New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance

Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies

Ayan Abdulle and Anne Nelun Obeyesekere (Eds.)

Foreword by George J. Sefa Dei

SensePublishers

New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance

New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance

Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies

Foreword by George J. Sefa Dei

Edited by

Ayan Abdulle and Anne Nelun Obeyesekere
University of Toronto, Canada

SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6300-948-5 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-94-6300-949-2 (hardback)
ISBN: 978-94-6300-950-8 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
https://www.sensepublishers.com/

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Cover image by Amanda Kali Bent

Printed on acid-free paper

All Rights Reserved © 2017 Sense Publishers

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

We dedicate this book to those, who despite being relegated to the margins continue to strive tirelessly to dismantle structures of oppression.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword ix
George J. Sefa Dei

Acknowledgments xv

Introduction xvii

1. The Fairness of Shadows: Implications of Shadeism on Urban Secondary School Students 1
Anne Nelun Obeyesekere

2. An Exploratory Paper on Understanding Whiteness 23
Ayan Abdulle

3. Languages Are Multiple: From Turtle Island to Africa – Combatting the Cultural Violence of Colonialism in Residential School and Christian Missionary School 35
Christina Hutchinson

4. Are We Doing Anti-Racism?: A Critical Look at the Ontario Ministry of Education's Anti-Racism Policy and Social Studies Curriculum 57
Qwyn MacLachlan

5. Re-Centering Race in the Classroom: Dominant Ideologies in Educational Spaces and Their Implications for Youth Identity Formation 69
Raagini Appadurai

6. A Journey into Anti-Racism: An Educator's Perspective 83
Tamla Young

7. Addressing Systemic Inequities, Student Achievement, and Deficit Thinking within Ontario's Urban and Priority High Schools 109
Katrina Rigelhof

8. Breaking the Silence: Effects of Colonial Education on Identity and Mind 127
Sevgi Arslan

9. Viewing the Toronto Education System through an Anti-Racist Framework: The Systematic Oppression of Black Youth in Toronto Based on Geography, Race and Class 143
Chanel Herbert

10. Epistemic Salience of Anti-Racist Education 161
Marie McLeod

11. Race and Racism in Education: Seeking Transformative Change through an Inclusive and Anti-Racist Curriculum 171
Saynab Xasan

12. All That's Black Is Black: The Reification of Race in Higher Education 185
Brieanne Berry Crossfield

About the Contributors 201

FOREWORD

I am writing this piece at a time with much trepidation. Like many, I have been trying to get over my intellectual emotions and political depression which surfaced with the emergence of the new face of the United States presidency. We are facing difficult times, especially for those of us who work on social justice and anti-racism issues. Frankly, the future may look gloomy and understandably so. It has also not helped much that many political pundits refuse to call out the new United States President for his fervent production of an alternate reality based not simply on untruths, but also on the manufacturing of lies, scapegoating, and fear mongering. The advancement of the whole posture of 'alternative truths', is harmful and outright deceitful. These pundits, who speak highly of morals and virtues are unwilling to honour truth as the fabric of the very morals and virtues of which they propagate. Although Donald Trump, his supporters, and more recently even the opposition, have alluded to or made claims of voter fraud, there has been little talk of voter fraud in the form of voter suppression.

Both historically and presently, voter suppression has been used as a tool to support White supremacy and to deny the full and meaningful political participation of negatively racialized people, particularly African Americans. The law, and its ancillaries are deployed as technologies that help to produce, structure, and maintain a social and cultural narrative of the non-White 'Other'. The Birther movement launched against President Barack Obama is one of many examples of how social and cultural narratives that center Whiteness and White supremacy call into question the constitutional legality of the non-White body as one that has been legitimately vested with the highest power in the country. The Black body as a non-voting body, an illegal body, whose democratic participation is suspect and must be thwarted through legal and spatial structures, is another cultural narrative that continues to normalize voter suppression.

Throughout the Trump campaign, another cultural narrative–the narrative of the professional/illegal/unlawful demonstrators has been in full production. Historically, the right to assembly and to peaceful protest can be problematized as being asymmetrical. Black bodies protesting injustices have been subject to a vestment of criminality and illegitimacy. The act of protesting has been seen as a respectable space when occupied by White bodies–particularly, White men. Although that problematization cannot be dismissed, it is important to recognize solidarity. Women and men marching in droves worldwide to protest, the day after the President of a hegemonic "superpower" is sworn in, is a sign of remarkable development. The march speaks nothing of claiming shared victimhood. The protest is an insistence and affirmation of individual and collective agencies and the power of global resistance. The same resistance, its heterogeneity and its homogeneity is on display

in this collection of articles. The women that collectively author this book do so as a form of resistance to White supremacy, to structural oppressions and against their many manifestations.

Of late, I am troubled by the visual images coming out of the White House depicting a President surrounded for the most part, by all White men when he is in a meeting of huge significance to global humanity. The absented faces and bodies is disheartening and smacks me as "going back". Not that we have gone anywhere far by the way!

I have found a need to share the above concerns as part of the Foreword to this book. My objective is simple. I want to hammer home a crucial point. If recent events should offer us any lessons and hope of any kind at all, it is to reaffirm the urgency for us to redouble collective efforts for social justice, equity, and anti-racist practices. We may be in for a rough ride in the coming years. Euro-American/Western civilization sustained a racist reading of a racial spectrum with Europeans at the top end, and with Black and Indigenous inferiority at the base. As a Black, racialized, and an African Indigenous body, I give premium to my identity and subjectivity in pursuing an anti-racist politic. This is more so because Blackness can also be a positionality that either affirms or threatens Whiteness and White hegemony (see also Dei, 2017a).

Anti-racism and community politics have a long rich history. Borrowing from this history the engagement of anti-racism as an area of study in the academy has embraced critical discussions on the theoretical principles and the practical requirements of anti-racism for educational and social transformation. This book clearly builds on the existing scholarship by asking new questions. These questions have implications for decolonial futuristic praxis. An important characteristic of this collection of articles is its ability to move anti-racism scholarship beyond schooling and education (broadly defined) to ground our analysis in other institutional/social settings. The various contributors take up questions around new conceptual framings on race and its connections with Indigeneity and decolonization. They also focus on how transgressive pedagogies assist us in re-visioning and reimagining schooling and education for contemporary learners. The recurring question about what it means to pursue a new politics of futurity as a re-imagining of community and social change is very relevant and should peek the interest of readers.

Increasingly, the pursuit of anti-racism is being questioned even among radical thinkers. This can be nerve wracking. But it emerges out of a sense of frustration that anti-racism has lost some of its edge and focus. Understandably, anti-racism has meant different things to different people. Not everything that is named anti-racist has always been anti-racist. It is this conundrum that has forced some early proponents/writers of anti-racism to be sceptical. Also, the way the nation-state has succeeded in domesticating a progressive discourse to serve its own interests is a factor. Nonetheless, those of us who are ardent proponents can take heart from the fact that not everyone is willing to give up on anti-racism. The struggle against racism is not an option. It is a luxury to deny our implications in this struggle.

The truth is we don't all have the luxury to be sceptics and be perpetually cynical. We cannot also be that arrogant in claiming that we know what anti-racism is and that only we have a monopoly of what anti-racism ought to be. Racism continues to manifest itself in complex ways. For example, anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism is a pernicious form of racism and it has become a site of community struggle. There is much to learn from the different manifestations of racism in our communities in order to embark upon collective and effective strategies for change. Anti-racist resistance must come in many forms. So it serves no useful purpose to deny the ties of anti-racism with shared struggles such as anti-Black racism. At the heart of these struggles is White supremacy and how we address this social cancer. I will return to this point shortly.

In taking up anti-racism on multiple levels of societal and institutional settings, the editors of this collection are calling on us to live up to the ideals of a fair and just society through the lens of a societal curriculum. They question the particular ways of ordering society through knowledge and the need for a more futuristic path to bring about social and educational change.

Ideas, turned into practice, have the power to bring about change. However, in the contestations over knowledge, ideas, and practice I have found that it is more productive and, in fact very useful, to move away from sterile debates about what anti-racism is, and how inclusive our understanding of equity and social justice is. These questions have their place and moment. However, I prefer instead to work with a strategic evocation of anti-racism and social justice from an entry point of our respective subject locations. These intellectual debates may satisfy our academic curiosity and perhaps, show the depth of our intellectual reasoning and academic thoughts. But we must ground our particular understandings of anti-racism and social justice work in everyday acts of resistance. Any attempt at reconceptualizing anti-racism for contemporary times must place the question of Indigeneity work at the centre of what we do. Simply put, while race may be our entry point to anti-racism and social justice work we cannot engage race alone. Our approach must take race in association with social differences (gender, class, sexuality, [dis]ability, as well as Indigeneity and decolonization. Such approach acknowledges that Whiteness, White privilege, and White supremacy have been and remain powerful markers for distributing rewards and punishments.

As an African-Canadian, anti-racist, and anti-colonial educator, I am duly informed by a realization of the deep-seated anti-Black racism and anti-Indigeneity in our public discourses and social justice practices in schooling and education. There is a simple fact or realization. Race is everywhere and we cannot hide away from it. The way Euro-American society was founded all but guarantees that race will always be at the centre of identity no matter how one defines it. In such a reading, I acknowledge the power of Whiteness and White identity and the consequences of critical conceptions of anti-racism. More specifically, as I long ago noted, in the theorizing of anti-racism, by using race as a key axis of social justice education, we are simply noting the significance of engaging social movement politics broadly,

while keeping certain goals at the centre (Dei, 1996). There are many forms of racism and anti-Black racism that can serve as focal points of anti-racist interventions that make the conceptual distinction between, "Black-White divide/binary/duality" and the "Black-White paradigm" (see also Sexton, 2010; Fanon, 1952). While the former may [sometimes unjustifiably] be read as oppositional, essentializing, and simplistic, the "Black-White paradigm" is a lens to understand the positioning and social location of Blackness in relation to Whiteness, and the idea that close proximity to Whiteness is heavily rewarded in society (Dei, 2017a). There is also recognition of how the racial polity and sanctity of Whiteness is maintained as a foregrounder to effective anti-racist/social justice work (see also Johal, 2007).

In counter-visioning different educational futures, I speak of a "*Messy Utopia*" building upon Michael Adams'(2008), "*Unlikely Utopia*" to highlight that the future is contested and no future can be designed for others (see Dei, 2017b). This contestation will be "messy" and will ruffle feathers. It will be unpleasant for those who benefit from the status quo. The pursuit of such contestation will also come at physical, material, emotional, psychological, and spiritual costs and consequences to all. Yet this messiness is what will move action. It is not complacency. Anti-racism work will not be nice and friendly, especially, when such work is about oppression, injustice, colonization, settler-hood, genocide and land dispossession. It is important for us to have this caution in mind as we read on and engage anti-racist practice.

Clearly, there is no one model of anti-racist practice (Dei, 1996). We can agree on some key elements including what, to my reading is – the centrality and saliency of race in anti-racism, even as race intersects with other forms of social difference. We are all in many ways part of the reimagining of the "new geographies of knowledge". We produce critical knowledge to contest the already established old geographies of knowledge. It is significant for our anti-racist discourse and practice to embrace the varied and intersecting ontologies and epistemologies that inform knowledge production about race, colonization, and Indigeneity in general. This affirmation only helps to signal the powerful place of counter-narratives giving voice to racialized, oppressed, colonized, and Indigenous peoples who insist upon using different ontologies. As noted by Raghuram (2017) such affirmation is also intended to serve as a resuscitation of neglected and erased epistemes. We have different social realities and we should be allowed to articulate them in ways that acknowledge and give us intellectual agency. Articulating different ontologies is about decolonization. There is the unending importance of complicating and subverting any hegemonic definitions and understandings of anti-racism in ways that allow us to resist how we have become "captives of the colonial experience" and encounters, and thus our mental subversion (Sicherman, 1995, p. 26).

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (2008). *Unlikely Utopia: The surprising triumph of Canada multiculturalism.* New York, NY: Penguin Canada.

Dei, G, J. S. (1996). *Anti-racism education: Theory and practice.* Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
Dei, G. J. S. (2017a). *[Re]Theorising Blackness, Anti-Blackness and Black Solidarities through anti-colonial and decolonial prisms*. New York, NY: Springer. [in press]
Dei, G. J. S. (2017b). Reframing Education through indigenous, anti-colonial and decolonial prisms. In P. McLaren & S. Soohoo (Eds.), *The radical imagine-nation* (Vol. 2). (in press).
Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skin White masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
Johal, G. (2007). The racialization of space: Producing surrey. In G. Johnson & R. Enomoto (Eds.), *Race, racialization and antiracism in Canada and beyond* (pp. 179–205). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Raghuram, P. (2017). *Personal communication*. Open university, Milton Keynes.
Sexton, J. (2010). Properties of coalition: Blacks, Asians, and the politics of policing. *Critical Sociology, 36*(1), 87–108.
Sexton, J. (2015). Unbearable Blackness. *Cultural Critique*, *90*(1), 159–178.
Sicherman, C. (1995). Ngugi's colonial education: The subversion of the African Mind. *African Studies Review, 38*(3), 11–41.

George J. Sefa Dei
(Nana Adusei Sefa Tweneboah I)
Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto (OISE/UT)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Allah (SWT) for all of the blessings, which I have been bestowed with. I am truly grateful. Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Dei for the opportunity to contribute to this collection of critical essays. Thirdly, I would like to thank the contributors for all of their hard work. To my children Kacie and Mecca and to my husband Jamil, thank you for all of your hard work, patience, and dedication. To Anne Nelun Obeyesekere, thank you for all of your effort, dedication, and planning. You were instrumental to the success of this project. I am honoured to have worked with you. To the team at Sense Publishers, thank you for your generosity.

– Ayan Abdulle

***

I wish to thank our contributors for engaging in this forward thinking work, and Dr. George Sefa Dei for his guidance in this endeavour. Thanks to Michel Lokhorst and the Sense Publishers' team for their patience and diligence throughout the process. I offer a special note of thanks to Amanda Bent for her beautiful cover art, Josue Tario for his ideological inspiration, and Bernadette Maheandrian for her constant intellectual and emotional support. Thanks to you Ayan, for our prolific and enduring working relationship. To my students, past, present, and future, thank you for providing both purpose and motivation for my work.

– Anne Nelun Obeyesekere

INTRODUCTION

I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects (Frantz Fanon, 1961:89).

This forward thinking and critical collection of thoughts, is grounded in the firm belief in praxis. Every writer in their own way aims to combine their unique experiences with the theories they are grappling with in their work in order to help bring about meaningful change. This drive to move away from academia as an exercise of one's academic prowess, and towards the academy as a place where thoughts and actions interlock to resist oppression, injustice, and inequity are the pillars on which this collection of work is founded.

White supremacy, Euro-centricity, and Euro-normativity are central themes that thread these chapters. The construct and material consequences of the Black/White binary and the Black/White duality are considered throughout these works, as well as how non-White, non-Black identities have come to construct and negotiate their own identities around these constructs. For non-White, non-Black bodies, the inescapability of the Black/White binary is rooted in proximity politics and the capacity of Whiteness to operate as a structuring power. The authors think through these interrelated systems of oppression by examining: cultural narrative productions that center Whiteness, proximity politics through shadeism, organized hierarchical forms of knowledge production based on Eurocentric/Euro-normative worldviews, devaluations of indigenous forms of knowledge, the role of schooling in the centring of Whiteness, and Whiteness as an international structurer of identity that produces global narratives of White supremacy.

While some authors work to enact change from the centre, within current structures, others resist this formula. These individuals call for the rejection and dismantling of current structural inequities.

Each author enacts anti-racist work in their own unique way. As Dei (2011) states, to be anti-racist is to be active. Our hope is that this work stands not only as an anti-racist action in itself, but also works to mobilize its readers to engage in their own criticality around anti-racist thought and action.

Our hope is that our readers will connect with our stories, how we come to make sense of our experience and our struggles. We see these narratives and the struggles behind them as the human story that connects so many of us. These narratives are interconnected, woven from the trials of many yet born from a singular cause. These divisions affect us all, and therefore can unite us all.

ANNE NELUN OBEYESEKERE

1. THE FAIRNESS OF SHADOWS

Implications of Shadeism on Urban Secondary School Students

ABSTRACT

Initiatives around anti-racism education in the secondary school system are presently insufficiently applied, particularly in recognizing Shadeism and its impact on the behaviour, academic achievement, and social engagement of students. This chapter hypothesizes that the closer in proximity to Whiteness of the student, the greater their access to White privilege. Obeyesekere situates the idea of Shadeism in the colonial context and establishes its present day implications on racialized secondary school students in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Shadeism is deconstructed using critical anti-racism theory (CART) in order to examine its consequences on urban students (Dei, 2011). Drawing upon research from anti-racism scholars, Obeyesekere grapples with the question of how Shadeism affects students in the supposedly post-colonial world. It is proposed that Shadeism can be addressed in schools through the multifaceted implementation of CART, in order to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment for all students. The chapter recommends strategies to address the consequences of Shadeism on students through the exploration of a three-tiered initiative. The initiative proposes to encompass and concurrently apply; a ministry and board-wide culture change, teacher training, and holistic student programming. The focus of this chapter is on student programming.

Keywords: Shadeism, colourism, critical anti-racism, post-colonial, education, teacher training, holistic student programming

INTRODUCTION

It is projected that by 2018, the global skin-lightening market will be worth an estimated US$19.8 billion (King, 2013). This growth is driven in large part by the desire of people predominantly from the Asian, African, and Middle East regions for lighter skin (King, 2013). While this trend exists within these regions that are considered the global South, I will be discussing its influence on students from their diaspora in Canada. In Canada, the valorizing of lighter skin over darker skin is representative of racialized students' desire to reproduce and reflect the dominant culture. This internalized inferiority has the potential to have an enormous impact on the self-esteem and perceived attractiveness of individuals, and consequently,

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 1–22.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

impacts how they are received by society. This is especially problematic in its effects on the developing minds of adolescents. The hegemonic nature of the Eurocentric education system in Canada continues to perpetuate a structure where the closer in proximity to Whiteness a person is, the greater their access to White privilege. Initiatives around anti-racism education in the secondary school system are presently insufficiently applied, particularly in recognizing Shadeism and its impact on the behaviour, academic achievement, and social engagement of students. Shadeism, in this context, refers to both inter-racial and intra-racial discrimination based on skin tone. I will explore the importance of skin-tone and its consequences on students, particularly in a heterogeneous, urban environment.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will briefly situate the idea of Shadeism in the colonial context and establish its present day implications. Through locating myself by examining my own experiences with Shadeism, I will attempt to resist the positivist paradigm, which suggests that there is an objective way of knowing.

The second part of this chapter will deconstruct Shadeism using critical anti-racism theory (CART). Through the analysis of Shadeism grounded in the CART framework, I will examine its consequences on urban secondary school students, specifically in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I will draw upon research from anti-racism scholars to grapple with the question of how Shadeism affects students in the supposedly post-colonial world.

The objective of this chapter is to offer analysis into the more nuanced aspects of race and skin colour and its impact on students, as well as to suggest integrative solutions to address this issue and create a more inclusive classroom. The third part of this chapter will conclude with thoughts on the implications of my findings and recommend strategies to address the consequences of Shadeism on students through the exploration of a three-tiered initiative. It will do so by breaking down the approach into three parts to be applied concurrently; a ministry and board-wide culture change, teacher training, and holistic student programming. For the purposes of this chapter, my focus will be on student programming.

I. DEFINING SHADEISM: EXPLORING THE ORIGINS AND ITS ENDURING EFFECT

My Changing Reflection: Locating the Self

I am engaging in Shadeism through critical anti-racist theory from my position as a South Asian/cisgendered/hetero/woman living in the global North. As such, I am approaching the issue of Shadeism particularly as it pertains to students in an urban environment, from my experiences in two very distinct metropolises, Toronto, Canada and Colombo, Sri Lanka. As a Canadian-born woman of Sri Lankan descent I have spent my life between the two countries. One of my earliest memories as a young child in Toronto was of my paternal grandmother insisting that my mother not

allow me to play outside for fear that I would "become dark". This notion of darkness being a negative, undesirable trait, is one that permeated my childhood. My acute awareness of my skin had a grave effect on my schooling experience in Toronto. My consciousness of my skin colour prevented me from engaging in sports and outdoor activities in school; I actively avoided the sun at recess, opting to seek shade instead. Further, this desire to be lighter-skinned resulted in a lack of confidence, which manifested in shyness and disengagement in school.

As I transitioned into adolescence, I could not escape the obsession with skin colour, particularly during my time spent in Colombo. Comments such as "though you are so dark, your features are still nice" were constant. These feelings of inferiority came to a head as an adult, on a visit to Colombo; I was present during a conversation between my female cousin, fifteen at the time, and a group of her friends. They were discussing their feeling that teachers in their urban girls' school would consistently call on students with lighter skin over darker girls to answer questions, and for coveted roles within the school. These comments resonated with me and upon my return to my job at the time, as a secondary English teacher in Brampton, Ontario, I began to wonder about the attitudes of racialized students in the GTA toward the colour of their skin. I noted that the students in the GTA had similar feelings of insecurity connected to the colour of their skin. Notably, while reading the novel *A Bronx Masquerade* with my Grade 11 College Level English class, a character revealed that she had reservations about the compliments she received as a result of her fair skin, as the historical circumstances surrounding the unwanted mixing of races at the hands of White colonizers made it painful for her (Grimes, 2002). As this section was being read aloud, a male student of Caribbean descent loudly interrupted the class stating "why is she complaining, I wish I were light-skinned". I realised in that instant that urban students in the global North were just as plagued with feelings of inferiority surrounding the colour of their skin as students in the global South. As a result, I wished to explore the consequences of these feelings on students' learning and well being through my academic research.

Situating Shadeism within the Colonial Context

Shadeism, also called colourism or Pigmentocracy, is unquestionably rooted in the colonial experience. In his work *Black Skin White Masks,* Frantz Fanon (1986) analyses the alienating effects of colonisation on those who were colonised, by deconstructing what he calls the "juxtaposition of the White and Black races" (Fanon, 1986, p. 44). According to Fanon, the world is divided into Black and White, separated by a power dynamic where Blacks experience themselves as inferior. This perceived inferiority arises from the dynamic that dictates that Whites have power and Blacks do not. Fanon goes on to state that Blacks internalise these feelings of inferiority, which manifest in the devaluing of oneself and the desire to be White. In their comprehensive analysis of Fanon's work entitled *Fanon*

Revisited: Race Gender and Coloniality Vis-à-vis Skin Colour, Linda Lane and Hauwa Mahdi (2013) propose a more nuanced racial hierarchy where White or light skin stands at the apex and is the most valued, and Black or dark-skin is directly opposed, positioned to have no value. Lane and Mahdi ground the location of different subgroups and groups specifically in North America and the Caribbean in Fanon's hierarchy of race in order to reflect a gradient hierarchy. I believe that Lane and Mahdi's understanding of this gradient racial hierarchy best places Shadeism in the colonial context.

Lane and Mahdi pose that White colonisers consorting with Black and Indigenous women have shattered the Black-White binary. This mixing created a middle position, "*métissage*" a term used to signify the result of neither Black nor White (Lane & Mahdi, 2013). Colonisers used this intermediary condition that they themselves created to drive a wedge between racialized groups. By privileging lighter-skinned and mixed-race groups, colonists established a hierarchy that linked skin colour to economic and social class (Lane & Mahdi, 2013). Thus, Shadeism developed as a direct result of discrimination by White colonialists against other races and the favourable treatment of lighter-skinned and mixed-race groups. Groups that gained political and economic power as a result of *métissage* maintained their position of power within the hierarchy by discriminating against others who were further down the skin colour scale (Lane & Mahdi, 2013). In his work *Colorism, Complexion Homogamy, and Household Wealth: Some Historical Evidence*, Howard Bodenhorn (2006) reports that during the time of slavery, lighter-skinned Black and mixed-race groups received skill training and as a result were relatively well positioned to be hired into good paying jobs after abolition. Over time the *métissage* came to form an elite, which strongly discouraged marriage outside the group in an effort to preserve this wealth (Bodenhorn, 2006). This creation of a gradient or scaled hierarchy of skin colour resulting from European colonisation is not exclusive to the North American context. The following section will explore the effects of Shadeism at present.

The Effects of Shadeism in the 21st Century

Among the colonial effects of Shadeism that remain today is the correlation between darker-skin and lower wages. In *Skin Color, Immigrant Wages, and Discrimination,* Joni Hersch (2008) reports that lighter-skinned immigrants earn on average 8–15% more than darker-skinned immigrants with similar qualifications. Her research indicates that these findings extend to immigrants of the same ethnicity (Hersch, 2008). Hersch's results were based on data from 2,084 people using an eleven-point scale where 0 represented the absence of colour and 10 represented the darkest skin colour. Ruling out other factors such as language proficiency and the sun possibly darkening the skin of those who are employed as outdoor labourers, Hersch concluded that the discrimination was based on colour of skin (Hersch, 2008). Margaret L. Hunter (2007) echoes this sentiment in her article entitled *The Persistent*

Problem of Colourism: Skin Tone, Status and Inequality. Hunter notes that lighter-skinned Black Americans earned more than their darker colleagues (Hunter, 2007). Another study conducted by Emroy University in 2006 revealed that employers prefer to hire lighter-skinned Black males to darker-skinned males, irrespective of their qualifications. Results of the study showed that a lighter-skinned Black male with a Bachelor's degree and standard work experience was preferred over a darker-skinned Black male with an MBA and past managerial experience (Harrison, 2005). This research shows that dark skin is negatively correlated with lower wages not only in the Black community but also in many other racialized immigrant groups, such as South Asian and Latino.

The impact of skin colour on wages is not suggestive of Shadeism being exclusively inter-racial discrimination. According to Evelyn Glenn (2009) in *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Colour Matters*, allegations between people of the same racialized group make up 3% of the 85,000 discrimination allegations annually reported to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC communicated a sizable increase in discrimination allegations based on colour from 374 cases in 1992 to 1,241 cases in 2006 (Glenn, 2009). It is important to problematize the fact that reported allegations of discrimination based on skin colour are increasing. The intra-racial discrimination evident in this study is directly tied to the gradient hierarchy of race established by the dominant and reinforced by the *métissage,* post-abolition.

Fairness in Marketing

The Guardian UK published an article in 2013 that featured the Indian actress Nandita Das' support of the *Dark is Beautiful* campaign. The campaign challenges the widespread South Asian belief that success and beauty are governed by skin colour (Rajesh, 2013). Amazingly, Das noted that another article, which reported on her support for the campaign against skin-lightening, featured a photo of her that had been altered to make her look lighter-skinned. The actress expressed that she often faces directors and makeup artists who try and lighten her skin when she plays the role of an educated, upper-class woman (Rajesh, 2013). This furthers the belief that only fair-skinned women can be educated and successful (Rajesh, 2013). The article goes on to state that since the 1978 launch of "Fair and Lovely", a skin-lightening cream produced by the Anglo-Dutch company, Unilever, the industry in India has grown to US$432 million. This spike in sales indicates a strong desire for light skin as a means to acquiring racial capital; the process of obtaining social and economical capital from racial identity.

Skin lightening products have been on the market since the late 19th century (Peiss, 1999). By the 1930s there were over 230 brands of skin-lightener. Though these products were initially marketed to White women in America, they have been used to lighten the skin shade of women in Africa, Asia, and more recently, Europe. Skin-lightening creams usually contain hydroquinone, mercury, or derivatives of

the two, and are activated by supressing melanin production at the basal layer of the skin (Garner, 2010). The creams are marketed to racialized women as ways to become more radiant, attractive, and Western (Garner, 2010). A popular Fair and Lovely television advertisement widely aired in South Asia, depicts a traditionally dressed Indian woman who overhears her parents expressing their concern and disappointment at the fact that instead of having a son, they have an unemployed and unmarried daughter. After being passed over at a job interview for an airline, the woman begins to use the skin-lightening cream. Weeks later, she returns to the airline not only lighter-skinned, but also dressed in a distinctly more Western and modern fashion. The advertisement concludes with the woman getting the job, meeting a man- a Western dressed pilot – and coming home to very satisfied parents (Prakash, 2010). This is one of several advertisements that explicitly connect the idea of lighter skin to attractiveness, desirability, and success.

Problematizing the connection between light skin and success is particularly important in the deconstruction of Shadeism and its implications on the self-perception and perceived inferiority of individuals and groups with darker skin. The perpetuation of these ideals negatively positions darker-skin in society.

This reaffirming of the Western colonial ideals, which valorize White/light skin over dark skin as evident in the marketing of the aforementioned skin-lightening products, is also extremely present in global Media and Entertainment industries. In his 2011 track *Look pon We*, Jamaican Dancehall artist Vybz Kartel sings about his use of 'cakesoap' a substance popularly used in Jamaica to lighten skin (Kartel, 2011). Though there have been many celebrities who have recently been accused of using products to lighten their skin, Kartel is among the few who have openly admitted to the practice. According to Margaret L. Hunter (2011) Vaseline, another Unilever product has sponsored an "app", a downloadable program typically used in mobile devices, which allows users to lighten their skin tone on their Facebook profile photos. "By dragging a vertical bar across their pictures they can create instant before-and-after images devised to sell more of Vaseline's best-selling product, *Healthy White: Skin Lightening Lotion*" (Hunter, 2011, p. 144). Hunter problematizes Facebook, the world's largest social media network for permitting such an app to function within their interface. Both of the above mentioned are examples of the increasingly overt desire of racialized bodies to acquire racial capital by altering their appearance in order to move toward the dominant within the gradient racial hierarchy.

Shadeism in the Greater Toronto Area Today

As I gathered the data presented above and continued to reflect on my personal experiences, I was haunted by the inferiority internalized by racialized youth. Is there still material consequence to having lighter skin, or is this desire simply a remnant of our colonial past? Lane and Mahdi state that the discourse around the

saliency of skin colour is very relevant today. The desire for light skin and the embodiment of Whiteness as representation provides social mobility and greater access to economic resources in the United States (Hall, 2006). Winston James (1992) argues that pigmentocracy exists on an ideological level, but is also a material force for binding colour to class, position, and privilege. As discussed previously in this chapter, racialized subgroups that historically gained power as a benefit of their lighter skin discriminated against others who were lower down the hierarchy. In her work entitled *Muslim Youth in Canadian Schools: Education and the Politics of Religious Identity*, Jasmine Zine (2001) describes the existence of this intra-racism on students in Canada today. She discusses Shadeism through the example of a female Muslim student who reported that as a darker-skinned Pakistani girl she felt a victim of racism in White society and Shadeism within her smaller community. These deportments of victimization and inferiority can leave young people feeling disconnected and irrelevant. I aim to question how these issues present themselves in the urban classroom in relation to the affect of Shadeism on student learning and feelings of self-worth in school.

II. VISUALIZING SHADESIM THROUGH THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Imagining Shadeism through a Critical Anti-Racist Theory (CART) Lens

"We cannot read and understand race without being anti-racist" (Dei, 2013, p. 1). This statement, anchors my understanding of what it means to do anti-racist work, and is the foundation for my inquiry into the subject of Shadeism. As Dei states, the very act of realizing race is the first step in doing anti-racist work. According to the principles of CART, to be anti-racist is to be active. The purpose of social engagement and politics is to elicit societal structural changes either through social practice, beliefs, attitudes, or systemic/institutional changes (Dei, 2013). The CART framework can be applied to the deconstruction of Shadeism for both analysis and application purposes. I have broken down the principles of CART into six categories to be considered in the discursive analysis of Shadeism:

1. Salience and centrality of race
2. Race identity
3. History and context
4. Intersectionality
5. Othering
6. Whiteness

I aim to deconstruct Shadeism using these six categories in order to dismantle its implications through an anti-racist lens.

Salience and Centrality of Race

According to Dei, the centrality of race is a keystone of CART (Dei, 2013). In order to engage in anti-racist work, Dei posits that the practitioner must recognize the relative saliences of different identities, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and religion in relation to particular settings and situations of oppression (Dei, 2013). This saliency and centering of race is important in the consideration of Shadeism in the global context. If race is at the centre of the analysis of oppressions, as suggested by Dei, then it must act as an anchor for all other aspects of identity. The application of the concept of centrality of race is helpful in contextualizing Shadeism, as it is a manifestation of racism. Using this framework, skin colour can be understood as a continuum whereby whether one is perceived as light-skinned or dark-skinned can change based on their cultural or geographic locations. For example, Zhara, a pseudonym for a former female student whom I taught in the GTA, described how the way her skin-colour was perceived changed as her geographical location within the GTA changed. As a Caribbean student of Indian decent she was a minority among her Indo-Canadian peers at her former high school in Markham, Ontario. Students there had commented on her skin as being dark, and 'othered' her by connecting her dark skin to undesirability, ugliness, and poverty. Conversely, when she moved to Mississauga, her peer group changed to a more diverse ethnic group of Eastern European White students and African Black students from both the Caribbean and the continent. In this context, Zhara was perceived as 'light-skinned' and noted that this association made her feel more attractive, desirable, and capable. Recognizing the salience of race and skin colour is crucial to understanding the consequences of the perception of skin colour in relation to where one is at particular time and place. Zhara's perception of her skin colour reflected a piece of her identity that was directly related to her confidence and sense of self-worth.

Race and Identity

For Zhara, the perception of her skin colour has very real consequences. Dei states that it is precisely these experiences that make race and racial identity real (Dei, 2013). Dei's response to those who postulate that race is not real as it is a social construct and has no biological validity, is that what makes race real is the existence of racism (Dei, 2013). According to Dei, an anti-racist simply speaks to the nature and extent of the racism that already exists. The same can be applied to Shadeism. Zhara, like the student in Zine's study, struggled with Shadeism both in and out of her racial group. CART stresses that people have the responsibility to resist the terms of the identities that are being used to oppress them. However, it also acknowledges that the more people experience instances of racism, the more likely they are to either embrace or detach from their racial identity (Dei, 2013). This notion speaks directly to the issue of Shadeism as it establishes the desire to move towards Whiteness, whether that manifests in the literal use of skin-lighteners or the figurative desire to

gain racial-capital by 'acting White', which will be discussed in further detail in the context of Cultural Revitalization in Part III.

History and Context

CART emphasises the importance of history and context in understanding race. In order to grapple with the implications of race and Shadeism, they must be linked to the history of colonialism as discussed in Part I of this chapter. As Dei postulates, an understanding of the colonial implications of race will allow for the re-invention of the ontology of races as a socio-historical and political condition. This re-imagining is necessary to change how race and skin colour are experienced. In Alfiee M. Breeland-Noble's (2013) article *The Impact of Skin Colour on Mental and Behavioural Health in African American and Latina Adolescent Girls: A Review of the Literature*, she reasserts this need for a socio-historical change to combat Shadeism. Breeland-Noble analyses the impact that having a dark-skinned Michelle Obama as the First Lady had in changing the attitudes on skin colour, especially in African American and Latina adolescent girls. She references an article from the Washington Post that states, "The fact we had to hold our breath and the fact we had to be proud spoke volumes about where colorism is today" (Brown, 2009, p. 4). Breeland-Noble explicitly states that Shadeism or "colourism" as she calls it, "impacts young people early on, and has significant implications for their long-term life course" (Breeland-Noble, 2013). To her point, it is important to recognize the significance of the colonial history on how skin colour is perceived, but also the effect of the small changes as part of a larger action that is mandated by CART. It is through the action of this anti-racist work, that the fluidity of history can yield positive change, specifically in the teaching and learning of young people.

Intersectionality

The CART framework recognizes race, gender, sexuality, class, (dis)ability, language, and religion as being multiple sites of difference and oppression (Dei, 2013). CART emphasises that these oppressions must be fought on multiple fronts, both collective and individual. Dei describes the structures within which oppressions operate as working to establish material advantage and disadvantage, making individual distinctions of self/other (Dei, 2013). Notably, however, the intersectionality of oppressions must be envisioned through a race-centred frame, as they are not equal in their consequences (Dei, 2013). In the context of Shadeism as it pertains to students, this race-centred approach to the intersectionality of oppressions is particularly important. The subject of skin colour needs to be anchored in the larger context of race. Although there are multiple factors that contribute to a student's identity, race is at the centre, because as Dei suggests, it is the only site, which is impossible to transcend.

In the earlier example of the Indian actress Nandita Das, the connection between education and class is necessarily centred by race (Rajesh, 2013). The desire to lighten Das' skin when she played the role of an upper class, educated woman speaks to the concept of race at the centre of discourse surrounding the intersectionality of oppressions. The Fair and Lovely television advertisement discussed in the same section also speaks to issues of gender, class, and education. Though the woman's parents associated the "successful child" or the "dependable child" as being male, their daughter's eventual success was premised on her lightened skin. The examples above are two of many that outline the importance of centering race as dictated by CART in discourse around the intersectionality of oppressions. Lane and Mahdi reiterate this idea by connecting relations of power, privilege, and agency between individuals and between and within groups, with the notion that there are a multitude of experiences of individuals and subgroups within the larger domain (Lane & Mahdi, 2013). For them, the goal of intersectionality is to comprehend how social and historical processes create and recreate privileged groups and how these groups develop and sustain ideologies of superiority and valorization (Lane & Mahdi, 2013). Lane and Mahdi emphasize the idea that not only are there multiple sites of oppression which contribute to an individual's identity, each individual experiences these oppressions differently in relation to the space which they occupy at a given time. Race, gender, sexuality, class, (dis)ability, and language are all sites of oppression that cannot be dealt with in a vacuum. Dei discusses CART's conclusions on these aspects of difference as they relate to each other by stating:

> The degree of permanence of race as a site of oppression marked onto particular bodies is often denied or dismissed along with severity, saliency, and centrality of skin colour in relation to race, notably in discourses of pluralism or plurality which posit that we are all simultaneously oppressed or even 'we shall overcome'. In such cases, the politics of difference separates itself from a politics of race. This allows centralist dominant systems to maintain their hegemonies of privilege. (Dei, 2013, p. 5)

His emphasis on the permanence of race is particularly important when considering Shadeism. Though the misguided desire to gain racial-capital by lightening skin can assist in the move toward the dominant, there is an undisputable permanence to race.

In the 2010 Canadian short documentary film, *Shadeism*, filmmaker Nayani Thiyagarajah problematizes the issue with a group of her racialized peers. Amanda, a student featured in the film, reported feeling that her light skin gives her power in certain spaces but not others. She shared her experience of working with racialized children, where little girls looked up to her and commented on her beauty, noting "it was not from a place of celebration, but from a feeling that they were lacking" (Thiyagarajah, 2010). This speaks to the saliency of race outlined by Dei. Though Amanda is light-skinned her position of power only exists in relation to other racialized bodies.

Othering and Whiteness

Othering as understood by CART is the importance of difference in the dominant's imagination (Dei, 2013). 'othering' lends consequence to the permanence of race and skin colour. Thus, if the dominant did not position White at the top and Black at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, the permanence of race would be insignificant. A Black-White binary establishes a duality between Black and White. A Black-White binary is created by the attribution of negative qualities on the Black body such as unintelligence, inferior minds, violence, and criminality, as outlined by Dei, juxtaposed with opposite, positive values attributed to the dominant body; that which represents Whiteness. A Black-White paradigm expands on this notion by acknowledging the existence of a gradient racial hierarchy based on White supremacy where lighter skin is valued over darker skin. Analysis based simply on a binary misses the nuances within Shadeism that the paradigm recognizes. In his article, *The Black White Binary Paradigm of Race: the Normal Science of American Racial Thought,* Juan F. Perea (1997) problematizes the consequences of this Black-White binary on the Latino American community. As neither Black nor White, Perea claims that the existence of this binary operates to exclude Latinos from full membership and participation in racial discourse. Further, Perea contends that this exclusion perpetuates the Black-White binary as well as negative stereotypes about Latinos in America (Perea, 1997). The existence of this binary acts to legitimize the dominant's 'othering' of those who are not White, and maintain White power, superiority and privilege. Racialized people are then relegated to the margins, but even this space is monitored by the coloniser. This example is indicative of the inter-race element of Shadeism as it illustrates the perception of the superiority of Whiteness, which stands directly opposed to the inferiority of Blackness, perpetuated by the dominant.

Dei importantly notes that the visibility of Whiteness is denied by the dominant by its normalization, Whiteness is seen by Whites as 'normal', 'neutral', 'natural', and 'objective' (Dei, 2013). For Dei, naming Whiteness is just as crucial to anti-racist work as naming Blackness. In *Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism*, Sara Ahmed (2004) states that Whiteness, or non-colour, acts as the absent presence, or hidden referent against which all other colours are measured as a form of deviance. This centring of Whiteness itself, acts to negatively 'other' racialized bodies. Ahmed posits a political project to address the centring of Whiteness by beginning with a Black critique of how Whiteness works as a form of racial privilege (Ahmed, 2004). Thus, for Ahmed, to study Whiteness as a racialized person is to contest its dominance (Ahmed, 2004). As a teacher of a majority of racialized urban secondary school students, the importance of critiquing Whiteness is evident in that it is necessary for students to deconstruct racism in order to move forward. Though the coloniser may not be in the room, the effects of racism and Shadeism are ever present. It is therefore necessary to create an environment for cooperative discourse in the classroom through which the theoretical and practical aspects of anti-racist work can be bridged.

III. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORK: THREE-TIERD APPROACH

Addressing Shadeism in Urban Schools: A CART Method

CART calls theory into action, it dictates that racialized bodies must act in order to create systemic political and cultural change. This agency involves questioning, critiquing, reflecting, reframing, and self-implicating (Dei, 2013). This is a concrete call to action, one that demands that schools be sites of change rather than sites of oppressions. Agency is transformed in the process of transforming social and cultural conditions, according to Dei, in a changing world people change themselves (Dei, 2013). Deconstructing Shadeism through CART poses questions about how agency can be encouraged, particularly in schools in order to change attitudes and underlying perceptions about skin colour. Dei believes that schools can be sites of oppression but also sites of power and change. As an educator in an urban secondary school the question around how racialized bodies can be repositioned as part of the process of dismantling the dominant hegemonic system, is crucial to my desire for inclusive pedagogical practices. Contextualizing and deconstructing Shadeism in the context of schools is for me, an imperative part of centering race.

My experiences as a racialized body both as a student and an educator within the urban school system in the GTA has made me acutely aware of the presence of Shadeism within the system. I propose a three-tiered approach to addressing the issue of Shadeism in GTA schools. The first tier will take a macro approach, concentrating on the overarching culture of the board and ministry. The second tier will focus on initial teacher training and Professional Development for experienced teachers. Finally, the third tier will be directed to holistic inclusive student programming. I wish to do further qualitative research in the form of student and teacher focus groups in order to address the first two tiers and the third tier more extensively and comprehensively. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be discussing the third tier.

Implications of Shadeism on Self-Confidence: Effects on Student Behaviour, Academic Achievement and Social Engagement

Shadeism can be witnessed in schools in the GTA in overt oppressions such as bullying, teacher expectation, and streaming, as well as in the hidden curriculum that works to ‘other’ and ostracize racialized bodies by omitting and excluding their experiences. The effects of Shadeism on the behaviour, academic achievement and social engagement of racialized students in the GTA prevent them from participating fully in school.

Perceived student behaviour. The consequences of Shadeism on adolescents can be linked to perceptions of their behaviour in school and the fields that they choose to pursue. For example, research shows that darker skin for Black males

can reflect attributes of dominance and status, evident in the fact that some of the highest paid male athletes and entertainers such as Michael Jordan and Denzel Washington have darker skin (Wade, 1996). However, analysis of the criminalization of racialized bodies indicates that darker-skinned Black males are seen as more aggressive and violent than their lighter-skinned counterparts (Dixon & Maddox, 2005). The implication of these studies on darker-skinned Black male students suggests the propensity towards being viewed as dominant and aggressive. Further, these readings of the behaviour of darker-skinned male students have material consequences for them later in life, noted in the Emroy University study outlined in Part I, which indicated a correlation between darker-skinned Black males and lower wages (Harrison, 2005). Shadeism can pervert perceptions of certain behaviours onto students based on the colour of their skin. This transference of expectations can create an environment where students feel they must alter their behaviour to fit expectations, and feel confined to a narrow window of career paths to pursue, subsequent to graduation.

Understanding of academic achievement. As certain behaviours are assigned to racialized bodies based on their skin tone, Shadeism can also create expectations around the academic capability of students. This can affect a student's perception of their own aptitude and the teacher's expectation of the student's intelligence. The association between light skin and attractiveness is problematic in its effect on students' self worth and teacher expectations. A 2016 study conducted by the University of St. Andrews, United Kingdom outlines the existence of an 'attractiveness halo', that ascribes desirable attributes to attractive people. The research indicates that the effect of this attractiveness halo on perceptions of students' academic performance is shown to influence their future academic performance (Talamas, Mavor, & Perrett, 2016). The results of the study showed that there was no relationship between attractiveness and academic performance, but a strong positive correlation between attractiveness and perceived intelligence, and attractiveness and perceived academic performance (Talamas, Mavor, & Perrett, 2016). As Talamas, Mavor and Perrett found, the skewed effect of attractiveness on the initial impression of competence of a student can have serious consequences to their future education and hiring (Talamas, Mavor, & Perrett, 2016). I argue that this correlation is extended to students who are deemed more or less attractive based on the colour of their skin. I posit that a teacher's perception of a student as being less-attractive, and therefore, less intelligent because of their dark skin, can have grave material consequence on their academic achievement.

Social engagement. An essential aspect of the holistic approach to schooling is the social engagement of students in such things as sports, arts, clubs, friendships, and dating. Throughout my career as a secondary school teacher I can recount several occasions where students described attractiveness by first ascribing positive attributes to light skin. There have been many times that students would hide under

trees or cover their faces during summer fire drills or field trips, in an effort to shield their faces from the darkening effects of the sun. Shadeism has the very real effect of preventing students from fully participating in their own schooling experience. Two girls featured in *Shadeism*, relate stories about comments made regarding their skin colour, which made them apprehensive about gym class (Thiyagarajah, 2010). This is evidence of how Shadeism can affect the self-confidence of adolescents and prevent them from fully engaging in their educational experience.

The exclusion of certain bodies from social spaces, even by their own racial group has persisted over time. The post-emancipation creation of the "Blue Vein Society", by a group of formerly enslaved mixed-race members, restricted membership to those whose skin was light enough that their veins could be seen at the wrist (Burrows, 2011). In the 1960s and 1970s, fraternities and sororities of upper-class Black colleges engaged in a practice called the "brown paper bag test" where they only accepted members whose skin was lighter than a brown paper bag (Burrows, 2011). In 2007, a Detroit club promoted an event where women with light skin would be granted free entrance (Starr, 2011). In a 2013 article published by the Toronto Star, students in the GTA reported feeling discriminated against based on their skin tone. One boy reported being told by a girl he was interested in dating, that she "doesn't date dark boys" (Hinkson, 2013). This kind of Shadeism enacted to negatively prescribe attributes to darker-skinned students in social spaces, can prevent them from engaging in a full and complete educational experience.

Recommendations: Applying CART to Issues of Shadeism

Many of the racialized students in the GTA are living in what Homi Bhahba calls a Third Space of resistance (Dei & Wood, 2006). Dei and Wood suggest that these students must shoulder the burden of navigating their diasporic existence through the Eurocentric practices, which continue to impose colonial and imperial control on the processes of knowledge production, interrogation, and validation (Dei & Wood, 2006). This form of existence only acts to marginalize racialized students risking their further disengagement in school. Change in schools is imperative for the inclusion and engagement of racialized students in the GTA. The following recommendations apply CART principles to addressing Shadeism in GTA schools. They are divided into three facets of learning; transformative change, dislocation of voices, and spirituality and indigeneity.

Transformative change. According to Dei, anti-racist educators must combine scholarship and activism (Dei, 2013). Essentially, educators must be sure that the curriculum we teach and learn should actively seek change. In Enakshi Dua's (2007) article entitled *Exploring Articulations of 'Race' and Gender: Going Beyond Singular Categories,* she deconstructs the process by which the school system works to marginalise racially oppressed female students. Dua divides this act into three areas: the imposition of a Eurocentric curriculum, teacher's attitudes and expectations, and

streaming (Dua, 2007). Each of these areas is implicated in the failure to address issues of Shadeism in GTA schools. For the purposes of this chapter I will discuss the imposition of a Eurocentric curriculum and its failure to address Shadeism in GTA schools.

The Ontario Curriculum is an optimal site to deconstruct the implications of Shadeism, as it presently insufficiently engages in anti-racist work. For example, the Grade 11 Social Science Course, *Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology* (HSP3C), a course that I often teach, could be an excellent passage to engage students in issues of racism and Shadeism. However, the curriculum does not instruct teachers to engage in anti-racist discourse. Race is only superficially mentioned in the course curriculum. The table below briefly summarizes the 2013, Ontario, Ministry of Education's curriculum document for the HSP3C course as it pertains to race. Shadeism, or any reference to discrimination based on skin tone is glaringly omitted from the document entirely. The chart lists strands, specific expectations related to race, and outlines my observations in relation to Shadeism and race. It is important to note that race is excluded from the overall expectations for each strand of this course. Therefore, the overall expectations are not outlined in the following chart:

HSP 3C: Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology, College Level

STRAND	*SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS*	*MY OBSERVATIONS*
Anthropology	• identify significant contributions of influential anthropologists (Noam Chomsky, Charles Darwin, Jane Goodall, the Leakeys, Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, Marvin Harris, Richard Lee, Biruté Galdikas, Sherry Ortner) • identify the effects that diffusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism have on culture *Teacher prompt:* "What do you know about how the residential school system affected First Nation, Inuit, and Métis cultures and languages?"	• Each of the practitioners are of White/European heritage • race is not mentioned in the discussion of identity. It is replaced with the indirect term "multiculturalism" • Teacher prompt does not account for racism in the context of Indigenous assimilation, but directs only to culture and language • Shadeism/skin colour is omitted
Psychology	• identify significant contributions of influential psychologists (e.g., Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Ivan Pavlov, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Thomas Bouchard, Mary Ainsworth, Carol Gilligan)	• Each of the practitioners are of White/European heritage • Race/skin colour omitted completely from this section

(Continued)

HSP 3C: (Continued)

STRAND	*SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS*	*MY OBSERVATIONS*
Sociology	• identify the significant contributions of influential sociologists (e.g., Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Edward Said, Max Weber, Dorothy Smith, Charles Wright-Mills, Gordon Allport, Reginald Bibby, George Dei, Ibn Khaldun) • explain the relationship between prejudice and individual and systemic discrimination (e.g., on the basis of gender, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability, religion, age, appearance), and describe their impacts on individuals and society *Teacher prompts:* "What is the impact of heterosexism on individuals and society?" "How are stereotypes conveyed in the media, and how do these stereotypes affect individual behaviour?" • describe ways in which social structures (e.g., economy, family, class, gender, race) affect individual and group behaviour *Teacher prompts:* "What is racial profiling, and what is the impact of racial profiling on individuals and groups?"	• Three racialized contributors are included in this section (Edward Said, George Dei, Ibn Khaldun) • race is mentioned in relation to prejudice/ discrimination. Racism specifically not mentioned • race/racism/skin colour are not mentioned in the teacher prompts in relation to discrimination • race is again discussed in relation to social structures, it is not discussed in terms of racism, systemic or individual • racial profiling is mentioned as a teacher prompt. The word "racism" is omitted • Skin colour/Shadeism is not included

In addition to the insufficient mention of race and the omission of racism and Shadeism explicitly, in the above analysed curriculum document, the textbook most commonly ascribed to the course, *The Human Way: Introducing Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology* does not have a section on skin colour, or racism for that matter, at all. Race is briefly defined in relation to ethnicity on pg.110 of the text along with a case study about a YMCA employee who wishes to 'dismantle racism' on pg. 113 (Bain & Colyer, 2001). If as Dei suggests, schools are a site for change, the education system in Ontario must begin the unlearning process by addressing the glaring omission of racialized voices in order to engage in transformative change.

Dislocation of voices: The need to hear the voices of all students is increasingly more important as the student population becomes more and more racially diverse. Student engagement rests heavily on their identification with the material, and the environment from which they are to learn. As Dei says, and the above table suggests, certain voices, experiences, and knowledges have not been at the table (Dei, 2013).

In the article *Racism is Not a Theory: Racism Matters in the Classroom*, Simpson (2006) states, "Teachers must be committed to creating classrooms that are open to knowledge about race, accommodate conflicting experiences and emotions that do not consistently normalize European attitudes and realities" (p. 156). As the issue of Shadeism does not necessarily affect European understandings, it does not seem to be applied to the Ontario curriculum at all. According to Simpson (2006), teachers and educators must be committed to creating classrooms that are open to knowledge about race and accommodate conflicting experiences and emotions that do not consistently normalize European realities. She notes that discussions of racism, when European Americans are in control, tend to only go as far as most White people are comfortable (Simpson, 2006). This can be combatted through a student-centred approach, where students lead a facilitated discussion anchored in their own lived experiences. Part of including the voices of racialized bodies in the discourse around race and skin colour should involve the development of more comprehensive courses at the secondary level. Not only should racism, and Shadeism be explicitly problematized in high school, in addition to general courses such as HSP3C, there should be a wider variety of subject specific course offerings that are specifically designed to deal with the construct of race and racism, and the saliency of skin colour. Potential courses could include such subjects as; anti-racism, Shadeism, region specific histories, and indigenous knowledges. The availability of these courses would offer racialized students the opportunity to engage in spaces where European hegemony is decentred; this would also provide dominant students an opportunity to learn about their peers through an alternative framework.

Spirituality and Indigeneity: For Dei (2013), a crucial site of knowing is Spirituality. Spirituality in this sense refers to, "a recognition of an understanding of the inner self and relation to the group and communities, understanding a deep sense of meaning and purpose in life, and a necessity to be human and whole again" (p. 10). Dei includes spirituality as being as much a part of human identity as race, class, and gender. Part of this healing from oppression can be addressed in schools by a facilitation of individual spirituality in classes. Not just the teaching of facts, but the teaching of introspection – understanding the self.

I wish to critique the manner in which spirituality is generally taught (if at all), in Ontario schools, particularly in the Catholic school board for which I work. In this setting, spirituality is explicitly connected to religion. It is often presented to students as monolithic and exclusively situated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This system is depicted as being the only system or way of knowing and experiencing spirituality, religion, and the self. This epistemological framework is embedded in a neo-liberal educational framework that centers the individual and divests from group and community identities. Individuals are treated as independent entities that should strive to preserve their own interest against the "other"; this creates a dynamic where students are taught either explicitly or implicitly to fear difference.

For example, I have been inviting a Buddhist monk from the community in which I work into my classroom over the past few years, to engage the students in mindfulness meditation practices. When I made a previous Vice Principal (a White man) aware of this, he was extremely apprehensive. Despite the push from the board to address the prevalence of stress and anxiety in students through mindfulness practices, and my assurance that the focus of the presentation would be on mindfulness, rather than the tenets of Buddhism, he insisted on sitting in. This defensive reaction is an example of the practice on the part of the dominant to preserve the normalization of Judeo-Christian, Eurocentric belief systems, while simultaneously negating other forms of spirituality.

The above mentioned experience is reflective of how Western knowledge systems have historically denied the religions and spiritualties of racialized peoples as being legitimate ways of knowing or experiencing the self. The result of teaching this singular way of understanding and experiencing spirituality is the alienation of students. If understanding spirituality is to be limited to dominant understandings, students are forced to internalize an external way of knowing the self. This necessarily fragments their identity.

Conversely, I argue that fostering spirituality in students will help to strengthen their identity and love for themselves and others. This will positively correlate with the behaviour, academic achievement, and social engagement of students who until now see themselves only through the gaze of the dominant- through the gaze of Whiteness. The creation of classroom spaces, which encourage critical reflection, is a necessary step in the decentering of dominant beliefs systems that prescribe a static understanding of what spirituality is.

Race as it has been constructed and understood by Whiteness cannot be separated from religion. The colonization and subjugation of non-Whites by Whites involved the use of religion (Fanon, 1986), particularly Christianity. Through Christianity, indigeneity in the Canadian context and throughout colonized lands was targeted with the goal of violent erasure of the religious and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples. Colonisers spoke of "civilizing" non-White races through Christianity. Proximity to Whiteness by performance through mimicry was one result. Whites deployed race, colourism, and Christianity, as tools that non-Whites would use to gain proximity to Whiteness. Secularism as a Western tradition further worked to alienate religion and spirituality. This has an indelible impact on how students in the classroom come to know themselves and the world around them.

Indigeneity in this context refers to the reassessment of the relations of subjects to land and state (Dei, 2013). Dei highlights the Canadian experience in its emphasis on 'multiculturalism' (Dei, 2013). For Dei, critical anti-racism must read Canadian citizenship from multiple subject perspectives, including 'Aboriginal', White settler, and racialized immigrant. In this context, it is important to problematize the effects of Shadeism on First Nations students in Canada. In *Aboriginal Education and Anti-Racist Education: Building Alliances Across Cultural and Racial Identity*, Verma St. Denis (2007) discusses the concept of Shadeism in the Canadian Indigenous

context. She dismantles the idea of Cultural Revitalization and states that although its goal is to address the problem of systemic social inequality by strengthening Indigenous cultural nationalism, it puts the onus of change back on Indigenous communities. Additionally, Cultural Revitalization has the effect of reforming a cultural hierarchy where there is a notion of “real”, “traditional”, and “assimilated” Indians. In this situation Indigenous peoples are put in a difficult position. In her study of First Nations and Metis teachers, Treaty Indians with darker-skin were the subjects of more racism. However, choosing to “pass” as the dominant for peoples with lighter skin has the consequence of denying that racism is a problem (St. Denis, 2007).

