartlett, 1977, 2017; Slattery, 2005).

Within education, teachers use various materials to present curriculum to students in order to achieve hegemonic knowledge production (Ahmed, 2017; Griffith, 2018). One example would be the racist, colonial narratives used as fact within history textbooks (Montgomery, 2006). Sustained hegemony then allows persisting inequalities in society and Euro dominance (Battiste, 2017; St. Dennis, 2011; Veracini, 2011). My aim in examining representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the classroom was to gain an understanding of inequalities that are perpetuated through literature as a form of media. To do so, I asked the following research question: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario?

From my research findings, I offer a discussion on the implications for change to appropriately represent Indigenous Peoples of Canada in the secondary English classroom. My research to explore representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the classroom serves to advance knowledge about how such representations may significantly impact the development of Indigenous students (Brown, 2019; Frideres, 2008; Prato et al., 2016; Way & Rogers, 2015). As well, the transmission of limited, in-appropriate, biased, and incorrect information to non-Indigenous students creates cyclical misconceptions that foster the continuance of Eurocentrism (Morgan, 2009; Scully, 2018; Talaga, 2017). Specifically, the materials that are used throughout the learning process can be detrimental if appropriate representations are not presented in the texts (Baker, 2012; Benton, 2017; Green, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; Oatley, 2011). My research assesses these representations and identifies recommendations for curriculum reform with Indigenous students' educational needs in mind.

The Research Focus

It is beyond the scope of my research to address the current state of Indigenous representations in education in Ontario, let alone Canada. More practically, the purpose of this study is to examine the representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom within Ontario. Utilizing a book inventory developed by the Ontario Book Publishers Organization in 2017, I focus on the representations of Indigenous Peoples within the texts used in the grade 9 to 12 English courses in Ontario. This information will provide me with evidence of representations of Indigenous Peoples in the course materials and current provincially funded programming. The evidence of representations will allow for an understanding of the current narrative being portrayed in classrooms, the potential effects of the current representations on students, and opportunities for change at the secondary level.

To address potential impacts on the development of students, I intertwine findings from Quigley (2019) and Rata et al. (2014) with my findings in my discussion, to draw upon Indigenous identity development processes, as identified by these Indigenous researchers. I utilize Quigley (2019) to discuss identity construction and Rata et al. (2014) to address identity development by using social identity theory, self-categorisation theory and a stage-based racial identity development model. Quigley (2019) focuses on Indigenous identity construction and the timeline that guides identity development, as well as influential factors. In a study of themselves, Quigley (2019) identifies and analyzes experiences from childhood to adulthood, addressing how the racial identity is formed. The study focuses on how identity is constructed based on interior and exterior forces that synthesize (Quigley, 2019). Rata et al. (2014) determine that social identity derives from membership in a social group, self-categorization exists as a fluid description of social identity, and racial/cultural identity is a development process in which the

individual progresses to achieve integrative awareness. Rata et al. (2014) further focus on identity construction but use the Powhiri Identity Negotiation Framework in assessment of Maori students and families. The framework is broken down into four identity states: the potential, the development, the transition, and the enlightenment. As they describe it, the process of identity development is linear and the individual moves through the process, resulting in cultural connectedness. Together, these theories of identity development will allow for a better understanding of how students' development alters in response to exposure to Indigenous representations.

Currently, there is political turmoil over the inclusion of Indigenous content and Indigenous based courses in Ontario, with opposition and cuts from the provincial Progressive Conservative government (Crawley, 2019; Roberts, 2020). Despite revision of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies curriculum and potential for these courses to be substituted for compulsory credits, individual school boards remain responsible for implementation (Jones, 2019). The new, authentic, curriculum is based on collaboration with a collective of Indigenous input but still is not attracting very much attention from the Progressive Conservative Ford government (Jones, 2019). Further, these limited, non-mandatory courses do not address the knowledge gaps that persists across secondary education and the lack of educator support for teaching or including Indigenous content in course materials (Clancy, 2016). Generally, there remains a "lack of Indigenous perspective across Canada's academic landscape" leading to sustained inequality and racism (Magon, 2020).

One of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action in 2015 was to include Indigenous viewpoints in a range of courses and disciplines, but inclusivity in courses and academic settings seemingly is still off the table (Kabatay & Johnson, 2019). The TRC

report (2015) states that "education must remedy the gaps in historical knowledge that perpetuate ignorance and racism," yet Ontario's education system has yet to see comprehensive reform (p. 234). Revision work is continually seeing cancellations and the necessary collaboration to develop culturally responsive curriculum remains postponed (Kabatay & Johnson, 2019). In Ontario, only partial implementation of representation has occurred within the alternate grade 11 English course, incorporating Indigenous authors and texts (Dodge, 2019). However, this is not a province-wide mandate, the classification of materials used in the course still remains unclear, and other English courses at the secondary level remain unaccountable for inclusion of Indigenous representation.

The 13-year-old, 2007 English curriculum document mandates that teachers use material that reflects the diversity of Canada and that literary works are to include "many genres, historical periods, and cultures, by both female and male writers, that represent a wide range of perspectives and reflect the diversity of Canada and the world" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Due to the broad curriculum expectation, my thesis research focuses on grades 9 through 12, instead of the mandated Indigenous representation in the new grade 11. Unfortunately, there is no surveillance system of the works employed in the classroom and in turn no accountability to this out-dated guideline. Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler argues that the current state of representations in secondary courses will "continue to fail [Indigenous] students" and that inclusion should not be optional in Canada (Jones, 2019). Evidently, limitations remain in terms of understanding the necessity of representations of Indigenous Peoples in the Ontario secondary curriculum, especially within English courses.

To address the current state of Indigenous representations in the secondary English classroom, my research analyzes the fictional literature used in English courses within Ontario to

assess the representations of Indigenous Peoples within curriculum material. Based on the data gathered in a 2017 study performed by the Ontario Book Publishers Organization, I aim to answer the following research question: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario?

My objective is to better understand the representations of Indigenous Peoples within texts in the secondary English classroom within Ontario. Higgins et al. (2015) recognize that curriculum often reflects and is shaped by Eurocentrism and Whiteness, hindering the decolonization of the classroom. Tuck and Yang (2012) note that the decolonization process is more than physically changing the environment, rather it is a larger social change that alters the perception of Indigenous Peoples and recognition of the past to change the future. LaRocque (2011) recognizes the historical representations of Indigenous Peoples as profoundly dehumanizing, within scholarship and popular culture. Indigenous authors and narratives are discredited because of the long-standing civilized versus savage (civ/sav) dichotomy, which utilizes "the politics of power" in discourse to sustain bias and oppression towards Indigenous Peoples (LaRocque, 2011, p. 28). By examining the representations of Indigenous Peoples in the fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom, I will examine issues of decolonization and the inclusion of authentic Indigenous representations in curriculum. Without attention to representations, colonial, hate literature that sustains the civ/sav dichotomy will remain as the linear lens of education (LaRocque, 2011). Pursuing these issues will foster an understanding of the current extent of representations and the potential justice issues that are present for Indigenous students within the English curriculum in Ontario's public education system.

Personal Ground

As a racial minority and non-Indigenous educator, I find myself in a unique position. I recognize the struggles that exist when there is a lack of racial representations because on reflection, I am able to see how a lack of representations of racial minorities in education and general society has impacted my identity development, and also caused me to struggle with my culture. Being a racial minority, who is visually ethnically ambiguous, I have spent years changing who I was, acting as a racial chameleon trying to fit in. McIntosh's (1988) work taught me long ago that I did not fit into dominant society, based on the perpetuating racism and genderism in our social systems. Clarity gained from McIntosh's (1988) work has created a deeper understanding of the disadvantage I face and the advantage that is unbeknownst to those who are privileged.

Similarly, the disconnect between Indigenous epistemologies and my pedagogy has heightened my interest in learning the approaches and integrating them into my practice. Kovach (2010) recognizes how situational location relates to the knowledge that one uses to interpret the world, which exemplifies how my deficient identity development allows relatability to Indigenous issues. I find that without a clear cultural or racial identity, I become more transient and feel connected to all, but at the same time, cannot truly connect to any. Being a racially ambiguous cis-female who has experienced lower- and middle-class economic status, I have encountered various impositions of hegemonic culture that are connected to norms that substantiate inequality. My experiences are connected to both my privileges and disadvantages, a varied identity that has shown me both ends of stigma and entitlement. Together, these privileges and disadvantages have fostered my development and allowed me to institute an open and empathetic perception towards Indigenous issues and social justice issues in education.

My educational experiences have been wayward to say the least. Having attended nine different schools before post-secondary, I had a plethora of opportunities to experience differing educational approaches, philosophies and methodologies. Looking back, I am able to see how education differed according to numerous factors. Most profoundly, I was able to see how I did or did not fit in to the school community and culture, nor did I see how my identity was reflected in the curriculum and materials used in class. While I excelled at academics when I was younger, I slowly drifted in and out of interest, struggling to complete high school. After narrowly being accepted into university, I again struggled. I changed my major numerous times, hovered at the pass-fail mark, and never really became truly engaged in my learning. That was until the beginning of my third year, upon meeting my husband.

My husband, Joshua Abela, was in the Engineering program at Lakehead and we quickly hit it off. He showed me how to have a passion for learning and how to "care" about the courses I was taking. His unique perspective on education really altered my perception and the drive I had for learning. He helped me realize that I too could be a person of inspiration and change, helping those who struggle to get back on a path of success. Refocused on education, I began to thrive, topping my graduating class and receiving a scholarship. It was at this point that I realized that my history, my experiences, and my journey were fuel that can be used to understand learners and help them overcome the barriers, similar to those I had faced in my life.

At times, I strayed from my interest in education, but when committed, I excelled. I found a deep connection to the opportunity to share my experience with others and help those who have faced similar pasts. Periodically during my high school and post-secondary years, I was able to acquire teaching experience through self-developed lessons and workshops, focusing on cross-curricular literacy. These occasions nurtured my interest in teaching to help

marginalized students, like myself, thrive. I have dedicated time to perform collaborative research, based on my professional practice, to address approaches in education and provide students with the greatest opportunity to succeed. Dr. Christopher Dague, an in-service teaching collaborator, of The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, and I completed an international assessment of democratic teaching models that are used in classrooms today. Our examinations have been featured in two scholarly publications: *Fostering Democratic Citizenship Through Discussion Pedagogy* (Dague & Abela, 2020); *Integrating Transformational Leadership to Foster Collaborative Classrooms* (Abela & Dague, 2020). As well, I have been granted the opportunity to share these innovative approaches twice at *The International Society for the Social Studies* annual conference, and at *National Council for the Social Studies* annual conference. Through these experiences, I have not only been able to develop my teaching practice, but also work in collaboration with academic professionals to improve practice for all educators.

What I learned, as connected to my proposed research, was that student voice and representation was critical for learning. Throughout my research and studies, I often reference one of my earliest teaching experiences. I was a literacy tutor at a local high school in Thunder Bay and my role was to work with a student to develop their extremely limited reading and writing skills. The workbook was seasonal and referenced Christmas, Santa, and angels. I struggled through the pages with the student I was tutoring and was making no progress. Through a conversation with the student, it quickly became apparent that they were unable to identify these holiday symbols and use these words in sentences, because they were not familiar with them. This interaction sparked my interest in learning about how students respond and learn based on the material that they are given. I have also been able to make this connection to my

own learning journey. Together, these experiences have developed my drive to further examine the relationship between racial or cultural representations and success. I assume it is key and critical for understanding the progression of educative methods, part of which is curriculum content.

Currently, I am an in-service secondary school teacher and work to employ the most innovative practices for my students to gain responsibility in their learning, use their voice to support identity development and to reach towards self-actualization. I have taught in numerous demographic settings through my career, working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in direct and indirect manners. Through my practice, I work to allow students to become heavily involved in their learning, through choice of materials that complement core curriculum goals. I find that in my practice, I have grown exponentially, as I become more aware of how educators, curriculum, materials and the learning environment affect and influence the learner. It is my hope that I can continue to examine these components of education and develop my own practice, as well as share developments for others to improve on the opportunities for learning to thrive.

Through my last few years of teaching, I have noticed a change in expectations, as there is an emphasis towards diversity and inclusion. The level of inclusion has felt somewhat fraudulent, acting as a façade to group all minority groups together and show that change is happening when it really is not. For example, when I was a new teacher, in 2017, I was granted the opportunity to teach the *English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices* course at the grade 11 level. Having very little knowledge of teaching Indigenous content, beyond a few knowledge-based courses in my undergrad and professional year, I was concerned. At the time, the course came with very little professional development, but required

the teacher to present works of Aboriginal writers, study content, form, style of literary and media from Aboriginal authors, and work towards an "appreciation of the wealthy and complexity of Aboriginal writing" (Ministry of Education, 2000). The overall expectations were to focus on identity, relationships, sovereignty and challenges, expressed through all mediums (Ministry of Education, 2000). There was so much depth within the course, with no preceding education, leaving me and the students in my class shell-shocked.

Since then, changes have been made to the course name and guidelines, as the Ministry of Education (2019a) published a new curriculum guide for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies. These changes came with the announcement that grade 11 English courses province-wide would be replaced with the newly developed *English: First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices* course. My immediate thoughts were that this curriculum was the Ministry of Education's band aid solution, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015). Similar thoughts were expressed by Miller (2020) who responded to the change by calling it an attempt to "increase diversity according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as they "ditch Shakespeare." Miller (2020) continued by expressing hesitation toward the change, prompting concerns that teachers are not knowledgeable enough to teach the course and do now have "cultural competency." Such perspectives create hesitation among teachers about the implementation of the content, whereas the hesitation should be more toward the lack of preparation or elongated integration for more than just one year of students' education.

While I am supportive of the curriculum change, it made me question how these sudden changes would affect student and teachers' perceptions of Indigenous studies. I found out quickly that my reservations were warranted, as my colleagues and students negatively responded to the new course. Many concerns quickly developed, in terms of my own teaching

and for the best practice and learning for students. Why was Indigenous content not being included in all courses? How will students learn all of the background information necessary to comprehend the necessity of this course? What impact does this have on Indigenous students? How will students perceive this course replacing the pre-existing course? Will the replacement of current texts with Indigenous texts cause negative responses from students?

Much of my concern became a reality as the courses began to roll out and I was able to see first-hand responses and difficulties that teachers and students were facing. After discussing the new course changes and course content with the students, I learned quickly that one reason students disengaged from the material was the heightened colonial focused, historical component. A repetitive response explaining disengagement was that the course seemed more like History than English and that students were not learning how to write essays and other English components with these texts. In part, I assume these responses were due to the lack of preparation in terms of teacher training and the general limitations that exist when teachers have to unpack topics before teaching new material (Halliday, 1998). In my thesis research, I utilize my experience to address representation issues in English education, which have guided my research.

Situating Myself

To understand and contribute to decolonization, I took Gaudry and Lorenz's (2018) advice that doing so should ideally incorporate a lens of Indigenization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Prior to my acquiring a deeper understanding, Indigenizing my practice was extremely stressful and frightening, as I feared incorrect, unjust, or disrespectful implementation. The infusion of curricular content that focuses on Indigenous Peoples offered, I felt, a less intimidating stance for non-Indigenous educators such as me. I quickly learned that these

feelings were due to the limited promotion of decolonization practices in my professional environment and the limited resources that were available to me for appropriate transformation of my practice. Without such curricular support, I was unable to more deeply delve into Indigenization, leaving me as a non-Indigenous educator perpetually disadvantaged in this process. That goes with saying that no level of support will ever allow me to truly understand or connect to the Indigenous representations, making it critical to incorporate Indigenous Peoples into my practice and the Indigenization process.

Within my practice, I strive to connect deeply with Indigenous voices to address the issues I explore with students. However, doing so can only be so effective in the absence of reaching out to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples. For example, when addressing representations within curriculum materials, my interpretation is only as finite as the research I can compare it to. Since I am not an Indigenous Person, I cannot understand the cultural meaning or depth of the representations of Indigenous Peoples. Through the use of cultural relativism, I am able to explain Indigenous cultures internally, by referencing them to my own frame of meaning (see Lynch, 2019). However, my potentially distorted lens can lead to inadvertent racism and colonialism towards the cultures that I am perceiving and interpreting (Lynch, 2019).

To counter the potential misinterpretations, aforementioned, I work to compare my interpretations to scholarly works. Through this, I seek to validate the meaning that I have developed. Although this may be effective, it is not the most effective or just method of assessment. Chartrand (2012) suggests that overcoming this barrier is achieved through collaboration throughout the research process, to allow insight and ties to complex Indigenous worldviews. Moreover, Cormier (2015) recognizes collaboration as a necessity to learn with each other and create better understanding between groups. While this is not to say that non-

Indigenous Peoples cannot complete research of Indigenous Peoples, it does evidence limitations to the cultural barriers that exist. Merely the limitations of being a non-Indigenous researcher proves the complexity of researching a group that the researcher does not identify with and the necessary attention that should be given through the research process to ensure the effectiveness of the research overall.

Theoretical Framework

My research is framed within postcolonial theory, which exposes the limits to academic Eurocentrism (Gandhi, 2019). In Canada, the ties to colonization remain in a designed White country, through neo-colonialism and lasting imperialism (Abele & Stasiulis, 1989; Breton, 2005; Clarke, 1997; Ward, 2002). Accounts of history and the design of Canadian society are based on a Eurocentric narrative that is recognized as an accurate account (Gandhi, 2019). Postcolonial theory addresses the theoretical and critical observations of colonies and Western powers, understanding how they interact and relate to the rest of the world (Olson, 1998). As well, postcolonial theory focuses on the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized, investigating the effects of culture clash and the dominance that occurs by one over another (Olson, 1998). In other words, postcolonial theory draws attention to the continued legacies of colonization on national identity.

Memmi (2013) contributes to postcolonial thought in relation to Eurocentrism in his description of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The act of colonialism is "one variety of fascism" based on the privilege the colonizer has, through the use of racism and terror (Memmi, 2013, p. 63). Postcolonial theory creates a link between "race, culture and gender, settler and native," sustaining a dominance and control (Rudunka & van Aarde, 2007, p. 1173). Despite the presence of democracy and apparent attempts at equality between colonizers

and Indigenous Peoples through the Truth and Reconciliation Act (2015), there is sustained colonial dominance by Canadian governments over aspects of education, culture and ideology (Gibson, 2017).

Fast and Collin-Vezina (2010) and Lawson and Tiffin (1994) suggest that the Federal government's approaches in the postcolonial setting are parallel to the colonizer, but in a renewed function of oppression, masked in institutionalized form. Since education is one of the institutionalized structures, it is imperative to assess curriculum materials, as a part of the framework of the education system, to ensure appropriateness for Indigenous students. Bhabha (1995) points out how the carefully established and highly sophisticated strategies behind colonial power allow for the maintenance of control and dominance. However, dominance through the colonial era and in the postcolonial era were and are not uniform, rather they differ from each other and are contextualized by social expectation (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1991; Ninnes & Burnett, 2004). The ongoing presence of colonialist ideas are intertwined in society and resultingly are present within school curriculum. Demerath (1999) completed similar research focusing on education in Papua New Guinea in the postcolonial era and determined that colonial elements have become deeply engrained in the Indigenous Peoples of Papua New Guinea's identities.

