The Talent Struggle of the Small White City

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Contemporary urban theory views diversity as essential to promoting social justice (Sandercock 2003; Fainstein 2005), to developing social capital (Putnam 2000), and to achieving attractive and efficient places (Talen 2006; 2008). The burgeoning literature on the economic geography of talent highlights the role that diversity now plays in the social dynamics of economic performance in city-regions (Florida 2002; Gertler et al. 2002; Florida et al. 2008). Theory holds that the creative class[1] of talented workers searches out places that are tolerant and diverse (in terms of ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation). This research has had a profound impact on urban economic development practice, with local actors in city-regions across North America and beyond, examining ways to boost their diversity indexes as they measure the number of gays, artists and bohemians, and people of colour in the community (Bell and Binnie 2004; Peck 2005; Thomas and Darnton 2006). Such work has encouraged local economic development actors to think positively about the role of embodied diversity – race, gender, ethnicity -- in economic development. Promoting multiculturalism and diversity has become an increasingly important public policy priority (Wood and Gilbert 2005). Unfortunately, however, the creative cities discourse misses complex processes whereby institutions embedded in a city region's history, economy, and society may perpetuate certain forms of racial and class prejudices. Institutional perpetuations of local cultures of privilege may be much more significant in terms of discouraging migrants from locating in particular places than a simple reading of racial diversity or ethnic origin would suggest. Quantitative proxies that link urban competitiveness with biological or geographical notions of diversity over-simplify the nature of difference and local responses to it. Furthermore, as an economic development practice, ranking and rating a city-region's economic performance in terms of the percentage of its population with certain skin pigmentations or places of birth has the effect of highlighting the natural disadvantage of the thousands of smaller city-regions that lack a recent history of immigrant settlement or economic opportunities that may encourage ethnic diversity.

In this article we argue for a more nuanced understanding of how social processes and institutions influence and reflect the economic performance of city-regions. Drawing on insights from cultural geography regarding constructions of whiteness (Bonnett 1997; Hartigan 1997; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; McGuinness 2000; Stokes 2001), we argue that race, class, and cultural identity -- especially competing claims of whiteness and

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[1] We understand the so-called 'creative class' as comprising individuals who are preoccupied with high level problem-solving, demanding a great deal of unilateral "…judgment and requires high levels of education or human capital" (Florida, Mellander and Stolarick, 2008, 12). In particular, it includes the following major occupational groups: "computer and math occupations; architecture and engineering; life, physical, and social science; education, training, and library positions; arts and design work; and entertainment, sports, and media occupations…."

cultural privilege -- can influence the ability of a city-region to attract and retain talented and creative workers. We draw on empirical examples of three small and medium sized Canadian cities: Halifax (Nova Scotia), St John's (Newfoundland and Labrador), and Kingston (Ontario). Our findings demonstrate the ways in which respondents we interviewed interpreted the openness of their communities to difference. While the three communities are relatively small, old by Canadian standards, and predominantly white, respondents in the city-regions reported encountering different local attitudes towards diversity. Respondents' discourse revealed the influence of divergent historical and spatial conditions on the social dynamics of local economic performance.

Interpreting difference: the geography of whiteness

The literature on geographies of whiteness has been growing in recent years, making substantial contributions to our understanding of the complexity of race and class in the modern age (Peach 2000; Peake and Ray 2001; Jarosz and Lawson 2002; McDermott 2006; Vanderbeck 2006; Wray 2006; Smith 2007). With a few exceptions (Amin and Thrift 2002; Wright and Ellis 2006), however, cultural geographers have not engaged this literature, even though many economic geography scholars are examining the ties between urban economic competitiveness, talent attraction, and issues of race and diversity (Florida 2002, 2005; Gertler 2004; Bell and Binnie 2004; Fainstein 2005; Thomas and Darnton 2006; Florida et al. 2008). Such scholars tend to employ research methods that have the effect of essentializing diversity through quantitative proxies that link the economic competitiveness of city-regions with biological notions of diversity (Lewis and Donald 2010). The creative capital argument links tolerance to measures that show high proportions of people born abroad, with different skin tones, or in gay relationships (measured by those living in same-sex households). As Lewis and Donald (2010, 31) note, however, the presence of non-white or non-heterosexual residents in a community does not ensure tolerance. Croucher (1997) acknowledges that cities with high levels of diversity can harbour racism and discrimination. While much of the earlier work on the economic geography of talent deserves praise for thrusting diversity issues into the public realm (Glaeser 2005), we recognize a need for more focused attention to reveal the ways material social processes like race, class, and cultural identity may underlie spatial economic performance.

In a landmark article, Kobayashi and Peake (2000, 393) provide "a rationale for revitalizing and advancing the study of racism, whiteness, and geography". They view race as a social construction that is not about biological essence but rather "a result of discursive, thoroughly material—and human—social processes" (393). Within this context, "racism isn't only about hate"; instead "racism involves the manipulation of power to mark 'white' as a location of social privilege" (393; see also Wiegman 1999). Deconstructing whiteness and other power relationships provides a useful perspective on the geography of diversity. As a standpoint, whiteness offers "a place from which to look at ourselves and the surrounding society, a position of normalcy, and perhaps moral superiority, from which to construct a landscape of what is same and what is different" (394; see also Frankenberg 1997, 2001; Dwyer and Jones 2000; Winders 2003).