The prevalence of Shadeism in the Indigenous community in Canada is real among students as well. St. Denis relays an example of students socializing at the ‘smokers corner’ at break. A lighter-skinned ‘passing’ student was present when other students were negatively discussing Indigenous people. As a ‘passing’ student, she was being complained to, whereas for a darker-skinned student, the complaints are directed at them (St. Denis, 2007). St Denis suggests that Indigenous teachers be equipped with a CART analysis, as they would be better positioned to challenge such effects of racialization by developing a critical analysis of how Whiteness has been produced as superior. Shadeism in the context of the Indigenous community in Canada seems to be a double-edged sword. Though darker-skinned students may experience more racism at the hands of the dominant, lighter-skinned students experience intra-racism in that they can be considered less “authentic”. Schools can be a site of anti-racism in this context as they can provide a safe and facilitated place to engage in this discourse around race and skin tone. In her article entitled *Indigenous Women and Cultural Resurgence in Tkaronto: Community Development and Identity Sustainability in the Case of ‘Being Urban’,* Jessica Cook (2014) shares an excerpt from an interview where a lighter-skinned Indigenous student recounts her experience with Shadeism. For her, Shadeism manifests in the fact that the dominant does not see her in the context of what they expect a stereotypical Indigenous woman should look like (Cook, 2014). In this sense, Shadeism is real as well; it is closely connected to colonial imprints on how Indigenous identity is formed and what that identity can be (Cook, 2014). This speaks to Dei’s notion that the coloniser need not be present for the effects of colonisation to be felt.

In his piece *In Defense of Official Multiculturalism and Recognition of the Necessity of Critical Anti-Racism*, Dei (2011) problematizes the notion of Aboriginality as being deeply embedded within the colonial context in Canada. For Dei, the push to assimilate ethnic and racial minorities into a society built on White identity needs interrogation. Education is a place where this anti-racist work can happen. In the context of Shadeism in the Indigenous community, both edges of the sword must be examined. The existence of a space in school for students to share these experiences is a necessary component in the call to action dictated by CART.

CONCLUSION

The desire to acquire racial capital through lighter skin, as well as supposed expectations of aptitude and success, are debilitating elements of a pained colonial past. Sara Ahmed asserts, "The power of Whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it. To those who don't, the power of Whiteness is maintained by being seen; we see it everywhere the casualness of white bodies in spaces… I see bodies as White, not human" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 14). In the context of Shadeism this declaration could not be truer. The impact of Shadeism has very real and material consequences today, especially on the individual and social development of racialized youth. If as Dei suggests, schools can act as sites of change, what better place is there to engage in discourse around Shadeism? My hope is that through critical anti-racist work in schools, the effects of Shadeism as it relates to perceived student behaviour, academic achievement, and social engagement, can be dismantled and a culture of awareness created in its place.

By situating Shadeism through deconstructing its colonial roots and examining its implications today, the call to decentre Whiteness is clear. The saliencies of race and skin colour indicate that there is no objective way of knowing. Racialized bodies, moving through space and time each experience the consequences of their skin colour differently.

Critical anti-racism theory is a necessary tool in the analysis and dismantling of Shadeism. Examination of the six categories outlined by CART; salience and centrality of race, race identity, history and context, intersectionality, 'othering', and Whiteness, as they affect racialized students in the GTA assists in bridging the ideals of theory and practice needed to take an active role in anti-racist work. CART equips teachers and students to act for change.

There is no excuse for any student to experience school as a site of oppression. The institution of the three-tiered initiative proposed in this chapter, which includes; a ministry and board-wide culture change, teacher training, and holistic student programming aims to put the principles of CART into practice. In this supposedly post-colonial world, students are still bombarded with images, advertisements, music, and textbooks that continue to valorize Whiteness. It is imperative that they recognise how Shadeism is enacted in order to understand the false perceptions and consequences ascribed to racialized bodies, and, actively resist them.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of antiracism. *Borderlands e-Journal, 3*, 2.

Bain, C. M., & Colyer, J. S. (2001). *The human way: Introducing anthropology, psychology, and sociology*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Bodenhorn, H. (2006). Colorism, complexion homogamy, and household wealth: Some historical evidence. *American Economic Review, 96*(2), 256–260. doi:10.1257/000282806777211883

Breland-Noble, A. M. (2013). The impact of skin color on mental and behavioural health in African American and Latina adolescent girls: A review of the literature. In *The melanin millennium: Skin colour as a 21st century international discourse.* Gothenburg: Springer.

Brown, D. L. (2009). The legacy of colorism reflects wounds of racism that are more than skin-deep. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/10/AR2009071000022.html

Burrows, P. (2011, February 18). Slavery is over, but 'colourism' persists. *The Toronto Star.*

Cook, J. M. (2014). *Indigenous women and cultural resurganence in Tkaronto: Community development and identity sustainability in the case of "Being Urban"*. Toronto: York University Faculty of Environmental Science.

Dei, G. J. S. (2011). In defense of official multiculturalism and recognition of the necessity of critical anti-racism. *Canadian Issues.* (A special issue on: "Diversity and Education for Liberation: Realities, Possibilities and Problems". Edited by Ghosh, R. and K. McDoough, Spring Issue.)

Dei, G. J. S. (2013). Reframing Critical Anti-Racist Theory (CART) for contemporary times. In G. J. S. Dei & M. Lordan (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in the sociology of race and ethnicity: A critical reader.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Dei, G. J. S., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: Critical knowledge/multiple knowings- possibilities, challenges and resistance in curriculum/cultural contexts. In Y. Kanu (Ed.), *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dixon, T., & Maddox, K. (2005). Skin tone, crime news, and social reality Judgments: Priming the stereotype of the dark and dangerous Black criminal. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *35*(8), 1555–1570.

Dua, E. (2007). Exploring articulations of 'Race' and gender: Going beyond singular categories. In S. P. Hier & B. S. Bolaria (Ed.), *Race and racism in 21st century Canada, continuity, complexity, and change.* Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Fanon, F. (1986). *Black skin, White masks*. London: Pluto Press.

Garner, S. (2010). Science. In *Racisms*: *An introduction*. Birmingham: Sage Publications.

Glenn, E. N. (2009). *Shades of difference: Why skin color matters*. Stanford, CA: Standford University Press.

Grimes, N. (2002). *A Bronx masquerade*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Hall, R. E. (2006). The bleaching syndrome among people of colour: Implications of skin colour for human behaviour in the social environment. *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment, 13*(3), 19–31.

Harrison, M. S. (2005). *Colorism in the job selection process: Are there preferential differences within the Black race?* Emory University, Athens, GA.

Hersch, J. (2008). Skin color, immigrant wages, and discrimination. In R. E. Hall (Ed.), *Racism in the 21st century: An empirical analysis of skin color*. New York, NY: Springer.

Hinkson, K. (2013, May 19). Students in Oshawa challenging Shadeism. *The Toronto Star.*

Hunter, M. L. (2011). Buying racial capital: Skin-bleaching and cosmetic surgery in a globalized world. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 4*(4), 142–144.

Hunter, M. L. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass, 1,* 237–254. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x

James, W. (1992). Migration, racism and identity: The Caribbean experience in Britain. *New Left Review, 1*, 93.

Kartel, V. (2011). *Look pon we*. New York, NY: Mixpak Records.

King, M. (2013). Skin lighteners market to be worth $19.8 billion by 2018. *Healthcare and Medical Market News online*. Retrieved from http://www.companiesandmarkets.com/News/Healthcare-and-Medical/Skin-lighteners-market-to-be-worth-19-8-billion-by-2018/NI7584

Lane, L., & Mahdi, H. (2013). Fanon revisited: Race gender and coloniality vis-à-vis skin colour. In *The Melanin millennium: Skin colour as a 21st century international discourse.* Gothenburg: Springer.

Nicholson, R. D. (2015). Corporeality, aryanism, race: The theatre and social reform of the Parsis of Western India. *Journal of South Asian Studies, 38*(4), 613–638.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *The Ontario curriculum grades 9–12: Social sciences and humanities*. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/ssciences9to122013.pdf

Peiss, K. (2011). *Hope in a jar: The making of America's beauty culture*. New York, NY: Owl Books.

Perea, J. F. (1997). The Black/White binary paradigm of race: The normal science of American racial thought. *California Law Review, 85*(5). Retrieved from http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/californialawreview/vol85/iss5/3

Prakash, V. K. (2010, January 12). Fair and lovely: Airhostess. *YouTube*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHhKqgOiAs0

Rajesh, M. (2013, August 13). India's unfair obsession with lighter skin. *The UK Guardian*.

Simpson, J. (2006). Racism is not a theory: Racism matters in the classroom. In *I have been waiting: Race and US higher education.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Starr, T. J. (2011). Light-skinned Blacks preferred over dark-skinned ones. *News One*. Retrieved from http://newsone.com/2000618/light-skin-vs-dark-skin/

Talamas, S. N., Mavor, K. I., & Perrett, D. I. (2016). Blinded by beauty: Attractiveness bias and accurate pereceptions of academic performance. *PLoS ONE, 11*(2), e0148284.

Thiyagarajah, N. (2010). *Shade.ism*. Toronto: Refugee Productions Inc.

Wade, T. J. (1996). The relationship between skin color and self-perceived global, physical, and sexual attractiveness, and self esteem for African-Americans. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *22*, 358–373.

Zine, J. (2001). Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of religious identity. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 32*(4), 339–423.

AYAN ABDULLE

2. AN EXPLORATORY PAPER ON UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines Whiteness as a category. The aim of this work is to contribute to understanding and deconstructing Whiteness; this is done (loosely) within the framework of Whiteness Studies. The main argument is that anti-Blackness anchors and centers Whiteness. Whiteness is situated at the center; an ideal Whiteness occupies the core of the center while White ethnicities orbit the core. A constitutive Blackness occupies the core of the most external periphery and Black ethnicities orbit the core of Blackness. Non-White and Non-Black races are organized between the center (ideal Whiteness), and the external periphery (constitutive Blackness). Within this construct non-White races seek proximity to Whiteness through the performance of ideal Whiteness. It is within this space that the model minority (non-White/non-Black) is constructed. The assertion is that the model minority construct simultaneously re-centers Whiteness and creates Blackness as the antithesis of Whiteness. A central tenant of this essay is that in order to deconstruct and de-center Whiteness, one must unpin it from its anchor—anti-Blackness.

Keywords: Whiteness, Whiteness studies, Blackness, Anti-Blackness, centre, periphery, model minority

INTRODUCTION

I have been staring at Whiteness as a set of interlocking, relational, shifting fronts of oppression for many years now. I was born, and raised in Somalia for the first seven years of my life. Although I remember the first seven years of my childhood as ones that were comfortable and privileged in the sense that I came from a two-parent household where I was educated, loved, nurtured and protected. I was strangely aware and very sensitive to the plight of people; I had deep empathy. On a personal level this often moved me to act and speak even as a young child. However, I also experienced somatic responses to oppression whereby I would feel what I would describe as sensory overload. Witnessing acts of oppression would sometimes cause me to feel physically ill and emotionally overwhelmed. Interestingly enough, I was adopted out of wealth (in its different forms) and brought to Canada—into poverty. I remember my first year of undergraduate studies. I was all of a sudden bombarded

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 23–34.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

by moving fronts of oppression. As I learned through the words of others I started to make connections. What I quickly observed was that although oppression could be straightforward, complex, multifaceted, sweeping, and nuanced it all triangulated back to Whiteness.

Allow me to qualify this more, I learned that the Indigenous people of North America were colonized by Europeans and that this colonization encompassed the theft of Indigenous land, the destruction of Indigenous cultures and identities. I also learned that the oppression of Indigenous people was not historical but rather current and ongoing. In the same year, I learned about the colonization of the continent of Africa by Europeans and its devastating effects. I learned about the colonization of South America, Australia; the colonization of parts of Asia by Europeans and the subjugation of Asia by Europeans. At first what I saw was economic domination, which led to social and cultural domination. I focused on the need for structural economic changes; I thought of things as economically driven. I looked at the United Nations, particularly the UN Security Council, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, development theory and practice. I kept thinking how—from what angle could one best dismantle these large-scale injustices, oppressions and transgressions? As I designed various projects in my mind, I realized that they lacked the extensive, layered and very complex groundwork necessary to execute them. I went back to my theoretical drawing board.

A colleague of mine at a summer internship stated that he had asked his teenage cousin if he got any grief from police when he and his friends congregated in public spaces to stake board, loitering away their summer afternoons. His cousin responded "No. I'm White". I etched his exact response as it was relayed to me into my memory, and held it there. In the summer of 2007 I had become good friends with a girl from Russia. In a conversation she had casually communicated that she had a friend who had gone to work in India; she said that he had encouraged her to make the move to India because "White people get treated like God there". I etched this too, vividly into my memory. In a conversation with an acquaintance of mine he shared with me that he had thought about going to China to teach English. He admitted that he did not have the credentials to teach and said "but I'm White". Again, I was taken aback. However, this time I did more than etch the memory into my brain. These examples illustrate the fluidity of Whiteness and its material capital. I confronted the statement of the latter and we never spoke again. However, it would not be long before I encountered overt demonstration of White privilege again. Only this time, there would be a clear juxtaposition. I was hanging out with a friend of mine and a female friend of his. Both were White. Two Middle Eastern men came up to the three of us and asked the girl if they could take a picture with her. They explained that they were tourists, thought she was pretty, and just wanted a picture with her. She hesitated. They pleaded. She acquiesced reluctantly. When the men left, my friend mocked, "please can we take a picture with you, please your White, can we take a picture with you". As the men pleaded for a picture, their internalized inferiority in relation to Whiteness was apparent; if not to them, then to the two White individuals

who laughed at them. In all four instances, there was a clear awareness of White privilege, what it meant and what it could potentially be traded in for. Without realizing it, I kept circling around race. Although I could triangulate much of the economic, social, cultural and geographic domination back to Whiteness, it would take me years before I could see that deconstructing and dismantling Whiteness was an imperative project in the fight against economic, cultural, geographic and social oppression. As a Black woman, as mother of Black children, and as a Muslim woman, it is important for me to fight against racism. In this chapter, I theorize about Whiteness and its impact on Blackness. I argue that Whiteness is centered by Blackness. I argue that anti-Blackness anchors Whiteness. I put forth the argument that a combination of racism and colourism create proximity to Whiteness.

Examined horizontally, race is socially constructed in a divisionary and hierarchal manner whereby the White race is centered and all other races are placed outside the center. All non-White races occupy the periphery in what can be described as outer rings that orbit the center—Whiteness. The most outer ring is occupied by the Black race. It is the Black race that anchors Whiteness. Whiteness has been socially constructed to dichotomize itself against its ultimate other, Blackness. It is Blackness that is used to pin and center Whiteness. George J. Sefa Dei's (2014) article, *The African Scholar in the Western Academy* argues that Whiteness historically constructed the Black race as sub-human. He states, "the transgressions against the African humanity has included a denial in our place in history and culture as well as a denial of our humanity" (p. 168). It was this denial of the humanity of Black people that was used to create the hierarchy of race. Examined vertically, the White race is at the top; the Black race is at the bottom, mooring Whiteness and creating a sliding scale of proximity to Whiteness. Non-White races (excluding the Black race) move around on the sliding scale hoping to be as close to the top (Ideal Whiteness) as possible and as far away from the bottom (Constitutive Blackness) as possible. However, examining race vertically through the hierarchy and its accompanying sliding scale does not capture the nuanced mutations that Whiteness enacts in order to survive. For that reason, I will not only argue that Whiteness is pinned by Blackness—so that Blackness convulses statically in its anchorage of Whiteness; I will also argue that it is by this anchorage that Whiteness mutates absorbing and expelling various identities along various intersectionalities in time and space.

Although Whiteness is centered, within that center there are peripheries of Whiteness. I call the peripheries within Whiteness' center the center-periphery. The center-periphery orbits within Whiteness. What is static in the center is an ideal construct of racial Whiteness. Ethnicities, (European ethnicities) occupy various places within the center-periphery as they intersect with time and space. Intersectionalities comprising of (among others), race, geographical space, class, citizenship, education, gender, disability, intersect creating rings within Whiteness orbiting around the ideal Whiteness of a particular time and space. Within the center Whiteness is a concrete entity that lacks any concrete characteristics outside of its

anchor, Blackness. This means that Whiteness is able to mutate within the center. The mutations reflect and are reflected in the center-periphery and the middle-peripheries (I will return to this idea).

Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1993) in their article *On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race* argue that race, seen as an "essence, a natural phenomenon" (p. 3) was once thought to have fixed meaning that were relatively unproblematic (p. 3). The authors assert that the shift away from race as an objective category to race as a social construct has constructed race as an illusion threatening to undermine recognition of race as a social category with real consequences. Omi and Winant (1993) assert,

> the main task facing racial theory today… is no longer to problematize a seemingly 'natural' or 'common sense' concept of race—although that effort has not been entirely completed…Rather our central work is to focus attention on the continuing significance and changing meaning of race. (p. 3)

In order to move forward Omi and Winant (1993) go back and pose the question what is race? They reject the notion of race as an illusion, "…an ideological construct— understood in the sense of a false consciousness" (p. 4) and argue that this dismisses the salience of race as a social and identity organizer with real material consequences. In making this argument they reject those that postulate, that to speak of racism is to reify race (p. 5) pointing out that race is so salient that it permeates every aspect of our society so much so that "…to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity" (p. 5). Firstly, I assert, the argument that to speak of racism is to reify race—a social construct that would otherwise disappear lacks historicity and denies people's everyday experiences with racism. This postulation is a mutation of Whiteness. The argument re-centers Whiteness by denying the very existence of race as a salient social construct with economic, social, and cultural consequences. It is a form of ontological and epistemological violence in that it denies: (a) race as a salient social construct with real material (social, spiritual, economic, cultural) consequences; (b) race as a category of historical and current system of organization and relation producing systems of oppression and systematic racism; and (c) the experiences of negatively (non-White) racialized people. Race as biological category also works to re-center Whiteness.

Omni and Winant (1993) argue that assigning objectivity to race is problematic in that it puts one in step with biologistic racial theorist, the eugenicist movement and scientific racists (pp. 5–6). However, they communicate, "…liberal and even radical social science, though firmly committed to a social, as opposed to biological, interpretation of race, nevertheless also slip into a kind of objectivism about racial identity and racial meaning" (p. 6) because they treat race as an independent variable and fail to `problematize group identity (p. 6). Race as a biological "fact" is the most enduring precisely because European colonizers invested heavily in the making of difference as a part of their strategic ethnocentrism approach (Abdulle, 2008). I argue that it is within the category of race as a biological "fact" that the assigning of

sub-humanity to the Black race (Dei, 2014) occurred. Furthermore, I assert that it is within this category that the centering of Whiteness and the anchorage of Whiteness by Blackness occurs.

Haney Lopez' (1994) article, *The Social Construct of Race* opens the discussion of race by citing the legal case of the Wrights women (grandmother, mother, and daughter) v. their "owner" Hudgins (p. 191). Lopez communicates that the women argued that they were free because they descended from a free maternal linage while Hudgins claimed otherwise. It is said that their fate rested on their physical characteristics; namely, the texture of their hair, the colour of their skin and the dimensions of their nose (p. 192). Lopez (1994) states, "under Virginia Law Blacks were presumably slaves and thus bore the burden of proving a free ancestor; Whites and Indians were presumably free and thus the burden of proving their decent fell on those alleging slave status" (p. 191). Lopez communicates that the judge's verdict as to the freedom or lack thereof of the Wrights' women came down to what the judge described as their lack of African characteristics, particularly "'a flat nose and woolly head of hair'" (Lopez, p. 191). Here one can see how Blackness anchors Whiteness while producing a sliding scale (horizontal or vertical) of proximity to Whiteness. The Indian is not White, but the Indian is also not Black. Furthermore, when one considers the judge's statement that even when the complexion of one's skin colour makes assigning race difficult a "'…flat nose and woolly head of hair" (Lopez, p. 191) make assigning race to Africans possible, it becomes evident that Whiteness is not just pinned by Blackness but by anti-Blackness. This is further evidenced by Lopez' self-situation in which he states, "I write as a Latino. The arguments I present no doubt, reflect the less pronounced role physical features and ancestry play for my community as opposed to Blacks…" (p. 193). Although Lopez argues that race is a social construct he uses the biological term morphology to define race. He defines race as "…as a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of morphology and/or ancestry" (p. 193). It seems that Lopez in same breath rejects and reifies race as a biological category because his focus seems to be on rejecting the idea of race not being a genetically verifiable category (genotype). I argue that Lopez's idea that race is plastic, rapidly changing and relational (p. 199) reflects the shifting nature of Whiteness as it centers and re-centers itself. In Lopez' argument on the meaning of Mexicans, I maintain that it is not Whiteness or Blackness that moved but rather the construction of what Mexican signifies in relation to Whiteness, as it is anchored by anti-Blackness in a particular time and space.

Paul Banahene Adjei and Jagjeet Kaur Gill (2013) in their article *What has Barack Obama's election victory got to do with race? A closer look at post-racial rhetoric and its implications for anti-racism education,* cite the Toronto Star as stating that "…the darker one's skin is, the greater the alienation one feels in Canada (p. 143). In the United States, a report commissioned by CNN (Adjei & Gill, 2013) and carried out Professor Margaret B. Spencer of Chicago University found that "…almost all the White children and quite a number of the Black children in the research

associated Blackness with dumbness, meanness, and ugliness while Whiteness was associated with smartness, beauty and goodness" (p. 143). Blackness is what Whiteness is not, and Whiteness is what Blackness is not. One might ask, what about those that are neither Black nor White. I will return to answer this question. First, let us examine Blackness as the anchor of Whiteness.

Blackness just like every other identity construct has its intersectionalities (gender, class, geography, religion), which results in complex layers of social, economic and cultural identities. Just as in the center-periphery, ethnicities of Whiteness orbit the ideal Whiteness (center) of a particular time and space; the outermost periphery which I call the external-periphery (Blackness) is occupied by ethnicities organized by its proximity to Whiteness through what some have labeled, colourism (Horschild & Weaver, 2007, p. 643). The salience of skin colour and all of the values and social signifiers it carries within, not just for Blacks but also within non-Black negatively racialized individuals is a direct result of the racial hierarchy of Whiteness. It is true that skin colour intersects with other variables in a more nuanced way. However, what is undeniable is that colourism centers Whiteness. In my community, it is not uncommon to hear comments like "you're so black" or "she is beautiful but she is dark". There is a direct correlation between characteristics attributed to Whiteness (goodness, beauty, smartness) and to the shade of one's skin colour because skin colour is seen as proximity to Whiteness. In the novel *Aman, the Story of a Somali Girl* (1995), Aman's older sister is kept home in order to protect her from the evil eye of neighbours because she is light-skinned. When Aman asks her mother how to attain this desirable skin colour her mother jokingly replies one must boil water and pour it over herself. While home alone one day Aman begins boiling water. Her mother arrives before Aman has a chance to pour the boiling water over herself. Aman's life choice and her desires are driven by an unquestioned desire for proximity to Whiteness. This, I argue, is because Whiteness rewards according to its image and ideals by directly placing itself in opposition to Blackness.

According to Joni Herish (2011) legal immigrants to the United States are rewarded or punished according to their skin colour. She asserts that even when all other variables are controlled for, individuals with lighter skin complexions face less discrimination. According to Herish, in employment, people with lighter skin colour secure higher paying jobs than their darker-skinned counterparts (p. 1345). Herish (2010) states that for African Americans, individuals with lighter skin colour also face less discrimination and have greater employment opportunities (p. 1345). Jennifer Horchschild and Vesla Weaver (2007) in their article *The Skin Color Paradox and the American Racial Order* state that dark-skinned Black people in the United States, "…have lower socioeconomic status, more punitive relationships with the criminal justice system, diminished prestige and less likelihood of holding elected office compared to their lighter counterparts" (p. 643). In 1998, ten-years before Barack Obama ran for office, negatively racialized writer Danzy Senna speaking about growing up biracial and bicultural in the book titled *Half-Half: Writers Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural* (1998) predicted that if a Black man

were to hold office in the United States he would have to be biracial because she understood how race(ism) informs colourism. Not only has Whiteness constructed lighter skinned Black people, as well as lighter-skin non-Black people as closer to Whiteness, it had to construct a constitutive Blackness, an anti-Blackness modeled on aesthetics that are sold as an antithesis of Whiteness. These aesthetic values are then attached to non-aesthetical characteristics and values such (among others) as goodness, smartness, kindness, truthfulness and honesty so that they operate as dichotomous signifiers that center Whiteness while anchoring Blackness. Horchschild and Vesla (2007) cite studies that show "dark skin evokes fears of criminality…or sharper memories of a purportedly criminal face" (p. 647) they continue, "even black first graders are better able to remember stories in which light-skinned individuals are portrayed positively [or dark-skinned people portrayed negatively] (p. 647). Journalist and Black activist Desmond Cole (2015) in his article titled, the *Skin I am: I've been interrogated by police more than 50 times—all because I'm black* talks about police carding, institutional and interpersonal racism. He communicates that women would regularly cross the street to get away from him. Even in a city as "diverse" or "multicultural" (terms that post-racial proponents, liberals and conservatives like to throw around) Cole (2015) communicates that he has witnessed women run away from him out of fear. He shares that in 2006 while canvassing during a run for office as a Toronto councilor in the Trinity-Spadina area he knocked on a door and the teenage girl that opened it ran, leaving the door open behind her. And after exiting from a streetcar on Dufferin Street a woman in her twenties looked at him and began sprinting. What is interesting in both cases is that both of these women were young.

One "common-sense" argument for [evidence] of a move towards a post-racial society is that racism in the form of colonization (post-colonial), slavery (post-slavery) and segregation (post-segregation) have passed and its residual will pass with time. You hear the logic in statements like: *I cannot believe in 2016, in the 21st century* or in attributing current systemic racism as "past inequalities" (Adjei & Gill, 2015, p. 137). This argument supports the centering of Whiteness through its anchorage of Blackness in two ways. First, it discourages any meaningful discussion of White privilege and White power by timelining it as past events. Hence, there is no need to focus on racism because any racism that is left in the world will die out with "racist old people"; resulting in a post-racial society through a form of attrition. Second, this is accompanied by an underlying assumption that any present or future inequalities cannot be attributed to racism but rather to "pathologies" that are inherent to a particular group. Omi and Winant (1994) attribute this to what they describe as the treatment of race as a single variable (p. 6). They state,

> as sociopolitical circumstances change over historical time, racially defined groups adapt or fail to adapt…In this logic there is no problematization of group identities, or of the constant shifting parameters through which race is understood, group interests are assigned, statuses are ascribed, agency is attained, and roles performed. (p. 6)

This occurs against the backdrop of the active construction of Whiteness and Blackness (their many signifiers) through a myriad of techniques including but not limited to, the curriculum in the education system, the stories that mainstream media tell, and the characters it uses to tell them, public institutions and public policies that deny difference and promote [tolerance] through multiculturalism. Allow me to demonstrate how these further reify Whiteness.

Think of Whiteness as a porous, multi-leveled system. If greater opportunities for success are given to lighter-skinned non-White people (Horchschild & Vesla, 2007), allowing them to dot the landscape of Whiteness in a palpable manner while denying access to darker-skinned non-White people, it connects the success of lighter-skinned non-White people to White superiority indirectly—through proximity. In other words, their success is constructed as a result of their less constitutive Blackness, as demonstrated by their skin colour. The logic here is that they have succeeded because they are less Black. This further reifies the construct of race as a biological category that produces inherent social differences and centers Whiteness. This porous yet restrictive system allows movements that work to distribute proximity to Whiteness (race, colourism, and class) while protecting the structural integrity of Whiteness.

Roderick A. Ferguson (2014) in his article *The Distributions of Whiteness* argues that Whiteness protected its structural integrity of oppression by absorbing difference, ensuring that it thwarts any real threat to White privilege. According to Ferguson (2014), while the old mode of Whiteness worked through direct colonial rule, employed overt racist language, policies and practices, the new Whiteness works through an appreciation of diversity and is thoroughly anti-distributive (p. 1101). Ferguson asserts, "…whiteness—in the post-World War II United States—tactically eschews prior gestures of white supremacy, in favor of procedures that can achieve white supremacist outcomes through "the productivity of anti-racist knowledge" (1102). Claims of tolerance and multiculturalism thwart efforts to dismantling Whiteness and White privilege. George Dei and Stanley Doyle-Wood (2006) argue that under the current status-quo, tolerance is a form of violence. Dei and and Doyle-Wood communicate, "tolerance allows one to maintain a hold on power and respectability. It places the violent onus on the Others to ensure that they do not overstep their boundaries or risk the benefits of being disliked and abjectified" (p. 154). Like multiculturalism, tolerance legitimizes Whiteness by framing difference as something that must be filtered through the ideals of Whiteness.

Epistemological challenges whereby non-Whites want access to educational platforms, infusion into education curriculum rather than token appendages are seen as angry and unreasonable; structural changes to the status-quo are framed outside of any dialogue. My son recently came home after writing a biology test and commented that according to all of his science textbooks anyone who has ever discovered anything is White. What my son is saying is that he has learned through the formal education system that no one (or very few) people that look like him have done something worthy of recording, learning, articulating or disseminating and of

course celebrating. This is not just what my son learns; it is what every student in Ontario's public education system learns.

The curriculum teaches White students that they are at the center of human progress. It also teaches them to reject future claims on Whiteness' implications in systems of oppression by not teaching them about colonization, racism, oppression, economic, social and cultural domination. The curriculum also teaches my son that Whiteness is at the center of human progress. That was evident to me very early. At age four, sitting in a food court at a west-end mall my son asked me why Brown (all non-White) people worked in restaurants and White people did not. Like the children of many non-White parents my son at age six—grade one, came to me and asked why he could not have White skin or straight hair or blue eyes. It seems that it did not even have to be all of those physical characteristics. It seemed that he would have been satisfied with just one of them in order to make a stronger claim for greater proximity to the center. Six-year-old Toni, a Black boy cited in Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006) articulates his identity as it is imposed on him through mainstream media. For him being Black means you hit women and rape women (p. 156).

Kelly Maxwell (2016) in her article titled *Deconstructing Whiteness: Discovering the Water* says that growing up she saw White people in public office, in her text books, in mainstream media living a life similar to hers (p. 156) and she "observed that the criminals on television were by and large portrayed as Black" (p. 156). We can see how as a child, Maxwell's identity centered Whiteness just as Toni's identity centered Whiteness. One can also see how Toni's identity anchors Blackness just as Maxwell's identity anchors Blackness. I would like to expand on this notion of identity building as consequential for centering and anchoring with one more important example.

Victoria Haviland (2008) in her article *Things Get Glossed over: Rearticulating the Silencing Power of Whiteness in Education* partook in a year-long seminar in which White teachers meet to talk about issues of race, White privilege and White power. According to Haviland one of the teacher participants, Emma, told a story of a Black boy in her class that she says was harassing her female students. Haviland quotes Emma as describing the female students as "little tiny…innocent… little seventh-grade girls" (p. 52). Haviland reports that in the same discussion Emma expressed amusement by her need to ask permission slips for her seventh-grade students to see a PG movie when according to Emma, "these girls are dating 20-year-olds'" (p. 52). Haviland states that with the exception of one quietly posed question that disappeared as quietly as it was posed, there were no comments that challenged Emma's racist statement in which the innocence of White girls was threatened by the criminality of a Black boy who she purported "harassed them". Their purported relationships with 20-year-olds did not pose a threat because the men were White. Their interaction with a teenage boy did, because he was Black. According to Haviland, the group failed to examine White privilege in any meaningful way. I would argue that the group's interactions worked to further reify White privilege by centering Whiteness against Blackness. Furthermore, the fact that no one was able

to challenge Emma's racist comments as well as other racist, anti-Black stereotypes such as Black criminality (p. 45) means that these teachers will walk into to their classrooms with deficit-thinking, which only intensifies internalized inferiority that many non-White children already struggle with.

The internalization of inferiority for non-Whites occurs in a multitude of ways (through mainstream media, education system, global, local economic systems). The process is not a one way process; it is marked by both passive and active resistance. We can think of movements like *Black Lives Matter (BLM)* that actively challenge racism, we can also think of formal community spaces like churches, mosques, as well as informal community organized events that revolve around culture such as Tamil school or a halaqa (small group led gatherings in Muslim communities). Friendships and family interactions also can be spaces of resistance and often are. When children come home and tell their parents they want White skin, straight hair or blue eyes, it can be overwhelming for parents to respond, but they are usually the front line of defense against racism and the internalization of inferiority. However, it really is an uphill battle. I am not aware of—I do not know of a single negatively racialized child that has not been impacted by racism. That means that there is not a single adult that has not been impacted by racism. My own child struggled at a very young age with the internationalization of racism. This manifested in his desire to be White. My neighbour told me that she called her daughter a princess and her daughter responded "I am not a princess because I am not White". A colleague of mine communicated that her daughter asked if she was African. When the mother, who is from Jamaica answered yes her daughter broke down. She said that her daughter cried inconsolably. Rosalyn H. Shute and Phillip T. Slee (2015) communicate that the field of infant cognition continues to surprise researches. They assert that infant research was originally framed through an inferiority rather than a competence lens, which resulted in research being framed and designed to underestimate the true capacity of infants. According to the authors,

> …it has been demonstrated that from 10 months of age, babies show surprise when a big animated block (with eyes and mouth) bows and gives way to a smaller one, showing that by this age babies understand how social dominance normally plays out when two actors have conflicting goals. (p. 214)

I have not come across any studies that indicate when non-White children come to internalize inferiority. Of course, I cannot definitively say that all non-White children internalize inferiority; only that my experience is that [all] non-White children that I have communicated with have internalized inferiority to some extent. However, studies do show a correlation between racism, low birth weight, preterm delivery (for African American women) and adverse developmental consequences for infants born to these mothers.

Amani Nuru-Jeter and et al. (2009) did an exploratory study with African American women of various economic backgrounds on the connection between racism and child birth outcomes. Amani Nuru-Jeter (2009) and et al. communicate that African American women are more likely to have pregnancy complications

such as low birth weight and preterm delivery. According to the authors, negative birth outcomes include not only a higher risk for infant mortality, but also, "…child developmental deficits such as low cognitive and educational achievement…adult cardiovascular disease and diabetes" (p. 29). The authors communicate that although infections have been identified as a potential source for these negative outcomes, the evidence is inconclusive (p. 29). They rule out genetics as a sole explanation citing "…favorable genetic outcomes for immigrant black women" (p. 29); the suggestion here is that Black immigrant women living in predominantly Black countries have been shielded from chronic encounters with racism that African American women are exposed to. The authors state that African American women's experience of childhood racism is salient, impactful and enduring (38); also, they continue to experience racism throughout their lifespan (p. 38). They go on to assert that the study participants reported chronic stress triggered by anticipation of racism they may potentially experience as well as racism experienced by their children. Amani Nuru-Jeter and et al. found that education and greater income may help to moderate the damaging effects of racism. However, Ferguson (2014) states,

> …the median net worth of black households is fourteen times less than that of white households…Blacks are also three times more likely to live below the poverty line…twice as more likely to be unemployed…and…job applicants with African American sounding names are less likely to receive call backs than job applicants with white sounding names. (p. 1105)

It is a well documented fact that African Americans face discrimination in education. The irony of course is that the moderating effects of education and income are limited by racism. I want to now turn to the concept of the model citizen and how it is racialized and deployed in the construction of Whiteness.

I argue that all non-White and Non-Black races are constructed by Whiteness so that they fluctuate, orbiting between Blackness and Whiteness. Similar to the center and the center-periphery (ideal White in a particular space and time, and, White ethnicities) and the external-periphery (constitutive Blackness as the antithesis of Whiteness), intersectionalities (race, gender, disability, citizenship) interact in a particular time and space, creating complex identities. They occupy what I call the middle-peripheries. I propose that these identities have a core identity that is imposed, negotiated and resisted by the construct of meanings attached to physical characteristics—race. For example, Chinese intersects with a woman, her class, education, religion, character, geographic location, political orientation, disability. The list can go on and on. However, the core identity—race is constructed against what George Dei (2014) calls the construct of the African race as sub-human (p. 168) and White ideals. This process I argue is achieved through race and colourism. Race and colourism together, intersect with other forms of identities. This is because Whiteness is centered by anti-Blackness. It is colourism and race together that supports the stereotype of light-skinned Black people as being "…different than those others… and not as smart, accomplished and articulate as Whites" (Amani Nuru-Jeter & et al.,

2009, p. 33). This is the logic of the middle peripheries. I argue that this is what the construct of the model minority is based on. This is also what the ruling in the case of the Wrights women v. Hudgins cited in Haney Lopez' (1995) article is based on.

This is my initial exploration into how Whiteness works. I have put forth the argument that it is Blackness in general and anti-Blackness in particular, that centers Whiteness. I have also argued that it is anti-Blackness that anchors Whiteness; anti-Blackness creates colourism and supports the desire for proximity to Whiteness. This construct has created divisions within non-White communities that have made solidarity difficult. In order to begin the process of deconstructing Whiteness there must be recognition that Whiteness is constructed against anti-Blackness. Colourism creates the nuance needed to perpetuate Whiteness through a proximity to Whiteness. I am at the beginning of my endeavor to understand Whiteness. I hope to contribute to the project of deconstructing Whiteness.

REFERENCES

Adjei, P. B., & Gill, J. K. (2013). What has Barack Obama's election victory got to do with race? A closer look at post-racial rhetoric and its implication for antiracism education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(1), 134–153. doi:10.1080/13613324.2011.645576

Barnes, V. L., & Boddy, J. P. (1994). *Aman: The story of a Somali girl*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Cole, D. (2015, April 21). The Skin I am: I've been interrogated by police more than 50 times—all because I'm Black. *Toronto Life*. Retrieved from http://torontolife.com/city/life/skin-im-ive-interrogated-police-50-times-im-black/

Dei, G. J. S. (Nana Sefa Atweneboah I). (2014). The African scholar in the western academy. *Journal of Black Studies, 45*(3), 167–179. doi:10.1177/0021934714525198

Dei, G. J. S., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: Critical knowledge/multiple knowings: Possibilities, challenges and resistance in curriculum/cultural contexts. In Y. Kanu (Ed.), *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations* (pp. 151–180). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ferguson, R. A. (2014). The distributions of Whiteness. *American Quarterly, 66*(4), 1101–1106. doi:10.1353/aq.2014.0064

Haviland, V. S. (2008). "Things Get Glossed Over": Rearticulating the silencing power of whiteness in education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(1), 40–54. doi:10.1177/0022487107310751

Hersch, J. (2011). The persistence of skin color discrimination for immigrants. *SSRN Electronic Journal SSRN Journal,* 1337–1349. doi:10.2139/ssrn.1695209

Hochschild, J. L., & Weaver, V. (2007). The skin color paradox and the American racial order. *Social Forces, 86*(2), 643–670. doi:10.1093/sf/86.2.643

Lopez, I. J. (1995). The social construction of race. In R. Delgado (Ed.), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. 163–177). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Maxwell, K. (2016). Deconstructing whiteness: Discovering the water [Abstract]. *JSTOR,* 153–169.

Nuru-Jeter, A., Dominguez, T. P., Hammond, W. P., Leu, J., Skaff, M., Egerter, S., Jones, C. P., & Braveman, P. (2008). "It's The Skin You're In": African-American women talk about their experiences of racism. An exploratory study to develop measures of racism for birth outcome studies. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 13*(1), 29–39. doi:10.1007/s10995-008-0357-x

O'Hearn, C. C. (1998). *Half and half: Writers on growing up biracial and bicultural*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1993). On the theoretical concept of race. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 3–10). New York, NY: Routledge.

Slee, P. T., & Shute, R. H. (2015). *Child development: Theories and critical perspectives*. London: Routledge.

CHRISTINA HUTCHINSON

3. LANGUAGES ARE MULTIPLE

From Turtle Island to Africa – Combatting the Cultural Violence of Colonialism in Residential School and Christian Missionary School

ABSTRACT

Hutchinson argues that Indigenous peoples actively resist the violence of the imperial doctrine. This chapter engages in a "contrapuntal" reading (Said, 1993) that accounts for both the oppression of Indigenous language and culture as well as how Indigenous languages and cultures have adapted to resist colonial oppression. Hutchison critiques Canadian residential schooling and Christian missionary education as imperial systems that devalue Indigenous knowledges through cultural appropriation. Through an assessment of the inability of Canadian Law to preserve Indigenous language, Hutchison applies Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's argument of the "colonial child" to assess the psychological manifestations of cultural loss. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the fluidity of Indigenous languages through the examination of the African diasporic and migratory contexts where Indigenous peoples incorporate and blend their histories through adaptive and transformative language strategies called "urban vernaculars" (Makoni, 2007). These discussions prove that Indigenous languages have survived and resisted imperial indoctrination, and that Indigenous ways of knowing are necessary to replace (not transform) the colonial academy (Dei, 2011).

Keywords: contrapuntal, Indigenous, residential school, Christian missionary school, colonial, urban vernacular

INTRODUCTION

The construction of knowledge in educational settings is deeply rooted in a history of colonial epistemic violence, with language being used as a tool to deny Indigenous peoples of their cultures. Too often scholars have assessed this divide using a binaristic understanding of "Indigenous" and "dominant" (Makoni, 2007, p. 26) as if Indigenous language, culture, and knowledge are unchanging and face the threat of *survival* – a dystopic vision that offers no alternative to negotiate the violence of colonial education. This conception treats Indigenous languages as endangered, rather than *integrated* into Indigenous lives; I argue that Indigenous peoples actively resist the violence of the imperial doctrine (Makoni, 2007, p. 26).

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance:
Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 35–55.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

This chapter will engage in a "contrapuntal" reading (Said, 1993, p. 62) that accounts for both the oppression of Indigenous language and culture as well as how Indigenous languages and cultures have adapted and resisted colonial oppression. I will critique both Canadian residential schooling and Christian missionary education as imperial systems that devalue Indigenous knowledges through the threat of cultural annihilation. I will include an assessment of the Canadian Law and its inability to act on the part of Canadian Indigenous loss of language, and I will discuss Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's argument of the "colonial child" (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 15) to assess psychological manifestations of cultural loss. Finally, I will conclude with a more hopeful discussion about how Indigenous languages are fluid and transformative. I discuss African diasporic contexts where Indigenous peoples incorporate and blend their histories through adaptive language strategies which Makoni et al. describe as "urban vernaculars" (Makoni, 2007, p. 27). Through these discussions, I will propose a platform for Canadian Indingenality that resists colonial homogenization by transforming the English language with Indigenous epistemologies.

African literature also resists the "domination" of colonial education through its use of proverbs that hold a cultural meaning beyond what the English language is able to convey, making it an essential decolonial practice; in the words of Jadie McDonell (2012), "the use of the proverb relies on cultural allusions, thus when the cultural element is not understood, the essential meaning of the proverb may be missed or lost" (p. 21). Colonial education forced the instruction of the English language on colonized bodies and Indigenous peoples were no longer connected to the culture of their native languages. In the words of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: "I went to school, a colonial school […] the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture" (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 11). The proverb is therefore a necessary "cultural element" to be included in the academy if education and culture are to connect after being severed and separated by histories of colonization. While the African literature I refer to is written in the *English* language, the cultural meaning of the proverbs ascribe to the text allow for an essential transformation of literature written in English that decolonizes the language by connecting Indigenous culture with the "education" of the novel form.

The purpose of these discussions will be to prove that Indigenous languages have not only survived and resisted imperial indoctrination, but that Indigenous ways of knowing are necessary to *replace* (not transform) the colonial academy (Dei, 2011, p. 5); decolonization is not possible without the inclusion of Indigenous philosophies and epistemologies that are centered in understanding that there are "multiple ways of knowing" (Dei, 2011, p. 10) the world rather than an imposed, narrowly defined, and colonially conceptualized world of "dominant" versus "Indigenous."

Binaristic and hierarchical understandings of culture and language (Indigenous vs. dominant) prohibit Western education systems from meaningfully engaging with the possibility of having a curriculum focused on multiplicity. Indigenous knowledge systems are, according to Jadie McDonell (2012) "not built upon a hierarchal framework, where one knowledge form is seen as superior to another"

(p. 12) instead, as George Dei asserts, Indigenous knowledge systems rely on an "interdependence" formed between "ourselves and the collective" (Dei, 2011, p. 16). Similar to colonial claims of ownership over the land, are claims that Western society holds the key to enlightenment. Indigenous knowledge systems disrupt the idea that one can "own" knowledge and understands knowledge as interconnected and integrated, belonging to the whole of society (Dei, 2011, p. 16). Rather than incorporating various knowledge systems, Indigenous students in the Western education system are forced to assimilate and standardize to hegemonic *settler* ways of knowing that manipulate the value of Indigenous philosophies by reinforcing the ideology that Indigenous cultures and knowledges are *inferior, savage, primitive, uncivilized…* (Fanon, 1967, p. 86).

POSITIONING MYSELF IN THE DISCUSSION

How I come to know the world is heavily influenced by my social location. In order to respectfully contribute to these anti-colonial and anti-racist discussions, I must be honest about my particular biases – in the words of George Dei, I must, "know and understand [my] self in order to pursue politics for anti-racism change. Subjectivities are contradictory sites of privilege, domination and subordination" (Dei, 1999, p. 47). I am a White woman, who does not experience racism or the threat of colonial violence against my own person; I stand beside, and not in front, of those who do. This means I must learn to view the world *outside* of myself by allowing those who have experienced colonial and racist oppression to speak and come to resist their oppressions on their own terms. I invite others to critique this piece based on my social location to help me further uncover potential biases I may have uncritically engaged with. My goal is to center Indigenous worldviews and critique the worldviews that I have come to know and have been privileged by, in hopes of discovering a world where power and privilege do not operate to marginalize the voices of the "Other".

A particular professor who taught me during my second and fourth year of my undergraduate degree changed my outlook and gave me the inspiration to proceed with this work. In his "Sociology of Education" class, I learned to critique all the knowledge I had ever learned in educational settings for potential racist, sexist, homophobic, and colonial ideological influence. I questioned the standardization of knowledge and whose bodies are better suited to succeed within the system. This meant I had to assess my own privilege, and these discussions, along with anti-racist and anti-colonial research create a space to do so. My particular interest in Indigenous philosophies began once I realized that the sites of oppression Indigenous peoples face make their lives most vulnerable under the colonial state. I believe that if I am truly to stand for Social Justice, Indigenous voices must occupy the largest space in my research.

My particular interest with language began when I was introduced to African Literature. I was reading Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Chris Abani, NoViolet

Bulawayo, Chamamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ahmadou Kouroua, Nadine Gordimer, etc. and in each novel I recognized the intersecting themes of colonialism, oppression, racism, and violence (among others) that speak in an authentic voice about the overall power and control the Western world has over colonial states and colonial bodies. In much of these writings, proverbs were part of a strategic literary style that relies on an understanding of the cultural context in which each proverb is applied. As an English major, I had been reading mandatory British Literature, American Literature, and Canadian Literature in the pursuit of my degree. The University, as an imperial institution, does not make African Literature courses mandatory, perhaps because knowledge influenced by the empire is seen as most credible. Literature therefore can strengthen the imperial view or, in the case of African Literature, it can *resist* it. As a result of taking an African Literature course, I gained exposure to these other views of the world.

I would also like to resist the notion that as a White body engaging in these discussions, I am making steps towards "innocence," meaning that I am hoping for forgiveness (Tuck & Yang, 2009, p. 16) and recognition that by simply talking about these subjects makes me a "good person." In recognizing that I live in a society established on hierarchal notions of race, being White often means having an authority over the voices of "others." Instead of paying due attention to those who experience racism and colonial oppression, a White person who empathizes with the "other" becomes the object through which discussions about race are legitimized. The *Black Lives Matter* and *Indigenous Lives Matter* movements asks White comrades to be willing to stand at the back of the protests where they will receive less media exposure because if they were to stand at the front, the cameras would focus on all the "good" White protestors who are so "selfless" and empathetic. The voices of the marginalized are then no longer given the political space they need to claim for the movement to hold its purpose. I do not wish to be thought of as a good person for my efforts, in fact, I would rather my positionality be recognized as limited and secondary to the voices of the marginalized.

THE 'LANGUAGE' OF RESIDENTIAL AND MISSIONARY SCHOOLING

Residential schooling and Christian missionary education sought to erase the language of the colonized, and impose the English imperial language as not only superior, but as the only language one can use to experience and view their world (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 12). Imperial education does not equalize; knowledge is controlled and mechanised in a way that divides and marginalizes Indigenous voices.

Such concepts as, 'indigeneity,' 'colonization' 'imperialism,' and 'decolonization' lie under the theoretical framework that I will apply to this chapter. My particular understanding of these concepts will help me to engage in anti-colonial discourse throughout .

Anti-colonial theory is a useful tool because it actively interrogates power relations of coloniality. Anti-colonial theory therefore is intersectional as it engages

in critiquing subjectivities that form power relations across lines of race, class, and gender (Kempf, 2009, p. 10). More suited to my discussion, anti-colonial theory engages in liberating struggles through a lens of resistance to settler ideologies and institutions that maintain colonial schooling processes (Kempf, 2009, p. 10). Anti-colonialism allows for a deeper engagement of imperialism that accounts for how new colonial relationships are maintained and are ahistorical. Colonialism under this framework becomes parasitic; it is an ever-evolving narrative that violates Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. With the "imperial weapon" (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 10) of language, as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o calls it, colonialism continuously imposes beliefs to maintain and wield power over colonial subjects. I will now discuss how I intend to use the concept of 'indigeneity' as a counter-hegemonic discourse within an anti-colonial framework.

INDIGENEITY AND THE QUESTION OF "LAND"

Anti-colonial theorists debate the concept of "Indigenous" identity relentlessly, some arguing that it negatively homogeneizes a group of people with distinct experiences under imperialism, while others argue it offers political resistance and collective agency to those threatened by neocolonialism (Adefarakan, 2011, p. 35). Temitope Adefarakan, in "Conceptualizing 'Indigenous' from *Anti-Colonial and Black-Feminist Perspectives: Living and Imagining Indigeneity Differently"* argues that the word "Indigenous" does not deny the various and distinct experiences that groups are subjected to under colonialism, instead, it recognizes different positionalities that are all impacted (albeit in different ways) by it (Adefarakan, p. 35). I agree with Adefarkan's argument as it strengthens resistance to imperial and colonial discourse by recognizing how colonialism traverses and extends its power to subject many groups of people in distinct ways. Canadian residential schooling and Christian missionary education are both forms of colonial and imperial control but with very different histories. I hope to engage with these differences in this chapter while recognizing that colonialism is the root of their conditions.

Indigenous peoples are racialized in the colonial nation-state to ensure the ascendency of White people as the rightful occupiers of land. In "national mythologies" of these societies, White people are believed to be the first occupiers who developed the land while Aboriginals are presumed to be either assimilated or dead (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 12). This "national mythology" is viewed as a historical fact that is replicated in the knowledge many of our Canadian history textbooks offer. According to Jadie McDonell (2012), "site[s] of knowledge are imbued in land, history and spirit, knowledge is a continual and accumulative process, gathered throughout experiences and interactions with one's environment, land community and self" (p. 32). While Indigenous languages and knowledge systems offer an alternative to the colonial education system*,* decolonization cannot occur as an "accumulative process." According to Tuck and Yang, the "historical facts" must be rewritten and must discuss the repatriation of land in order to make

decolonization more than just "an empty signifier" or metaphor (p. 8). It is not enough to understand that our history textbooks offer a "national mythology," one must offer a new historical narrative that offers a space for Indigenous voices. Non-Aboriginal Canadians must begin to ask themselves whose land they live on and why this matters (Nock & Brown, 2006, p. 4).

The language of the Canadian national anthem is another example of a "national mytholog[y]" in which claims to land through repatriation are ignored and Indigeneity as understood by the colonial nation-state involves no discussion of Indigenous connection to the land. "*Our* home and *Native* land" implies that the land belongs to all of us; it ignores exposing the reality that "our home" is "native land" that has been stolen and divided. The national anthem allows for the disillusioned belief that native land was land for the White settler to develop through civilization in order to make the land "our home." Aboriginals and their connection to this land, their epistemologies and spiritual cosmologies are displaced once settler claims to land as property that "destroy or assimilate the Native" threaten to "disappear them from the land." The language of the national anthem perpetuates the idea that Native land is "our" resource; any Indigenous bodies associated to the land become just a "resource" that must assimilate or disappear from "our home."

While Indigeneity is centered around questions of land, one must, as Adefarakan contends, address how Indigenous relationships to land are different from that of the White settler: "it is necessary to acknowledge that Indigenous identity is not singular, it is necessary to recognize that Indigenous peoples' relationship(s) to their ancestral land or territory is also not singular" (Adefarakan, 2011, p. 39). Thus, Indigeneity cannot be singularly predicated on residence within ancestral lands, Indigeneity must also account for the notions of belonging and connection to land as variant. In the case of diasporic Africans who have been "physically and forcibly scattered" and "displaced" from ancestral land, their Indigeneity must include recognition of how colonialism is mobilized *beyond* ancestral land residence (Adefarakan, 2011, p. 39).

COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

I conceptualize the concepts of "colonialism" and "imperialism" as mutually constitutive processes that enable Eurocentric worldviews to hold power and privilege over other ways of knowing. Colonialism is more than a "structured relationship of domination and subordination" (Barrerra, 1979, p. 193) that establishes and maintains hierarchies that legitimize the interests of the dominant group (Biermann, p. 388). Scholars have assessed the impacts of colonialism through a pessimistic lens that assesses the divide between "indigenous" and "dominant". However, instead of allowing for resistance, this mode of intellectual engagement reinforces the idea that Indigenous peoples cannot defeat the legacies of colonialism. While colonialism is certainly a "structured relationship of domination and subordination," *resistance* is also in a relationship with colonial "domination" and "subordination" discourse.

This resistance can be found in the ways Indigenous spirituality and knowledges are preserved despite colonial legacies. Proverbs provide a meaningful example:

In McDonell's research, Indigenous ethnic groups in Ghana (the Akan, the chala, the gonja, etc.), despite having been "caught in the reverberations of colonialism" and being "greatly impacted by neo-colonial ideologies in schooling and development" (McDonell, 2012, p. 4) have preserved their Indigenous spirituality through a "common use of local and indigenous languages" (McDonell, 2012, p. 4). Proverbs link Indigenous knowledge, language, and spirituality across African ethnic groups. Proverbs are "local indigenous knowledges […] that speak to all aspects of African life and provide a glimpse into the world of African people" (McDonell, 2012, p. 3). Thus, Indigenous spiritually, language, knowledge, and culture are preserved through proverbs.

Colonialism must also be understood as ever-present. David A. Nock and Celia Haig-Brown in their book *With Good Intentions* (2006), argue that colonialism continues to encounter Indigenous lives through the "imposition of Western authority over all aspects of indigenous knowledges, languages and cultures" (p. 7) We are certainly not living in a "postcolonial" society for "too little has changed for us to claim that Canada is now in postcolonial times" (Nock & Haig-Brown, 2006, p. 7). In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon (1967) asserts that the true *problem* of colonialism is "not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions, but also human attitudes towards those conditions" (p. 84). Colonialism is a "historical condition" with a violent past involving the usurpation of Indigenous land and bodies. However, colonialism is also an "attitude" towards these conditions, which within the realm of academia regulates Indigenous bodies within a Eurocentric frame (Biermann, p. 390).

Academia adopts the attitude that creates and regulates colonial ideology as it sustains unequal power relations while supporting institutions that further the colonial agenda. This is why students of different cultures are told to only speak English within the walls of the institution and are ridiculed for maintaining their native tongues and accents. This is also why pseudo-scientific justification exists that suggests certain bodies are racially inferior and less capable of becoming assets to the colonial elitedom of the University (Dei, 2011, p. 39). Indigenous research conducted by Indigenous scholars has challenged these assumptions. Coburn et al. (2013) explain in their article: *"Unspeakable Things: Indigenous Research and Social Science,"* that Aboriginal peoples are undertaking their own research for their own communities in order to further the "explicitly political goals of decolonization and liberation" (p. 331). Instead of assimilating and accepting the discourse of the colonial academy, Indigenous scholars continue to make efforts to oppose colonization and liberate themselves. Indigenous research has also transitioned from being focused on Indigenous communities to a focus on the academy (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 331). Rather than being objects of research, Indigenous peoples have become authorities over their own ways of knowing (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 331).

The lasting effects of colonialism, however, continue to encounter Indigenous lives in negative ways despite efforts of resistance. Canada is not immune to these effects. The "historical conditions" of colonialism that subjugated and devalued Indigenous lives create long-term consequences that colonization inspires in more contemporary scenarios. Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Africans were forced to learn the "dominant" language and now continue to negotiate their culture through the language of the colonizer (Dei, 2001, p. 300). The rationale of this imperial coercion lies in a belief that Indigenous peoples could either be "civilized" into modern society or were "savages" who could not progress (Paisley & Reid, 2014, p. 33). In other words, if an Indigenous person refused to learn the dominant language and practice the imperial rationale at the expense of losing touch with their traditional culture, they are deemed "savages," who by the law, are treated as such.

The Canadian policing system is a contemporary example of how Indigenous bodies are disciplined through force that can be described as nothing less than savagery. Canadian law does not compensate for cultural loss suffered by Indigenous peoples. Further, it continues to allow the violation of the human rights of Indigenous Canadians through the neglect and undue force used against them by the police. The Native Women's Association of Canada documents several instances of police brutality and failures to protect Indigenous women threatened by the Canadian State (Dhillon, 2015, p. 32). An unnamed Metis youth worker and activist in Dhillon's research describes the injustice in detail: "I have seen the abuse from city police. I've seen the ego, the attitudes, the complete injustice […] It's all right to take some Aboriginal girl into a back alley and get a blowjob from her because what is she going to do? […] it's us against the system. The judges don't care. The cops are a big part of the problem" (Dhillon, 2015, p. 18).

Indigenous peoples become a direct threat to the existing settler social order by simply being present within it. Thus, methods of criminalization and policing are used to control the Indigenous population to produce and regulate the social order (Dhillon, 2015, p. 18) that seeks to 'invisibilize' and destroy those who undermine it. As a result, young Indigenous girls who experience sexual violence from police officers are offered no protection. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples are constantly captured by the police-state gaze. In Prairie courtrooms in Manitoba, for example, "Indigenous defendants now make up 85% of criminal caseloads" (Macdonald, 2016, p. 2). Indigenous bodies are over-policed and over-represented in institutions regulated by state control (Dhillon, 2015, p. 20).