In my research, I focus on the curriculum materials within the Ontario public secondary education system, as 40% of public secondary students in Canada are in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2018) and 30% of students from K-12 in Ontario are in public secondary in the province (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Within the education system, an overwhelming majority of Indigenous students are currently not receiving an education that reflects their needs, rather it

focuses on the dominant, Eurocentric demographic that has sustained dominance on their land (Scott & Louie, 2020; Smith et al., 2018).

There exists an overall failure of the Ontario education system to support Indigenous students' calls for identification of a framework for education that is for Indigenous students by Indigenous educators. McCarty and Lee (2014) discuss a culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy that provides this necessary attention. Education for Indigenous students pertains to issues of language, race/ethnicity, social class, and extensive rights concerns (McCarty & Lee, 2014). In response to the necessity to focus on education that responds to the needs of Indigenous students, it is imperative to integrate a culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy.

Alim and Paris (2017) also attest to the necessity of a culturally sustaining pedagogy, due to the continued social and educational inequality that exists globally. The intention of such an approach is to sustain, according to them, "the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling" (p. 1). Doing so reintegrates culture into learning, allowing attention to be given to the complexity of social configurations within learning and in learner development (Lee, 2017). For Indigenous students, the use of a culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy assures attention is given to the needs of the Indigenous students, and that support is given to the revitalization and resurgence of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

For non-Indigenous students a change in pedagogy is also highly beneficial. Blackstock (2010) suggests that welcoming alternatives to Western paradigms can create more fruitful and beneficial learning. As well, by placing value on Indigenous scholars, histories, and worldviews, equity and appreciation of diversity can be achieved (Giroux, 2017). Further, Walia (2012)

describes the important role of non-Indigenous Peoples, as they must be accountable and responsive to Indigenous voices, needs, and political perspectives. Through representations of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous learners can also take on a role of leadership, standing in solidarity, to support the equity deserved (Walia, 2012). Moreover, students develop an understanding of Indigenous Peoples and history, creating reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples (Kovach, 2010). Thus, culturally sustaining pedagogy is mutually beneficial for all students.

Significance of the Research

My research supports the decolonization of the institutionalized school system in Ontario, as it draws attention to the potential effects that current curriculum materials may have on Indigenous students' identity development. Justice (2018) determines the criticality of including Indigenous literature based on the efforts of Indigenous Peoples in political, creative and intellectual aspects. Offering authentic Indigenous materials will allow for learners to challenge settler-colonial policies and practices and rethink the assumptions that have generated through stereotypical representations (Justice, 2018; Smith et al., 2018). Most importantly, the necessity for change is in response to the negative impact that misrepresentations by non-Indigenous authors has on Indigenous Peoples' identities and the lack of inclusion of Indigenous voice by using Indigenous authors (Fanshawe et al., 2019; Justice, 2019).

Change also supports just and honourable education for Indigenous students. Unfortunately, appropriate education for Indigenous students has never existed within institutionalized settings, evidenced by two-hundred years of Eurocentric construction that is incongruent with Indigenous students' learning needs (Cherubini, 2010; Harper & Thompson, 2017). Further, there is continued oppression against Indigenous Peoples in Canada by the

government (Kovach, 2010). The government, at all levels, has deep rooted Eurocentric ideologies, which also intertwine with dominant society, perpetuating inequality within the education system (Kovach, 2010). Schools are consistently used as a method to assimilate Indigenous Peoples, through the denigration of Indigenous languages, cultures and religious practice (Cormier, 2010). There has been a constant shift back and forth from strategies for full-scale cultural eradication to education policies that support segregation and cultural assimilation (Kovach, 2010). These on-going changes deeply affected Indigenous Peoples, cultures, communities, and relationships. Historically and still, the education system contributed to misrepresentations of Indigenous Peoples, to their cultural detriment, and to the perpetuation of stereotypes that operate in Canadian society. These "systemic efforts to control as assimilate" Indigenous Peoples is a result of internal colonization that causes problematic conditions, which contribute to difficulties for Indigenous students in education (Cormier, 2010, p. 29). Because of the effects, it has become exponentially critical for curriculum materials to incorporate accurate and respectful Indigenous content that is reflective of Indigenous students' needs.

Reformation of the curriculum materials used at the secondary level requires attention to the effects of current material use and the potential outcomes of change. Research on the current representations of Indigenous students in these curriculum materials is invaluable, as it sets a foundation for continued examination into inclusion within the institutionalized education system. Current research into larger scale Indigenous representations identifies continued colonial subordination and exploitation, opposed to the expectation of Indigenous empowerment (Nolan et al., 2020). Research into decolonization in the institutionalized setting must deepen the understanding of what decolonization in the school and curriculum means. Tuck and Yang (2012) reinforce the necessity of recognizing Indigenous Peoples, the struggles for sovereignty

and the contributions of Indigenous Peoples intellectually. Adoption of decolonization methods is not an easy practice and is often misconstrued by moves to innocence, a strategy to relieve guilt or responsibility without giving up land, power or privilege, that create the mirage of decolonization (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Research on Indigenous representations is thus imperative as it provides concrete evidence that change in the education system is required, which will also support the calls of reconciliation and ensure equity in education.

Manageable changes that can occur within the education system will be observed through the investigation of representations of Indigenous Peoples. By addressing what teachers know about Indigenous content and how to include it in their practice, a shift can begin towards increased representations. However, before moving towards increased representation, Sabzalian (2019) states that a complete understanding of the current status of representations of Indigenous Peoples must occur. Understanding current representations will allow for creative navigation of colonial dynamics and offer ease in inclusive and transformative practices (Sabzalian, 2019). Then, conceptualization of implementation of heightened representations of Indigenous Peoples by educators will result, as well the opportunity for educators to discern how curriculum and pedagogy must change to meet the needs of Indigenous students (Sabzalian, 2019; Tipton, 2019).

Chapter Two: A literature review on Representations of Indigenous Peoples in English Curriculum Materials

Within my thesis research, I explore representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom. Given my current understanding of Indigenous representations in secondary curriculum, I believe the curriculum does not adequately respond to the needs of Indigenous students, which I anticipate will be among the conclusions of my research (Battiste, 1998, 2005, 2017; Kovach, 2010). Since my research is focused on the representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature, my analysis primarily focuses on the use of literature in schooling and historical influences on ideologies within institutionalized education in Canada.

To contextualize my research, this literature review begins with the historical significance of my research and a background of the ongoing oppression against Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Through examination of relevant scholarship, I explore the relationship between fictional literature, stereotypes and identity development positioning my research focus within it. Restated from the introductory chapter, the question is: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario?

Through my investigation, I aim to better understand representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom. In what follows, I explore some of the scholarship on historical influences that have led to the current representations of Indigenous Peoples in education, the role of Eurocentrism and stereotypical characterization, and representations of Indigenous Peoples in literature.

Historical Influence and Current State of Indigenous Inequality

I situate my research within a historical trajectory, to provide a brief sketch of how colonization of North America has had adverse effects upon Indigenous Peoples. Drawing upon historical significance, my research works to understand how these events are interrelated with current circumstances that plague Indigenous Peoples in Canada. A direct impact of these injustices is exhibited within the education system, continually burdening the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, who have faced the traumatic realities of colonialism that remain ingrained in the very foundation of Canadian society. The relationship between colonizers and the Indigenous Peoples grew exponentially during the colonial rivalry between France and Great Britain, as Indigenous groups aligned with both European powers (Slattery, 2005). The alliances with the Indigenous Peoples allowed military control to be secured in North America (Milne, 2017). However, along with the transfer of New France to Great Britain came legislation that began the grim European control of the Indigenous Peoples.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued to recognize Indigenous rights to land and resources, but also initiated Indigenous rule under the Crown's protection (Slattery, 2005). The British North America Act also known as The Constitution Act, enacted in 1867, allowed the federal government exclusive power over "Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians" (Voyageur & Calliou, 2000, p. 106). From this, Parliament imposed a series of laws that exercised jurisdiction, resulting in the Indian Act (Voyageur & Calliou, 2000). Within the Indian Act, it was the obligation of the government to "civilize" the Indigenous Peoples, while protecting them (Bartlett, 1977).

The effects of the Indian Act were contradictory to the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960) and later changed after appeals were made to the United Nations Human Rights Tribunal about

specific rights (Voyageur & Calliou, 2000, p. 107). Concurrently, Indigenous Peoples were abused and oppressed through physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional traumas faced through historical examples such as residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and systemic racism that underlined most government actions (Friedel, 2010). Residential schools were an assimilative, genocidal, colonial practice that aimed to physically, biologically and culturally eradicate Indigenous Peoples from Canada (Woolford & Gacek, 2016). Residential schools were a dominant influence towards the transition and maintenance of Eurocentric education, through the creation of distrust of the Indigenous knowledge systems, Elder wisdom and the inner learning spirit (Battiste, 2017, p. 27). Similarly, the Sixties Scoop was a time period when federal policies allowed the removal of Indigenous children from homes, to be placed in the welfare system (Valiquette, 2019). The removal of children from their homes was another form of colonial and assimilatory practices that perpetuated trauma against Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Valiquette, 2019). These events, among others, have caused lasting, intergenerational effects on the Indigenous Peoples in Canada and supported the lasting presence of a Eurocentric education system.

Within the latter half of the 20st century, the Indigenous Peoples of Canada began to, yet again, face change in legislation that directly controlled their rights. The Constitution Act of 1982 was developed, amending the previous Constitution and adding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Kilgour, 1983). Within the Act, amendments affirmed treaty and "Aboriginal" rights, as they were called then, including the right to education (Government of Canada, 2020). The Act was the first time that "Aboriginal" was defined as "Indian, Inuit, and Metis." During this time, Bill C-31 gained momentum and aligned the Indian Act regarding gender equality rights (Fiske & George, 2006). However, the legislative changes were not significant enough to create

substantial change in jurisdiction and funding for Indigenous Peoples, limiting progression towards *just* and *honourable* change. Colonizers and Eurocentric ideologies continued to dominate Canadian society (Friedel, 2010). Due to the persisting dominance of Eurocentric ideologies, Indigenous students in Canada remain oppressed through foundational representations and largely remain eradicated from the institutionalized education system across the nation.

After centuries of policies designed to eradicate Indigenous culture, long-term effects still perpetually support eradication. Within education specifically, Indigenous students have faced forced assimilation through enrollment in residential schools and forcible removal from their families for cultural genocide, through senseless government action (Battiste, 2017). These ceaseless inflictions have cause irrefutable harm to Indigenous students and overall Indigenous well-being. However, recent actions, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) Calls to Action have worked to redress the legacy of residential schools and toward reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. The Equity Action Plan "promotes awareness about First Nation, Metis and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions in schools" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 6). However, there remains no form of accountability for implementation and limited attention to the lack of progress in the five years since the Calls to Action were issued (Jewell & Mosby, 2019). Veracini (2011) connects this to the difficulties of decolonization, suggesting that Euro dominance in government and education skews the appropriateness of action. St. Denis (2011) further identifies difficulties through the amalgamation of all persons of non-colonial ancestry. When society only values and recognizes one group, colonial dominance classified all Indigenous groups as the same (St. Denis, 2011).

These misconceived notions have then led to continued Euro dominance in education, despite attempts to create equality.

Further, Battiste (2017) argues that "the education system has not yet ensured that non-Indigenous children develop an accurate understanding of the Indigenous Peoples in Canada and their knowledge systems" (p. 32). Such a statement goes beyond the importance for Indigenous students to have the opportunity to learn through traditional means and towards the idea that all students should have the opportunity to learn through Indigenous pedagogical approaches. McGregor (2012) identifies the necessity of inclusion, as school climates that are not inclusive can cause limitations in productivity or student development. Current approaches to diversity in the classroom, while seemingly effective, are causing the opposite effect of the intention, as they have fostered the development of an umbrella approach to diversity (St. Denis, 2011). An umbrella approach takes away from the necessary attention that should be given to Indigenous culture, overlooking the importance of Indigenous Peoples in comparison to immigrant cultures (St. Denis, 2011). These amalgamations into an umbrella approach to diversity are yet again a Eurocentric method to meeting requirements for non-dominant cultures within the Euro-dominant institutionalized structure of education.

Sustaining Eurocentric ideologies is harmful to all students, evidenced through the manipulative factors experienced in residential schools. Within the Eurocentric education systems, Indigenous students were manipulated and exploited through cognitive manipulation and forced homogenization (Battiste, 2017). These methods discredited Indigenous knowledges and approaches to life and education, prompting the persisting existence of issues associated with these horrific historical means (Battiste, 2017). The result of such impositions has left a lasting impact on Indigenous Peoples and national approaches to education. Now, these same

approaches are implemented through covert tactics, often unbeknownst to the educator due to the deeply intertwined presence in all aspects of education, such as physical structure, behaviour management, assessment, and curriculum (Abawi, 2019; Bell, 2019). Due to these underlying ideological implications, Indigenous Peoples will continue to be oppressed until effective intervention occurs. Thus, the historical injustices inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples and persisting Euro dominance in education contribute to the lasting adverse effects that have been imposed upon their personal and collective identity.

The lasting effects of oppression against Indigenous Peoples in Canada, while largely due to the dominance of Eurocentrism, also relate to subset ideologies that were drawn from European thought. One such theory that remains prevalent is Social Darwinism, explaining social inequality beyond the deeply rooted issues that persist. Darwinism is based on the concepts of "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" when addressing views of human society (Rogers, 1972, p. 265). The use of this concept by Social Darwinists is based on the rationalization of social preconceptions, overlooking other theories that more deeply investigate social issues (Rogers, 1972, p. 265). Social Darwinism is a pertinent issue for Indigenous Peoples due to the undercurrent the ideology has sustained in dominant thought.

Derived from European ideologies on racial superiority, the initiation of Darwinism in the 1870s endorsed natural selection, strongly influencing ideologies towards human evolution and racial hierarchy (Hawkins, 1997). Impacts of the theory led to inequality towards the understanding of intelligence, race, social organization, sexual difference, and morality (Hawkins, 1997). For Indigenous Peoples, the theory was applied against their well-being, through the alignment with the historic and present dominant Eurocentric ruling in Canada. Indigenous Peoples were seen as naïve, savage, cannibals who required education (Brown,

2019). The portrayal of the pre-colonized Indigenous Peoples is that of a weak population, "outside the realm of God, morality, and civilization" who needed the European colonizers to help them (Brown, 2019, p. 45). Even though the theory is not a dominant worldview, the framework of the concept remains in the underpinnings of presiding social ideologies.

In Canada, the employment of Social Darwinism is present in the treatment and attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples, through overt and covert methods. Historically, there exists a perception that Indigenous Peoples have the opportunity to "buy-in" to dominant culture to thrive and rid themselves of the hardships they face when working to sustain their traditions and culture in an oppressive environment (Smith, 2003). However, Tully (2000) describes assimilation as cultural genocide, fulfilling the colonial intent of complete eradication of Indigenous cultures. The multi-faceted approach to genocide against the Indigenous People gained headway through the education system, by their forcible transfer to colonial ideologies within residential school and modern Eurocentric education structures (MacDonald, 2014). Largely, such an issue occurs because of the Eurocentric dominance of society where pre-existing and rightfully continual resistant Indigenous societies exist (Tully, 2000). Such resistance is seen as a factor for their impending demise, rather than a deeper connection to the colonial impacts that have fostered intergenerational detriment.

The theoretical explanation of Social Darwinism remains a pertinent cause of misunderstanding surrounding the issues and inequalities faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada. A lack of truth and clarity surrounding the history of Canada and the actions of colonizers in Canada has caused the negative perception of Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Bielefeld, 2018). Often, poor income management, addiction and crime are associated with the Indigenous Peoples, as well as beliefs that they receive government handouts for nothing,

without consideration of the root reasons behind these aspects (Bielefeld, 2018). As well, there is persistent misrepresentations in media, from Eurocentric views, that misleads societal understanding of the Indigenous Peoples past, present and future (Brown, 2019). Thus, the lasting inaccurate portrayal of Indigenous Peoples has fostered the resonating connection between Indigenous Peoples and the theory of Social Darwinism. To better understand the representations of Indigenous Peoples, I next define the cultivation of stereotypes, and examine how Euro-dominant identity directives are entwined within education to impose identity directives upon Indigenous learners.

The Cultivation of Stereotypes and Imposed Euro-dominant Identity

Alongside the importance of understanding how historical relationships perpetuate oppression against Indigenous Peoples, I explore the concept "stereotype," specifically how it affects identity development, and the power that stereotypes have to support Euro-dominant identity narratives. By definition, a stereotype is, according to Bordalo et al. (2016) a "widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing" that is "ubiquitous" and often focuses on demographic segregations (p. 1753). The use of a stereotype is often exaggerated and is a response to "interpersonal beliefs and expectancies that are widely shared and generally invalid" (Jussim et al., 2016, p. 33). Use of stereotypes can be a method of control, through utilization of stereotypes against subordinates to maintain oppressive action against them (Fiske, 2018).

Stereotypes can have a strong impact on identity, as a part of adolescent socio-cognitive development (Boyes & Chandler, 1992; Greenwald & Lei, 2020; Remedios & Snyder, 2018). Identity develops from experiences and the social influences that determine *who we are,* and these experiences often include exposure to stereotypes (Fanon, 1967). The presence of

stereotypes is expansive, but within my research I focus on stereotypes within fictional literature. Stereotypes in fictional literature are connected to archetypes, allowing the opportunity for the audience to easily identify basic character roles (Kidd, 2016). Addressing the ways that such representations shape identity seems useful given that requiring students to read fictional literature is a common practice in schools.

Stereotypes support oppressive Euro-dominant narratives and can drastically influence Indigenous students' identity development. From the dominance of Eurocentrism, through assimilative nationalism, the existing ideals are normalized and standardized as an identity expectation for all. Based on the stereotypical representations of cultures, ethnicities and, races, a social hierarchy develops and becomes accepted within society. Normalization is based on the idea of standardization, which also provides status to relevant standards (Copp, 2001). Through the creation of a standard, a criterion is developed that causes judgement or appraisal of one's adherence to these attributes (Copp, 2001). The perception of normalization is that the accounts of the past, whether meaningful or meaningless, are representative and explanatory of fundamental relations (Peregrin, 2016).

Through the development of social ideals and normalization, applications of misconceptions are applied to groups, prompting implicit and explicit prejudice (Mendelberg, 2008). When applied to race, the effects are evidenced through racial priming and the creation of racial messages through implicit idealization (Mendelberg, 2008). Racial cues play an important role in racial attitudes, because these perceptions affect attitudes towards individuals, based on the normalized classification or stereotypical representations (Valentino et al., 2018). Sustained perceptions of races being inadequate then foster hostility between races, fuelled through the normalization of these segregations (Valentino et al., 2018).