In a case study of two neighbourhoods in California, McDermott (2006) found that phenotype proved instrumental in the way people interacted with one another. In one of her study areas, the underlying assumption, held by both visible minorities and whites

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of various class backgrounds, was that "the whites who lived in workfare were somehow defective; that the least capable whites were most likely to live among large numbers of poor and working-class blacks" (McDermott 2006, 41). Interestingly, however, McDermott (2006) noted that the assumption was not uniform across her study areas, but instead proved context dependent. A central finding of McDermott's work argued that understandings of "white racial identity are not fixed but context dependent; thus whites in two different neighborhoods that have nearly identical demographic profiles can have very different understandings of what it means to be white" (McDermott 2006, 149). Whiteness is not only resilient in its operation, but also capable of eliding class designations (Shaw 2007).

For Wray (2006), a social constructionist approach to whiteness means re-conceptualizing the term to confront the multifaceted nature of social inequality (see also Hartigan 1997; Jarosz and Lawson 2002). According to Wray (2006, 6), we need to "re-conceptualize whiteness as a flexible set of social and symbolic boundaries that give shape, meaning, and power to the social category white." Drawing upon his example of the usage of the term "white trash", he suggests that deconstructing whiteness

> speaks to another tension, that between what have for too long been competing categories of social analysis: race and class. Indeed, split *white trash* in two again and read the meanings of each: *white* now appears as an ethnoracial signifier, and *trash*, a signifier of abject class status (emphasis in the original 2006, 3).

Wray (2006, 6) calls for a unified theory of social difference and inequality at a fundamental level:

> To resolve tired and tiring debates about how much analytical weight to give to race versus class, or gender versus race, and so on, or about whether we are conceiving of such terms in essentialist or anti essentialist ways, or about what exactly it means for something to be socially constructed, we should allow our methodological focus to resolve to a level of greater abstraction – social difference – and a larger domain of social practices – social differentiation. It is at this most fundamental level that new knowledge will be found.

As we explore the social dynamics of economic performance in Canadian city-regions we seek to understand the social practices of difference. How can we arrive at a unified theory of social difference and inequality in place? We argue that the creative cities discourse as applied to thinking about the future of small and medium sized city-regions operates from a position that treats whiteness and middle class expectations as normative, and that judges prospects for economic success accordingly. By measuring non-white skin colour, non-local birthplaces, and non-straight sexual orientations policy makers define the white, local, and straight as standard. By encouraging immigration and improving conditions to attract the other, city-regions seek to generate diversity that creates social and economic interest. The biological essentialist approach has had profound implications for the ranking, ordering, and understanding of the economic performance of smaller cities. Given that smaller cities tend to be whiter in physical makeup than their large, globalizing, cosmopolitan counterparts, creative cities discourse employs a somewhat narrow understanding of their social dynamics. A social constructionist approach, however, requires us to re-conceptualize whiteness as we confront the multi-dimensional nature of social inequality in communities. In Wray's words (2006, 6), this means viewing whiteness as "a flexible set of social and symbolic

boundaries that give shape, meaning, and power to the social category *white*" (emphasis in original).

Our study reveals that local understandings of the implications of race and identity politics differed across the three communities we profiled. Respondents in Kingston directly engaged the language of whiteness as they critiqued an intransigent historic class hierarchy. Those interviewed in Halifax highlighted concerns about historic discrimination against African-Nova Scotians and resilient sexism in power structures. In St John's respondents described an insular community that proved challenging for newcomers to penetrate. In each community, local history and social relationships defined the context within which talented and creative workers interpreted the diversity theology preached through local economic development discourses.

The role of social difference in three cities

As part of a national study on the social dynamics of economic performance in Canadian cities[2] we interviewed talented and creative workers in Kingston, Halifax, and St John's (see Map 1). The broader study seeks explanations for what makes some Canadian cities economically stronger and more innovative than others, and specifically investigates the role of local social processes and structures in making city-regions appeal to talented and creative workers. In total, 16 city-regions, ranging from small cities like Kingston to Canada's largest city, Toronto, are included. While larger city-regions typically show high rates of growth and considerable ethnic diversity, many small and medium sized cities reveal slower growth and limited diversity. We chose to compare the three cities included here to explore the way that talented workers think about diversity in city-regions which score low on creative cities indices of diversity yet have growth rates somewhat above what economic models predict based on location, industrial base, and size (Shearmur 2009).

[*Map 1 will go about here*. Location map of Canada showing cities profiled]

We recorded and transcribed interviews for qualitative analysis (see Table 1). Interviews generally lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Researchers used a semi-structured schedule that included questions such as: why did you move to [this city]? What characteristics of the local economy and/or labour market make it an attractive place to work in your field? To what degree is [the city] a tolerant/welcoming place (i.e. in terms of race/ethnicity/ sexuality/gender equality)? Conversely, what characteristics of the economy and/or labour market undermine its attractiveness as a place to work in your field? What characteristics of [the city] reduce its attractiveness as a place to live?

Table 1: Description of sample

City-Region	**Kingston**	**Halifax**	**St John's**
Sample size	54	28	25
Year of interviews	2006-2008	2007	2008
Sectors profiled	Academic	Health research Music Built environment consultants	Arts, media & culture Health Higher education Maritime

Based on an understanding of the regional economy, the local investigator for each city-region selected sectors to profile. Kingston is a small city with three major institutional employers: prisons, academic institutions, and the military. The early capital of Upper Canada, prior to Canadian confederation, the city has significant heritage assets. Located on the shore of the St Lawrence River, Kingston attracts seasonal tourists. In the Kingston case, researchers focused on academic 'star talent' for two main reasons. First, the empirical evidence overwhelmingly suggested that the higher education cluster is the only statistically significant cluster in Kingston (Spencer and Vinodrai 2009a; cf. Porter 1998; Martin and Sunley 2003). Second, universities are important institutions for shaping knowledge-intensive regional economies (Florida et al. 2006, 2008). The sample frame was created by performing a reputational analysis of Queen's University faculty members. By examining various databases (which listed research medals, teaching awards, research awards/ grants) and after consulting with local media, Queen's University senior administrators, and community insiders, we identified 150 faculty members as promising and highly valuable to the university and Kingston community. Then, to account for survivor bias, we tailored the sample to ensure that it included members who either commute from three nearby big cities (Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa) or have left or are leaving Kingston. We actively privileged academics in the early stages of their career with the assumption that quality of life issues may affect their location choices.