The policing system is just one of the many examples of how Indigenous peoples are exposed to systemic inequalities in contemporary society based on the belief that their cultures are inferior to modern, civilized, imperial society. This "policing" of Indigenous culture is also prevalent in the schooling context, where Indigenous students are exposed to moral violence for speaking in their native tongues. For example, on February 2, 2012, a 12 year old girl from "Sacred Heart Catholic School" in Ottawa was suspended from playing in that night's basketball game for speaking in her native tongue during class (Anonymous, 2012, p. 1). The demoralizing effects

of colonialism that lead to the censorship of Indigenous languages, continue to be practiced after the abolishment of residential schools and are encrypted in the logic of the policing system.

The hegemonic belief that Canadian society is a multicultural society is a lie that results from imperialism. Canada is a multicultural society based on appearance and appearance alone. While the nation may be home to a diversity of races and cultures, histories of colonization that threatened to erase the languages and cultures of the colonized undermine the notions of equality that the Canadian nation is believed to represent. Canadian multiculturalism deceptively introduces the idea of equality without a reassessment of the existing White privilege. Furthermore, the lie of *meritocracy* denies White privilege and reaffirms the notion of multiculturalism. If a Black man cannot succeed, it is not because the White man had more privilege, it is because the Black man did not *work hard enough*.

The racialized "other" who does not interrogate the imperial lie of multiculturalism will believe that they have not worked hard enough –that they are inherently inferior, and do not hold the same capabilities of the White man. Thus, multiculturalism is an *imperial* lie because it, along with meritocracy, affords White knowledge more privilege; it is an insidious lie because it actively denies White privilege and asserts notions of equality simultaneously. When indigenous students are taught in a language that is not their own, they are taught to embrace a hegemonic culture through the hegemonic language. They are not taught that their culture is equal to that of the White man's culture. I will use George Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh's (2001) understanding of "imperial" as "political institutional structures that sustain the relations of domination" (Dei, 2001, p. 301) to assess how educational institutions teach the dominant narrative, which includes but is not limited to, multiculturalism and meritocracy in order to "sustain the relations of domination" by imposing a curriculum that Indigenous students are inequitably alienated by.

DECOLONIZATION

Understanding Indigeneity as being fluid and transformative plays a role in decolonizing language. In the diasporic contexts, Indigenous peoples actively reimagine and reinvent language to resist colonial imposition. Decolonization also means recognizing Eurocentricity and its role in devaluing Indigenous practices and actively resisting being subsumed by Eurocentric conditions. The African writer, through their use of both the English language and native language, exposes imperialism and colonialism for what violence it has accomplished, while reinterpreting the colonial encounter through the eyes of the Indigenous African.

CONCEPTUALIZING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND ALIENATION

Indigenous language alienation as imposed by the imperial education system is one of the main tenants of my argument. The purpose of this section is to unpack the role

of language and how it applies to culture, using Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* Wa Thiong'o argues that language is a carrier of culture and that imperialism is a "cultural bomb" when it threatens to annihilate a people's language (Wa Thinong'o, 1992, p. 3). He perhaps overemphasizes the connection between language and culture and there is a danger in not recognizing how culture is carried by means other than language. Culture is best communicated through a people's language, and language is therefore sacred to cultural beliefs. However, culture is also carried through art/music, which requires no written or verbal communication. The visual and auditory communication of culture is also sacred; unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this chapter to assess this more exclusively. I agree with Wa Thiong'o in emphasizing language as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. I will now discuss these dimensions in detail.

Elizabeth Adefarakan (2011) adopts Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's argument concerning the elements of language as both a means of communication and a carrier of culture in her research: *Yoruba Indigenous Knowledges in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and the Politics of Indigenous Spirituality* (p. 36). I will now borrow this framework to assess Wa Thiong'o's argument in the context of residential schooling and Christian missionary education systems.

LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION

According to Wa Thiong'o's language as communication has three elements:

1. The language of real life which seems to be the most basic communication needed to hold interactions in the labour market and in the household,
2. Communication through oral speech
3. The dissemination of oral language through the written word (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 13).

The 'language of real life' is universal and applies to humans' basic needs to communicate and cooperate in their daily lives; this language is essential to survival (p. 14). The imperial *English* language taught to Indigenous Canadians in residential schools did not afford Indigenous students the ability to communicate effectively. Similarly, present day mainstream schooling initiatives work to perpetuate and reinforce the superiority of the imperial language to Indigenous students.

Catherine Gordon and Jerry White in *Indigenous Educational Attainment in Canada* explore the necessary connection between the history of colonialism in residential schooling and the present educational attainment of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Gordon & White, 2014, p. 2). Residential schools deprived Indigenous students of an "economic base," separated them from their families, and forced them to learn a Westernized curriculum (Gordon & White, 2014, p. 3). Education is important for building an economic "base" and holding a sustainable life in the Canadian economy. Many Aboriginals lived in poverty as a result of poor educational

attainment (p. 121), and were then blamed for their impoverished conditions (recall *meritocracy*) and the systemic factors that forced them into these environments were largely ignored. How then, did an Aboriginal communicate their needs for better economic situations (which are fundamental to their survival) when their situations were perceived as being their own fault? Labour market relations (poor educational attainment leading to poor labour market possibilities) and familial relations (the child is taken from their family) were disturbed for Aboriginals and the basic need to communicate in order to survive was threatened by residential schools (Gordon, 2016, p. 122).

While residential schools are no longer a policy initiative, the current Canadian policy prevents Indigenous culture from being taught in the Western academy. This effectively continues the legacy of residential schooling that removed Indigenous students from their "inferior" cultures. While First Nations committees have addressed the policy deficits and in 2013 proposed a "Bill on First Nation education" that sought the right for First Nations to control and guarantee that First Nation children learn in a "safe, secure environment nurtured within their languages and cultures," these initiatives have not received adequate funding or support (Gordon & White, 2014, pp. 17–18). Aboriginal Canadians continue to learn in institutions that are not dedicated to immersing them in their cultures and enhancing their learning experiences by nurturing their ethnic identities. As a result of this cultural censorship, Indigenous students have a more difficult time engaging in Western curriculum and thereby are more likely to experience lower educational attainment than non-Indigenous students (Gordon & White, 2014, p. 10).

Identity, according to Michel Foucault (2006), is constituted by an "individual history" and "inevitably [is] a product of otherness" (p. 32). Residential schools are a part of Aboriginal "individual history[ies] that make up how Aboriginals perceive themselves in relation to their world. The effects of residential schooling become expansive in their mind-controlling capacity to dictate identity formation predicated on notions of "otherness." By participating in discussions about Indigenous perspectives, the "other" is given a genuine dialogue that destabilizes the radically unequal conditions of colonialism (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 336). In such a "strive to create, albeit in a delimited way, the conditions for a more or less equal dialogue" (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 339) with the oppressor, Indigenous research is necessary corrects the colonial histories that established their identity as "other" and "inferior." These discussions promote "equal dialogue" and prohibit the mind-controlling effects of history from creating and controlling Indigenous identity (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 340).

The second tenant of Wa Thiong'o's argument regarding language as communication, is focused on the importance of orality in communication. Indigenous culture is highly connected to oral traditions, the importance of the spoken word to indigenous identity must be emphasized (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 22). Before the introduction of Christian Missionaries in Africa, children were taught and learned through oral lessons (Makoni, 2007, p. 29). Imperial education stresses

the importance of the written word in communication. In Western cultures, what is spoken can be written down without sacrificing meaning, but in indigenous cultures, it is absurd to believe one can write what must be spoken and maintain meaning. Indigenous Africans, like Aboriginal Canadians in residential schools, were forced to create written versions of their own multiple dialectic languages (Makoni, 2007, p. 40). This meant standardizing these variances in dialects into one or two official languages; homogenization and a severed meaning is the result as these dialects all communicated different meanings (Makoni, 2007, p. 29). Language as communication and as a transmission of culture in the spoken word is divided from traditional meaning and devalued through Christian missionary education (and residential schooling), which teaches Indigenous peoples to write rather than to speak, and further, to write in *English.*

The third aspect of Wa Thiong'o's argument regarding, language as communication, is the translation of oral speech into written language. This is particularly important to my research as it pertains to a discussion of power relations. Language in the context of colonialism is bound with power (Adefarakan, 2011, p. 40). What constitutes as a legitimate language in the colonial school is a crucial question in anti-colonial theory because it interrogates the structure that hierarchically defines *whose* language holds the most influence.

LANGUAGE AS CULTURE

According to Wa Thiong'o, what makes a language cultural is: its role as a product of history; its role as an image-forming tool in a child's mind; and its transmission through spoken and written language (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 19). This means that language reflects a particular history and a child's world is created through the images that a language conjures, and that transmitting language is particular to the culture it represents. Children are susceptible –the images formed in a child's mind through language are likely to represent or disturb their realities. This means that an Indigenous child who is taught not to speak their native tongue in class will likely internalize inferiority to the corresponding hegemonic languages taught in schools (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 19). It also means that their histories are not reflected in the hegemonic languages they are taught (p. 19).

I contend however, that the imperial language can be used as a weapon against itself in its political capability of exposing the unconceivable truths of colonialism; Indigenous writers may write *to* their colonizers in the colonizer's language in order to *teach* and *rewrite* their histories. An indigenous language also can be transmitted into English and still retain some of its cultural roots through the use of proverbs and trickster stories, etc (Dei, 2016, p. 199). McDonnell, for example, suggests that the meaning of the Gonja proverb, "A stranger cannot tell the deepest part of a stream" is that anyone unfamiliar with Indigenous culture will encounter difficulty understanding Indigenous proverbs (McDonell, 2012, p. 39). In order for Indigenous histories to successfully inject the Western academy, Indigenous texts must retain

cultural roots while demanding anyone unfamiliar with the language interact with Indigenous cultures.

In order for respectful and meaningful interaction between these two cultures, Indigenous culture must be recognized as equal to Western culture. "Tradition" can no longer be understood as "primitive." This initiates what George Dei calls a discussion about the "distinction between traditional thought and modern scientific thought" as Western thought sought to discredit Indigenous knowledge in the pursuit of more "modern scientific" knowledge (Dei, 2002, p. 9). By maintaining this "traditional" thought and injecting the Western academy with it, one may begin to align tradition with progress, creating a space where both knowledges may co-exist (Dei 2002, p. 9)

In order for this co-existence to be made possible, however, Indigenous languages must be incorporated in the academy. Language is transmitted differently depending on the sounds and dialects it is spoken in. Indigenous languages hold sounds that will conjure images that are different to the images and sounds of the English language. While I do believe that decolonization is possible, I recognize that a great loss has occurred in Indigenous culture as a result of colonial schooling. Assessment of this loss will begin with discussion around Canadian residential schools.

The official aim of residential schooling was to "take the Indian out of the child". This resembles a cultural colonization where the stated goal is akin to annihilating Indigenous culture (Gordon, 2016, p. 122). In order to achieve this goal, residential institutions forcefully removed children from their homes, cut their hair, made them dress in European style clothing, subjected them to rape and other forms of violence, which all lead to poor health conditions and segregation from Canadian society (p. 122). To "take the Indian out of the child" meant to completely eradicate Indigenous identity and foster a European standard for creating a new identity. Successful assimilation, however, did not mean Indigenous peoples became equal to their colonizers as they were segregated from the rest of Canadian society and treated with violence while being threatened by poor health conditions that European students did not encounter.

Furthermore, these institutions taught a less advanced curriculum that focused more on increasing the efficacy of manual labour than on equipping Indigenous students with intellectual tools needed for higher educational attainment. Teachers were also poorly trained and students spent half of their day in school and the other half performing manual labour tasks (Gordon, 2016, p. 122). As a result, 60 per cent of students in many areas were diagnosed with tuberculosis and approximately 70 per cent of residential school students were sexually abused (Gordon, 2016, p. 122). Assimilation, it seems, would come at all costs; these Indigenous bodies were treated with disgust, and their education was to be purposefully inferior to that of White children in mainstream schools.

As a result of forceful assimilation, students suffered enormous physical and psychological trauma. Less than half of these children lived long enough to use the education they received (Gordon, 2016, p. 123). This cultural colonization

devastatingly took lives and violently imposed a curriculum that alienated children from their cultures.

Students were alienated from their cultures. They were "taught to be ashamed of their culture and to see themselves and their people as inferior and immoral" (Gordon, 2016, p. 122). One way to alienate students from their cultures is through the physical displacement I mentioned above (removing them from their homes). This physical displacement results in psychological alienation through the form of cultural loss. Due to a child's experiences of segregation from their families, they are forced to give up practicing and maintaining culture in the home. Coupled with the threat of violence, this alienation can lead to inferiority predicated on disposability. Children are taught that their lives do not matter to the Western Institution. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon contends that all colonized peoples share challenges stemming from an "inferiority complex." This "inferiority complex" is created by the "death and burial of local cultural originality" (Fanon, 1967, p. 18). When Indigenous students are taught to be ashamed of their culture, and are forcibly removed from crucial ties to maintain their culture (family connections, punishment for speaking native language) they are made to feel inferior.

Inferiority is a result of racist beliefs and attitudes tied to the colonial mentality, which were prevalent in residential schools. "Staff at residential schools often verbally denigrated traditional spiritual practices and rituals or made humiliating negative comments about the children in relation to their cultural and ethnic identity" (Barnes et al., 2006, p. 23). Having a positive ethnic identity results in increased individual performance abilities in academia: "Individuals with a positive ethnic identity show improved psychological and social functioning including higher self-esteem, stronger self-efficacy, higher school grades, and a greater sense of social competence (Berry, 1999, p. 25; Steinberg, 1999, p. 36) as well as improved resilience in the face of exposure to racially related stressful situations" (Fischer & Shaw, 1999, p. 36). Native language allows Indigenous children to maintain religious beliefs, transmit knowledge and participate in family ceremonies where knowledge is passed down generationally through the spoken word (Barnes et al., 2006, p. 19). The children who attended residential schools had little, if any, exposure to any other language than the language of their societies prior to enrolment (Barnes et al., 2006, p. 19). In order to maintain a positive ethnic identity, which in turn will improve psychological health and self-esteem, Indigenous children need to be able to communicate in their native language. Racism, and the feeling of inferiority may be combatted if an Indigenous child maintains a positive ethnic identity.

Colonialism shares a similar legacy in its mission to "civilize" "primitive" African societies through imperial education; native cultural ties are severed as the language of colonizer is elevated. Wa Thiong'o shares his personal experience with this curriculum in *Decolonizing the Mind:* "the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture" (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 11). English was made to be superior: "English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference" (p. 11). If English was not spoken in school,

students were punished. Punishment included but was not limited to, a cane to the bare buttocks, a fine students couldn't afford, or public humiliation where a student was forced to wear a sign that read, "I am stupid. I am a donkey," (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 13). It was the colonizer's belief that Africa had no civilization or culture (Fanon, 1967, p. 34); and that imperial education taught civilization and culture to Indigenous Africans. Indigenous African societies are culturally rich, family is central and knowledge is passed down through oral traditions. This is "civilization," that is *culturally* specific. Indeed every language that assumes a culture, as Fanon asserts, bears the "weight of civilization" (Fanon, 1967, pp. 17–18).

Not only does colonial education threaten to destroy Indigenous culture in the name of civilization, it threatens to turn Indigenous learners into mimics of the "colonial elitedom" (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 13; Dei, 2016, p. 191). The colonial education achieves administering this threat by denying the possibility for multiple ways of knowing – what George Dei coins as "epistmecide" (Dei, 2016, p. 190). Colonized bodies are taught that the only knowledge worth knowing is that of the White colonizer. To "sustain the relations of domination," (Dei, 2001, p. 301) was the imperial goal –to achieve this goal, knowledge must be *standardized* in a way that confirms the hierarchy which situates White colonial knowledge as superior to all other forms of knowledge. Colonized bodies that mimic colonial knowledge are nothing more than "imposters" to colonial rule (Dei, 2016, p. 191). A colonized body will never be given the privilege of the White man within the colonial education system; hence they are committing "epistemecide" by attempting to be mimics of the "colonial elitedom."

The consequences of "epistemecide" are also prevalent in Canada where Indigenous people who suffer from the loss of culture and language as a result of residential schooling have found little success finding sympathy within the legal system. Zeo Oxaal researches this phenomenon in *Removing that which was Indian from the Plaintiff: Tort Recovery for Loss of Culture and Language in Residential Schools Litigation*. Cultural loss can lead to a crisis of identity as illustrated by one survivor of residential school, "I lost my identity as a Native person. I live with a sense of not knowing who I am and how I should be in this world" (Oxaal, 2005, p. 368). While searching to find "identity," this survivor is unable to find a sense of who they are by accepting Western norms; residential schooling therefore, in this case, fails in its mission to homogenize identity through forceful assimilation. It is the "Native" identity that this survivor wishes they had not lost, and it is a loss that cannot be recovered by gaining a Western identity.

Despite the devastating cost of residential schooling (epistemicide) that leaves this survivor in a state of cultural nihilism, the Canadian government argues, "[residential school] conduct was acceptable within the standards of the time" (Oxaal, 2005, p. 391). What *time* is the government referring to? Many of these court cases arise in the "1960s," a post-War period that initiated better development of human rights laws (Oxaal, 2005, p. 392). The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks of "cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free

development of his personality," which asserts "the right of minorities to enjoy their own culture and use their own language" (Oxaal, 2005, p. 392).

By the 1960s, the effects of this residential schooling were largely apparent through cultural and language losses that prevented Indigenous Canadians from "knowing who [they were]" (Oxaal, 2005, p. 368) when these survivors were brought as plaintiffs to the courts. Canadian Law did not effectively pursue these cases despite its foundational belief in the "indispensability" of "human rights" and "dignity" important to "the free development" of one's "personality." In the 1960s, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlined the right for minorities to speak in their own languages. However, when I attended high school in the 21st century, teachers scolded children for speaking in any other language other than English. Clearly our laws do not speak to the actual occurrences of cultural and language loss for minorities, nor does it serve to protect or compensate for those who have experienced an identity crisis on account of such losses.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o explores the psychological effects that the imposition of a foreign language may have over a child's mind. The "colonial child" was exposed to a "world external" to themselves (Wa Thiong'o, 1992, p. 17). "He was being made to stand outside himself and look at himself" (p. 17). Thus, the world in which the colonial child stands in is a world that requires self-criticisms through the language of imposition. This means reading textbooks that state the inferiority of Blacks to Whites as stated facts (p. 17). The colonial languages taught the colonial child to be skeptical of herself and to accept her position of inferiority as scientific fact.

Language is important not only for colonial domination but for a colonized person's resistance to such domination. George Dei in *Education and Society: Canadian Perspectives* argues that "multi-epistemes" otherwise known as "*multiple ways of knowing",* are a crucial component for institutions of learning to include in their curriculums (Dei, 2016, p. 192). One must teach a diversity of knowledge in education; colonial imposition is effectively denied when a variety of racialized voices are taught as counter-epistemic narratives to the dominant imperial one. In the words of George Dei, "there is a particular politics of knowing that emerges from histories of colonization, genocide, and violence that sought to obliterate whole groups of their knowledge base and social existence. Such politics of knowing is about reclamation and resistance. It is for this reason that Indigenous knowledges are very much tied to decolonial projects" (Dei, 2016, p. 192).

Colonialism has imposed a standard knowledge on Indigenous bodies but it has not and can not take away one's indigeneity (Dei, 2016, p. 192). The politics of knowing that George Dei speaks of, involves understanding inferiority as systemic rather than scientific/biological. The lack of diversity in mandatory texts students must read results in exposing minorities to a belief in and internalize their own inferiority. When Indigenous authors begin to enter the academic space, multiple epistemes are developed and the "colonial child" is epistemically emancipated. George Dei also evokes an important discussion about cultural and *mental* genocide that results from violence that sought to obliterate "whole groups of their

knowledge" (p. 192). Knowing and understanding colonization as more than just physical violence and interpreting it as a form of mental and cultural violence helps with practices of reclamation and resistance.

Indigenous people engage in "multi-epistemes" (Dei, 2016, p. 191) in their everyday interactions. This phenomenon can be addressed using a study about the transformation of Indigenous vernaculars in urban Zimbabwe. In *The use of indigenous and urban vernaculars in Zimbabwe*, Sinfree Makoni et al. argue that the African languages that are codified and unified by the standard colonial regime do not succeed in ethnic language annihilation (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 26). Instead, Indigenous peoples create new urban vernaculars to express their shared social experiences. This study opposes the paradigm of African Indigenous language endangerment as this paradigm assumes African languages as "essentialist" and unchanging (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 26). The binary separating traditional African languages and developed colonial languages is too simplified an understanding. It ignores the emergence of creative adaptive language strategies used among the colonized in Zimbabwe (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 26).

The result of the adaptive language strategies witnessed in the above mentioned study are "urban vernaculars" which Makoni et al. define as "languages made up of discourse elements, lexical items and syntactic forms drawn from a number of different languages" (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 34). The use of these vernaculars oppose colonial linguistic standards as the words spoken do not adhere to written standards and in fact challenge them (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 34). Furthermore, the English language does not supersede over Indigenous meaning: the meaning of English words in urban vernacular often radically differ from their meaning in Standard English (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 37). This represents a developed linguistic model that is fluid, dynamic, and resistant. Language functions in malleable ways; it adapts to changing social environments (urbanized/colonized). If language is seen as fluid and adaptive, then it can be argued that the importance one gives to a language is the meaning it imparts. One woman in this study, who remains anonymous by the author for confidentiality purposes, disclaims the use of English and instead uses proverbs to educate her children. She cites the proverb *kurumba handikusvika* when cautioning her children about the dangers of being in a hurry (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 42). Meaning cannot simply be translated into English and the use of proverbial language addresses this woman's need to express meaning that English cannot define (Makoni et al., 2007, p. 33).

Elizabeth Temitope Adefarakan's *Yoruba Indigenous Knowledges in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power and the Politics of Indigenous Spirituality* discusses the diasporic Yoruba identity in the context of a globalised Canada. She defines globalization as a "hegemonic process imbued with political, economic, social and religious inequalities that induce the continued movement of people across multiple spaces, and national borders […]" as a result of these shifts, she argues, "it becomes futile to evoke hegemonically fixed or static notions of *any form of identity* or people" (Adefarakan, 2011, p. 83). Thus, in a globalized, diasporic context, where

Indigenous peoples are "forcibly scattered" and "displaced out of their ancestral lands," it becomes *crucial* to not define Indigeneity as static (Adefarakan, p. 84). Indeed, by doing so, one gives credit to the binary power of dominant vs Indigenous, colonizer vs. colonized. Adaptation is an agential concept that figures changing relationships to languages as politically necessary. This does not mean oppression does not configure identity as Indigenous Canadians experience daily oppressions in horrendous abundance. A claim that Indigenous identity is multivariate is a claim towards recognition of more diverse experiences of colonialism and imperialism (Adefarakn, 20011, p. 95) and oppression may better be interrogated through a critique that understands Indigenous identity as variant and multiple.

Literature holds the potential for Indigenous writers to occupy a political space and cope with, and review their personal relationships with colonialism and imperialism. In Karl Marx's *Literature and Art*, he argues, "the novel form is essentially critical and oppositional. It is a form of resistance" (Marx, 1947, p. 10). He analyzes the novel as a necessary tool for critiquing bourgeois society, and I argue, that it is also a necessary tool for critiquing colonial and imperial society. In Goldman's *Towards A Sociology of the Novel*, she argues that the novel is both a "biography and a social chronicle" (Goldman, 1975, p. 3) that "reflects to a greater or lesser degree the society of the period." Elements of "content" reflect the "existence of a social reality" (Goldman, 1975, p. 5). The content of the novel may reflect society, while *at the same time,* the novel may be used as a tool to critically assess, oppose, and resist dominant societal narratives. The African writer actively uses their "biography" (or personal experiences) and history to create a "social chronicle" that both reflects dominant society while rejecting its imperial notions.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* critiques colonialism by adopting an oral narrative form using story telling and proverbs as he rewrites the colonial encounter with the focus on a disrupted pre-colonial Igbo society. The "District Commissioner"- the White colonial settler threatens a truly democratic and stable society. The Commissioner imposes a State and Religion, as well as a judicial system, complete with a prison. He imprisons those who do not follow his religion, and writes a book about the primitive state of Africa before it was colonized. This is emblematic of history being written by the White man. Chinua Achebe is an Igbo man who lived in precolonial African society (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 35). He was educated in a University in London where he read books about Africa that did not comply with what he had witnessed (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 34). One such narrative that Achebe detests for its misrepresentation of Africa is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Achebe's criticism of the novel in his article *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness* argues that Conrad displays Africa as dark and primitive, bearing no "civilization" (Achebe, 1977, p. 255). *Things Fall Apart* became a narrative he used to correct the misrepresentative demonstrations of Africa in European literature (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 36). *Things Fall Apart* is a politically necessary novel that purports the Indigenous writer as an active writer of history. This counter-narrative exposes hidden truths about the violence of colonialism and its silencing tool of imperialism

which sought to control whose histories are written and whose voices are silenced by such histories. Chinua Acehebe is known as the father of African literature and he holds among many others, a legacy of interrogating colonial imposition and reclaiming cultural histories, particularly the histories of the Igbo peoples. Chinua Achebe was born in what is now called "Nigeria" and was a member of the Igbo tribe before he migrated to London for University (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 42). His novels aim at recapturing the "civilization" of Igbo society before the colonial encounter. His use of proverbs in his literature are key for conveying meaning beyond what the English language or English reader is able to comprehend; they are essential agents in language decolonization and colonial resistance.

PROVERBS

Proverbs are employed in *Things Fall Apart.* "Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe, 1994, p. 7). In the literal sense, Palm oil is an essential cooking tool in Igbo society that is used in most recipes. Palm oil helps one swallow and digest food. In saying, Proverbs, are the "palm oil" of *wisdom* it indicates that one should allow for words to better be digested and wisdom/knowledge to be understood. It also suggests that the easiest way to digest such wisdom is through the proverb (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 66). Proverbs are essential to African Indigenous ways of knowing (Ohaeto, 1997, p. 45). As such, their very presence in literature makes it decolonial. An English reader would not be able to simply comprehend the meaning behind these words without seeking further knowledge about the Indigenous African cultures in which they apply. I had to understand the use of palm oil in Igbo culture in order to comprehend the meaning of this particular proverb, for example. Learning about another culture that is different from my imperial rooted culture meant exploring a counter-epistemological narrative and an active interrogation of my own cultural standards. These proverbs shed me of some of my ignorance.

Another Igbo proverb that George Dei applies in his essay, *Indigenous Philosphiess, Counter-Epistemologies, and Anti-Colonial Education* eloquently sums up this discussion. "A step taken marks the end of a long journey" (*Out nxo ukwu biri ogologo njem).* This proverb is about setting goals and reaching those goals through small, calculated steps. A task cannot be completed without determination and hard work. Small steps will acquire great successes (Dei, 2016, p. 196). Decolonization through African literature and language fluidity are small steps towards a greater goal of equality. One must remain critical of dominant narratives and engage in anti-colonial philosophies of interrogation in order to actively resist dominant narratives of oppression. Canadian multiculturalism should lie under this critique, as should the Canadian belief in meritocracy. Post-colonialism too quickly assumes the end of colonization. The goal of this chapter is to spark further discussion through the interrogation and critique of colonization and imperialism in an active and opposing way. I hope that one day I will honestly

be able to say that we live in a post-colonial society, where Indigenous peoples and anyone who uses a language that is not French or English may speak freely and openly in their own tongues. I will not make the mistake of taking a giant leap of faith instead of calculating the small steps towards achieving this goal. This chapter has critiqued colonization with an emphasis on its effects over *language* while applying anti-colonial theories to both Indigenous African and Indigenous Canadian contexts. My hope is that I have convinced my reader that colonialism is not only an "African" problem, but also a Canadian one.

REFERENCES

Achebe, C. (1977). An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness. Massachusetts Review*. Retrieved from *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Casebook* (pp. 250–267). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Acehebe, C. (1994). *Things fall apart* (pp. 1–200)*.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Adefarakan, E. T. (2011). *Yoruba indigenous knowledges in the African diaspora: Knowledge, power, and the politics of indigenous spirituality* (A thesis)*.* Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. University of Toronto, Toronto.

Adefarakan, E. T. (2011). (Re)Conceptualizing 'Indigenous' from anti-colonial and Black feminist theoretical perspectives: Living and imagining indigeneity differently. In G. J. S. Dei (Ed.), *Indigenous philosophies and ciritucal education: A reader* (pp. 34–52). Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing.

Arnove, A. (1993). Pierre Bourdieu, the sociology of intellectuals, and the language of African literature. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, *26*(3), 278–296. Retrieved from http://doi.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.2307/1345837

Barnes, R., & Josefowitz, N. (2006). Residential schools: Impact on aboriginal students' academic and cognitive development. *Sage Publications, 21*(1), 18–32.

Coburn, E., Moreton-Robinson, A., Dei, G. S., & Stewart-Harawire, M. (2013). Unspeakable things: Indigenous research and social science. *La nouveau revue des sciences sociales*, 331–348.

Dei, G. J. S. (2011). Revisiting the question of the 'Indigenous'. In G. J. S. Dei (Ed.), *Indigenous philosophies and critical education: A reader* (pp. 20–52)*.* Switerzerland: Peter Lang Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S. (2016). Indigenous philosophies, counter-epistemologies, and anti colonial education: The case of indigenous proverbs and cultural studies. In W. Lehmann (Ed.), *Education and society: Canadian perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dei, G. J. S., & Asgharzadeh, A. (2001). The power of social theory: Towards and anti-colonial discursive framework. *Journal of Educational Thought, 35*(3), 297–323.

Dei, G. J. S., Hall, B. L., Rosenberg, D. G. (2000). *University of Toronto Press Incorporated* (pp. 1–277)*.* Toronto, Canada.

Dhillon, J. K. (2015). Indigenous girls and the violence of settler colonial policing. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 4*(2), 1–31.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skins, White masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans., pp. 1–223). New York, NY: Grove Press.

Foucault, M. (2006). *Materialism and education* (M. Olssen, Trans., pp. 1–253). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Goldman, L. (1975). *Towards a sociology of the novel* (pp. 1–180). Great Britain, London: Tavistock Publications Limited.

Gordon, C., & White, J. (2016). An overview of indigenous educational attainment in Canada. In W. Lehmann (Ed.), *Education and society: Canadian perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kempf, A. (2009). *Breaching the colonial contract: Anti-Colonialism in the US and Canada* (pp. 1–39)*.* New York, NY: Springer & Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. University of Toronto, Canada.

Makoni, S., Brutt-Griffler, J., & Mashiri, P. (2007). The use of indigenous and urban vernaculars in Zimbabwe. *Language in Society*, *36*(1), 25–49.

Marx, K. (1947). *Literature and art* (pp. 1–155). New York, NY: International Publishers.

Max, K. (2005). Anti-colonial research: Working as an ally with aboriginal peoples. In G. J. S. Dei & G. S. Johal (Ed.), *Anti-racist research methodologies* (pp. 80–93). Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing.

Mertz, E. (1988). The uses of history: Language, ideoloy and the law in the United States and South Africa. *Law and Society Review,* 1–27.

Mcdonnell, J. (2012). *Re-theorizing the integral link between culture and development: Exploring Ghanian proverbs as theoretical and practical knowledges for development* (A Thesis). Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada.

Nock, D., & Celia Haig-Brown, A. (2006). *With good intentions: Euro-Canadian and aboriginal relations in colonial Canada*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.

Obi, J. E. (1986). Sociology of African literature. *International Social Science Review*, *61*(2), 65–75. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/41881696

Ohaeto, E. (1997). *Chinua Achebe: A biography*. Bloomington, IN: Oxford University Press.

Oxaal, Z. (2005). *Removing that which was Indian from the plaintiff: Tort recovery for loss of culture and language in residential schools litigation* (pp. 367–402). Saskatchewan, Ontario: Saskatchewan Law Review.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Toronto, ON: Random House of Canada Inc.

Tischler, N. M. (1968). The Negro in modern southern fiction: Stereotype to archetype. *African American Review* (St. Louis University), *2*(1), 3–10.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1–39.

Wa Thiong'o, N. (1992). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers.

QWYN MACLACHLAN

4. ARE WE DOING ANTI-RACISM?

A Critical Look at the Ontario Ministry of Education's Anti-Racism Policy and Social Studies Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the new Ontario Social Studies, History and Geography (SSHG) curriculum document, released to considerable praise in 2013. MacLachlan undertakes a textual analysis of the document through an anti-racism lens. The lack of an anti-racism framework at the Ontario Ministry of Education level will be explored through the analysis of its anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards (AREESB) Guidelines, as well as its revised Equity and Inclusivity Education in Ontario Schools (EIEOS). There will be an investigation into the compliance of the SSHG curriculum in relation to the EIEOS document, suggesting the re-vamped policy does not accurately address racism within an educational context. The aim is to expose the SSHG curriculum as a document that excludes the voices of those who continue to experience discrimination, particularly as it pertains to racialized bodies. The assertion is that the new EIEOS neglect its anti-racist origins. While all three documents attempt to inspire teachers to create "equitable" classrooms, the language throughout reinforces the dominant narrative; the EIEOS document only moves further away from addressing and working within an anti-racist framework.

Keywords: Ontario, Social Studies, History, Geography, curriculum, ethnocultural, equity, school boards, anti-racism

> *The social studies, history, geography, and Canadian and world studies programs will enable students to become responsible, active citizens within the diverse communities to which they belong. As well as becoming critically thoughtful and informed citizens who value an inclusive society, students will have the skills they need to solve problems and communicate ideas and decisions about significant developments, events, and issues.* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 6)

INTRODUCTION

Ontario's new Social Studies, History and Geography (SSHG) curriculum document was released in 2013, to be implemented the following school year. It was thought

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 57–68.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

to be a progressive approach to the Social Studies curriculum content, mainly in its two strands: Heritage and Identity, and People and Environments. The two policies developed that would have likely had the greatest impact on the content of the SSHG are the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards (AREESB) Guidelines, created by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1993), and the revised Equity and Inclusivity Education in Ontario Schools (EIEOS) Guidelines (2014) developed by the Ministry to replace it over two decades later (a shorter Equity *Strategy* was released in 2009, but the full guideline document was not released until 2014). The AREESB (1993) was written to address the policies, procedures and practices within the school system that it states, "are racist in their impact, if not their intent," (p. 5). It clearly acknowledged that, "Ontario's school system has been and continues to be mainly European in perspective," (p. 5) and demonstrated intent and dedication to change. The EIEOS (2014) acknowledges the continued pervasive nature of racial prejudice and states, "educators, administrators, and school staff must maintain their focus on racism and disability to address these issues," (p. 12). However, it also acknowledges the intersections within which many students are located, and shifts focus to the grounds of discrimination as a whole outlined in the human rights code.

A textual analysis of these documents will explore the lack of antiracism framework present in both the structure of the new SSHG Curriculum document and its curriculum expectations. I am concerned with exposing the SSHG Curriculum document as one, which excludes the voices of those who continue to experience discrimination, particularly as it pertains to racialized bodies in today's society. I assert that the EIEOS abnegates its antiracist origins in its attempt to address multiple discriminatory factors at once. While all three documents attempt to inspire teachers to create "equitable" classrooms, the language throughout reinforces the dominant structural narrative.

Many educators were excited about the new SSHG Curriculum document, believing it would more accurately reflect the "diverse" needs of their students. As a teacher candidate in 2013, I was told by an course instructor, that this document was a welcomed upgrade from the "outdated" 2004 edition. One of the main additions was the inclusion of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Histories from Kindergarten through to Grade Eight. As Social Studies is the Elementary equivalent of History and Geography, it was surprising that this was not already the case. The same instructor asked the class to write Social Studies units for our upcoming practicums. That semester I had a Grade Five class, and the following semester I had Grade Two. While it was not yet mandatory to use the revised version, I was eager to see what additions within the SSHG Curriculum I would be working with.

As a young girl, I was both painfully aware and incredibly oblivious of my own Blackness and its implications in the larger societal context. I struggled to understand why there *must* be a distinction between "acting" Black and visibly being Black. My visibility in majority White public alternative schools was strictly optical, as was my existence in Black social contexts. As a first generation Canadian I questioned,

the many places my ancestors have lived, been born and raised, which if any could I claim Indigeneity to? Where is my place on First Nations soil?

I was interested to see if there were moments within the document that acknowledged the presence and experiences of Blackness in Canada. As a student, I did not learn about the existence of Black settlements in Canada until I was well into High School. Even then, it was only once a Black teacher came to the school (she was only there a year) that any educator of mine was willing and prepared to provide any substantial information about the Black Canadian experience. The absence of Black representation in my schools, and the subject matter being taught, made me question my Canadianness, irrespective of my Canadian identity. The lack of visibility in the education system with regards to both teachers and lessons, effectively led me to understand Blackness as not belonging to Canada in the way Whiteness did. I was even further removed from an understanding of my place in a colonial system that continues to deny its violent history with Canada's First Nations Peoples. As I wrote the Grades Two and Five Social Studies units, nothing stood out to me as particularly "new" information. However, I did note that both Grades' curriculum expectations for the units I was to plan; People Of The World, and Government Structures, did not call for teaching aspects of antiracism in any sense.

THE POLICY

The Ontario Ministry of Education created the AREESB Guidelines in 1993. This was in response to an amendment made to the Education Act in 1992, which called for antiracism policies in all School Boards across Ontario. The EIEOS Guidelines developed in 2014 (revised from the 2009 document entitled Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy) were created to replace the 1993 document. These policies are crucial not only with regards to development and implementation throughout School Boards, but also within the Ontario Ministry of Education itself. The key difference between both documents is the focus on antiracism. The mandate for the AREESB states, "this policy document is intended to assist schools and school boards in ensuring that the principles of antiracism and ethnocultural equity are observed everywhere in Ontario's school system," (1993, p. 3). Though the renewed goals of the EIEOS state, "These guidelines are designed to help Ontario school boards review and/or continue to develop, implement, and monitor equity and inclusive education policies that support student achievement and well-being," (2014, p. 8) the focus has shifted to all prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Beyond an initial look at both documents' mission statements, it is clear that the EIEOS is missing the critical approach to institutionalized racism that existed in the AREESB. This is partially because the documents serve different purposes. The AREESB was meant to bring racist attitudes and policies to the attention of the education community. Antiracism as a cause had yet to be addressed in this particular proactive manor. The document sought to aid teachers in equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live in an increasingly diverse

world, appreciate diversity, and reject discriminatory behaviours and attitudes as they pertain to racism (1993, p. 5). On the other hand, the EIEOS states, "Several boards have expanded these antiracism and ethnocultural policies into more inclusive equity policies that address a broader range of discriminatory factors," (2014, p. 61). I find it hard to believe anyone could argue racism has been eradicated. However, what the EIEOS implies is that a policy specifically addressing systemic racism is no longer necessary. This line of reasoning inadvertently dilutes the urgency for continued antiracist practice, but not because of its assertion that other oppressions are also valid. The intersections of oppression are integral to the work of the antiracist educator. The shortfalls of the EIEOS go beyond intersections. The document includes a resource entitled *Racism Hurts* developed by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario and the Human Rights Commission. The poster used to advertise this resource is the story of a young girl whose "brown" skin drew "unwanted attention." The poster reads:

> Parveen was proud of her name and worked hard to fit in with her classmates. She was happy with herself just the way she was, but her name and brown skin drew unwanted attention. This made her unhappy. Sometimes she cried.
> Did her name or the colour of her skin make her different? Would changing her name help? She soon realized that even if she did change her name, she would never be able to change her brown skin. (2014, 78)

The assumptions one is led to make are multiple. Most notable, is that the reader is led to believe that if Pavreen could change the colour of her skin, she would. It also assumes those who are giving her "unwanted attention" do not have brown skin. These assumptions, whether or not intentional, reinforce Whiteness as a dominant presence worthy of striving for. It targets Whiteness as the aggressor without further problematizing its power and privilege. The inclusion of this resource gives the impression that the Ontario Ministry of Education acknowledges the racism enacted in educational institutions. However, I question whether policy makers are aware that our current system is filled with documents as this example shows, which specifically pander to a White audience, perpetuating the systemic racism inherent in educational institutions.

The EIEOS uses the statement, "we've come a long way" in its introduction, as if to imply that there is less work to be done in the field of antiracism. Statements like these perpetuate the narrative of the post-racial world. They suggest that documents like the AREESB have brought about such "significant" change with regards to antiracism specifically, that they are no longer necessary. If examples like Pavreen are any indication, this is absolutely not the case. The AREESB states:

> Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity policies go beyond a broad focus on multiculturalism and race relations… inequities in the treatment of members of some cultures and races that have occurred as a result of inequities of power and privilege have often tended to be ignored. (1993, p. 7)

This language acknowledges the silencing of racialized bodies in dominant settings. The acknowledgement of power and privilege as it pertains to antiracism education is crucial. It has, however, become very clear that, despite an open acknowledgement of structures of power and privilege affecting racial hierarchies, Whiteness does not like to acknowledge its own dominance. While the AREESB mentions White-Eurocentric curriculum, there is no acknowledgement of a power structure benefitting Whiteness in either the EIEOS or the SSHG Curriculum.

One of my biggest concerns with the policy guidelines continues to be that the Ontario Ministry of Education did not create a fully enforceable policy for schools, but a strategic policy framework for School Boards. Each School Board within Ontario operating under the Education Act must *create* a policy based on the guidelines that each individual School Board must monitor and enforce. A shift in language introduces the EIEOS in 2014, with surprisingly little change in the way of developing practical solutions to racist practices to be implemented in educational institutions. Enforcement is still the responsibility of the individual School Boards. This leads to a lack of accountability on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Education when it comes to utilizing an antiracist framework in the development of curriculum documents mandated for Ontario. As George Dei (2014) notes, "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" (p. 17). The absence of a policy holding the Ministry of Education accountable exemplifies this statement, as the AREESB and the EIEOS both call for changes from teachers and principals.

Developing guidelines and *mandating* a policy instead of *creating an enforceable* policy presents us with multiple issues and consequences. First, it removes responsibility from the policy creators. It ensures there is something to point to if a complaint arises. This takes away from the School Boards responsibility and dedication to antiracism. Second, it removes necessity from policy creators to implement the policy in their own documents, as is evidenced by the SSHG curriculum document. The AREESB states a commitment to antiracism curriculum. The EIEOS (2014) shifts the focus from antiracism and ethnoculturalism to equity and inclusivity. It states, "While racism continues to be a major focus, the strategy recognizes that Ontario's publicly funded schools must increase their efforts to develop an approach that will respond to the full range of needs within the education community," (p. 13). The language of equity is embedded in the EIEOS document, but it is approached as if a focus on racism causes the continued oppression of others. Without penalties in place for improper implementation or failure to implement, antiracism policies can go undeveloped and unutilized.

The justification continues to be the importance of all equity and diversity over the maintenance of one policy specifically dedicated to antiracism. After a brief look, it would seem not all Ontario School Boards appear to have online access to their antiracism policies. I assert that creating guidelines instead of a policy gives School Boards the opportunity to "deal with racism" however they see fit. It also

means School Boards that do not reflect the "diversity" referred to by the Ministry of Education can act as if they do not have a problem because they do not see/encounter it on a daily basis. There do not appear to be any penalties for failing to include specifically antiracist framework in an equity policy. Removing specifically antiracist language and framework through the overhaul of the AREESB, while using the discourse of equity and inclusion when referring to diversity, did little to move antiracism forward. If anything, it had the opposite effect.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ANTIRACIST FRAMEWORK IN THE CLASSROOM

Our educational institutions have been created and maintained through colonial power. George Dei and Marie McDermott state, "colonial education, which has permeated our individual and collective consciences, as informed by Euro-Enlightenment paradigms, has classified and ordered our world by way of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ability," (Dei & McDermott, 2014, p. 3). Within an institutional capacity, Eurocentrism continues to dictate what students learn at both conscious and unconscious levels. Many of the books I owned as a child reflected the diversity of society, while the books I encountered at school continued to center Whiteness. Characters I could embody in the stories I read were nourishment to my imagination and creativity.

Jennifer Simpson (2003) notes, "marking whiteness can be part of the process of addressing and undoing racist practices in higher education" (p. 175). I believe the same to be true in an elementary context. The saliency of systemic privilege and disenfranchisement begins at birth. By the time students enter Kindergarten classrooms, their conceptions of difference have already been highly influenced by their social interactions. This is to say that we need to be developing instructional pedagogies that refrain from ignoring the experiences of racialized peoples, and gives opportunities to our youngest students already affected by systemic racism. The EIEOS attempts to address direct racism, but has trouble identifying indirect structural racist practices.

Antiracism policies are developed for numerous reasons. They do not necessarily arise from a sudden capacity for understanding the importance of antiracist work. Those in charge of creating and instituting the policies predominantly inhabit Whiteness. Antiracism work involves an acknowledgement of embodied experience, which is only possible when one is aware embodied experience exists. For a racialized body, the embodiment of racist experiences may be common sense, but for dominant White bodies, the experiences of racialized people as those of embodiment are not necessarily heard or validated. The stories of racism as experienced by racialized people can be construed as invalid by Whiteness.

Antiracism acknowledges colonization and challenges hegemonic power. It validates the experiences of colonized/racialized peoples. As Dei (2014) acknowledges, "for the colonized, anti-racism research can be a healing and regenerative process," (p. 21). As an antiracist educator, I have come to understand

my capacity for antiracist education through my research and practice, as well as the importance of naming Whiteness with regards to an antiracism framework. In our society, to consider race has often been to consider Blackness and marginality. Because of the ”unmarked” nature of the White body and the hyper visibility of the Black body, discussions of race have often focused on Blackness as the problem without considering Whiteness as both the problem and the problematizer. As Simpson (2003) states, "marking whiteness requires that teachers make visible patterns of behavior that are based on the assumption of white superiority," (p. 157). Here Simpson is referring to the post-secondary classroom. However, it is just as important to mark Whiteness in elementary settings. This is not to "target" White students, but to make *as* visible, the white body.

Dei (2000) writes that the concept of not "seeing race" can permeate the classroom, which, "masks and denies the existence of racism and provides an excuse for complacency or the outright dismantling of anti-racism programs and initiatives" (p. 26). He notes that antiracism work can only begin once individuals are made aware of their positions of power, privilege and disadvantage (p. 25). These are ideas we need to introduce to young children as early as they begin to recognize difference. Recognizing the racial balance of power does not "teach racism." Race is "taught" though social relationships and interactions from birth. Dei's understanding of racial experiences help to give racialized bodies a voice in settings where they often feel silenced, and to insist dominant bodies are aware of these voices and experiences. Though the EIEOS puts forth a concerted effort to challenge racist attitudes, behaviours and practices, it is not until the institutions creating these policies address the racism inherent in the system that we can bring about change.

THE CURRICULUM

The most recent version of the SSHG curriculum was released in 2013. The document is divided into multiple sections, which include, Introduction, The Program, Assessment and Evaluation, Considerations for Program Planning, and Curriculum Expectations for individual grades as well as Appendices and a Glossary. The vision statement of the SSHG Curriculum Document points to the goal of responsible active citizens in diverse communities valuing an inclusive society (see p. 1). Is this possible without an understanding of colonization, and its influence on the creation of the education system we know today? In other words, can antiracism be achieved in a system that does not acknowledge its contributions to racist practices?

The curriculum documents created by the Ontario Ministry of Education are visibly lacking in critical antiracist framework. Any teacher not familiar with antiracist education is no more equipped to inquire with their students about antiracism than they were prior to referencing the document. Without taking the time to name racism as a product of a colonial project that continues today, antiracism work is not being done. A look at the SSHG document demonstrates the absence of critical antiracism within mandated curriculum. As the SSHG document focuses on the diversity of

society and teaching students to appreciate and value the diverse communities they belong to, it should necessitate operation within an antiracist framework. Within the 216-paged document, the word race is used a total of three times. Racism is mentioned a total of four times- three times in the Grade 3 expectations, and once in the Grade 6, and all of them refer to racism as a historic practice. This updated document was re-written in 2013 to replace the 2004 curriculum document. Notable updates include imbedding Aboriginal history in all grades and providing less detailed content so students have more flexibility in developing the relevance of the content for their community.

Grades 3 and 6 are the groups in which racism is described *as* racism in the SSHG Curriculum document. There are mentions of discrimination in Grades 7 and 8, but they are generally used as a substitute for racism as exemplified by expressions such as, "*discrimination facing Black Loyalists*," (2013, p. 138). The language used thoroughly impacts the way the subject is taught by teachers and received by students. The language of discrimination in this context glues discriminatory behaviour to its historic reality and the history of colonialism that created the circumstances. The racism discussed largely surrounds the lived experiences of both Black and First Nations peoples and focuses on how they must have felt, or how they might have reacted to their experiences. An acknowledgement of the impact of colonization, or even the power the White settler continues to hold within society, is missing in its entirety.

In one of the unit strands in Grade 3, some of the suggested questions for students include, "What are some of the ways in which First Nations people and European settlers cooperated with each other?" and, "How did settlers in Nova Scotia view the arrival of Black Loyalists?" (p. 89). The first question implies a relatively amicable relationship maintained by both parties. There is no further mention of conflict between the two communities in Grade 3. The latter question dismisses the presence of First Peoples in Nova Scotia entirely. To question how White settlers viewed the arrival of Black former slaves who were promised provisions and land (and received neither) without situating the question in its context and completely ignoring the views of First Nations people is problematic at best. These types of questions do not help to bring race to the forefront. They serve to minimize racial/colonial experiences and emphasize biases.

Urrieta and Riedel's (2006) chapter on the teaching of pre-service teachers in Social Studies, though it relates to the US, speaks to another kind of problem we experience in Canada, the denial of a colonial past and present. In their study, Urrieta taught a course on diversity while Riedel observed and recorded behaviours of primarily White pre-service secondary Social Studies Teachers. They found many of the participants refused to critically engage with the content, and instead displayed feelings of avoidance, anger, and what they refer to as *convenient amnesia*. The SSHG curriculum exemplifies the resistance Urrieta experienced and Riedel witnessed from many of the educators in their study. The language used specifically relates to Whiteness as it participates in the education system. It describes diversity

from the perspective of Whiteness and uses examples that pertain to a dominant body coming into contact with a racialized one.

Racialized bodies are constantly coming into contact with systems of oppression that view them as "other." To say that *all* students need to develop an "understanding of the diversity within local, national, and global communities" (SSHG, 2013, p. 7) dismisses the relationship racialized students are already forced to have with their social environments in ways that have already begun to develop their understanding of "diversity." Everyday encounters with stereotyped images of racialized bodies on social media are examples of narratives racialized students come into contact with on a regular basis. The language of *all* students speaks to the idea of equality and not equity. A system that unfairly biases Whiteness needs to acknowledge the disparity between White and racialized peoples, and work to bring racialized students to the forefront; not instead of the dominant, but alongside them. Reflecting on their findings, Urrieta and Reidel (2006) write,

> To advance not only in the study of race and ethnicity in education, but most important, to expose and work toward dismantling White supremacy, all teacher education courses should make the critical examination of multicultural and social justice issues the foundation of the course, and not relegate these issues to one day on the syllabus (p. 297)

While this refers to the training of Social Studies teachers, it is crucial to the success of these teachers in their future classrooms. If we consider the intention of the SSHG Curriculum document and its dedication to people and cultures around the world, it becomes clear that antiracism must be at its center as an integral component of the document.

The importance of discomfort in conversations about race within public schools is multifaceted. The uncomfortable feeling disrupts teachers' and students' sense of self and world. Non-racialized teachers need to be made aware of realities they do not experience as it pertains to systemic racism. From an antiracist perspective, and with an acknowledgement that it is within a White system of oppression that the SSHG document was created, it is important for teachers to also reflect on their own power and privilege within society, and how it affects their teaching. This process as it relates to antiracism is not a comfortable one. It includes acknowledging existence in an oppressive education system that has yet to create policies and curriculum that actively address *all* students.

The absence of a specifically antiracist framework within the curriculum as it pertains to the world today deprives young people of useful tools to combat the supremacy of Whiteness they experience on a daily basis (with or without their knowledge). Referring to racism as "a thing of the past" delegitimizes the experiences of racialized bodies, and further intensifies the notion of a post-racial society. It continues to silence racialized bodies in the same way that tailoring the topics to student "interests" and "readiness," but not to their lived experiences does. The SSHG (2013) document further suggests teachers motivate students to

work through these themes with "the end in mind" (p. 36). This notion of "the end" as a reference to "finishing" the work of antiracism, equity, inclusivity, or social justice, is incredibly misleading and quite frankly, irresponsible. There is no end to an understanding of the social relationships and power structures within society. We will always be constructing our sense of self and world on the basis of social structures. To give students the impression that at the end of a "unit" they will have learned everything there is to learn about settlers in Ontario, or else that anything they did not learn is irrelevant, is a direct product of the colonial project at work within the school system.

Dei and McDermott (2014) mention that it is important for racialized bodies to tell their stories, and challenge those who wish to relegate our experiences to those of past transgressions toward us. The newest SSHG curriculum document perpetuates the idea that racism is *in the past*. If the curriculum document itself is perpetuating a post-racial ideology, it becomes that much harder to bring stories of oppression to the forefront. The systems of power that institutionalize racist practices continue to be in power. The AREESB document was essential in forcing these power structures to recognize their colonial roots, but the revision has moved us away from a specifically antiracist focus, which has had disadvantageous effects to the project of antiracism in education.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the SSHG curriculum document through an antiracism lens reveals the need for a more comprehensive antiracism-specific strategy. The EIEOS, while attempting to build on the AREESB, have inadvertently diminished the realities and experiences of racialized bodies within the education system by reducing antiracism-specific mandates. We should be looking to develop policies that seek to add to those already available. The revision of the AREESB Guidelines removes the urgency for antiracist reform within school boards. With regards to the SSHG curriculum document, the revision of the AREESB removes the necessity for antiracist-specific practice, and allows the language of diversity to dismiss racism as a past aggression and not a systemic form of institutionalized oppression. The additives to the document should not go unnoticed. To have been teaching any semblance of Canadian History without the presence of Canada's First Peoples is akin to re-performing the violent erasure of First Nations Peoples.

Within the documents discussed throughout this chapter, a missing link in the connection between policy and practice remains. The Ontario Ministry of Education is presented as an equitable institution by implementing a policy framework without instituting systemic reform, by writing the policy themselves. Combined with the shift in language from antiracism to equity, it leaves me questioning the dedication of the Ontario Ministry of Education to the eradication of systemic racism. There is no outright *denial* of race within these documents, but the EIEOS's acknowledgement that racism exists is no longer partnered with an acknowledgement that it was

enacted through colonial projects, or a framework for its eradication. Dei (2000) writes, "Rather than move beyond race, what we ought to move beyond is a 'denial of race as a social issue, in a society with a profoundly racist history and where institutional racism still exists'" (p. 30). The AREESB as a guiding framework for policy development was much closer to acknowledging the realities of racism both in our institutions and our society than the EIEOS.

The Ontario Ministry of Education should create a policy addressing oppression directly. A revision of the equity strategy should include specific entry points for various intersections of oppression. The structure necessary for antiracism education to inform the curriculum will not be the same structure that is required to address gender disparities. But of course, it is important to keep in mind that intersections are ever present within the colonial discourse. While the SSHG (2013) document states, "anti-discrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy" (p. 45), lumping the entire scope of diversity into one call to action does not serve the multiplicity of diverse communities we have in society. Creating more specific strategies for the vast differences within marginality will more directly serve the affected communities. It will serve to validate experiences on political levels and it will necessitate a conversation about those experiences on provincial scales.

Teachers should be vulnerable. It is impossible to do antiracism work without an understanding and feeling of discomfort. Part of this call to action is including positionality in teaching contexts. Teachers should bring their students to understand their own privileges and recognize all the intersections in the classroom. A teacher should be able to demonstrate this with their students as well. In a profession populated by predominantly White educators, influencing increasingly diverse students, it is important that racialized students know that their voices are valid in more ways than one. Not only as a student in that classroom, but as a racialized person in society.

There are of course limitations to textual analysis. Understanding the document's intended purpose and audience helps to deconstruct the content and language, but without taking into account all that informs it, it is hard to develop an understanding of its influencers. While the AREESB no longer govern antiracist policies within Ontario School Boards, they recognized racist policies and practices existing within the education system. The revision and release of the EIEOS has effectively removed specifically antiracist policy guidelines, pointing to a possible shift within the system to a belief in a post-racial society. Racialized bodies must continue to tell stories of their experiences in order to expose systemic practices of racism within institutions such as education. A system that is not doing antiracist work is inherently doing the opposite.

REFERENCES

Dei, G. J. S. (2000). Towards an anti-racism discursive framework. In G. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader* (pp. 23–39). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S. (2014). A prism of educational research and policy: Anti-racism and multiplex oppressions. In G. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (pp. 15–28). New York, NY: Springer.

Dei, G. J. S., & McDermott, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning*. New York, NY: Springer.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (1993). *Antiracism and ethnocultural equity in school boards: Guidelines for policy development and implementation.* Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/antiraci/antire.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). *Realizing the promise of diversity: Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013 revised). *The Ontario curriculum, social studies, grades 1–6; History and Geography, Grades 7–8.* Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014 revised). *Equity and inclusive education in schools: Guidelines for policy development and implementation*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Simpson, J. (2006). Racism is not a theory: Racism matters in the classroom. In *I have been waiting: Race and US higher education* (pp. 155–196). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Urietta, Jr., L., & Riedel, M. (2006). Avoidance, anger, and convenient amnesia: White supremacy, self-reflection in social studies teacher education. In W. Ross & V. Ooka Pang (Eds.), *Race, ethnicity, and education* (pp. 279–300)*.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.

