Title
A Time Before Deception: Truth in Communication, Culture, and Ethics. By Thomas W. Cooper.

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dent. American Indian students are tracked into an educational curriculum less demanding than their ethnic counterparts. American Indian students are over-represented in learning disabled and mentally retarded classes and are subject to more numerous and severe disciplinary actions. In terms of physical and/or political representation, a glaring absence is noted through a lack of American Indian teachers, administrators, and school board members. From this, the authors conclude, from a politically laden position, that the second generation discrimination of American Indian students can be reduced through the presence of American Indian teachers and administrators. The argument here is that both physical and ideological advocacy—political representation—will, by nature, facilitate a political/cultural/economic shift in the means by which American Indian students are educated. This argument is premised on the trickle-down theory of educational equality: that the political inevitably affects the pedagogical. Whether the political voice of the American Indian educational community is loud enough to affect such ingrained and pervasive educational disparity remains to be seen. It also remains to be seen how clearly this voice will be heard.

Though minor nuances (the obsessive use of quantitative measures and the overly generous use of repetitive citations) may serve to detract from the readability of this work, it nonetheless brings to focus an important issue: that the educational opportunities afforded American Indian students are unequal to their white counterparts. In attempts to rectify or remedy this educational disparity, the authors look to the political arena—teachers, administrators, and school boards. Though certainly not a new suggestion, there is nonetheless contributory value in its plea. For better or worse, politics and education are entwined. The hope still lingers that the democratic ideals of plurality and equality will ultimately remedy that which *Brown* could not. The authors, intentionally or not, keep that dream alive.

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A Time Before Deception: Truth in Communication, Culture, and Ethics. By Thomas W. Cooper. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers,1998. 256 pages. $24.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.

The main thesis of *A Time Before Deception: Truth in Communication, Culture, and Ethics* is that communication practices among indigenous peoples prior to their contact with contaminating influences were governed by a spiritual ethic that inherently resulted in greater respect toward other beings than do the various ethical systems that have come to dominate and define contemporary communication. Drawing on several years of field research and considerably more years as an authority in the area of communication ethics, Thomas Cooper advances his thesis primarily through discussions of general and specific observations and inferences concerning language, laws, rules, cere-

monies, art, privacy issues, moral and ethical instruction, censorship, and a host of other related topics.

This is a tall order, especially given the obvious lack of evidence supporting pre-contact claims, and doubly so given the fact that the text purports to offer conclusions about indigenous peoples globally, both of which leave more than enough room for error. Nevertheless, Cooper meets the task with considerable acuity and success. This is due, in part, to Cooper's maturity as a scholar and, in even larger part, to his willingness to rely on the narratives he gathered in the field. This in itself is remarkable insofar as scholarly treatments of indigenous accounts so typically advance non-indigenous interpretations. Far from uncritically accepting the information he gathered in the field, however, Cooper carefully and consistently considers alternative interpretations as well as respectful objections to the information with which he is dealing. Furthermore, he takes the matter a step beyond empathy by deliberately avoiding scholarly jargon and Westernized categories that, as he puts it, too often result in "subjects" feeling "invaded, misunderstood, decontextualized, even raped of meaning" (p. 196). Finally, he augments this strategy by maintaining a healthy skepticism of frontier accounts, reports, and narratives, thus avoiding a simple replication of previous errors, myths, and stereotypes.

But this may be exactly where Cooper begins to lose readers. His clear, even simple language, for instance, is a refreshing departure from heavy, theory-laden dissertations that now are commonplace; yet, readers who are accustomed to wading through typical academic treatises may find the lack of technical and scholarly language an indication that the work is too rudimentary and thus may discount the import of his work. Others conceivably will regard the absence of standardized hegemonic accounts of the frontier sufficient reason for discounting the authenticity of the perspectives Cooper presents. The obvious alternative of replicating these practices simply to satisfy reader expectations, it needs to be said, would have been a far greater corruption.

Conversely, Cooper's singular focus on attempting to advance his thesis about communication of the past has the unfortunate consequence, save for his treatment of the Diné in chapter six, of freezing indigenous peoples in the past. Obviously, his thesis demands a transparent and sustained focus on the past; yet, the mere fact that he gathered the majority of his information from living peoples might have led him (and his readers) to conclude that what he has to say about peoples of the past also might be applicable to peoples of the present. At one point in his discussion of the information he gathered from the Shuswap, for instance, he virtually erases his contemporaries by claiming that "Teit's [*The Shuswap*] is the only comprehensive text prior to the erosion of authentic Shuswap practices of the nineteenth century"—as if contemporary Shuswap practices are somehow inauthentic (p. 114). There is little doubt that his point here has to do with the influence of processes such as transculturation, and one might offer similar arguments in a number of other instances. Yet Cooper's tendency to ignore and even erase contemporary indigenous peoples, although little more than an annoyance in isolation, becomes particularly troublesome in a context of widespread tendencies in popular culture and scholarly works to deny those same peoples an authentic existence.

A related problem is Cooper's desire to make his study of specific communication practices among specific peoples emblematic of all indigenous peoples. Although he is careful throughout the work to remind readers "that research, like the individuals it reflects, is subjective and culture-bound," his efforts to universalize his observations all too often lead to unfortunate expressions such as "the Native perspective" and "the Native ethic" (p. 95). Beyond implying a reductionism that belies his explicit avowals to the contrary, universalization of this sort seriously threatens to perpetuate the destructive myth among readers that all indigenous people are the same.

Finally, there is in this work a curious lack of reference to extant research by contemporary Native scholars. This is not to say that the work lacks any legitimate basis or that indigenous voices are missing from the work. Still, rarely do the text or the references lead readers to incorporate or even consider related works. Without putting too fine a point on it, Cooper's discussions of a great many topics would have benefited from a survey of the works of contemporary scholars who have been laboring in this area for a great many years.

In all, readers may find Cooper's deliberate avoidance of technical and scholarly language suspect, his tendency to erase contemporary indigenous peoples annoying, his predisposition to universalize problematic, and the lack of references to related contemporary scholarship peculiar, but they will also find here a valuable contribution to our understanding of communication practices. We may lament what he might also have done, to put the matter differently, but *A Time Before Deception* belongs on the must read list of every scholar seriously concerned, as Chief Oren Lyons puts it in the Epilogue, with "the long-term thinking and ethical communication necessary to solve the grave problems facing western society today" (p. 194).

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The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America. By Bernd C. Peyer. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997. 432 pages. $19.95 paper.

The Tutor'd Mind by Bernd C. Peyer is an exploration of the issues faced by Native Americans who adopted Christianity during the Antebellum period. Peyer's work concentrates on individuals who functioned as intermediaries between the colonizing and colonized societies. Peyer recognizes the difficulties inherent in this type of dualistic life, and acknowledges the personal crises that stem from a life that functions out of necessity in two different societies. However, he also contends that bicultural people have a special opportunity to act as a voice for their communities and to "initiate a reversal in the unilateral flow of information" that usually flows from the colonizer to the colonized (p. 17). The book is a study of several bicultural Native Americans who converted to the Protestant faith and sub-