

Chapter 2

A Prism of Educational Research and Policy: Anti-Racism and Multiplex Oppressions

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Introduction

This chapter explores possibilities of anti-racism practice in the struggle against social oppressions through a gaze of critical research and educational policy. The focus is not on research methodologies per se but how anti-racism research is relevant given the questions that need to be broached in the pursuit of social change and justice. What anti-racism research scholarship brings is equally as important to lay clear as the academic pursuit of anti-racism practice, that is, the dynamics of doing oppositional research, the goals, strategies, and efforts required to achieve social and educational change. As anti-racism researchers we have particular responsibilities to explain the continuing silence on race in many academic quarters, as well as the ways in which race discourses are taken up in ways that support the status quo. We must ask about how our research work helps inform how prevailing racial and racist tropes are supported, maintained, and reproduced in the every day of schools and wider society. We must also consider the myriad ways in which racial hierarchies are upheld through the intersections of difference; we must unpack the logics that underpin oppressive societies and why society may wittingly and unwittingly create a culture of hierarchies.

There are problematics of dominant social research as emerging from and consistent with relations of race and colonialism. Anti-racism is political and working with the “political” dimension of research is key to sustaining anti-racism research and scholarship. Our social world is replete with non-racist illusions. Therefore, anti-racism research must capture the “real/everyday” politics, socio-material realities, as well as the institutional practices and the resistances engaged in by subjects with

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or without explicit or conscious “paradigms” to articulate them. Our particular methodological approaches must look simultaneously at forms of external and internal colonial and oppressive relations and practices at various and constitutive sites of difference. In other words, for anti-racism research practice to begin to engage the incommensurability and contentions of lived experiences, we must address the sometimes contradictory subject locations taken up and inscribed on individuals in social spaces. A critical research methodology must explore how the subjects of study resist continuous external and internal colonizing tendencies. What popular forms of consciousness inform these resistances and the subjects’ interpretations of everyday practice?

An important goal of anti-racism research is the search for “evidence” in responding to such questions. We must engage what constitutes “evidence” and “data,” and there must be a relationship between the “concepts” used and the “data.” The “data” must move beyond what we know as researchers. Researching for “data” (e.g., oppressive relations and practices) cannot be pursued as mere descriptive appendages of our theoretical formulations, as these oppressive moments are far from mere appendages in lived experiences. In effect, anti-racism research has a specific political and academic goal to subvert the dominant ideologies that seek to dismiss/downplay/dislodge/decenter the relevance of race in everyday practice (see Dei and Johal 2005).

In thinking through these moments, anti-racism scholars also need to ask what it means to engage multiple sites of oppression in and through our work. While intersectional analyses surely complicate our understanding of oppressions, as anti-racism researchers and practitioners, the goal of our analyses is to come to understand and challenge multiple oppressions, for the dismantling of one oppression cannot be sustained at the expense of other oppressions. In other words, we ought to engage various sites of oppression as operating in relation to each other in order to disrupt the dominant center. Part of this work includes asking the difficult questions of how an anti-oppressive movement is implicated in oppressions at other sites of difference. Adding to the complexities, there are obvious limitations in the possibility of conventional social research paradigms and methods to capture and explain the experiences of the minoritized and oppressed. To counter and redress these limitations, a primary focus in anti-racism research methodology ought to be on the experiences of minoritized subjects as key to understanding oppressions and the pursuit of transformative praxis which speaks to the notion of epistemic saliency (Dei 1999). At the same time, racisms and oppressions cannot be understood fully by focusing solely on the oppressed. The perspectives of the dominant are also important, for example, in terms of their own understandings of oppressions, power, and privilege. We must work with an overarching concern for domination studies and the transformative potential of anti-racism research. To this end anti-racism research must enhance the agency and the “agential power” (Daniel and Yearwood 2002) of the minoritized as part of a critical transformative praxis.