RAAGINI APPADURAI

5. RE-CENTERING RACE IN THE CLASSROOM

Dominant Ideologies in Educational Spaces and Their Implications for Youth Identity Formation

ABSTRACT

Appadurai reviews how the colonial imposition of hegemonic ideologies within educational spaces and the dominant historical-social constructions of race they embody, can work to perpetuate the continued alienation of Blackness and/or colour. This estrangement comes to accord particular governance on the everyday lives of young racialized bodies, by which the processes of meaning-making and identity formation of non-White students is constituted through an epistemic violence. Appadurai posits that this leads to an absent presence of race in classrooms and other educational spaces, resulting in the silencing and disengagement of marginalized and racialized youth in these settings, working to further perpetuate systems of oppression and racism that exclude them. Arguing that race is a social construction, this chapter calls for an anti-racist/anti-colonial reading so as to center race and give voice to the lived experiences of young racialized and marginalized bodies. An anti-racist/anti-colonial reading would situate their voices centrally in discussions around inclusion and belonging in the classroom and other educational spaces.

Keywords: hegemonic, ideologies, race, epistemic violence, education, anti-racist, anti-colonial

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review how through colonization, the imposition of hegemonic ideologies within educational spaces and the dominant historical-social constructions of race they embody, work to perpetuate the continued alienation and oppression of racialized bodies within these spaces. This estrangement comes to accord particular governance on the everyday lives of young racialized bodies, by which the processes of meaning making and identity formation of non-White students comes to be constituted through an epistemic violence. I argue that this violent distancing leads to an absent presence of race in classrooms and other educational spaces. Thus resulting in the silencing and disengagement of marginalized and racialized youth in these settings, and in the further perpetuation of the systems of oppression and

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 69–82.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

racism that exclude them. Arguing that race is a social construction, this chapter calls for an anti-racist and anti-colonial reading so as to center *race*, and give voice to the lived experiences of young racialized and marginalized bodies. The aim is to situate their voices centrally in discussions around inclusion and belonging in the classroom and other educational settings.

I situate the issues, struggles, and understandings I present in this chapter in terms of the epistemological significance of my own race, biography and self-location. In broaching topics of difference, identity formation, and race pedagogy, I acknowledge that I am implicated both directly and indirectly in the context, narrative, and issues that I intend to analyze through the Principles of Anti-Racism Education (PARE). As a racialized woman, I am positioned both politically and personally within the topics I bring forth here. As an Indian; born and raised in the 'East', and then educated and grown up in the 'West', I now occupy narrative and understanding within a unique 'Third Space' between both worlds that I hold connections to. With this, I also recognize that my personal experience, without doubt, reflects the less pronounced role particular physical features, history, and ancestry play for my community as opposed to Black bodies, the group most considered in the elaboration of the racial theories that I engage with here, and in the educational spaces I occupy (Lopez, 1995, p. 193). Therefore, I acknowledge the level of privilege I hold in certain racial contexts. As an educator, mentor, and community leader to youth in various educational and community spaces in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the issues I engage with are closely situated and intricately connected, both in ideological foundation and materially-speaking, to the interactions, power relations, and personal experiences of and between my students that I have observed and experienced within the educational spaces that I occupy.

From this unique location and standpoint, I am often and increasingly confronted with the question of how I navigate experiences that complicate my understanding of the self as a multi-layered, ever-changing, differentiated being. These complication occur with competing expectations, desires, and ambitions across various contexts and settings. My own struggles with understanding my identity, race, gender, and other markers of difference that I embody, and similar struggles that I witness my students experiencing, have compelled me to actively seek out anti-racism education and the tools it might provide in order to help me navigate the complex processes of systemic racism, identity formation and power relations within educational spaces. As well, I seek out the convergence between anti-racism theory and anti-colonial praxis in order to understand the role I play in confronting and dealing with these issues as an educator and youth advocate. In this work, I am committed and dedicated to educational transformation, social justice, and youth empowerment through an anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, feminist framework.

The questions presented at the beginning of each section of this chapter reflect my endeavour to think through and engage with anti-racist and anti-colonial thought/education/praxis, and how it might be implemented into educational spaces.

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

> *Where do our understandings and conceptions of race come from? What are the historical and social contexts of these constructions? How do relations and dynamics of power, privilege, disadvantage and punishment based on these racial constructions manifest in educational spaces?*

In their analysis of the way in which the discourses of race have operated in the USA, and by extension, other White-dominant capitalist societies, Omi and Winant (1993) argue that race is not merely an 'add-on' or side element to our understanding of social dynamics, but rather it is truly constitutive of the majority of our taken-for-granted daily experiences. Race dominates our social lives, permeates our politics, determines our economic prospects, and mediates almost every aspect of our lives (Lopez, 1995, p. 192). It is present in every institution, every relationship, and every individual. This is the case not only for the way society is organized – spatially, culturally, in terms of stratification, etc. – but also for our perceptions and understandings of personal experience. Race becomes a 'common sense' way through which we comprehend, explain and act in the world. Thus, as we carry out the 'normal' observations and tasks of our everyday lives, we are compelled to think racially and to use the racial categories and systems of meaning in which we have been socialized and conditioned (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6).

Lopez (1995) defines race as "neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (p. 193). Similarly, Apple (1999) argues that race is not a stable or stagnant category. Rather, the parameters through which race is understood and racial identities are formed are constantly shifting; emphasizing the inconstant, fluid and plastic nature of race. How race is understood, who uses it, and the role it plays in educational policy and social discourse in general, is entirely historically and politically contingent. These socially constructed racial dynamics can operate in subtle and powerful ways, even when not intentionally or consciously done so by the actors involved (p. 10). Important to note is that it is not only racialized people who find their identities mediated by race, or who are implicated in the creation and use of racial constructs. "The attempt to racially define the conquered, subjugated, or enslaved is at the same time an attempt to racially define the conqueror, the subjugator, or the enslaver" (Lopez, 1995, p. 199). Social conceptions of race are relationally constructed, and as such, Whiteness or White identity is just as much a racial fabrication. Therefore, White bodies are equally, if not even more implicated in the perpetuation of the racially constructed status quo (Lopez, 1995, p. 193).

A critical theoretic formulation of race must be explicitly historicist. It must recognize the importance of historical context and significance in the framing of racial categories and the social construction of racially defined experiences (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6). As my students engage in the struggles of this complex process of identify formation, surrounding notions and understandings of race and the

relationships of power they experience and engage in, it is crucial that the historical and social contexts of these formations be acknowledged. Only by placing race at the forefront, can we "challenge the state, the institutions of civil society, and ourselves as individuals to combat the legacy of inequality and injustice inherited from the past" and that continues to be reproduced and perpetuated today (Apple, 1999, p. 9). The racialization of Black and/or racialized bodies does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in the context of dominant ideology, perceived capitalist economic interests, and psychological necessity on the part of dominant bodies. This ideology, and the hegemonic way in which it is imposed within institutions, particularly within schools, serves to confirm and reaffirm the superiority of the White, capitalist, dominant bodies and the inferiority of racialized peoples (Lopez, 1995, p. 197). This same ideology and process of racialization was used as justification for the expropriation of Indigenous lands through violent colonial expansion, and the establishment of free-market capitalism by the White colonizers. Here, it is important for us to pay significant attention to the complex historical issues of Indigenous lands and occupation. We need to understand and acknowledge these moments of oppression based on Aboriginality/Indigeneity as deeply embedded within the contexts of systemic racism, colonialism, and subsequently, within the historical fabric of Canadian and North-American society more generally (Dei, 2011, p. 16).

As postmodern literature points out, knowledge is socially constructed and reflects the interests, values, and actions of humans. Although many factors may influence the knowledge that is created by a certain individual or group, the knowledge that they create is heavily influenced by their experiences, their interpretations of those experiences, and their positioning within particular political, social, and economic systems and structures of society (Banks, 1993, p. 5). This concept of positionality is significant because it means that important parts of our identity, for example, our gender, race, age, class, ability, etc. are all relational markers of difference rather than essential qualities. Their meanings and implications are fluid and change according to context (Banks, 1993, p. 5). Given this understanding, it is important for practicing educators to identify types of knowledges that reflect particular assumptions, biases, values, perspectives, and ideological positions regarding history, race, and people. These biases have frequently and continuously worked to victimize racialized people because of the misconceptions and stereotypes that have been perpetuated about them in historical, social, and political contexts (Banks, 1992, p. 6). Discriminatory practices of the dominant heavily impacts racialized people's self-perception and how they come to negotiate and perform their identities. This can manifest in how racialized students come to understand how and when they should or are able to speak freely, share their thoughts, or behave authentically in the presence of dominant bodies in classroom settings.

The Canadian education system is deeply entrenched in colonialism and persistent racial hierarchies that actively work to manage and oppress racialized bodies. We must be cautious about adopting ways of knowing the racialized body that classify the historic constituents of colonization. We must avoid theorizing in

a way that de-legitimizes minority bodies of knowledge, while at the same time engaging with historically contingent variables (Dei, 2011, p. 18). It is only possible to examine and understand people/cultures outside of an established/dominant norm when we understand how certain cultures have been silenced (Dei, 1998, p. 201). The imposition of dominant cultural narratives and their overt claims to cultural supremacy, legitimacy and normalcy give rise to racialized relationships of power which work to reproduce and sustain social inequity and exclusionary practices in educational spaces (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 151).

How does our role as educators within this system and the educational spaces that we occupy implicate us in continuing particular histories? How can we challenge and transform dominant forms of knowledge production in these spaces? How are classrooms and community spaces for young people racially coded with acceptable and unacceptable enactments of race? There is an urgency to open up conversation about how race and/or Blackness can be used within school spaces as a powerful political tool to challenge dominant ideologies, epistemologies, and ontologies.

DOMINANT IDEOLOGIES AND THE ABSENCE OF RACE IN THE CLASSROOM

How does global systemic racism come to be normalized in the education system? How does the imposition of dominant ideologies and knowledges in schools lead to an absent presence of race in classroom spaces? How does this absence work to neutralize and make Whiteness invisible? How might we as educators work to deconstruct these ways of knowing in schools?

Classrooms are not only sites of instruction, but also fundamentally political and cultural spaces in which accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social groups take place (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 157). In the classroom, a historical reluctance by dominant students and educators to engage with issues of power and access has created a vacuum for in-depth conversations about race and racism (Simpson, 2006 p. 164). Dominant ideologies and cultural understandings within these spaces have thoroughly condoned and rewarded inattention and ignorance surrounding issues of racial injustice and inequality (Simpson, 2006, p. 164). When dominant social institutions are able to deny the systemic levels of inequality and racism they embody, and directly avoid questions of responsibility and accountability, students and their educators are encouraged to do the same. According to Apple (1999), this absent presence of race in policy, curriculum, and in the classroom space is fully implicated in the goals and concerns surrounding the support of the marketization of education (p. 10). There exists a desire on the part of the dominant to protect their neo-conservative interests and their hegemonic status. Subsequently, there exists a fear of the culture and body of 'the other,' which works conjunctively to directly take anti-racist education steps backward (Apple, 1999, p. 10). Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006) argue that without taking into account the totalizing impact of neocolonial and global capital interests, we

as racialized/marginalized bodies in the West cannot fully understand the changing existence of systemic violence as it impacts us here (in the global North), when the interests of Western cultural capital feels threatened by the very same bodies abroad (in the global South) (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 151).

In embodying this fear, it is still true that many White people believe there is a great disadvantage and social cost to being *White* (Apple, 1999, p. 13). Many continue to make the argument that mentalities and policies put in place to assist 'underrepresented groups' actually unfairly support 'non-White' groups. Through this, White bodies often claim the status of victims by pronouncing their own oppression (Apple, 1999, p. 13). It is here that anti-racism education and anti-racist work is deemed 'exclusionary', 'silencing', and 'hypocritical'; an administrative viewpoint I am often confronted with in the places where I teach.

Dei (1998) sees this argument as a failure to understand 'inclusivity' as an educational practice premised on the idea that the process of teaching, learning and sharing knowledge is fundamentally a power relation, and that for it to be a meaningful and effective means of educating, inclusivity must lead to the sharing of power in the process of creating and validating knowledge (p. 202). While it may sound acceptable in theory to use a generalized, comprehensive approach to alternative education and reform that would introduce social justice ideals more broadly in education, Dei challenges us to ask how we might infuse such 'social justice teachings' into curriculum when there is a basic lack of understanding and acknowledgment that notions of race and difference stand at the foundation of relations of power and domination in society (1998, p. 202).

The destruction of historical lived experience and memory through the violent imposition of dominant ideologies in social institutions, and how the implementation of these ideologies is accomplished, is again related to how race functions as an absent presence in our classrooms and in our societies (Apple, 1999, p. 12). For those deeply committed to anti-racist/anti-colonial curricula and teaching, it is important that we direct our attention to the invisibility of Whiteness and the ways in which White identities hold space and power, particularly within educational spaces. The invisibility of power relations and racial hierarchies in our ordinary talk is reflected in our language and the way in which we speak about Whiteness. The subconscious but prevalent idea of 'Whiteness as neutrality' works to designate that particular social group as the 'human ordinary' (Apple, 1999, p. 14).

By ignoring the production of racial identities, Whiteness remains an invisible marker of difference. When discourses of race are ignored or seen as 'exclusionary', it allows a certain 'raceless' or 'White' societal identity to function as the norm (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1085). When such routines of normalization that deny and devalue the embodied knowledges, lived experiences, and voices of marginalized students are allowed to manifest and exist within these educational spaces, the invalidation of these racialized bodies is enforced (Dei, 2007, p. 159). These routines actively work to disempower and shut out students from their schooling environment, as has been the case for many of the racialized and marginalized students I engage

with. In this way, unique intelligences of individuals from cultures different from the dominant are dismissed. Recognizing the importance of naming Whiteness in the classroom, leads me to question the ways in which this can be achieved. As an educator, how do I engage and include *all* my students in the intention, portrayal and content of classroom lessons and discussion? How do I ensure that the voices of marginalized bodies are given space, a chance to speak, are acknowledged, and are valued?

There has long existed a 'Black-White binary" that has served to justify and perpetuate particular histories, social relations, practices and racial hierarchies within our communities that have been founded on the unquestioned racial polity of the dominant. This binary conceptualizes race in North America as consisting, either exclusively or primarily, of only two racial groups, the Black and the White (Perea, 1997, p. 1219). Here, it is crucial for us to make a conceptual distinction between this binary or duality, and the notion of a "Black-White paradigm". It is a fact of racial politics that one's proximity to Whiteness gives them currency, and it is this currency which is rewarded in society (Dei, 2015. *October 13 Lecture)*. Any anti-racist or anti-colonial theorization of race relations, even while complicating the "Black-White binary," must acknowledge and affirm the political and intellectual relevance of the "Black-White paradigm" in order to recognize the saliency of race, skin colour, and racism in society and the world (Dei, 2015, October 13 Lecture). In doing so, we must also acknowledge that as we decenter these complex racial binary logics, political deployments of the concept of race come to signal new types of political domination and opposition (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 7). "Thus, part of our task in terms of pedagogy and political awareness and mobilization is to tell ourselves and teach our students that identities are historically conferred. We need to recognize that 'subjects are produced through multiple identifications'. We should see our project as not reifying identity, but both understanding its production as an ongoing process of differentiation, *and* most importantly, as subject to redefinition, resistance, and change" (Apple, 1999, p. 14).

MEANING-MAKING AND IDENTITY FORMATION FOR RACIALIZED YOUTH

How does the absence of race in the classroom impact the meaning-making and identity formation processes of non-White bodies? How does this come to be constituted through an epistemic violence? In turn, how do young marginalized and racialized youth learn to view and understand themselves, the world, and their place in society?

One's identity must be understood as a construction, product, and effect of social and historical relations, rather than something that is innate and individually determined (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1070). Acknowledging the significance and importance of history and social relations in the production of identities allows us to better analyze the impact of racism and colonization on racialized bodies, as well as the ways in which

racially marginalized peoples may resist the effects of colonization and oppression (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1070).

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon recounts his experience of what it means to be a Black male in a racist, White-supremacist world; "I came into the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desires to attain to the source of the world, then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects" (1967, p. 109). Fanon's concern, revealed in this statement, is that a Black person is being called upon to experience Blackness that has been constructed for and imposed on him/her by the White 'other' (Adjei, 2013, p. 27). In a world of White supremacy, Blackness is perceived as a quintessential evil, needing to be policed and contained in order to prevent it from threatening Whiteness. Thus, when Blackness shows up where it is not supposed to, or expected to appear, particularly in places supposedly reserved for Whiteness (such as the school environment or other educational spaces), it is presumed that it must be seriously questioned and acted upon (Adjei, 2013, p. 27). Within this White supremacist society, there is an active political assertion that racialized bodies, especially Black bodies, represent a homogenous social group that embodies characteristics of criminality, illiteracy, immorality, violence, and degeneracy; all as part of their normative history, culture, and identity. The implication here stands that racialized bodies must be viewed and understood as imminent threats, and treated as such whenever they trespass through spaces reserved for Whiteness (Adjei, 2013, p. 28). In this way, racialized bodies are already pathologized and criminalized before they even enter the White world, as if the White dominant bodies around them already have pre-existing knowledge of who they are before their arrival. These preconceived notions on the part of the dominant are presumed through a violent colonial imaginary story that scripts racialized bodies as quintessentially evil, dishonest, uneducated, immoral, lazy, unintelligent, and fundamentally inferior (Adjei, 2013, p. 28). The imposition of these preconceived character notions by the dominant manifest in political and media representations of Black and/or racialized bodies, in how these bodies are treated and dealt with in the criminal justice system, in the assumptions that are made about the needs and abilities of racialized students in the education system, and in many more social avenues or instances.

This inherent assumption of superiority by dominant bodies both within and outside of the classroom works to de-value and discourage racialized students from sharing, engaging, and being acknowledged in their schooling/educational environments. The devaluation of racialized identities and experiences in the school system contribute to the problem of racially marginalized students' disengagement from school and their other educational spaces. This disengagement leads to the personal struggle of racialized students trying to strip themselves of their Black/racialized identity, only to experience that this extrication from colour becomes the very source of their alienation and amputation from community (Adjei, 2013, p. 26). With this, Black and racialized bodies experience the 'gaze of Whiteness'; which denotes suspicion, strips them of their identity, and imposes a newly scripted one.

Particularly for racialized youth like my students, who by the nature of their age and life stage are already engaging in general life processes of identity formation and self-understanding, the imposition of this gaze raises many complex questions around their identity.

In *Discipline & Punish* (1977), Foucault asserts that there is a strong connection between space and the exercise of power. He notes that most spaces are organized and regulated to make sure that bodies deemed as degenerates or as inferior, disappear from "spaces of respectability" – spaces that are reserved for White, dominant, privileged bodies. Foucault (1977) further notes that spaces are systemically regulated to produce binary subjects; a strategically constructed dualism that works to create two homogenous social groups in which one group labeled as "dangerous," "abnormal," "undesirable," and "insane" can be spatially separated from the group labeled "harmless," "normal," "desirable," and "sane" (p. 297). The strategy of this dualism works within the "Black-White binary", serving to structure and justify particular histories, social relations and practices in society informed by or founded on dominant White-supremacist ideology. Colonization creates a world in which Blackness is positioned against Whiteness, and racialized bodies are called upon to choose between the two sides; 'White values' or 'Black values' (Adjei, 2013, p. 36).

Black or racialized students often experience academic and social difficulties or complexities in schools because of the ways in which personal or cultural knowledge within their cultural community conflicts with the dominant knowledge, norms and expectations of their school environment (Banks, 1993, p. 7). These students are often unfamiliar with school cultural knowledge surrounding power relations, and consequently, they either experience academic or behavioural problems because of their failure to conform to established norms, rules and expectations. Alternatively, they are forced to feel like they are violating their own norms of kinship and community by running the risk of "acting White" (Banks, 1993, p. 7). This tension between students' cultural/personal knowledge and school knowledge often conflict on variables related to how the racialized student is meant or expected to present themselves, relate to the group or classroom, and interact with others. Consequently, racialized bodies come to face a dilemma where they may feel that they no longer understand their race or themselves in relation to their racial identity, or vice versa. This divide in the White supremacist world, forms and informs social interpretations of Blackness and the racialization of people of colour (Adjei, 2013, p. 38). Students are encouraged to accept rather than question this reinforcement of the dominant social, economic, and political power arrangements in their educational environments and in society (Banks, 1993, p. 11).

In critical reflection of the power relations and racial politics that give rise to the strong relationship that exists between race, identity, and space, we may ask: What is being imagined or projected on to particular bodies in educational spaces, and what is being enacted there? How do White bodies know and understand themselves to be, and how much does an identity of dominance rely upon keeping racial others

firmly in place? How then, are certain bodies made to be kept in their place in school settings? (Razack, 2002, p. 5)

IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION AND ANTI-RACIST WORK

How is the concept of 'difference' significant and imperative to discussions of school and anti-racism education? How do we develop and engage in anti-racist pedagogic practices that recognize White identities and their impacts within the educational spaces we occupy, and yet do not lead to regressive ways of thinking? How can we constructively use 'discomfort' that arises in the classroom to deconstruct dominant ways of thinking/knowing/understanding? How and why must we center race in our classroom pedagogies and make its saliency our primary concern?

In my commitment to intellectual and political work related to youth education and empowerment, many of the tensions and contradictions I consistently encounter in this engagement speak to the complex intricacies surrounding the notion of *difference*. This stands both in relation to my own journey of identity formation and understanding, as well as that of the many racialized and marginalized students I engage with. In the educational spaces I occupy as a teacher and mentor, I often observe a conditioned tendency amongst both students and staff to deny difference in the name of shared commonalities. Differences in personal standpoints or identities, individual and community-based needs, and fluid complexities amongst people, is understood by the dominant to be a problem in itself. There seems to be an ever-growing inability amongst young people in these spaces, particularly dominant bodies, to be able to acknowledge and uplift one another without seeing or feeling solidarity through *sameness,* rather than *difference*. This then becomes the embodiment of the deep-seated notion that we can only hold compassion, respect, acknowledgement, and love for another if we see *ourselves* in them. It is here that I am motivated by intellectual and political desires to speak about the complex nature of *difference,* how it is understood and (re)imagined, as well as how these understandings and challenges cannot be removed from the historical and neo-colonial global tensions in which they exist (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 154). It is here that I seek critical-cultural, anti-racist, and anti-colonial school practices, instruction and classroom pedagogy that offer possibilities for delivering education to diverse groups of learners; consisting of both dominant and non-dominant bodies.

Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006) tell us that speaking *difference* is imperative and significant to discussions of schooling and education. This includes broader questions of identity, the fluid ways in which we understand ourselves and others, and the power relations we embody in society (p. 152). Critical anti-racism education allows us to engage in questions surrounding what identities, histories, and cultures are being denied, and simultaneously, privileged within our education system, and at whose expense. This allows us to cultivate "communities of difference" in which

the maintaining of groups' language, culture and identity, as well as the sharing of power are primary concerns (Dei, 2011, p. 18). Our current education system deals with historical questions, challenges, and understandings in ways that minimize difference from the status quo (Dei, 1998, p. 201). We must build curriculum that makes racialized and marginalized youth feel empowered, acknowledged, and gives them sense of belonging.

Focusing race as an important entry point to anti-racist work also points to the relational character of difference and the ways in which race is embedded in other aspects of difference. In order to engage in genuinely transformative anti-racist politics, we must acknowledge the contextual variations in intensities and experiences of oppressions (Dei, 1998, p. 204). There is no such thing as a singularly shared collective historical experience or identity. However, Adjei (2013) points out that in our take on multiplicity, complexity and the fluidity of identity, we must be careful not to dilute the responsibility we have to speak about racism while we speak about difference and heterogeneity, particularly critical anti-Black racism in the North American educational context (p. 37). All oppressions work within structures and institutions of power to establish material advantage or disadvantage while making unfounded distinctions between 'the self' and 'the other'. Yet, it is still important to understand that oppressions are never equal, as their consequences and intensities differ for different bodies (Adjei, 2013, p. 37). Through an anti-colonial, anti-racist lens, the material and lived realities of racialized groups in their interactions with the state and its social institutions, namely the school system, become highlighted and recognized. In this way, anti-racism education acknowledges the meanings and implications of race and racial constructs, and how all forms and markers of difference intersect to script the life probabilities and opportunities of racialized and marginalized bodies (Dei, 2011, p. 17).

Anti-racism education and the politics of anti-racist work demand that race come first. Race must be central to how we begin and navigate our work, the saliency of race must be primary even when other oppressions exist in conjunction with racial ones (Dei, 1998, p. 204). The decision to speak of the saliency of race is political, intentional, and significant, and must be treated as such. In doing so we acknowledge that race is present everywhere and in everything we do. Race matters because all members of society have internalized racist ideas about what skin colour tells us about the value and worth of a person or a group of people. Subsequently, the racialization of identities continues to matter because of the propensity of this process to distribute unequal power, privilege, rewards, and punishments in society (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1071). We may all have some discomfort in speaking about race, however, discomfort about race should not lead us to shy away from addressing or naming race when it is present in an issue (Adjei, 2013, p. 37).

Transformative classroom pedagogy requires engagement with concepts, paradigms, ideologies, and explanations that challenge existing mainstream dominant knowledges and ways of knowing, and that expand our understanding of history (Banks, 1993, p. 9). We must deconstruct existing epistemological assumptions

about the influence of human and capital interests on knowledge production. We must acknowledge a history that has been characterized by an elusive quest for 'democracy' through violence, conflict, struggle, oppression, and exclusion. In order to combat systemic attempts to perpetuate White privilege in the classroom, we as educators in a White-supremacist, capitalist society must intentionally mobilize anti-racist and anti-colonial methodologies in the school and classroom spaces we occupy. In doing so, we give voice to the lived experiences and stories of racialized and marginalized bodies, placing them at the center of discussions surrounding inclusion and belonging that are brought to the table. Anti-racism education involves learning about the experiences of those living with racialized identities, and understanding how the lived experiences of marginalized/racialized students in and out of school are implicated in youth engagement and disengagement from classroom and educational environments (Dei, 2011, p. 17)

As a discursive, political, and educational practice, anti-racism pedagogy opens for discussion and engagement, various forms of racism and their intersections with other forms of oppression in societal institutions (Dei, 2011, p. 17). Transformative change requires that teachers and educators be committed to creating classroom spaces that are open to knowledge about race, engaging in the deconstruction of normalized White Euro-American realities, and are accommodating to conflicting experiences, emotions, and opinions. To cultivate cross-racial dialogue and understanding of the ways in which race and racial identities are constructed, we must engage students in explicit conversations about race, responding openly and constructively to what they bring to the collective learning process (Simpson, 2006, p. 156). In order for this to happen, we must open up classroom spaces to multiple knowledges. This can be accomplished by marking Whiteness, examining routine expressions of White expectations and interests, and recognizing how relations of power operate within the classroom through the privileging of European-American knowledge at the cost of the lived experience and knowledge of racialized people (Simpson, 2006, p. 157).

This kind of education involves a total change in school and classroom environments, so as to create equal educational opportunities for all students. An important goal of this kind of teaching is to help students understand how the knowledge they experience and consume is constructed. Banks (1993) states, "students should be given opportunities to investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways that knowledge is constructed. Students should also be given opportunities to create knowledge themselves and identify ways in which the knowledge they construct is influenced and limited by their personal assumptions, positions and experiences" (p. 11). It should be an important goal of educators to transform classroom curriculum so that students may become critical consumers and producers of knowledge by learning how to critically analyze the knowledge they master and embody, while constructing their own interpretations of the past, present, and future (Banks, 1993, p. 12). By adopting anti-racism education into

our classrooms and school systems more broadly, we challenge and engage in questions about the violent processes of colonization and racialization; pointing out how claims of history, politics, knowledge, social relations, and identity are all embedded within dynamics of power; mobilized by the privileging of Whites and the disempowerment of the 'other' (Dei, 2011, p. 18).

Today's educators are faced with the task of challenging the conscious and unconscious ways in which the ideology of White identity as superior is normalized and naturalized in our schools and communities, both in the past and present (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1085). In an anti-racist and anti-colonial context, schools must be open spaces that allow students from non-dominant backgrounds, from the margins, and from disadvantaged segments in our communities, the opportunities to realize their potential, their goals, and their dreams (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 154). Our classrooms are not only sites of instruction, but also fundamentally political and cultural spaces in which accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social groups take place. Classrooms are a direct reflection of the society in which we live, and as such, "the school is a site in need of anti-racist, anti-colonial readings, interpretations, interventions, disruptions, and subversions. Learners of today are and must be anti-colonial subjects and agents" (Dei, 2011, p. 18).

REFERENCES

Adjei, P. B. (2013). When blackness shows up uninvited: Examining the murder of Trayvon Martin through fanonian racial interpellation. In G. J. S. Dei & M. Lordan (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in the sociology of race and ethnicity: A critical reader.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Apple, M. (1999). The absent presence of race in educational reform. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 2*(1), 9–16.

Banks, J. (1993). The Canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher, 22*(5), 4–14.

Dei, G. J. S. (1998). Race and the production of identity in the schooling experiences of African-Canadian youth. *Discourse, 18*(2), 241–257.

Dei, G. J. S. (1998). Why write back?: The role of Afrocentric discourse in social change. *Canadian Journal of Education, 23*(2), 200–208.

Dei, G. J. S. (2011). In defense of official multiculturalism and recognition of the necessity for critical anti-racist education. *Canadian Issues.* (A special issue on: "Diversity and Education for Liberation: Realities, Possibilities and Problems". Edited by Ghosh, R. and K. McDoough), (Spring Issue), 15–19.

Dei, G. J. S., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: Critical knowledge/multiple knowings: Possibilities, challenges and resistance in curriculum/cultural contexts. In Y. Kanu (Ed.), *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations* (pp. 151–180)*.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, White masks: The experiences of a Black man in a White world*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Vintage.

hooks, b. (1997). Representing whiteness in the Black imagination. In R. Frankenberg (Ed.), *Displacing Whiteness* (pp. 338–364). London: Duke University Press.

Lopez, I. J. (1995). The social construction of race. In R. Delgado (Ed.), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. 163–177)*.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Lund, D. (1998). Social justice and public education: A response to George J. Sefa Dei. *Canadian Journal of Education, 23*(2), 191–199.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1993). On the theoretical concept of race. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 3–10). New York, NY: Routledge.

Perea, J. F. (1997). The Black/White binary paradigm of race: The normal science of American racial thought. *California Law Review, 85*(5), 1214–1258.

Razack, S. (2002). *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a White settler society*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Simpson, J. (2006). Racism is not a theory: Racism matters in the classroom. In *I have been waiting: Race and higher education* (pp. 155–196). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Verna St. Denis. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: Building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30*(4), 1068–1092.

Wane, N. (2003). Anti-racism in teacher education. In G. Dei & N. Wane (Eds.), *Orbit* [Special Issue], *33*(3), 6–9.

TAMLA YOUNG

6. A JOURNEY INTO ANTI-RACISM

An Educator's Perspective

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to address the importance of identity development as a means of empowerment in the lives of young Black and marginalized people(s) within the public school system in Ontario. Equipping children with the tools to survive this patriarchal, colonial, White supremacist society is essential. In working with various communities in Toronto, it is clear that decolonizing Kindergarten classrooms is a significant step in affecting change and transformation within Early Years education. Young examines micro-aggressions of racism and prejudice, through theories like double-consciousness, and movements of resistance such as Pan-Africanism. This has been imperative to moving forward activism and anti-racism education. Two Toronto District School Board (TDSB) African-centred programmes are credited with bringing about transformative change in students and educators. Implementing African principles such as the *Nguzo Saba*[1] has caused a shift in class discussion, play, questioning, confidence and sense of activism in all students. However, there has been great discomfort and resistance from educators within the TDSB to implement African-centred principles in the classroom. Concern about educators' unwillingness to confront their power and privilege and their lack of willingness to acknowledge race as an integral part of students' identity has prompted this work. The result has been a renewed call for educators to take up anti-racist, inclusive, social justice education.

Keywords: White supremacist, colonial, Nguzo Saba, Black, Toronto District School Board, power, privilege, African-centered, resistance

INTRODUCTION

Through continued self-examination and reflection, I have come to realize that I have had vast and varying experiences throughout my life and that each one of these experiences has shaped not only how I view myself but also how I view and interact with the world.

I interact with the world by identifying as a Black, Jamaican-born, Canadian woman. As an educator with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), a lifelong learner, a dancer, a traveler, and an aspiring writer, I am a lover of many things.

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 83–107.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

Some aspects of my identity come with assumptions about who I am or should be, while other aspects of my identity come with some privileges. I have the privilege that education and travel offer the mind and soul. I also have the privilege of being raised in a family that was loving and supportive, and also aware and conscious of the deeply embedded roots of colonization and White supremacy that continue to affect our lives. As such, my family did what they could to counter them with tools of empowerment and resistance so that growing up, I never thought or felt I was 'less than' despite society telling me otherwise. Despite these privileges, I have experienced my fair share of micro and macro aggressions at various stages of my life, in a variety of spaces, and inflicted by a variety of bodies. I have for the most part, been able to shrug off and dismiss these micro and macro aggressions except those inflicted upon me by teachers. The hurtful actions and comments made by educators seem to have stuck with me, and are either painful or extremely uncomfortable.

In this chapter, I will explore my journey into anti-racism education via experiences that have shaped and brought me to this point. I focus mainly on race, but acknowledge the intersectionalities between issues of identity and equity (i.e. sex, gender, religion, etc.). Prior to becoming a teacher, I was always seeking new learning opportunities and experiences. My experiences almost always involved working within communities of African descent or marginalized, racialized people, which did not change when I became a teacher. Rather, my passion for effecting positive change within communities of African descent through education, was fuelled even more so by my participation in two pilot, African-Centred teaching programmes (to be referred to as UBORA and IBSA). UBORA was a pre-kindergarten summer learning program that implemented culturally relevant and Afrocentric principles. Complimenting this program was the IBSA initiative, an on-going series of professional development workshops for Early Years educators working in racialized communities, which experienced low student achievement.

These African-centred teaching projects furthered my interest in African ways of knowing, particularly because of their application in Early Years learning environments. What stood out to me was how differently these almost identical programs played out. During IBSA, there was blatant resistance from some of the educators who were instructed to implement the program. For me, the program was an incredible learning experience that has made a lasting impact on my teaching practice. It was at the same time however, a 'frightening' experience that brought back flashbacks of micro and macro race-based aggressions from the past five years of my career in education. My participation in these two, African-centred, anti-racist, inclusive education programmes propelled my interest in pursuing graduate studies, specifically in Social Justice, Anti-Racism education at OISE/UT.

Race and racism, have played a major role in my identity formation, how I view, interact and experience the world. In this chapter I will be examining: (1). My journey into anti-racist education work, how my interest and passion was developed and shaped, and the implications of this for, my students, my colleagues and me. (2). My

Praxis; how Critical Anti-Racist Theory (CART), inclusive education and African-centred teachings can take shape and manifest in a Kindergarten Classroom. (3). Future Research; deconstructing Whiteness as a mandatory process of transformation for educators working in public school systems so as to better serve all students.

My journey into anti-racist education work; how my interest and passion were developed, shaped and what it means for my colleagues, my students, and me.

> *A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.* (Marcus Garvey)

THE EARLY YEARS

I grew up in a hard-working Jamaican family. My grandparents migrated first to England and then to Canada in the 1960's. After being 'sent' for, from Jamaica to Canada as a young child, mother decided to return to Jamaica at the age of 18 and then met my father while both at Teacher's College My mother and father left Jamaica when I was very young due to familial pressures for a 'better' life; first to Florida and then Toronto. In both places my mother faced employment challenges. While trying to fulfill her career goals, she did temp work, got her Masters at OISE/UT and volunteered at my sibling's elementary school and mine. My elementary school was incredibly community-oriented and parents and community members were involved in many aspects of our schooling. My mother volunteered as a Community Support Worker, and was eventually, after meeting the right administrator at the right time, was able to get a reference letter that finally got her an interview with the school board. I say all of this because, from a very young age, I recognized the power and necessity of having goals and being resilient. It is something that has stayed with me and continues to play a role in my interactions with the young people I work with.

I grew up in a diverse community among a majority of people of colour. I remember going to Saturday School programs held at the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA), from a very young age. I attended a plethora of events like the city's Santa Claus Parade, to Easter Bun and Cheese parties at the JCA, to special programs at the Science Centre, free events at the Public Library (my mother was a single, underemployed mother and had to find economical activities for my siblings and me). As a child, I received many books (often at Christmas); books about Black people, with Black characters, Black Heroes and folktales and folklore from the Caribbean and Africa. I also remember my Tamil friends attending Tamil Saturday School programs, my Korean friend attending Korean language school, my Greek friend attending Greek language school and I'm sure there were many others seeking and attending supplementary cultural and/or language schools outside of the Public School System. I believe that parents encouraged their children to participate in these programs in order to foster a connection to their cultural communities so as not to be lost in the dominant Canadian society.

THE ERA OF 'MULTICULTURALISM'; A SENSE OF BELONGING

Multiculturalism was a big thing during my entire public school experience, and at the time, I ate it up. "Multiculturalism was brought under federal law in Canada in 1988, with the purpose to "[promote] cultural diversity as an intrinsic and valuable component of the social, political and moral order [and also to] value racial minorities on the basis of a common humanity" (Dei, 2011, 15) For me, multiculturalism was fascinating. my exposure to it began in 1992 after moving to Toronto from Florida. I loved learning and sharing about the cultures that made up my community. It is only with reflection that I recognize that the multicultural initiatives that I engaged in were quite superficial and only touched the surface of understanding and accepting difference (a former instructor of mine likes to call it 'Samosas and Saris').

"While multiculturalism recognizes the different cultures in Canada, it fails to address critical issues of history, power, marginalization, identities, structural inequities, and the like…Although difference is foregrounded in this interpretation, it is not contextualized in historical and/or cultural contexts (Naseem, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

This creates a static and stereotypical view of cultures that are not White" (Raza, 2014, p. 136). However surface level those experiences may have been, at the time, based on individual and collective experiences, multiculturalism held great value for me, and the other children and parents involved. Growing up, it became clear to me that my culture was valid, important and something to be proud of, even if it somehow seemed to be reserved for talent shows, special events and potlucks. Raza (2014), in *Multiculturalism: The Missing Bodies and Voices* explains that great danger lies in 'the singular voice' which is a common effect of multiculturalism and "can result in exoticism (Gerin-Lajoie, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004); the identities of those who are 'othered' become fixed and essentialized based on, and further perpetuating, existing stereotypes" (Raza, 2014, p. 137). Yet, I never shied away or felt ashamed of my culture and always had a desire to learn and understand more about it. Being a racialized 'Canadian' meant, for me, never really feeling like I belonged. I was not accepted as a 'real' Jamaican, and by virtue of the questions "Where are you from?" clearly, I was not a 'real' Canadian either. I cannot deny, that I went on to benefit from exoticism via multiculturalism through cultural dance. The exoticizing of Afro-Caribbean dance allowed me to enter many spaces that I would not have access to without this tokenism. Despite this deep love for who I was/am and who and where I've come from, I've always operated with a 'double-consciousness'. The theory of Double Consciousness brings to the fore what the other classical theorists of the self could not see: the presence of the veil; an intangible boundary that affects the perceptions of and relations between racializing and racialized subjects (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 235).

While I didn't formally learn about 'double-consciousness' until I attended university, I knew based on my upbringing, that as an 'other', in order for me to

succeed in society and in life I needed to be able to navigate multiple worlds. Indeed, I became quite the 'model minority', however it is imperative to bear in mind that this is a stereotype that is imposed upon Brown students. I needed to wear two hats, the hat I wore with my family, friends and other members of my cultural community, and the hat I needed to wear when interacting within dominant mainstream environments such as at school (despite White people being a minority at any Public School I've ever attended). I realize now, that my mother and the parents of my friends who were also attending these supplementary cultural and language programming were setting us up to be able to navigate and achieve in a society of systems and structures that maintain, uphold and value White hegemony. I acknowledge that I (we) needed a strong foundation of who I was (we were) and how the world saw me (us), in order to withstand, navigate, achieve and be successful in a greatly power imbalanced White supremacist society.

IN HIGH SCHOOL; COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

When in high school, my participation in cultural empowerment programs started to change.Rather than being the participant, I began to take on the role of facilitator, performer, spokesperson, and educator. I volunteered at the Scarborough Black Educator's Saturday School Program where I attended the Six Nations Reserve. This experience sparked my interest in Indigenous Canadian peoples, cultures, and realities and how we foster coalitions between all racialized groups. I was a part of my school's Black Student's Association (BSA) and became seriously involved in African-Caribbean performing arts and culture, as a dancer. As part of the BSA, our teacher facilitators encouraged us to move beyond the once-a-year Black History Month assembly and/or activities. We worked on planning seminars, workshops and bringing in community members to support our development as students of African descent. This exposed us to the possibilities that existed for us outside of the dominant messages perpetuated by society at large. To engage in career and post-secondary schooling workshops, we went on trips to York University, U of T and Centennial College. The goal was to expose us to the opportunities that existed and the many Black people whose struggles and resilience have given inspiration to many. However, what was most impactful was the focus on empowering Black youth to embrace the value of their identities. Also instilled was a sense of community, and support for one another and our community within and beyond the school walls. We had in us, an awareness that we needed to support one another in order to achieve our goals; this support did not come from anywhere else.

My involvement with dance (Afro-Caribbean Dance) was an incredibly empowering experience on many levels. Not only did it teach me discipline, but also I learned even more about African-Caribbean culture, identity and resistance. According to Henry M. Codjoe (2006), in *The Role of an Affirmed*

Black Cultural Identity and Heritage in the Academic Achievement of African-Canadian students,

Most scholars of ethnic and racial identity now agree with the view that ethnic and cultural identity provides a sense of social connectedness that is the basis for psychological well-being and that ‘a strong sense of connection and pride in one’s ethnicity is 46 H. Codjoe related to healthy developmental outcomes, and that ethnic identity should therefore be reinforced whenever possible’ (Tajfel, cited in Gonzales & Cauce, 1995, p. 147; see also Walters, 1994; Mah, 1995). Trueba (1994) also adds that ‘the very possibility of developing a positive self-concept and ethnic identity depends on the recognition and celebration of one’s own social, linguistic, and cultural heritage’, and that there is ‘a profound link between ethnic identity and students’ ability to participate fully in academia’, concluding that ‘ethnic identification has an integrating effect on students that seems to facilitate their academic achievement’ (p. 380).

Through these learning experiences, pride in who I was and those who came before me continued to grow. During my high school years, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives, under Mike Harris implemented the Zero-Tolerance Policy for Bad Behaviour in Schools. This policy enforced a code of conduct, which allowed teachers and administrators to suspend and expel students at their discretion (Ontario Human Rights Commission). This policy was violently enforced at my high school. I remember one of my first moments of activism; we were not allowed to wear headgear. Headgear according to this ‘zero-tolerance’(refer to ‘Ontario Human Rights Commission’ website for more information) policy included absolutely anything on your head, even a headband, or a Kufi worn by Muslim males. This resulted in a Muslim teacher on staff having to call in a leader from an Islamic organisation to address some of the challenges and misunderstandings regarding the cultural headdress of the Kufi;

While I did not wear a Kufi, I often wore a headband as part of my daily hairstyle. I experienced the zero tolerance policy through an altercation between a Vice-Principal and myself. He demanded I take my headband off and I responded, *“Fine, but I need to go to the washroom to fix my hair.”* He insisted I take the headband off right then and there and I refused to do so. Instead, I disregarded his instruction and went to the washroom to comply. Upon reflection, the vice-principal returned and apologized to me. This incident had a lasting effect on me. I resisted this violent oppression by deciding to completely wrap my head (hair), every single day until the end of the school year. I told anyone that asked and wrote a letter informing the office that I practiced Myal “A Jamaican folk religion focused on the power of ancestors, typically involving drumming, dancing, spirit possession, ritual sacrifice, and herbalism” (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). The experiences I encountered during these years of my life sparked a sense of collective responsibility and empowerment within me. By the end of high school the feeling that Black people must unite in solidarity to resist dominant oppressions became central to my existence.

IN UNIVERSITY; PAN AFRICANISM AND ACTIVISM

In University, after my first year in International Studies at Glendon College/York University, I changed my program to Fine Arts Cultural Studies and transferred to the University's Keele campus. If honest with myself, I was lonely; and one of the main factors influencing my move to the main campus was my need for 'community', my community, a community that I did not find at Glendon. While at the main campus, I joined cheerleading and dance teams, and quickly found my home on the 5th floor of the Student Centre where York University Black Students' Alliance (YUBSA) had its home. The York United Black Students' Alliance (YUBSA) is a non-profit community service group whose mandate is to develop programs that support Black-identified students (and community members) academically, financially, and socially. YUBSA is a pan-Africanist organization that services all students and people at York University and the wider community that adhere to the racial identity of "Black" despite their nationalistic identities. It was here that I discovered and really began to understand Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent. Up to this point, I had claimed Caribbean, specifically Jamaican, roots. Despite my significant participation in YUBSA, I was really leaning towards the concept of race being an artificial and a social construct. Race is a product of social interaction and institutionalized power (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 244) Thus, I felt the need to dispute any and all notions of what is and is not 'Blackness'. I did not believe that there was one single Black identity, and the notion of constructing one was in essence the essentializing of a contrived Black identity.

As a Cultural Studies major, the work of Stuart Hall became paramount in my thinking. In Stuart Hall and 'Race', ClaireAlexander (2009) states that "Hall has been a foundational figure for scholars in Britain, the US, the Caribbean and beyond, in opening new avenues for thinking about race, politics, culture and identity" (p. 458). I was at times, torn between the unifying shared struggle that all continental and diasporic Black people have experienced, continue to experience and/or are at risk of experiencing. The idea that while race definitely played a role in how one experiences and navigates the world, so much of one's identity is dependent on the culture they identified as belonging to. Acknowledging that even within a culture, despite numerous similarities, race can and is often a major marker of negative difference in one's life experiences. I became heavily involved with YUBSA in varying roles and capacities. I played a role in planning conferences, workshops and rallies. I helped advocate for student issues and concerns and attended conferences and workshops locally and abroad. It was at York, during numerous courses and readings and lectures that I became familiar with names like Edward Said, Noam Chomsky and concepts of 'othering', such as Orientalism, culture & identity politics, representation and as I mentioned earlier, the concept of double-consciousness.

At York I was able to take a fair number of courses focused on Caribbean studies, Black women and colonialism, and its effects on the African diaspora. I had several Black and racialized professors and saw racialized bodies in my classes. I was comfortable. Upon completing my undergraduate degree, I continued to work with marginalized communities in the areas of community development, capacity building and empowerment. I continued to work in several of the city of Toronto's identified 'priority' under-served communities. For a number of reasons I worked in these communities in several capacities before deciding to take a break to seek some clarity about the direction I wanted my life to go. I travelled to Japan in 2007 to teach English. This teaching experience fuelled my desire to pursue a second degree and a career in education.

TEACHER'S COLLEGE; A PROFOUND AND RUDE AWAKENING

After a short detour via a Post Graduate diploma program at Humber College, I attended the University of Windsor in 2010 for my Pre-service Teacher's Education with a focus on 'Urban Education', under the instruction and leadership of Dr. Andrew Allen whose research interests entail Anti-racist Education, Educational Equity; Critical Pedagogy; Critical Social Theory; Race, Class and Gender and Issues of Social Difference and Marginalization in Education and Schooling; Urban Education. My teacher education experience was more than profound and was a rude awakening for me in terms of race; yes, race. I began to question education with a more critical eye. My colleagues and Iwere asked by Dr. Allen to think about *'Who are teachers?'* The response was, middle class White women. We were asked to question 'What values the public school system rewarded? The response was, White, middle class values. Up until this point, despite the 'awareness' I had surrounding issues and realities of injustice within our society, I have always had a fairly neutral view of education. While in Teacher's College, I was asked and encouraged to self reflect and to look at what biases I carry and how they may affect and effect teaching and learning for myself and my students; and I did.

This self-reflection came to a head when I had the opportunity to experience a trip to Walpole Island First Nation in Southwestern Ontario. This experience was also a rude awakening because, for the first time in my life I felt isolated because of my difference; because of my race.

I was away from my home in Canada's most multicultural city and now was in Canada's supposedly fourth most diverse city, and myself and three other colleagues of colour (a Brown female from Toronto via Tanzania, A bearded Arab-Muslim male from Toronto via Sudan and a Hijab wearing Muslim female from Windsor) felt discrimination while at Teachers' College. Our camaraderie developed simply because we were always being left out, unheard, ignored and dismissed by our colleagues. We knew not what to do and became really close because of it. We connected with each other, we supported each other, we worked with each other and we even travelled together. I was so dumbfounded about the experience, not that it

was happening to my friends, and myself but because these colleagues were soon to be teachers. I thought, *"How are these teachers' beliefs going to impact the lives of the diverse children they are going to teach."* I felt sad and worried and helpless, and tried my best to not think of them ever again.

I recognize that I am privileged in many ways, and have been blessed with a plethora of multi-faceted experiences that have helped anchor me throughout my journey. I acknowledge that I have a deep sense of resilience and have a deep sense of purpose to work towards empowering, developing resilience and a sense of collective responsibility in the young people I work with everyday. This passion has been a constant throughout my life, regardless of influencing forces and continues today. At present, this passion is directed at the teaching and learning of our youngest learners and is a passion that has been fostered and developed in me from a young age. Indeed, I have had multi-faceted experiences that have helped shaped me. I have had multi-faceted experiences that are not always a reality for others both within and outside of the school system.

MY PRAXIS; WHERE I STAND TODAY, WHY AND WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE?

> *If you haven't confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life. With confidence, you have won even before you have started.* (Marcus Garvey)

While in teacher's college, "An instructor told me that as teachers we are dealing with little people and will have more impact on their lives than can sometimes be imagined. We decide whether we humanise or dehumanise them." I found this statement to be profound and affecting because I have had many amazing teachers who recognized my humanity and had a positive influence on my life. I now strive to be a part of their legacy. I do this by continuing to reflect on my own practice, exploring and questioning old and new pedagogies and continuing to seek new learning opportunities.

Thus, two summers ago, I was eager and fortunate to be a part of one of my board's pilot project. UBORA, an African-centred summer program for Pre-K children. For three weeks, I was part of a team that serviced several of Toronto's identified priority communities. We facilitated African-centred teaching and learning for children between the ages of 3–6. The entire process of developing and implementing the program impacted not only my students and their parents but also my whole approach to teaching, learning and collaboration with colleagues. In particular this manifested in the use of African-centred principles in my daily teaching practice. Throughout the program, we attempted to provide authentic play-based learning experiences for a diverse group of racialized early childhood children. With all of our learning and explorations the Nguzo Saba was used as a reference and a guide that centered our teaching.

The seven principles of the Nguzo Saba (Karenga, 1977) describe a process in which the African American is encouraged and empowered through self-knowledge (Harris & Johnson, 1999, p. 4).

Seven Principles of Nguzo Saba:
Umoja (Unity)
Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)
Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)
Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)
Nia (Purpose)
Kuumba (Creativity)
Imani (Faith)

We made daily Nia Circles, where children shared their feelings and experiences with our Talking Drum. We also discuss Umoja (Oo-moh-jah) and other Nguzo Saba principles (kuumba, kujichagulia, ujima, ujamaa and imani as they applied to our learning and experiences. As a Pan-Africanist, and as someone who sees culture as an essential part of one's identity, I find the Nguzo Saba to be extremely unifying. It encompasses multiple ways of African Indigenous ways of knowing, thus being able to cross over multiple lines of difference not as a means to erasure, but that of embracing and unifying our differences and similarities for a common, collective goal. For me the goal is to create a learning environment where no student feels less than, and all have the opportunity to foster and achieve.

Approaching my teaching through an African-centred lens has allowed me to draw on past experiences such as my own cultural background, African-Caribbean dance and cultural performing arts, my undergraduate studies in Cultural Studies, my previous work experiences in community development in several of Toronto's identified priority neighbourhoods, as well as new learning such as incorporating the Nguzo Saba, as a framework for my current Kindergarten programming and practice.

As a teacher, I approach teaching with the view that I must empower and foster resilience in the young people that I work with to be critical, socially conscious citizens. I believe that I have a duty to understand their needs, deliver hope to their lives and help them to develop and/or envision plans to accomplish their goals. Developing the capacity of young people is very important to me and has also played a major role in all the work that I have done. I do not believe these sentiments to be unique, they are sentiments shared by many educators.

The difference, however, is that, I believe this empowerment and resiliency can be developed by helping kindergarten students regain and reclaim their sense of self and identity in a society of institutionalized and systemic racism, and colonial structures and ideals.

Growing up, I was familiar with the teachings of Marcus Garvey and always believed the responsibility of knowing oneself lay in that of one's family. I believed that in order to be successful one needs to understand where they are coming from in order to know where they are going. In University, I learned about Sankofa," a cultural concept from the Akan people of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Translated from Twi, it literally means "go back and get it," or "return and get it." Figuratively, it symbolizes the importance of knowing one's past to build a successful future"

(Moore, 2015, p. 57). This affirmed my belief in the idea that Black people need to know their past in order to move successfully forward. I felt, as Black people, it is our own responsibility to uplift ourselves. It is our own responsibility and we should not expect anyone else to do that for us. I am mentioning all of this because despite knowing this, I acknowledged the impact of colonialism and White supremacy. I somehow still felt the responsibility was that of Black people alone to effect positive change in our communities. I did not entertain the possibility for dominant systems to ever change, and so the responsibility was and is in our own Black hands. I was and still am about the uplifting of the Black race and the need for African-centred programs and supplementary cultural programs. While aware that all students do not have access to these programs, I believed and felt that they were a start, a move in the right direction. I would do what I could in my classroom and found comfort in knowing that my colleagues of colour were also doing what they could in their classrooms. Perhaps from a macro perspective this is not enough, but we are doing what we can within our capacity.

It was not until about two years ago that I really started to hear about data surrounding the underachievement of Black and Aboriginal students and have thus started to think differently, and shift more responsibility on the school system. According to the TDSB Achievement Gap Report (2006),

Of the 25% who do not graduate, the largest numbers are students of Aboriginal, Black (African heritage), Hispanic, Portuguese, Middle Eastern background. TDSB data shows that in proportion to their numbers, these students have the lowest test scores (EQAO), the lowest rates of credit accumulation through secondary school, and the highest dropout rates. As well, based on our data, students of these backgrounds are likely to have the lowest rates of school attendance and the highest suspension rates. The achievement gap for these groups has existed since the 1980's. These students have the lowest family income levels and are more likely to live in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the city.

I began asking myself many questions about why other racialized groups appeared to be 'succeeding' in the school system. I wondered what was going on with Black and Aboriginal students? I think that we, as Black bodies are not the only colonized groups, we are not the only displaced groups, and we are not the only marginalized groups. I think about common factors like loss of language experienced by both Aboriginal peoples, and Blacks from the diaspora. I think about the loss of land, religion, indigenous knowledge's and culture. And what that means to one's development and sense of self and place in the world. I think of the power that educators have and the number of hours that are spent with our students each day. I think about the connections and relationships that are made and I think *'oh yes, we can do something about this*.' While school in isolation may not be enough to right all of the wrongs that have been internalized by many, through colonization, we can still do our part to effect positive change. We can, from an early age, have our students see themselves in meaningful ways, develop dreams and aspirations and visualize their futures. Ideas of such change and reform excite me and have, for the

past two years effected great change in my teaching practice and my outlook on how social justice issues play out in the education system.

I began my M.Ed at OISE/UT in Social Justice Education, with a specific interest in researching how an African rooted principle such as the Nguzo Saba can impact pedagogy and shift power and White privilege in the mainstream kindergarten classroom. I wished to create a more open and equitable space for learning. I truly believe that taking an African-centred approach to teaching and learning allows young children of all diverse backgrounds to see and connect with the world through a more holistic lens that includes and reflects multiple viewpoints, experiences and ways of knowing the world. I believe that by putting into practice an African-centred approach to kindergarten programming, children of African descent will be affirmed. They will have a sense of pride in recognizing their place in the world and will have a greater sense of the true origins of things. All children who occupy the space will begin to understand the world from a different perspective than what is regularly accepted and presented as 'normal'. Introducing such concepts to early learners is critical for providing them with a foundation for a love of learning, and the ability to look at the world from a different perspective, with African and Indigenous knowledge as a centre that has played a major role in informing the rest of the world. As Dei (1996) explains in *The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools,*

> Afrocentric ideas have relevance for the wider Canadian society. The idea of community membership and social responsibility should be important to all: although individual rights are significant, the maintenance and performance of social responsibility is vital. The notion of responsibility calls not only for making the necessary interconnections between groups and individuals, but also for subordinating our individual interests and wishes in favour of a collectively defined common good. (p. 13)

In my classroom this notion of Afro-centricity sense is critical to my pedagogy. I believe that it is our responsibility as educators to foster this sense of community through African-centered principles such as the Nguzo Saba. Within and beyond the walls of my classroom, statements from my students, that affirm integrating African-centred teaching into our 'regular'programming are heard daily, such as:

If Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. walked came into our classroom, what would you say to him?

- *"You're nice and you're being nice to people."*
- *"Thank you for saving us! Are you okay?"*
- *"Why are people being mean to you?"*
- *"Why did the people kill you*?
- *"How are you feeling about people who don't have love?"*
- *"Why people need guns for?"*
- *"Good Job! … because he was trying to save us.*

How would you feel if you lived in that time…a time when you couldn't all learn and play together?

- *"Sad because we weren't friends and we'd be alone. If we got along we would not be mad at each other."*
- *"I'd feel sad because the white people are not being nice."*
- *"Sad because he died."*
- *"Sad because people need to show togetherness. Because that means they're friends and will never come apart."*
- *"Sad, because other people are sad."*

Who might you ask for help?