Often, Euro-Canadian socio-cultural ideals are perpetuated in education, as educators, the content and curriculum create normalization and adversely impact Indigenous identities (Battiste & Semaganis, 2002; Pauker et al., 2015). Commonly, this includes ignoring or undervaluing Indigenous perspectives, including Indigenous worldviews and learning practices (Johnston & Mason, 2020). Normalization in Canadian schools reflects the colonial perspective, due to the sustained Eurocentric foundation of the public education system. In schools, students learn social ideas through the curriculum, interactions with teachers, and the overall school context, most of which are contextualized by dominant ideas about society from a Eurocentric lens (Dewey, 1922). Within Canada, the ideals are based on Eurocentric ideologies, reflective of the sustained Euro dominance across the nation and within all facets of society (Griffith, 2018).

While Euro-dominant narratives remain normalized, non-dominant populations are subjected to perpetual marginalization and oppression. Cultural, ethnic and racial portrayal through stereotypes in society, can lead to forced identity and negative perception of ones' true self-identification. The foundation of forced identity begins with the idea of nationalism and the underlying uniformity nationalism forces on citizens of Canada. Nationalism, a concept derived from the rise of Western Europe and societies of Western European descent, reflects the position of economic, political and cultural leadership (Greenfeld, 2012). As a political and social ideology, nationalism acts as a socio-political entity that is, as explained by Breton (2010), "constructed, maintained, expanded or otherwise transformed," to support dominant control over resources or all of Canada (p. 85).

The Eurocentric ideologies that exist at the core of nationalism are based on the European thought of superiority (Lambropoulos, 2019). European societal practice became a self-titled standard for civilizations, justifying European expansion across the globe (Lambropoulos, 2019).

The persistence of nationalism in Canada then became based on the sustained integration of Eurocentric ideologies, fuelled by the social construction of "principles of inclusions and exclusions," and the conception of "national interest" (Breton, 2010, p. 85). These connections are present when nationalism creates an association between policies and unification (Gutierrez, 2017). Through the creation of standardization, practices become "common culture" and an expectation is created (Gutierrez, 2017, p. 3). Further, creating a national perspective nurtures the development of collective behaviour in response to problems (Breton, 2010).

Since the fundamental components of colonialism are the displacement of a population and the unequal relations with the now displaced population, Eurocentric ideologies were imposed upon non-colonial Canadians, including the Indigenous Peoples (Veracini, 2011). Within colonialism, the act of assimilation is exercised, creating Euro dominance and the idea that Eurocentric ideologies were best suited for all of Canada. In other words, there is a continuation of European privilege and power through the forced alignment with colonial ideologies. Assimilation occurs when a person or group's culture transforms to resemble that of another, gained through incorporation into experience, history and cultural life (Younge, 1944, p. 372). These practices create an identity for Canadians, despite the recognition of their connection to the individual.

Specifically, Canadian culture falls under the umbrella culture of the Western world, which Eurocentric thought believes is "central" and "standard" when compared to other regions (Ahmed, 2017). The culture itself can be defined based on the European or Anglo-American ancestry that has dominated through colonialism and exhibited as the dominant worldview in many structures of Canadian society (Ahmed, 2017). Griffith (2018) suggests that the ideologies and colonial structures that exist within Canadian schools and society are an extension of

"imperialism" and "White supremacy" that is based on Eurocentric ideology (p. 30). However, the colonial perspective of Eurocentric diffusionism, which is the way cultural processes move from the Euro sector into the non-Euro sector, is a result of Europe being more advanced or progressive (Blaut, 2012). Such a perspective suggests that non-Europeans were the recipients of what was believed to be innovative culture and ideology (Blaut, 2012). Another perspective is that of Freire (1993), who believes the sustained Euro dominance is responsive to a fear of freedom, which results from "taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, in preference to the risks of liberty" (p. 36). Such compliance can cause the oppressed to confuse freedom with maintenance of the status quo (Freire, 1993). Given the dominance of Eurocentrism within identity and the assimilative action that is exercised through propagated nationalism, it is evident that limitations are placed upon identity development of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Based on the display of culture, ethnicity or race through stereotypes, idealized ideologies of assimilation are imposed upon Indigenous Peoples, dictating how they *perform.* Stereotypical representations of ethnic and racial identity have a direct effect on the individual's identity development (Way & Rogers, 2015). Prato et al. (2016) argue that cultural, ethnic, and racial portrayal through stereotypes supports the idea that an individual is only "authentic" to that classification if they align with these derived perceptions (p. 183). The basis of generalization suggests that to fit in, one must align with these base components, otherwise they cannot identify with this social group. Such a process exists through the development of group schemas, which "have broad influences upon [a] persons[s] perception" and "judgement of and behaviour toward others" (Strangor & Schaller, 2000, p. 66). Beyond physical and behavioural representations, Prato et al. (2016) suggest that music is another context by which a "powerful nonverbal form of communication" plays a "major role in constructing ethnic stereotypes and reinforcing them" (p.

183). As well, portrayal in the media often refers to racial communities, coding and identifying experience by race (Lund & Carr, 2007).

Stereotypical definition of cultures, ethnicities, and races has been performed for years, allowing ease in identification or classification of an individual, and imposing upon one's identity. For Indigenous Peoples, these perceptions result in negative perception, similar to other ethnic groups who are non-White (Leavitt et al., 2015). The representations of an Indigenous Person are often associated with poverty, lack of education, and addiction (Leavitt et al., 2015). Awofeso (2011) parallels these perceptions in the former British colony of Australia, stating that Indigenous Peoples are associated with smoking, alcoholism, unkempt appearance, swearing and public nuisance. While these are just a few overarching stereotypes, these identity sets are evidence of how identity has been directed through the specific classification of the essentialized Indigenous culture, ethnicity, and race in society and stereotypes. Due to the limited and stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples, Eurocentric ideologies have remained dominant. From this dominance, a series of negative implications have been imposed upon Indigenous Peoples and culture, perpetuating the oppression against Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

In addition to the limitations that Eurocentric ideologies impose on revitalization of Indigenous Peoples, there is also a component of false representations of identity affecting Indigeneity that exists due to the role that Eurocentrism plays in the process of identity development. Characterized portrayals of Indigenous Peoples have been "essentialized" for ease in the implementation of government policy, negligent of the variations within the wide group of Indigenous Peoples (Frideres, 2008, p. 314). Essentialism is a lens by which groups are simplified into unchangeable properties (Grillo, 2003). An essentialized view of Indigenous

Peoples overlooks the richness of Indigeneity, due to the amalgamation of Peoples into a single and often inaccurate description (Frideres, 2008). Fanon (1967) explains that psychiatric-psychoanalytic factors within economic and cultural colonization foster alienation and impacts the core of identity and who we are. Such effects are present when investigating Indigenous identities because it is evident that the dominant Eurocentric culture has damaged Indigenous sense of identity and overall collective identity of numerous Indigenous Peoples (Frideres, 2008). Thus, the bounteous identities of Indigenous Peoples have become falsely represented by an overarching Euro-developed portrayal of a singular Indigenous identity.

Beyond the essentialized perspective of what Indigenous identities *are,* there are also perpetual impositions on identity through the education system. Considering the teacher's background is important for addressing influences upon identity because it allows attention to the narrative that is being generated by the teacher and for the student. The professional knowledge that is implemented within the classroom setting is supporting the identity development of Indigenous learners, which can be skewed by the race, history and experiences of the educator (Burleigh & Burm, 2013). Often, educators take up employment in First Nations communities, bringing their Eurocentric educational experiences and their "Whiteness" with them (Burleigh & Burm, 2013). These impositions come in the delivery of curriculum that is shaped by Eurocentrism and Whiteness and is now being taught by non-Indigenous educators (Higgins et al., 2015). Many of these teachers are educated through the "Catholic [or] public school systems in urban centres" and receive "mainstream preservice training, [which] took place in large-scale, westernized institutions" (Burleigh & Burm, 2013). Their educational experiences then reproduce colonialism and racism in teaching and in schools that require an accommodated and modified approach to traditional institutionalized education (Higgins et al., 2015). To determine

how these impacts relate to identity development, the next section will focus on what identity is and how it is developed within the individual.

Theorizing Identity and Identity Development

To aid in the understanding of how identity is influenced, I provide in this section an overview of the concept of identity and the influences towards identity development. Identity is a representation of the self, "made into a story by the person whose *self* it is" (McAdams, 1995, p. 385). Erik Erikson (1968) parallels the concept by correlating identity with "the core of the individual" and also "the core of [their] communal culture" (p. 22). Through identity, the individual can be described, making sense of their actions and what their actions say about who they are (Hoyle et al., 2019). Together, these unique characteristics, including traits and preferences, determine personal identity and define how individuals differ from each other (Hoyle et al., 2019).

While identity is, on one hand, about individual traits and characteristics, it is also closely defined within the concepts of social identity theory. Social identity theory suggests the individual perception of the self is tied into the representations of social categorization, aiding in the definition of oneself in society (Crisp & Hewstone, 2000). Tajfel (1978) describes social identity as a construct of the individual that is derived from their knowledge of their membership within a social group tied to the value and emotional significance of their membership in the group. According to Ellemers et al. (1999) factors that affect social identity include evaluation of group membership, awareness of membership, and a desire to remain a part of the group. Jackson (2011) revised these components based on a factor analysis, which resulted in the inclusion of solidarity, togetherness, and common fate as facets of desire to remain in the group.

These aspects of social identity theory are key because formation of behaviour for social categorization stems from the belonging with social groups (Cameron, 2004).

Categorization remains a component of identity, reflective of categorization in society, where division is used to better meet the needs of *things* that are alike. By categorizing, a connection is created between attributes and specific identities, offering a stronger *understanding* of what it means to *be* in a specific category. However, the creation of identity is beyond the assumed factors that construct simplistic classification, rather there are cognitive and psychological aspects of the concept that support authentic identity development. One theoretical stream within the scholarship on identity is an individual perspective, determining that identity development is a result of independent exposure to various influences throughout one's life (Alexander, 2019; Ashforth, 2015).

Experiences that students have through education have a profound impact on the overarching social structure of society (Aronowitz, 2002; Entwistle, 1979; Kovach, 2010). Bourdieu (1990) parallels the idea that experience influences the individual through the concept of habitus. Habitus is the way that the individual perceives and responds to their social structures and process of socialization (Bourdieu, 1990). As well, human consciousness comes from dialectical interaction with the world making it imperative to recognize that experiences in school impacts students (Au, 2007). These interactions are a combination of "the ways that people live, enact, or resist their social realities" (Adelson, 2007, p. 6). The result of persistent influence through experience is positive or negative outcomes (Ashforth, 2015). These outcomes then create an adoption of identities that can lead to advantages and disadvantages, shaping perception of what is and is not acceptable (Ashforth, 2015). For Indigenous Peoples, cultural and community traumatization has resulted as the product of internal colonization and neglectful

government practices that are not attentive to Indigenous health and well-being (Adelson, 2000).

A cultural decomposition from the missionization process was the effect of brutally enforced

non-native ideologies and limited human agency within education (Adelson, 2000). Thus, the

individuals' experiences and interactions with the world becomes the primary influences on how

individuals classify their identity or how they situate themselves within the various aspects of

identity.

These life experiences are defined as narrative identity, the internalized and evolving life

story of the individual, which is impacted by the past and imagined future of a person (McAdams

& McLean, 2013). Considering many of the formative years of an individual are spent in the

education system, it is expected that these years attribute to the development of one's identity.

Essentially, it is life stories that are "variegated and dynamic, more culturally contoured, and

more situated in, and even constitutive of, ongoing interpersonal relationships and conversational

performances" (McAdams, 2018, p. 361). The concept of narrative identity is similar to social

identity, which is created based on the perception and interaction with social groupings. Social

identity is reflective of the group to which a person belongs, acting as their social identification

by mimicking group features, and determining emotion or behaviour (Scheepers & Ellemers,

2019). Philosophically the extrinsic self is a reflection of the intrinsic properties that influence

character, resulting in action (Alexander, 2019). Together, these factors collectively aid in

identity development and the way an individual is identified in society.

Critical understanding of the development of identity is related to the representations of

Indigenous students in schools because adolescent age and school settings are pivotal for identity

development (Kroger, 2017; Rich & Schachter, 2012). Baquedano-Lopez and Janetti (2017),

Machando-Casas (2012) and Perez et al. (2016) determined that Indigenous students may deny

their ethnic identity due to social and academic schooling experiences. Due to the perception of Indigenous students in schools, discriminatory practices, and a lack of equal representations, youth may assimilate and adapt to the accepted representations (Gonzalez, 2018). Further, Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) determine a connection between racism and resistance to Indigenous identity in education and the disassociation from Indigenous identity. For Indigenous students, the formative years of identity development, specifically within school settings, has the potential to bar Indigenous youth from embracing and exploring their identity and may force conformity to the stereotypically accepted identities that are represented. Largely, stereotypes play a key role on identity development, through the influence they have during the developmental process.

The misconception of others that resonates due to the presence of stereotypes directly affects an individuals' identity or association with identity groups. The stereotypes that comes with identity groups can foster an individual's identity change or lack of acceptance of their true identity. Cokley (2002) determined that representations directly affect identity, but more so through negative representations. Haslam et al. (1999) paralleled these findings in an experiment of identity manipulation when it was determined that participants were "more likely to describe a group using positive traits" to represent their own identity (p. 815).

Identity, then, is influenced by social experience. Thus, individuals' exposure to representations of their identity group plays a significant role in their identity development. Human social behaviour occurs when people interact in various social situations, including with family, educators and peers at school, friends, and other contexts of social interaction (Argyle, 2017). All aspects of life influence identity: place of residence, employment, marital status, and social associations (Lund & Carr, 2007). Helms's (1995) racial identity model suggests

internalized racism plays a large role in self-affirmation and the collective development of group identity. Responsive to the representations of attributes that make up identity, identity development can then be affected, as the stereotypical association of these can hinder healthy identity development.

Cokley (2002) suggests that stereotypical influences are more crucial and effective in the early stages of identity development, when individuals are more vulnerable to negative stereotypes, as opposed to those who have developed an identity and have strayed from the influence of internalized oppression. During adolescence, individuals are exposed to stereotypes in the classroom setting, where narratives can be formed through material use, supporting unwavering representations and fostering insufficient identity development. For example, Mark Twain's *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* is a racist narrative that supports hegemonic curriculum (Howard, 2016) or Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which reinforces heteronormativity and gender normativity through sexual stereotypes (Szirom, 2017).

Changes come directly from a person's perception of a social group because if they view it as negative they will not want to personally identify with that classification. However, Saucier et al. (2016) suggest that the impact on the group targeted in a stereotype may only be deterred if the perceived intention was negative. Stereotypical humour-based racialization has been a part of Western culture for quite some time, with an only recent investigation of the psychological effects of these attacks on identity (Saucier et al., 2016). The findings suggest that positive correlations exist with negative association, but also through the reinforcement of the status quo and persistence of stereotypical referencing in society (Saucier et al., 2016). These links are hegemonic construction, which result in cultural violence, as schools, teachers and students establish and endorse these differences (Khoja-Moolji, 2012). Further, formal and informal

school culture works to support structural violence, as the social structure exploits, marginalizes and fragments "the Other" to maintain the status quo and informal power dynamic (Khoja-Moolji, 2012).

Overall, there are strong associations between stereotypes and social groups, in many categories, affecting perceptions of the self when identifying with these groups (McLaughlin et al., 2018). Perception of negative stereotypes can further negatively influence the individual, through performance academically, professionally and socially, lending the argument that individuals will change their identity to avoid negative stereotypes (Shih et al., 1999). Within the education system, stereotypes are covertly woven into curriculum and teaching, confirming their use in larger social settings and allowing the direct influence on identity to persist (Kamasak et al., 2020; Kerr et al., 2016; Kuhl et al., 2019). Thus, attention must be given to the use of stereotypes to alleviate their imposition on identity development.

Moreover, to deepen the understanding of how stereotypes play a role in identity development, the larger presence of stereotypes, as structural violence, in society must also be addressed. Structural violence is the inequality, injustice and oppression within society that is deeply engrained and normalized within institutions, such as the education system (Mari et al., 2020). Those who benefit from structural violence will tend to work to maintain the status quo, to reduce the risk of destabilizing the hierarchal structure that has been developed within society and institutions (Galtung, 1969). The use of stereotypes fits into structural violence through the maintained perceptions towards social groups, based on the potentially misidentifying aspects of stereotypical portrayal.

Accepted ideals are perpetuated in society through stereotypes. By examining the role that stereotypes play in interactions and representations in society, I work to delineate how

identity is directly influenced. These interactions are a time for the individual to make judgements about the social world and interpret how they behave within it (Crafa et al., 2020). Objects, services, environments, and many other factors play a role in how an individual may respond to what is around them (Gardiner & Niedderer, 2017). These interactions set out roles and role-relationships between those who interact and foster the development of social behaviours (Argyle, 2017). As well, they support social and cultural learning that has implications on an individual's behaviour (Crafa et al., 2020).

Social behaviours, such as interaction, are encouraged within society, as avoidance of interaction is seen as anti-social and unappealing (Gardiner & Niedderer, 2017). Encouraging interactions is a social construction in response to social design, which is the way that environments and society have been constructed to interact, allowing the divergence of different perspectives for social engagement (Gardiner & Niedderer, 2017). Differing perspectives tear at the dominant narrative that has been sustained in Western society, present through stereotyping and hierarchal privileges associated with categorization (Miyamoto et al., 2018). Oppenheimer et al. (2020) add to this argument by correlating social rejection with suicidal ideation, prompting concern over the necessity for youth to *fit in.* The prominent role that social interaction has on nurturing social behaviours makes it crucial to understand dominant narratives and the stereotypes that support them.

The support of dominant narrative by stereotypes exists through representations. Stereotypical representations that associate with hierarchal privileges in society are a representation of sustained Eurocentrism in colonized societies. Society is composed of relationships between people, which leads to the development of social structures that impact social relations (McGarty, 2017). Often, these stereotypical representations create prejudice

towards individuals and groups, altering how people intake and process information used to engage with others (Nelson, 2002). Rubinstein et al. (2018) suggest that the presence of stereotypes impacts the perception that one has of another, with the stereotype taking primacy over the individuating information. Talaga (2017) recognises this circumstance affecting Indigenous Peoples by the overarching stereotype that they are substance abusers and alcoholics, without consideration of the traumatic historical trajectory that has led to this unfortunate outcome for some Indigenous Peoples. There is a reliance on the stereotype that fosters bias, rather than attention to individual difference (Rubinstein et al., 2018). The stereotype acts as a dominant part of an impression of a social target, based upon social group membership and the stereotypical attributes, while personal attributes remain secondary (Bodenhausen et al., 2016). It becomes apparent that stereotypes, generated through socialization, play a dominant role in perception of others and of oneself.

From a sociological perspective, stereotyping is, as Perkins (2018) put it, an explicit and implicit monolithic categorization of social groupings that are not accurate for all members of the group. Bordalo et al. (2016) suggest that stereotypes often are also tied to groups that "have been historically mistreated," forcing perpetual false beliefs regarding these social groups (p. 1754). Kidd (2016) adds that the characteristics aligned with stereotyping very easily align with subgroups, which can hinder the recognized value these groups present. Many of the groups have a plethora of other attributes that are ignored because stereotypes are perceived as reality (Kidd, 2016, p. 27). Drawing attention to the influence that stereotypes have in society reveals how perceptions about others are often directed through stereotypes and impact social interactions (Williams, 2017).