Research must always speak to the social policy implications as far as anti-racism is concerned. Many of us in anti-racism have had to ask difficult questions about the limits of policy efficacy in effecting real change as far as equity and educational outcomes in the lives of marginalized students are concerned. Although educational

institutions are quick to discuss the need for reflexivity among teachers with regard to their teaching practice, the same cannot be said for policy, which tends to reside discursively in a “no person’s land” of bureaucratic obfuscation. Policy itself must be a reflexive and reflective process whereby communities (the stakeholders in any given society) are understood as knowers whose knowledge counts and is validated in processes of educational codification and dissemination of knowledge. Policy writing must be an exercise in popular education, which wears its politics on its sleeve instead of relying on false notions of objectivity, historical universalism, and fairness. There is little doubt in my mind that Indigenously informed and more human-centered approaches to policy might offer a public, reflexive, and transparent political approach to education.

Theorizing the Interstices and Implications for Social Research: Asking Critical Questions

Anti-racism discourse and practice has and continues to make contributions to the literature on critical race theory and anti-oppression activism. Critical anti-racism, with a gaze on the problematics of Whiteness as embodied by some engaged in anti-oppressive work, can be an important call for implicating dominant bodies to do solid anti-racism work to bring about meaningful change (see also Howard 2009). In other words, it is a call for a more effective anti-racism engagement that brings an understanding of the power of embodied knowledge, the relations of power and racism, and the implications of one’s positionality within social politics. This essay is asking all of us to be self-reflective and to examine why we do race and anti-racism equity work. In this endeavor we must bring a degree of humility in relation to what we know and cannot know about the experience of racism and the intertwining processes of racialization and colonization. The chapter asks us to both engage and disengage ourselves from positions of power and to exploit our positions in the service of race equity work.

We cannot pursue a transracial coalition praxis devoid of any symptoms of politics of identity. Identity is about who we are and the particular politics we chose to engage in. We do not pursue a politics without an acknowledgment of our identities. Thus, we must always recognize our different entry points that speak to both a saliency as well as situational and contextual variations in intensities of oppressions. The anti-racism discursive framework articulates that the study of racism must be preoccupied with the experiences and knowledge of the oppressed while simultaneously focusing on the benefits and privileges that accrue to the dominant from their oppression. The challenge is to come to name, mark, and work with the various identities that those who are oppressed have and to acknowledge those identities that place even the oppressed in positions of dominance and power. The framework acknowledges and works with the understanding that the self and subjectivity matter in terms of methodological implications/considerations, as well as the ways we produce knowledge. Anti-racism emphasizes that bodies and identities (race, class,

gender, sexual, spiritual, etc.) are linked to the production of knowledge as well as social practice. Hence, the learner cannot distance herself/himself from a study of racism and the construction of knowledge about race and anti-racism. The anti-racism discursive framework also seeks to understand the processes and ways of racializing subjects through history as well as social and political systems. It is argued that racial dominance is an integral part of social inequity and that there is the salience of the White body/White racial identity in a race supremacist society. In discussing racisms and oppressions, it is equally important to work with an understanding of the asymmetrical power relations that exist among and between different bodies. This being said, the politics of anti-racism requires that race be kept in the foreground in the axis of oppression. This is what makes anti-racism a truly anti-racist practice.

As many have repeatedly noted, the engagement of other sites of oppression (gender, class, ability, sexuality, etc.) in anti-racism work is critical in order to acknowledge that oppressions are relational, multiplicative, interactive, intersecting, polyvocal, and always enmeshed and embedded with other oppressions. Therefore, we cannot deal with one oppression and leave others intact (see Collins 1993). Oppressions are best understood within the prism of “and/with” rather than “either/or.” Lived experience and acknowledging the self is a starting point to understanding oppressions, as well as emphasis on histories and contexts, linked to institutions and to local and global political economies. We cannot repeat the trend that has historically produced hegemonic knowledges. We must always maintain a critical gaze on the oppressions and oppressive possibilities within ourselves (Lorde 1984). Yet it is equally important as we engage these sites of identities and the pursuit of oppressions to recognize the saliency of issues for certain bodies. Thus, for me, while acknowledging the myriad forms of racisms and oppressions, the saliency of anti-Black racism in a racialized society cannot be denied (see also Dei and Delaney 2013).