Halifax is the provincial capital of Nova Scotia, generating a substantial government sector, including clusters of hospitals and universities. It is the eastern base for the Canadian navy and a major year-round port. The largest city in Atlantic Canada, Halifax is an economic hub that includes major business service functions for the region. The Halifax study examined three sectors: health research, music, and built environment consultants (architecture, planning, and engineering). Earlier interviews in the city-region had indicated that government authorities and development agencies saw the health research sector as a source of innovation and growing economic potential; the same respondents identified the live music scene as an important contributor to the attractiveness of the city-region to talented workers in other sectors. Consequently, we determined that these sectors warranted further study. We added the built environment consulting sector as an example of business service providers who work throughout the region but generally live in Halifax. For each sector we sought to interview workers and managers within the same organizations, and representatives of related development organizations.

St. John's, the provincial capital, increasingly dominates the rural-urban system of Newfoundland and Labrador as the economy makes the radical transition from one extractive resource – fishing – to that of off-shore oil and gas. Better than 40 percent of

the province's total population lives within commuting distance of the city (Simms 2009). The St. John's study examined four sectors: arts, media, and culture; health; higher education; and maritime (Lepawsky *et al*., Forthcoming). Researchers identified these sectors as economically important through a location quotient analysis (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006). Potential participants from each sector were contacted by e-mail through publically available industry directories and then asked for the contact details of other potential participants. The findings discussed here draw on the responses of 25 interviewees.

Each of the three case study city-regions showed significantly lower scores on measures of diversity than Canada did in general in the 2006 census (see Table 2). While almost 20 percent of Canadians are foreign-born, only 12.4 percent of Kingstonians, 7.4 percent of Haligonians, and 2.9 percent of St John's residents immigrated (Spencer and Vinodrai 2009). Likewise, the cities have small proportions of visible minorities[3]: 7.3 percent in Kingston, 7.5 percent in Halifax, and 1.9 percent in St John's. Concentrations of foreign-born residents and visible minorities occur essentially in the largest cities (Ley and Germain 2000), while small and medium sized cities in most parts of the country show similar levels to our sample cities. While average incomes in Kingston are near the Canadian average, employment incomes in Halifax and St John's are considerably lower. Despite weak performance in income and diversity, however, these small cities surpass the Canadian average in the proportion of residents with higher degrees, and proportion of residents working in creative occupations. That suggests that talented and creative workers remain in these city-regions regardless of local conditions that the creative cities discourse suggests might dissuade them. How do talented workers explain their choices in light of limited diversity in these city-regions?

Table 2: Characteristics of the city-regions and Canada (2006 census)

	Kingston	**Halifax**	**St John's**	**Canada**
Population census metropolitan area	152,350	369,455	179,270	31,612,890
Proportion visible minorities	7.3%	7.5%	1.9%	16.2%
Proportion foreign born	12.5%	7.4%	2.9%	19.8%
Average full time employment income	$51,267	$48,092	$48, 392	$51,221
% BA or higher	21.7%	24.0%	18.8%	18.1%
% in creative occupations	37.4%	38.0%	38.6%	33.2%
% in science tech occupations	6.0%	7.0%	8.0%	6.6%

Sources: Statistics Canada 2010a, 2010b; Spencer and Vinodrai 2009

The next sections of the paper briefly examine the findings of our interviews with respondents in Kingston, Halifax, and St John's to indicate how they talked about

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[3] The term "visible minority", in this context, describes "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." This definition, used by Statistics Canada, derives from Canada's Employment Equity Act of 1995.

diversity and the lack of it in these city-regions. The final section then considers the wider implications of our research.

Kingston: The culture of whiteness

      "It's all about discipline. It's this kind of reforming people…it's all odd" (Professor 2). At many levels, this comment from a respondent highlights the centrality of discipline and social control to the broader social processes at work in Kingston. The largest employers in town are reforming institutions, with the military, the university / hospitals and the prison system employing the majority of the workforce. The university is recognized, in particular, for its ability to prepare individuals for the global marketplace: Queen's University commands a strong international reputation in commerce and business, for instance. The military trains soldiers and officers for warfare, among other duties; the prisons discipline and prepare offenders for a transition into civilian life. Strong mechanisms of social control manage difference in the city-region.

      Kingston is a city of stark contrasts: a place that attracts and retains the best and brightest of the Canadian knowledge-intensive economy, but simultaneously detains those who have failed society. A Statistics Canada study ranked Kingston as the Canadian city with the largest per capita number of PhDs, scientists, and engineers (McKenzie 2007). With its cluster of nine federal prisons, Greater Kingston has the notorious distinction of housing Canada's largest prison population[4] and their accompanying family networks. Kingston's population is socially and economically polarized, and spatially fragmented or "ghettoized." According to respondents, the various social communities share the larger urban space but behave as if they were geographically isolated. The military has its own residential, commercial, and operational districts to accommodate its members and their families. Respondents uniformly recognized that residential areas north-of-Princess Street (a street bisecting the city) suffered considerable stigma of crime and poverty. By all accounts, Kingston exhibits enclaves of abject poverty juxtaposed with bubbles of relative wealth. While they expressed sadness or guilt over the severity of the social divide in the city, the academics interviewed understood the rest of Kingston from their place within comfortable bubbles.