Deeply engrained in society, stereotypes are perpetuated through "racializing structures, social processes, and social representations," and shaped by subgroups classified through assumptions (Aghasaleh, 2018, p. 102). Exhibited and increasingly disseminated through government policies, the media, and word-of-mouth based on racist ideologies, stereotypes become powerful (Frey & Borogonovi, 2017; Gabriele, 2018). These overarching representations are what truly impact the education system and identity development, as the perceptions towards individuals have a direct impact on socialization and interactions in society. Thus, identifying the parallels between stereotyping and social norms, in texts used in schools, illuminates how stereotypes may be continually reinforced. To explore if and how parallels between stereotyping and social norms are reinforced in texts used in schools, I focus directly on the influences of fictional literature on identity development and the presence of stereotypes within these texts.

Racial Identity Development, Stereotypes, and Fictional Literature

English curriculum plays a critical role for student learning, as it is a core, mandatory course that students are enrolled in for the entirety of their public education experience. Within English education, students utilize various materials that allow them to explore themselves and the world around them, including fictional literature. Fictional literature plays a key role in identity development, based on the character traits used to depict various roles (Leal, 1999). The creation of ideal and substandard traits is reflected through the protagonist and antagonist roles within fictional texts (Leal, 1999). These representations include racial, physical and cultural attributes that sustain Whiteness and colonial dominance in Canada.

For Indigenous Peoples, negative portrayal has been depicted for decades, through belittling representations as delinquent savages (Kelly, 2017). White people have colonized much of the world, resulting in racial divisions and the dominance of the White people in many

aspects of literary representation (Lund & Carr, 2007, p. 1). The representations correlate with powerful, leading, or dominating characteristics, which are tied to deep-rooted historical events, including slavery, colonization of Indigenous Peoples, neo-colonialism, and imperialism (Lund & Carr, 2007, p. 1). The racial hierarchy of White privilege continues to exist as a "legacy of European colonial imperialism" and is evidenced through "theories of globalization and post coloniality" to depict the dominance that "White people" have as a "superior race" (Jay & Jones, 2005, p. 100).

Racially, Whiteness sustains dominance, as consumer research has proven *White faces* and *White spaces* overwhelmingly exist in society, causing unconscious performance of Whiteness (Burton, 2009). Whiteness is the idea that there is racial privilege in the "lives, attitudes, and actions of White people" (Hartigan, 1997, p. 496). Whiteness is a multi-dimensional social process, a location based on structural advantage, a racial privilege, and set of cultural practices, and a standpoint from which White people view themselves, others and society (DiAngelo, 2018). Denial of this intertwined privilege is then a fundamental method for White people to maintain unequal racial power (DiAngelo, 2018). Further, Whiteness has been identified as the "core set of racial interests" as superiority in racial hierarchy (Hartigan, 1997, p. 496).

These ideal traits are perpetuated within various social contexts, commonly referred to in the education setting as well. In literature, DiAngelo (2018) points out White privilege in reference to the identification of character race, which is rarely done for White characters. DiAngelo attributes this to White people simply being people, whereas other race characters are defined by their racial classification. Also, racial ideal traits are supported through the interconnected Eurocentric ideologies in the school structure and curriculum, supporting a White

narrative (Jay & Jones, 2005). More so, redundant representations of stereotypical characterizations lead to inequalities of traits, sustaining the negative alignment with racialized minorities (Hartigan, 1997). From this, stereotypical representations become connected to races and support racial segregation in society.

The necessity behind recognizing representations in fictional literature is responsive to the central role it plays within English courses at the secondary level. To focus critically on stereotype influence in the classroom, my research addresses stereotypical representations in fictional literature, due to the use of fictional literature with all secondary students within the four mandatory English courses at the secondary level. Stereotypes within fictional literature are only one influence on students at the secondary level but is important to analyze because English courses are mandatory to achieve an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Fictional literature plays an important role in Secondary English classrooms but distorts perceptions of identity differences. The use of fictional literature allows students to gain knowledge, understand good and bad, and develop moral understanding (Benton, 2017; Green, 2016). Further, fictional literature offers students an opportunity to make connections with the story and their own life through character-based comprehension (Hodges et al., 2018). As well, fictional literature helps students develop perspective-taking skills and develop social understanding through the perceptions of characters (Hodges et al., 2018; Oatley, 2011). However, Dash (2016) suggests that fictional narratives can be detrimental, as texts are not often based on historical investigation and blur the difference between fiction and non-fiction. The difficulty with blurring between truth and fabricated stories lies within the use of fiction as comprehension of social worlds (Oatley, 2016). Consciousness is used for comprehension of the real world, which is similar to the consciousness developed through simulations of the social

worlds exhibited in fictional literature (Oatley, 2016). This parallel can make inauthentic

fictional literature seem authentic and result in application of learning from fictional literature to

be applied into the real world (Stamou, 2018). Implications of these interchanges can be

detrimental, especially when fictional literature contains inaccurate stereotypical representations.

The intention of using fictional literature in the classroom is to positively develop the

learner through its use, which may not always be the case. Portrayals of characters that can carry

into the real-world perceptions of people cause skewed perceptions of people based on their

classifying demographics (Benton, 2017; Melhem & Punyanunt-Carter, 2019). For minorities,

the skewed portrayals through characters in fictional literature can further engrain stereotypes

and increase passive and uncritical acceptance of these portrayals (McLaughlin et al., 2018). For

Indigenous Peoples, these skewed portrayals through characters in fictional literature can sustain

representations of being disenfranchised, homeless, or invisible as authentic representations

(Wilson, 2019). As well, the literature's portrayal of characterizations can impact how the reader

perceives various attributes, imposing on their understanding of themselves and others (Kunst et

al., 2012). Based on the value that fictional literature has as an instructional tool within the

classroom, it is imperative to recognize the effects of literature's content more deeply.

McLaughlin et al. (2018) argue that stereotype presence in fictional literature is reductive

and formative, and used to teach and entertain readers (McLaughlin et al., 2018). In the

classroom, students utilize critical analysis and discuss fictional texts to draw attention to issues,

and rethink who they are and how they interact with the world (Cook, 2016). As well, students

develop preconceived notions through fictional literature, based on gender roles, careers,

sexuality, and other subgroups of society (Abad & Pruden, 2013). Representations of stereotypes

in fictional literature correlate with the corresponding stereotypes in real life (Trebbe et al.,

2017). Due to the necessity to reduce complexity in social environments, often a stereotype is unconsciously and automatically applied to aid in categorization of people and reduce complex reality (Lippmann, 1949; Trebbe et al., 2017). Categorization occurs by placing an individual into a social (race or ethnicity) category and then utilizing stereotypes to connect positive or negative designations, fostering value creation (Trebbe et al., 2017). By using stereotypes, a common understanding of the generalized individual is created, and implications are made for the individual's characteristics, roles and behaviours (Trebbe et al., 2017).

Hinton (2017) suggests that the misconception and biased cognition towards people and social groups came from authoritarianism. Authoritarianism traditionally aligns with Eurocentric educational ideologies, prompting a dominant presence in the institutionalized classroom (Hinton, 2017). In literature, archetypes are often developed, which present a character that provides the audience with a mental model of themselves and others (Kidd, 2016). Archetypes are the original model that generates an assumed ideal pattern, from which stereotypes develop based on the preconceived and oversimplified idea of characteristics attached to a person (Kidd, 2016). Essentially, stereotypes allow people to connect through the recognizability of the character and the archetype allows us to understand the character (Falsafi et al., 2011). For example, the ruler or king is an archetype describing a character who creates order from chaos and the character is often stereotypically controlling, stern, responsible (Robertson, 2016). Often, this role is portrayed by a White male or Renaissance man, with specific and ideal attributes including charm, strength and intelligence (Robertson, 2016).

The process of creating characters includes specific attributes that evoke emotion and create relatability, prompting the audience's ability to "tune in" to the content (Kidd, 2016, p. 26). These parallels result in identity development or internalization of perceptions towards

specific characterizations associated with the stereotypes presented. Unfortunately, these representations often perpetuate racial inequalities and for low visibility or marginalized groups the negative generalization and contextualization of stereotypes can lead to a deteriorating status within mainstream society (Trebbe et al., 2017). These unequal representations can also lead to the voices of non-dominant students going unheard in the classroom, due to Eurocentric material use (Esposito & Raymond, 2017).

The importance of recognizing stereotypes in literature is related to the power that is given to educators when using literature for development and learning. While influence presented through literature is merely one way that students learn about the world, its use strongly influences how they perceive themselves and the people around them (Abad & Pruden, 2013). Given the ways that students might be miseducated, educators have the opportunity to create typical or atypical representations through literature use, altering the effects of literature on the perpetuation of stereotypes (Abad & Pruden, 2013). Alleviation would occur though the altering of literature used and include engagement in conversations that prompt thoughts about beliefs and stances on stereotypes and social issues in the world (Cook, 2016). So, it becomes clear that fictional literature and stereotypes are strongly connected, suggesting the power that the use of fictional literature has for learning and student identity development.

Aforementioned, stereotypes play a key role in the socio-cognitive development of adolescents, which is developed as identity through the experiences that one has (Boyes & Chandler, 1992). During formative adolescent years, Rodriguez (2017) recognises the importance of school environments and the presence of stereotypes in material, as stereotypes have a direct effect on students' sense of identity. Based on the presence and use of stereotypes,

amplification of "systematic differences between groups" occurs and creates an exaggeration of the variance through misrepresentations (Bordalo et al., 2016, p. 1757).

The presence of archetypes and stereotyping in fictional literature can potentially leave a lasting negative impression on the reader, evidenced through the outcry against canonical texts still present in Ontario classrooms today; *Romeo and Juliet, The Catcher in the Rye, To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Giver* (Ressler, 2005). Specifically, stereotypes can have social-psychological impacts, including effects on the cognitive functioning of stigmatized individuals (Williams, 2017). Self-view is also strongly influenced, as stereotypes can cause persistent criticism against an individual and groups they identify with (Williams, 2017). Within the school setting, these negative impacts can result in altered learning ability or willingness, adding to difficulties that students may already be facing.

Sheepers and Ellemers (2019) suggest social identity-based interventions in the educational setting to offer alleviation to negative impositions on identity through negative social identity representations. These claims are founded on the ability for stereotypes to influence individual identity development. When it comes to gender, skin colour, and religion, changed representations can alter how an individual perceives themselves (Cook, 2016). Achieving intervention occurs through the integration of atypical narratives that enables the voices of students' to be validated and humanized, fostering positive identity formation in strenuous social environments (Rodriguez, 2017). So, it is evident that stereotypes strongly influence identity and are often imposed on an individual through fictional literature used in the school setting.

Within stereotypes, representations of identity categories become organized into ideal and substandard classifications. These associations in turn result in comparable understanding towards racial groups. Since stereotypes are role-defining, the positive and negative attributes

that are associated with them then reinforce divisions in society (Hinton, 2019). One particularly important stereotype is that of the male, god-like character, who speaks English, is White, has brute strength, and irresistible charm (Davis, 2017; Hinton, 2019). Links to this stereotype are presented within the idea of perfection and the prejudice against anything that does not align or conform to these expectations (Hinton, 2019).

These associations effect Indigenous Peoples, who generally have less social status in Eurocentric societies than White people. Racial hierarchies exist through this historical prejudice and discrimination, founded in Eurocentric ideologies and based on the dominance of the Whites (Alter et al., 2016). The good versus bad representations is a theory that determines that Whiteness is superior and dark skin is inferior, as defined by Alter et al. (2016). The theory suggests that stereotypically within society "darkness and negativity" are linked, affecting "social evaluations and beliefs" held about people racially (Alter et al., 2016, p. 1654).

Representations in the media strongly affect positive and negative views toward social groups (Sharma, 2017). Movies, the news, advertisements, and generally all forms of media have a commercial interest, which affects how stereotypes are presented and the associated connotation that is produced (Sharma, 2017). Diamond (2009) highlights these impacting representations in his documentary film *Reel Injun* by looking at the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples over the last century in film. Portrayals of Indigenous Peoples are as savages and drunken addicts, while Diamond also touches on the limited presence of Indigenous actors in media. These social effects can be unintended or extended effects of representations in media, as the positive examples of mood, feelings, body ideals, or behaviours can lend negativity to those not included (Akestam, 2017). Often, these attributes are also tied to race, attaching the representations to races, perpetuating stereotypes.

The result of good versus bad representations is the development of cognitive bias, which causes an individual to apply prejudice towards an individual based on the individual's inadequate perception of them (Hinton, 2017). So, the good and bad representations "mold" or create a "distorted mirror" of what society is like, even though it does not reflect all of society (Akestam, 2017, p. 16). These misconceptions are then taken as fact and act as a basis for judgement or assessment of an individual and their identity, based on the stereotype that is aligned with their social group.

Within the concept of forced or influenced identity, attention to the legitimization of stereotypes evidences the impact of stereotypes on identity development. The prevalence of legitimizing racism came with the concept of colour-blind racism, and gained power in the mid-1990s (Robertson, 2015). A colour-blind perspective is the ideation that race does not impose on inequality between people (Speight et al., 2016). Claims from White people like "I don't see colour; I just see people," are characterized by scholars as colour blindness and act as a means of avoidance of critical issues, such as racial inequality and racial injustices (Karmali et al., 2019). However, such an idea does not mean that without race there is no racism, as behaviours, discourses and ideologies persist (King & Chandler, 2016). Actually, by creating a passive and silent response through the idea that race differences do not exist, racial structures are being reinforced (King & Chandler, 2016). Racism has transitioned from overt acts to covert actions, still sustaining White privilege (Robertson, 2015). The covert actions support ideologies and treatment of individuals, leading to the persistence of racist judgements, despite overtly presenting racist action.

The forced development of identity through legitimized racism is especially important for addressing issues that Indigenous Peoples face. Historic representations of Indigenous Peoples in

literature has been that of the savage Indian represented in Western stories (Murray & Brickell, 1989). These masculine savage depictions are often sustained through the archetype of the *Indian* in reference to the Western genre (Murray & Brickell, 1989). Gender-specific representations have also long existed for Indigenous women, romanticizing women and placing them in domestic roles (Murray & Brickell, 1989). Together, these stereotypes have been forced on Indigenous Peoples and maintained through the continued presence in the literature and other forms of media, legitimizing these stereotypes and making them seem *real.*

Within fictional literature, stereotypes are portrayed through character roles and the development of characterization. Through a focus on character roles, my proposed study will examine how stereotypical character roles can preserve racial discourse in society and ultimately impact how identity develops based on these perceptions. The importance of characterization in literature lies in the active potential literature has to change ideologies, utilizing dialogues and circumstances to educate, rather than as passive treatment to change ideologies (McDowell, 1973). The presence of stereotypes within this process then prolongs social change, due to the extension of ideologies cyclically through education.

Through the European Enlightenment in the late 18th century, humanity became divided by race (Calloway, 2018). The Enlightenment period was an age of scientific emergence, fostering the classification of all things, including people (Outram, 2019). European researchers began classifying humans in a hierarchal manner, distinguishing between man and primate, resulting in Whites being considered the pinnacle (Outram, 2019). The effects of the racial partitioning continued into all aspects of society, including the education system through segregated schooling (Marsala & Rugh, 2016). Then, consequently racial groups emerged in literature, as a means of reproduction for these Eurocentric, dominant ideologies, evidenced

through the promotion of racial hatred, racial segregation and White supremacy in texts like *Huckleberry Finn.*

Before the 18th century, literature was dominantly used for religious instruction or as an instructional text (Calloway, 2018). Transitioning literature's use into the classroom allowed for more dynamic publications, reflective of the commercial aspect of publishing (Calloway, 2018). The commodification of literature has skewed the impact and led to the development of materials that simply sell, versus development for the use as a learning tool (Hade & Edmonson, 2003). Early renditions of characterization in children's literature were racist and violent, focusing on the reproduction of ideologies for real life (Calloway, 2018). Bernstein (2011) determined that White children would read books about slavery and use dolls to re-enact scenes from the stories they were learning, supporting White supremacy and racialized violence.

Current characterization in some literature supports overt racism, through the use of language differences and representations of race in literature roles (Calloway, 2018). Within literature, implicit prejudices support racism, through the tendency to correlate positive traits with White characters and negative traits with minorities (Augoustinos, 2013). White characterization continues associating fitness, healthism and physicality, lending strength and beauty to White characters (Azzarito et al., 2016). Racial positioning also occurs with correlations to social class and religion, altering the self-esteem, self-confidence, and worth of non-White readers (Azzarito et al., 2016). These Eurocentric ideals can impose an impossibility on Indigenous Peoples, through the inability to achieve these ideals, due to the racial ties (Azzarito et al., 2016). However, these negative impositions can be alleviated through adequate attention to representations. In the next section I address how "seeing yourself" influences students during identity development.

Effects of "Seeing Yourself"

Based on the existing racial hierarchies, the representations of Indigenous Peoples negatively impact an individual, due to their understanding of racial identity and opportunity. Stereotypical representations occur in many media outlets and are an inaccurate lens (Bleich et al., 2015). In the classroom, Indigenous students need to *see* themselves as there is a direct effect on how they perceive themselves in social standing. However, Indigenous students may often struggle with having accurate representations in the classroom, due to the historical oppression and the role that institutionalized education plays in sustaining racial hierarchies (Jay, 2018). Further, Jay (2018) states that schools are "shortchanging" students, restricting opportunities to "read works by those like [themselves] and learn about [their] history" (p. 19). The result was a lack of self-knowledge and the inability to effectively connect to and preserve their group's identity (Jay, 2018).

Representations can be positive or negative, each equally impacting how the individual *sees themselves* and how they correlate what they see to who they are. Positive representations can promote prosocial ingroup relations and positive views of racial minorities, altering the negative effects traditionally experienced by these groups (Tukachinsky, 2015). Through a positive stereotypical display, individuals will tend to be eager and more open to identifying with the group and have a stronger understanding of who they are.

However, just as positive representations contribute to self-affirmation, negative representations also affect the individual and their perception of themselves. Elliott-Groves and Fryberg (2018) draw attention to the negative representations of Indigenous Peoples, to demonstrate how negativity can be carried into the individual's identity development. Largely, these discriminations and stereotypes threaten identity and can inflict negative emotional

responses such as shame or anger, aligned with low self-esteem and deterred academic achievement (Elliott-Groves & Fryberg, 2018). Essentially, the representations are resonating within the individual who aligns with the groups' identity and internalizes the racism, imposing on their identity or identity development choices. Therefore, it is evident that profoundly positive effects would result from representations, prompting the necessity for change.