What does it mean to speak of race today in relation to its historical and contemporary socio-political realities, i.e., to acknowledge race as about a “floating signifier” and much more in speaking about the physicality and materiality of existence (see also Hall 1989, 1991, 1992; Omi and Winant 1993)? What does it mean to speak of race today in relation to questions of class? The concepts of race and class both speak to systems of power and domination. How do these two sites of difference work to enhance the oppressive politics of hegemonic social and material relations? It will help to situate the discourses historically. A Marxist narrative (a narrative that has historically been given particular credence in the academy) suggests that race is a product of class, that racism is an effect of the pursuit of capital and economic interests: racism, by way of the enslavement of African peoples, was merely a function of capitalism. However, for particular bodies to be deemed inhuman and therefore enslavable must have been informed by racism. Similarly, Euro-Enlightenment classificatory systems worked to hierarchize racialized bodies in pre-capitalist, imperialist pursuits. In other words, Enlightenment discourses of progress, civility, and modernity produced Euro-White superiority (see also Fanon 1963, 1967; Dei 1996). These discourses, productive of a particular set of social

relations, come to inform the materiality of race. This historical discussion of discourses of race and class is not intended to suggest that these are disparate moments, and it is particularly important in contemporary times to speak to more than the materiality of race to address the spiritual and sociological aspects of race and class.

The system of power and domination is dynamic and includes not only race and class but also questions of gender and sexuality as sites of social organization. Anti-racism discourse and practice asks us to consider the ways in which race is experienced through gender and sexuality, as well as how gender and sexuality are experienced through race. There is a “simultaneity of oppression” (Brewer 1993), “a matrix of oppression” (Collins 1993), and “a multiplex of oppression” (Dei 1996) that must be addressed; however, through hegemonic identity politics, these sites of oppression are often marked as distinct from one another, obscuring their constitutivity and co-relational status. We need to move away from an additive model of oppression and instead think through the hegemonic logics that oppress at various sites simultaneously, even while the details of the oppression may vary qualitatively (Smith 2006). Socializing discourses inform how we are to engage social spaces in relation to our sites of difference, and these different engagements produce variant experiences of oppression and marginalization or power and privilege. If the normalized body is assumed to be White, male, and heterosexual, as the circulating dominant discourses proclaim, what does it mean to be Other than any of those identities? Simultaneously, what does it mean to be Other to only one or two of those differences? Are we willing to consider the ways in which we (re)produce power by playing to power (Fine 1994) and become complicit in oppressive relations? Anti-racism must guard against masculinist, heteronormative tropes. We must ask ourselves what does it mean to be human and how do the various sites of oppression work to dehumanize? In other words, in seeking self-humanization, how do we concomitantly rehumanize all Othered bodies? Increasingly, critical anti-racism work is broaching the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in terms of how masculinity and femininity are racialized and sexualized and which forms of masculinity, femininity, racialized, and sexualized bodies are afforded power and privilege and on what grounds – with whom as the reference point (see also Archer and Yamashita 2003)? For instance, anti-racism research is also beginning to explore the connection between masculinized performances and school-based violence (McCready 2008).

More recently, anti-racism work is asking new questions about how to understand our differences and the role of ableism in this matrix of oppressions. Disabilities studies offer us a lens to read this matrix through questions of language and embodiment. As Titchkosky (2007) asks: how do terms like the “vulnerable,” “weak,” “special needs,” and “elderly and infirm” speak to the possibilities for the human condition? Titchkosky (2007) goes on to amplify that “disability [is] a metaphor of choice to discuss problems” as well as a metaphor that “disappears from the social landscape as a form of human existence” (p. 137). How does consideration and language of (dis)ability inform the naturalization of Otherness? In other words, in thinking through (dis)ability and race, how do these categories come to produce

“normalcy” and the embodiment of difference? Once again, disability and race are not distinct moments. If we were to think about “special education” classes, for example, racially minoritized bodies tend to disproportionately outnumber Whiteness bodies.