      Respondents recognized the lack of diversity in Kingston. Professor 3 told us, "My partner and I used to joke in the 1980s that we could call this place Caucasia". Professor 4, expressing distain for anti-Semitism encountered in the 1980s commented, "just the fact that I didn't have blond hair made me a visible minority!" Conditions may not have improved over time. Professor 9, who has since left Queen's University remarked,

> The last thing—Kingston felt so white! I got so tired of it sometimes. You know, everyone you saw in the street, everyone you saw in the stores, everyone was pretty much white. With the exception of the handful of Queen's students, a handful of people running different ethnic restaurants, you know. And I got tired of that—it felt very barren. I found myself very lonely there, on an everyday basis, walking around was just…I couldn't make friends!

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[4] The prisons housed 2377 offenders as of April 13, 2008, of those approximately 1000 were in maximum security institutions. (Nathalie Fortier, Corrections Canada, personal communication, October 16, 2008)

The theme and terminology of whiteness came up repeatedly with the academics interviewed. Professor 28 declared, "What I get is a failure to recognize cultural difference, a resentment of the issue of race being brought up. It's a highly white normative environment". Similarly, Professor 20 said,

> I think Kingston has a very profound culture of whiteness. And though I myself am white, I'm very conscious that whiteness is something that is created. It's a cultural and ideological question; it's not a question of how many people have so much skin pigmentation.

Such comments prove highly instructive in the context of the broader literature on whiteness. The physical homogeneity of Kingston's population alone may be insufficient to explain the prevailing culture of whiteness in the city and its institutions: respondents explicitly articulated their understandings of the way that the power and meaning of whiteness is socially constructed in practice. As Walker (2008, 7) suggests, Kingston, and in particular Queen's University, is home to an "astonishingly resilient culture of silence and complicity". Several professors and community insiders interviewed spoke about rigid social divides within the city. According to Mr. B, "Queen's students are rich...They don't just ask each other where they are from, but what street in Toronto they are from". Professor 26 called Kingston "small, upper-class and smug." Existing power structures may exclude newcomers and non-whites, and reinforce strict class and social hierarchies.

The interviews demonstrated that academics pointed to the culture of whiteness in explaining factors that make Kingston less attractive to them. Professor 28 remarked that "Kingston's whiteness is a detraction." Professor 34 elaborated: "I have lived in big cities and I like them. I think homogeneity breeds intolerance so I miss that degree of diversity. I feel less secure in this environment." Professor 41 "can't get into the big city quite fast enough". These respondents linked smallness with homogeneity and intolerance. They reveal little interest in the difference generated by religion, occupation, personal history or other factors but define homogeneity by skin colour and ethnicity: they critique whiteness while treating it as normative.

Respondents in Kingston connected cultural diversity (non-whiteness) to colour and excitement, while linking whiteness with cultural blandness. Professor 23 noted that "Kingston is so lily white….the culture kind of sucks." Professor 38 spoke at length about feeling marginalized in Kingston:

> I certainly feel marginalized in the city … not just in terms of race but just in terms of who I [am], it feels like a GAP town, like it's very bland and, you know, seems like, I'm not saying it's socially conservative, but it appears so. So I remember once I was looking at someone who was wearing an orange scarf…and oh my god! Someone else is wearing an orange scarf! So it feels like [there is] a level of cultural blandness… [there is] just a lack of diversity in general… lack of diversity here and lack of options… diversity at all levels: political diversity, cultural diversity, lack of things to do and be exposed to, in terms of what life is about…I mean honestly, I don't know how to put my finger on it. Walking around Kingston I never see anybody; it always feels dead to me.

Interviewing respondents who stayed and respondents who had left Kingston revealed the way in which talented workers presented a critical discourse of whiteness in explaining their feelings about the social dynamics of Kingston. While those who

remained in Kingston recognized the homogeneity and privilege of the circles of power and influence in the city, they pointed to other factors to explain their decisions to stay. Those who left or contemplated leaving Kingston described the culture of whiteness as a contributing factor. Access to nearby multi-cultural cities gave them options to act on their commitment to diversity: to live in Ottawa, Montreal, or Toronto even as they worked in Kingston.

The concept of whiteness in the Kingston context integrated a range of ethnic, occupational, and class differences: in the university context at Queen's whiteness may become code for the elements of Kingston social structure that academics dislike or dismiss. For respondents, the culture of whiteness reflected an oppressive social quality, linked to a long tradition and history of those who hold power. A perceived culture of whiteness reduced levels of personal comfort and social interaction for the professors interviewed, regardless of ethnicity or personal background. For talented academics, Kingston is a station on life's train: a place they land for a period of time but many expect to leave later. The quality of prestigious Queen's University attracts talented young academics to Kingston but our data suggest that homogeneity plays a role in some people's decisions to move on to more urbane locations. The discourse around a culture of whiteness encapsulates respondents' distress about power and economic imbalances; it encourages implicit comparison with more cosmopolitan cities nearby that undermines some talented workers' affiliation and loyalty to the city-region.