- *"I would ask someone that is strong and brave. The king."*
- *"The king because some of our white people are being good but some are being bad. The King!"*
- *"My mom or my teachers!"*

This JK has a lot of questions about 'The King'
Before going out to play after eating his lunch, Alistair felt compelled to examine and talk about some of the pictures in Martin's BIG words. He explained that:

JK Student: He got bigger and he got shot. And his house was bombed. And his brother's house was bombed.
Teacher: What do you think about that?
JK Student: I feel sad.
Teacher: Why sad?
JK Student: Because, he got dead and his brother's house was bombed and his family.
Teacher: I wonder why people would do that Alistair.
JK Student: It doesn't happen in this globe.
Teacher: In this globe? You don't think so?
JK Student: It doesn't happen in this globe.

(Student continues to look through some of the illustrations with deep thought.)

Making connections about some of the books we read.

- They're all brown. They've all been treated unfair. said Reina as she looked at our books on Dr. King, Ruby Bridges and Nelson Mandela
- They had brown skin and no one wanted them in their country.

Why did he (Nelson Mandela) go back (to South Africa)?

- He went back to clean up the mess."
- "The HATE. *(to clean up the hate)"*
- "He wanted to be freeee!"

Students displaying a spirit of activism as they look at an image of a 'White Area' sign on a beach:

- If I'm not white, I am still going.
- I will take the *sign* off!
- If I was so strong. I would lift it up!
- Everybody can go to that beach.

Why are people being treated unfairly in South Africa?

- Maybe there's more White people than brown.

During Learning Centres

- Ms. Young, I brought chalk outside to make FAIRNESS on the wall! No pushing. No fighting. No kicking.
- You guys, this is not a fight. This is not a fighting game. We have to show UMOJA, this is not how we show UMOJA, we have to share. *(said an SK student while drumming with friends)*
- One day during learning centres, I witnessed a student looking at a page in Nelson Mandela's book and overheard them expressing "This is my favourite page because I see everyone at the beach and they are free. It's just like Martin's dream because one of his big words was FREEDOM."

For me, these conversations are powerful and life changing. I believe they are for my students as well. They exemplify the need to begin having real discussions surrounding race and identity with young learners. Children in early stages of development are in a very important stage of development, they are taking in and being shaped by all of the messages presented to them. As educators we need to provide them with the tools that will benefit their development as empowered, socially conscious and responsible individuals who care about the common good and believe in collective responsibility. Real conversations in this context refer to educators' understanding that we live in an unequal, unjust world. However, from a young age we can do wonders for effecting change in how children begin to view themselves, their surroundings, and how they begin to question and interact with the world. Therefore, not reading as many novels with fictional characters (i.e. stories about bunnies and monkeys) and presenting children with critical literature, allows them to not only see people that look like them and/or those around them but also question and explore real concepts that affect their lives and communities.

It has become obvious to me, through my experiences with UBORA and the IBSA programme that many educators shy away from discussions surrounding identity, especially in terms of Early Childhood development and even more so in regard to race. Thus far, through my experiences, I believe it serves a purpose. When I overhear my students exclaiming things like "I don't want any White people breathing in my face!" or when another says ", told me that only Black people can be racist." or when

Black and Brown racialized children look at their skin and despite knowing their colours identify as 'peach'. These statements, among many more, made by children between the ages of 4–6 exemplify the need for discussions of identity, including that of race in Early Childhood programming. As such, my goal is always to create a safe space for my students to explore, question and create their own means and ways of expressing themselves and effecting social and environmental change. Dei (2006) states that:

> The task for Canadian educators is to integrate Afrocentric teachings with other systems of thought, particularly in the education of Black youth. Afrocentric values and ideas can form the cornerstone of classroom pedagogy. Teachers and administrators can recognize their mutual interdependence with other social learners. For the Afrocentric educator, an awareness of personal location, authority, experience, and history is the foundation of successful teaching practice. Rather than claiming authority of text, knowledge, or experience, a teacher can share power in the classroom, knowing when to step outside the role of "authority" to engage students collectively in the cause of social change. (p. 11)

The process, for me, has not been about filling my students' heads with specific knowledge. It is very organic and responsive; it is more about a constant, mutual sharing, teaching and learning that takes place between my students and me; we are constantly building on each other's knowledge by sharing through our experiences and looking at how our varying realities, thoughts and opinions connect and/or differ; without judgement with an understanding that there are more than one ways to think, to know and to be.

CURRENT FOCUS AND WHY

> *When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.* (Audre Lorde)

My experiences, particularly in terms of my experience in anti-racism at OISE/UT has re-shaped and re-defined my purpose. Thus far it leads me to believe that I need to do more in terms of my own anti-racist work. The anti-racist, inclusive education and social justice work taking place in the classroom of many of my racialized, female colleagues gives me goose bumps. I feel excited to know that our young people are being equipped to not only navigate society but to think critically of it and try to effect positive change within and beyond their communities. This community engagement is seen in the way they question and recognize injustice. In one instance the grade 1–8 programs at the school I worked at were participating in a drumming workshop. As the kindergarten class became aware of this, and when it was explained to them that they were not included, they perceived this to be a great injustice. They said, "we drum everyday, we love to drum, why are we not

included? This is NOT fair!" After a collective discussion, the class decided that the best course of action was to approach the principal. Ultimately, a compromise was reached where the kindergarten class was allowed to participate during their lunch period. This example, though not directly related to race, shows me that even at a young age, children recognize injustice and have the agency to advocate for themselves.

I want to work with young people before they became disengaged from the school system, before they disengage from their learning and become 'at-risk' and a part of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) data on achievement. I went into teaching for many reasons, one of which is because education is an incredibly powerful tool for change but also because I want to ensure that Black, Aboriginal and other racialized children are engaged in their education.

Thus far, I have been content with my learning and growth as a teacher. I am blessed to witness and play an active role in the development of my students' identities. I am excited daily, to have the opportunity to share and make connections with my students; and to be able to incite a sense of collective responsibility for themselves, others, and the environment. This is a responsibility that I cherish and hold dearly. I jump at the opportunity to be able to better serve and provide tools for empowerment, goal envisioning, achieving and resilience in my students. When asked to reflect and confront my biases, I comply with my sights set on doing whatever is needed for me to better serve and meet the needs of my students. So when I witness or hear of a colleague who has made an offensive or ignorant comment I feel incredibly disheartened and confused because the comments or actions are in opposition to my view of the 'teacher'.

Being at OISE/UT has brought on an onslaught of memories of verbal micro-aggressions that I have experienced within the last four years of teaching within the TDSB. Teachers have expressed to me, on many occasions that, *"I don't see race."* In response to discussions with a school administrator about Winston Churchill SC's Africentric program they said, *"Why is this the school's responsibility?"* I remember overhearing another colleague say, *"We didn't cause these problems, and we have to just move on."* These comments exemplify "examples of White normativity and dominance" within our schools and just ten years prior, similar comments were being made as recorded by Dei (2000) during an "ongoing study of 'best practices: of inclusive schooling.' *"We don't have a Muslim week, we don't have a White week" (11/16/95) "no reason to teach, you know, that particular history [Black/African history]": "I really get tired of people labelling [and distinguishing] 'Black' history…. Do I teach 'White' history? (12/5/95) (p. 26)* As innocent as these comments may seem, Ladson-Billings (1998) in *Just What is Critical Race Theory and What's It Doing in a 'Nice' Field Like Education?*"explains that "these daily indignities take their toll on people of color. When these indignities are skimmed over in the classrooms that purport to develop students into citizens, it is no wonder students ''blow off'' classroom discourse. How can students be expected to deconstruct rights, ''in a world of no rights?" (Williams, 1995)

In *Basic Principles of Anti-Racism Education* Dei (1996) states, "the claim to "neutrality" is itself a value-laden position. Many teachers, both non-racialized and racialized, share these sentiments and do not see the school as being responsible for filling the voids created by colonialism and White supremacy. They do not see the role that schools play in maintaining and upholding dominant values and ideals while dismissing others. Ladson-Billings, (1998) recounts a travel experience to illustrate how the saliency of race playsout.

> One of the perks that comes with these lecture "gigs" is a decent hotel. This one was no exception. My accommodation was on the hotel's VIP floor – equipped with special elevator access key and private lounge on the top floor overlooking the city. As I stepped off the elevator, I decided to go into the VIP lounge, read the newspaper, and have a drink. I arrived early, just before the happy hour began catching up on the day's news. Shortly after I sat down comfortably with my newspaper, a White man peeked his head into the lounge, looked at me and all – and said with a pronounced Southern accent, "What time are y'all gonna be servin'? (p. 8)

"Despite the scientific refutation of race as a legitimate biological concept and attempts to marginalize race in much of the public and political discourse, race continues to be a powerful social construct and signifier" (Morrison, 1992, p. 11). Despite the fact that "Many believe we live in a phase of race neutrality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 8)and "there is a supposed disappearance of race evident in current processes of deracializing human subjects" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 8). Yet, while not in a VIP lounge, like Ladson-Billings, I remember, a day while on a teaching assignment as an Occasional Teacher. It was the beginning of my career and so I was trying to make a good, lasting, impression and despite looking admittedly, young, was not dressed like a student. I was going over the teacher's plans and mentally preparing for the unknown of the day, when a teacher walked into the room, looked at me, standing behind the teacher's desk, day plans in hand, and sternly said, *"Where should you be?"*, I looked up at her, and replied *"Right here, actually."* And continued with the task at hand. These experiences are not unique, nor are they always as minor as the experiences of mine or Ladson-Billings'; at other times, they can and have been proven to be fatal, as in the case of Trayvon Martin, a Black youth killed in Florida for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Incidents such as these stress the importance of addressing the saliency of race and the negative meanings and attachments that go along with it. "Rather than move beyond race, what we ought to move beyond is a 'denial of race as a social issue in a society with a profoundly racist history and where institutional racism still exists" (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 20).

I recall another time, I was in the staffroom room at lunchtime, and a teacher said to me *"You're so lucky you are not White."*. The implication of this statement was in reference to supposed diversity hiring. The assumption was that I must have been hired solely because of my race. While setting up my classroom one year, a colleague

was familiarizing me with several of my assigned students. The colleague described two students as follows, *"Her parents are okay, but be prepared, they are 'rough'. You know, old school West Indian, 'beats' you know. Mom's going to tell you 'student' knows 'this and that', but she doesn't, you'll see."* and then when referring to another child said, *"He's a good kid. He has a little attitude but he's a good kid. There was a Children's Aid Society (CAS) incident last year, He said dad hit him, I don't think it was anything though; they're a good family you know. They're 'White".* These comments, said directly to me, are loaded with "an enactment of White normativity and dominance" (Chater, 1996; Dei, 2000).

As Dei (2006) stresses, "Race is a salient aspect of human identity. To ignore race difference and the social practices and actions engendered by race categorizations is to deny the individual-social subject connections and to 'neutralize a person's experiences' as situated in broader contexts" (p. 109). As such, my research interests have started to shift to that of educators; both non-racialized and racialized, who lack awareness and/or have no interest in making changes to their practice. It will be impossible, for true change to come about unless change is desired. Comments such as the above mentioned are commonly, but not exclusively, made by White teachers; teachers who often state, "I don't look at the race; I see only the child." This colour-blindness and/or racelessness is not a social equalizer; it is a "racial act" (Morrison, 1992, p. 46) and "only White people can afford to be raceless" (Dei, 2000, p. 26).

In spite of my continued disappointment and bewilderment towards colleagues who fail to recognize the impact of their role as teachers. I am now aware that I am quite comfortable in my role as an anti-racist educator. I continue to unpack my own biases and their implications for how I interact in the world and with my students. I am comfortable with who I am today and the role I feel compelled to play. I have come to understand and am reminded, that as an anti-racist educator I cannot be comfortable, not if I am doing radical, system-changing work.

> Thus, pedagogy from the point of view of a radical teacher does not entail merely processing received knowledges (however critically one does this) but actively transforming knowledges. In addition, it involves taking responsibility for the material effects of these very pedagogical practices on students. Teaching about "difference" in relation to power is thus extremely complicated and involves not only rethinking questions of learning and authority but also questions of center and margin. (Ladson-Billings, 1998)

This questioning of the centre and margin is truly a complicated and transformative process. It is one that cannot be forced. It is a continual process of learning and unlearning that must take place. However, in Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 90's Mohanty (1996) states,

> The struggle to transform our institutional practices fundamentally also involves the grounding of the analysis of exploitation and oppression in accurate history and theory, seeing ourselves as activists in the academy-drawing links between

> movements for social justice and our pedagogical and scholarly endeavors and expecting and demanding action from ourselves, our colleagues, and our students at numerous levels. This requires working hard to understand and to theorize questions of knowledge, power, and experience in the academy so that one effects both pedagogical empowerment as well as transformation. Racism, sexism, and homophobia are very real, day-to-day practices in which we all engage. (p. 30)

It is true, as Mohanty states, this type of transformation cannot take place until certain critical self-reflection on the part of educators has taken place. Dei (2000), also states "Anti-racism work begins when the individual practitioner takes stock of his or her relative positions of power, privilege and disadvantage" (p. 25). It "entails a recognition of the individual and collective responsibility to use multiple positions and differential locations of power, privilege and social disadvantage to work for change" (p. 25).

Believing in prevention first, intervention second, I have accepted this responsibility and my purpose is to continue digging deeper, trying to get closer to the root and counter the dis-engagement of racialized students.

I believe that anti-racist education can work and truly support children's learning not only in school but out in the world. However, in order for this work to be successful, it needs all stakeholders to be genuinely invested and unafraid to embrace anti-racism. To accomplish this, reflection resulting in intense transformation is required. Contrary to current belief that we now live in a post-racial society; "The everydayness of racism makes this project far more imperative and urgent" (Dei, 2014, p. 5). The demonization of Black bodies that takes place in our schools from a very young age has lasting negative effects on Black students. Often leading to disengagement and thus, resulting in a push or drop out.

> It is important that today's academy be a decolonizing space where we begin to interrogate, think, and rethink the ways in which dominant knowledge, discourse, and practices have shaped our understanding of social power relations; of our relationships with one another; of our understandings of sociopolitical differences in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability/ability, and body image. (Dei, 2014, p. 5) Dei stresses,
>
> *Colonialism seeks to impose the will of one people on another and to use the resources of the imposed people for the benefit of the imposer. Nothing is sacred in such a system as it powers its way toward the extinction of the wills of the imposed upon with one objective in mind: the ultimate subjection of the will to resist. An effective system of colonialism reduces the imposed upon to a shell of a human who is incapable of thinking in a subjective way of his or her own interest. In everything the person becomes like the imposer; thus in desires, wishes, visions, purposes, styles, structures, values, and especially the values of education, the person operates against his or her own interest.* (Dei & Kempf, 2006, p. 9)

Whether educators acknowledge it or not, the effects of colonialism are alive in all aspects of our society; especially our schools, and we have a collective responsibility to do something about it. Scott Woods (2011) is an American author and poet whose work engages issues of culture and race. He states,

> The problem is that White people see racism as conscious hate, when racism is bigger than that. Racism is a complex system of social and political levers and pulleys set up generations ago to continue working on the behalf of whites at other people's expense, whether whites know/like it or not. Racism is an insidious cultural disease. It is so insidious that it doesn't care if you are a White person who likes black people; it's still going to find a way to infect how you deal with people who don't look like you. Yes, racism looks like hate, but hate is just one manifestation. Privilege is another. Access is another. Ignorance is another. Apathy is another. And so on. So while I agree with people who say no one is born racist, it remains a powerful system that we're immediately born into. It's like being born into air: you take it in as soon as you breathe. It's not a cold that you can get over. There is no anti-racist certification class. It's a set of socioeconomic traps and cultural values that are fired up every time we interact with the world. It is a thing you have to keep scooping out of the boat of your life to keep from drowning in it. I know it's hard work, but it's the price you pay for owning everything. (p. 29)

While highly idealistic of me, I feel like anyone who reads this quote must understand the state of our society(ies), how the dominant came to be and why they remain as dominant against which, all others are necessarily measured as inferior. I am aware that this likely isn't enough to effect change in one's examining of the 'self', in terms of power and privilege and one's teaching practice because not a thing can and will ever change unless one wants to make change. You cannot force people to change, and if you attempt to try to force people to change they will be resentful, disingenuous and inauthentic; which achieves nothing. For all of those resistant teachers in IBSA, I highly doubt any real change was effected in their classrooms. The question remains, 'Why such resistance?' Is it fear, lack of capacity, lack of understanding, the use of the word 'race', was it the approach?

I continually return to my experiences with the UBORA and IBSA. I constantly replay Dei's words "and/with not either/or", these words help to remind me that implementing African-centred programming alongside Culturally Relevant & Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) is not only okay, but is necessary. I think about the fact that in UBORA, I was working alongside teachers that were invested in creating meaningful experiences for all involved (students, parents, colleagues and the community), and then I think back to the colleagues I observed during IBSA and their lack of interest and regard to the professional development (PD) sessions we were receiving in direct response to low achievement results amongst Black youth. The major difference between the two programs is that one had teachers who wanted to be there, while the other had teachers who were told they had to be there. This difference has had a lasting effect on me.

Participation in the IBSA program was based on the school and the grade being taught; thus, many of the educator's in the programme were there by 'chance' and were quite vocal about their displeasure in being there. They felt, that by implementing African-centred teaching into their programming they were now ignoring the other racialized students in the space. They felt their human rights were being violated. I will admit, initially, I was wary as well. Not because I didn't believe in African-centred teaching, but because I thought (CRRP) was sufficient. I also felt that Afrocentricity was replacing Eurocentricity and found this not to be the answer to our problems. Dei (1996), in *The Role of Afrocentricity in Canadian Schools* clarifies this and explains that,

> A focus on Afrocentricity is designed not to exclude other "centric" knowledge but to contribute to a plurality of perspectives and knowledge about schooling in the Euro-Canadian context. Curriculum in Canadian schools is diversified when programming is culture-specific without marginalizing other cultures. Questions surrounding Afrocentric education could equally be asked about First Nations, Asiacentric, and other forms of education. First Nations peoples can and do generate knowledge about their own societies that could be tapped by an initiative for inclusive schooling. Asiacentric, Eurocentric, and Afrocentric world views all contain some ideas that can help solve educational problems. (p. 8)

I was however, still cautious of the capacity of my colleagues to deliver African-centred centred teaching in an authentic manner. As such, despite experiencing great successes in my own classroom, my opinions and feelings wavered throughout the program. I was unsure about the process and implementation of the IBSA. Deep down, I knew that the program was needed and needed to be far-reaching, but it also needed to be in the hands of educators who actually cared about implementing it. Something I noticed in our PD sessions was the lack of discussion surrounding and confronting Whiteness. Sure, in one session we watched and discussed, the 'blue eye, brown eye' experiment where, a teacher, Jane Elliot conducted a daring classroom experiment the day after Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. She decided to treat children with blue eyes as superior to children with brown eyes (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided/). We also watched videos on students feelings about an infamous 'doll experiment; 'black doll versus a white doll' where "More than 40 years ago, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1947) conducted a series of doll studies examining racial identification and racial preference in dark-skinned and light-skinned Negro children between 3 and 7 years of age" (Farrell & Olson, 1983). We spoke a lot about what it was like to be a Black student in the public school system, but we did not discuss what it means to be White.

As Dei regularly reminds his educators and his students, anti-racist education is not a program, there is no curriculum for it, there are however some guiding principles based on social justice, democracy, and critical theory that attempt to bring to the forefront the realities faced by oppressed groups with a particular focus

on power relationships. This focus is great for the teachers that are ready and willing to take teaching and learning in a different direction, but again, what about those who have no interest? What do you do if they refuse to participate in change and how do you address the consequences of this failure to engage on their students?

What I have observed throughout my journey is that, there have been countless opportunities and efforts made for teachers to confront their own biases and positions of power and privilege both in the classroom and in society, and to genuinely see and interact with their students. In Teacher's College, the site of much of my 'soul' abuse, all teacher-candidates had to take a course entitled Social Issues in Education. In this course, teachers are asked to reflect and confront their own experiences and biases and how these may impact the diverse students we serve. While participating in regular PD sessions, my colleagues and I were asked to reflect and confront my experiences, biases and how they may impact our students, but for many, there is still resistance. Facilitators of these development sessions are basically either 'preaching to the converted' and/or their words are falling on deaf ears for the rest.

"Teachers who belong to the White, dominant group have never experienced racism first hand and, therefore, are often the last to recognize racism when it occurs to others" (Pillay, 2013). The deconstruction of Whiteness is not an easy feat to take on. Whiteness is everywhere and not often questioned. Regardless, as it states in *Engaging Equity* "Whatever the complexity of the concept, Whiteness cannot escape the materiality of its history or its effects on the everyday lives of the marginalized…" (Steinberg, 2005, 16) Whiteness has to be deconstructed so that meaningful social change will not occur on the large scale it needs to happen in our public schools for our students; all students.

During a Principles of Anti-Racism Education Course at OISE/UT, the implementation of a mandatory course, specifically pertaining to anti-racist education for teacher candidates came up.

This idea has stayed with me because the seemingly innocent micro and macro aggressions that I, and many around me have experienced as a consequence of our race, lingers and carries a lot of weight and meaning. A genuine effort needs to be made in Teacher Pre-Service programs to address the role of race and racial prejudices in establishing positions of power and privilege within society and thus, the education system. Drastic measures need to be taken; processes need to be put into place before teachers are accepted into, and then allowed to graduate and receive Ontario College of Teachers certification. I believe a more critical process must be put in place before teachers are considered 'hirable' by a school board. This process of reform in Anti-racist training must be drastic because meaningful social change does not take place without discomfort and disruption of the present. I am unsure at this point in my journey as to how to measure the success of such a process in order to ensure that teachers are well equipped to implement anti-racist pedagogy. I do believe however, that some measure is necessary if we are to actualize anti-racist pedagogy. This process will necessarily require discomfort. Teacher candidates must engage in critical self-reflection, starting from within and manifesting outwards.

> However, a public culture of dissent entails creating spaces for epistemological standpoints that are grounded in the interests of people and which recognize the materiality of conflict, of privilege, and of domination. Thus creating such cultures is fundamentally about making the axes of power transparent in the context of academic, disciplinary, and institutional structures as well as in interpersonal relationships (rather than individual relations) in the academy. It is about taking the politics of everyday life seriously as teachers, students, administrators, and members of hegemonic academic cultures. Culture itself is thus redefined as incorporating individual and collective memories, dreams and history that are contested and transformed through the political praxis of day-to-day living. (Dei, 2005, p. 30)

CONCLUSION

Race and racism, have and continue to play a major role in how I view, interact with, and experience the world. Race affects how I am received and perceived by others. This has been a constant, throughout my entire life. “The ongoing denials of race and difference, however, necessitate a new politics of affirmation for those directly injured or harmed by a racial divide and or racist actions in institutional settings” (Dei, 1999, p. 32).

I believe that my journey exemplifies the need to centre race in order to show how “Identity is linked with knowledge production in terms of how we can make sense of our world through individual and collective histories and experiences” (Dei, 2000, p. 36). I believe that I was provided with a fairly solid foundation in the early years of my life, paticularly in terms of my identity formation. I believe that this, along with a basic awareness of power and privilege in society, has allowed me to navigate the multiple learning(s) and (un)learning(s) that I have experienced from an early age. I have and continue to gain deeper understanding, an awareness and must adjust my thought processes accordingly, in terms of navigating my own identity, and the identities of the communities I belong and do not belong to. Much of this learning and (un)learning is difficult and accompanied by great discomfort. However, I believe it to be a necessary process not just for understanding who I am and the world around me, but also in terms of my role as an educator. I believe that this foundation has, helped me to be able to shrug off and dismiss most of the micro and macro aggressions that I have experienced. I recognize that many of my students are not afforded ‘my privilege’ and as a result may succumb to hurtful, or dismissive actions and/or comments made by educators. Issues that face Black, Aboriginal and racialized people are multi-faceted. They are not solely the consequence of the Eurocentric school system. These deep issues of racism and marginalization are entrenched in many facets of society and have been for hundreds of years.

Schools and teachers are powerful beyond measure and have the ability to effect amazing, meaningful, progressive social change. This notion is mandated in Toronto schools and is beginning to be implemented. Change must and will continue to take

effect, slowly but surely, and will require much discomfort and disruption of the dominant hegemony. In collaboration with fellow anti-racist educators, I aim to continue to try to effect change within and beyond my classroom. Until anti-racism education demands the implementation of a mandatory pass/fail course for teacher candidates, the deconstruction of Whiteness and the dismantling of the existing Eurocentric hegemony prevalent in our school system will not be possible. However, at anti-racist educators must make every effort to engage, include, and redirect their colleagues who are not willing to change their approach. We must encourage these educators to acknowledge their privilege and participate in the process required to meet the needs of racialized students.

NOTE

[1] The Nguzo Saba are a set of 7 African principles of African Heritage; a communitarian African philosophy.

REFERENCES

Alexander, C. (2009). Stuart Hall and 'Race'. *Cultural Studies, 23*(4), 457–482.

Calliste, A. M., & Dei, G. J. (2000). *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.

Codjoe, H. M. (1997). *Black students and school success: A study of the experiences of academically successful African-Canadian student graduates in Alberta's secondary schools* (Doctrol dissertation). University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Dei, G. J. (1996). The role of afrocentricity in the inclusive curriculum in Canadian schools. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation, 21*(2), 170. doi:10.2307/1495088

Dei, G. J. (1999). The denial of difference: Refraining anti-racist praxis. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 2*(1), 17–38. doi:10.1080/1361332990020103

Dei, G. J., & Kempf, A. (2006). *Anti-colonialism and education: The politics of resistance*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Dei, G. J., & Mcdermott, M. (2014). *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Farrell, W. C., & Olson, J. L. (1983). Kenneth and Mamie Clark revisited: Racial Identification and Racial Preference in Dark-Skinned and Light-Skinned Black Children. *Urban Education, 18*(3), 284–297. doi:10.1177/004208598301800302

Harris, F., & Smith, J. C. (1999). Centricity and the mentoring experience in academia: An Africentric mentoring paradigm. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, *23*(4), 229.

Itzigsohn, J., & Brown, K. (2015). Sociology and the theory of double consciousness. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race Du Bois Rev., 12*(2), 231–248. doi:10.1017/s1742058x15000107

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7–24. doi:10.1080/095183998236863

Mohanty, C. T. (1989). On race and voice: Challenges for liberal education in the 1990s. *Cultural Critique, 14*, 179. doi:10.2307/1354297

Moore, N. B. (2015). The transformative power of Sankofa: Teaching African history inside San Quentin state prison. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2015*(170), 57–65. doi:10.1002/cc.20144

Myalism – definition of myalism in English | Oxford Dictionaries. (n.d.). Retrieved November 09, 2016, from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/myalism

Pillay, M. (2014). Understanding Whiteness first step in anti-racist teaching. *The Saskatchewan Bulletin.*

Raza, A. (2013). Multiculturalism: The missing bodies and voices. *Explorations of Educational Purpose Politics of Anti-Racism Education: In Search of Strategies for Transformative Learning,* 135–147. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-7627-2_10

Steinberg, S. (2005). *Engaging equity: New perspectives on anti-racist education*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

The Ontario Safe Schools Act: School discipline and discrimination. (n.d.). Retrieved November 09, 2016, from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-safe-schools-act-school-discipline-and-discrimination

Toronto District School Board. (2010). *Achievement gap task force: Draft report*. Retrieved from http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/Community%20Advisory%20committees/ICAC/Subcommittees/AchievementGapReptDraftMay172010.pdf

KATRINA RIGELHOF

7. ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES, STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, AND DEFICIT THINKING WITHIN ONTARIO'S URBAN AND PRIORITY HIGH SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

This chapter acknowledges that many students are falling through the gaps of Ontario's current education system. Rigelhof seeks to understand the consequences of labeling students as 'at-risk,' and will critically engage with the stereotypes surrounding urban schools. This chapter focuses on the 34 schools that are a part of the Ontario Ministry of Education's initiative: Urban and Priority High Schools. By critiquing deficit thinking and stereotype threat theory as conceptual frameworks, through the theoretical frameworks of critical anti-racism theory and anti-colonial theory, this work aims to deconstruct these ideals and determine ways in which educators can move away from such thinking into more inclusive practices. Rigelhof posits that this will result in greater student success for those who are labeled 'at-risk.' The current literature surrounding deficit thinking and urban schools is lacking in the sense that there has not been critical and in-depth focus and analyses of the Urban and Priority High School initiative. Rigelhof acknowledges that this research may change over time; however, deconstructing the stereotypes applied to 'at-risk' students is a necessary endeavour in gaining greater student achievement.

Keywords: at-risk, anti-racism, education, Urban and Priority High Schools, deficit thinking, stereotype threat theory

INTRODUCTION

Richard LaGravenese's 2007 film *Freedom Writers,* depicts a true story of a White English teacher in a classroom where her students have segregated themselves among racial lines. This film contains many of the stereotypes that we see portrayed in other films (e.g., *Save the Last Dance, Badge of Honor,* etc.) and in the news regarding Black students; these include a large presence of violence and gang activity and a lack of interest in education. While the film *Freedom Writers* is fictional (though loosely based on a true story), many of these stereotypes are present within our education system as well. Such stereotypes help reinforce the racialization of lower student achievement and engagement (see Milner, 2008). In fact, "discourse about urban schools, teachers, students, and principals is quite often "presented in

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 109–126.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

negative, deficit, inadequate, and deficient manners" and are often spoken about with such terms as "disadvantaged," "oppressed," and 'at-risk" (Milner, 2008, p. 1574). As Richard R. Valencia (1997) asserts the unsurprising fact that, "many [racialized and marginalized] students attending [urban and low socioeconomic schools] perform very poorly on conventional measures of assessment of academic achievement. These include performance below grade level on standardized tests and dropout rates of secondary school students (p. 1). The question however, is how and why do racialized and marginalized students have lower academic achievement than White students? (see Valencia, 1997; Poretlli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007; James, 2012; Olivos, 2006). As Kumashiro (2000) emphasizes, "to the onlooker, some of these [urban] students 'succeed' in school, whereas others are marginalized, fail, or dropout" (p. 27). The Urban and Priority High School (UPHS) initiative started by the Ontario Ministry of Education is a way in which 'at-risk' students may become more successful in the school system (i.e., graduate, become critical thinkers, etc.); this initiative is the focus of this chapter.

People for Education indicated within their 2008 report on Ontario's schools that, "63% of Ontario's students attend urban/suburban schools" (p. 3), and these students receive, on average, $920 less than those in non-urban schools. Therefore, there are funding inequities that may also contribute to lower student achievement in students labeled as 'at-risk' because of a lack of programming. In response to these issues, the Ontario Ministry of Education began the UPHS initiative that recognized that certain spaces (and bodies) in disadvantaged areas may require more support than other schools in order to provide programming, staff, and other resources to help these students deemed 'at-risk' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 28). The 'at-risk' term has largely meant that the students who are labeled as such have a greater propensity not to complete the requirements necessary for graduation (see Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007; MacMath et al., 2009; Milner, 2005; Walker, 2011, etc.). The UPHS initiative began in 2008 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012) with 285 potential secondary schools identified however, only 20 to 50 schools could be selected for funding; the initiative has since allotted funding for 34 schools in 12 school boards since 2008 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 1).

Schools were eligible for anywhere from $200,000 to 500,000 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 3). The UPHS initiative is committed to giving $10 million annually to those schools who are designated as urban, which means that the purpose of this funding is to provide support for schools "that face challenges such as poverty, criminal and gang activity, a lack of community resources, and below-average student achievement […] The ministry's primary goals for this initiative were to improve school safety and academic achievement" (Auditor General of Ontario, 2010, p. 277). The Ministry of Education's website indicates that the schools designated as UPHS focus on five key areas: Nutrition, Student Leadership and Engagement, Lunchtime and After School Programming, Staffing, and Improving Student Achievement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

It is my firm belief that all students no matter their socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexuality, or religious background deserve equal access to education and the same opportunities should be available to every student so that they can reach their full potential. In fact, "the public education system exists to ensure that every student has an equitable chance for success. But for many students that is not a reality" (People for Education, 2008, p. 14). There are many high schools in urban centres that face issues relating to poverty, criminal activity, and a lack of community programming that make the educational system within those areas unequal (Daniel, 2010; James, 2012; Brown, 2010, etc.).

I was given the opportunity to work in one of the UPHS schools during the 2014/2015 school year as a student teacher, and I saw firsthand the stereotypes placed on students by their teachers and by those outside of the school. I heard constantly from people within my personal life that the school I would be teaching in was a 'bad' school, a place where the students did not care about their education, and that it was dangerous for a 'young White female' to enter into. However, this could not have been further from the truth. It was my experience and one that I have seen within reviewing the literature that these students needed teachers who cared about their wellbeing and that sought to understand their lives and how it could connect to the classroom. The students needed to know that they can, in fact, be successful. I witnessed my own students in the classroom struggle with the subject matter because they could not connect it to their own lives. It is in knowing my students' personal stories and how it affected their school life that brought me to this topic and drives my passion.

Therefore, it is incredibly important to me that I recognize my privileges as a White woman. As a member of the dominant group for whom the education system was designed for I have the responsibility to decolonize my mind, "unlearn" my privileges, and acknowledge my own place in perpetuating these deficit views (Dei, 2010, p. 360). This is significant to engage upon as my theoretical framework on which this research is based is critical anti-racist theory (CART); and as Dei (2013) contends "at the heart of re-theorizing anti-racism, is a decentering of Whiteness and dislodging it from the position of dominance and the standard marker of all that is good, pure, civilized, moral, and virtuous" (p. 2). Furthermore, CART is heavily linked with addressing systemic inequities and the deficit mentalities placed on marginalized and racialized bodies (Dei, 2013, p. 3).

The UPHS initiative has been in place for seven years, yet the stigmas surrounding students in urban schools still exist; largely because of a deficit mentality that certain racial groups are inferior. While, the initiative was not started in an effort to reduce these stigmas, but instead to create a safe space and greater success in students through funding and programming, it should have allowed for the stigma to be reduced since these students are becoming more successful in the school system. The stereotypes that face 'at-risk' students are heavily linked to the conceptual frameworks on which this research is based: stereotype threat theory (see Steele, 1997) and deficit thinking (see Valencia, 1997; Portelli, 2010; García & Guerra, 2004). Deficit thinking

"maintain[s] White middle-class privilege by leaving unspoken the way in which schooling is organized around the norms of this group" (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007, p. 9). Whereas stereotype threat theory is "the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs becoming self-relevant" (Steele, 1997, p. 616). Both deficit thinking and stereotype threat theory relate to student achievement, in that they both cause lower student achievement (Olivos, 2006; Steele, 1997; Tatum, 2010).

Students within urban schools come from diverse communities and many may have personal issues (e.g., siblings to look after, single parent households, jobs, etc.) outside of school, therefore, these factors could influence whether or not the students are successful in their educational endeavours. In this context it is important to recognize that students within UPHS schools are often labeled as 'at-risk' students. The 'at-risk' term is heavily contested within academia and within the education system (see Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007). Deficit thinking contends, "that the primary blame for academic underachievement and social maladjustment should be placed on the social group in question. […] the source of inequality is not seen as being located within the dominant [White] social structure" (Olivos, 2006, p. 45). Therefore, under deficit thinking, the 'at-risk' label allows for teachers to see the student as the problem, rather than the system and its inequities as being the problem. The student becomes the label, and unfortunately there is an overrepresentation of racialized bodies within the 'at-risk' designation, which further allows for the perpetuation of deficit ideals within the education system (James, 2012).

For the purposes of this chapter, the 'at-risk' term shall be defined as "those students who are having 'difficulty achieving curriculum expectations and will be at risk of not completing their diploma requirements'" (MacMath et al., 2009, p. 87) and as "populations of students who possess a higher likelihood than other students of experiencing low academic achievement" (Brown, 2012, p. 1078). I recognize that there are students who are not racialized bodies who are also 'at-risk,' however, to connect the term to deficit ideals it is necessary to focus on racialized bodies as they are overrepresented within the term and within urban schools (James, 2012). This chapter will address the factors contributing to the 'at-risk' label, and how this term further creates deficit ideals in the education system and how these contribute to systemic inequities.

It is, therefore, important to address the systemic inequities in relation to the perpetuation of stereotypes on certain marginalized bodies within our education system and how quite often these bodies are the ones who are streamed into the Applied, Workplace, College, and Open courses in Ontario high schools and are subsequently quite often labeled as 'at-risk.' James (2012) contends that in labeling students as 'at-risk,' it is less about their learning needs and more about their deficits (p. 465). Furthermore, James (2012) argues that Black male 'at-risk' students are at an even further disadvantage when coupled with the stereotypes of them as immigrants, fatherless, athletes, troublemakers, and underachievers (p. 470). In addition, while the term 'at-risk' is well intended, the way the term has become

normalized in Canadian society does not allow for an examination of how dominant structures are creating these students. This is as a result of the fact that the structure is not conducive to their learning needs, but acts instead to explain away their failure (James, 2012, p. 470).

Furthermore, some teachers reproduce hegemonic and deficit ideals by teaching to perform well on tests, by treating students as 'one size fits all,' by engaging in "colour-blindness" (Milner, 2005, p. 770**,** Walker, 2011, p. 585), and by treating students differently based on their socioeconomic statuses and family backgrounds (see Dei et al., 1997; James, 2012, etc.). In the coming paragraphs of this chapter, I will address the issues surrounding streaming, dropouts, and parental involvement, and how teachers contribute to these issues through deficit thinking.

Deficit mentalities and the stereotypes placed on marginalized and racialized students is heavily linked with Canada's multicultural identity; and while, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to deconstruct and discuss the issues surrounding Canada's multiculturalism, it is, however, important to briefly discuss this in relation to systemic inequities. Given society's firm belief in Canada's Multicultural Act and subsequent ideology, "any complaint and issue brought up by a racialized group becomes a reflection of their inability to solve their own issues, in an 'ideal' and 'equitable' environment" (Huynh, 2014, p. 153). Canada has an image of promoting cultural freedom, democracy, and equality amongst all people (James, 2012, p. 471), and yet, the image of the 'other' creates the stereotypes that are placed on the students labeled as 'at-risk'. I admit that prior to researching Canada's Multicultural Act, I thought Canada was a multicultural and accepting nation, but through researching deficit thinking and our multicultural identity, I realize that the notion of multiculturalism as prescribed in the Act is actually contributing to the systemic inequities that are causing more and more racialized and marginalized students to become 'at-risk' and are allowing the stereotyping of these students as 'other.' In this way, the 'other' is then stereotyped as a foreigner, and because of this "unaware educators will tend to take the position that nothing or very little can be done to help these youth" because they are seen as lacking "Canadian educational values and discipline" (James, 2012, p. 472). The stereotyping of marginalized and racialized students as 'other' causes deficit thinking in the classroom, which hinders a student's ability to succeed. Thus, it is important to address the inequities and these deficit mentalities.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that these bodies are incredibly diverse and are bringing their multiple identities with them to the school; and, these multiple identities are missing from the curriculum, and therefore, the practices within the school (see Dei, 2010, p. 355). These multiple identities "do not refer only to race, gender, class, language, religion, or sexuality; they also refer to histories and cultures that shape our understanding of being a person and belonging to a group, multiple groups, a community, and varied communities" (Dei, 2010, p. 353).

Within the current Anglo-White (Eurocentric) hegemonic curriculum, so many of our racialized and marginalized students are falling through the gaps of the education

system. This is because the system that is in place is not conducive to their identities or their lived experiences. In fact, "student success becomes determined through this singular measurable relationship with the texts and curricula" (Jackson et al., 2015, p. 5), of which, school and its curriculum is formed within hegemonic relations that exclude particular bodies from education. This is heavily linked with race and deficit thinking which as Edward Olivos (2006) indicates is the idea of institutionalized racism causing so many issues within the education system, causing marginalized and racialized bodies to be disconnected from education (p. 42). Racism is, therefore, permeated within our current school system in the ways in which it treats those marginalized bodies through stereotypes and deficit mentalities, streaming, lack of representation within the curriculum, and through the way in which the structure of the school is set (Olivos, 2006).

The UPHS initiative and its funding for programming allows for those students who are disengaged from education to have a school environment in which their identities are recognized and given opportunities necessary to become successful within the school system. The initiative also recognizes that there are structural inequities that may prevent a student from succeeding, in that, the way the system is designed as a Eurocentric White curriculum, disengages racialized students from school. Thus, the system is essentially designed to let these students fail (see Ladson-Billings, 2003; Dei et al., 1997). The UPHS funding provides programming that will aid racialized students in their academic endeavours; these include after-school programming, staff (i.e., social workers and psychologists), parental and community programs, and achievement programs (tutoring, achievement centres, student success offices) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010/2012).

THE STIGMA OF THE URBAN

Deficit thinking affects our everyday lives; in the sense that, we place deficit ideals on racial groups who we view as inferior to the dominant White group. For example, there are common stereotypes against Black males that they are either criminals or should be playing basketball; these are evident in popular media and seep into the school culture—working to reinforce one another. This example is just one of many deficit ideals, that is normalized and accepted through many public spheres. Furthermore, "[i]n schools, practices such as academic tracking, disproportionate funding, and the overrepresentation of Black and Latino children in punitive school disciplinary procedures contribute to the maintenance of structural racial inequality and social reproduction" (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Oakes, 2005; as cited in Hambacher & Thompson, 2015, p. 1). It is these inequalities, which stem from deficit thinking, and work to perpetuate the stigma that surrounds the urban student.

Jackson and his colleagues (2015) state that, "urban, as a term, has come to be codified through various means to signify racialized, impoverished students and communities" (p. 3). In relation, scholars Hampton, Peng, and Ann (2008) indicate

within their article "Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Urban Schools" that pre-service teachers see urban students as "less motivated, "having fewer academic skills," "needing more discipline," "parents as less supportive," "do not want to learn," etc. (p. 270). They indicate that they are receiving these deficits through media representations which show urban students as "susceptible to gangs, violence, and drugs" and that the teachers in these representations are "noble saviors" and the students as "victims" (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008, p. 285).

Thus, "the term 'urban schools' evokes an image of a dilapidated building in a poor neighbourhood with African American or Hispanic children" (Jacob, 2010, p. 130), and in these neighbourhoods "rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime are all high" (Jacob, 2010, p. 132). As an example, in 2007, in an urban school in Toronto, Canada, 15 year old, Jordan Manners was shot to death. In a report commissioned after the death of this student, it was found that "nearly a quarter of the students knew someone who had brought a gun to school in the previous two years" (Allen, 2010). This school, C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute, would become one of the 34 schools deemed UPHS by the Ministry of Education, and since it has now been given funding for programming, "suspensions are dropping, and standardized test scores have risen" (Allen, 2010). With the funding from UPHS initiative, this school is able to provide programs to "get kids engaged inside the classroom" which ultimately will allow for not only greater success in 'at-risk' students, but also a safer school environment.

Beverly-Jean Daniel's article (2010), "Reimagining the Urban: A Canadian Perspective," also discusses Teacher candidates' assumptions regarding urban schools and how they largely believed that all students in the education system, regardless of whether or not it was the urban or the suburban school, had equal access to schooling and had the same level of education (p. 824). However, "there are various institutional, physical, ideological, and social factors that can impact the quality of the schooling that is afforded to students which will affect the outcomes" (Daniel, 2010, p. 824). As Dei and his colleagues (1997) state, in having racial stereotypes placed on students who are 'at-risk,' these students may feel deterred from "relating their problems to teachers or guidance counselors, who they presume will be evaluating them in light of these misconceptions" regarding their backgrounds (p. 72).

Furthermore, teachers may not be actively, or even consciously racist, nor recognize their own underlying deficit mentalities, but as Beverly Daniel Tatum (2010) indicates "we are all products of our culture and history" (p. 9). This means that, "we have all been exposed to racial stereotypes and flawed educational psychology, and unless we are consciously working to counter their influence on our behaviour, it is likely that they will shape our interactions with those who have been stereotyped" (Tatum, 2010, p. 9). By addressing the stereotypes placed on marginalized and racialized bodies within our urban education system, and how this relates to lower student achievement, in connection with the Ministry of Education's UPHS initiative, hopefully these inequities will begin to change.

Social psychologist Claude Steele's stereotype threat theory also provides insight into the stigmas surrounding racialized students in urban schools as it indicates how the threat of stereotyping can hinder a student's achievement and success within school. Further, deficit thinking and the stigma of the urban are heavily linked with Steele's stereotype threat theory. Milner (2005) explains that stereotype threat is the "psychological burdens that marginalized people have endured as a result of the systemic and the socialized ways that they have been depicted as throughout history" (p. 771). Therefore, deficit thinking and the stigma of the urban "may be a consequence of stereotypes that are ingrained in prospective teachers thoughts about diverse learners" (Milner, 2005, p. 771). Prior to Steele and his colleagues (2002) further researching stereotype threat theory, there was the belief in the "underperformance phenomenon" in which "a group of students sharing a given racial identity get lower subsequent grades than other students" (p. 379). When a student underperforms on a test, it is not necessarily their lack of skills that is preventing them from achieving a higher score, but the impact of stereotypes that are placed on those groups, which is when Stereotype Threat Theory becomes prevalent. The aforementioned is an example of a "situation-specific form of stigma […] a form tied to a specific negative stereotype" about a certain racial group (Steele et al., 2002, p. 380). For example, as Martin Wasserberg (2014) states "a Black student taking a standardized test may fear performing worse than her White classmates" (p. 502); this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy projected onto racialized bodies by the dominant group "thereby confirming stereotypes of minority intellectual inferiority" (p. 502). The threat "has been shown to decrease the academic test performance of African American students at college, high school, and elementary school (Wasserberg, 2014, p. 502). In Wasserberg's study (2014) when he framed the reading comprehension tests around ability, racialized students who were aware of the negative stereotypes facing their racial group performed poorly despite efforts to not conform to the stereotypes (p. 511).

Steele and his colleagues (2002) explain that negative views may not be connected personally, however, they ultimately stem from conscious or subconscious judgments about certain racial groups. This judgment ultimately results in discrimination, which can result in the constant worry of the subjection of stereotypes (pp. 384–385; see also Boucher et al., 2012; Wasserberg, 2014). "The more one is identified with the group about whom the negative stereotype is constructed against, or the more one expects to be perceived as a member of that group, the more stereotype threat one should feel in situations where the stereotype applies" (Steele et al., 2002, p. 391). Moreover, some students who feel as though their racial group is seen as being inferior or weak may feel like they cannot seek their teachers' assistance because they do not want to confirm their group's stereotype (Tatum, 2010, p. 16; see also Steele, 1997; Steele et al., 2002). Therefore, Tatum (2010) indicates that it is important for educators to ensure they are not setting up testing situations or assignments in ways that make their racialized and marginalized students feel as though they cannot perform well (p. 16).

Boucher and her colleagues' (2012) studied 142 undergraduate women and 62 undergraduate men, where they manipulated certain test situations to see what kind of effect it would have on the genders. It is a common stereotype that women are notoriously bad at math (Boucher et al., 2012, p. 174), and they wanted to see if women who know this prior to a test would perform poorly on it given the stereotype threat. They found that women who knew about the stereotype performed poorly than those women who received the explicitly stated gender fair test (Boucher et al., 2012, p. 178). Within a UPHS environment, programming needs to be in place that works to ensure the success of all students, which will allow for the reduction of stereotype threat and of deficit thinking. Many UPHS communities have Student Success and Achievement Centres that provide equal access to assistance for all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010/2012). It is important, therefore, "to effectively reduce the negative impact of stereotype threat on learning […] before learning begins" (Boucher et al., 2012, p. 178).

TEACHER PRACTICE: UNDERLYING DEFICIT MENTALITIES

The stigmas surrounding urban schools are also reflected in teacher practices within the classroom, as they demonstrate underlying deficit mentalities. In Gloria Ladson-Billing's article entitled "I ain't writin' nuttin': Permissions to Fail and Demands to Succeed in Urban Classrooms" (2003), she explains the idea of allowing racialized bodies to fail within the classroom. This concept is explicated through the rationalization that a Black student did not want to partake in a writing exercise because she said, "I don't want no White people pickin' me!" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 110). In the teacher allowing this student not to write, the teacher was, in fact, granting the student "permission to fail" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 110). Ladson-Billings (2003) questions whether or not this permission to fail occurs because of the student's "cultural style, form of language, and attitude deem her unworthy of teaching in her teacher's eyes" (p. 110). This one example of treating a racialized student differently than that of her White classmates who are not given the same "permission to fail" is also discussed within many other articles and scholarly resources (see Dei et al., 1997).

As Dei (2010) explains "true academic achievement means that all students have a full range of opportunities and appropriate support to reach their goals in a way they feel they can be successful in any undertaking" (p. 352; see also Dei et al., 1997). However, through treating racialized students differently from their White peers, teachers are contributing to the systemic inequities that make the education system incredibly unequal. An issue here is that, "educators do not view themselves as part of the problem" (García & Guerra, 2004, p. 151). This is largely because "the majority of teachers are well-intentioned, caring individuals but are unaware of the deeper, hidden, or invisible dimensions in culture," therefore, they are then contributing to their own underlying deficit mentalities that in fact hinder student achievement (García & Guerra, 2004, p. 153).

As García and Guerra (2004) contend there is "a general assumption that many of their students' did not enter school ready to learn" (p. 159). This is related to the idea that many marginalized students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, have unsupportive parents, and therefore, their lives are not conducive to success within the classroom (García & Guerra, 2004, p. 160; see also Dei et al., 1997; Hambacher & Thompson, 2015; Milner, 2005). Furthermore, some teachers state that they are colour-blind, in that, they do not see race, that they treat each student the same (Walker, 2011, p. 585). But, in doing so they are continuing to marginalize students, which in effect places these students 'at-risk.' Dei (2010) explains that, "difference is also often viewed as a problem that can only be solved by stressing sameness or commonality" (p. 354). If a student deviates from this idea of sameness, they will "suffer in the school system" (Dei, 2010, p. 355). It is explained that,

> Deviation often arises because of the nature of the school system—how it is run and by whom; what is taught and not taught, who teaches what, how and why; and which students it supports most. Historically, public school culture has legitimized societal hegemonic ideas and practices by imposing dominant norms to reinforce differences. (Dei, 2010, p. 355)

It is this idea of "deviation" and the emphasis placed on sameness, and the focus on the differences between the dominant and racialized students that causes the systemic inequities that put urban students 'at-risk.' In fact," in the Canadian context, the term 'at-risk' now applies to the 70 percent majority of students deemed 'not university bound'" and these students categorically are the ones who are racialized within the school system (Dei, 2010, p. 357). In having deficit mentalities they cause students to be seen as "the poor, the willful, the disabled, the non-English speaking, the slow, the bottom 10 percent" (Comber & Kamler, 2004, p. 293).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND STUDENTS 'AT-RISK'

The Canadian education system currently places more emphasis on the importance of standardized test scores, and inter-competition between students; this is a neoliberal ideal in which more value is placed on capital worth and individualism (Portelli & Konecny, 2013, p. 91). A neoliberal school system produces "systemic inequities, dehumanization, and instrumentalization of teachers and students" (Portelli & Konecny, 2013, p. 89). Within urban schools, student achievement is heavily linked to deficit thinking in that, "a schooling system based on deficit mentality yields narrow student engagement that in turn leads to school dropouts" (Portelli, 2010). I witnessed a supply teacher display outward deficits in relation to 'at-risk' students within an Applied level class which affected how she presented herself to the students. In the presence of students, she said to me that "these students have no work ethic…they get that from their families, no interest in education," among other racialized remarks. While, these students—to my knowledge—have not dropped out, I did witness their lack of engagement in the classroom and their resistance to this particular teacher.

It is “certain pedagogical practices seen as normal and necessary by mainstream America [that] negatively affect the academic performance of bicultural students” (Olivos, 2006, p. 51). For instance, racialized students may have their teachers, place lower expectations on them, deliver a culturally biased curriculum, and offer them less access to unbiased educators (Olivos, 2006, p. 51; see Jacob, 2007). It is these inequalities that then lead to students being placed as ‘at-risk.’ Labeling students ‘at-risk,’ ‘others’ them. This measurement against the dominant is the “central notion of deficit discourse” (Polakow, 1992, as cited in Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007, p. 9). Students who are considered to be ‘at-risk’ often have other labels placed on them; Portelli, Shields, and Vibert (2007) assert, these students “explicitly named some of their teachers’ constructions of them as ‘bad kids,’ ‘trouble-makers,’ and said getting trapped in these constructions limited, frustrated, and disempowered them” (p. 46). It is this disempowerment and limitation that leads to lower achievement within the school system, which keeps the label of ‘at-risk’ on these students.

McMath and her colleagues (2010) state that reasons why students are designated as ‘at-risk’ include, failing a previous course, inconsistent attendance, and inappropriate behaviour within school (pp. 87–88). “[Far] too often in academic discourse, blame is placed on the student and their families” (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007, p. 2). As Portelli, Shields, and Vibert (2007) contend the ‘at-risk’ term can either “reproduce inequities” or become “a necessary means of support” (p. 6). I opine that within deficit thinking and stereotype threat theory, the term reproduces the stereotypes and the structural inequities; whereas through the UPHS initiative and its funding for achievement programs, the term can become a way of providing support for the students deemed ‘at-risk.’ Thus identifying students as ‘at-risk’ can have the inadvertent and adverse affect of “segregating schooling along class and racial lines” without ever getting to the root causes of systemic issues (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, “racist and classist ideologies embedded in our culture also entered into some educators’ (and students’) constructions of the kids in [urban] schools” (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007, p. 48).

Within educational discourse, the achievement gap is “usually defined as a disparity in school performance between White students and racialized students (particularly Black and Latino students) as evidenced by standardized test scores and overall grade point averages” (Tatum, 2010, p. 2). The primary concern at present should be the achievement level of students deemed ‘at-risk’. The teachers who are seen as being effective within urban schools are those whose students perform well on standardized tests (Walker, 2011, p. 577). However, teaching to perform well on a test is not, in fact, effective for marginalized and racialized students because the tests are designed for the dominant social group for whom the education system was set up for in the first place. I opine that the problem with the achievement gap lies within the education system and not with students, families, or the community. I have found through reviewing the literature (see Walker, 2011; Tatum, 2010, Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007) that anti-racist theoretical discourse affirms this belief. As Tatum (2010) indicates, we need to address these racial attitudes and

stereotypes and how they can "negatively impact student performance" (p. 2). While the UPHS initiative does not indicate race as a factor for the development of the initiative, given that it was developed for urban schools, race is an important aspect for discussion (Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008, p. 281). For example, at the school in which I did my practice teaching, there was a very well attended and important assembly for Black History Month. This assembly was planned and executed by the students themselves, and it was clear to me that it was very important to them. The assembly gave the largely Black community of students within the school an opportunity to showcase their lived experiences through poetry, song, and dance. The school in which I was placed ensured that the students within its walls had a space through this assembly and other events throughout the academic year to showcase their lived experiences.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE 'AT-RISK' LABEL

The main factors leading to the 'at-risk' designation and its relation to deficit thinking include parent involvement and socioeconomic status. In the remaining paragraphs of this chapter, I will discuss students dropping out of school, streaming, parental involvement and family factors; and how the UPHS initiative works to ensure there is greater success for students 'at-risk' and programs available to aid in strengthening parental and community involvement.

School Dropouts:

Many of the students who are labeled as 'at-risk' are labeled as such because they lack the necessary credits to graduate from high school. Some of these students may then drop out. Statistics Canada (2003) indicates the importance of detecting the risk factors of dropping out early on in order to prevent students from dropping out of school. There were 345,000 15-year old students enrolled in Canadian high schools in 2000, and by 2002 an estimated 9,000 of these students had left school without graduating (Statistics Canada, 2003). It is important to discuss the issue of dropping out, because the UPHS initiative is in place to ensure greater student success for those students deemed 'at-risk. UPHS provides funding specifically to ensure that the dropout rates are lower in urban schools. Furthermore, it provides insight into those who are 'at-risk' and it looks at the ways in which systemic inequities regarding marginalized students are at play within our school system. There is a "disproportionate drop-out rate among racialized communities as these students continue to find that the curriculum does not reflect their reality, heritage or diversity" (People for Education, 2008, p. 17). Furthermore, students 'at-risk' "are twice as likely to drop out of school" than those who are not labeled as 'at-risk' (People for Education, 2005, p. 13).

The Youth in Transition survey (YITS) was a longitudinal study conducted by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The

research was designed to track 15 year olds and 18–20 year olds. As indicated within YITS, the main reason for dropping out is because of school related reasons (Statistics Canada, 2003). These include "being bored or not interested in school, problems with school work and with teachers, being "kicked out of" school and missing a few credits/not worth continuing" (Statistics Canada, 2003). It is interesting to note that in the Statistics Canada report, 9% of the dropouts surveyed indicated personal and/or family related problems as the main factor, and in Dei and his colleagues' (1997) ethnographic study on dropouts this was the most frequent response (p. 65). In fact, family related problems are quite commonly cited under deficit mentalities (see Portelli, 2010; Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007). Fortin and her colleagues (2006) further contend that the factors contributing to students dropping out are broken homes and single parent households, poor parenting practices, and low parental expectations (p. 365).

Another major factor of students dropping out is racism and prejudice. Dei and his collegues (1997) document a student reporting, "you feel like a raisin in a glass of milk" (p. 66). This sentiment speaks to the dominant White presence within our education system, whether that be through the physical presence of White bodies or through the Anglo-White curriculum. Feeling like the 'other,' causes feelings of not belonging in racialized students, and why would they want to attend a school in which they feel like they do not belong? Another student expressed, "the school that I went to made me feel like I wasn't smart enough… They treated Blacks like we had no brains… and that the Chinese were smarter, the Whites were better, so I just said 'Forget it!'" (Dei et al., 1997, p. 69). In stereotyping students, and by enabling their discomfort and creating disengagement, the school system we have in place now is in a sense "pushing out" students rather than keeping them inside the school (Dei et al., 1997, p. 47). In fact, Statistics Canada (2003) says, "if dropping out is indeed a process, these findings indicate that disengagement from school is underway by the age of 15 or earlier for many who have dropped out by age 17." The UPHS initiative, then, works to provide funding so that schools with high drop-out rates and low student achievement can provide programming and the necessary support 'at-risk' students need so they do not fall 'victim' to deficit mentalities and the systemic inequities within the school system.