There is theoretical value in exploring how Whiteness intersects with class, gender, sexuality, and disability in challenging the broad problem of racism. The use of intersectionality must not and cannot dilute commitments to racism and the salience of race. However, it also brings some critical questions for examination. Levine-Rasky (2009) in a shared commentary asks that those of us who seek to remove all oppressions while operating from a particular lens (e.g., a race-centered lens) must acknowledge and work around some methodological questions and issues, for example, to reconcile the discourse of intersectionality and the salience of race in Critical Integrative Antiracism Theory (CART) and practice. Levine-Rasky (2009) poignantly asks: “if race is salient and if blackness is also intersected by gender, sexuality, and class (for example), how can [one] be attentive to other axes of identity that affects the dynamics of racism and the way it is experienced” (p. 2) among Black and racialized people generally? Also, that if we concede that Whiteness confers power regardless of the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, etc., what does this mean for anti-racist work by the dominant? Racism is not only about bodies. There is the relationship between the “body” and embodiment, but how do we articulate this relationship such that racism does not become merely about bodies? In other words, there are questions of both bodies and politics. It is generally maintained that power is not necessarily top-down and that, in fact, power works insidiously, systemically, or culturally, and in all these ways simultaneously. Power also works in interstices as in the intersections of social difference (race, class, gender, sexuality and [dis]ability). So how do we articulate the dynamics of power and racism both theoretically and politically to challenge the saliency of the power of the White (colonial) dominant, particularly in a White supremacist context?

Coming to the Anti-racist and Anti-colonial Moment Through Research and Policy

Research is about social relations of power (as the previous section suggests, these relations of power are located at multiple sites simultaneously). Research is also about joy, satisfaction, and most importantly about resistance. Embodiment, as engaged in research, should be more than about knowledge as socially and discursively constructed (McDermott and Simmons 2013). It must also be about “sentient perceptions and the search for symbiotic relationship between physical, mental, emotional and spiritual experiences” (Batacharya 2010). Apart from placing embodiment in social dynamics and political contexts, there must also be recognition that embodiment of oppression hurts and continually marks different bodies. Questions of embodiment, therefore, ought to touch on healing and making selves whole

persons again. Conventional research has tended to objectify theory and pedagogy based on simple transmission and instruction of knowledge with little focus on the transformative power of education. This risks reproducing hegemonic worldviews and the *modus operandi* of colonialism. Anti-racism engages research practice and pedagogies that talk about and enact transformations on the reader, teacher, student, researcher, and study participants through a rigorous spiritual alignment with the work of social change. Consequently, for the colonized, anti-racism research can be a healing and regenerative process.

We must avoid the theory-practice gap, which makes research a moralizing discourse with little activism and limiting transformative potential. Anti-racism research must also evoke pedagogic authenticity of local subjects of study and the power of using knowledge to help heal ourselves and our wounded souls. For example, study participants' narratives must be well woven with theoretical explorations. But it is important to foreground and honor participants' voices rather than subordinating their contributions to the researcher's analysis and the literature. This entails that the writing of the experiential into text becomes lucid with issues clearly delineated (and not necessarily engaged in a search for definitive answers). The authenticity of experience (as voice and a narration of voice) implies taking the experiential as an entry into theory.

There are particular challenges of note in writing the experiential into text. In naming the acts of resistance in anti-racist research, we must pay attention to those moments when acts of resistance simply insert the oppressed body into colonial, hegemonic, and imperial spaces and relations. These are important gaps for the critical researcher to look for. These lacunae are not critical and anti-colonial research endeavors. Simultaneously, if research is about healing, it is also important to note that not all healing is about resistance or social activism. Certain forms of healing can be individualizing, and the challenge is to move into an understanding of healing as collective politics. Research about race that denies a people's histories is not anti-racism nor anti-colonial. Similarly, research cannot be about single stories since such stories merely work to dehumanize us and the complexities of our collectivities (see Adichie 2009). We must engage research from the heart, making the connections of body, mind, and soul.

In writing the experiential into text, some other issues also come into focus particularly when we begin to speak of dominant conceptions of Black youth experiences. For example, who benefits from the discourse of "at-risk" youth? There is a power of anti-deficit thinking in challenging the normalizing and imperial gaze on schooling, a gaze that seeks to blame and pathologize young learners and their communities for perceived educational deficits while leaving systems and structures of schooling intact. In other words, in asking local communities to take responsibility for the education of the youth, we are fed with innocent discursive practices that avoid talk of institutional accountability to local communities when schools fail youth; we avoid a key tenant of anti-racism research. Yet, through moral panic and colonial tropes, youth are continually blamed for shirking their responsibilities to learn. Similarly, research that focuses on only one identity site risks reifying dominant dehumanizing narratives of other sites of difference and oppression.