Halifax: Myth, reality, and identity

Those interviewed in Halifax judged the city in comparison with other places and recognized its shortcomings in ethnic diversity. Respondents commonly contrasted the limited diversity in Halifax with cultural and racial diversity seen in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. A health research administrator said,

> A challenge is the level of diversity. Cultural diversity is not as high as many people are used to coming here. If you're coming here from Montreal or Toronto and many other places, people have expressed the relative lack of diversity, both culturally and racially. I came here from Montreal. Diversity gives a certain *joie-de-vivre.* If you have thriving communities from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds it is fun.

Some respondents described Halifax as cosmopolitan but others said that they knew people who had left Halifax because it wasn't cosmopolitan enough for their tastes. Comments often linked diversity to urban amenities and display elements in the city. As in the Kingston context, in Halifax the term ethnic diversity generally served to mark non-white, non-western practices, whether in food, entertainment options, or other consumption opportunities.

Although people generally identified themselves as white or Anglo-Saxon in response to a question about their ethnicity the overwhelming theme of whiteness that permeated academic discourse in Kingston did not appear in Halifax. Many Halifax respondents described themselves and their sector or scene as tolerant and inclusive, although they proved somewhat sceptical about tolerance within the wider community. Some saw their own personal experience with difference as limited. For instance, a musician told us,

I was raised really tolerant, but in [another town] and in the suburbs of
Halifax. I didn't hang out with people from different neighbourhoods. I
hung out with a bunch of white guys from the suburbs, you know what I
mean?

Concerns about race and disparity came up in all but five interviews. One
respondent called the government's appointment of an African Nova Scotian as
Lieutenant-Governor a token gesture. Several complained of systemic racism and sexism
in the region, as did this manager:

We have some work to do in terms of accepting people; even our own
native people, the African Nova Scotians or the Mi'kmaq. I think we have
some work to do there and we're not admitting it. So until we admit it,
we're not going to do anything about it. …We're pretending to be very
open and welcoming and friendly to newcomers, but we're not even that
way to our own.

When respondents described tensions around the African Nova Scotian community they
often cited historic examples. One person noted the poor treatment of the Black Loyalists;
several talked about the legacy of Africville: a Black community dispossessed and
relocated in the 1960s (Clairmont and Magill 1987). These instances of broken promises
and displacement reflected a highly charged political discourse around Black history and
the prospects for the African Nova Scotian community. Those interviewed generally
revealed discomfort with historic and contemporary discrimination and suggested that
local authorities needed to act to remedy the situation.

Respondents commonly described Nova Scotia as having a conservative political
culture resistant to change. The local government in Halifax received extensive criticism
about its bureaucracy and regulations. Three respondents referred to old-boys-networks
or clubs to connote insularity in the system. Some respondents saw government's focus
on encouraging immigration as a cynical effort to ensure growth in a context where the
population is aging.

Despite concerns about limited diversity and lingering racism, most respondents
called Halifax friendly and welcoming; several contrasted it with the unfriendliness they
had experienced in Toronto. Some of those interviewed worried that newcomers may find
problems in penetrating social networks. A built environment consultant answered the
question "are newcomers easily able to integrate into this region?" this way.

I think that depends on your cultural background. I already mentioned that
if you're Indian or Chinese or black, then no. If you're Anglo-Saxon and
you've got, maybe, a Scottish lilt to you, you'll be loved by all. If you're
female and you're independent and spirited and stuff…not going to go far.
It's very sad to say that.

Two participants illustrated a lingering debate within Halifax – framed in the
language of political correctness -- on how to deal with issues of race. One respondent
argued that Nova Scotians excuse their racism and sexism by saying they refuse to be
politically correct. Another respondent defended artistic practices against charges of
political correctness. The musician put the issue this way:

I was explaining my piece to this woman and she said, 'Well, if you knew
anything about our culture, you'd know that we don't use the word Black.
We use the word African Nova Scotian.' And I didn't know that. And I

didn't know when that changed. Because when I was living in [another country], we were calling people Black. And so…anyway…she was very incensed. And I still didn't change it [in the production]. But…that kind of dogmatic political correctness divides people, rather than includes them.

Discussions of tolerance and diversity frequently led to comments about "Nova Scotia culture". Provincial and local governments have promoted what one respondent called "the myth of the Celtic" and others talked about as a "party town". In packaging the region for mass consumption government has encouraged a homogeneous view of provincial heritage that favours particular types of music, dress, and socializing. A musician described the problem:

I think the social make-up of many of the students who come here … to do undergrad degrees -- they are really coming to Halifax because of the public support of the ersatz fictionalized folk culture. … I find this whole myth of the Celtic very frustrating. … Not only is it a fiction now, it is a historical fiction. It is a rewriting of history. It is problematic seeing how it writes African-Nova Scotians out of the picture; it writes German-Nova Scotians out of the picture; it writes Aboriginal people out of the picture; and it largely writes Acadians out of the picture. This fictionalized Scottish / Celtic world is a minor reflection of the real Nova Scotia.

Such political constructions that privilege Scottish heritage build loyalty to place but have the effect of denying significant social differences and discounting the role of cultural diversity in local identity.

Several respondents identified parts of the North End of Halifax as a transitional neighbourhood traditionally occupied by working class, lower income, and Black residents that now attracts artists and musicians. Gentrification increasingly threatens the low cost accommodations there. A music producer explained the concern:

The classic line is 'artists are the storm troopers of gentrification', right? Like they've been moving into these neighbourhoods and renovating these neighbourhoods and participating in them. I think one of the biggest problems we have in the North End, that's holding back that becoming some kind of Queen St West [in Toronto] before it sold out … is Halifax's and Nova Scotia's systemic racism. … The reason that neighbourhood is the way it is, is because 87 percent of the people rent and 45 percent of the people in that neighbourhood are on social assistance. And that neighbourhood will stay in this weird flux it's in right now, with white kids from Ontario putting up HCAP [Halifax Coalition Against Poverty] posters and Black people who have actually lived there for years just saying they want the grocery store back, until something gives.