Conclusions

Secondary English courses are a mandatory component of education that profoundly impact Indigenous students as they develop their identity. My review of the scholarship indicates that stereotypes play a key role in identity development and are readily present in fictional literature, which is a key component of the English curriculum. To ensure adequate support for identity development of Indigenous students the review determined a necessity for prompt attention to the representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature, due to the potentially detrimental effects on students. Fictional literature is a powerful tool, often used in the classroom as a tool to support learning (Benton, 2017; Green, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; Oatley, 2011). Unfortunately, the use of fictional literature has proved ineffective at doing so, through the inadequate attention to student diversity and the sustained Eurocentric perspective (Burton, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2007). The literature review has demonstrated that identity is directly affected by the use of racial stereotypes within fictional literature used in the classroom and specifically impacts racially marginalized students. Based on the historical foundations that have fostered the development of a colonial Canada, underpinnings of Eurocentric ideologies exist within the social structures and especially within the institutional education system. Founded through colonization, the European embarkment into Canada overruled existing populations through attempts at cultural genocide (Lund & Carr, 2007). These actions created a social hierarchy,

which perpetuates through centuries of capitalistic, Euro-dominant development towards the existence of modern Canada.

Esposito and Raymond (2017) highlight the absence of Indigenous students' voices in modern Canada, which is the effect of colonialism's continued existence through nationalism and assimilation, where capitalistic ideologies rule the values, beliefs and, practices of the nation. Fictional literature often presents lopsided ideologies, as they represent the social hierarchy created and sustained by Eurocentrism and by the nationalist perspective. When students learn through these texts in the school system, they are negatively influenced from the lack of equal representations or representations of identities they align positively with. For Indigenous students, this can be the perpetual inaccuracies of Canadian history and overdrawn representations of Indigenous Peoples.

My research question focuses on exploring the stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature used in the secondary English curriculum. Reiterated here from the introductory chapter, the question that I am using to guide my research is: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario? Through the scholarship that I have explored in this chapter, it is clear that stereotypes have negative effects on personal identity development. The effects of stereotype use in fictional literature can positively and negatively affect identity development through various streams, depending on the context or resulting representations. Identity is developed based on representations seen, making the representations in literature particularly interesting, due to their direct effect on learners through developmental years. With a change in narrative and adequate inclusion, changes occur in student success, their engagement with learning, identity development and in future life. Thus, it is crucial to draw attention to the use of stereotypes and

to adequately intervene and prevent negative representations that impact proper identity development.

Addressing the stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature is critical due to the potential impact it has on Indigenous students. Battiste (2017) poignantly describes the inaccurate representations of Indigenous histories in institutionalized schooling, which directly impacts Indigenous students (Brown, 2019; Frideres, 2008). As well, the longstanding obligation to receive education through the Euro-dominant system leaves Indigenous students without education that tends to their needs (Battiste, 2017). The results are limited student achievement and racist discourse that impacts Indigenous student identity development (Prato et al., 2016; Way & Rogers, 2015). Without intervention, Euro dominance will persist within the English subject area and the use of fictional literature will continue to oppress and disadvantage Indigenous students' identity development (Baker, 2012).

By employing theories on postcolonialism, I investigate the status of academic Eurocentrism and the potential need for transformation within the Secondary English curriculum to support Indigenous students' needs. Indigenous students' needs in previous studies have connected to racial representations (for example Demmert, 2011; Kanu, 2011; Kim, 2015; Milne, 2017; Sterenberg, 2013). These studies were focused on the integration of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, culture-base curriculum, and Indigenous policy across various programming in Ontario. These works do not provide significant scholarship on the direct correlations between curriculum and identity development, rather they focus on broader indicators of success and development. My research explores how the curriculum can impact Indigenous student identity development, highlighting the importance of challenging the current Eurocentric dominance in high school novels.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

As explained through the scholarship I explored in the previous chapter, literature used in the secondary English classroom has long reflected the ideologies of Eurocentric institutionalized educational settings. I aim to explore representations in books to offer an informed response to the research question I have posed. Savage (2008) recognizes the impositions on students to "assume subjectivities that are heavily informed by the ideologies and discourses of popular/corporate culture" (p. 52). Fictional literature used in the classroom is decades old, repeated through the same lessons and format from teachers year after year (He & Gao, 2019; Lodhi et al., 2019; Savage, 2008). Publication dates for popular texts such as *Lord of the Flies* date back 60 years, while *The Great Gatsby* was written nearly 100 years ago. Further, Shakespeare authored six of the top 20 most commonly used texts, which are dated from the 16th and 17th century. While these literary works may sustain pedagogical value, their use blocks opportunities for new, divergent narratives from a breadth of voices to emerge. Thus, I seek to determine the representations of Indigenous Peoples in fictional literature currently being used and the potential effects these representations may have.

My research focuses on representations of Indigenous Peoples in literature used in the secondary English curriculum, to determine the current status of representations in response to the diversity of cultures in Canada. Using data from the Ontario Book Publishers Organization's (2017) book inventory study, I address representations through discourse analysis. The data from the study includes books taught in grade 7 – 12 English classes in Ontario. Using discourse analysis allows me to deeply explore each text, determining representations of Indigenous Peoples (Cheek, 2004). From this, I then determine representations of Indigenous characters

within fictional literature and draw conclusions based on scholarship related to identity development.

Methodology

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) allows for an examination of how meaning is created in social contexts and can be applied to any instance of written language, such as books (Gee, 2017). It also allows for attention to language use and contextual meaning of language (Gee, 2017). Through CDA, I address social aspects of communication to determine how effects are produced, such as creation of trust or doubt, or to evoke emotion (Johnstone, 2018). Within my analysis, I develop an understanding of what messages are being sent through representations of Indigenous Peoples. I use CDA to analyze representations in each text and determine how the use of stereotypes build or emphasize a narrative (Johnstone, 2018). From assessment of fictional literature used in the secondary classroom, I draw conclusions about the narrative that is being shared through the representations of Indigenous Peoples within the texts.

Wodak and Meyer (2015) describe language as a social practice and draw attention to the context of language. Specifically, they argue that CDA draws attention to the relationship between language and power and how communication is used within this relationship. When applying CDA, talk and text can be analyzed in terms of politics, equity, and power in society, focusing on the function of language within these aspects (Gee, 2017). CDA is effective for studying policy and practice as the methodology offer diverse viewpoints on complex topics (Pekkola et al., 2018). As well, through CDA, texts can be analyzed to reveal social control and domination in society (Pekkola et al., 2018). To better apply such analysis to my study, I use Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model.

According to Pekkola (2018), the three-dimensional conception of discourse model is based on a fluid, non-linear examination of texts based on discourse and social context. The first dimension focuses on the text and linguistic features within the text, which is represented by the fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom. The second dimension is the discursive practice, which is how the reader interprets the role of the author in shaping the text, and how the readers' own social locations will affect their interpretation of the text. At this stage, the books are analyzed according to key questions for development of themes and patterns. Then, the final dimension is employed through the connections to social context in which the discursive practices take place, exhibited through my connection to scholarship on identity development. The connections represent a dialectical relationship that exists between elements of the situation(s), institution(s), and social structures(s) to a particular event (Van Dijk, 2011). In other words, CDA addresses the circumstance that supports the reproduction of the status quo, specifically related to issues of power through linguistic conventionalization of the world (Van Dijk, 2011).

Throughout my study, CDA guides my research with its the focus on identity. Ainsworth and Hardy (2004) suggest that CDA is invaluable when studying identity, due to the limitations of other methods. In other words, CDA allows for analytic techniques and critical perspective to examine social phenomenon in a way that cannot otherwise be achieved (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). Identity emerges from social interaction and the social environment and can be addressed through CDA by understanding dominant ideas about different identities (Van Dijk, 2011). CDA also allows researchers to make a deeper connection between texts and the social, which may otherwise be deterministic and could result in limited insights (Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

As well, CDA is a strong methodological choice for studies in educational research, as schooling is responsive to societal values, social structures and power relations (Kress, 2011; Westheimer, 2015). The social construction of education and the materials that are used within the classroom require CDA to better understand, analyze and evaluate their use in relation to the social context in which they have been produced (Rogers, 2011). In doing so, a better understanding of their potential outcomes can be addressed, as well as links between power relations and ideologies that are constructed and perpetuated through texts and discourses (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA also responds to the complexity of educational practices and the inequalities that exist, while focusing on underlying issues (Rogers, 2011).

Rationale for using Critical Discourse Analysis in My Research

Through the use of CDA, hidden motivations behind text are researched and the method allows for interpretation (Lynggaard, 2019). I will be able to better understand the perpetuating Eurocentric narrative within fictional literature and address the hidden Eurocentric motivations within narratives. As well, CDA allows attention to be given to a problem from a higher discursive level, offering a comprehensive view of the problem. Euro dominance is a challenging issue in society and can be difficult to navigate. With a CDA of a focal issue, the totality of the issue is better comprehended. Further, discourse analysis allows for the uncovering of deeply held attitudes and perceptions that may not otherwise be uncovered (Lynggaard, 2019). By drawing attention to the systemic racism and ideologies that exist in society, concurrently with Euro dominance, change can begin to happen.

Limitations of Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA, like all methodological approaches, has limitations. It has an array of options available, each of which have unique epistemological positions, concepts, procedures and understandings (Rahman, 2017). As well, discourse analysis does not provide tangible answers that are based on scientific research and poses limitations within the findings (Rahman, 2017). Unfortunately, CDA does not provide a way to determine the impacts of representations within fictional literature of Indigenous Peoples. However, it does create a foundation for future research with Indigenous Peoples to address the effects more deeply. Moreover, my aim is to deconstruct the novels and interpret the problems that exist to work towards a solution. While the research may not solve the issue of representation, the findings can provide insight into the potential next steps for Indigenous representations in fictional literature used within the classroom.

Text Selection Procedure

My study focuses on the actual books that are assigned in English courses. The Ontario Book Publishers Organization's (2017) study, *Use of Canadian Books in Ontario Public and Catholic Intermediate and Secondary English Departments: Results of a Survey of Teachers of Grades 7 through 12,* produced a comprehensive book inventory that I utilize as my source to collect books for data analysis. From the inventory within my data source, the Ontario Book Publishers Organization study, I use discourse analysis involving inductive and deductive methods of analyze the top 20 novels used in Ontario English classrooms.

Using an inductive process, I hand-coded the data to identify descriptive information within the texts and formed themes and categories for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I then utilized deductive analysis by reviewing the data to address supporting and refuting

evidence for each theme based on scholarship (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In other words, I detailed Indigenous representations in the novels and then drew conclusions on the impact of these representations utilizing relevant literature. Making connections between the themes and scholarship is a priority in understanding the potential impacts of stereotype use within fictional literature. Throughout this process, I continually consulted with my thesis supervisor for feedback.

Specifically, I coded and categorized themes within each subunit to uniquely describe and analyze Indigenous representations within the fictional literature used. Then, I compiled the results, producing a collective and comprehensive analysis that allowed for conclusions to be drawn. The thematic conclusions were then compared to racial stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples, addressing social and physical representations (Baca, 2004; Hawkins, 2002; Tan et al., 1997). This method fostered the formation of connections between fictional literature use and the potential impacts on the Indigenous students' who read them.

Coding Guide: Key Questions for Thematic Development

To adequately assess the books, I analyzed the texts based on thematic coding that allowed for conclusions to be drawn (Yin, 2014). I used the following questions to code the data. Representations

1. Was a character in the text identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, Inuit included)?

2. If there was an Indigenous character, were they a protagonist or antagonist?

3. If there was an Indigenous character, were they a major or minor role?

Stereotyping

1. Was the Indigenous character in the text presented positively or negatively?

2. What type of social attributes were given to the character?

3. What type of physical attributes were given to the character?

Conclusion

Responsive to the framework described in my methodology within this chapter, and the methods I have expanded upon, the research question explored in this thesis is: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario? My research works to identify the necessity for incorporating inclusive literature that responds to the diverse populations in our nation, specifically towards the inclusion of Indigenous representations. As previously stated, the source for my analysis is the Ontario Book Publishers Organization's (2017) book inventory; the top 20 novels used in Ontario English classrooms at the secondary level. Each book is analyzed to determine if representations of Indigenous characters exist and how they are represented, based on specific coding questions. The questions related to the physical and social representations, as well as the role each character plays within the novel, are used to guide my analysis of the representations.

The Indigenous character representations in these novels depicts the potential impact of fictional literature use on student identity development. Thus, the application of CDA is appropriate and crucial for examining the covert Eurocentric narratives within curriculum. The limitations of representations are examples of persisting colonial oppression, through control over narratives due to limited representations within fictional literation used in the classroom. Analyzing the most commonly used novels and the representations of Indigenous Peoples will allow for assessment of the common narrative. Using the questions that I have formulated, I will be able to address the current status of fictional literatures impact on students, potentially leading to recommendations to address oppressive literature use.

Chapter Four: Analysis

In the first three chapters of this thesis, I delineated the criticality of investigating the representations of Indigenous Peoples in current novels used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario. In this chapter, the two novels with Indigenous representations within the top 20 most commonly used novels in secondary English classrooms in Ontario are analyzed. The analysis of the two novels addresses representations of Indigenous Peoples in terms of physical and social presentation, as well as the roles they are given within the novels, due to the potential impacts that representations have on the reader. It is important to address representation in these novels, as storytelling is used in Indigenous cultures to teach students morals, values and beliefs and can leave lasting ideological impacts (Iseke, 2013). For Indigenous Peoples, representations can lead to greater awareness of the historical conflicts that have occurred in Canada and draw attention to acts of reconciliation. Further, representations are important to address due to the prevalence of Eurocentric narratives and ideologies within curriculum materials used within schools.

Source: OBPO Book Inventory

My rationale for analyzing data from a previously completed survey is twofold. The first reason is because of the breadth of the survey. The Ontario Book Publishers Organization (2017) completed their study over a ten-month period and analyzed 307 respondents. Due to the size of the study, I chose to utilize the OBPO's collected data, providing a more accurate depiction of novels that are used in the classroom. Many independent, school-based inventory lists do not accurately represent what is being used within the classroom at any given point in time, making it difficult to address representations. The second reason is because the OBPO's study addressed school boards across the province. There are many factors that lead to a novel being used in the classroom, which may have impacted my research had it focused on a singular school board or

region. Based on demographics, regions may choose different novels, which is why it is critical to analyze representations at a larger scale.

However, rather than addressing the entire data collection from the OBPO's book inventory, which includes 695 unique titles, I focused my analysis on two of the top 20 most commonly used novels. I eliminated some of the novels based on discerning whether the novels have representations of Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous content. From this, I was able to decipher the representations of Indigenous Peoples in the two novels used in the secondary English classroom. The narrowing to two novels does not to suggest that there are not more novels with Indigenous representations employed in teaching, or that these novels are censored from the classroom, but rather that Indigenous Peoples are not widely represented in novels that are most commonly used. Following my analysis of the two novels, I draw conclusions on Indigenous Peoples representations in novels used in the secondary English classroom in Ontario.

Situating Analysis on Two Novels

After a primary examination of the top 20 most commonly used novels in the secondary English classroom in Ontario, I determined that only two of the novels had representations of Indigenous Peoples. The determination of this was based on overt racial identification in the novels. The first novel is Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* ranked 11th, with 27/2081 mentions, and representing 1.3% of all novels mentioned. Second is Joseph Boyden's (2005) *Three Day Road,* ranked 14th, with 23/2081 mentions, and representing 1.1% of all novels mentioned. Within *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, not all characters are Indigenous (see Table 1), but those who are Indigenous are identified by Alexie as Spokane Indians. Boyden also specifically identifies Indigenous

characters in *Three Day Road,* as Cree Canadian and Ojibwe (see Table 2). Both novels

prominently focused on storylines that incorporated Indigenous characters, as protagonists,

antagonists and as narrators.

Table 1
Central Character Roles in The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Character	Role & Relationships	Description
Arnold Spirit Jr. (Junior)	- Narrator - Protagonist - Rowdy's best friend	14 y/o - Spokane Indian - Cartoonist - Student
Rowdy	- Junior's best friend - Star high school basketball player	- Spokane Indian - Violent/lack of emotion - Emotionally and physically abused
Mary Spirit	- Junior's sister - Married to Montana Indian	- Showed promise in school - Moved to Montana and struggled financially - Alcohol use led to death in house fire
Arnold Spirit Sr.	Married to Agnes, father of Mary and Arnold Jr.	- Alcoholic, binge drinks - Poverty, no money at home - Played saxophone (jazz), could have been musician
Agnes Adams Spirit	Married to Arnold Sr., mother of Mary and Arnold Jr.	- Very smart, religious - Ex-alcoholic - Suffers depression and anxiety
Grandmother Spirit	- Grandmother of Mary and Junior - Discrepancy as to whether she is Agnes or Arnold Sr.'s mother	- Struck by drunk driver and killed - Provides advice and tolerance, "old-time-Indian spirit" - Does not drink - Well-known in community
Penelope	- Junior's girlfriend - Freshman at Reardan High School - Figurative little sister to Roger	- Beautiful, popular - Bulimic - Blond hair, pale skin - Plays volleyball
Roger	"Roger the Giant" - Big-brother figure to Penelope - Senior at Rearden - Becomes friends with Junior	- Racist and disrespectful - Plays basketball and football - Popular
Dawn	Junior's first crush	- Indian from Wellpinit - Typical Indian girl, braids, tan skin - Powwow dancer

Table 2
Central Character Roles in Three Day Road

Character	Role & Relationships	Description
Niska	• Protagonist • Narrator • Xavier's aunt • Hookimaw, spiritual leader • Windigo killer	• Cree-Ojibwe • Did not participate in War • Friendly, embodies traditional Cree culture • True to Indigenous identity
Xavier Bird	• Protagonist • Narrator • Elijah's best friend • Niska's nephew • Marksman in WWI • Windigo killer	• Cree Canadian • Skilled sniper and hunter • Strong connection to Indigenous identity and resents European/military efforts to transform him
Elijah Weesageechak	• Antagonist • Narrator • Xavier's best friend • Marksman in WWI • Windigo killer	• Cree Canadian • Sniper in Canadian Military • Absorbed by addiction to morphine • Turns on Indigenous identity (assimilation to British)
The Windigo Killer	• Niska's Father • The last great talker of the clan • Hookimaw, spiritual leader	• Arrested by Europeans and jailed for murder • Dies in jail • Highlights division between Cree and Europeans (rejects forced assimilation
Wemistikoshiw (Europeans)	• Colonizing Canada • Leaders in Canadian Military • Educators in residential schools	• Force European ideology and education on Indigenous Peoples • Founded residential schools and forcibly removed children from communities • Led Canadian military

   The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is a narrative of Arnold Spirit Jr's life.,

better known as Junior, set in modern times. The story begins by telling the early life of Junior

on the Spokane Indian reservation and his numerous medical issues, during which his father,

mother and sister struggled with poverty and alcoholism. Such experiences led to lengthy and

unending bullying in school. However, Junior was protected and supported by his best friend

Rowdy. To pass the time, Junior loved drawing cartoons and was interested in becoming an

artist. One day, Rowdy convinced Junior to attend a powwow, at which Junior was beat up, leaving him more hopeless than ever. Junior then begins his freshman year at Wellpinit, where he responds violently towards Mr. P, his teacher, who tells Junior that he should leave the reservation school because he will never achieve anything there. Junior decides to leave and starts attending an entirely White school off the reservation in Rearden.