Anti-racism resistance educates that Black and racially minoritized parents and communities can no longer wait for change to happen at the systemic level. Communities ought to work to bring about change. Change does not happen without resistance from those affected by the inequities in the existing social order. Local parents and communities have learned from Friedland and Alford's (1991) "dynamics without change" theory, which understands that the more things change the more they remain the same. Thus, disadvantaged students and their communities are empowering themselves to become active agents, not dupes in the systemic reproduction of inequities and oppressions. There is an appreciation of that fact that while schools are sites of indoctrination and reproduction of structural inequities, they are also sites of empowerment, resistance, and transformation. Through anti-racism education, disadvantaged communities become aware of where and what are the fault lines of their children's schooling and education. They begin to resist the "dumbing down" of students and parents and even become skeptical of who is served by teacher bashing, which dances around institutional responsibilities. These parents and local communities begin to challenge ways academic research assigns discursive authority to scholars who many times have no embodied connection to their subjects and communities of study. They begin to assert their voices understanding that silence through the culture of fear can be detrimental to systemic change and transformation. They cultivate an anti-racism and anti-colonial presence as well as a historicized reading of their experiential realities to inform and pursue political praxis and to self-determine through critical consciousness. They begin to make anti-colonial claims around race equity, human rights, and social-economic justice from the circumscribed spaces of (dis)enfranchisement, economic materiality, and nation/citizenship belonging.

Anti-racism must be able to capture these moments in the lived experiences of the minoritized, colonized, and oppressed. This calls for us to rethink the focus of our scholarship and what we seek to destabilize. We must lay bare the intellectual and social hypocrisies that afflict much of current discourse on race equity. For the anti-racism researcher, the search for academic credibility puts on the table different and new questions and concerns. We ask, what does academic credibility mean, what does it involve, and where does it reside? In anti-racism, academic credibility becomes about developing counter and oppositional discourses to the pathologizing discourses at multiple sites of oppression. It problematizes the expectation to publish in mainstream journals for legitimacy when such publishing outlets have not always welcomed critical and oppositional discourses that challenge dominance. Credible anti-racism research would seek to demonstrate the link between state/institutional policies/practices and racist, classist, sexist, heteronormative, ablest exclusions. As noted elsewhere (Dei 2008; Goldberg 2002), historically, Western political systems have been founded upon the construction of racial hierarchies. Such hierarchies have become the bases for the distribution of rewards and punishments. Dominant bodies lay claim to a sense of entitlement, while communities of color struggle daily to resist claims of their "illegitimacy" and "degeneracy" (see Fanon 1963, 1967; Goldberg 2002; Said 1994; Razack 2002; Omi and Winant 1993; Johal 2009). And, perhaps it can be added that such claims of illegitimacy are not just

about our bodies or our mere physical presence in certain spaces. It is also about our Indigenoussness, our cultural resource knowledges, and our everyday lived experiences and existence. Such knowledges and our social realities are dismissed either for not validating the dominant experience or for an insistence on the epistemic saliency of our voices (see also Smith 1999). This can perhaps be evidenced in mainstream reaction to local communities' initiatives for educational change informed by an exercise of our own intellectual agencies. The call for African-centered schooling by African-Canadian parents, scholars, and community workers comes to mind.

African-Centered Education as a Policy Initiative to Address Educational Inequality

In this final section of the chapter, I bring together the previous discussions of intersectional oppressions and anti-racism research by way of thinking through African-centered education in the context of Canada. I single out and find the necessity to reiterate some of my ideas on African-centered education because it is one area of my anti-racist pursuit of inclusive schooling, which has led me to rethink the ways of producing counter-visions of schooling. In the ensuing discussion, I consider some implications of African-centered education both for the pursuit of improved African-Canadian educational excellence and for the possibilities and limitations for the locally initiated school to address the various sites of oppression. To contextualize the following discussion, I will present some of the key arguments for rethinking African-Canadian education. Beyond contextualizing the arguments, it is also my hope that by rearticulating the reasoning behind an African-centered education, even while querying the possibilities and limitations, the conversation will register with some who have doubted the Africentric school in Toronto. It has been my experience on many occasions where I was asked to present at or about the Africentric school that inevitably someone in the audience comes up to me afterward to share how she/he had never considered the perspectives I brought and that I had changed their opinion of the school (which were likely informed by misrepresenting discourses that circulate about the school). I am sure that this experience is not unique to my presentations, for most of the information circulating about the school is either mis- or not informed. For a more thorough discussion of African-centered schooling in Canada, Arlo Kempf and I have just come out with a text (see Dei and Kempf 2013).