This quote effectively links issues of class and race while explaining changing neighbourhood dynamics in terms of political economy.

Those interviewed in Halifax generally described social networks of mutual support and collaboration that kept them connected to the city-region (Grant and Kronstal 2010). Although talented workers valued diversity and saw themselves as tolerant, few pointed to concerns about diversity as likely to push them away from Halifax. Despite worries about historic wrongs and social displacement, they saw the Halifax community as welcoming. While they rarely used the discourse of whiteness we can see that racial

politics and ethnic identity influenced their perspectives. By calling authorities conservative respondents revealed their concerns about how government deals with difference. Municipal authorities especially received criticism for not sufficiently supporting diversity except in promoting immigration as a means to an end: economic growth. Despite limited diversity and normative whiteness, however, Halifax remained generally perceived as a desirable destination for those who could find work in the city-region.

St John's: Openness, stigma, and insularity

      Interviewees in St John's spoke about diversity and the lack of it in two main ways: first, in terms of the city being an open and welcoming community, but one that lacks diversity in terms of visible minorities; and second, as a community susceptible to certain kinds of stigma and insularity that effects a palpable insider/outsider dynamic.

      The common response to questions about tolerance around issues of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in the city were that St John's is very open and welcoming, but not visibly diverse. For example, a successful musician in his 20s told us:

> You don't see a lot of like massive gay pride parades, or you don't see a lot of… people doing Tai Chi in the park or anything or, I don't know, even groups of ethnic people walking around … But I don't think that has much to do with [a lack of] openness. I just think maybe [St John's] doesn't draw people like that or… people are drawn to communities elsewhere.

      Two young filmmakers echoed the sentiments. One explained that St John's "is not the most richly diverse place by any stretch of the imagination; but I think there's an open-mindedness and an acceptance for sure." Responding to questions about tolerance, another filmmaker commented:

> I would say extremely tolerant … I mean, in terms of gender and sexuality, I don't even think anyone would even notice … And I'm saying in terms of ethnicity, like we just [chuckles], honestly, don't get a lot of different ethnicities here, which is a pity; but like I think that, you know, when we do, if we do, then it's totally tolerant.

      Given that these talented workers do not identify themselves as belonging to any minority group, their responses reflect their non-minority status more than they convey genuine tolerance in the city. However, evidence from two respondents who self-identified as minorities seemed to support the claims. A professional who migrated from Africa replied that he had not experienced any form of discrimination in St John's. He said that the city "is fairly welcoming; it's the weather that's not." The same respondent revealed the challenges his appearance and origins created:

> You don't know how lucky you are to have a Canadian passport ... Yeah, that's not so bad [moving within Canada], but it's going back and forth outside of the country that is most difficult. I was going to an interview in Houston: everything was already set up, but my visa got denied so I couldn't go.

      Another respondent, a doctoral student in science, commented on the tolerance and openness in St John's.

Well, being from Quebec, like you would sometimes expect that there
would be racism – like people don't like French – but I have never had any
issues. ... People know I'm from Quebec just because of my accent, but
never nobody… said bad things about my accent or where I come from, so
I think they accept well.

The same interviewee, like others in the sample, commented on the lack of visible
minorities in the city.

The other thing is I haven't seen much different ethnicities other than
white people in St. John's, so I don't know what that means. I don't know
if people from other ethnicities - they don't feel welcome here or what. I
don't think that's the case, but I don't know what's the cause for that.

Like respondents in the other cities, those interviewed in St John's generally
lumped whites in an undifferentiated category while differentiating others according to a
range of factors (including skin colour, language, place of origin). A public relations
consultant asked about the role living in a multicultural city plays in business implicitly
coded Greeks and Italians as non-white:

I don't think that I'm really living in a multicultural environment, to be
honest with you. So [the question is] not really applicable here. I mean, it
would be great if we were a little bit… I would like to see a much more
diverse society here because from there it means different types of work
and different ways to have to communicate, which would challenge me
even further, I mean, as a communications specialist. ... I hate to say it –
but it's a pretty, you know – what's the word I'd use for it – uni-
dimensional society … While there is some diversity, it's pretty white and
it's pretty middle class and it's pretty secure. ... [In Ontario] you'd be
targeting the Asian community. You'd be targeting the Italian community.
You'd be targeting the Greek community. Here it would be sort of a waste
of my time.

A financial executive told us that some of the challenges of attracting and
retaining talented workers related to "cultural diversity. There's just not as much here.
So I think if that's what they were looking for and a big part of their life, then there's not
as much room for that than they might find in other centres." Similarly, a federal
government accounts manager stated,

I guess, you know, historically we've been just, you know, not a real
diverse ethnic, I guess, background. Here it's changed a bit, but I think
that for the most part it's pretty open that way and, you know, I would
hope that there aren't too many examples of problems in that regard.

Responding to questions about his personal experience with discrimination in the
city, this respondent revealed an important theme about the stigmatization of
Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders from the rest of Canada.

"There's misperceptions outside the province; and, nationally, I think. You
know, over the years there has been a certain amount of ignorance about
Newfoundlanders and education of what was in Newfoundland."

The sense of stigma attached to being Newfoundlanders emerged in several interviews in
ways that suggest it can have real implications for attracting and retaining talent as well

as for Newfoundland-based businesses competing for market share. A board member of a local trade association explained.