Unfortunately, Junior's choice leaves people on the reservation feeling betrayed and they begin to ignore him. But, Junior thrives and starts playing basketball and making friends at Rearden. This leads to further controversy when Rearden plays Wellpinit in basketball, leaving an even more sour taste in the mouths of people on the reservation. Soon, Junior's sister, Mary, decides that she too is interested in leaving the reservation, marrying a man and moving to Montana. After Mary leaves, Junior's grandmother is struck and killed by a drunk driver. Then, a family friend, Eugene, is murdered over alcohol and Mary dies in a housefire because she was too intoxicated. The overwhelming tragedy leaves Junior yearning for home, where he reconciles with Rowdy over a game of basketball.

Three Day Road is also a narrative told by the three main characters, Niska, Elijah, and Xavier, set in the early 1900s. The story begins with Niska narrating her journey from the "bush" to Moose Factory to await the return of Elijah, her nephew's best friend and the closest relative she has. Her nephew, Xavier, was killed in the War and Elijah was injured, prompting his return home. Niska raised both Xavier and Elijah in the "old ways" away from the wemistikoshiw (Europeans), making his journey especially difficult for her. When the train arrives, Xavier disembarks instead of Elijah, equally as confused, as a mistranslated letter communicated her death to him. After reconnecting, Niska and Xavier must now make the three-day trek back to their home. During this journey, Xavier is clearly not well, emotionally or physically and

presents an addiction to morphine. Xavier uses the morphine to escape his traumas and drift back to memories of War.

Niska passes the time storytelling, as her father, a spiritual leader and windigo killer, once did. A windigo killer is one who kills those who have succumbed to the evil spirit and become cannibals. Niska's father was merely protecting his family by killing windigos, but the wemistikoshiw did not see it that way and jailed him for murder. Sadly, he died in jail and windigo killers remained condemned by the wemistikoshiw. As they continued their journey, Xavier reverts to memories, narrating his experiences with racism and alienation in the military. Xavier explains how he and Elijah drifted apart, as Elijah was consumed by murder and becoming a windigo. Elijah even attempted to kill Xavier by strangulation, but Xavier, who is a windigo killer by blood, fights back, resulting in Elijah's death. Such horrific experiences led to Xavier working to escape the War, leading to the long, trying trip home with Niska.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian and *Three Day Road* both have a predominant focus on Indigenous characters, within primary and secondary roles throughout the novels. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a first-person story, based on Alexie's own life, set in the late 1900s. *Three Day Road,* is a historical fictional that follows the journey of young Cree men who become snipers in World War I. Both texts have in-depth and detailed portrayals of the Indigenous characters, creating physical and social representations that contribute to the reader's understanding of Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, both of these novels use specific terminology to support the development of the story and representations of the Indigenous Peoples within them.

Representations of Physical Attributes

Physical characteristics are critical in a novel, as they offer descriptors that allow readers to envision the story more vividly. In examination of the two novels, I found that physical traits were used to offer a generalized depiction of the Indigenous characters. Both Alexie and Boyden offer physical traits for their characters, describing Indigenous Peoples very similarly. The clearest description given by Alexie (2007) is that of Dawn, who is described as a typical "Indian girl," with a tall stature and brown skin (p. 74). These attributes are paralleled in Boyden's (2005) character descriptions as Elijah describes Suzanne as having "dark skin" (p. 253), and Niska describes Elijah's skin as the "colour of cedar ash in the setting sun" (p. 16). Boyden also describes height and stature as a notable physical characteristic of Indigenous Peoples. When interacting with a non-Indigenous soldier, Xavier is questioned about whether he really is Indigenous, because he is short. "You're pretty short for an Indian, ain't ya?... All the Indians from where I come from are taller than you" (Boyden, 2005, p. 30). These descriptors provide foundational knowledge for the reader to picture the Indigenous characters physically.

In more detail, both novels draw attention to characters' hair and the importance of hair for Indigenous Peoples. First, Dawn is described as typical, with long, traditional braids (Alexie, 2007). Boyden (2005) also connects long hair and braids to tradition, through Niska's description of children she spotted while on her journey. Alexie (2007) reinforces the importance of hair by noting the years it takes hair to grow and how cutting it is "about the worst thing you can do to an Indian guy" (p. 22). Boyden further recognises the importance of hair during the scene in which Niska first enters the residential school. Upon being taken into a residential school, Niska remembers her "black hair that reached to [her] waist" and that removing it was "wemistikovshiw authority" and symbolized defeat (p. 99). Both novels focus on hair as physical

representations of the Indigenous characters throughout the stories, making it the most prominent and notable physical descriptor of these characters, per cultural traditions among some Indigenous Peoples. As Indigenous scholar Paul Cormier put it in personal communication (2020), "Traditionally, for some of our people, the length of hair demonstrates honour. Some of us perform a daily ceremony where we braid our hair and there are specific teachings behind the braid. Colonists knew this and this is why they cut our hair. It was an extremely violent act that severed our physical tools for participating in our spirituality. Hair is used as a culturally based metaphor the way you are describing it here. It represents both he sacredness of traditional culture and the violence of colonization."

Representations of Social Attributes and Experiences

Social attributes and experiences of the characters in the novels are also quite descriptive of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous cultures. The novels have strong thematic representations of Indigenous Peoples facing poverty and oppression, mental health issues such as addiction, major trauma, and racial inequality. Alexie (2007) utilizes the narrative structure to give Junior's first-hand experience through the realities that are faced by Indigenous Peoples, on and off of the reservation. These representations are more modern and relatable to today's reader, based on the setting of the story. Similarly, Boyden (2005) offers circumstance that portrays the life and experiences of Indigenous Peoples but offers a historical representation. Together, the two texts show longevity of these attributes and experiences, propagating a potentially stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples and cultures.

Poverty and oppression are at the forefront of social representations for the Indigenous characters in both novels. Early in the book, Alexie (2007) provides a brief social description of the protagonist, Junior, his family, and the Spokane Indian Reservation. Simply described as

poor, Alexie paints the picture that Junior, his family, and people on his reservation, have no money and no food. Such circumstance causes them to miss meals, as "sleep is the only thing [they] have for dinner" (p. 7). Poverty is described by Junior as generational, stating that his "parents came from poor people who came from poor people who came from poor people, all the way back to the very first poor people" (p. 9). Junior assures himself that this poverty does not define the Indian people, as they have dreams and aspirations such as college, "but they never got the chance because nobody paid attention to their dreams" (p. 9). Further, Alexie uses the circumstance of poverty to describe how intergenerational effects and oppression against Indigenous Peoples perpetuates.

> It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and there's nothing you can do about it. Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor (p. 13).

The deep connection between poverty and oppression of being Indian is developed and described as a long-standing and seemingly permanent descriptor of Indigenous Peoples (Moon, 2016). Such representations of structural oppression allude to the pressing effects of colonization. A deeper connection to colonization is made during Junior's examination of Euripides' play and the mention of losing one's native land. Junior notes that Indians lost everything, their native land, languages, songs, dances and each other (Alexie, 2007). The depiction of Indigenous Peoples as being poor and oppressed in the novel offers the reader a stark representation of reality and how Indigenous Peoples have fallen victim to colonization.

Poverty and oppression also exist prominently in *Three Day Road,* as the Indigenous Peoples struggle with the colonization of their land and resulting genocide. Boyden (2005) describes poverty as a direct result of the Cree Peoples' relationship with the wemistikoshiw, "the pale ones of the Hudson's Bay Company" (p. 53). Those who would have furs would be treated well and "given flour and sugar for their bellies" (p. 53). Unfortunately, the wemistikoshiw also provided rum, which coerced Cree People to share Cree business and left them vulnerable to exploitation (p. 53). Boyden further abundantly mentions the Cree People being hungry or addresses the lack of food for Cree People during the colonial times. Niska mentions these circumstances by claiming they were "going to bed hungry once more," suggesting the regularity of this occurrence (p. 68). Evidently, the Cree People were bound to the colonizers as they received sustenance for their work and without them they suffered. The ties to poverty and imprisonment become blatant when Niska confirms that if they "make more money" they will have "more freedom," also confirming the oppressive actions that colonizers took against the Indigenous Peoples (p. 125). Thus, *Three Day Road* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* both exhibit poverty, oppression, and social circumstance for Indigenous Peoples.

Another prevalent social attribute and experience for Indigenous characters in both *Three Day Road* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is the presence of mental health issues, such as addiction. Within *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* Alexie focuses significantly on the portrayal of Indigenous characters as drunks. Alcohol is used by many of the characters, often in connection to mental health concerns, as a form of wasting life and numbing the pains of poverty and lifeless opportunity on the reservation. On multiple occasions, depression is tied to alcohol use. First, Penelope describes the connection between her

father's drunkenness and depression, saying that he is "ready to give up on the world" when he drinks (p. 108). Junior also connects his alcohol use to depression and his struggles with bipolar mental illness (p. 230). Repeatedly, Alexie also portrays Indigenous characters as drunk and affirms it to be a rarity for Indigenous Peoples to have not drank alcohol. The characters are often described as using alcohol regularly and as a coping mechanism. Alcohol was even depicted as a method of parenting, in response to a child not listening to their parent: "Dad said I wasn't listening… so he got all drunk and tied to make my ear a little bigger" (p. 16). The reality portrayed by Alexie suggests that all "rhythmless, talentless, tuneless Indians are most likely to get drunk and beat the shit out of any available loser" (p. 16). Junior ratifies this statement, mentioning that Rowdy's dad, his parents, uncles and "most Indians" are drunks (p. 16). The reasoning behind alcohol use in the book was simply attributed to being Indian, as Junior claims, "Of course they were drunk! They're Indians!" (p. 204). Alexie connects alcoholism to the historic tragedies that were faced by the Spokane Indians, stating that they "were drunk and sad and displaced and crazy" (p. 166), While no direct connection is made to colonization, I infer that the author implies colonization is the cause due to the depiction of life on the reservation as restricting and tragic.

Similarly, *Three Day Road* draws attention to the prevalence of mental health issues and addiction that are faced by Indigenous Peoples. While alcohol is not directly tied to the Indigenous People's social behaviour in Boyden's portrayal, it is connected to exploitive trade with the colonizers and the use a mind-numbing coping mechanism for Indigenous soldiers. The Hudson's Bay Company rewarded the Cree People with rum when they provided furs, which cost the life of one Indigenous hunter (Boyden, 2005). A seemingly kind gesture, the rum was in fact a "sly and powerful weapon" to "drown" the Cree People (p. 53). If a job was well done,

double rum rations would be provided, creating a dependency and relationship with positive action and alcohol (Boyden, 2005). As the dependency develops, Xavier is known to "take it greedily" and have a reputation for being a "drunk Injun" (p. 314). Elijah eludes to the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism during a conversation of kill counts with his corporal, saying "let's not talk of dying tonight…let's drink instead" (p. 293). Elijah further exhibits mental health concern when gaining an addiction to morphine use. Elijah becomes no longer able to live without it, noting that "morphine eats men" (p. 16). After taking morphine, one isn't the same, it washes away fear and makes everything better (Boyden, 2005). The representations of dependency on substances in both novels depict prominent presence of mental health issues and addiction for Indigenous Peoples.

A third prevailing theme within social representations of Indigenous Peoples in both novels is experience of death. Death becomes a common occurrence throughout both books, as many characters reflect on their experiences with death in their lives. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* Junior describes death as extremely common for Spokane Indians, as he is "fourteen years old and [had] been to forty-two funerals" (Alexie, 2007, p. 200). Junior continues to compare his experience to his "White friends" who can "count their deaths on one hand," whereas he uses his "fingers, toes, arms, legs, eyes, ears, nose, penis, butt cheeks, and nipples," which is not even close to the amount of death he has experienced (p. 200). Most of the deaths are attributed to alcohol, including the death of Junior's sister, who died because she was too intoxicated to wake up during a house fire (Alexie, 2007). Another death, Junior's grandmother, was at the fault of a drunk driver, a "dumb-ass Spokane Indian alcoholic", who struck her as she was walking home from a powwow at the community centre (p. 156). Junior eventually recognizes the correlation between his circumstance on the reservation and impending

death, as he explains to Rowdy that he must leave or else he will die too (Alexie, 2007). But, death was not something that was feared by the Spokane Indians. Alexie describes death as something that happens together, as they all "lived and died together" making "each funeral a funeral for all of us" (p. 165). Death seemingly is a part of life for Indigenous Peoples, as they experience loss in unfortunate circumstance, but also embrace loss as a symbolic part of their cultures.

Similarly, death becomes a prominent theme in *Three Day Road*, through family loss and murder. The main character and one of the narrators, Niska, immediately mentions how all of her familial relations have died (Boyden, 2005). The events of their deaths vary, but most pressing is the death of her father, the "windigo killer" (p. 51). He had killed a family of windigo people, known as cannibals, who would prey on unsuspecting Cree (Boyden, 2005). After witnessing her father's action, Niska faces the death of her father at the hands of White society who condemned him for murdering the windigo people (Boyden, 2005). But it was not just Niska's father who was known to murder all Indians "had the unfair reputation of being thieves and murderers" developed by the wemistikoshiw, the White people (p. 136). Death is further depicted through the War that Elijah and Xavier experience first-hand. When Xavier and Elijah kill during war, they come to terms with their actions.

> The night of the day I killed my first human was the first time I felt like an ancestor, an awawatuk raider and warrior. I prayed to Gitchi Manitou for many hours on that day and the following day, thanking him that it was I who still breathed and not my enemy. Since that time, I am able to shoot at other men and understand that what I do is for survival, as long as I pray to Gitchi Manitou. He understands. My enemy might

not understand this when I send him on the three-day road, but maybe he will on the

day that I finally meet him again. (p. 229)

The actions of the men at war become animalistic and acts of survival, like wolves who

hunt and are not hunted, who kill to survive (Boyden, 2005). The book's namesake is

representational of the presence of death, as the three-day road is what one will walk to

return to the other world (Boyden, 2005). The three-day road is also representative of the

travel time Niska and Xavier will take to return home and referenced as the journey that a

spirit will guide one (Boyden, 2005). The representations of death in both novels showed

the constant presence of death in the lives of Indigenous Peoples, through both time

periods and settings.

These three dominant social themes, poverty and oppression, mental health and

addiction, and death, offer comparable plotlines for Indigenous Peoples in both novels.

These themes distinguish experiences of Indigenous Peoples and shape who Indigenous

Peoples are in the novels, more often than a non-Indigenous character. These portrayals

then create an understanding for the audience of what social circumstances Indigenous

Peoples have and continue to face in North America.

Representations of Racial Inequality

Racial representations are a key aspect of analysis within this study, addressed through

the physical and social representations of Indigenous characters within the two novels. But, overt

racial representations of Indigenous characters are equally as critical, offering blunt narratives

for the audience to absorb. Racial inequality is evidenced in both *The Absolutely True Diary of a*

Part-Time Indian and *Three Day Road*.

Alexie's representation of racial inequality emerges within the divide between Indigenous Peoples and the White people in the White community. Junior describes the town as being a "hick town" that is "filled with farmers and rednecks and racist cops who stop every Indian that drives through" (p. 45). Junior describes his father's experience with the "racist cops" saying that he had been "stopped three times for DWI: Driving While Indian" (p. 45). Roger also overtly states racist claims against Junior when claiming that Indigenous Peoples are "living proof that niggers[1] fuck buffalo," causing a fight (p. 64). Junior also faced racism from Penelope's father, who made it clear that any relations with his daughter were forbidden. Her father stated that if Junior got Penelope pregnant, if they made "charcoal babies," then he would disown her and kick her out of his house (p. 108). Larger society is also noted as being racist, as "old White guys still give [Junior] the stink eye just for being Indian" and their beliefs are that "[Junior] shouldn't be in the school at all" (p. 153). These examples evidence the presence of overt racism against Indigenous Peoples in the town where Junior is attending school.

Boyden also details experiences of racial inequality by the Indigenous characters within *Three Day Road* through their treatment by colonizers and in general social situations. The most profound representation of racial inequality in *Three Day Road* is the depiction of residential schools. Residential schools were an extremely traumatic time for Indigenous Peoples, as described by Boyden, resulting in long-lasting intergenerational effects on Indigenous Peoples and culture. In the residential schools, the children's hair would be cut, their clothes would be taken, their families could not visit, and their native language could not be used (Boyden, 2005). These restrictions were part of the context in which children experienced violence and became

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[1] With full understanding of the recent political attention given to derogatory terminology, I feel that as a person of colour it is important to draw attention to the use of these terms within the classroom. As the term is not censored in Alexie's text, I chose to not censor the term in my thesis, as it clarifies the importance of understanding the effects of racial representation in the classroom the necessary attention that must be given to change.

traumatized without explanation, as they were supposedly changed into civilized beings (Boyden, 2005). The reason children were taken was to learn English and to learn about God, working to override all that they had been as Cree people (Boyden, 2005). Later in life, Elijah and Xavier experienced discrimination on a train ride when they were treated unequally for being Indian. "No Indians in this car" a uniformed man told them, "you belong four cars to the back" (p. 168). Elijah and Xavier were then ignored by others on the train and placed in the smelly, uncomfortable, filthy environment in comparison to where the wemistikoshiw would sit, despite paying the same for price for their ticket (p. 168). Both of these drastically different experiences are evidence of how racial inequality existed for Indigenous Peoples in this historic fiction. Together, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road* offer insight into historical and current unconcealed racism against Indigenous Peoples.

Representations Through Terminology

Through literary texts, terminology and vocabulary play an important role in depiction as each word chosen has unique meaning and connotation, especially within their individual contexts. Perhaps most contended is the use of the term *Indian.* Alexie and Boyden both use the term *Indian* to describe the characters' race. Alexie uses the term *Indian* to describe the narrator and others from the Spokane Reservation. Within the book's title and throughout the novel, *Indian* is used to describe the Spokane Indian People and all Indigenous Peoples. In some cases, the term *Indian* is considered controversial, yet used over the seemingly politically correct term: *Indigenous*. However, Alexie's use of the term *Indian* is not disparaging, as he claims, "the only person who's going to judge you for saying *Indian* is a non-Indian" (Petersen, 2017).

The change in terminology used to describe Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States has been consistent since colonization and differs in each country. Historically, the

collective noun identifying Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the United States has been responsive to colonial and government action (Peters & Mika, 2017). The accepted collective noun has interchangeably included *native, redskin, Indian, American Indian, Native American, Aboriginal, First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Eskimo,* and *Indigenous* (Flemming, 2006). However, the collective noun rarely responds to Indigenous Peoples perspective on racial and ethnic identity labels (Lefebvre & Elliot, 2017; Yellow Bird, 1999). Collective nouns that have been used in the past have been "derogatory, historically inaccurate and contaminated by a colonial past" supporting the "demeaning notion of 'primitive' peoples with its assumption of western cognitive superiority" (Peters & Mika, 2017, p. 1230). Through the use of a collective noun, colonizers have amalgamated the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and continue to define their identities (Lefebvre & Elliot, 2017; Yellow Bird, 1999). Using a single racial identity is a socially constructed method to perpetuate subordination of people who are not White (St. Denis, 2011; Yellow Bird, 1999). Due to the pejorative foundations of the collective nouns' origin, it can be considered that the use of an outdated term within these novels is either to develop circumstance within the time period or reference the derogatory nature of the terms use. Further, depending on who is reading the representative term, various impacts can result. A settler reader may be uncomfortable by the use of the term, while an insider who is cognisant of the resistance to naming and act of claiming may resonate with the terminology choice.