My experience with the Canadian public school system began in the early 1990s, and since researching Ontario schools specifically, I have come to recognize a need for a restructuring of education to highlight the principles of community, mutual interdependence, and social responsibility, as well as the inclusion of spirituality, a different conceptualization of history as a totality of lived experiences, and respect for all community members by way of local cultural knowledges incorporation into all the disciplines. These are some of the ways in which we

might broach the challenges of improving educational outcomes and success for students who are marginalized in conventional schooling and education. It is on this need for a school organized non-hierarchically, one that embraces all members of the community as knowledge producers and treats them as valued partners in the educational enterprise, that the Africentric school was premised. The school works with and in fact makes explicit the links between knowledge production and identity formation. Founding its organization around notions of schooling as a community of learners and redefining success to be more broadly understood, the Africentric school has wide-reaching pedagogical and curricular implications. By reworking the principles that ground conventional schooling and education, the Africentric school can be a model for doing educational administration and policy differently. I believe that this model can provide different possibilities and rehumanize contemporary education.

I have long (Dei 1993) considered the call for the African-centered school to be a much-awaited anti-racist response to the historical onslaught of educational research and policies that challenge the inequities in dominant schooling and education without producing any real change for the African-Canadian youth who are involved in the system. Since the 1970s in Canada, there have been significant conversations about Black youth disengagement and academic achievement in schools; over 40 years later, we have not seen much improvement. For years, community activists have made policy recommendations that challenge the status quo, only to have them disregarded. Similarly, scholarly informed research has addressed the merits and called attention to the necessity for alternative educational spaces outside of the dominant schooling system, which have gone unheard (see Dei 1993). In fact, back in 1992 in Toronto, the African Canadian Working Group, a multilevel government task force, was charged with considering the disengagement and limited academic achievement of too many Black youth. Among the suggestions put forth from the Working Group to address feelings of frustration and marginalization in conventional schooling and education was to have each municipality in Toronto offer an alternative school for Black junior high students in which the curriculum addressed African-Canadian history, cultures, and perspectives as well as being staffed by Black teachers and administrators (see Working Group 1992). The proposal amplified the necessity for this alternative space in developing, strengthening, and supporting Black youth identity and belonging. Then, in 1994, the Ontario government set up the Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL), which also suggested setting up “demonstration schools” similar to the proposed schools put forth in the 1992 Working Group report (RCOL 1994). Neither the findings of the Working Group nor the Royal Commission on Learning were taken up in the 1990s for fear of public outcry. This produced a further tension for community activists and scholars in the academy who increasingly sought an alternative space of schooling and education (see Dei 1993, 1995, 1996, and 2008; as well as Brathwaite and James 1996; Dei and Kempf 2013 among many others).

Frustrations around the disacknowledgment of the two reports mounted among the community activists and scholars. When these issues are taken up in public discourse and the media, a common dismissal of the necessity for alternative and

Black-focused schools centers around questions of segregation and integration. The dominant paradigm of integration, as presented in opposition to segregation, masks questions of who is expected to be integrated into what and at what costs, as well as the fact that since the nineteenth century and institutionalized schooling and education was established in Canada, particular interest groups have had publically funded separate school spaces – for instance, the Catholic school boards. Presently, in Toronto, there are also alternative schools for students with special needs; schools for creative arts and cyber arts; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students; and a First Nations School – and rightly so.

What does it say about the school system when there is a need for schools that speak to particular experiences? This ought to say more about the school system than it does about the multitude of people who seek these alternative schools; however, it remains contested terrain, particularly when race is invoked. How do the present confines of schooling and education require that separate, safe, and supportive spaces are created for those who are socially marked as “different” than some mythical norm in conventional schooling and education? Similarly, within the boundedness of the discourse of schooling and education, what role does locating these schools as “alternative” play in further Otherizing particular bodies and experiences? In other words, while there is a necessity for schools where students can feel a sense of belonging, how do these schools come to reproduce the demarcations of difference that are always already hierarchized in dominant society? What is the responsibility of the schooling system to speak to all experiences and all bodies in the curriculum, to have bodies that represent the various sites of difference represented on their faculties and staffs?