> Recruitment from, say, the US and the UK, has been fairly successful. It's probably more successful than recruiting from other parts of Canada. In other words, there's a Canadian perspective on, say, the local, which there isn't down in the US. If you're in the US, you're coming to Canada; UK, you're coming to Canada. If you're in Canada, you're coming from BC to Newfoundland and there's already an image or perception there.

Others echoed the sentiment. A business consultant described the challenges faced by businesses based in St John's.

> There's a hurdle to get over, and I hesitate to call it a discriminatory, but it's kind of like – "oh, you're from Newfoundland. You can't be any good, right?" It's a stereotype that has been developed over a period of time and, probably, many countries have a particular group that they say – "oh no, you know, we don't want those guys, you know; they're no good." It's easier for companies [based in Newfoundland] to do business in the US; they don't know that you're supposed to be a stereotype.

In mirroring this point, a human resources manager suggested that increasing diversity may turn the image around.

> I think our general reputation within the rest of Canada is probably a weakness. Until people actually experience us, I don't believe that mainland Canada fully appreciates how well educated, how diverse, how culturally oriented this province is becoming.

The sense of stigma attached to being a Newfoundlander is connected in complex ways with a parallel sense of insularity. Later in the interview, the respondent returned to the issue of stereotypes about Newfoundlanders adding,

> We're still very much an insular community, still very much looking in and remember a lot of our history … Although we're very friendly, we're also very… I don't want to say suspicious, but … whenever you sit down… well, whenever I sit down with anyone, I still get the "Who's your father; where were you born?" Right? So we try to trace back our roots to find out… It's very important to find out how you're connected to Newfoundland, and I think that that can be a real barrier.

The interviewee, herself a Newfoundlander, expressed hesitancy in describing insularity, perhaps wishing to avoid re-inscribing those stereotypes. But her hesitancy also revealed a palpable insider/outsider dynamic experienced by other respondents in St John's (Lepawsky *et al.*, forthcoming). A director of a health research centre resident in Newfoundland for 20 years self-identified as Caucasian but also referred to himself as an outsider in response to questions about the challenges of integrating members of the creative class into the labour market:

> Well, frankly, there's a problem. There's a CFA [Come-From-Away] problem. I'm one of them. Many academics who come here from elsewhere in Canada or elsewhere, find that the only people they end up hanging around with are other CFAs, whether Canadian or not. Not for any really good reason: people here tend to hang around with one another.

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So, unless you have some structural grounds for breaking through that barrier, you often don't.

That the respondent saw no need to explain the acronym CFA to an interviewer he had just met revealed the extent to which this insider/outsider dynamic is a palpable facet of everyday social relations in St John's.

The insider/outsider dynamic that emerged in St John's suggests that it is a mistake to equate small white cities with homogeneity. The CFA problem exposes whiteness as a construct replete with diverse meanings about insiders and outsiders. In St John's, coming from away poses a barrier to integration regardless of skin colour. Our findings suggest rethinking the proposition in creative class theory that membership in the creative class is "determined by economic function – by the kinds of work that they do – all other distinctions follow from that" (Florida 2002, 8). Such a proposition misses important entanglements of power and identity that both enable and constrain the locational choices and mobility of members of the creative class (Lepawsky *et al*., forthcoming). Creative class theory advocates tolerance and diversity as factors that play a determining role in the locational choices of the creative class. Yet, in a sense, by insisting on a strict occupational definition of class membership, creative class theory pays little attention to how members of the creative class are themselves marked by difference. Instead, creative class theory normalizes the bodies of its members as un-marked, un-racialized, and post-difference (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; Peake and Ray 2001), while the actual experiences of its members reveal that mobility and belonging are conditioned by the differently positioned subjectivity of outsiders.

The significance of difference

The creative class model which pervades contemporary economic geography and local economic development practice sees diversity and tolerance as central to economic success. If Florida's (2005) conceptions about talent flows are accurate, then the most successful places are not simply tolerant to difference but proactively inclusive of it. Such places are certainly not judged as overwhelmingly white, culturally bland, covertly racist, or socially insular. Do the challenges that small white cities like the ones profiled face in generating diversity correlate with a lack of tolerance? Do they affect the communities' abilities to attract and retain talented workers?

Our respondents frequently referred to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver as larger cities with laudatory diversity. Some of those interviewed indicated that they considered these large cities as potential places to live. The smaller cities we studied may not be growing at the rate of Toronto, Vancouver, or Calgary but they have their successes. They have dynamic internationally-renowned universities that draw students from far and wide. They are showing faster employment growth than models predict (Shearmur 2009), but the availability of jobs remains a critical issue that limits their capacity to retain university graduates. They have more successful downtowns than many cities their size (Filion et al. 2004). They attract talented people, especially from other parts of Canada, for a variety of reasons including educational opportunities, jobs, affordability, urban and environmental quality. Talented workers in smaller city-regions described limited ethnic diversity as a problem, yet many stayed regardless. The smaller city lacks diversity but offers other benefits (Sands and Reese 2008).

The creative class discourse privileges cosmopolitanism (Young et al. 2006) in large, diverse cities. Thus talented and creative people in the small white city feel the need to explain why they live where they live. On the one hand, they may critique homogeneity and the repressive nature of traditional power structures; on the other hand, they may appreciate the strongly supportive nature of local social networks. The principal narratives that articulated the issues around diversity and homogeneity differed in the three communities we studied. Respondents in Kingston judged the city and their own social networks harshly in describing a culture of whiteness. By contrast, respondents in Halifax and St John's framed examples of racism and insularity within an overall tale of tolerance and social inclusion.