The term *Indian* is also paired with the phrase "part-time" to describe Junior's perception that being Indian was [his] job (Alexie, 2007, p. 118). The plot is based on the movement between Wellpinit and Reardon, as Junior faces experiences on the reservation and in an all-white school. His attitudes and social interactions are vastly different, suggesting that he splits his time between the two drastically different worlds. Junior felt that he was "always a stranger"

and that he played two roles: "half Indian in one place and half White in the other" (p. 118). The tear between two worlds strained Junior's identity and disengaged him from truly finding who he was.

Boyden also uses the term *Cree*, *Cree Indian*, and *Cree Canadian* to describe the characters in *Three Day Road.* They are noted to be generous people and not to be mistaken for Plains Cree (Boyden, 2005). However, an opposing description is given by a nun in the residential school, stating that the Cree people are "heathen and anger God," and that they are "a backwards people and God's displeasure is shown in that He makes [their] rivers run backwards, to the north instead of to the south like in the civilized world" (p. 61). Without differentiating the validity of the descriptions of the Cree People, a reader may not draw connections between religion and overt racism. The term *Indian* is also used in the novel, in derogatory fashion, by the colonial people when discussing Indigenous Peoples. However, these terms are used as a depiction of how the terms were used in a derogatory way during the early 1900s and WWI.

Nomadism is also tightly linked to the actions of Indigenous Peoples throughout both novels. Being *nomadic* is a term used to describe the movement of Indigenous Peoples and their history. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* the Indigenous Peoples are described as being historically nomadic, as well as in *Three Day Road,* depicting Indigenous Peoples as following survival. Rowdy, in a self-discovery journey, describes "old-time Indians" as being nomadic; "people who move around, who keep moving, in search of food and water and grazing land" (p. 229). But Alexie concludes that Indians are no longer nomadic anymore and that most simply stay on the reservation. However, the lack of nomadism perpetuates the demise of Indigenous Peoples, as life on the reservation does not provide prosperity for Indigenous Peoples, according to Alexie's depiction (Moon, 2016). The term is used again, describing an

"old-time" nomad as someone who searches for food and water, further depicting the lifestyle of Spokane Indians (p. 230). In *Three Day Road,* home for the characters is Moose Factory, a small town in Northern Ontario (Boyden, 2005). But, not all of the Cree people are from the town, as many came from the bush and others have long been on the reserve. The nomadic movement in the bush and eventually to the reserve was a result of survival, as those in the bush would likely die if they did not become prisoners on their own land. Both novels conclude that the nomadic behaviour of the Indigenous Peoples came to an end, resulting in the Indigenous Peoples mostly living on reserves.

Another key term used in the novels is the term *tribe,* representing a group of people to which an Indigenous Person belongs. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* Alexie describes Junior's *tribe* as multiple and inconsistent. Junior claims that he is finding tribes outside of his Spokane community to be a part of. In doing so, Junior normalizes the term *tribe,* using it to describe groups that he is a part of that are unrelated to his Indigenous background. Junior states that he belongs to the tribe of basketball players, bookworms, cartoonists, and teenage boys. Similarly, in *Three Day Road,* Boyden describes tribes as similar but different. The Cree and Ojibwe are two similar tribes, with a shared language but that did not get along. The use of the term *tribe* responds to a collective group of characteristics but is not conclusive or concrete. These differing uses for the term *tribe* allow alternative understanding for the reader and a different perspective of an Indigenous term.

Indigenous terminology, in Cree language, is also prevalent in *Three Day Road* and becomes a notable aspect of the story, present throughout the novel. By using Cree language to describe people and places, the Indigenous Peoples, awawatuk, and the colonizers, wemistikoshiw, become more defined. As a first-person narrative, the novel gains a personal

touch and insight into the Cree perspective, with the use of language during a time period when language was being stripped from them. Additional terms such as matatosowin, hookimaw, askihkan, wawahtew, windigo, etc. are used throughout, to add authenticity to the story and the Cree narrative. Together, these various forms of terminology and vocabulary work to shape the novels and the way in which Indigenous characters are portrayed and developed within each storyline.

Indigenous Character Roles and Inclusion in Novels

Indigenous characters in the novels used in the Ontario secondary English classroom is limited to just two of the top 20 having any sort of representation. It just so happens that these two novels are not only inclusive of Indigenous characters, but they also focus on Indigenous storylines, with the Indigenous characters in the role of narrator and protagonist. As well, Indigenous characters play numerous other roles within the storylines, both major and minor. But, when questioning why these books are so progressive in terms of inclusion, it becomes apparent that the inclusion of Indigenous characters is not simply commonplace. Both authors, Sherman Alexie and Joseph Boyden, have personal connections to Indigenous cultures and communities, prompting their interest in writing novels that are focused on Indigenous characters.

Sherman Alexie wrote *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* in reference to his own life and experiences on and off of the Spokane Indian Reservation (Alexie, 2007). Alexie, a Spokane-Coeur d'Alene-American, openly discusses the connection between the novel and his life, evidencing his urge to share his story as a real-life part-time Indian. In an epilogue note in the 10th anniversary edition of the book, Alexie makes deeper connections between the

content and his past. Drawing on these similarities, Alexie is able to validate the experiences of Junior and confirm these representations as authentic.

Joseph Boyden (2005), who was questioned on his Indigenous ancestry, focuses on a narrative "through the voices of two Native Canadians." Boyden's novel is inspired by the life of Francis Pegahmagabow, whom he became inspired through his deep connection to Indigenous Peoples. Boyden attributes his interests in the Mushkegowuk Cree to his role as professor of Aboriginal Programs, stationed in Moosonee. He worked in various reserves around Hudson Bay and experienced a deep connection and wanderlust satisfaction from hunting and snowmobile treks (Boyden, 2005). As an Irish Catholic, he claimed in 2005 that his heart is part Ojibwe and his experiences a muse for his writing. Boyden has faced controversy over the years since the publication of *Three Day Road,* as some believe he falsely claimed of being Indigenous ancestry and resultingly should not be celebrated as an Indigenous author (Andrew-Gee, 2017). Since submitting a fraudulent affidavit and status card, which required no proof to obtain, claiming his Metis status, Boyden's Indigenous ancestry remains in question (Andrew-Gee, 2017). In response, Boyden (2017) states that "being Indigenous isn't all about DNA. It's about who you claim, and who claims you." He remains confident that he is a positive, vocal activist for Indigenous rights and that his work is responsive to reconciliation for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Despite the controversy surrounding Boyden's ancestry, both authors had significant ties to Indigenous Peoples, communities and stories, prompting their interest not just to include Indigenous character, but entirely focus their novels on Indigenous stories. Despite their deep connections to Indigenous communities, having two such representations in the classroom does not adequately represent the vast amount of Indigenous voices that need to be heard. For

Boyden, controversy exists, questioning whether his ancestry devalues the content of his novel.

Based on historical oppression of Indigenous voices, supporting Indigenous authors is a foremost

expectation, otherwise the author should be "very enculturated with Indigenous culture" (Heiss,

2002). Otherwise, a non-Indigenous author is an outsider and the representation of Indigenous

Peoples would be vastly different than representations that would be defined, developed or

refined by an Indigenous author (Heiss, 2002). Moving forward, it becomes difficult to assess

novels based on authorship, despite the role that the author plays in their content, intention and

the depictions of Indigenous Peoples, because reader response theory would argue that the author

is no longer "the subject of which his book is the predicate" (Barthes, 2001, p. 4).

Conclusion

As evidenced in my analysis of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

and *Three Day Road*, the Indigenous characters present distinct and similar representations

of Indigenous Peoples. Both offer specific physical features of the Indigenous characters

that portray Indigenous Peoples as tall with dark skin and who favour long hair in a

cultural sense. Socially, the novels describe poverty and oppression as experiences of

Indigenous Peoples, as well as struggles with mental health and addiction, and an

overwhelmingly common relationship with death. Moreover, the novels have handpicked

terminology to depict Indigenous Peoples in a way that offers a comprehensive and

immersive first-person experience.

The common rationale for why the two novels analyzed include Indigenous Peoples

is authorship. The Indigenous character inclusion and representations are directly

responsive to Alexie and Boyden's life experiences, resulting in Indigenous focused

novels. Perhaps this alludes to the reason why more novels do not have Indigenous

characters, as the authors simply do not have the understanding of or experience writing with these character profiles. Further, both novels portray historically paralleled representations, inspired by Alexie's experiences and Boyden's relationships with Indigenous Peoples, that support the authenticity of the information presented. What seems to be apparent is that representations of Indigenous Peoples are responsive to personal relationships with Indigenous Peoples, cultures and communities.

In the next chapter, I contextualize the findings from the previous chapter and discuss their significance. I explore why it is critical, and for whom, to incorporate Indigenous representations in the classroom that are not negative or stereotypical. Following my analysis, I advise how educators of English at the secondary level can shape their choices for novels to be more inclusive and how a wider range of Indigenous characters can be included.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Based on my analysis of the top 20 most commonly used novels in the secondary English classroom in Ontario, there are three significant effects of the current representations of Indigenous Peoples in curriculum material: one, limited inclusion hinders the accuracy of racial and cultural Indigenous representations; two, perceptions of limited inclusion can foster the development of stereotypical representations; and three, it obstructs inclusive representations of Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and communities in the curriculum. Additionally, the two novels analyzed are outdated by more than 10 years and do not accurately represent the diverse Indigenous Peoples, cultures and communities in Ontario classrooms. Following my discussion of these three effects, I then provide recommendations for educators to transition to a more inclusive classroom environment for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The necessity of these recommendations is fortified by the consequence of not following them, resulting in the perpetuation of Eurocentric narratives in society.

Accuracy of Racial and Cultural Representations

The limited representations of Indigenous characters and cultures within novels used in the secondary English classroom in Ontario provide opportunity for very limited representations of Indigenous Peoples. Only ten percent of the top 20 books used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario had an Indigenous character, leaving the two novels, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road,* to provide the sole narrative for all Indigenous Peoples race and cultures. The racial representations given to physically describe Indigenous characters in both novels create the same portrayal of what Indigenous Peoples look like, which is not true for all Indigenous Peoples. Such a narrow descriptor of what Indigenous Peoples look

like can lead to misconceptions over Indigeneity, as Indigenous Peoples, like other people, adopt a wide variety of expressions in clothing and hair-style choices.

Similarly, limited social representations of Indigenous Peoples can mislead readers, as the two novels focus on specific Indigenous cultures and communities and cannot represent the diverse experiences of Indigenous Peoples. The social circumstance of the Spokane Indians depicted in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* would be much different than the social circumstance of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. Alexie's novel is contextually focused on Spokane, but in the absence of other novels that collectively represent a diversity of Indigenous Peoples it stands alone as a singular representation. Without exposure to a plethora of Indigenous voices, students have narrow representations and, thus, limited understanding of Indigenous diversity. Alexie and Boyden are focusing on singular stories of Indigenous Peoples and cannot begin to cover the vastness of Indigenous experience. More depth can be created through added Indigenous voices in the classroom, allowing diverse experiences of Indigenous Peoples to be engaged with.

According to the United Nations (2020), an Indigenous Person is defined as having "historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories" and by their distinct languages, cultures, beliefs, and strong links to territories and surrounding natural resources. An Indigenous Person's resolve is to "maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments" and to work in a system as "distinctive peoples and communities" (para. 3). There is a plethora of unique characteristics, physically and socially, that are linked to Indigenous Peoples across Ontario and globally. Without diversification of the novels that are utilized in the classroom and growth of Indigenous representations, these Eurocentric narratives will continue to dominate. Without accurate inclusion, the narrow representations given through

these two novels will remain as the idealized or stereotypical ideas of Indigenous Peoples, closing off students to the richness of Indigenous Peoples and cultures.

Development of Stereotypical Representations

By having limited representations of Indigenous characters in the novels used within the secondary English classrooms in Ontario, a narrow, stereotypical understanding of Indigenous Peoples masks underrepresented Indigenous cultures and ideologies. Surface representations and limited engagement with the portrayals that are depicted within the novels can mask the diverseness of Indigenous Peoples, cultures and communities. Prominent in both novels were the themes of poverty and oppression, mental health issues and addiction, and death. These three prevalent themes create a dehumanizing and problematic representations of Indigenous Peoples. While the themes hold merit for these depictions, as the most prominent themes available to educators, student conceptions of Indigenous Peoples can become misconstrued. While potentially unintended, without adequate unpacking by a teacher, the narratives can substantiate inaccurate, stereotypical conceptions of Indigenous Peoples.

The portrayal of stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples in the classroom can be harmful to Indigenous students, but also to Indigenous Peoples, communities and cultures as a whole, due to the socialization process that is influenced by these representations. Schools can be social contexts where racially hostile environments shape the experiences of Indigenous children and youth by having racially limited representations in curriculum materials, such as fictional literature (Baca, 2004). In turn, bias-based, stereotypical, racial representations perpetuate race-based bullying, such as thematic representations of alcoholism, poverty and mental illness against Indigenous Peoples (Xu et al., 2020). Two approaches are commonly used in the classroom when teaching about Indigenous Peoples and cultures: the dead and buried approach

and the tourist approach (Hawkins, 2002). The dead and buried approach is utilized when Indigenous Peoples are referred to in past tense; as relics of the distant past (Shear et al., 2015). This is a hegemonic method to culturally control society (Gramsci, 2010). The tourist approach came through the commercialization and commodification of Indigenous Peoples in the late 1800s (Claw Nez, 2016; Valdes-Dapena, 2004). The othering of Indigenous Peoples created an exotic nostalgia that separated them from the Whites (Valdes-Dapena, 2004). *Three Day Road* utilizes a dead and buried approach, due to the historical nature of the storyline, but also through the ideation that colonization is the new wave and modernization of Canada, with Indigenous Peoples being segregated to the bush. Alternatively, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* uses the tourist approach by portraying Wellpinit and Rearden as racially segregated communities and Junior's transition between them as explicit. To move away from these two stagnant approaches, a more humanized and normalized representations of Indigenous Peoples must be presented within novels used in the classroom.

Moreover, a common representation of Indigenous Peoples is that they are "living in teepees, hunting with bows and arrows, and always resisting the westward expansion" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 17). Commonly, media portrays Indigenous Peoples as being "poorer, lazier, more violence prone, less intelligent, less patriotic, and less willing to be self-supporting" (Tan et al., 1997, p. 266). These stereotypical descriptors of Indigenous Peoples, while challenged in both novels, are often present in textbooks and can go without in-depth or detailed depictions of the rich, diverse histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples (Hawkins, 2002). Stereotypical representations in novels and textbooks can leave teachers with limited choices to provide students with comprehensive representations, leading to oppressive and racist narratives to be shared year after year (Hawkins, 2002). This occurs because many educators are left without

options and must use these representations naively, due to lack of Ministry and school board resources to unpack the inaccuracies and misconceptions or offer diverse materials to substantiate the learning lens.

Poverty and oppression are used as representations of socioeconomic status of Indigenous Peoples in both *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road*. Alexie claims that the poverty Indigenous Peoples face is generational. The fault of Indigenous poverty stems from colonization and the limited attention given to the futures of Indigenous Peoples by external support systems such as the government. Yet again, the experiences of the Spokane Indians, exhibited through Junior's story, becomes a representation of the socioeconomic status of other Indigenous Peoples, merely because there is a lack of representations in the novels used. True North Aid (2020) recognizes that more than half of Indigenous children are living in poverty, many in overcrowded homes, in unsafe conditions and without adequate food and water. However, there are many Indigenous Peoples in Canada that have and are overcoming systemic racism and oppressive barriers, obtaining higher education and employment. Statistics Canada (2015) reported that more than half of Indigenous Peoples in Canada between the ages of 25 and 64 have achieved a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree. Boyden also represents how colonization forced poverty upon Indigenous Peoples and lead to their dependence on colonizers, which sustains the historical narrative that Indigenous Peoples are uncivilized and incapable. While there still remain many systemic inequalities against Indigenous Peoples in Canada, there are pathways for reconciliation and revitalization of Indigenous communities and cultures across the nation. Foremost, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) had worked to develop methods by which Canada can work to recognize the past in honest narratives and develop honourable and just relations in the future.

Mental health issues and addiction are also a common social descriptor used to depict the health state and social engagements of Indigenous Peoples. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* strongly correlates depression and alcohol abuse with Indigenous Peoples, a stereotype that is not given strong historical context. Without consideration of the factors that have led to these circumstances, a reader may not understand how Indigenous Peoples have developed mental health issues or substance use issues. Alexie slightly touches on the displacement of Indigenous Peoples but does not provide proper explanation as to how the Indigenous Peoples portrayed in the novel came to be where they are. While not as aggressive, Boyden also touches on the issues of Indigenous Peoples with mental health and substance abuse. However, the root of these developing issues is attended to, exposing the influence that colonial relations had on Indigenous Peoples during that time period.

Statistics Canada (2015) calculated that fifty-two percent of Indigenous Peoples report to have excellent or very good health, including mental health, comparable to sixty percent of non-Indigenous Peoples. However, the study only addresses Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve. In more specific studies, it has been determined that Indigenous Peoples are five to eleven times more likely to commit suicide than the national average and that mental health remains a major health concern for Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Mihychuk, 2017). The misconceptions over health, based on statistical representation and cause of the current mental health state can misconstrue the status of Indigenous Peoples health in Canada. Moreover, Indigenous Peoples health in Canada is a common controversy due to jurisdiction issues that resulted from federal and provincial government disputes (Mihychuk, 2017). Thus, without increased representations of Indigenous Peoples in novels used in the classroom, the portrayal from these two novels, that

Indigenous Peoples are heavily ailed in multiple manners, can create a flawed understanding of Indigenous Peoples.

Death is also portrayed as a common experience for Indigenous Peoples, through the prominent experiences of characters in both *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road*. Junior explains that at the age of fourteen he had been to more deaths than he could count on his body, comparable to a White person who would be able to count the death they have experienced on one hand (Alexie, 2007). The death is attributed to the prominence of alcohol abuse and negligence on the reservation, linking these attributes more concretely to Indigenous Peoples. Boyden also utilizes death as a common experience, with Niska mentioning the loss of all of her relatives. But, within *Three Day Road* the presence of death is more commonly resulting from WWI, taking away from the direct connection to Indigenous Peoples. However, the presence of death as a normality for Indigenous Peoples can foster stereotypical connection for the reader. Such a representations of death does not accurately portray the life expectancy of Indigenous Peoples, as the average is 64 years for men and 73 years for women, 10 years under the total national average.

Together, these two novels, which have significant similarities in social themes, depict a narrow perspective of who Indigenous Peoples are and what they experience. As well, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* portrays a real-life experience and *Three Day Road* portrays a story based on historical context, validating the authenticity of the representations that are presented within the novels. Unfortunately, since there are just two representations of Indigenous Peoples in the top 20 most commonly used novels in the secondary English classroom, they have the power to create the narrative for readers. The portrayal of poverty and oppression, mental health issues and substance use, and death then create an overarching

stereotypical representation for all Indigenous Peoples, which would be altered with the use of more novels with Indigenous representations.