Parent Involvement

It is a hegemonic notion that parents, who are unable to attend parent/teacher conferences, or answer the phone when a teacher calls, do not care about their child's education (Dei et al., 1997, p. 193). The UPHS initiative allows for schools to provide ways in which working parents, new immigrant families, and parents who may not understand the school system in Canada can be involved in their child's education. It has been determined that students whose parents are heavily involved in their child's education will perform better and ultimately be more successful in school. A deficit mentality would suggest, "it's not the system, it's the students and parents that need

to change" (García & Guerra, 2004, p. 163). But, as Dei (2010) rightly asserts "rather than focusing on the home and family as sources of problems, we must see them as local cultural resources that can be tapped to assist students in their learning" (p. 362). It is incredibly important to embark on parental involvement as resources because there is a direct link between parents' income and their children's performance at school (People for Education, 2005, p. 13). Children from single parent households are also at-risk of achieving lower academic results. In fact, 28% of dropouts lived with a single parent. This is a higher proportion than the number of students from single parent household that stayed in school (Statistics Canada, 2003).

One of the 34 schools within the UPHS initiative is in an area with a high proportion of immigrant families (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2). These families "face language barriers and other risk factors, such as poverty and lack of local services, which may put [the students] at risk of not graduating" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2). This school reached out to local community partners to provide a program to help students and their parents better understand the education system, which include weekly sessions and individual meetings regarding "volunteer opportunities at school and in the community, course and pathway selection, understanding parent-teacher interviews, exploring options for after high school" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2). Through this program, parents and students are able to feel connected to a new school environment and a different system than the one they may have been previously attached to. While, this does not unpack or fix the larger structural inequities at play within the school system, it does allow for 'at-risk' students and their families to be involved in a way that helps them navigate the Canadian education system. Though, this is just one example of how the UPHS funding has allowed for greater parental involvement, I believe that it is a step forward in the right direction to helping students 'at-risk' of dropping out of school to complete their necessary degree requirements.

STREAMING AND TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Often times, within urban schools, there is the idea of "colour-coded streaming" (Zine, 2001, p. 413, see Dei et al., 1997, p. 119) that exists within the structure of the course offerings to certain students. The students streamed into the Applied, Workplace, College, or Open level courses are those who are often labeled as 'at-risk' and are frequently marginalized bodies. Dei and his colleagues (1997) contend that this form of streaming is formal stereotyping (p. 115). In fact, almost 90% of the students in their study understood streaming "as a practice which had negative implications for students generally and could be considered as a contributing factor to students' disengagement from the system" (Dei, 1997, p. 116).

Furthermore, "low teacher expectations of racial and ethnic minoritized youth can lead to negative evaluation and bias in assessment as well as underachievement" (Zine, 2001, p. 416; see also Dei et al., 1997, p. 128). In fact, of the students in Dei's study (1997), "almost 90 percent expressed a position about streaming

understood it as a practice which had negative implications for students and could be considered as a contributing factor to students' disengagement from the system" (p. 116). Streaming is a detrimental issue within our school system. While I do believe different sections of courses relating to a student's chosen post-secondary path (workplace, university, trades, or college) is necessary, I do not think the way in which streaming is obviously connected to a student's race or economic status should occur. It is beyond the scope of this research to suggest ways in which this could be changed through formal recommendations, however, streaming and its connection to deficit thinking is relevant to this chapter. Streaming also coincides with lower teacher expectations, which as Dei and his colleagues (1997) assert, "also contribute to the perception of [the student's] inferiority vis-à-vis White students" (p. 128). Furthermore, streaming is "denying equal access to classroom participation" in that it makes assumptions based on a student's skin colour, background, and socioeconomic status (Dei et al., 1997, p. 132).

Zorić (2014) explains that cultural deficit theories allow for the belief that in "poor and working class families and communities, their children lack the knowledge, skills, habits, and other cultural values that are needed to do well in school" (p. 4). In having this idea of urban students, they are then not expected to be entering into the Academic or University Preparation courses nor are they likely to attend post-secondary schools (Parekh et al., 2011, p. 257). In fact "teachers of low-income and working class students often hold learning expectations of them that are far below those of their more affluent peers" (Thompson et al., 2004; Haberman, 1995; as cited in Zorić, 2014, p. 10). In having these deficit mentalities within the classroom it means that teachers are far less likely to "call on students for whom they have low expectations" and that teachers will "accept poorer quality and incorrect responses from low-expectation students;" when teachers present this dynamic they are in fact causing a negative effect on "students' learning, self-worth, and achievement," it also causes a lack of wanting to do well in school because no one believes that they can achieve anything (Zorić, 2014, p. 10). As Dei and his colleagues (1997) contend streaming is "a process which can result in limited life chances and low self-esteem and self confidence" (p. 75). This coupled with low teacher expectations creates the disengagement students feel, which may then cause them to drop out. It is interesting to note however, that teachers in Dei and his colleagues' (1997) ethnographic study of dropouts did not identify streaming as a factor, however, students did identify it as a reason for dropping out. Streaming students into different pathways based on their socioeconomic backgrounds, and societal misconceptions is what continues to perpetuate deficit mentalities and allow for the possibility of stereotype threat within our school system.

CONCLUSION

It is unfortunate that deficit ways of thinking "are still so dominant in classrooms and staffrooms; that they are reproduced in student files, educational journals and

conferences, and reported as fact in media coverage of young people and schooling" (Comber & Kamler, 2004, p. 293). Furthermore, within deficit thinking there is an emphasis "placed on 'fixing' the deficient student, rather than the system or structures" (Jackson et al., 2015, p. 6). As educators, we need to ask ourselves, how can our system become different if learning is embodied in the lived experiences of urban students? By doing so, we will move past the systemic inequities at play within our education system in order to make students the centre of their own knowledge production. The UPHS initiative will hopefully continue to allow for greater student success within 'at-risk' students through funding for programs designed to involve the parents and community, and allow for more achievement opportunities and a more equitable school system. To end, I would like to share a metaphor for curriculum that I first came across during my teacher education program and one I have referred to throughout my time in graduate school. This metaphor is: "curriculum as 'window' allows students to see the realities of others, while curriculum as 'mirror' allows for the representation of their own realities" (Thomas, 1997, p. 55; as cited in Dei et al., 2000, p. 194). Allowing for the lived experiences of *all* students is what we should be embarking on within our twenty-first century education system, rather than keeping a system that was designed for White, European bodies.

REFERENCES

Allen, K. (2010). Tragedy gives rise to transformation at Toronto high school. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from www.theglobeandmail.com

Auditor General of Canada. (2010). School safety. *Annual Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, 272–287.

Boucher, K. L., Rydell, R. J., Van Loo, K. J., & Rydell, M. T. (2012). Reducing stereotype threat in order to facilitate learning. *European Journal of Social Pyschology, 42*, 174–179.

Brown, K. D. (2010). Is this what we want them to say? Examining the tensions in what U.S. preservice teachers say about risk and academic achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *26*, 1077–1087.

Comber, B., & Kamler, B. (2004). Getting out of deficit: Pedagogies of reconnection. *Teaching Education*, *15*(3), 293–310.

Daniel, B. (2010). Reimagining the urban: A Canadian perspective. *Urban Education*, *46*(2), 822–839.

Dei, G. J. S. (2010). *Learning to succeed: The challenges and possibilities of educational achievement for all*. Youngstown, NY: Teneo Press.

Dei, G. J. S. (2013). Reframing Critical Anti-Racist Theory (CART) for contemporary times. In G. J. S. Dei & M. Lordan (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in the sociology of race and ethnicity: A critical reader* (Counterpoints: Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education, 445, pp. 1–14). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S., James, I. M., Karumanchery, L. L., James-Wilson, S., & Zine, J. (2000). Representation in education: Centering silenced voices, bodies, and knowledge. In G. J. S. Dei, I. M. James, L. L. Karumanchery, S. James-Wilson, & J. Zine (Eds.), *Removing the margins: The challenges and possibilities of inclusive schooling* (pp. 172–195). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Dei, G. J. S., Mazzuca, J., McIsaac, E., & Zine, J. (1997). *Reconstructing 'Dropout': A critical ethnography of the dynamics of Black students' disengagement from school*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fortin, L., Marcotte, D., Potvin, P., Royer, E., & Joly, J. (2006). Typology of students at risk of dropping out of school: Description by personal, family, and school factors. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *21*(4), 363–383.

García, S. B., & Guerra, P. L. (2004). Deconstructing deficit thinking: Working with educators to create more equitable learning environments. *Education and Urban Society*, *36*(2), 150–168.

Hambacher, E., & Thompson, W. C. (2015). Breaking the mold: Thinking beyond deficits. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, *9*(1), 1–17.

Hampton, B., Peng, L., & Ann, J. (2008). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban schools. *Urban Review*, *40*, 268–295.

Huynh, K. (2014). To speak, know, live and feel Asian: For an anti-racist approach on the study of Asians in Canada. In G. J. S. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racist education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (Explorations of Educational Purpose, 27, pp. 149–161). Dordrecht: Springer.

Jackson, Y., McDermott, V., Simmons, M., & McDermott, M. (2015). Creating a culture of confidence: Re-conceptualizing urban educational leadership. In M. Khalifa, N. W. Arnold, A. F. Osanloo, & C. M. Grant (Eds.), *Handbook of urban educational leadership* (pp. 62–70). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Jacob, B. A. (2007). The challenges of staffing Urban schools with effective teachers. *The Future of Children*, *17*(1), 129–153.

James, C. E. (2012). Students "At-Risk": Stereotypes and the schooling of Black boys. *Urban Education*, *47*(2), 464–494.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(1), 25–53.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). I ain't writin' nuttin': Permission to fail and demands to succeed in urban classrooms. In L. Delpit & J. K Dowdy (Eds.), *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 107–120). New York, NY: The New Press.

LaGravanese, R. (Director), DeVito, D., Shamberg, M., & Sher, S. (Producers), Gruwell, E. (Writer), & LaGravenese, R. (Screenwriter). (2007). *Freedom writers* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States of America: Paramount Pictures.

MacMath, S., Roberts, J., Wallace, J., & Chi, X. (2010). Curriculum integration and at-risk students: A Canadian case study examining student learning and motivation. *British Journal of Special Education*, *37*(2), 87–94.

Milner, R. H. (2008). Disrupting deficit notions of difference: Counter-narratives of teachers and community in urban education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *24*, 1573–1598.

Olivos, E. M. (2006). Racism and deficit thinking. In E. M. Olivos (Ed.), *The power of parents: A critical perspective of bicultural parent involvement in schools* (pp. 41–59). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2008). *Application guidelines: Urban and priority high schools funding* (pp. 1–3). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). Supporting students in urban priority neighbourhoods. *UPHS Connections*, 1–12.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2012). Supporting students in urban priority neighbourhoods. *UPHS Connections*, 1–24.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2012). *Safe schools: Urban and priority high schools*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/urbanPriority.html

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2015). 2016/2017 education funding consultation guide, 1–38.

Parekh, G., Killoran, I., & Crawford, C. (2011). The Toronto connection: Poverty, perceived ability, and access to education inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *34*(3), 249–279.

People for Education. (2005). Public education in Ontario's cities. *People for Education*, i–25.

People for Education. (2008). Ontario's urban and suburban schools: A discussion paper on the schools we need in the 21st century. *People for Education*, 1–37.

Portelli, J. (2010). Leadership for equity in education: Deficit mentality is a major challenge. *Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Blog*. Retrieved from http://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/leadership-equity-education-deficit-mentality-major-challenge

Portelli, J., Shields, C., & Vibert, A. (2007). *Toward an equitable education: Poverty, diversity, and students at risk*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies Education.

Statistics Canada. (2003). Early indicators of students at risk of dropping out of high school. *Education Matters* (Catologue Number 81-004-XIE). Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2004006/7781-eng.htm

Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613–629.

Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social threat. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *34*, 379–440.

Tatum, B. D. (2010). Connecting the dots: How race in America's classrooms affects achievement. In *Can we talk about race: Another conversation in an era of school resegregation* (pp. 39–81). Boston, MA: Bacon Press.

Valencia, R. R. (Ed.). (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. London: The Falmer Press.

Walker, K. L. (2011). Deficit thinking and the effective teacher. *Education and Urban Society*, *43*(5), 576–597.

Wasserberg, M. J. (2014). Stereotype threat effects on African American children in an urban elementary school. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *82*(4), 502–517.

Zine, J. (2001). Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of religious identity. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *32*(4), 339–423.

Zoric, T. (2014). Poverty and class bias in schools: An anti-classist agenda for educators. In E. L. Brown, P. C. Gorski, & G. Lazaridis (Eds.), *Poverty, class, and schooling: Global perspectives on economic justice and educational equality* (pp. 349–365). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

SEVGI ARSLAN

8. BREAKING THE SILENCE

Effects of Colonial Education on Identity and Mind

ABSTRACT

Using an auto-ethnographic method, through anti-racist and anti-colonial frameworks, this chapter explores the role of colonial education and its effects on the identity and psyche of students. Arslan examines the ways in which colonial education silences students through the Eurocentric curriculum, representation, and other educational practices. She asserts that this silence constructs and shapes students' sense of racial identity, learning, discomfort, and their relationship with other students in the classroom. Furthermore, Arslan argues that colonial education erases, silences, and constructs one's difference and identity while teaching students to participate in White supremacy, hold prejudices, and make assumptions about the 'other'. At the core of this research is whether education encourages and assists students to own and live their identities and differences, or whether education simply works to constitute a different way of exercising power on racialized bodies, resulting in the manufacturing of a certain kind of citizen.

Keywords: auto-ethnography, anti-racism, identity, colonial, education

> You shouldn't crush child's spirit. They will just want to stop participating, to stop speaking.
>
> The Skin That We Speak

> But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solutions fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self.
>
> Black Skin, White Masks

It has been swirling around in my head for months, the readings and conversations, which took place in The Principles of Anti-Racism course I took at OISE/UT in the fall of 2015. The conversations and reading began mixing with my own thoughts

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 127–142.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

and reactions, but I did not know just how to make sense of all this. I still struggle, as I reflect on multiple moments that generated discomfort in class. The most painful of these moments occurred in a presentation during the first term. After my presentation, I proposed to the class that racism is not a choice, but the result of systems and structures. The examples class members provided suggested that it is indeed a choice. As a result, I became angry and defensive, even though they were only suggesting that we approach the topic from a different angle. Throughout the discussion period, I remember myself silencing and dismissing their opinions in a very passive aggressive manner. I ultimately ceased the discussion because I was neither equipped nor prepared to deal with the issues that came up. I exclaimed to my classmates that I did not feel safe in the classroom because I felt attacked. Naturally, other students defended themselves and stated that they were only trying to discuss the issue further. I left the classroom in tears, promising myself that I would never return to subject myself to such discomfort again.

Since I was in complete disbelief, never having displayed such emotions before, I felt compelled to understand the discussion and my own emotional response and discomfort with the situation. Taking this moment to heart, I found myself asking the following questions: How come this has never happened before? What triggered me? What is the root cause of this discomfort? Why was I offended? Most importantly I wondered where, when, and how I learned to silence and dismiss other voices? My initial answers did not satisfy me for they were putting the responsibility on classmates. There had to be a lesson that I needed to learn/unlearn from this. Silence fell and stayed as the most honest responses revealed themselves to me as difficult and sad. Responses that I have been trying very hard to obliterate from my mind and life.

INTRODUCTION

Although it is an emotional task to recall and write about my lived experience of racism, I feel compelled to embark on this auto-ethnographic journey in order to contextualize that moment in class in relation to my colonial education both in Turkey and Canada. In both of these spaces I was continuously silenced through colonial schooling. This *silence* produced and constructed my sense of racial identity, my learning, my discomfort, my relationship with allies and colleagues in classrooms, and most importantly, how all of these experiences influenced my reaction in that moment in class. In this chapter, I wish to share how colonial education erased, silenced, and constructed my difference and identity while teaching me how to participate in White supremacy; to hold prejudices, and to make assumptions about the 'other'. Working through discomfort, I hope to advance anti-racism, build solidarities, and, reconstruct and reclaim my identity, while at the same time challenging the status quo.

I try to deconstruct my experience of discomfort during the class presentation within an anti-racist/anti-colonial framework. I introduce this chapter by locating myself and my sense of identity within the contexts of Turkey and Canada. I discuss the production of a colonized identity created by colonial education. Furthermore, I

reflect on what I mean by silence through examples from my colonial education where the subject of race is erased and silenced through curriculum and representation. This chapter concludes with a discussion on emotions and discomfort. I reflect on participation in colonizing practices and how The Principles of Anti-Racism Education class, particularly that pivotal moment, assisted me in unlearning how to engage, negotiate, struggle for and understand the concept of identity and difference, and how these should inform my life and practice.

Methodology and Discursive Framework

My reason for choosing an auto-ethnographic method is to assert the notion that experiences matter. An auto-ethnography method enables me as a researcher to look inward and study myself in order to create dialogue with the readers of this work. My hope is that my educational journey and its impacts on my identity and mind might positively inform other teachers and students' experiences and practices (Anderson, 2006; Wall, 2006). The benefit of using an auto-ethnographic approach outweighs its disadvantages. One of the disadvantages of utilizing this method is the exposure of inner feelings and thoughts, which require honesty and willingness to self-disclose regardless of how agonizing it is (Anderson, 2006; Wall, 2006). Therefore, during the production of this work, it was important to remind myself that this work is not only about me but also about racialized students who survive, though scarred, the consequences of colonial encounters in the education system.

Another disadvantage is the possibility of using the self in a narcissistic and depoliticised manner (Anderson, 2006). Hence, I strive to keep in mind that the 'self' in an auto-ethnography method refers to the data, which helps me to challenge mainstream knowledge production and connect personal experiences to larger communities in order to explain the impacts of colonial schooling. In short, I believe that auto-ethnography requires one to excavate the personal in order to invoke a collective responsibility, in pursuit of social and political change.

Western scientific approaches, however, still very much at play today, require researchers to minimize their selves, viewing the self as a contaminant and attempting to transcend and deny it (Dei, 2014; Hales, 2006; Thesee, 2006). Therefore, it asks the researcher to put bias and subjectivity aside in the scientific research process by denying his or her identity.

The questioning of the dominant scientific paradigm, the making of room for other ways of knowing, and the growing emphasis on the power of research, create a space for the sharing of unique, subjective, and evocative stories of experience (Hales, 2006; Thesee, 2006) that contribute to my understanding of the social world and allow me to reflect on what could be different because of what I have learned. As a Kurd in a Turkish world and as the 'other' in a White world, I believe that the insistent pushing of auto-ethnography against the world of dominant methods holds meaningful, symbolic, and revolutionary promise. It says that what I know and experience matters and is real.

In the theorizing of my experiences, anti-racist and anti-colonial frameworks complement an auto-ethnographic approach as they encourage me to articulate the complexity of my colonial education.and its implications for identity building. According to Dei (2014),

> we can start to investigate, think, and rethink the ways in which dominant knowledge, discourse, and practices have shaped our understandings of our very existence; of our relationships with one another; of who we are; and who we believe ourselves to be. (p. 5)

Questioning and analyzing my colonial education through these critical lenses is the initial step towards the decolonization of my mind. This questioning, as Dei and Ashgarzadeh (2001) write, "is important not as a resting place, but in order to make the connection between what is and what ought to be" (p. 298). In other words, this is not to merely critique but to challenge the foundations of colonial power and privilege, which categorizes and dominates the world through race, class, and gender divisions, by re-imagining the social relations and my place within it.

Finally, these particular frameworks encourage me to re-centre the knowledge, histories and practices that are negated and devalued by dominant discourse and discursive practices. By recentering, I challenge not only the ways in which certain bodies are defined and shaped by dominant Eurocentric ideologies, I also challenge, resist, and transform the continual subordination of lived experiences (Dei & Ashgarzadeh, 2001).

ON THE HISTORICAL PROCESSES OF OTHERING IN TURKEY

The history of the colonization and oppression of Kurds goes back to the Ottoman Empire. A new installment of racial violence against Kurds started with the establishment of the new regime, in 1923 (Ergin, 2000). The problem with this newly established state was not only the colonial occupation of Kurdish regions by the Turkish government, but also the laws which focused on the building of a nation state. The extreme nationalist movement, which focused on Turkification, established the groundwork for the promotion of genocide. Other non-Turkish groups constituted a serious problem for Turkish national identity building and were a real threat to Turkish unity and sovereignty (Ergin, 2000; Keyman, 201; Ergil, 2000).

I echo Dei's argument that colonialism, as it happened in Turkey, did not end with the return of political sovereignty and the establishment of a nation state (Dei, 2006). I further argue that colonialism, multiculturalism, and nationalism have similar fundamental features. Applying Hage's discussion of nationalism and national practices to colonialism and multiculturalism, I argue that these ideologies all presuppose an imagined space whether it is multicultural or nationalist; an image of the dominant himself/herself; and image of the racial other as an object within the imagined space (Hage, 2000). Therefore, the sole purpose and effect of these assumptions around imagined space and the imagined 'other' reproduce the same violence.

The identification of non-Turk groups as unwanted, and the idealization of the one-nation concept legitimized the violent solution of the cleansing of Turkish society. Turkification meant the eradication of ethnic elements via exclusion, assimilation, and even genocide. Furthermore, the widespread project of the Turkification of the non-Turkish groups was activated through education, laws and policies (Ergin, 2000; Keyman, 2012; Ergil, 2000). At a global level, this new state was in a quest to find its place in modern White Europe (Ergin, 2008). Thus, the Turkish elites were keen on adopting western science to establish an invariably superior, modern and White identity for Turkey. As Ergin (2008) writes "as long as Turkishness contained the essential element that made the West modern, Turkey could create a distinctive tradition within modernity" (p. 298). In turn, as Ergin (2008) writes, "modernity required action being taken to protect and improve the very essence of Whiteness and Turkishnes simultaneously, even it was at the expense of minority groups" (p. 297).

Turkishness has enlisted Western scientific notions in order to justify its project of modernity in order to legitimize itself among advanced nation states (Ergin, 2008). The articulation of Whiteness within the context of Turkish modernity was manufactured to implicitly contribute to the creation of racial assumptions which consequently marginalized minority groups within Turkish society. This marginalization is apparent in Ergin's (2008) statement, "…hierarchies of taste between 'White' and 'dark' Turks to the perceptions of Africans, reveals the fascination with Whiteness" (Ergin, 2008, p. 832).

Furthermore, Turkey's desire to be part of modern Europe meant the social, economic, and political subjugation of its minority citizens. Racial prejudices and ideologies created the politics of racial domination, which informed and constructed dominant images of both the colonizer (superior) and the colonized (inferior), such as the Kurds. Therefore anyone who looked, lived, and behaved as European while advancing the Turkish national ideas, represented the ideal Turkish identity or, Turkishness.

Similar to Whiteness, Turkish identity or Turkishness is an imagined identity which constructs itself as "static", against which all other racial identities are measured as forms of deviance. The claim to Turkishness, similar to Whiteness, first, works through a description of Turkish properties declared through accent, one's origin, where one is born, clothing, and where one lives. Minority groups, particularly Kurds, experience the impacts of popular anti-Kurdish discourses and practices daily and continue to be marked as a racial group, who is backward, separatist, uncivilized, and overall as a threat to Turkish modernity and its nation building project. For instance, as a Kurdish woman, I am aware that I am not Turkish but because of its attainability , an attainability through invitation by nation state, I can still make claim to it by assimilating into Turkish society. A claim to Turkishness however, requires the displacement of my own racial identity for a Turkish one. I can claim it by performing Turkishness and keeping my racial reality silent.

ON STAINED RACIAL IDENTITY

As I engage with anti-colonial and anti-racist theories, my racial identity has become very important for me, and has transcended my other identities. It is important to note that I recognize the implications of giving importance to one identity over the other as all of my identities intersect and interlock, and cannot be examined separately from one another. My intention, however, is not to dismiss my multiple locations but to center race in my analysis as it is the most political one which constructing me as the other and subjecting me and my people to social, political, economic and psychological violence.

Engaging with critical theories and meeting with other racialized students who seemed to be grounded in their racialized identity sparked my curiosity and frustration. This motivated me to start questioning my parents in order to understand why they choose to ignore our racial identity and set the material conditions for their children to grow up performing an identity which did not belong to them. It was not until a couple of years ago that my parents started to talk candidly about their lived experiences of racism in Turkey and encouraged us to own who we are. The privilege to be able to claim a Kurdish identity after we moved to Canada was, I suspect, the result of an assumed privilege of having political freedom. It is now seemingly convenient and there are no risks associated with being Kurdish. I understand that social and political conditions in Turkey necessitated this and my parents' choices were meant to protect us from nationalist and colonial harm.

It was because of racist state politics that my parents preferred not to put emphasis on our ethnic/racial identity. Thus, they passed on the erasure of race talk or the 'keep it quiet' tradition to the next generation. They furthered this thinking by setting up material conditions such as moving us from the low-income neighborhood largely populated by Kurds, to more upscale areas in Istanbul and enrolling us in schools in those areas. Class, in the context of Turkey, ostensibly erased people's differences. Therefore, it was understood that where we lived and went to school would help assimilate us through erasure.

Implicit in this reasoning is the understanding that my class privilege would remove state sponsored racial violence from my life. Considering that our racial struggle was on a psychological level and detached from the collective struggle of Kurdish people, I think it is important to note that this strategy only helped me to be invisible in schools but it did not change how Kurds were constructed in Turkey or how I felt by performing an identity that did not belong to me. Performing or pretending has enormous impacts on one's psyche (Kempf, 2006), and the damage that is enacted on the mind of a young person is long lasting. As Matute (2014) writes, this relational implication is even more significant when considering power dynamics and identity construction for students (Matute, 2014, p. 177). The way in which power dynamics play out also states who has the privilege of claiming an identity and who cannot. Therefore, while I grew up speaking Turkish, I could claim the Turkish speaking identity that some Kurdish students could not claim. My

performed Turkish identity has never been questioned by students in school and if I said that "I am Kurdish", classmates would question my identity since every aspect of me from speaking Turkish fluently to where I lived challenged the imagined Kurdish stereotypes.

I am certain that my struggle around my sense of racial identity was due to the constant performance of Turkishness. In school, I strove to not be marked as the 'other'. Every aspect of me had to fit within Turkish society: speaking perfect Turkish, modern appearance, speaking of things that are politically convenient in classrooms, having only Turkish friends, and attending national celebrations. I had to hide my racial identity through middle and secondary school to assimilate and live freely with a sense of self-confidence in school. Denying my Kurdish identity or performing Turkishness as a consequence of colonial schooling, further separated and alienated me from my people and culture. This performance became a barrier to live and breathe the Kurdish experience. I was denied of the opportunity to know myself because the colonizer had already claimed to 'know' me. This knowledge served to "objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden" my very being (Fanon, 1968a: 34).

In the Turkish school system, my Kurdish identity used to reside at a parallel yet intersecting point; a dangerous place where being assimilated and resisting self came into conflict with each other. If my resisting self challenged how 'I' is constituted in classrooms, life for me in a colonialist nation-state would be very difficult. This is mainly because being 'Kurdish', as a discursive outcome of various meta-narratives defining the Kurd as problematic or non-existent would cause continuous discomfort, and this epistemic violence would work to make my Kurdish identity more burdensome. This change in narrative, however, was never a mere abolition. It was pure violence which asked me to own a coerced story that was fashioned for me specifically. This rude invitation by the nation-state, through educational practices and curriculum contents, in Turkey taught me that the 'inferiority' of Kurds was not permanent as Kurds could become Turks by becoming modern.

Moving to Canada and integrating into the Canadian education system made the struggle around my racial identity even more complex. I could not hide my racial identity anymore because the colour of my skin was a permanent marker, which said 'she is different'. Students and staff saw me as the immigrant, a middle class foreigner who is a model citizen but still does not belong. Someone inherently not the ideal but still better than "those folks in the hood" due to my features and lighter skin colour. Hence, I was not that big of a threat but I was still noticed and interrogated by the White gaze. I cannot perform the 'ideal' in Canada and I will never be able to. I feel stuck. I am careful with respect to what I say and how I speak in front of the White gaze. Government, teachers, and books often repeat that I am tolerated, welcomed, and included in Canadian society. I feel erased, silenced and reduced again via a different method: multiculturalism. My difference is denied in a different, seemingly kinder way.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (2004) states, "Colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: 'Who am I in reality?'" (p. 182).

Applying to the educational context, Fanon's quote helps me to articulate and understand how education and the struggle of forming a racial identity is connected to White supremacy. Fanon points out the alienation of the self, to the extent that the student is not even sure who he or she is anymore. Education as a colonizing tool constantly and pervasively imposes its values through curriculum, content, visual representation, and staff, while dismissing the realities and differences of minority students. Instead of valuing the subjugated voices, histories, and experiences, colonial education asks minority students violently to forget who they are.

This in turn creates a zone of non-being and a sense of loss; students may constantly try to overcome their own race while wanting the colonizer to acknowledge their humanity. Students can suffer a fragmented identity as the education system has already defined and created a meaning as to who and what they are. Racialized students in a White supremacist education system, through their embodied knowledge, are silenced. In order to survive they are forced to act as instruments that allow the colonizer to achieve a subjective security.

Fanon's statement resonates with my educational history as I was never freely able to display or represented who I was, racially. Having to perform what I was not, denied me the opportunity to be myself, while being fixed by the White gaze created the sense of loss of identity which I believe answers Fanon's question. Also, the question of who I am in reality, for me, points out to the loss of identity and the worst part of this feeling is the fact that I was conscious of it and yet felt imprisoned. The education systems that I experienced, denied my difference and my whole humanity. It was a complex and an uncomfortable space for me to form my own identity in both Turkey and Canada, as the systems silenced, erased, and constructed my racial difference in multiple ways.

ON COLONIAL SCHOOLING, IDENTITY AND SILENCE

When I reflect on education, I think that it must be a meaningful process that supports and encourages the learner to recognize, defy, and resist dominant systems, structures, and behaviors (Dei, 2014; McKenna, 1997) while encouraging the idea that we are intimately connected to others in terms of our liberation. Furthermore, education, as Dei and McDermott (2010) point out,

> it is not only about knowledge, power, curriculum, and instruction, a coming to know, act, which engages the world, it is also about values, ideas, practices, and identities [race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.] and how they link to knowledge production and social processes. (p. xiv)

My experiences have shown me that education is an imperial project framed through nationalist or multicultural lenses, organized through seemingly inclusive practices and procedures, and maintained through hierarchical power and influence. As a result, the education systems in both countries offered alternatives within their value

and belief systems in order to maintain the status quo. This resulted in the denial of differences.

Education in Turkey, in particular, served to maintain the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation (Ergin, 2012). Still today, many members of minority communities, including Kurds, feel that the Turkish education system works to assimilate and eliminate them. Turkish identity is promoted as ideal while distinct minority cultures, identities, and histories are ignored in the curriculum. For instance, no minority language can be used at public schools as the language of instruction and none of these languages can be taught at public or private schools as an elective language course. These conditions intensify the discrimination, harassment and humiliation that children from minority communities face. As a result, students who belong to minority communities often hide their ethnic identities in order to be included.

The aim of the Turkish education system, for me, is simple: ignoring and denying the difference and the identity of the 'other', while imposing an alternative identity. Curriculum content and teaching methods, therefore, employed in the schools function to attain these instrumental purposes (James, 2005). Below are examples of moments of exclusion within the educational system in which I was encouraged to hid my racial identity.

One of the most painful memories of my schooling in Turkey was taking the student oath. I had to proclaim loudly: "I am a Turk, honest, hardworking. My principles are to protect the younger, to respect the elder, to love my homeland and my nation more than myself. My ideal is to rise, to progress. May my life be dedicated to the Turkish existence". It concluded with a sentence that expressed the central principle of the education system: "How happy is the one who says 'I am a Turk!'" This ritual served to remind me of who I am, who I am not, and who I can become in the Turkish imaginary. Kurdish students, through this ritual, have been 'located outside of the world; the world of goodness, the world of progress' (Kempf, 2006). Furthermore, the student oath constructed for me, the relational meaning of Turkishness and Kurdishess; it conveyed who belongs and who does not belong in the national imaginary. As a student, I preferred to have a sense of belonging than a claim to my Kurdish identity.

Social Science classes, History in particular, provided exclusionary histories and perspectives where Kurdish history was erased and denied. In terms of representation, there were, for instance, no books that mentioned the word Kurd or talked about the Kurdish genocide. If a student contested the knowledge that was presented, it was, firstly, denied by the teacher; secondly, when students dared to challenge the status quo, the teacher took disciplinary actions against them. Challenging of dominant narratives was always discouraged in the education system. Colonialist mentality, in short, encouraged me to dispose of my identity and accept assimilation and total surrender.

One other apparent issue that created my loss of racial identity was language. Even though, Kurdish is the mother tongue of as many as one in five inhabitants

of Turkey (Ergil, 2000), I do not know how to speak it. This is mainly because the Turkish Constitution defines 'Turkish' as the language of the state, and prohibits the teaching of any language other than Turkish as 'mother' tongue' (Ergil, 2000). These constitutional restrictions attest to a continuing refusal on the part of the Turkish state to recognize the cultural identity of its Kurdish citizens (Ergil, 2000). Linguistic racism, as Dei (2006) states, "must be understood as a form of marginalization and even genocide or cultural erasure of the other" (Dei, 2006, p. 19).

Most Kurdish youth who grow up and live in the Western Regions of Turkey cannot read or write their own language. This is the consequence of their desire to go unnoticed and blend into the dominant Turkish society. Those who grow up and live in the Eastern Regions speak Kurdish fluently as the Eastern Regions have greater Kurdish population; this region is predominantly Kurdish and is more homogenous in terms of the language that is spoken. Speaking Kurdish becomes problematic for those who live in the Eastern Region when they migrate to the West: the symbol of modernity.

I have vivid memories of students in high school mocking the Kurdish 'Easterner' accent and laughing as though the language was inherently funny. Turkish speakers, due to the continuous nationalist propaganda were "unable to identify how linguistic/cultural diversity is an asset to an individual and, in turn, to society at large" (Matute, 2014, p. 178). Kurdish students were evaluated through a deficit framework which considers Kurdish accent as backward and emphasizes their lack of Turkish fluency.

Even though the Kurdish community is the largest minority group living in Turkey, and Kurdish is one of the oldest indigenous languages in Mesopotamia (now Syria, Iraq, Iran and Eastern parts of Turkey), Kurdish language courses were not even offered as elective courses in school. Notably, French, English, and German language courses were offered with high enrollment. Offering Western languages reinforced the government and school officials' objective to create a Turkey that embodies a Eurocentric modernity. Conversely, the Kurdish language was cast off as uncivilised and backward. I remember a student in my class who had a Kurdish accent. She always looked insecure and tense when she spoke in class. The rest of the class would mock, whisper and look at each other. In retrospect, I wish I stood up for her. I also wish I was not ashamed of my mother's accent and allowed her to be a part of my education. I did not want my mother to be present at school events as I feared that my peers would realize who I was and who I was not. My ability to speak Turkish fluently allowed me to "escape the bush" (Fanon, 2008, p. 2). By rejecting Kurdish and assimilating into Turkish language, I became more Turkish.

Schooling in Canada, at first, seemed like paradise where students from various 'cultures' or origins were included in the schooling system. I would often see posters in school that promoted multiculturalism and course contents, which seemed inclusive of the diverse student body. Only now, do I realize the ways in which the Canadian education system framed and practiced diversity erased my racial identity and made me invisible. They perform this by putting enormous efforts into imposing

the narrative that Canada and its education system is inclusive and multicultural. This resulted in the erasure of my racial and cultural identity in order to streamline me into Canadian assimilation. The Canadian education system fails to, "critically reflect on their curriculum materials, cultural events and pedagogical approaches in ways that will brings students to a critical understanding and consciousness of their location in the education" (James, 2005, p. 43). I was forced to ignore my racial identity and replace it with multicultural identity.

I vividly remember how happy I was when I received my acceptance letter for my Masters of Social Work degree. Studying critical Social Work in one of the more progressive schools in Ontario meant that I was finally going to be able to openly talk about social justice oriented issues in a manner that I was denied in my previous schooling experience. However, I felt that discussions, assigned reading and even the curriculum were not as progressive as I had hoped. Erasure of race talk was always present as the saliency of race was replaced with "but Sevgi, it is also about gender, class, ability…". My intention is never to dismiss these intersectionalities, however; I wanted to centre race in my analysis.

Erasure of race talk in Canadian schools is real and it helps the dominant group to maintain the status quo. In turn, erasure of race talk fails students who want their difference to be recognized and acknowledged in school and in society. In short, a multicultural approach to education allows the dominant group to deal with difference by replacing it with a Whiteness-centered multicultural identity. Multicultural in this sense, as Dei writes, "becomes a code for the non-White and results in ghettoization" (Dei, 2006, p. 161). In its passivity, Canadian multiculturalism fails to actively acknowledge racialized bodies, this erasure is in itself an act of violence.

Multicultural identity is a by-product of Whiteness and is constructed within a colonial ideology (Blackwell, 2010). Multicultural identity passes as tolerant and civil, while dismissing issues of race and racism. Through the colonial narratives of belonging, citizenship, diversity, nationhood, and tolerance, the 'other' is informed of who they are in relation to who the dominant is. Most importantly, the dominant use laws and policies to erase or eliminate differences. Privileges, based on racial superiority in the educational system, therefore, translates into Eurocentric exclusionary practices. Through the curriculum, language, pedagogy, and representation, the construction of the other as inferior is reproduced.

The question I'd like to pose is, what do colonial exclusionary practices do to racialized learners psychologically, politically, and socially? What does it mean for racialized students to see the portraits of White women scholars on the school walls? What does it mean for a Black student to see that a school designates only one month for Black people's history? What does it mean for a Kurdish student to see Turkish flags everywhere in school? What about when no books talk about the ancestors of racialized people and their contributions? What happens, psychologically, when a racialized student doesn't feel comfortable to eat her 'ethnic' lunch with White friends and chooses to eat it in the school washroom?

These manifestations of colonial schooling cause harm in a myriad of ways. The Student shrinks, doubts herself, disappears, and feels reduced and insulted, and ultimately becomes silent as the practices tell her that you or your people are not worthy enough to talk about or to put your photos on these walls. Instead, the system says, *we teach you about these great people through these methods which satisfactorily work to establish and maintain a dominant-subordinate status quo.*

Being silent became an everyday experience. At each moment I was silenced through colonial education both in Turkey and Canada. It was not that I could not speak in a literal way but that years of silencing resulted in understanding my sense of self through the stories told about me by the colonizer. So, even when I would speak, or think about my experiences, it was within the parameters of how the colonizer defined me. I was an unwanted body, while Whiteness or Turkishness took on the appearance of normalcy by representing the universal condition of the ideal being. Eventually, I become speechless for I learned to speak the colonizer's words and appropriate colonizing practices to be considered as normal.

Education and language as a colonial site, Dei writes, informs identity formation and knowledge production of racialized students in schools and shapes identities by recreating "colonial mythologies and ideologies" (Dei, 2006, p. 3) which in turn works to establish and maintain a dominant-subordinate relationship. Along the same lines, Fanon's (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks* portrays the material realities of conflict within a colonial world, as endless pain and suffering since it reconfigures the psyche of the colonized. This manifested itself in my life in three ways. First, as I mentioned earlier, the representation of the colonizer's exploitation became part of the same normalized ways of meaning through which I, the colonized, view myself. Secondly, the colonizer so normalized the conditions of the colonization process in the education system that the colonized I, came to work within those same narratives and think that this is undeniably how the world is. Finally, I turned my gaze to the fellow colonized which revealed itself through that painful moment in class.

ON DISPLAYING COLONIZING TENDENCIES

It was rather a disappointing moment to realize that I had difficulty hearing and dealing with the honest expressions of experiences and that I unknowingly engaged in appropriating colonizing behaviours by silencing those voices in class. One immediate thought that came to my mind after leaving class emotionally unsettled, was that "I have never felt such a level of discomfort before". It is now clear to me that I had never felt such discomfort before because I was never exposed to such blunt race talk; no one had exposed me to the saliency of race. Furthermore, I had never shared a space where Black bodies were the majority, nor had I ever had a Black professor. Colonial schooling did not provide me with much opportunity to learn from – or learn how – to engage with students from differing racial backgrounds,

nor did they prepare me to engage with a plurality of perspectives about an issue. As a result, I often felt resentful during class as I had difficulty communicating my experiences or appreciating what others had to say, so I mostly relied on theories of scholars to avoid the 'emotional' race talk.

Consciously or perhaps unconsciously, as Urrieta and Reidel (2006) suggests, I mostly utilized theory, which worked to "avoid engagement in bridging theory and practice" (p. 285). Instead of critically engaging the material and being self-reflective about the issues or my discomfort, I put the responsibility on my classmates by engaging in the colonial way of thinking. This was as a result of learning "to theorize, not from lived experience but from an *intellectual,* systematic, scientific, empirical, and measurable way" (McDermott, 2014, p. 216). By displaying colonial tendencies, I accepted the ideal of Eurocentric normalcy and contributed to the reproduction of devaluing the voices of the other.

Even though the discomfort with other's opinions does not always lead to the liberation of one's mind and behaviour, it benefited me in the context of this class as I was understanding not only how I was appropriating colonizing behaviors but also the impacts of colonial schooling on my identity and mind.

Breaking the Silence

As Urrieta and Reidel write, "Questioning cherished beliefs, unacknowledged assumptions, and one's identity is never easy, rarely voluntarily, and almost always painful" (Urrieta & Reidel, 2006, p. 281). This type of reflection is especially difficult for me because I practice and enact my racial identity in mostly unconscious ways through behaviours, values, beliefs and assumptions that are constructed by the colonizer (Urrieta & Reidel, 2006; McKenna, 1997; Leibowitz et al., 2010). Silence is sustained and maintained by societal norms. Whiteness conditioned me to think that my identity should appear neutral, normal and reflective of the Canadian and Turkish standard. By extension, I saw myself as the norm while simultaneously experiencing being othered; I in turn othered and silenced.

Echoing Agnew (2007), I now think of myself as being less a victim and more a survivor of the many struggles of multiple oppressions and choose to politicize and not take for granted the privileges and oppressions that frame my life (Dei, 1997). My histories and stories that I have constructed for myself and those that have been constructed for me were ruptured by discussions, readings, emotions of discomfort in the Principles of Anti-Racism Education class. I feel at ease as I found that there is definitely power in knowing who I am and there is an opportunity to recognize the possibilities in not knowing.

The class taught me to take responsibility for myself and encourage myself to investigate the cultural and historical reasons for my emotions and my emotional investment in particular worldviews because they are neither neutral nor natural (Dei, 1996; McKenna, 1997; Leibowitz et al., 2010). As Dei (2000) writes,

anti-racist framework asks us to recognize "the individual and collective responsibility to use multiple positions and differential locations of power, privilege and social disadvantage to work for change" (p. 25).

Furthermore, my reflection at the beginning of this chapter on whether racism is a choice or a results of systems and structures is becoming more clear as I now understand that the issue is not so simple to frame as "either/or". It is indeed more complex as there are individual, collective and systemic implications of racism. I need to challenge each of these implications wherever I encounter them.

I now understand that there are multiple ways of living and experiencing one's identity, as gender, class, sexuality, and disability informs how one experiences their lives. I also have become conscious of the perils of constructing an identity against another one. What was it that I tried to construct myself against? Is it not this thinking that also operates to mold my identity in a constrained way? And what does it mean to counter-construct my identity against a colonial one? What does this mean for education? What are the perils of educating the 'other' through this lens?

I am choosing to own my identities regardless of how messy and stained they are. I feel that owning my identity works as an entry point to challenging the state, the racist institutions, and myself as an individual. Furthermore, I feel that ownership of my identity is necessary to challenge the legacy of inequality and injustices that are inherited from the past and continue to be re-created (Omi & Winant, 1994).

By owning my identity, I am resisting the illusions of attaining inclusion, equality, and recognition under a White supremacist framework. Instead, I am focusing on resisting the colonial politics that dominates, silences, and devalues racialized bodies. I am working on building solidarities by realizing similarities between the histories of colonized people everywhere.

By owning my identity, I am breaking the years of silence and further decolonizing my mind in order to inform myself of who I am and the possibilities of who I can become. My objective is to use the lessons I have learned through my lived experiences in order to advance anti-racism, be a better ally, and challenge the status quo.

REFERENCES

Agnew, V. (2007). *Interrogating race and racism*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 35*(4), 373–395.

Amin, N., Dei, G. J. S., & Lordan, M. (2006). *The poetics of anti-racism*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Pub.

Blackwell, M. D. (2010). Sidelines and separate spaces: Making education anti-racist for students of color. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *13*(4), 473–494.

Carr, P. R., & Lund, D. E. (2007). *The great White North?: Exploring whiteness, privilege, and identity in education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Dei, G. J. S. (1996). The challenges of inclusive schooling and education: Multicentric curriculum and pedagogy. In G. Dei (Ed.), *Anti-racism education: Theory and practice* (pp. 75–104). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S. (1997). Race and the production of identity in the schooling experiences of African-Canadian youth. *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 18*(2).

Dei, G. J. S. (1999). The denial of difference: Reframing anti-racist praxis. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 2*(1), 17–38.

Dei, G. J. S. (2000). Towards an anti-racism discursive framework. In G. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the terrain-towards a new politics of resistance. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education: Politics of resistance* (pp. 43–62). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Dei, G. J. S. (2014). Introduction to the politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning. In G. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning*. (pp. 15–28). New York, NY: Springer.

Dei, G. J. S., & Asgharzadeh, A. (2001). The power of social theory: The anti-colonial discursive framework. *Journal of Educational Thought, 35*(3), 297–323.

Dei, G. J. S., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: Critical knowledge/multiple knowings: Possibilities, challenges and resistance in curriculum/cultural contexts. In Y. Kanu (Ed.), *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations* (pp. 151–180). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dei, G. J. S., & Simmons, M. (2010). *Fanon & education: Thinking through pedagogical possibilities*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Ergil, D. (2000). The kurdish question in turkey. *Journal of Democracy, 11*(3), 122–135.

Ergin, M. (2008). Biometrics and anthropometrics: The twins of Turkish modernity. *Patterns of Prejudice, 42*(3), 281–304.

Ergin, M. (2008). 'Is the Turk a White Man?' Towards a theoretical framework for race in the making of Turkishness. *Middle Eastern Studies*, *44*(6), 527–550.

Ergin, M. (2014). The racialization of kurdish identity in Turkey. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(2), 322–341. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.729672

Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, White masks* (1st ed., New ed.). New York, NY[Berkeley, CA.]: Grove Press.

Hage, G. (2000). *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*. New York, NY: Annandale, NSW: Routledge.

Hales, J. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the terrain-towards a new politics of resistance. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education: Politics of resistance* (pp. 43–62). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

James, C. (2005). The ties that bind us: Thinking through the praxis of multicultural and anti-racism education in Canadian contexts. In. L. Karumanchery (Ed.), *Engaging equity: New perspectives on anti-racist education* (pp. 41–58). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Kempf, A. (2006). Anti-colonial historiography: Interrogating colonial education. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education: The politics of resistance* (pp. 43–62). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Keyman, E. F. (2012). Rethinking the 'kurdish question' in Turkey: Modernity, citizenship and democracy. *Philosophy & Social Criticism, 38*(4–5), 467–476.

Leibowitz, B., Bozalek, V., Rohleder, P., Carolissen, R., & Swartz, L. (2010). Ah, but the Whiteys love to talk about themselves': Discomfort as Pedagogy. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(1), 83–100.

Matute, A. A. (2014). Entre el Aquí y el Allá*: International schooling and the colonized mind. In G. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (pp. 15–28). New York, NY: Springer.

McDermott, M. (2014). Mo(ve)ments of affect: Towards an embodied pedagogy for anti-racism education. In G. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (pp. 15–28). New York, NY: Springer.

McKenna, K. (1997). Working with difference differently: Exploring the subtext of pedagogical implications. *Curriculum Studies, 55*(1), 49–68.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Urietta Jr., L., & Riedel, M. (2006). Avoidance, anger, and convenient amnesia: White supremacy, self-reflection in social studies teacher education. In W. Ross & V. Ooka Pang (Eds.), *Race, ethnicity, and education* (pp. 279–300). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.

These, G. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the terrain-towards a new politics of resistance. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education: Politics of resistance* (pp. 43–62). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Thobani, S. (2007). *Exalted subjects: Studies in the making of race and nation in Canada*. Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press

Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *The International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(2).

CHANEL HERBERT

9. VIEWING THE TORONTO EDUCATION SYSTEM THROUGH AN ANTI-RACIST FRAMEWORK

The Systematic Oppression of Black Youth in Toronto Based on Geography, Race and Class

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores intersectionalities and the systematic oppression of Black youth viewed through a critical anti-racist framework. Herbert focuses on how the spatiality of race and class influences the education curriculum offered to youth in high priority neighbourhoods in Toronto. The main discussion centres on the effect of racialized streaming and negative perceptions of Black youth, which results in further marginalization as exemplified by the forty-percent dropout rate, and the continued cycle of poverty experienced by these youth. This study offers a critique of the popular democratic education framework based solutions, juxtaposing them to Afrocentric and anti-racist based solutions and strategies. The hope is to influence curriculum and equity practices and policies in Toronto schooling, to move towards Afrocentric and anti-racist based solutions and strategies.

Keywords: intersectionalities, critical anti-racist, education, curriculum, marginalization, Toronto, schooling, Afrocentric

> *While we may not agree on what constitutes justice, we can recognize injustice when it is done.* (Dei, 2000b, p. 26)

INTRODUCTION

As a recent immigrant to Toronto who completed both primary and secondary education outside of Canada, I have limited personal knowledge of racism within the schools of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). It was only in my final year of post-secondary education in Toronto that I became aware of how dire the situation was for Black students in the city. Even though Black students make up 12 percent of the TDSB population (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015a, p. 3), there has consistently been a 40 percent dropout rate since the 1970s that continues today (Sium, 2014, p. 143). This is above the 33 percent dropout rate in Toronto in 1992 as well as the 18 percent and 31 percent dropout rate for Asian and White students respectively (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, p. 8). The TDSB

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 143–159.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

has done a disservice to Black youth. These youth are subject to injustice resulting from streaming, the absence of relevant or culturally inclusive curricula and the stigma attached to neighbourhoods with high numbers of racialized persons.

This chapter seeks to use statistics, personal stories, and theory to examine the TDSB's policies and practice on equity through an anti-racist framework, specifically focusing on the spatiality of race, racialized streaming and intersections of race and class in the classroom. The focus of this chapter will then shift to the consequences the Black community face as a result of the perpetuation of racist, classist, unequal and disempowering systems of oppression enacted in the education system. Finally, I will offer next steps and solutions so that the Black community can move forward.

THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

The TDSB is the largest school board in Canada and boasts one of the most diverse groups of students (Toronto District School Board, 2014a). According to the TDSB, it caters to approximately 245,000 students in 588 schools throughout Toronto, with over 40 percent of their graduates ranking as Ontario Scholars and more than 80 percent of their graduates going on to university or college (Toronto District School Board, 2014a).

The TDSB professes to be committed to equity and social justice and has formed committees such as the Equity Policy Advisory Committee as well as policies and guidelines concerning 'caring and safe schools', gender-based violence and protection and religious accommodations. According to the TDSB, it is dedicated to "creating school learning environments that are caring, safe, peaceful, nurturing, positive, and respectful and that enable all students to reach their full potential". The TDSB asserts that "equity of opportunity, and equity of access to [their] programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all those whom [they] serve, and for those who serve [their] school system" (Toronto District School Board, 2014b). The board has also created an Equity Foundation which they say aims to "establish the Board's commitment to ensuring that fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of our school system" (Toronto District School Board, 2014c). It is this school board that I will be analysing through an anti-racist framework or lens.

WHAT IS AN ANTI-RACISM FRAMEWORK?

Anti-racism is defined as "an action oriented educational strategy for institutional systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 2000b, p. 27). This approach focuses on the saliency of race and epistemic knowledge of racialized minorities and discredits Eurocentric knowledge and ways of knowing as being the benchmark for validity. It brings into disrepute the notion that all persons have the same socio-economic starting point at birth with the same

level of access to cultural capital. An anti-racism approach acknowledges that society on a whole is wrought with inequalities. This framework seeks to "identify, challenge and change the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppressions" (Dei, 2000a, p. 41). In doing so, anti-racism aims to dismantle Whiteness, White privilege and White superiority; it also works to counter the act of using Whiteness as the baseline or norm by which all others are measured. . In Dei's words, "when Whiteness is destabilized, both the claim to own, possess and be privileged and the claim to normalcy are challenged and resisted, and the right to have a larger share of societal resources is made suspect" (Dei, 2000b, p. 29). An anti-racism framework aims to decenter Whiteness and works towards ensuring a more equitable society on paper and in practice.

Anti-racism, while built on the saliency of race and permanence of skin colour, does acknowledge and incorporate intersectionality into its framework. It "looks at the ways in which racism is related to sexism, homophobia, classism and other forms of oppression and devises plans to deal with them" (Bramble, 2000, p. 109). According to Dei and McDermott, "if identities are linked with knowledge production, then we must speak about anti-racism from our different locations, experiences, histories and identities" (Dei & McDermott, 2014, p. 5).

Viewing the education system through an anti-racist lens involves analysing policies and practices to ensure that they are applied in an equitable format that doesn't privilege one group of students over another. To ensure equitability, it also requires that the curriculum includes varied perspectives, which are to be regarded and treated as equal to one another. In total, the aim of the antiracist lens is to locate inequitable situations that enforce power hierarchies of knowledge and the unequal treatment of students and to dismantle them. It is this framework and lens that will be used to analyse how race intersects with geographic location and class.

According to Dei, "anti-racism work begins when the individual practitioner taking stock of his or her relative power, privilege and disadvantage" (Dei, 2000b, p. 25). It is through this notion that I position myself within the discussion that will unfold about anti-Black practices in Toronto's education system. My own interpretations of both being part of a racial minority and identifying as a Black, Caribbean female immigrant who is educated in Canada, has encouraged me to favour anti-racism as a lens of analysis. Within Canadian society, I am granted privileges as a heterosexual, middle class individual whose post-secondary education was completed in Canada. However, my race, gender and status as an immigrant are grounds on which I have experienced discrimination, especially in the workplace. For example, I had a co-worker who was vying for the position I was holding, question me repeatedly about my immigration status and its expiry. I believe that as someone who has accessed and benefitted from higher education in Canada, it is my responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, that the next generation of Black youth have access to similar or even greater educational opportunities to improve their life chances. It is these sentiments that ground the motivation for the discussions below.

SPATIALITY OF RACE

According to Richard T. Ford (1992), spatial organisation, that is the socially produced organisation of space, is not accidental and has always been a mode of politico-social control and differentiation (p. 117). When applied to racialized groups, spatial organisation becomes a tool used to concentrate and reinforce other dimensions of marginalisation (Price, 2010, p. 153; Woods, 2002; Wilson, 2007). This has long been exemplified by the race and class based polarization of Toronto neighbourhoods as shown in the report by J. David Hulchanski (2006) and in the real estate market by the devaluation of property in areas with a high population of racialized persons. For example, A wealthy neighbourhood can lose its value if there is a high influx of racialised persons. This is often linked to the racist ideas that poverty and violence are a key characteristic of racialized groups and therefore the presence of racialized groups results in a dangerous neighbourhood and it is this perception that leads to devaluation.

It has been said that educational attainment is not a silo but is impacted by intersections of socio-economic class, race, gender and other oppressions and priviledges. It is also dictated by the social capital and economic resources available to students in school, and is usually dependent on the wealth of the school district. Education has long been impacted by space financially as historically, property taxes from both residential and business real estate in neighbourhoods have been used to fund the school boards in Toronto and therefore the schools located within them (Gidney, 1999, pp. 244–245). This has meant that for racialized communities which tend to have low property value and in turn a lower collection of property taxes, that their schools have had less funds allocated to them than neighbourhoods with higher property values, higher income and a closer proximity to Whiteness. Before the amalgamation of the Toronto School Boards, this led to differences in per pupil spending between boards; as spending ranged from $4,723 to $9,148 per student (Gidney, 1999, p. 244). After amalgamation the funding formula and all taxes were transferred to the provincial government who then transferred funds to school boards based on the number of students in the school with the addition of grants for programs such as special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), transportation and declining enrolment. Regardless of the shift to equally ditributed funds, schools in historically white upper class neighbourhoods had already benefited from the infrastructure of previously rich boards and continue to benefit from the current high income population that contribute to the schools' fundraising efforts to make up the difference between what resources the government funds and those other resources they need to create or sustain. According to People for Education, fundraising contributes heavily to the bottom line of schools in high income neighbourhoods as the top 10 percent of elementary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 69 percent combined … [and] the top 5 percent of secondary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 85 percent combined" (People for Education, 2015, p. 14).

Space holds just as much power as financial support in determining student outcomes in neighbourhoods defined around racial and class lines, and it is this social-spatial difference that I will be focusing on.

RACE, LOCATION & CURRICULUM CONTENT

According to Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006), "in a post-colonial and/or anti-colonial context, schools must be open spaces that give opportunities to people from non-traditional backgrounds, from the margins, and from the most disadvantaged segments of our communities to realize their goals and dreams" (p. 154). By viewing the TDSB through an anti-racist lens, it is difficult to see the goal outlined by Dei and Doyle-Wood above being the aim of the TDSB considering its oppressive practices of racialized streaming toward persons of low socioeconomic status'. This information is known by some Black parents who, as I will show below, have taken action to ensure that their children escape the discriminatory actions of the TDSB.

I have seen a Black immigrant mother uproot herself from a priority neighbourhood and move to a suburb, with the sole intention of providing greater educational opportunities for her children. I have seen a Black Canadian, move from his parents' home in a priority neighbourhood, while still in post-secondary school to a 'better' neighbourhood in the city so that his child was able to attend a French Immersion school. Both families completed this move regardless of the number of challenges their households would face living on a single income with precarious jobs. In these cases it resulted in families paying more for rent so that their children could have opportunities that living in priority neighbourhoods would have deprived them of, such as better resourced schools and greater access to academic streaming and specialized programs such as French Immersion as well as the removal of the stigma of living in a priority neighbourhood.