The culture of whiteness in Kingston signifies a relatively impermeable local power network (with deep historic roots) that does not readily permit outsiders to enter. Thus newcomers form their own social networks but remain highly aware of their own position as privileged outsiders in a city of extreme status inequalities. Although their employer (Queen's) enjoys high status in the academic milieu, some talented workers in the university may not develop allegiance to the city. They look to (and travel to) nearby cities for the diversity in food, entertainment, culture, shopping, and people that Kingston lacks. They explain their potential choice not to remain in terms of the deficiency of the local culture (not in terms of the disadvantaged groups represented by those associated with the prison, or the working class associated with the military, but in terms of the privileged position of elements associated with the university and the city elites). Talented workers in Kingston proved the most likely of workers in the three communities studied to consider relocating.

With its long military history and its many universities, Halifax has been a destination for migration within the country for many decades. Rural to urban migration within the Maritimes has also contributed to Halifax's growth. Consequently, a high proportion of residents in the city migrated and stayed there. Although the descendants of early settlers remain influential in the economy and society, local power networks do accommodate social mobility for newcomers. Talented workers who come to the city can meet with and become power brokers. At the same time, however, talented workers recognize that African-Nova Scotians face continuing obstacles to opportunity: the social networks prove more permeable for some than they are for others. In suggesting that discrimination existed, respondents sought to distance themselves and their own social networks from any lack of tolerance. Racism in Halifax was acknowledged but somehow disembodied and attributed to undefined authorities. With this rationalization talented workers could reaffirm their faith in diversity and tolerance without feeling that they condoned it through their desire to stay in Halifax.

With its great distance from other Canadian cities, and weak economy until the last decade, St John's experienced relatively little interprovincial in-migration or immigration. Consequently, social networks revealed the influence of long-standing family connections reinforced by religious faith and cultural practices. With few migrants coming, the city has the reputation of being friendly if somewhat insular. Newcomers find immediate opportunities to link to work and recreational networks often comprising other newcomers. The most effective strategy for fully integrating newcomers into local social networks has traditionally been intermarriage. Those who remain to raise their own families become integrated over generations as they pick up the dialect and other cultural practices. In St John's the search for economic opportunity, rather than a search for diversity, remains the primary issue for attracting and retaining talented and creative workers.

To what extent does whiteness affect talent attraction and retention in these communities? Do immigrants choose not to come to these communities because the city-regions are white, or because they offer few jobs? Despite efforts to encourage immigration to smaller cities most immigrants to Canada choose to locate in larger centres. Smaller city-regions thus end up mostly attracting migrants from within Canada. Our interviews indicated that talented workers who remained in the city-regions studied acknowledged the dominance of particular cultural positions (Anglo heritage and fair skin) that can be characterized as whiteness. At the same time our study confirmed that talented and creative workers in smaller cities value diversity both for its intrinsic goodness (as a normative goal of theory and politics) and for its contribution to quality of life (as a generator of interesting food, entertainment, and spaces). Talented workers recognize when diversity is missing in their community and express the wish for more. While they articulate critiques in terms of racial, gender, and cultural power relationships, their statements of aspiration commonly reveal that they value diversity to address their own preferred consumption practices (e.g., restaurants, cultural festivals). Thus, talented workers inadvertently reproduce the normative white position where the non-white other functions principally to address the interests of the dominant class.

The way that talented and creative workers talk about evidence of discrimination and injustice reflected differences in their own education and experience. For instance, academics proved highly analytical and critical, generalizing from particular examples to develop broader theory: they seemed most inclined to see lack of diversity as grounds for relocating. Musicians described social contexts of tolerance and inclusion, explaining away particular cases as bad behaviour: diversity rarely affected their decision to relocate. Similarly, each city-region established its own discourse around the issues: thus our study revealed a culture of whiteness in Kingston, concern about racism and old boys' clubs in Halifax, and a gap between locals and those who come-from-away in St John's.

Whether talented workers act to relocate based on concerns about diversity depends on several factors. Is the choice to relocate easy? For instance, ready commuting access to nearby large cities gives Queen's faculty members options to live elsewhere. By contrast, Halifax and St John's are the largest urban centres in their region: workers are confined to place. Job offers from other cities open opportunities. As workers develop family ties to place the option of moving becomes less likely. Other attractions in the city-region may prove salient to creative workers. City-regions with affordable housing

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prices, attractive natural landscapes, and interesting architecture can prove alluring. A strong sense of cultural identity can gradually win over newcomers to build affiliation to a city-region. As Putnam (2007) found, homogeneity can create conditions that enhance social capital and integration. The quality of the work environment plays a critical role for many workers (Grant and Kronstal 2010). Thus diversity may not play the pivotal role the creative class argument presumes.

Race, class, ethnic, and cultural identity can become interconnected categories in the discourse of diversity in community settings. The stories of place that develop within city-regions reflect two elements: the way that local authorities manage and reproduce forms of difference, and the responses of local residents to newcomers. The attractiveness of city-regions to talented and creative workers is influenced in part by the fact of diversity, in part by the story of how the city-region manages diversity, and in part by workers' own experiences of encountering responses to diversity in the city-region. The danger for the small white city is that local officials become overly preoccupied with changing the percentages of types of people in the community even as they maintain a city "centered in Anglo Celtic traditions and values" (Osborne and Swainson 1988, 334). Our findings suggest that talented and creative workers can accept varying levels of difference in a community; however, they explicitly criticize local authorities, institutions, or residents they see as intentionally discriminatory or exclusionary. Consequently, the way that local authorities manage difference and work to integrate people of differing backgrounds and characteristics is a key factor with the potential to influence the migration decisions of talented workers.

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