Stereotypes and the Formation of Indigenous Identity

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian and *Three Day Road* offer narrow representations of Indigenous characters, lending to similar impacts on discourse and social context. Narrowed, these representations present partial truths of physical depictions and social experiences of Indigenous Peoples in North America. Fairclough's (1992) discourse model addresses discourse practice through the production, distribution and consumption that exists within texts. The text's content produces rules and norms that develop socially accepted behaviours, telling the reader how to think, act and speak (McGregor, 2003).

The presence of physical and social stereotypes through Indigenous representations can strongly influence Indigenous identity development. The presentations of Indigenous characters are presentations of Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous students, who compare their actions to those of the characters, to understand what their actions say about who they are (Hoyle et al., 2019). An Indigenous students' perception of themselves is being tied to the representations of Indigenous Peoples in the text and the definition of Indigenous Peoples that is created as a whole (Crisp & Hewstone, 2000). The Indigenous students' identity development can then be hindered based on the exposure to limited representations or inaccurate representations, as the perceptions presented can positively or negatively correlate to their own identity (Alexander, 2019; Ashforth, 2015). Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) determined that Indigenous students connect representations of Indigenous Peoples to self-representation, with negative representations causing disassociation from Indigenous identity. For any student, stereotypical representations impact identity development, but specifically for Indigenous

students, representations can alter or affirm identity. Thus, representations that some might characterize negatively as "stereotypical," such as those involving alcohol abuse, might be interpreted as validation of actual aspects of many Indigenous Peoples' lives, a legacy of ongoing colonialism and generational trauma.

Fairclough (1992) also addresses the effects of content on social practice and how discourse is shaped and how it influences social structures. The representations in texts can shape how people live, enact and resist their social realities, suggesting that representations are carried from the text into real-life social interactions (Adelson, 2007). Readers learn what behaviours, actions, values and beliefs are acceptable and what are not, based on the positive and negative associations with representations (Ashforth, 2015). Such representations create an internalized understanding of people and affect the interactions in society (McAdams & McLean, 2013). For Indigenous Peoples, that can mean the limited representations act as a depiction for all Indigenous Peoples, fostering a standard for social practice across North America.

In both *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road* there are similar representations of Indigenous characters. On the individual basis of identity development, these representations have the opportunity to offer insight into the accuracies or inaccuracies of physical and social representations. These representations can create enriching opportunities for Indigenous students to strengthen their identity development or can potentially distance them from their Indigenous identity. Similarly, the representations create a larger narrative for the social experiences of Indigenous Peoples and their place in society. Without depth in examination of the novels or additional novels to create a diverse understanding, negative social practices can be sustained. To avoid both potentially harmful effects, it is apparent that increasing representation is imperative. By adding additional representations, clarity in the

diversity of Indigenous Peoples' physical and social experiences can become known and the transference to identity development and social practice can become more fruitful.

Criticality of Inclusive Representations

As I have noted from the beginning of this thesis, of the top 20 most commonly used books in secondary English classrooms in Ontario, only two portrayed Indigenous characters. It is imperative that more novels used within the classroom incorporate Indigenous characters, offering more diversity in the physical and social representations. Without a wider diversity of representations of Indigenous Peoples in materials used within the secondary English classroom, misconceptions of Indigenous Peoples, culture and communities have the potential to be sustained.

Fictional literature develops socialization through racial division in the classroom, offering students a lens to view racially tied ideal and substandard traits, which can be detrimental for Indigenous students when portrayals are limited and inaccurate (Kelly, 2017; Leal, 1999; Lund & Carr, 2007). Social development during childhood is crucial for sustaining relationships as adults and being cognizant of social interactions based on standardized rules of society (Quigley, 2019). During development, children internalize standards of White society and community, fostering the idea that if they are not White, they must alter to "remain in good standing with their White community" or else they will be exiled (Quigley, 2019, p. 695). Due to the racially classifying characteristics, in the limited representations of Indigenous characters within novels used in Ontario classrooms, White privilege is sustained (DiAngelo, 2018). The deficit representations of Indigenous Peoples in the classroom, from biased to obsolete representations, are reflected in social practices and sustain "historical, social and power relations" (Quigley, 2019, p. 696).

The Ministry of Education and school boards must work to increase the representations, to support Indigenous and non-Indigenous student development. If the representations are redundant, stereotypical representations of traits and support for racial segregation is developed (Hartigan, 1997). Fictional literature also offers opportunities for students to gain knowledge and connect to their own life, providing critical thinking and development of morals, values and beliefs. Since identity is "constructed, negotiated and constituted through discourse and representation," representations in media used in the classroom often delineate identity development outcomes (Quigley, 2019, p. 696). Without mandating diverse representations within the material used in the classroom, students are not receiving the breadth of information necessary for comprehension and development (Benton, 2017; Green, 2016). Rather, students' consciousness is subdued, and inauthentic representations become a reality.

When students are given the opportunity to see themselves in materials used in the classroom, they develop a better perception of themselves. If these representations are continually narrow in representations or offer stereotypes, they are shortchanged and restricted, left with the inability to connect to and preserve their identity (Jay, 2018). Indigenous students "have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation" and the colonial processes that limit access to Indigenous ideologies (Rata et al., 2014, p. 292). The limited representation is a disservice and damaging action that leaves students behind, as the curriculum material does not meet the needs of the students. Moreover, disengagement from Indigenous culture in the classroom can disengage Indigenous students and reduce their willingness and ability to access Indigenous culture in life outside of the classroom (Penetito, 2011). Identity stress is a component of adolescent development and Indigenous adolescents can find this time difficult, as they can be traumatized through the coming to terms with their identity position (Phinney &

Chavira, 1992; Rata et al., 2014). Additionally, identity construction is associated with positive

traits and can lead to challenges for minority or low-status groups because they will alter

themselves for the high-status group (Rata et al., 2014). Such conformity finds the individual

using perceptions of the White majority and negative perceptions of the 'others' to define their

identity (Rata et al., 2014; Sue & Sue, 1999). For Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in

Ontario, inclusive representations must be more prominent, to adequately respond to the

diversity in the classroom, but also to respond to the history and culture of the nation.

Recommendations for Educators, School Boards and the Ministry of Education

To create an inclusive learning environment for Indigenous students and to offer diverse

perspectives for non-Indigenous students, I offer recommendations for educators to address the

racial representations in the material used in the secondary English classroom in Ontario.

Educators are in a role of contribution, offering truth, reconciliation and healing in the classroom

and supporting the social wellbeing and vitality of Indigenous Peoples. Through collaboration

with Indigenous Peoples, incorporation of Indigenous authors and practices, and heightened

attention to inclusion, educators can offer a classroom culture that is responsive to the needs of

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

By collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, the material present in the classroom can be

best suited for students. Collaboration is a responsive framework that provides Indigenous

perspective, which can offer insight into the impacts and effects of practices in the classroom

(Blackstock, 2010; Peterson et al., 2016). Indigenous involvement goes beyond inclusion in

development of processes and protocols, it requires collaboration from Indigenous Peoples,

communities and Elders in the classroom (Hopkins, 2006; Iseke & Moore, 2011). Encouraging a

local focus assures that not only is the education of teachers through professional development is

just and honourable, but that the curriculum, instruction and materials used in the classroom are as well. Further, decolonization can continue beyond the material use, transforming the physical setting of the classroom and offering alternatives to the common, Eurocentric structures of the classroom and learning. Doing so ties back into the collaboration with local Indigenous Peoples, nourishing learning appropriately.

Directly targeting representations in novels and other materials used in the secondary English classroom, or any classroom in Ontario, teachers must work to include more Indigenous authors and mediums. It is apparent that there are limited representations of Indigenous characters in the works being used, however, and there are limited representations of Indigenous voices. Thus, educators must be critical of the resources they are using, focusing on authorship, credibility or the perspective of stories, written both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Simple inclusion of Indigenous characters and stories is not enough. It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine the message that is tied to the story, or adequately collaborate with Indigenous Peoples to better understand the portrayal that would be best suited for just and honourable representations. Titles that can fulfil this void include *The Break* by Katherena Vermette, *Writing as Witness* by Beth Brant, *Life Among the Qallunaat* by Mini Aodla Freeman, *Witness, I Am* by Gregory Scofield, *The Evolution of Alice* by David Robertson, *On/Me* by Francine Cunningham, and *In My Own Moccasins* by Helen Knott. Additional titles can be found through Strong Nations Publishing, Raven Reads, Amnesty International Book Club and #IndigenousReads searches on social media; a few of the many catalogues of literature featuring Indigenous Peoples and representing Indigenous voices.

In addition to utilizing Indigenous authors, Indigenous mediums should also be incorporated, such as oral storytelling (Hopkins, 2006; Iseke & Moore, 2011). Exclusion of the

traditional form of storytelling sustains systemic violence by valuing the written form of

storytelling (Baker, 2012). Indigenous voices have traditionally been represented in oral form,

which fosters attention to how the story is being told and by whom. Educators of English at the

secondary level must choose novels that include these various perspectives, to truly offer

inclusion of Indigenous perspective in the classroom. By doing so, students are introduced to a

wider diversity of perspectives and voices.

  To achieve these transformations, educators must be supported by their school boards and

the Ministry of Education. Currently, there are numerous superficial expectations and resources

for educators in Ontario that support teaching and learning about Indigenous Peoples, responsive

to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action. All levels of educational

management in Ontario must facilitate the development of more opportunities for teachers to

work with curriculum specialists and Indigenous Peoples. As well, resources must be more

accessible for educators, but also funded for development. There are many limitations that exist

due to funding, including in-depth and consistent professional development and the integration

of new curriculum materials. For adequate changes to be expected of educators, first the Ministry

of Education and school boards must provide the opportunity for educators to be prepared in this

transformation.

  My last recommendation would be that normalization and openness must develop in

terms of inclusion of Indigenousness in the classroom. Coinciding with collaboration and

diversification of materials is the normalization of Indigenous methodologies in the classroom.

Educators must give overt attention to inclusion and the experience that they provide to their

students through immersion into alternative methods of teaching and learning, such as oral

storytelling. By teaching through a less segregated and more normalized lens, students will be

able to equally value the methodologies that come through Indigenous teaching and learning practices. For example, students should be given the opportunity to experience oral storytelling as an alternative to written form in novel studies. Fletcher and Cambre (2009) draw attention to this opportunity by including digital storytelling in the classroom, in presentation and development. However, Indigenous methodologies and materials in the classroom should not simply be grouped into the idea of inclusion and diversity as a whole (St. Denis, 2011). By incorporating Indigenous methodologies in the English course, curriculum materials can be more inclusive, as storytelling is a traditional form of knowledge sharing for Indigenous Peoples. As well, oral storytelling can be integrated in place of novels, allowing more opportunities for Indigenous voice to be present in the classroom. Therefore, through direct attention to methodology, educators will provide a platform that is welcoming to alternative ideologies within the classroom, lending perspectives of equality to students.

Creating Respectful Spaces Through Representations

Increasingly diverse representations of Indigeneity in fictional literature used in the secondary English classrooms in Ontario offer an opportunity for candid and productive discussions. When representations exist through Indigenous voices and perspectives, counter narratives produce unlearned truths and create conditions where individuals can engage and act (Davis et al., 2017). These differing perspectives deteriorate the dominant narrative that exists through disrespectful representations and hierarchal privileges that form from racial categorization (Miyamoto et al., 2018). Kertzer (2012) recognizes the value of Alexie's representation, as the narrative opposes the dominant discourse, allowing the dominant discourse to alter. Brandsma (2012) concurs, suggesting that novels such as *Three Day Road* work to break traditional colonial views of Indigenous Peoples. For Indigenous Peoples, this can mean an

alternative narrative that responds to realistic histories. For example, discussion on stereotypes and partial truths of Indigenous Peoples' actual lives can be examined, such as experiences with alcoholism and residential schools. Both novels nurture this respectful space, by exhibiting the traumatic and horrific experiences of Indigenous Peoples that were faced during colonization (Boyden, 2005) and that resonate today (Alexie, 2007). As well, representations can increase the diversity of narratives, removing outdated depictions that do not attend to the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, as Alexie (2007) has done through the normalization of experiences that Indigenous Peoples faced today.

As a non-Indigenous educator, I see extraordinary benefits of using novels in the class that have Indigenous representations because they support experiences that I could never speak to. Inclusion creates social change, developing the learning process by validating Indigenous worldviews and approaches to education (Nicholls, 2008). One method of inclusion is incorporation of Indigenous authors or Elders. Elders hold a place of distinction as knowledge keepers within Indigenous communities, making it imperative for collaboration, to allow the appropriate voice to take the lead when educating on Indigenous content (Chandler, 2018). In addition, students' voices also need to be heard in discussions about misconceptions over content and representations. When including counter narratives, discussion pedagogy can be employed to alleviate confusion or questions regarding stereotypes. Discussion allows students freedom of thought, prompting active appraisal of their thoughts and the thoughts of their classmates (Dague & Abela, 2020). Together, these practices promote improved social practice and cultural competence, addressing the impacts of stereotypes and understanding the representations on a deeper level.

Effects of Perpetuating Eurocentric Narratives

The aim of my research was to determine how Indigenous Peoples are represented in fictional literature used in the secondary English classroom in Ontario. From the examination of the top 20 most commonly used novels in the secondary English classroom in Ontario, it was determined that only two novels had representations of Indigenous Peoples. Without adequate inclusion, exclusion validates oppression, prejudice and racism, fortifying inequality and White privilege through a racial hierarchy (Gebhard, 2018; Robertson, 2015). Attention to these effects are critical because Indigenous and non-Indigenous students develop according to the ideologies and content within the classroom, using these practices as a lens for the rest of their lives (Battiste, 1998; Kovach, 2010).The presence and direct impact of Eurocentric narratives in the classroom are harmful to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students because they overlook alternative forms of learning and hinder student development through inadequate representations. So, it is important to recognize the imposition that perpetuating Eurocentric narratives cause, especially in response to the diverse racial identities of students in the classroom and in recognition of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. To alleviate this, it is crucial to include alternative ideologies and be accountable and responsive to the experiences, voices and needs of Indigenous Peoples (Walia, 2012).

Further, the effect that the lack of inclusion has on Indigenous students through limited representations is profound. While my study has no means or merit to focus on the impact on Indigenous student identity or success in learning, I have found that racial representation is tied to identity development and empowerment (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Iseke & Moore, 2011; Nicholls, 2008). When an individual does not conform to the status quo, they are exiled and isolated from dominant society (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014; Rata et al., 2014; Sue & Sue,

2019). Undoubtedly, marginalization would be reduced through an increase of inclusion and representations of Indigenous Peoples within the material used in the classroom, offering a transformation from stereotypical, linear perspective to one of understanding and acceptance. Such determination was not the original focus of my study, but racial representations and the connections to socialization verify how critical attention to this is, as it lends to identity development and ones' perception of others. Transforming the current level of representations would not only nurture student and social development, but it would improve school culture and grow social acceptance.

Continuation of limited representations of Indigenous Peoples in books used in the secondary English classroom has the potential to inhibit well rounded development of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. While Alexie and Boyden provide some representations with Indigenous perspectives and voices in the classroom, without more representations of different Indigenous Peoples, there remains opportunities for inaccurate conceptions of race and culture to persist. My recommendation is that Indigenous representations in material be increased, in addition to the larger process of decolonization in teaching, learning and the physical classroom. Without change, the consequence is sustained Euro dominance, overlooking and invalidating student needs and racial identities. Avoidance of change in practice merely further fosters social conformity and strays from the necessity to nourish social justice and equitable practices for all students.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

From my research, I have found that racial representations in novels used in the secondary English classroom is crucial for adequate socialization and development of students. Schooling experiences for adolescents are a time of identity development and socio-cognitive development that supports lifelong socialization. The perception of oneself and others is responsive to ones' learning, as well as the way an one interacts with society. Inaccurate or stereotypical racial representations can lead to racial division and disassociation with learning and identity, as well as negative behaviours between racial groups. Further, social ideals and normalization are generated in the school setting at this age, making it crucial to present positive and diverse racial representations for students to experience and engage with.

In my research, I analyzed the top 20 most commonly used novels in Ontario secondary English classrooms. I asked: How are Indigenous Peoples represented in fictional literature used in secondary English classrooms in Ontario? In analysis of each novel, I determined that only two of the 20 novels had Indigenous characters, moving my research focus to the representations within these two specific novels; *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Three Day Road*. I deeply analyzed the representations of Indigenous Peoples in these novels and categorized the representations into dominant themes; physical attributes, social attributes and experiences; racial inequalities; and use of terminology. My analysis allowed for the thematic development of physical and social representations of Indigenous characters, lending to the potential misconception of Indigenous Peoples, cultures and communities. Overwhelmingly, it became clear that the limited narratives contributed to the lack of abundance of representations in novels used in the secondary English classroom in Ontario.

My research has shed light on the detrimental effects that limited representation has on perception of races and individual development. Inadequate or limited racial representations affects both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, as it does not provide comprehensive perspectives of races and the diversity within them. For Indigenous Peoples, the limited representations within just two novels creates an umbrella that unifies all Indigenous Peoples under a single collective noun. In doing so, the dominant narrative is sustained, and misconceptions perpetuate. As well, my research depicts the necessity of increasing diverse perspectives and incorporating more representations of Indigenous voices. Through two novels, students are not introduced to the richness and vastness of Indigenous Peoples. The list of books must reflect a wider diversity of representations, for the benefit of educators' and students' broader understandings of Indigenous Peoples.

Allowing access to diverse and more frequent representations of Indigenous Peoples within novels used in the secondary English classroom can reduce racism, segregation and isolation based on racial differences. There will be a better view of racial minorities created through the normalization of the other. For racial minorities, there will be an eagerness to be open and identify with non-dominant identity groups, fostering engagement in education. But, most importantly, equity offers a platform for Indigenous Peoples within the classroom and across Ontario, prompting recognition for change and the understanding of others. Therefore, the effects of increased racial representations of Indigenous Peoples in the secondary English classroom determine the necessity for change, for inclusive, safe, and well-rounded education and student development.

Further Research

The depth of my research's subject area calls for a plethora of further research to delve into representations within other genres of literature in the English classroom, additional disciplines, grade levels, provinces and nations. As well, further research must represent Indigenous voices through Indigenous authorship and collaboration, offering deeper insight into the representations within curriculum materials. Potential lies in qualitative studies that address Indigenous student perspectives, comparative studies that address secondary English classrooms to other levels of academia, disciplines, school boards and geographic locations.

My research is merely a pinpoint study within a broad range of representation potentials within curriculum and for Indigenous Peoples. As a non-Indigenous person and without collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, my research is limited in its conclusions and recommendations. As well, having only been able to address two novels can hinder understanding of the large-scale representation that may be present in the classroom. Recognizing these limitations and the potential for development in future research is critical because Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous identities are diverse, complex and constantly evolving. Without ongoing and expansive research, improvement and innovation will also be limited. My study, however, offers a critical analysis of the content of two Indigenous-focused novels, surmises on their pedagogical use, and argues for increased representations in English fiction curriculum at the secondary level.

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