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## Book Review: Revisiting the Great White North? Reframing Whiteness, privilege, and identity in education

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**Book Review: Lund, D. E., & Carr, P. R. (Eds). (2015). *Revisiting the Great White North? Reframing Whiteness, privilege, and identity in education.***

Lund, D. E., & Carr, P. R. (Eds). (2015). *Revisiting the Great White North? Reframing Whiteness, privilege, and identity in education* (2nd ed.). Rotterdam/Boston/ Taipei: Sense. 340 pp. ISBN: 9789462098671.

Reviewed by: Christina Parker, University of Toronto/University of Waterloo

This edition of Lund and Carr's *Revisiting the Great White North* revisits its goal of bringing together scholars' and activists' voices, to determine what Whiteness looks like in Canada. It is a unique approach to new editions: The text reproduces the essays from the 2007 first edition, together with one or two new pages written by the original authors, revisiting their pieces. These reframing pieces, and the original questions for further reflection, remain useful tools for provoking critical conversations in diverse classrooms and communities. The text does not engage specific criteria for its inquiries, nor does it offer resolution. Instead, it serves as an enabler and a reminder: disruptive dialogue is necessary, and needs to be engaged by individuals and institutions that perpetrate harm.

The authors add rich personal experience to their strong theoretical grounding. Since 2007, some have moved on or retired from academia. Others have completed graduate programs and gone on to work in community-based and political contexts. Still others continue to navigate academia, observing the changes and stagnations of how Whiteness operates there. Taken together, their retrospective reflections create a critical conversation that serves to reinforce how dysconscious racism continues to permeate educational systems.

Whiteness is ultimately the failure to acknowledge cultural biases which remain implicit, un-interrogated. Over the past seven years, fuelled by neoliberalism and corporate capital, a pervasive Canadian colour-blindness has rendered any progress dismal (Dei, p. xxv).<sup>1</sup> Systemic White privilege affects the ways decisions are made, including decisions impacting educational funding and curriculum. This ingrained dominance, this Whiteness, must be interrogated—and this new edition does just that.

The book is organized in five thematic sections. In the reframed first section, *Conceptualizing Whiteness*, the authors revisit their personal and professional autoethnographic accounts of Whiteness. They reflect on the many changes that have occurred, the economic crises and global conflicts that have increased inequality, the much larger number of racialized people experiencing poverty: "We are seeing the construction of a racialized underclass of indentured labourers without access to the most basic rights" (McCaskell, p. 41).

The second section, *Whiteness and Second Peoples*, discusses the structural barriers that give power to Whiteness. Tracey Lindberg reframes her piece with addendums, new theorems, and life lessons—further deconstructing her initial reflections, and uncovering new truths through her movement into Western academia, describing it as "beautifully challenging" (p. 77).

In the third section, *Developing and De-constructing White Identity*, the authors explore "White identity development" (Wihak, p. 124). For Carl James (pp. 141–158), the maintenance of the status quo usurps a lack of real commitment to equity. The fourth section, *Learning, Teaching,*

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<sup>1</sup> All parenthetical citations refer to *Revisiting the Great White North* (2nd ed.).

and Whiteness, contains responses to the structural power of Whiteness. Cynthia Levine-Rasky (pp. 159–178) cautions the reader to pay attention to the effects of intersectionality. Beverly-Jean Daniel reframes her and (the now late) Patrick Solomon’s piece, reinforcing the necessity of critically reading current events within the context of the “historical relations that have produced the patterns of engagement that we see today . . . as the struggle of power is ultimately bound in such historically embedded relations” (p. 206).

In the final section, *The Institutional Merit of Whiteness*, the authors reflect on entrenched Whiteness. Laura Mae Lindo reflects that “to teach ‘the system’ to youth in crisis is to teach Whiteness” (p. 240). Paul Carr notes that he has “come to realize that Whiteness is within us all” in a deeper way than he had initially imagined (p. 281). Carr contends that the normalizing of Whiteness fuels hegemonic relations; he argues that the journey to dialogue and transformation, acknowledging the reality of the structures that maintain oppressive systems, requires “a great deal of humility” (p. 282).

In this final section, the authors critically interrogate the structural realities that continue to mould histories and perpetuate the denial of White privilege. Many of their anecdotes and much of the qualitative data that represent racialized and White voices are troubling. Still, most do not offer tangible solutions as much as they offer stark realities of the resistance to these necessary conversations. Gulzar Charania writes about how school officials in a divided elementary school addressed racial conflicts in ways that shielded the White students’ power. He reflects: “Discourses of multiculturalism in Canada, and the erasure of ongoing colonial violence, operate to make racism appear and disappear in particular ways that mark both its subtlety and force” (p. 268). He asks readers to consider how such discourses operate. This simple question advances the potential for dialogic inquiry, for: “Institutional change starts with individuals who work in institutions” (Lindberg, p. 84). In reality we are all complicit in the process of what the authors—including Frideres, Comeau, and Solomon and Daniel—conceptualize as historical collective amnesia. Thus, whether coming from a racialized or White identity, all teachers, teacher educators, students, policy makers, and academics must participate in this challenging, and necessary, dialogue. *Revisiting the Great White North* is a great place to reignite this conversation.

This second edition reads as a critical conversation and a call to action designed to stimulate a Canadian national dialogue in which various stakeholders would confront how racial politics operate in Canada, demystifying the dominant rhetoric of peaceful co-existence in a liberal democratic country. While Canada may allow racialized peoples to live on the land, its structural and institutional hierarchies strategically impede them from entering particular social and cultural landscapes.

This book serves as a dialogue that invites conflicting and uncomfortable perspectives and open spaces for deep, critical inquiry into how and why Whiteness operates and what is necessary to disrupt it. Given the stagnation of progress, the book is very welcome. It does this by presenting powerful, troubling, and problematic reflections, intended to disrupt and provoke. Ultimately, throughout the text, racialized and White authors use the power of their various positions to challenge White supremacy and reinvigorate their vision of restoring humanity, challenging capitalism and patriarchy.