In a country that prides itself on equality of opportunities, in one of the richest provinces and cities in Canada, one should question why certain neighbourhoods have better schools or programs than others. It has always been the argument that Black students are disengaged from school because of lack of interest on their part, their teachers' lack of confidence in their abilities and streaming in schools (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997; Sium, 2014). I want to add to that list and argue that Black students are funneled into certain spatial areas of the city which are labelled priority neighbourhoods via systemic, racist contributions to disparities that are manifested in where people can afford to live. This in turn systematically places Black students in petri dishes of schools that label them "at risk" and offer limited academic programs which, at the start of their education, restricts their potential life achievements.

Priority neighbourhoods are usually portrayed in the media as racialized ghettos which are low income, high in crime, have a high immigrant population and are dangerous to the rest of the city. This chapter contends that the municipal government,

via the labour market, actually create and sustain these neighbourhoods through a number of factors:

- Lack of housing options
- Lack of social and economic mobility
- Precarious employment.

LACK OF HOUSING OPTIONS

According to the 2011–12 TDSB Student and Parent Census (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015b), 48 percent of Black parents have an income of less than $30,000 per year and 29 percent of them have an income between $30,000 and $49,999. Both of the above mentioned averages, which reflect the income of Black families, exceed the overall percentage of families, below the poverty line. The overall family income across the TDSB indicates that 28 percent of families earn less than $30,000 and 21 percent earn between $30,000 and $49,999 (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015b). This income disparity consequently limits the housing options available to Black families. This in turn results in low-income families being congregated into priority neighbourhoods.

LACK OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Racialized minorities tend to make less than their White counterparts and tend not to move up the socioeconomic ladder as quickly. As noted in the TDSB 2011–12 Census, the majority of White students (59 percent) had an annual family income of $100,000 while the majority of Black students' families' (48 percent) had access to less than $30,000 a year.

The lack of housing options and social mobility can also be attributed to the fact that a large number of racialized minorities are immigrants to Canada. It has been found that foreign-born visible [racialized] minorities are disproportionately disadvantaged with regards to income and occupation (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013, p. 419). That is, racialized immigrants usually have low-income jobs which can result in a reliance on cheap housing options and little social mobility. The country sustains this trend among immigrants via racial discrimination in the job market and the lack of foreign credential recognition (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013, p. 420). Immigrants, depending on their financial status, usually do not have the money to send themselves back to school resulting in them being concentrated in low-skilled and low-income jobs.

Lack of housing options and *precarious employment* assist in making priority neighbourhoods home for many racialized immigrants and lack of social mobility and racial discrimination constrain their social mobility options.

In a study done by Parekh et al. (2011) they communicate that school stratification is a neoliberal 'market driven tactic to ensure that only those the market see

eligible for future economic contribution are granted access through training and higher education opportunities" (p. 252). Their study focused on the availability of vocational focused programs, full academic course selections and French Immersion in secondary schools based on their geographic location. The study also found that programming opportunities varied according to the income of the neighbourhood. Wealthy neighbourhoods were more likely to have French Immersion, full course offerings and Gifted programs. Lower income neighbourhoods, which are for the most part racialized neighbourhoods, offered more special, vocational and basic education programs (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, pp. 261, 274–275). The disparity is not only in the course offerings but in the dropout rate. The dropout rate in wealthy neighbourhoods was 2.6 percent, while lower income neighbourhoods' dropout rate was three times higher at 8.3 percent (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, pp. 6–7). Parekh et al. (2011) also found in their study that "students from the poorest 25 percent of Ontario households are more likely than other students to be in schools that offer special education to a high proportion of students" (p. 273). This is directly related to the higher number of Special Education courses available in low income areas and speaks to the streaming occurring in schools which pushes low income and often racialized youth into programs, such as Special Education, which fail to lead to post-secondary education. This is best exemplified in the TDSB statistics which show that Black students who comprise 12.6 percent of the student population make up 30 percent of its students enrolled in Special Education (Toronto District School Board, 2013b)

The TDSB has not adequately addressed the aforementioned areas of concern to ensure that students in low income racialized neighbourhoods have access to programs that could lead to less disengagement, higher graduate rates, higher post-secondary enrollment and greater opportunities for social mobility. The information therefore suggests a presence of anti-Black racism as most neighbourhoods where this discrimination takes place are predominantly Black. Although there is systemic discrimination against other racialized groups, a comparison between the racial composition of neighbourhoods in the TDSB system, as shown in their 2011–2012 Student Parent Census, and the locations of the Gifted, French Immersion and full course offerings show that East and South Asians also benefit from advanced program availability in their residential areas. This demonstrates that Whites are not the only ones benefiting from anti-Black racism and it is truly the proximity to Whiteness that allows these two other racialized groups to advance at the expense of Black youth.

RACIALIZED STREAMING

According to McCreary et al. (2013), "critical scholars of education have long argued [that] schools are sites of cultural and social reproduction that legitimize broader social stratification" (p. 255). They argue that the streamlining of students into professional, vocational and technical programs further separate and subject

students into streams that are representative of "deeply spatially structured roles within capitalist regimes, while the spatial segregation and relining of schools further perpetuates inequalities" (p. 255). One of the ways this is done is via racialized streaming.

Racialized streaming refers to the act of directing students of colour to specific academic streams based on their real or perceived level of compentency. Prior to 1996, students in Ontario had three choices 'basic', 'general' and 'advanced'. These streams were dismantled as it was argued that they were "biased in terms of gender, socio-economic class and cultural background" (Robertson, Cowell, & Olson, 1998, p. 693). The present curriculum available to students gives them the choice between applied, academic and locally developed compulsory, with options in limited number of schools such as the Gifted program, French Immersion, the Advanced Placement Program and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, p. 256). However, research has found that

> the [old] streaming process…still exists to an extent in Ontario through Grade 9 Program of Study courses. That is, students take a majority of their Grade 9 courses in only one Program of Study including Academic, Applied, or Locally Developed [Compulsory]… [with] the distribution of the Program of Study levels closely resembl[ing] the old Advanced (Academic), General (Applied), and Basic (Locally Developed Compulsory) system. (Brown, Newton, Tam, & Parekh, 2015, p. 2)

As shown above via statistics in Parekh et al's (2011) article, low income and therefore a large number of racialized students have limited access to advanced, Gifted or French Immersion programs based on their residential location and the mainly basic and vocational focused curriculum being offered in their neighbourhoods (Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011, pp. 272–273, 275).

To truly understand what the implications for streaming are, we must first define the purpose of each stream and how that impacts students' outcomes. According to the TDSB the aim of the academic stream in grades 9–10 is to "develop students' knowledge and skills through the study of theory and abstract problems with the emphasis on theory and abstract thinking as a basis for future learning and problem-solving" (Toronto District School Board, 2016). The applied stream is defined as the "focus on the essential concepts of a subject and [the] develop[ment] [of] students' knowledge and skills through practical applications and concrete examples" (Toronto District School Board, 2016). The Locally Developed Compulsory stream has "been developed to meet students' education needs not met by the existing provincial curriculum" (Toronto District School Board, 2016).

Each grades 9–10 stream leads to grade 11–12 preparation courses – the college preparation, university preparation, the college/university preparation or the workplace preparation courses. The college preparation courses "emphasize concrete applications of the theoretical material and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills" (Toronto District School Board, 2016) and the university

preparation courses "focus on the development of both independent research skills and independent learning skills". The university/college preparation courses are "designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for specific programs offered at universities and colleges (often referred to as mixed courses)" and the locally developed courses are "designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the expectations of employers, if they plan to enter the workforce directly after graduation, or the requirements for admission to certain apprenticeship or other training programs" (Toronto District School Board, 2016).

The academic stream offers the most options to students exiting grade 10 as it gives students the option to take any of the four types of preparation courses, whilst the applied stream gives access to all courses with the exception of the university only preparation courses. The locally developed compulsory stream only leads to workplace preparation courses. Racialized students are funnelled out of academic and applied streams. Less racialized students are able to move on directly from high school to post-secondary education. This has implications for their future job prospects and earning potential as those with post-secondary education generally earn more money. It also means that if students who have completed the locally developed compulsory stream want to enter and complete post-secondary education, they have a longer and more expensive journey to get there as they will have to take bridging courses, then university or college courses. In some instances students will have to take an even longer, more expensive route by completing bridging courses to college before being eligible to move on to university. This results in less earning potential as well as higher expenditure on post-secondary education due to time and money spent on bridging programs.

Given the commitment to equity the TDSB proclaims to have, and the educational and economic reprecussions, one would wonder why racialized streaming is still allowed to occur. One would also question why the TDSB is not held more accountable for its policies and actions. The TDSB's own *Equity Program Advisory Committee* questions whether the TDSB is answerable to its own policies and advocates for the creation of a "mechanism to monitor the implementation of policy" (Equity Program Advisory Committee, 2015). It is this lack of accountability in racialized streaming that I hope to tackle below.

RACIALIZED STREAMING AND THE TROUBLING LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN STREAMING

The systematic failure of Black students in Toronto can be traced to the streaming of youth into basic / locally developed compulsory courses in high school. The basic level high school diploma does not lead directly to college or university but instead leads students to graduate with diplomas that have limited mobility. This practice of distributing basic level high school diplomas raises the following questions and concerns.

Why is the TDSB disseminating a high school certificate that does not put high school students in a position to pursue further studies after high school? Why are Black students being directed to this basic level diploma? That is, why are racialized youth more likely to access basic level programs than academic or applied program streams? This was exemplified in a 2013 TDSB Program Study Overview, where it was found that although there were only 4.1 percent of students enrolled in the basic stream in the school board, Black students, who comprise 12.6 percent of the TDSB student population, made up 29.3 percent of the basic level program population. White students, on the other hand, which make up 28.3 percent of the TDSB student population make-up 26.5 percent of students in the basic level program population (Toronto District School Board, 2013a). This also begs the questions, why does the TDSB insist on providing a program stream whose dropout rate in one year was three times higher than the dropout rate of the university bound academic stream? (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters, 2008, pp. 8–9). Why is the TDSB not being held more accountable for this disproportionate allocation of basic level diplomas to Black youth via the special education program? Why does 'special education' for Black youth have to carry a negative connotation? Why are we not considered 'Gifted'?

As a public institution managing the future of the largest city in the nation, one must seriously begin to question the TDSB as to why it offers a certificate that limits students' educational and employment opportunities after graduation. As racialized tax payers, the Black community should be questioning why their taxes are supporting the education systems in wealthier neighbourhoods that have better offerings, while their children are left to vocational, basic and special educational streams. If the TDSB is truly an equal opportunity education provider, one must ask why the program offerings being made in low income racialized neighbourhoods are different from the offerings in the wealthy ones.

The most troubling part of this scenario is the targeting of Black youth for the Individual Education Plan (IEP). According to Bairu Sium's 2014 research, teachers rush to label Black students as "special education students" without any real evaluation. According the Ontario IEP Resource Guide (2004) no specialized knowledge is needed to add an IEP to a student's file, transition back into mainstream is not a requirement and the IEP travels with you from elementary school to secondary school. This document is the leading cause of Black students being streamed into the basic level and the use and consequences of this form is not being clearly communicated to students or parents. As seen in the example given by Sium (2014, pp. 89–94), parents are given the idea that the IEP is a temporary document used by the education system to provide remedial support to students who need it until they can be put back into mainstream classes.

There is also the concern of how a child can be placed in a special education class without any known physical or learning disabilities. It can be contended that the TDSB should be held educationally accountable for placing students in special education when it is unwarranted. Until accountability is demanded, the TDSB is likely to continue implementing policies and practices that limit opportunities of

Black children, especially those whose parents and guardians do not understand the educational system. If unchecked or unchallenged, Blacks will continue to be disproportionally impacted in a negative way.

The final concern to be interrogated concerning race, location and curriculum context relates to the chasm between the 'special' programs dominated by White students versus the 'special' program dominated by Black students. There are serious issues with an education system that is designed to oppress Black students by pushing them into a special needs education stream, which suggests a deficit framework. On the other hand, this system has found a way to give a leg up to White, middle class youth, and racialized youth with a closer proximity to Whiteness, by making advantageous academic streams such as Gifted programs and advanced placement programs more accessible to them. These streams can even be seen as a two time advantage as White, middle class youth already profit by accessing schools with more resources than those available in poor, racialized neighbourhoods. According to Andre-Bechely, 'middle-class parents have long fought to maximise educational advantage for their children by choice in ways that have excluded non-middle-class and non-White children' and "are increasingly concerned to ensure that their children get the opportunities necessary to ensure their social reproduction" (Butler & Hamnett, 2007, pp. 1163–1165). Sium puts it succinctly when she states "Middle-class parents are demanding more and more resources and receiving them while working class and those with double strikes against them, like African-Canadians, get stop-gap solutions that do not deal with the root cause of their problems" (2014, p. 160). There is no more systematic proof of the racism that dwells inside the streaming system as this practice of disadvantaging Black lower income students in favour of White middle class students. Given this analysis, the question remains as to why this state of affairs has been allowed to continue.

Unfortunately the systematic structure of the TDSB concerning streaming, lack of accountability and program of study availability are not the only barriers racialized students have to face. In priority neighbourhoods where race, class and space collide, the intersections of race and class can also pose a barrier in the classroom.

INTERSECTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND CLASS

Teachers' perception of a student determines much of a child's educational future to the point that it appears to be more important than the child's actual academic abilities. One situation has really brought this to light for me. In the Fall of 2015, while attending a guest lecture about the effect of class on education, a White university professor confessed that she refused to allow her son to wear his favourite shirt too many days in a row, even if it was clean, as she knew teachers would assume a negative perception of him based on how many times he wore the same clothes to school. Given how Whiteness is given preference in this Eurocentric society, if this was a concern for a White university professor, one is inclined to question how much more scrutiny a Black child would have to endure in the same situation.

In Sium's (2014) book *How Black and Working Class Children Are Deprived of Basic Education in Canada*, which focuses primarily on education in Toronto, she states teachers viewed lower social class as a barrier to education. Social situations such as "living in public housing, being from single parent households and not having parent(s) who could help them with their school work" (p. 115) were all presented as reasons for the low performance of Black students. In her ethnographic study she found that the teacher whose classroom she was studying tended to use home situations as a reason not to challenge her students academically. For example, she let a Black male student sit in her grade five classroom and underperform at a grade two level in mathematics, grade three level in spelling and grade four level in other areas because his father left the family recently and the mother was on welfare (Sium, 2014, p. 116). Instead of offering academic support to the child so that he could improve in his academics, this teacher chose pity and negligence as a means of response. This teacher has chosen in the same context to ensure that the other children in the class who are at the required level have the information they need (Sium, 2014, p. 116). In priority neighbourhoods where there is public housing and a higher number of welfare recipients, students experience greater discrimination of this kind.

If Canada is a truly 'colour and class blind' society situations such as living in public housing or being from a single parent family should not have had any effect on the teacher's treatment of this student and other students under her care. It also takes a special kind of unconscious anti-Black sentiment to reason that a student in a disadvantaged situation should be even more disadvantaged 'for their own good'. In an education system which 'prides' itself on being multicultural and inclusive, one wonders why it is not mandatory for teachers in the TDSB to take instruction on anti-racism, which advocates for a holistic view of students, in order to prevent these situations from occurring in classrooms. It is these setbacks that contribute to dropouts, push-throughs and a reoccurring cycle of poverty in Black communities.

WHY IS SYSTEMATIC RACISM BLATANTLY ALLOWED IN CANADA?

This chapter has provided information that questions the TDSB's commitment to equity and has argued that the TDSB is systematically discriminating against racialized bodies. A question that must be asked is 'why has this been allowed to exist and continue?' Frances Henry and Carol Tator (1994) coined the term 'democratic racism' as an explanation for the blatant racism allowed in a society that appears to value inclusivity and multiculturalism. The authors define democratic racism as "an ideology that permits and justifies the maintenance of two apparently conflicting set of values" (p. 1). On the one hand, there are values of "fairness, justice and equality" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 3) and on the other "attitudes and behaviours which include negative feelings about people of colour" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 3). Out of this desire to seem fair and equitable comes the inability to deal with race and racism.

One of the consistent issues I have faced in Canada is the inability to name race in any social context and to be allowed to name my race. For example, I have a White

co-worker who becomes very offended when I refer to myself as Black. I find it problematic that as a racialized person, a non-racialized person has determined that they have the authority to tell me how they would prefer for me to define myself. Yet, this same co-worker would insist that she is tolerant of everyone.

This idea of practicing racism "unconsciously" is very much Canadian as it gives White Canadians an excuse when caught in a racist act to behave as though they are unaware of their offense. This form of democratic racism in the education system usually leads to a call by well-intended persons for democratic education. Democratic education is the notion that we should work to address all areas of social justice inequality in an equal manner. However, I agree with Dei and argue that in those instances where race is lumped in a group with all other oppressions, race is more likely to be discarded and unaddressed.

It is for this reason that I believe that the anti-racist framework is the optimal lens for looking at the TDSB as it is a holistic system that "enjoins us to deal with differences that extend beyond race, gender, class and sexuality to issues of language, culture, religion and spirituality" (Dei, 2001, p. 144). It therefore encompasses all the aspect of students that make up their educational experience.

PERPETUATION OF CYCLES OF POVERTY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The racism prevalent in academic streaming in elementary schools as it relates to IEP's and in secondary schools with the streaming of racialized youth into basic or locally developed compulsory courses leads me to consider the consequences of streaming and educational disenfranchisement on the Black community. The Black community has been subjected to special education classes from at least the 1980's until present (Sium, 2014, pp. 94–95) and this has left an indelible mark on a community which is predominantly working class. To put in perspective how damaging this process of streaming has been on the Black community, it means that there has been nearly forty years loss of increased socioeconomic gain in the Black community. Forty years of lost opportunities, wasted potential, and the reinforcement of the 'dominance' of Whiteness. It also means that persons streamed through the basic level have also become active members of the working class or underclass and in turn their economic opportunities have had diminished economic and educational benefits for themselves and their future generation.

NEXT STEPS & SOLUTIONS

In discussing this topic with my peers, questions have come to mind such as why such disruption has been allowed in the Black community. I question why Black families have not migrated to other neighbourhoods? Why Black students have not requested to be transferred to schools in 'better' neighbourhoods? Why are Black parents not more aware of the situation? And what do we do next?

In response to these questions, our gaze should first be redirected to remove responsibility from the oppressed in these circumstances and instead focus on the oppressor. It is the Eurocentric capitalist society, which has created situations of racial discrimination which has contributed to lower paid jobs, limited access to higher skilled jobs, and has discriminated against foreign credentials of highly skilled immigrants who entered the country as skilled workers.

Secondly, is it unfair that parents who have been made aware of the educational bias in the range of programs made available at their schools and would like to transfer their children to better school, now have to navigate an annual application process with no guarantee of placement? This especially presents a challenge for parents for whom English is not their first language. Even if the application is successful and the student has been relocated to a school in a 'better' neighbourhood, the family is now obliged to shoulder the additional $112 monthly transit fee to attend the school outside their residential area.

Cultural understanding is also paramount. Black communities in both the Caribbean and continental Africa have a culture that trusts the judgement and good will of educators and the education system with their children. It is common culturally to see the teacher as the 'third parent'. It is this trusting nature that the Eurocentric education system has exploited the most. The Black community must educate other Black parents so that this cultural understanding does not become our downfall.

Next, I advocate using small acts and big acts in the Black community to subvert the power of the TDSB and the practice of streaming. Voices of both the other racialized bodies and that of dominant bodies need to be incorporated in the discussion regarding streaming and should form allyships with the Black community to dismantle this barrier. The Black community must educate Black parents, especially new immigrants about the dangers of streaming; advocate for discontinuation of basic level diplomas and demand accountability from the educational boards in the General Toronto Area (GTA) as it relates to the streaming of intelligent, capable children into needless special education streams. Finally, we must advocate for the TDSB to utilise the research being done regarding education theories and studies and implement policies based on well-balanced research. Studies have shown the imbalance in educational outcomes for years and the TDSB has acted slowly to implement the radical changes that need to be made if students in low-income areas are truly to have an 'equitable education'.

The most unfortunate thing would be if the community stood by and allowed another 40 years to go by before our community has a chance to grow both socially and economically at a higher rate than present.

CONCLUSION

It has long been thought that education is the great equalizer. The idea that one can "pull up his/her bootstraps" via education and hard work and rise in the social ladder

has become a fallacy in the Black community when our educational rights are being undermined. The reality is, what others deem a class struggle is not simply such, but it is a fight that encapsulates race by the very nature of a class being assigned to certain races. That is, as a Black person in Canada one is associated with poverty, crime and deviance. With that stigma attached to that particular race, the way in which social institutions treat Blacks as individuals and as a group is very much coloured by a deficit based mentality regarding the negative perceptions of class, intelligence and gender attached to Blackness by the White dominant. This chapter has sought to highlight how Blacks are viewed in the education system and the negative consequences of racism, classism and socio-spatial organisation in the city of Toronto. It posits that it is only by utilising anti-Black racism that one is able to locate the main disruption Black bodies bring when entering spaces and institutions that were not created or intended for them.

Based on the discussion above, this chapter contends that it is an education system's responsibility to expose educators to multiple ways of knowing and that includes creating a multi-faceted view of youth of all races, especially when it relates to Black youth. It is envisaged that advocating for the use of an anti-racist framework through which policies, teachers and systems in general operate, will result in a very different education system. A system which will result in the dismantling of White supremacy; a system that will allow for true equity, a system that views Blackness as intelligent, resilient and capable.

REFERENCES

Anisef, P., Brown, R., Phythian, K., Sweet, R., & Walters, D. (2008). *Early school leaving among immigrants in toronto secondary schools.* Toronto: CERIS – The Ontario Metropolis Centre.

Bramble, M. (2000). Black education in Canada: Past, present and future. In T. Goldstein & D. Selby (Eds.), *Weaving connections: Educating for peace social and environmental justice* (pp. 99–119). Toronto: Sumach Press.

Brown, R. S., Newton, L., Tam, G., & Parekh, G. (2015). *The trajectories of grade 9 mathematics achievement 2008–2013.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

Butler, T., & Hamnett, C. (2007). The georgraphy of education: Introduction. *Urban Studies, 44*(7), 1161–1174.

Dei, G. J. (1997). Race and the production of identity in the schooling experiences of African-Canadian youth. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 18*(2), 241–257.

Dei, G. J. (2000a). Recasting anti-racsim and the axis of difference: Beyond the question of theory. *Race, Gender & Class, 7*(2), 38–56.

Dei, G. J. (2000b). Towards an anti-racism discursive framework. In G. J. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader* (pp. 23–39). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Dei, G. J. (2001). Rescuing theory: Anti-racism and inclusive education. *Race, Gender & Class, 8*(1), 139–161.

Dei, G. J., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: critical knowledge / multiple knowings – Possibilities, challenges, and resistance in curriculum/ cultural contexts. In Y. Kanu (Ed.), *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations* (pp. 151–180). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dei, G. J., & McDermott, M. (2014). Introduction to the politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning. In G. J. Dei & M. McDermott (Eds.), *Politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (pp. 1–11). New York, NY: Springer.

Dei, G. J., Mazzuca, J., McIsaac, E., & Zine, J. (1997). *Reconstructing drop-out: A critical ethnography of the dynamics of Black students' disengaement from school.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Equity Program Advisory Committee. (2015, November 26). *2015 11 26 EPAC Minutes.* Retrieved from TDSB Web site: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/Community%20Advisory%20committees/EPAC/2015%2011%2026%20EPAC%20Minutes%20.pdf

Ford, R. T. (1992). Urban space and the color line: The consequences of demarcation and disorientation in the postmodern metropolis. *Harvard BlackLetter Journal, 9*, 117–147.

Gidney, R. D. (1999). *From Hope to Harris.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Henry, F., & Tator, C. (1994). The ideology of racism: Democratic racism. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 26*(2), 1–14.

Hulchanski, J. D. (2010). *The three cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods, 1970–2005.* Toronto: Cities Centre Press.

McCreary, T., Basu, R., & Godlewska, A. (2013). Critical geographies of education: Introduction to the special issue. *The Canadian Geographer, 57*(3), 255–259.

Nakhaie, M., & Kazemipur, A. (2013). Social capital, employment and occupational status of the new immigrants in Canada. *International Migration and Integration, 14*, 419–437.

Parekh, G., Killoran, I., & Crawford, C. (2011). The Toronto connection: Poverty, perceived ability, and access to education equity. *Canadian Journal of Education, 34*(3), 249–279.

People for Education. (2007). *How funding works.* Retrieved November 02, 2016, from People for Education: http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/How-Funding-for-Schools-Works.pdf

People for Education. (2013). *Mind the gap: Inequality in Ontario's schools.* Retrieved November 2, 2016, from People for Education: http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/annual-report-2013-WEB.pdf

People for Education. (2015). *Ontario's schools: The gap between policy and reality.* Retrieved November 2, 2016, from People for Education: http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/P4E-Annual-Report-2015.pdf

Pinto, L. E., & Portelli, J. P. (2014). Philosophy as policy, policy as philosophy: Reviving a radical relationship. *Antistasis, 4*(2), 24–29.

Price, P. (2010). At the crossroads: Critical race theory and critical georgraphies of race. *Progess in Human Geography, 34*(2), 147–174.

Robertson, C., Cowell, B., & Olson, J. (1998). A cast study of integration and destreaming: Teachers and students in an Ontario secondary school respond. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 30*(6), 691–717.

Sium, B. (2014). *How Black and working class children are deprived of basic education in Canada.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Soja, E. W. (1980). The socio-spatial dialecctic. *Annals of the Association of American Georgraphers, 70*(2), 207–225.

Toronto District School Board. (2012). *Equity & inlusive education*. Retrieved June 05, 2016, from TDSB: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/aboutus/directorofeducation/annualreports/annualreportfor20112012/equityandinclusiveeducation.aspx

Toronto District School Board. (2013a, December). *Programs of study an overview.* Retrieved November 1, 2016, from Toronto District School Board Website: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/research/docs/reports/programsofstudyanoverview%20fs-%20final.pdf

Toronto District School Board. (2013b). *School-wide structures: An overview.* Retrieved November 02, 2016, from Toronto District School Board: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/research/docs/reports/school-widestructuresanoverview%20fs-final.pdf

Toronto District School Board. (2014a). *About us*. Retrieved June 5, 2016, from TDSB Website: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs.aspx

Toronto District School Board. (2014b). *Caring and safe schools*. Retrieved June 05, 2016, from TDSB: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/HighSchool/CaringSafeSchools.aspx

Toronto District School Board. (2014c). *Policies procedures and forms*. Retrieved June 05, 2016, from TDSB: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Detail.aspx?docId=200

Toronto District School Board. (2016, January). *Choices 2016–2017.* Retrieved October 31, 2016, from Toronto District School Board: http://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/0/HighSchool/docs/Choices20162017.pdf

Yau, M., Rosolen, L., & Archer, B. (2015a). *Census portraits, understanding our students' background: Black students report.* Toronto: Toronto District School Board.

Yau, M., Rosolen, L., & Archer, B. (2015b). *Census portraits, understanding our students' background: Socioeconomic status report.* Toronto: Toronto District School Board.

MARIE MCLEOD

10. EPISTEMIC SALIENCE OF ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the epistemic salience of anti-racist education. Epistemic saliency is about the oppressed voice becoming salient. McLeod examines the flaws of Western conceptions of knowledge constructs on the Native/Indigenous through an anti-racist lens. These constructions are historically contingent, politically and socially constitutive, and produce forms of social organization. The discussion identifies the problematic implications of Eurocentric construction and production of knowledge on race and difference. It argues that contemporary pedagogues should take into account how knowledge construction and production are implicated in schooling. Current educational practices based on essentializing knowledge about the "other", have contributed to racism and the unequal treatment of non-White students. The chapter examines ways in which racist ideas and actions are consciously entrenched by schooling structures and processes. It recognizes and examines issues of exploitation, oppression, domination and subordination embedded in dominant epistemological frameworks in schools with a view to rupture and subvert hegemonic paradigms of race and difference. Western epistemological constructions of race and difference must be reframed through anti-racist praxis. This chapter gives suggestions as to how pedagogues might use reframed knowledge constructs of race and difference, to rupture and resist the status quo.

Keywords: epistemic, salience, anti-racist, education, indigenous, pedagogue, exploitation, oppression, domination, subordination

INTRODUCTION

As a researcher I often wonder, 'how do we know what we know?', 'what counts as knowledge?', 'on what basis can we say that something amounts to knowledge?', 'is knowledge simply ineluctable theories arrived at by induction?', 'is knowledge ahistorical, and therefore race-free, or culture-free?'. The epistemology guiding and informing the assumptions behind ideological positions are of paramount importance to the revelation of inherent problems with the notion of "first principles". How the world is defined, an individual's place in it, and one's ability to relate to the world, is largely determined by epistemological beliefs. Epistemology is more than a mere

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 161–170.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

philosophical difference. Thus, to fully understand reality, our current status in it, and its multiple effects, epistemology is a significant element of analysis. Ahistoricity, race and culture in epistemology are contentious issues. However, perhaps the more pertinent issue is taking stock of the epistemological baggage we bring to generating understanding about our realities. How do we come to determine what is considered reasonable and true? Although the prevailing perspective of mainstream research communities assumes that ”their epistemologies are not derived from any particular group's social history …” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 9), any exploration of the various ways of thinking and perceiving, any effort that seeks to determine “what is”, of interpreting meaning and applying concepts to form reality, is socially and historically constituted. Sociocultural histories of people are central to what drives the creation, definition and validation of knowledge. For Kincheloe and McLaren (2008), knowledge serves as a dialectically reinitiating practice that regulates truth within a given reality or system (p. 405).

Over the past 25 years, critical theories and critical research assert this basic accepted assumption that all thought is fundamentally socially and historically constituted (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 405). Clearly, the metaphysical posture of the paradigms-belief systems gain immanence, if only in the contemplative realm. The epistemologies typically endorsed and ultimately used are constructed from a Eurocentric point of view (Banks, 1993). In ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways, Eurocentric paradigms define basic belief systems, and formulate the world. Formally, what counts as knowledge is determined by a Euro-American interpretation of realities based on their cultures, histories, and varied structural positions. Thus, the material realities of the powerful inform and construct theories of knowledge. History itself is written from the vantage point of the privileged. We must deal with Western epistemological privileging as an operative force in and over our world as it is embedded in the very foundations of society and social structures. It is the basis on which society is organized; cementing Euro-American privilege and power. Its social domination and subordination are enshrined. Consequently, these dominant groups construct the world, subordinating all other groups and their distinctive epistemologies or theories of knowledge. Apparently, an epistemological empire is formed “based on a notion of truth that undermines the knowledges produced by those outside…” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 408).

This discussion is inexorably concerned with the issue of the nature of knowledge and what really does it consist of, how it is constructed, is it value-free? For me, the issue is whether influence can truly be denied in the establishment of what is ultimately constructed as fact. The trustworthiness and authenticity, the goodness or quality and criteria of knowledge construction must be influenced by some form of ideological inscription. Some form of subjectivity is central to the formation of knowledge (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 405). I agree “that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values”. They affirm that epistemological presuppositions are endemic to researchers' investigations. Findings, which find

their way into becoming facts and inevitably what can be known, are linked to the values of the individual producer. Therefore, knowledge is not neutral and is culpably value-mediated and value-dependent. This value-determined nature is an epistemological difference that informs knowledge, and by extension, knowledge claims and knowledge validation processes.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), maintain that mainstream research practices are implicated in the reproduction of systems. I will go even further to postulate; as I begin thinking about my own thinking, advised by Freire (1990), that any mode of perception, any concept formation is shaped and mediated by mainstream research. Researchers are implicated in the interpretation of any slice of reality. Research then, becomes a site for not just increasing knowledge but constructing the very world we see. This Euro-American construction of the world and reality is known as modernism. According to Scheurich and Young's (1997) analysis of Foucault, modernism is an epistemological, … network or grid that "makes" the world as the dominant Western culture knows and sees it (p. 9). One of this grid's primary assumptions and rationale is predicated on racial hierarchies and exclusions (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 9) highlighting that dominant research epistemologies – from positivism to postmodernisms- implicitly favour White people. The epistemological axis of modernism promotes White racial supremacy (Goldberg, 1993). Modernism and its rationale of the supremacy of Whites dictate the fundamental assumptions of Western civilization at large. Its ways of knowing name, discuss and explain all historical and cultural contexts, all social contexts, all knowledge, invariably all that we think. Such Euro-American constructions are not random knowledge constructs by aberrant researchers unwittingly stepping out of line. Rather, it is indicative of an "epistemological unconscious" lurking beneath the shadows of mainstream research. Making research itself a site of oppression.

Epistemologies undergirding positivism to postmodernism, undoubtedly endorse particular knowledge primacy and potent over-emphasis on quantitative methods parade as the only valid knowledge dating as far back as Plato. A natural corollary of epistemological domination is the development of a master narrative and by extension the hierarchization of certain epistemologies. Critical theorists of the 21st century have identified the development of "episto-weaponry" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 408) ,the existence of a form of "information warfare" designed to spread deliberate falsehoods. One way of using this weaponry is to engage in epistemic acts of conflation and domestication. For example, the conflation of race with ethnicity which depoliticizes race, the construction of difference as deviant, the misreading and miscapturing of race; the failure to present racism as structural and systemic rather than as individualized and situational. Also implicated, the domestication of oppressive acts. The development of a "received view", a kind of received knowledge ensued seemingly validating immutable natural laws, cause and effect norms determining the true state of affairs and the way things truly are (Banks, 1995) affirms that much of the social science research assumptions, labels and perspectives spread across different disciplines assert erroneous scientific knowledge

and distorted interpretations. Additionally, these distortions pass into dominant spheres into history, into culture as "truths". "…fallacious findings, questionable theories, and inappropriate interpretations…" (Gordon et al., 1990, p. 16) become the basis of practices, policies, and most insidious, institutional attitudes.

Eurocentric epistemologies that guide inquiry by extension are implicated in educational research. These Western inquiry paradigms, from positivism to postmodernism promote the social history of the dominant White race as privileged at the exclusion of people of colour. Scheurich and Young (1997) point out, "all of the epistemologies currently legitimated in education arise exclusively out of the social history of the dominant White race" (p. 8). Critiques of research epistemologies have pointed out that much of social science knowledge particularly citing the racialized, is distorted (Gordon et al., 1990). Blacks, Indigenous peoples and Latinos are characterized and ultimately stereotyped in demeaning, warped ways. Scholars of colour and research based on race and non-dominant cultures are often infantilized, primitivized, demonized and ultimately particular discourses and ethnic-related knowledge are silenced. In many ways researchers become the new gatekeepers of what counts as valid knowledge, legitimating interpretations and standards of scholarship in research. Typically, in higher education, race-based epistemologies and race-oriented scholarship are riskier and more dubious than mainstream-oriented scholarship. Studies drawn from new race-based epistemologies are not regarded as legitimate, or as real research with real merit. According to Scheurich and Young (1997), educational researchers specifically continue to be key participants in the reproduction and elaboration of racism. Indeed, according to Banks (1995), racism is endemic to social science research, racially biased assumptions or beliefs are embedded within the discipline.

Qualitative methodologies and the critical tradition, to which I am unwittingly drawn, are continually being challenged in education. Among researchers the study of race has met resistance in being regarded as critically significant and epistemologically rigorous. When advancing topics such as race and difference, the discourses employed in the actual education practices in which institutions engage, often present demeaning cum distorted interpretations of the realities of people of colour. Typically, studies drawn from new race-based epistemologies are not regarded as valid. Ethno-racial distinctions in education theory and practice have contributed to the promulgation of racism and unequal treatment of non-White students in schools. The result: racism is promulgated on an epistemological level; racism is constructed in the very act of research itself. Stanfield (1985) and Banks (1995) have suggested that the epistemologies that we typically use in educational research may be racially biased. Clearly it is the epistemology itself that is racist. Thus, I wonder if as an educational researcher, am I a key participant in the reproduction and proliferation of epistemological racism if my assumptions are congruent with dominant epistemologies?

Epistemological racism has consequences. The critical conundrum with epistemological racism is that it not only reinforces as valid the social histories of

Whites, the concept fixes the paradigmatic rationale of inquiry used by Whites as privileged and superior. Additionally, it restricts and excludes other epistemologies that originate from other social histories. Knowledge claims of Indigenous and Black peoples are invalidated. The knowledge validation process itself, "…the specifications of different research methodologies are all cultural products of White social history" which is privileged and advances lack of success in scholarship comprising non-traditional research. The resultant effect is that race-based research is always under the scrutiny of the Eurocentric lens; invalidating its focus, validity, and value.

The resultant flaws of Western conceptions of knowledge constructs on Indigenous peoples, implicate schooling. Eurocentric construction and production of knowledge guide pedagogy and curriculum in schools. Current schooling practices are informed by, and continue to contribute to the essentializing of the knowledge of the "other". This polarization of knowledge leads to binary conceptions. Deficit thinking in schools and the metaphysical assumptions undergirding its tenets must be seriously questioned. The problematic implications of Eurocentric construction and production of knowledge that guide pedagogy and curriculum in schools must also be questioned. What are the real, material effects of major conceptual flaws in education theory and research on the lives of the marginalized, the minoritized, and the racialized?

IDENTIFY A SPECIFIC FOCUS FROM TOPIC AREA/NEEDS

Epistemic Salience of Anti-racist Education

The issue of voice is rarely addressed directly in the previous discourses of positivism and post-positivism. It is in the voice of the oppressed that epistemic saliency resides. "The body of the knowledge producer and the context and tradition within which such knowledge is produced are always very important considerations" (Dei, 2014, p. 245).

The notion of saliency articulates the multiple ways of knowing which offers meaning to both the understanding, and relation to epistemology. This makes epistemology a site of knowledge contestation. This tenet pinpoints its critical analytical capacity. The idea then is that no subject is exempt from critical analysis. Saliency's conscious critical resource becomes the entry-point that critiques multiple spaces and creates dissonance to the status quo. This primacy of critique debunks Plato's one singular truth. It centers oppositional knowledges, which foregrounds dialogic engagement in de-colonial cum anti-colonial responsibility. Centering different ways of coming to know opens up spaces of challenge and resistance. Any such anti-colonial project implicit in saliency gives the notion powerful currency to effect transformation. Transformation aligns epistemic salience to social issues/ social justice purpose. It has fundamental significance for the decolonization of educational practices where erroneous knowledge constructs can lead to the miseducation of the learner.

HAVE NOT ANTI-RACIST THEORISTS AND EDUCATORS DONE THIS ALREADY?

Though anti-racist educators have identified the value and legitimacy of anti-racist education, few have dealt with its epistemic salience and soundness.

There are limitations in accentuating epistemic salience, such as the idea that your reality is the only one.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical grounding of this chapter is rooted in the epistemology of the critical tradition. The critical tradition is dedicated to emancipatory actions in its origins. It is in direct opposition to the simple verification and falsification of hypotheses prototypical of the prevailing hostile paradigmatic environment of positivism and post-positivism. The critical tradition's basic assumptions are devoted to critique, and moves beyond reproduction of the status quo in its outcomes, to the more sought after transformation. Here it is crucial to engage in aims-talk. "In this context, criticality and the research it supports are always encountering new ways … to provide more evocative and compelling insights" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 407). The saliency of the critical tradition lies in its willingness to at least question. So, at the very least, the presence of critique is important to the implementation of alternatives, articulating counter and oppositional theoretical framings and ultimately different ways of knowing. The posture is not reductionist but accommodating. Inherent within is a rejection of a hierarchization of epistemologies which opens up pedagogical spaces for counter knowledges to emerge, multiple ways of knowing rather than binary conceptualizations cum readings. The troubling of dominant canons, paradigms and theories that silence particular discourses problematizes knowledge construction that endorses the notion of one absolute and singular truth, it endorses a discourse of intersectionality. This understanding criticality supports a more complete perception, which results in a closer approximation to reality. We can reimagine centers and margins by destabilizing the established epistemological ones, and creating multiple centers from different scholarships in their place. The idea is not to decenter with another hegemony but rather to promote the notion of a multicentre, which encourages the deconstruction of dominant norms. We can decouple capitalism and democracy. The criticality and the knowledge research promoted are neither static nor neutral.

The aim of critical theory is inquiry dedicated to social change. The critical tradition is interested in engaging social change. The focus of its criticality on rupturing political systems, social structures, economic arrangements, ideologies, discourses and epistemologies that prop up forms of power and privilege, is indicative of its bid for change. Critical theory is intensely facilitative of change, a rejection of the present state of affairs as normative; through combatting rationalistic modes of Western epistemology. Freire's (1990) conscientazcao speaks to this expansion of consciousness that gives greater insight into the forces of domination

affecting the lives of individuals. Its dialectic tenets of inquiry are commensurate with the dynamics of the study of the social complexities of intersection of Western societies and non-Western peoples. The revelation of the nature and extent of exploitation is a benchmark in contributing to social transformation- a Freirean concept no doubt. The critical tradition's crucial concern for just, social change, its imperative to reframe social theory, to introduce new research methodologies, to explore new topics and consequently new strategies for interpretation are basic to the epistemological dimension of its criticality. It is dedicated to a democratization of various modes of meaning-making and knowledge production. The production of new forms of knowledge, usually from the margins, generates new meanings which ultimately can inform policy decisions, and more importantly, political action. Its primary democratic control operates in its attempt to remove knowledge production from the control of elite groups. In foregrounding this counterhegemonic action of the "bricolage" embedded in critical theory, there is a primacy of critical concern with social change for social justice. The subjugated knowledges of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the minoritized, can gain insight and understanding. This kind of knowledge work helps to address the complexity of the domain of the lived world.

Implicit in social change is a central focus on oppression and addressing the needs of the oppressed. Critical theorists' work is to empower the oppressed. Within this context its criticality foregrounds collective complicities and responsibilities, and does not avoid the expectation of accountability. It introduces the idea of the possibility of diluted social justice if all oppressions are considered together. In this regard, the notion of voice assumes importance. Critical theorists are interested in the voice of the oppressor, not an appropriation. The knowledge base becomes suspect if the voice of the marginalized is not engaged. What voice is mirrored in the creation of a master narrative is of paramount importance. Does the dominant possess the moral authority to speak in one's name. The body of the knowledge producer is very important. Who is saying what? Why they are saying what they are saying is equally important. This leads to a discussion of acceptance and validity of embodied knowledge as a legitimate voice of dissent.

The critical tradition is grounded on an epistemology of historical situatedness. A central dimension of the critical tradition that holds profound implications for epistemic salience is historical situatedness. Its critique is informed by a link to a historical understanding- historical realism. This link allows for the excavation of historical and undoubtedly subjugated knowledges; which in turn inform and enlarge insight; eroding ignorance. To reiterate, knowledge is not neutral. It is subjectivist and value-laden. Critical tradition-based epistemology supports the acceptance and emergence of other ways of knowing derived from the social histories of different races and cultures.

A valuable conceptual tenet of the critical tradition is its devotion to a praxis-oriented critical approach. Its knowledge work weds criticality to activism and advocacy. Praxis is implicit in its epistemological framework because of its concern with issues of power relations and justice, its focus on examining the way power

operates, its insistence on inciting action to expose oppressive power relations. In the critical domain the idea is introduced that change resides not in bodies but is dependent on rupturing systems and structures. It reinforces the idea of exposing power so it can be opposed. It seeks to uncover particular power arrangements that demarcate one's life chances. Specifically, how power determines one's social status. Its embryonic thesis lies in the philosophy of Freire's "conscientization" and Foucault's enabling critical inquiry of knowledge: Reflection and action leads to praxis which seeks to transform the social order, transform ways of doing things.

The critical tradition engages difference, unlike democracy which does not fully address it. For me, any engagement with difference subverts the unanalyzed assumptions usually inherent in more passive, normative research methods.

One problem that may debilitate the success of using the critical tradition lies with its genesis in White social history. Does the critical tradition have racial biases? Does it become complicit in stagnating the emergence of a true Black critical consciousness? Its openness to resistance may be challenged if the epistemological frame emerges out of the social history of the dominant race. However, I believe that what supersedes this apparent shortcoming is the critical tradition's willingness to question, its ability to transverse beyond the apolitical positivism and advocate change. Despite its "European-derived paradigms" (Stanfield, 1985, p. 399) the critical tradition's ontology, epistemology, and axiology, to a significant extent opposes oppression. Its importance to an anti-racist agenda supersedes any cathartic dependencies that may or may not be sought by Black intellectuals.

Accepting today's climate of "evolving criticality" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008) within the critical tradition is not an attempt to delineate and reduce its character to a discrete school of analysis. "Blurred disciplinary norms" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 405) capture not wanton analysis rather, the "evolving hybridity endemic to contemporary critical analysis" (Kincheloe, 2001). This, of course is always tenuous business in terms of suggesting a kind of laissez-faire perspective, but such concerns are unavoidable in a paradigm such as this. Research as a transformative endeavour is not static. If concerned with social inquiry rather than forceful critique, with a view to stimulate emancipatory action; discrete schools of analysis are liminal. In attempting to engage action that support social change and political action that redresses injustices, the epistemological presuppositions that inform research must continuously exhibit new and interconnected ways of understanding. The ideological imperatives of its "bricolage" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 405) must be instructive in relation to constructing research that first recognizes the forces that subtly shape our lives. Any research that aspires to weaponize theory and thus, be deemed or labelled "critical," must connect to a thesis of change and empowerment.

The canon wars raging relegate qualitative research and critical theory to a secondary position. Positivism and Post-Positivism exercise hegemony over all other paradigms and are predominantly influential. Critical theory proponents of this decade still seek recognition and avenues for input. Critical theory still seeks acceptance. Critical schools of thought are therefore in their infancy. Definitions,

meanings and implications in this formative stage are tentative, and need to be developed. Will a resolution of paradigm hierarchization truly occur even with the constant and continual emergence of more sophisticated and informed views/belief modalities? Or will the dilemma be resolved with the emergence of a metaparadigm rendering all others irrelevant? I really do not know. One thing I have learnt about the enterprise of research is the paramount importance of being clear as to what paradigm informs my approach. Paradigm issues are crucial. It is worthwhile to struggle for better ones. The criterion for progress is restitution and emancipation. The critical tradition's posture of revision, reframing and reformulation implicit in its nature of critique, advances and reinforces its agenda of change. It stirs transformation, which aligns its basic tenets with progress and bolsters the progressive policy. The aim is not to reify the critical tradition. That its epistemological frame is appropriate is evidenced by its emancipatory work. It squarely participates in anti-racist work through its critical orientation. The critical tradition advocates for race-oriented scholarship.

RESEARCH QUESTION

I am questioning whether anti-racist education is founded on salient and thus, justified foundations. Is the basis of knowledge in anti-racist education taken for granted or assumed or privileged simply because it is embodied and hence deemed to be authentic?

NOTE

I am using the concept of the bricolage articulated by Joe Kincheloe. He develops the notion as an extension of the concept of evolving criticality. The French word bricoleur describes a handyman or handywoman who makes use of the tools available to complete a task (Harper, 1987). Some connotations of the term involve trickery and remind me of the cunning of Anansi, a prominent figure in Jamaican folklore. In particular in recounting the exploits of Anansi, he is able to overturn the social order in unconventional ways. Similarly, the interdisciplinary feature marks the epistemological innovation of the bricolage. This conceptual terrain allows exposure of various structures that covertly shape research narratives. It is the bricoleur's unique ways of seeing through his or her own social location in relation to other researchers that shapes the interpretation and production of knowledge.

REFERENCES

Banks, J. (1993). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher*, *22*(5), 4–14. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189x022005004

Dei, G. (1996). *Anti-racism education*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publication.

Dei, G. (1999). The denial of difference: Reframing anti-racist praxis. *Race Ethnicity And Education*, *2*(1), 17–38. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1361332990020103

Dei, G. (2014). Personal reflections on anti-racism education for a global context. *Encounters*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.15572/enco2014.13

Dei, G. (2015). Global education from an 'Indigenist' Anti-colonial Perspective. *JCIE*, *9*(2). Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.20355/c53g6b

DeVault, M., Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1995). Handbook of qualitative research. *Contemporary Sociology*, *24*(3), 418. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2076551

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, White masks.* New York, NY: Grove Press.

Kirova, A. (2009). Critical and emerging discourses in multicultural education literature: A review. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, *40*(1), 101–124. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ces.0.0065

Mohanty, C. (1989). On race and voice: Challenges for liberal education in the 1990s. *Cultural Critique*, *14*, 179. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1354297

Morales, A., & Delgado, R. (1996). Critical race theory: The cutting edge. *Contemporary Sociology, 25*(3), 388. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2077485

Scheurich, J., & Young, M. (1997). Coloring epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher*, *26*(4), 4–16. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189x026004004

Valencia, R. (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking*. London: Falmer Press.

Valencia, R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking*. New York, NY: Routledge.

SAYNAB XASAN

11. RACE AND RACISM IN EDUCATION

Seeking Transformative Change through an Inclusive and Anti-racist Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This chapter argues that racial prejudice, Eurocentric curriculum, and low teacher expectations, negatively impact the achievement of African/Black children in North America and Britain. Consequently, these children are subjected to emotional and symbolic violence; this is detrimental to their wellbeing. The argument is framed within critical race theory and anti-colonial discursive frameworks, to analyse and theorise the experiences of Black children in the schooling system. European colonialism and its legacy, white supremacy, are deeply ingrained in Western European societies, creating injustices and inequalities that permeate every aspect of children's lives, particularly in education. In order to transform the classroom and provide spaces free of racial oppression, teachers and educators must engage in a decolonising process so that they are able to authentically de-construct and decolonize a neo-liberal curriculum. The chapter ends by looking at ways indigenous knowledges could assist teachers and students to unlearn racism and create positive learning environments.

Keywords: Eurocentric curriculum, African, Britain, critical race theory, colonialism

> *You can go to school and not get educated* (George Dei, Video interview, OISE's website, 2016)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will attempt to examine the ways in which Eurocentric curriculum reinforces and validates White-European cultural hegemony. The dominant narrative in North America and some European countries is that Black[1] children are 'underachieving'. However, this underachievement is attributed to the perceived deficits within these students rather than as a result of the structural systems of White supremacy and racism (Dei, 2008). In his book, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, Peter McLaren, one of the architects of critical pedagogy, states that schooling is a 'resolutely political and

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 171–184.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

cultural enterprise' (McLaren, 2002). Therefore, it is impossible to look at schooling as a separate entity, independent from society because schools promote the political and cultural agenda of the dominant group. According to Professor Dei, racism in education is not only performed through the formal curriculum but also via a set of 'unwritten codes' as part of what he identifies as 'hidden curriculum' of schooling through which the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and other school agents convey specific messages to students. He goes on to argue that 'these messages are often conveyed through a climate of preconceptions which are fuelled by racial stereotypes such as the notion of 'the Black pathological family'.

With that understanding in mind, we will use critical anti-racist theory (CART) and anti-colonial discursive frameworks to examine and theorise the experiences of Black children in the schooling system in North America and Britain. CART is grounded in the fundamental values of critical race theory (CRT) scholarship tradition that developed as a counter to critical legal studies (CLS). CLS was regarded as inadequate in addressing institutional racism in the United States of America during the 70's (Lanson-Billings, 1998). Furthermore, colonialism has had a fundamental impact on our global social realities, therefore we ground our analysis in a discursive framework that helps us understand these social realities in their historical context.

To begin with, I will share a brief historical background of my education as a way of contextualising my experience and the journey that has brought me to anti-racism work. I will then examine the issues by posing the following questions: In what ways do racism and the hidden curriculum affect student achievement and engagement? What tools does anti-racism provide educators to authentically de-construct and decolonize neo-liberal curriculum using Indigenous knowledges? How can we use education to do transformative work to unlearn racism? What would an inclusive curriculum look like? To conclude this chapter, I will suggest possible ways forward to facilitate true change that has the potential to build a more equal and just society.

My Journey to Anti-racism

I am writing this chapter from the perspective of a Black woman who was born and grew up in East Africa. I lived in the UK for 17 years before immigrating to Canada in 2014. I received my primary and secondary education in Djibouti, a small country in the Horn of Africa, which became independent from France in 1977 after nearly 80 years of colonial rule. The original inhabitants of Djibouti were mostly from the Afar ethnic group; however, gradually more Somali people started settling following their immigration from Somaliland and Ethiopia. The independence of Djibouti was a symbolic one because the country inherited a colonial system of political organisation and an education system based entirely on the French colonial one. The French never really left Djibouti.

My entire schooling was in French, which remains the official language in Djibouti. I was taught European/Western history, culture, geography, philosophy,

politics and the great achievements of European men and women but nothing worthy or significant about my own history. There was no child in Djibouti who could not sing La Marseillaise, the French national anthem. We did not learn French as a foreign language; every subject was taught in French. This very fact is extremely problematic because it had a particular psychological impact on our minds as children and speaks to the concept of hidden curriculum. I, like many around me, took it completely for granted and even saw it as a privilege that we adopted the language of those who colonised us. Frantz Fanon writes, 'To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization' (Fanon, 1967). Fanon (1967) goes on to say,

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (p. 48)

As a child, I did not question the superiority of French and European culture, the beauty of their poetry and songs and the richness of their philosophies. As I think back, this was not the issue in itself. The problem was that we were did not learn anything positive about the history of Somali or African people. We were exposed to colonial and racist narratives of ourselves and other Africans that erased our humanity and positioned Europeans as our civilisers, which was even more damaging. These were the hidden messages we received through our Eurocentric education and hidden curriculum and this is the reason why it is important our analysis is framed around an anti-colonial discursive framework.

The curriculum in Djibouti, both formal and hidden, was (is) a tool which reinforces and reproduces Eurocentric and colonial ideals and values such as meritocracy, individual success and the emphasis on rational to the detriment of emotions. We were told that if we work hard, we would do well and learn how to 'speak perfect French like Frenchmen'. We were ranked according to our marks from the first place to the 50th or 60th place depending on the number of students in the class. Children who could not make to the top places were put on the spot and those who were the front-runners were popular and celebrated both in the schools as well as in our families and community.

As colonial subjects, we did not have agency or the power to influence the curriculum. We did not learn how to be critical and question the way the schooling system worked and what and how we learned in school. We were denied the 'right to participate in history' and because of that, we were 'dominated and alienated' (Dardar, 1998). In fact, our schooling taught us how to be more complacent and accepting of our own oppression and domination rather than seeking radical and

liberatory learning that provided us with the critical thinking and tools needed to resist colonialism and White supremacy.

Just like the hidden curriculum, media has been a powerful tool through which the European colonial project was promoted and sustained. In Djibouti, the media reflected European value systems rather than our own indigenous value systems. Our national television channel broadcast was dominated by an amalgam of French programmes, which were designed to further ingrain Eurocentric images and values in the African mind. For example, all of the cartoons and children's programmes that came on TV featured French or American (White) characters, were set in Western countries and spoke with French accents. As a child, all the heroes I saw on TV were White and spoke French and the greatest scientists, philosophers and inventors were White-European. These imageries and literature we were exposed to on daily basis conditioned us to accept the superiority of Europeans.

The French held themselves to a higher moral stand compared with their American cousins, so their agenda was to use African countries as a cultural battlefield against Anglo-Saxon imperialism and expose the worst of American culture and history to their African 'subjects'. For instance, rather than showing films and programmes on the struggle for independence against French rule, we were bombarded with documentaries on the Vietnam War and civil rights movements in the United States of America. I remember when 'Roots' first came on Djibouti's national television and the profound impact it had on me but also on everyone around me. 'Roots' is a television miniseries based on Alex Haley's 1976 novel, featuring Haley's family history from their ancestor Kunta Kinte's enslavement to the emancipation of his descendants. Roots was our gateway to the struggle for civil rights in the United States and to Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X. At that young age, I was exposed to what White racial oppression and violence looked like and it disturbed and angered me. I was probably too young to watch it but it exposed me to the brutality of European chattel slavery and the racial oppression Africans in the United States of America were subjected to. Up until that time, most of the things we saw on TV glamorised European and North American culture, history and people.

Despite being heavily influenced by this Eurocentric curriculum, I received an alternative knowledge about my identity, history and culture through my parents and the collective memories of my community. My parents, like many Somalis, have a strong interest in politics and followed the African struggle for liberation throughout the continent. They recounted to us the struggle the Somali and Afar people engaged in against the French colonialists and the brutal repression and retaliation by the French forces. The names of Mahamoud Harbi, Zayid Hassan, Nkrumah, Kenyata, Nyerere, Lumumba, Sankara, Toure, Biko and Mandela are names I was familiar with. The day that my mother screamed, *'Oh my God! They killed Thomas Sankara!*' reacting to the news on our radio that the African revolutionary leader of Burkina Faso was assassinated, is still ingrained in my memory even thought I was only nine years old. Teaching history through storytelling and poetry is part of many African cultures, especially those based on oral tradition such as the Somali culture.

Those stories we heard from our grandparents and parents gript our imagination. The heroes in these stories not only looked like us, but often they were related to us as those stories revolved around the lives of close family members and relatives. We learned values such as courage, integrity and altruism through animal stories. In our families and communities, we felt valued and loved which gave us a sense of belonging and self worth. The stories that my family told me had a positive impact on my self-esteem as an African woman and shaped the way I view the world around me.

Once I arrived in Britain, my sense of self worth came under great pressure, because of the relentless vilification of non-European immigrants and refugees in the media. We were blamed for different social issues from taking jobs from 'real British' people to bringing more violence and crime into Britain and exploiting the welfare system. According to Faisa Abdi and Hamdi Issa, advocates at Migrants Rights Network, 'Over the past decade, media reporting on the Somali community has been disproportionately negative and perpetually centred on moments of crisis. The typical captions are all too often the pirate, the benefit cheat, the criminal or, most damaging, the terrorist'. Somalis are particularly scrutinised in the British media because of the fact they self-identify as both Black and Muslim and are subjected to Anti-Black racism and Anti-Muslim sentiment (Abdi, Isse, 2015).