As noted in a forthcoming paper (Dei 2013), much of public hysteria and dominant resistance around an African-centered school as an alternative/counter-visioning of schooling is informed by the landmark decision in the USA, on the 1954 *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court case. In a very influential article, Guinier (2004) argues the *Brown vs. Board* case actually treated the symptoms of the disease rather than the disease. The decision was more about recognizing “formal equality” rather than “substantive equality”; the latter would require fundamental changes to the broader economic, social, and political order. Guinier (2004) advances a racial literacy framework in examining the Court’s decision, her analysis extending the conventional interest convergence argument that shows how the interests of Northern White liberals converged with Southern Black interests in demanding an end for segregation of schools. Such racial literacy necessitates a reading of the ways in which policies and constitutional acts, such as desegregation in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case, can work to suggest progress while simultaneously reifying the status quo. Such racial literacy is incomplete without a thorough examination of the histories of bodies of “difference” in social and institutional spaces.

Anti-racism research requires that we ask difficult questions of policies and that we urge, rather, we insist that policy-makers become reflexive of the broader socio-historical context of conventional schooling and education. We must simultaneously ask difficult questions of the positions we take up in our efforts to affirm

Black youths' identities, address issues of community development, and support self-determination and the ways in which they become subsumed under the colonial rubric of differentiating differences by way of hierarchizing access to power and privilege. How, in the African-centered school, are we prepared to speak to the experiences of our Black youth as they are interstitched and entangled with other sites of oppression? In seeking out a space within the auspices of government policies and requisites for schooling and education, where we can concomitantly support our communities' needs, what are the possibilities and limitations of this endeavor, and how do we guard against the narrow reading the media has placed on the call for an African-centered school? Anti-racism research has brought me to the urgency that we must read the African-centered school in the context of the call for Black/African people to take responsibility for our own problems and design our own future, that is, we must think through solutions to the problems that confront our varied communities through a search for our voices and an approach pursued on our own terms and not have them filtered through the perspectives of the dominant and colonizing apparatus/status quo or colonial governance. Any serious discussion of African-centered schooling must move away from the discourse of segregation and start to think of the critical questions of pedagogy, curriculum, and instruction that engage anti-racism as an intersectional analysis.

Policy requires an unremitting critique of conventional, institutionalized schooling and education, as the discussion of the African-centered school amplifies. Policy necessitates not only a view toward shaping future schooling and education but also a sustained appraisal of the underpinning ideologies, frameworks, and politics that have historically shaped the institution of schooling and education. We need to be willing to reimagine what schooling and education can look like. The African-centered school provides us with a site to begin considering these tough questions of policy, pedagogy, and curriculum in relation to integrative anti-racism research and practice, such that it takes as its starting point the community as knowledge producers whose knowledges and experiences are validated within the school.

Conclusion

Anti-racism positions identity, and by extension identifications, as historically constituted and laden with politics. If critically engaged, anti-racism research can be counter-hegemonic and work to destabilize the taken for grantedness of hierarchies of difference and differential access to power and privilege; however, as I have articulated in this chapter, tough questions must be asked, not only of contemporary policies shaping schooling and education but also of efforts to claim spaces within the demarcating logics of capitalist modernity. It is important to note the centrality of reading race through anti-colonial frameworks to offer counter-hegemonic readings that work to disrupt the production and dissemination of colonial knowledging very much endemic to civilizing narratives of what it means to be

human. We must rehumanize research and policy by pushing back on the disinterested, disembodied, and objective research that is validated in the academy. To engage lived experiences, experiences of pain, sorrow, joy, and elation, researchers and policy-makers must recall that these moments are laden with the human. We ought to bring theorizing back to the ground, as the African-centered school represents and we ought to bring theorizing back to the community in efforts to seek transformative schooling and education. The African-centered school presents us with a critical site from, with, through, and against which we can pursue these endeavors. In an effort to end with hope, I believe that the African-centered school presents us with an example that something different is possible!

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