These negative stereotypes and racist narratives propelled me into the realm of anti-racism activism. Being a Black, woman female whose first language was not English, meant that I was faced with multiple barriers and forms of discrimination, which amounted to oppression. As time passed, I became more and more aware of the social inequalities and injustices ingrained in British society and I felt that something needed to be done about it. I recognised the field of education as a space where I could make a positive difference to the lives of those who have been victimised by White colonial supremacist racism over centuries. Education is a field in which we have the opportunity to unlearn our distorted views of history and learn in a way that helps us promote positive change and social justice.

RACISM IN SCHOOLS

In *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, philosopher Charles Mills explains how European expansionism in it's various forms—expropriation, slavery, colonialism, settlement—brings race into existence as a global social reality, with the single most important conceptual division being that between 'Whites' and 'non-Whites' (Mills, 1999). Those classified as 'White' have been lifted above other 'races' with the structural power to exploit and enslave the 'other'. Hence, race was the greatest signifier used to organise the population of the planet in a human hierarchy with White people constructed at the top and non-Whites at the bottom. This White racism has negative ramifications for every domain of Black life from education, employment, housing, criminal justice system, economics, to self-determination and racial identity. Many researchers identified racism and racial

prejudice and the consequent low teacher expectations, differential treatment and exclusions, as having a negative impact on Black youth (Dei, 1997). As recently as last year, a 50 page report, commissioned by the advocacy coalition called FACES of Peel revealed worrying level of discrimination, anti-Black racism and negative stereotypes experienced by Black male students ins schools. 87 Black male students who were interviewed for the report, said that teachers did not expect them to succeed and were surprised if they obtained good marks; they received harsher punishments and were treated with suspicion and assumed being part of a gang because of the colour of their skin (Gordon, 2016). These experiences, which are not unique to Peel, highlight the saliency of race and skin colour within the system of White supremacy, and for that reason, we insist on centering race in our attempt to critique the education system.

Theorising Education: The Place of Critical Anti-Racist Theory in Education

When seeking to understand contemporary societal issues, one must ground their thinking in a discursive framework that places colonialism and racism at the centre of its analysis otherwise we will be ill equipped to understand the root causes of these contentious issues and the relationship between power and racial privilege. critical anti-racist theory (CART) provides those of us who are interested in transforming the education system, with an opportunity to analyse schooling in a way that demonstrates the racism inherent in the education structures and highlights how that impacts the lives of Black youth. CART is based on the fundamental tenets of critical race theory (CRT) scholarship tradition that developed as a counter to critical legal studies (CLS), deemed ineffective in addressing institutional racism in the United States of America during the 70's. Critical race theorists criticised CLS for not considering race in its critique and argued that it fundamentally 'helped create, support, and legitimate America's present class structure (Ladson-Billings, 1998; DeCuir, Dixon, 2004).

They argued that it was no longer satisfactory or sufficient to appeal to the moral sense of dominant bodies to advance equity and civil rights. Dei argues that CART takes into account the fact that there are different forms of oppression however; he states that 'oppressions are not equal in their consequences and intensities' (Dei, Lordan, 2013). He continues to explain that the only point of entry of this discourse is through the personal (Dei, Lordan, 2013). This perspective is important as it validates and empowers those who have been denied the opportunity to tell their stories in an authentic way.

Racism requires narratives to perpetrate itself. Narratives build prejudices and self-perceptions that privilege White bodies while exploiting and disadvantaging Black bodies. This is where stereotypes and labels come into play. Labels, and particular representations and stereotypes, facilitate the concoction of punishments or consequences that come with being categorized in a negative and unfavourable manner. Sensoy and DiAngelo explain that, 'prejudice is part of how we learn to

sort people into categories that make sense to us […] Although this is a process necessary for learning, our categorisations are not neutral.' (Sensoy, Di Angelo, 2012). This argument compels us to consider how certain groups have been represented historically in literature and media in our society. It has been part of European/Western history to dehumanize and label African and Indigenous peoples as uncivilized, so that the violence and subjugation imposed on them could be rationalized and legitimized. Negative stereotypes can throw a human being out of the human realm on the basis of characteristics that they have no control over, such as their gender, race/ethnicity, or sexuality. This is the reason why we believe the voices of the oppressed and disenfranchised are extremely important for the production of knowledges and counter-stories that reflect their experiences with racism.

Given the pervasive nature of institutional racism and Whiteness, CART provides an effective analytical framework to interrogate the education system and propose ways to improve the schooling experience of Black children as well as other negatively racialized learners. Despite all the research and scholarly works that point out that institutional racism remains insidious and lays at the root cause of the underachievement of Black children, there is little or no change to this depressing state of affairs (Dei, 2000). In the UK, in 2005, a critical research commissioned by the then London mayor, Ken Livingstone, revealed that African-Caribbean children especially boys 'have been betrayed by the education authorities for almost half a century' and that these children 'are struggling to overcome racism from many of their own teachers' (Smithers & Muir, 2004). Yet, there is still resistance among policy makers and educators from the dominant culture to scrutinise race and racism in the education system and therefore, we continue to witness the dominance of White Anglo-European culture and ways of knowing and the flourishing of anti-Black racism. The result of this is that African children cannot access an inclusive and good quality education, and therefore remain disengaged and struggle to imagine a positive and successful future for themselves (Dei, 1997).

Racist Curriculum: Written and Hidden

The negative impact that Eurocentric curriculum has on African children has been widely discussed and theorised over the years, both in North America and Europe. British-Jamaican Social Anthropologist and educator, Dr William Henry, argues that 'children do not receive anything of note from the National Curriculum about a thinking African historical self that is positive, uplifting and predates the period of chattel enslavement'. (Henry, 2016) Out of the many millenniums of African history and civilisation, the period of chattel slavery is one that is emphasised in British schools. This clearly reinforces the idea that Africans had no history before chattel enslavement and even worse, European men such as William Wilberforce 'freed' Africans from their bondage. Many of my friends and the young people I have worked with expressed the feeling of humiliation and disempowerment they felt as they listened to classroom teachers reinforce the 'White saviour' narrative.

This is a distorted representation of history that speaks to the concept of *cultural fundamentalism* interpreted as a denial and eraser of Black/African positive historical contributions to the world (Dei, 2016. Principles of Anti-Racism Education. OISE).

As part of my own professional development in the field of education, I tried to study the aims of the National Curriculum in England and I learned among other things that state funded schools must offer a 'curriculum which is balanced' and which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society'. Furthermore, public schools are expected to offer 'rigorous material' and teachers 'should set high expectations for every pupil' (UK National Curriculum). Unfortunately, there is a serious gap between policy and practice as Black children continue to be undervalued and discriminated against. Furthermore, prejudicial and deferential treatment of African children is widespread and comes in form of what Professor Dei describes as 'unwritten codes' and prejudiced attitudes within school settings.

While living in the UK, I took my friend's three young daughters to an Afrocentric event during Black History Month. Black History Month is a national initiative that seeks to highlight the history and positive contributions of Black communities in the UK. This event was held in honour of Mary Seacole, a Jamaican nurse who pioneered the concept of social services in the UK (100 Great Black Britons, 2014). The eldest daughter became extremely excited by this experience and decided to do a presentation on Mary Seacole, which she shared with her Year 4 class as part of an extracurricular activities initiative that they engaged in. To end her presentation on Mary Seacole, she asked her teacher, a White, English, male, if he had heard about Mary Seacole and inquired about why her story was not taught in school. When the teacher admitted he never heard of Mary Seacole, she then asked why that was the case. The teacher tried to dismiss her pertinent questions by instructing her to return to her seat. The young girl then tried to protest by asking him again why individuals who looked like her and who did amazing things were not taught to children in schools. His response was to send her to the principal's office for being 'disrespectful'. When the parents were asked to discuss their daughter's 'behaviour', the mother became aggravated and decided to punish her child because she was afraid the school would 'fail' her because of this incident. I remember the sadness, anger and frustration on that child's face. She was effectively silenced and through this experience she learned that her opinions did not matter. She did not matter.

During my Access Course at college, I was asked to write about 'a day in my life' as part of my English class. I wrote a piece which I used as a therapy session and spoke of the fact I was feeling extremely stressed, depressed and isolated following two years of trying to overcome social barriers. I expressed my wish to return to my homeland even though it was no longer safe for me to do so. I talked about how disturbing it was that I became invisible. That was a terrible shock to my system because I came from a space where I was loved and valued. This piece of writing came from my heart and poured out of me. However, all that my English teacher could ask me was 'did you write this on your own?' I was devastated. My teacher

not only did not believe in me and doubted my capabilities but he also did not seem to care about the pain and trauma I was going through.

Of the five teachers I had in college, only one has been supportive of me and motivated me to peruse my higher education. The others assumed that I would not do well in my courses. In one particular course, the instructor, a White female, did not believe me when I informed her that I attended evening English classes and I was confident I could do well in a Level 4 ESOL class (English for Speakers of Other Languages). She remained adamant that I could not manage a Level 4 ESOL class and told me that the only way I would be allowed on the course was to pass all the levels leading up to level 4. She quickly turned away from me and continued to go about her business. I believe this instructor expected me to walk away but instead, I decided to sit through the English Level, 1, 2 and 3 tests just so that I could 'prove' to her that I possessed the necessary English language skills to join the level 4 class. Although, I have been blessed to cross path with several excellent White teachers who acknowledge their privilege and encourage their students to develop a critical thinking, it will take much more than few individuals to transform our classrooms.

Transgression and Subversion

More often than not, the lived experiences of African people in White dominated societies are dismissed and devalued when in fact they represent powerful opportunities to subvert the status-quo. This especially occurs in education where the voices of African and other negatively racialized youths are often silenced (Dei, 1997). Storytelling, or in the case of anti-racism work, counter stories, rooted in revolutionary and anti-racism thought, is an antidote to stereotypical and prejudiced representation of African people in colonial and racist narrative that dominate Westerner societies which manifest itself through the media, history and education among other areas of human interaction.

These stories are much more than simply expressing a reality. They remain a powerful way of transgressing and subverting the system of White supremacy. As an African, Black, Muslim, immigrant, a working class colonised female, I have been victimised, discriminated against and oppressed on many levels. Unless I appreciate these interlocking systems of oppression I cannot possibly start challenging them. Notable is that as I resist these systemic and systematic oppressions and try to articulate my experiences, pain and anger, I am told countless times that I have a 'chip' on my shoulder and I am 'playing the race card' by identifying racism as an oppressive system based on constructed notions of White racial superiority. It is part of decolonising our minds and empowering ourselves as African and racialized bodies to name our realities, and that is what CART helps us to do. Moreover, comparing the injustice and anti-Black racism, I and those who look like me experience on daily basis, to a chip on our shoulders, is racist in itself. This is how those who speak out against racial oppression and White supremacy are dismissed and silenced.

It remains a challenge to engage in the act of transgression and subversion particularly for Black bodies in White dominated institutions. One of the key challenges of White supremacy is that of cognition: most Whites do not see themselves as racist. Whites are socialised to view Whiteness as the norm and have normalised it. Such statements may make Whites uncomfortable, because most Whites do not "feel" racist. However, White supremacy functions independently of these feelings. In the past, White privilege was upheld through openly racist acts and political policies, but liberal ideas about equality became widespread. The consequence of this was that White privilege hid itself behind rhetoric of equality, diversity and multiculturalism and notions of racial superiority remained unchallenged (Mills, 1999).

The aim to revolutionise our schooling system cannot be left to concerned community members, anti-racist activists and scholars. It has to be a mission for all of us if we wish to disrupt racism and Eurocentric cultural and ideological hegemonies and reverse the low attainment of some African children. The question remains, how do we moved beyond providing a diagnosis of the problem and towards remedies and solutions that have the potential to bring about the kind of change we want to see in our schools? What would a holistic education entail in our schools?

What Would a Holistic Curriculum Look Like?

Critical anti-racism theory challenges the ideas promoted by Western neo-liberalism, which lead us to believe that our society is colorblind and that the law is neutral (John, 2010). The curriculum is a tool, which reinforces and reproduces Eurocentric and colonial ideals and values. It has the aim of organising the culture, life, and environment within schools around Neo-liberal, European, capitalist values. Whoever has the power and agency to create the curriculum has power over those who are not involved in that process. How can we expect Black and other non-White children whose stories are not represented in education, to engage and feel a sense of inclusion? It is not surprising that indeed many Black children disengage from their learning due to the alienation they feel (Dei, 2013).

Professor Gus John argues that schooling is geared towards a neo-liberal agenda, which focuses on 'labour market needs and the nation's economic competitiveness in a global, free-market economy'. Education is turned into a commodity where parents are encouraged to invest in the 'best schools' rather than everyone working towards the creation of safe, inclusive and accessible schools in all communities (John, 2010).

This reminds me of the many conversations I have had with other concerned educators and community activists who had serious reservations about the way schools are structured. Many felt that too much emphasis was placed on rigid rules, memorizing information and regurgitating it. 'Too much questioning' from the children was seen as disruptive. I often sat in classrooms observing the ways in which individual expressions and creativity was squashed out of children for the benefit of

uniformity. I imagined schools as being a factory where they produced an army of labourers, robotic in their ways of thinking and behaving, groomed to continue enabling capitalism. As someone who considers education as a liberatory tool that should help humanity to grow and work for the greater good, this observation left me with a feeling of despair.

The current contemporary form of education forces us to question its purpose. Dei states that education 'must cultivate a sense of identity within a culture and community, while working with ancestral cultural knowledge retention'. I share Dei's view when he argues that 'Education must help students to deconstruct power and privilege' (Dei, 2008).

There is a pressing need to transform and deconstruct the curriculum and make it more inclusive and representative of a diverse range of ways of knowing and understanding the world. All children should be able to see themselves in what they are learning and relate it to their everyday life. African children and other negatively racialized children cannot aspire to be what they cannot see and imagine. It is important that Educators engage in decolonising their own minds and 'truths' they might hold. This process will entail an honest and critical questioning of the status-quo and the interrogation of Whiteness and the 'pervasive affect of White privilege'(Dei, 2000). This might not be an easy process but as Fanon warned us, colonisation was a violent process and therefore decolonising will also involve some form of violence. According to Dei, 'there are many forms of violence – physical, economic, sexual, spiritual and symbolic violence' that occur at different levels for negatively racialized communities (Dei, 2000).

I would argue that the school is where this 'symbolic violence', experienced by many Black children takes place. Educators from the dominant culture should use the feeling of discomfort that they may experience while they try and engage in anti-racism work so that they are able to think of ways of decolonising the curriculum and transforming the classroom into safe spaces where every child can flourish and reach their full potential. There are multiple challenges to true transformative change as identified by many anti-racism scholars and activists. As `Dei underlined during class discussions, intentions alone are not enough and diplomacy and political correctness is limiting us. He alludes to the necessity for pedagogical clarity to education about race and racism and that educators should adopt a learner-centric approach. Dei also calls for spirituality to be placed in the life of the student because students come to school with their racial, religious and ethnic identities. Spirituality provides an understanding and awareness of the creator and the importance of mother earth.

This way of understanding the world is a fundamental belief in many indigenous societies and comes in contrast to Western, liberal, capitalist societies where individual success and consumerism are seen as values worth pursuing to the detriment of the well-being and prosperity of the entire community. This way of knowing, presents an understanding of the world that is based on relations and interconnectedness and that fosters respect for all living things. There is a lot to be learned from different indigenous approaches to education such as the African

perspectives that are based on and 'understanding of the physical, social, and spiritual environments' of the students (Kanu, 2006). For instance, Kanu speaking in the context of the West African nation of Sierra Leone, states that the aim of education is to 'introduce children to society and prepare them for adulthood'. He goes on to say, 'it [education] emphasizes job orientation, social responsibility, religion, moral values and community participation'. Such an understanding would instil a sense of ownership and sense of belonging within the learners, which will consequently make them feel valued and included in their own learning.

I sat through the Principles of Anti-Racism Education class and as I participated in the discussions, I thought about some of the ways Somalis view schooling and teachers, and how this fit very well with the idea of school as part of the community. In Somali culture, and in many other African cultures, teachers are considered as 'third parents' and schools are seen as an extension of the community; a place that is accessible and inclusive. The task to educate the learner was one shared between teachers and parents as well as elders in the families and communities. This concept of community schooling is at the heart of Afrocentric schools and has been proved to make a positive difference to the academic achievement as well as the self-esteem of African children. However, I am aware of the heated debate surrounding Afrocentric schools in Canada which contextualises the undermining of African agency for self-empowerment and determination. Therefore, I expect resistance to that idea. A holistic education, which centres the learner, will not only benefit African and racialized people but it will benefit all ethnic groups and will lay the foundation for a more inclusive and egalitarian society. It is therefore in all our interest to work towards achieving that or else we would continue being complicit in an oppressive and unjust system that privileges some groups and disadvantages others on the basis of race, ethnicity and class.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I undertake the task of examining the ways in which race and racism play out in education through an exclusive curriculum that reinforces and validates White-European cultural hegemony and negatively impacts on the achievement of African children in North America and Britain. I have attempted to re-enter the classroom space and trouble the structural racism that plagues the education system using a CART and anti-colonial discursive frameworks, which provide a rigorous and insightful analysis of race and racism in education. I have argued that the so-called underachievement of African students is associated with the racist assumptions that they are deficient while the structures within education are not scrutinised. In White dominated societies, the curriculum is fundamentally a Eurocentric and colonialist tool to reproduce western cultural hegemony. It is neither neutral and nor colorblind and to believe that is is—is ignorant at best and malignant at worse. Despite countless researches that highlight the issue of racism in education, many teachers and educators from the dominant culture still remain in denial and resist this knowledge (Urrieta & Reidel, 2006).

As a way to conclude, I invite us to imagine a different world and dare to challenge ourselves to work towards achieve that. Dei reminds us that we are all implicated and there is a responsibility that comes with that implication although that responsibility is different for different bodies. The journey will not be one free of struggle however; it is a necessary endeavour in order for us to create a more equal and just world for the upcoming generations. With our unequal society, we cannot be complacent and just be bogged down by just trying to survive. We need to live for a higher purpose than simply making ends meet. Social justice is a worthy enough cause to live for.

NOTE

[1] For the purpose of this chapter, I will use the term 'Black' to refer to all people of African ancestry and heritage and will include all the categories, Black African, Black-Caribbean, Black-British, African-American etc.

REFERENCES

@. (2016). *Politicians must acknowledge the link between negative media stereotyping of the Somali community and marginalisation*. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from https://mediadiversified.org/2015/04/01/politicians-must-acknowledge-the-link-between-negative-media-stereotyping-of-the-somali-community-and-marginalisation/

100 Great Black Britons – Mary Seacole. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.100greatblackbritons.com/bios/mary_seacole.html

Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like*. South Africa: Heimann.

Conroy, K. Black male and exclusionary practices: 'Common-sense racism and the need for critical anti-racist approach. *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 170–201

Cracking the Codes | The System of Racial Inequity. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://crackingthecodes.org/; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F05HaArLV44

Dardar, A. (1998). Teaching as an act of love: Reflections on Paulo Freire and his contributions to our lives and our work. *Counterpoints*, *418*. (A DISSIDENT VOICE: Essays on Culture, Pedagogy, and Power (2011). Page 188.)

Decuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26–31. doi:10.3102/0013189x033005026

Dei, G. J. (1997). Chapter Four: Understanding student disengagement. *Reconstructing 'Dropout'*. doi:10.3138/9781442679078-007

Dei, G. J. (2007). Schooling as community: Race, schooling, and the education of african youth. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*(3), 346–366. doi:10.1177/0021934707306570

Dei, G. J., & Lordan, M. (2013). *Contemporary issues in the sociology of race and ethnicity: A critical reader.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Dei, G. J. S. (2000). *Towards an anti-racism discursive framework.* In G. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader* (pp. 23–39). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. (Discursive Framework. Pages 23–41)

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, White masks.* New York, NY: Grove Press.

Gordon, A. (2016). Peel school board launches plan to support black male students. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2016/10/23/peel-school-board-launches-plan-to-support-black-male-students.html

Grant, A. (2016). Young Black men report racism, lowered expectations in Peel classrooms. *CBC.ca | Metro Morning*. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/programs/metromorning/young-black-men-peel-district-school-board-1.3818707

ICAR, Navigation guide Key issues: UK asylum law and process. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=29667787F58F47269FDE28F34BCA9401&CID=2C9EA028499D6F7734E0A9F448AC6E7B&rd=1&h=5hHGFgwcZRzDwQ0RNy5IqjqdfPNOCVg Cg28q4rByooA&v=1&r=http://icar.livingrefugeearchive.org/navgdlawandprocess.pdf&p= DevEx,5047.1

John, G. (2010). *The case for a learner's charter for schools* (1st ed.). London: New Beacon Books Ltd.

Kanu, Y. (2006). 8. Reappropriating traditions in the postcolonial curricular imagination. *Curriculum as Cultural Practice.* doi:10.3138/9781442686267-011

Kincheloe, J. L. (2006). 7. Critical ontology and indigenous ways of being: Forging a postcolonial curriculum. *Curriculum as Cultural Practice*. doi:10.3138/9781442686267-010

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education*. Teacher College Record, 97*(1). (Columbia University.)

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7–24. doi:10.1080/095183998236863

McLaren, P. (1988). Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education. *Popular Educational Classics*. doi:10.3726/978-1-4539-1735-0/32

Mills, C. (1999) *Blackness visible*: *Essays on philosophy and race*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

National curriculum in England: Framework for key stages 1 to 4. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4

Portelli, J. P. (1993). Exposing the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 25*(4), 343–358. doi:10.1080/0022027930250404

Refugee Council, The facts about asylum. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/facts_about_asylum_-_page_1

Smithers, R., & Muir, H. (2004). Black boys betrayed by racist school system, says report. *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/sep/07/education.politics

UK: White Paper on Asylum. August 1998, Volume 5, Number 8. https://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=1604

Urrieta, L., & Reidel, M. (2006). Avoidance, anger and convenient amnesia: White supremacy and self-reflection in social studies teacher education. In E. W. Ross (Ed.), *Racism and antiracism in education* (Vol. 5, pp. 278–300). Westport, CT: Preager Press.

Vaught, S. E., & Castagno, A. E. (2008). "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical race theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 11*(2), 95–113. doi:10.1080/13613320802110217

William 'Lez' Henry on Education and Schooling – Theory, Culture & Society. (2016). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.theoryculturesociety.org/william-lez-henry-on-education-and-schooling/

Wilson, M., & hooks, b. (1989). Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black. *Feminist Review*, (33), 95. doi:10.2307/1395217

BRIEANNE BERRY CROSSFIELD

12. ALL THAT'S BLACK IS BLACK

The Reification of Race in Higher Education

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines what it means to be a Black student in Canadian higher education by asking how race is reified in academic institutions. By recognizing the historical and social effects of being negatively racialized as Black, questions of who is allowed to receive praise and under what circumstances are grappled with. Furthermore, considering how policies of inclusion inform contemporary education wherein diversity is identified as a desirable result, leads Berry Crossfield to believe that there are performative implications of being Black in higher education. Black students are forced to participate in "academic minstrelsy", strategizing and negotiating their identities in order to find success in an environment that remains hostile to their presence, even as they are recruited to enrich the knowledge production within the academy. Through a reflection of personal experiences as a first-generation Black mixed-race Canadian student, Berry Crossfield posits that while Black students show resistance through their physical presence within higher education, race is reified through their participation in the institution of knowledge throughout their journey of academia. In this context, the Black student remains an object, specifically an object of exceptional circumstances rather than recognized as a complex subject.

Keywords: respectability politics, critical anti-racist theory, higher education, academic minstrelsy

> I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects. (Frantz Fanon)

INTRODUCTION

What do you tell a classroom full of Black high school students about post-secondary education? Do you tell them that as long as they work hard they will be successful? Do you sell them the illusion that respectability will protect them from institutionalized racism? Is there a way to prepare them for harsh realities without allowing them to feel helpless?

A. Abdulle & A. N. Obeyesekere (Eds.), New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance: Volume 1 – Anti-Racism and Transgressive Pedagogies, 185–200.
© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

I present workshops on mental health and post-secondary education with the purpose of motivating high school students. In February 2016, I was assigned a presentation itinerary, which included a scene from the 2007 film "Freedom Writers". The protagonist of the film, Erin Gruwell, a high school teacher, in her frustration with her dis-engaged inner-city pupils, draws comparisons between the bullying of a dark-skinned classmate to the propagandistic images of Jewish people during the Holocaust. This incident is considered a turning point in the film. Gruwell chastises the students for their hostile treatment of each other (and her). In doing this, she fails to recognize that the hostility present on their school campus operates through the systemic disenfranchisement of low-income students unable to access the proper resources required for their schooling. Furthermore, Gruwell overlooks the informal segregation of bodies based on their racial/ethnic identities and gang affiliation, which is then reinforced outside of school boundaries.

It is only when a student asks Gruwell to explain the Holocaust that she realizes her students have been unable to benefit from their education because they have been lacking the resources/access to see their struggles – and the struggles of others – reflected in the the curriculum and their general schooling experience. The film continues with this narrative of empowerment – give them books, let them learn and they will grow together to beat the odds stacked against them.

I find the messaging in this film to be deeply problematic in the way it centers Gruwell as a saviour of the poor and racialized, as well as in how it supports the use of Eurocentric education as a universal tool for liberation.

The way the workshops I run are meant to be structured suggest that students discuss how this scene makes them feel as Black/ racialized students. I decide to forgo this question in favour of asking them to simply name stereotypes associated with Black people. The answers come easily: Black people are loud, stupid, "ratchet" and uneducated. The sarcasm in the room is palpable as they roll their eyes and sneer, identifying that they do not agree with the stereotypes assigned to their bodies. I should note that many of these Black students are from the middle-income suburbs in a small city in Ontario. When asked who typically lives in the "bad" neighbourhoods in the city, they respond that it is White people. They also point to their own individual circumstances. Even if they entered Canada as refugees or immigrants, they still want to attend university – many of them intended to apply to the sciences and business programs at the university where the conference was hosted. They were adamant that they were not representative of these stereotypes, even if they were loud or talked differently.

This scenario shows how the reification of race and racial stereotypes still hold presence in the minds of our younger generations, not only because they are oversimplified generalizations, but also because they maintain the objectification of Blackness. Anyone can be loud or uneducated, but when that stereotype is assigned to the Black body, it becomes justification for all the ways we are mistreated during our schooling. It allows for our possibilities to narrow, as academic streaming and school-to-prison pipelines filter out Black students from even considering entering

university. Furthermore, for those who do enter university, there are new expectations and regulations that work to constrain Black students in their academic journey.

Post-secondary education is often viewed as the equalizer in social inequality, blurring the lines between class, gender and race. However, while Black people have worked to subvert the "minstrel mask", and many have been able achieve success through higher education, the Black student is still tasked with performing a particular song and dance under the White Gaze that has yet to falter in its judgement. Despite the fact that race has repeatedly been identified as a social construction (Omi & Winant, 1993; Lopez, 1995; Miles & Torres, 1996; Apple, 1999) rather than an inherent biological quality, the way that race holds material implications which demand a particular performance is integral to understanding how the experiences of Black students differ in higher education from students who are not racialized as Black.

Blackness must always be performative. In Eric Lott's (1995) *Love and Theft,* which was a comprehensive study on blackface minstrelsy and how its introduction served as a first institutional acknowledgment of Black culture, he notes,

> Black performance itself, first of all, was precisely "performative", a cultural invention, not some precious essence installed in black bodies; and for better or worse it was often a product of self-commodification, a way of getting along in a constricted world. (p. 39)

I intended to explore the issues of the Black student[1] in education by examining what it means to be considered "exceptional" in relation to accessing postsecondary education. It is not that the Black student has not earned their position through merit. It is the larger issue of being the "exception" to the hidden curriculum rule that only particular kinds of Black students are welcome. However, I have come to realize that even to be exceptional does not alleviate racial anxiety because the Black student never transcends being Black – rather, Blackness becomes their reason for being present. After locating my social position(s), this chapter will draw parallels between minstrel shows and how the Black student is taken up on the metaphorical academic stage. This will included a critique of how inclusion and diversity aggravate, rather than alleviate the racial anxiety of a Black presence on campus precisely because of the expectation associated with Black performativity.

Blackness is reified upon entrance into higher education and is used to organize social relations around Black students in order to maintain their status as the 'other' object. I introduce the term "academic minstrelsy" to identify the performativity inherent in entering an institution built upon a foundation of colonialism and White Supremacy. While some could argue that this sounds much like the "Imposter Syndrome", the lack of authenticity and belonging felt by Black students is just as much an external sensation maintained in academia, as it is an internal sensation of self-doubt.

Much like the development of minstrel shows, which were meant to show a gross depiction of Black people through the gaze of the White audience (Lott, 1993) and

later made room for Black actors to take up these roles, by drawing comparisons between minstrel shows and academia, we can identify how institutional reforms are made that are not more inclusive of the Black student but actually cements their status as an object. Being a Black student is no longer an uncommon identity in the West, nevertheless we must interrogate how our "difference is…used productively…and often fabricated in the interest of social control as well as of commodity innovation" (hooks, 1992, 369). It is necessary that we interrogate how our difference has become a benefit to the institution that does not necessarily alleviate constraints around our beings, but rather maintains them in order to ensure that Black students are kept in their place.

LOCATING THE SELF

It is important in my discussion to locate my social location in order to illustrate that my perspective is not outside of my experiences. I also would find it dishonest if I simply named my marginalized positions without acknowledging that my identity is complex, contradicting and informed by a journey of re-introducing myself to my Blackness. In doing this, I am attempting to avoid what Sherene Razack and Mary-Louise Fellows (1998) call the "race to innocence" that allows me to remain ignorant of privilege that I possess which can be harmful and unproductive, especially in conversations with other women and other Black people. Furthermore, it does a disservice to ignore the multiple features that make up a person's identity as there is no separation between Blackness and/or queerness and/or ability and/or poverty, etc.

As someone who is of Jamaican heritage and carries the legacy of colonialism in my existence as a person with an Afro-Jamaican father and a biracial Indo/European-Jamaican mother, I did not come to recognize myself as "Black" until I reached my teen years. The "existential crisis" I later experienced came at the recognition that in many ways, my mixed-race identity was rooted in anti-Black racism and a denial of being "that kind of Black" also had worked to my advantage in many ways. I am a first generation Canadian from a middle-class family, raised predominantly by my conservative-Christian Euro-Jamaican grandfather and Indo-Jamaican grandmother in a suburban city east of Toronto. I was raised to be attached to my ethnic identity, but to ignore the implications of my racial background. By doing this, I learned to assimilate myself into Canada's colonial institutions situated on Turtle Island.

I am also the first person in my immediate family to pursue a degree at the graduate level. My experience is not unique as much as it reminds me of the hurdles that many other first-generation students face in my position – to be the first means that I have had to learn to navigate through the university environment without being able to rely on my parents or grandparents for advice because they have never entered the space for themselves. Trying to explain to my immigrant grandparents that the sacrifices they have made may not be enough to guarantee me a higher quality of life even with my educational background has been a hard conversation to unpack,

particularly because it disrupts the myths of the merit-based "boot straps" theory and of post-secondary education.

Being Black and educated often only grants superficial markers of social status that recognize the achievements as one of assimilation – I have been successful in navigating and regurgitating the Eurocentric Ontario curriculum since I was in grade school. I learned to provide what teachers expected of me and in turn, I received high grades. I became a token in spaces that did not readily accept my community, precisely because I have a lighter complexion, a privileged class status, and the ability to code-switch out of using Jamaican-Patois for Standard Canadian English.

My own life experience is only one example of a particular performance within higher education that defies stereotypes of Jamaicans in Canada and combats negative assumptions about the attitudes of Black girls and women, but is predicated on making sure that I am recognized as a respectable object. This life experience, compounded by my struggles with mental health, common financial strains of the millennial generation, and severed community ties has lead me to reject that the racial anxiety I have felt in the institution has been of my own making. Rather, it is the normalized space in which Black students are expected to navigate.

THE BLACK STUDENT IN THE IVORY TOWER

"Valuable" students are rarely intended to be Black students. Michael W. Apple (1999) locates this devaluation of Black students as being due to a set of "over-determined historical relations" and the often complex micropolitics that exist in the resources and power within the school, as well as between the school and the local and national state (p. 11). Black performativity serves a purpose in academia because it re-establishes existing signifiers of the Black body while other actions and components are denied to the Black student. As Nadine Ehlers (2006) points out, "Occupying a socially, legally and discursively sanctioned subject position is, as such, not an articulation of what one is. Rather, it is an action and activity – something one does" (p. 155). Therefore, the Black student ends up *doing* Blackness, which is constrained in its articulation as an object.

Discussions surrounding race in Canada are often dismissed with arguments of Canada's commitment to "multiculturalism" and celebration of diversity. It is important to ask *who* benefits the most from multiculturalism and discussions of race in education. Access to Black students and their embodied knowledge only serves to enrich the institution while denying the very experiences they face within it. Dei quotes Sexton, "the appropriation of Black suffering as a template for non-Black grievances remains one of the defining features of contemporary political culture" and expands this statement to include how the affirmation and legitimacy of Black struggle as well as the saliency of Blackness is usually dismissed or denied within wider society. The ongoing removal of Black narratives and Black knowledge from Black people continues to benefit the educational institution, using the lives of the 'other' for research purposes, the accumulation of social capital, and personal

reward that does not extend to the lives who have been consumed for another's gain. When Black students wants to speak for themselves, it is seen as an issue. Conversely, when when a non-Black person chooses to speak of the implications of race their claims are validated. If Black students cannot be considered experts in what they know and are led to believe that representation is enough, what happens when the space taken up by Black students is considered "too much"?

In her examination of Whiteness and its implications for academic writing, public culture and government policy, Sara Ahmed (2004) tackles the issue of institutions 'admitting' histories of racism as a way to reconcile and more forward without having to put in the work,

> In a way the institution becomes recognized as racist only through being posited as like an individual, as someone who suffers from prejudice, but who could be treated, so that they would act better towards racial others. To say 'we are racist' is here translated into the statement it seeks to replace 'I am racist', where 'our racism' is describable as bad practice that can be changed through learning more tolerant attitudes and behavior. (p. 7)

A humanized institution then becomes a site where the solution of multiculturalism is enough to undo a history of racism because it individualizes instances as moments of "intolerance" or "bad behavior" rather than locating it as a systemic process that remains present. Ahmed (2006) continues,

> The logic goes: we say, 'we are racist', and insofar as we can admit to being racist (and racist are unwitting), then we are showing that 'we are not racist', or at least that we are not racist in the same way. (p. 7)

Admitting racism does nothing to help Black students when it is admitted in a reflexive manner that serves to replace action. Often, Black students are accused of being "overly sensitive" when they choose to critique rather than celebrate how race and culture are taught. They are told that they are the perpetrators of racism for speaking about race or they are told that they are demanding too much by wanting the institution to do more than tolerate their presence. Being able to "admit" racism becomes another way that dominant institutions can reinforce power relations, while also congratulating themselves for addressing the issue.

Learning environments still uphold Eurocentric knowledge and White Supremacy as the dominant framework and by extension, Standard English as the language expected to replace our own, does not lead to Black liberation within educational institutions. What counts as voice? The colonizer's apparent need to *give* …the colonized speech cannot be underestimated… (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006, p. 160). To push forward critiques of systemic oppression and how that affects issues of gender, sexuality, class particularly when examined through race as an entry point, I have had to use a colonial voice given to me by people in power within the institution that decides what kind of knowledge is worthy of being taught, while dismissing Indigenous and Afrocentric knowledge unless it can be used as educational seasoning

to "spice up" curriculum without taking an in-depth examination of these how these knowledges are not inherently worth less than what has forcibly been made the standard:

> Talking about race solely for the purpose of talking about race – because it is interesting or exotic, because you want to check it off a list or because you know that students will respond to the topic – will not move a class toward anti-racist knowledge and practice. (Simpson, 2003, p. 195)

Critical anti-racist theory challenges the dilution of radical discourse in multiculturalism, where race is treated like a category that can be checked off when the racialized body is present and cultural/ethnic histories and knowledges can be reduced to a brief detour from Eurocentric learning. Through this process, multicultural education supports consumption rather than learning – to learn involves an active participation and through anti-racist education, students are forced to confront a reality that is more nuanced than they have been conditioned to believe.

When race is considered an unnecessary topic to meaningfully take up in academia, it makes minstrels out of Black students precisely because any examples of failure are constructed as the personal problem of the Black student, rather than as a result of systemic oppressions and inequity,

> The conflict between the ideology of democratic liberalism and the racist ideology of the dominant culture – democratic racism – is manifested in the racist discourse that operates in educational institutions, which are discursive spaces. These spaces represent a terrain of tension and conflict: tension between the everyday experiences of minority students and educators of colour, and the attitudes and practices of those who have the power to redefine that reality. (Henry & Tator, 2009. p. 225)

This lack of meaningful action towards creating inclusive environments that do not treat Black students as objects ultimately works to the benefit of institution. Rather than take accountability, it allows for Black students to carry the weight of dismantling anti-Black racism present on their campus. This means that even when Black students are able to exceed expectations, it re-inscribes myths of merit and hard work that absolves the role that the university plays in creating these hostile environments.

BLACK MASKS AND THE ACADEMIC STAGE

When speaking about performativity, I am using a phenomenological approach to critique the structure of Western consciousness in regards to Black people that creates the cognitive dissonance for Blackness to remain a fixed understanding in the White imagination. For example, Judith Butler's (1988) arguments about gender presentation also has implications for how we understand race, because race is not a stable identity. Much like gender, race is also instituted through a "stylized

repetition of acts" and "must be understood in the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gender/[racialized] self" (Butler, 1988, p. 519). However, while Butler chose to look at drag, I am exploring minstrel shows because of the way that the Black minstrel performer attempted to perpetuate uncertainty in order to subvert the White Gaze. Michael Borshuk (2003) noted in his essay on the performativity of Josephine Baker that the strategy of Black minstrel performers was to affirm and exaggerate injurious representations on stage and subsequently discard the persona once offstage (p. 57). However, given the permanence of skin color in the context of anti-Black racism, these strategies of resistance rarely translate into breaking the gross essentialism associated with Black people. Rather, any performance becomes a "natural" performance for the Black student, particularly if it can be read negatively.

The Black/White binary, which has remained a fixture in understanding race, ensures that Whiteness is more exclusive than Blackness and as such, the Black body must be understood as fluid. To borrow from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the body is not only a historical idea it is also a set of possibilities to be continually realized,

> That the body is a set of possibilities signifies (a) that its appearance in the world, for perception is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence, and (b) that its concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities…the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities. (Butler, 1988, p. 521)

Minstrel shows provide a historical possibility that can be recognized and understood as still having influence today. As most Western institutions have been created for the benefits of White people and inclusion is a process that occurs only after it has already been established, we must question the conditions that allowed Black people to take up blackface minstrelsy. Lott (1995) identifies that the Post-Abolition era saw Black freedmen taking the stage and adopting the minstrel forms unaltered, and as time went on,

> [S]ome Black performers attempted to achieve the distance between the stage characters and themselves by the very extremities of the exaggerations… Nevertheless the common delusion that minstrelsy and African American reality were one could only have been strengthened by the presence of the "real thing" on stage. (Herring, 1997, p. 9)

What does this mean for a Black student in higher education? Historically, these institutional spaces have been predominantly arenas for people racialized as White and where non-White identities have not been welcome if they were unable to take up the dominant ideologies that circulated the institution. Furthermore, since we can argue that the Black student is rarely making the conscious effort to take up a stereotypical "Black" performativity, but rather is navigating through a series of interracial interactions with other non-Black people that also assign meaning to their

bodies, we are complicating what subversive representation actually looks like in academia while questioning how this racial anxiety remains:

> [T]he social unconscious of blackface suggests that the whites involved in minstrelsy were far from unenthusiastic about black cultural practices, or conversely, untroubled by them, continuous through the economic logic of blackface was with slavery. As often as not, this involvement depended on an intersection of racial and class languages that occasionally became confused with one another, reinforcing the general air of political jeopardy in minstrel acts…At every turn blackface minstrelsy has seemed a form in which transgression and containment coexisted, in which improbably threatening or startlingly sympathetic racial meanings were simultaneously produced and dissolved. Neither the social relations on which blackface delineations depended, the delineations themselves, their commercial setting, nor their ideological effects were monolithic or simply hegemonic. (Lott, 1995, p. 234)

Black students are expected to perform on a metaphorical academic stage that recreates two tendencies which Lott (1995) identified in blackface minstrelsy: (1) an appropriation of Black culture and (2) a deformation of what was being appropriated. This means that there is constant negotiation of the Black student regarding their presence. While we have been able to see the emergence of departments, theories, and resources that centre and legitimize discourses around race, it is important to interrogate how these sites of knowledge have also been erected in order to create an easier method of consumption for the dominant that allows for transgression and containment to co-exist without altering original performative implications.

W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the first to form a critique of minstrelsy that identified the inherent performativity of being a Black body in the Western world. Du Bois' concepts of the "veil" and "double-'consciousness" illustrates the ways in which the Black student must learn to navigate their education. When DuBois speaks of these concepts in his works, he is speaking to the recognition that to be Black is to be outside of a norm that has been coded with Whiteness in contemporary Western society. He makes this observation:

> [T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. *It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity*. (Dubois, 2002, p. 3, emphasis mine)

The Black student must walk in this double-consciousness when they are taught a knowledge that is not theirs, they learn to speak in a language given to them and assimilate themselves through education. Dei and Doyle-Wood (2006) highlight this practice, which Homi Bhaba calls "colonial mimicry", wherein the desire of the

colonizer is not to learn our language, but to craft us into 'a reformed recognizable 'other', as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite' White" (p. 160). To be seen as worthy, Black students are required to exist in this double-consciousness, taking up a dual identity and colonized tongue in order to achieve any kind of success. Furthermore, in order to navigate this contradiction, Black students are expected to be "more" than their White and non-Black counterparts (also known as the "Twice as Good" rule, where to be Black and successful means to put in double the effort of everyone else) not only in academic performance but also in day to day performances while existing as Black bodies.

To be twice as good: respectability politics in education The first day I walked into my Principles of Anti-Racism Education course was the first time I ever saw myself in higher education. Having had only one Black teacher in my 20 years of education in Ontario, and a handful of non-Black people of colour as my instructors and classmates, it was rare to enter classroom spaces where there were more than five students who could be identified as students of colour and in even less instances, was there ever more than two Black students in my lectures or tutorials. To finally experience myself in a space where I was allowed to centre race, rather than include it as an afterthought allowed me to articulate with other Black students the anxieties that were felt about entering academia as Black bodies. Some students articulated frustration because they did not carry the right kinds of social or class capital and felt that it impacted how they were perceived. Other students noted that they struggled to be part of academia while still holding on to their community ties. Many casual discussions with my Black classmates also centered around critiques of how theories in the social sciences and humanities were inadequate to truly encompass experiences of being Black without Whiteness being used as an anchor. Much like the high school students who rebuked the stereotypes of Black people they knew to exist, my classmates rejected the notion that they should have to be respectable to be taken seriously as academics.

It is necessary to discuss how respectability has come to be recognized as the only acceptable version of performativity for Black students. "Respectability politics" was first coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1994) to discuss the strategies used by Black activists during the civil rights movements of the 1960s. In a recent interview, Higginbotham re-iterates, "The politics of respectability, and this is the key thing about it, gives you a moral authority to say to the outside world, "I am worthy of respect. You don't respect me, but I am worthy of respect" (p. 5).

In order for Black people to be more palatable to their non-Black peers and instructors, there is pressure to behave in a way that cannot be coded as aggressive or even arrogant. Respectability becomes a way to enforce modes of delivery that ignores the content of discussion. It becomes about creating comfort for those receiving the message. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has now become the epitome of how a Black body should behave, be it in education or activism. While he was demonized during his life as a civil rights leader, no less than 60 years later, he has become the embodiment of "respectability". Black students are expected to

adhere this politics of respectability and take up the essence of Martin Luther King Jr. who was also college educated. However, when this strategy is divorced from the historical context in which it took place, it becomes less about a radical claiming of respect in the face of physical violence and more about the Black student proving that they are deserving of respect in the first place. To be respectable reinscribes Black bodies as the 'other' because it expects the Black student to divorce themselves from the negative tropes associated with the Black body in order to be seen as worthy of the positions they occupy. Despite the fact that Blackness has never been a monolith, the Black identity is constantly narrowed down to stereotypes and common-sense racist rhetoric that is "proven" by a Black student who fails to keep on their veil. Black students who still appear to be "ghetto" or "foreign" can then justifiably be ostracized within the institution because their image does not uphold this narrow representation. Their apparent rejection of the "right way" to carry themselves in general public then becomes justification to pit them against Black students who appear to adhere to standards determined by Whiteness. It creates a reward system that tells Black students who cannot blend in that their Blackness is the very reason why they are not respected, while reminding them that there is an implicit expectation that if they must be Black, they must be the right kind of Black.

STRATEGIES OF BLACK PERFORMATIVITY

The Black student must learn to strategize how they are going to navigate themselves through higher education when they are faced with anti-Black racism from the culture of the institution but also from peers, faculty, and administrators. Is there ever a safe time to speak up? Do they disregard the performance of respectability politics or use it for their survival? Do they invoke their lived experiences? I argue that the Blackness in Black students is reified as soon as they enter the institution, and in navigating the conditions of academic minstrelsy there is no moving away from the consequences of being Black in higher education. Nadine Ehlers (2006) argues:

> In order to be considered a viable racial subject, then, it is imperative that regularised norms be recited to the degree that they are recognisable as reaffirming a certain discursive designation. What then comes into focus is that it is the very repetition of these acts that makes it seem as if the identity being expressed is natural. (p. 155)

As I have previously postulated, race, like gender, becomes a performative accomplishment when both the audience and actors come to believe and perform in the mode of belief – As Butler (1988) notes, it is the "*appearance of substance* that makes it real" (p. 520) and as such, the appearance of Black bodies makes the negative consequences possible.

What does it mean to speak race? It is not rare that Black students will refuse to speak race in their classrooms and feign ignorance in an effort to preserve their

mental wellbeing and avoid being labelled. In spaces where they may be the only Black or even racialized student, they are often unwilling to take the risk of calling out professors or fellow classmates for fear of becoming known as one of "those" students. There can be benefits to choosing silence because there is a tendency for racialized students to be chosen as "representatives" of their entire race or ethnicity, which places the onus on the student to educate everyone else. In instances of blatant racism, it can be even harder to challenge those who are in positions of power because the Black student is then risking their own academic success to speak up.

Ahmed Ilmi (2011) explains that while he was a high school student and became aware of his Blackness as a political identity, he took up hip-hop culture as an act of agency and resistance. He illustrates,

> I was… becoming conscious of the price I had to often pay for being racialized and I knew that I had to navigate the system to make something of myself. With that mindset, I quickly learnt to avoid conflicts with my mostly White teachers, school administrators and staff, at all costs. Even though this survival strategy often presented a high emotional and spiritual cost on my soul, yet it allowed me to navigate the school system. (p. 221)

Much like Ilmi, after the second year of my undergraduate degree, I also took to mostly avoiding White students and professors outside of the classroom and learned to not bring discourses of race into certain classrooms because my presence itself constantly felt tenuous. It was very clear that I was not able to "fit in" within the larger university population and found myself keeping to the Equity and Diversity office in order to escape the anxiety I felt around my peers and the institution that seemed unable to recognize my subjectivity.

In my second year, Communications Studies tutorial, my Teaching Assistant (TA) was a White man doing his Master of Arts in Philosophy. During one of the last tutorials of the semester, in discussing the significance of Black skin in relation to theories of semiotics, he proceeds to use Chris Rock's comedic bit about "Black people versus Niggas" as an example of how Blackness comes to mean different things. I was the only Black student in his tutorial and feeling a combination of embarrassment, anger and shock, I was unable to speak up during class to address his blatant racism.

However, upon leaving the class, I decided to send an email to both my TA and professor, explaining that the use of the word was not appropriate and I was made to feel extremely uncomfortable, considering that I was the only Black student in the tutorial. In a condescending response, my TA denied "using" the word, saying that he merely "mentioned" it. I can only assume that because I had made my professor aware of the situation that he was instructed to "fix" the situation and in a second email, he politely asked for a meeting so I could explain to him where he went wrong for "mentioning" the word.

By being pressured to debate my position with someone responsible for my grades, I quickly learned what it felt like to experience academic 'gaslighting' by

his response and strategy to employ semantics and philosophical thought to our discussion. After our conversation and the reality of what I had done set in, I feared that my final marks would suffer, even though I had not reacted aggressively or raised my voice. As the course TA, this man would be responsible for marking my final paper, my final exam, and grading my tutorial participation, which would contribute to a large portion of my overall grade. I was not made aware of any policies or requests that I could make to protect myself, and my professor merely reached out with an apology without offering alternative solutions or steps that I could take. Even though I completed the course with an acceptable final grade, I could not help but wonder if I could have done better if I had chosen to say nothing and kept my head down for the rest of the semester. Had I been in a different position – for example, if I had been a Black man or an International Black Student, it is quite possible I would have wound up in even more trouble for merely confronting the issue. There is a very low tolerance for Black people to express outrage even when they are justified in doing so – because I chose to bury my anger rather than express myself fully, I aligned myself with respectability politics in hopes of preventing more backlash.

I did fret over what it would mean for my academic career, and did end up regularly having to confront anti-Black racism in my classroom, on campus, and in the city I lived in. Nadine Ehlers (2006) points how these "spaces of crisis" through embodied performance can be reworked and embraced in a way that extends subjectivity. Rather than allowing my status as an object to remain unquestionable, I grew more opposed to my conditions.

Who are "those" Black Students? The conception of the Black Liberation Collective Canada chapter[2] began in November 2015 after there were nationwide actions to express solidarity with Black students at the University of Missouri who were challenging anti-Black racism on their campus subsequent to a string of racially charged events which occurred there. In reflection of what was happening in the United States, Black students at the University of Toronto also saw the similarities in the experiences across the border and began advocating for themselves, finally obtaining a meeting with some members of the administration in December of 2015. At the University of Toronto, the Black Liberation Collective created a series of demands, including (but not limited to): collecting race-based data including students, faculty, academic staff and administration, a stand-alone African and Caribbean studies department, mandatory equity training at all levels, divestment from for-profit prison corporations, and free education for Black and Indigenous students. These demands are intentional in that they name the ways in which the institution upholds anti-Black racism and how the administration should respond if they are committed to taking steps to reconciling this issue.

Black students and Black student activists often come to a head in educational spaces, where the former may be okay in their Blackness but do not see reason to draw attention to race[3] or are afraid to be furthered marked by their identity while Black student activists often centre their racial identity as integral to their work on

campus. Despite assumptions that higher education should be open and supportive of student activism, particularly in disciplines where critical race theory, postcolonial studies, equity studies, or critical anti-racism theory is taught, the institution does not operate outside of the social relations that exist within larger society.

To challenge anti-Black racism on campus has meant backlash and made Black students visible in ways that they may not have recognized before. By speaking race directly to the powers that be, and demand that the institution actively participate in a dismantling of racism from its very structure, is the only way to truly accommodate the Black student. Unless there are intentional and tangible actions made to do so, these tensions will remain.

CONCLUSION

This chapter is meant to begin a conversation on Black students in higher education that seeks to explore the conditions that Black students must navigate throughout their academic journey. While I ran the risk of essentializing the Black student by using my own experiences and by choosing to forgo deeper analyses on gender, sexuality or class, I believe that it was necessary to not separate these social positions in order to avoid placing blame where it does not belong. It is not the responsibility of Black students to alleviate the racial anxiety. Higher education becomes the stage in which we are expected to perform and yet the ways in which we may fall short are rarely considered to be the result of the institution.

To have a discussion about education means discussing how Western education has remained an acceptable tool for the process of assimilation in which respectability politics are imposed upon Black students. The intent to teach Eurocentric knowledge and values is rarely challenged on a large scale and it is still desired that the Black student enter in as one body and leave as another. To stand in one's Blackness while trying to navigate higher education often means taking up an identity that intends to "bleach out" one's very essence. Blackness then only becomes a mask that one wears as their body is filled with Whiteness to blend into the larger society.

It is often believed that to create change, all that needs to be done is to open opportunities for anyone to participate. To see a few racialized bodies taking up space in predominantly White arenas such as higher education, is celebrated and seen as enough to cite as instances of racial progress. However, when disadvantage is also built into these structures and there is a failure to take up the systemic ways in which participation of racialized bodies is still limited, to see only a handful of Black or Indigenous or non-White students reduces their presence to that of tokens. It becomes a justification that because there are a few, there is enough. It ignores the fact that physical diversity does not actually promote the expression of cultural diversity or difference in ways that transform the spaces where they are located. It adds stress to the Black student that goes beyond the "Imposter Syndrome" because there is no relief from the expectations of Black performance.

NOTES

[1] For the purposes of this chapter, the "Black student" is to remain a broad category that encompasses anyone who identifies themselves in some way with the African Diaspora, including but not limited to: Indigenous Africans, Afro-Latinxs, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Canadians/Europeans and African-Americans.

[2] The Black Liberation Collective in Canada was founded by Black student activists at the following universities: University of Toronto, Ryerson University, the University of Guelph, the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, McMaster University, Trent University, and the University of Waterloo. However, the overarching "Canada" chapter was started by Black students at the University of Toronto and as such, the other university co-founders can be viewed as chapters of a particular chapter.

[3] This is not to say that there are not Black students who do not actively distance themselves from their Blackness by claiming they are "White" on the inside or not "really" Black or even the ways in which international Black students do not see their struggles as intertwined with Black Canadian struggles, however the effects of internalized racism and western-imposed hierarchies of Black ethnicities can be saved for another discussion.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of Whiteness: The non-performativity of anti-racism. *Borderlands EJournal, 3*(2).

Apple, M. W. (1999). The absent presence of race in educational reform. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 2*(1), 9–16.

B., D. B. (2002). *The souls of black folk: With related readings*. New York, NY: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.

Borshuk, M. (2003). "Queen of the Colonial Exposition": Josephine Baker's strategic performance. In H. Wallinger, T. Lorenzo, H. D. Pinson, & K. L. Phillips (Eds.), *Critical voicings of Black liberation: Resistance and representations in the Americas* (pp. 47–66). Germany: Lit Verlag.

Dei, G. J. S. (2011). In defense of official multiculturalism and recognition of the necessity of critical anti-racism. *Canadian Issues,* 15–19.

Dei, G. J. S., & Doyle-Wood, S. (2006). Is we who Haffi Ride Di Staam: Critical knowledge/ multiple knowings – possibilities, challenges and resistance in curriculum/Cultural contexts. In *Curriculum as cultural practice: Postcolonial imaginations* (pp. 151–180). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ehlers, N. (2006). 'Black Is' and 'Black Ain't": Performative revisions of racial 'Crisis'. *Culture, Theory & Critique, 47*(2), 149–163.

Fanon, F. (1967). Chapter Five: The lived experience of the Black man. In *Black skin, White masks* (pp. 89–119).

Foster, K. (2015, October 13). *Wrestling with respectability in the age of #BlackLivesMatter: A dialogue.* Retrieved April 22, 2016, from http://www.forharriet.com/2015/10/wrestling-with-respectability-in-age-of.html#axzz4X6sdGELm

Frances, H., & Tator, C. (n.d.). Racism in Canadian education. In *The colour of democracy: Racism in Canadian society* (4th ed., pp. 199–232). Ontario: Nelson Education.

Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2009). *Racism in the Canadian university: Demanding social justice, inclusion, and equity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Herring, S. (1997). Du Bois and the minstrels. *Melus, 22*(2), 3–17. doi:10.2307/468131

Higginbotham, E. B. (1994). *Women's movement in the Black baptist church, 1880–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

hooks, b. (1992). Eating the other: Desire and resistance. In *Black looks: Race and representation* (pp. 21–39). Boston, MA: South End Press.

Ilmi, A. (2011). The White gaze vs the Black soul. *Race, Gender and Class, 18*(3/4), 217–229.

LaGravenese, R. (Director). (2007). *Freedom Writers* [Motion picture on slide program]. USA: Paramount Home Entertainment.

Lopez, J. I. (1995). The social construction of race. In R. Delgado (Ed.), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. 163–177). Philadephia, PA: Temple University Press.

Lott, E. (1992). Love and theft: The racial unconscious of Blackface minstrelsy. *Representations, 39*, 23–50. doi:10.2307/2928593

Lott, E. (1993). *Love and theft: Blackface minstrelsy and the American working class*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Miles, R., & Torres, R. (1996). Does 'Race' Matter?: Transatlantic perspectives on racism after 'Race' relations. In V. Amit-Talai & C. Knowles (Eds.), *Re-situating identities: The politics of race, ethnicity and culture* (pp. 24–46). Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1993). On the theoretical concept of race. In *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 3–10). New York, NY: Routledge.

Razack, S., & Fellows, M. L. (1998). The race to innocence: Confronting hierarchal relations among women. *Gender Race and Justice,* 335–352. Retrieved from http://scholarship.law.umn.edu/faculty_articles/274

Simpson, J. S. (n.d.). 'Racism Is Not A Theory': Race matters in the classroom. In *I have been waiting: Race and U.S. higher education* (pp. 155–196). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

EDITORS

Ayan Abdulle has her Honours B.A. in Political Science and Communication, from York University, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Project Management, from Sheridan College, and is currently working towards an M.A. in Social Justice Education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). She is the recipient of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) scholarship. Ayan's areas of interest include resistance, deconstructing Whiteness, race and racism in early childhood, and Black motherhood.

Anne Nelun Obeyesekere has her Honours. B.A. in International Relations/Peace and Conflict Studies, and her B.Ed., from the University of Toronto. She is a teacher at an alternative secondary school where she actively engages in the implementation of anti-racist pedagogy. Anne is presently working towards an M.A. in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT with a focus on deconstructing Whiteness, Shadeism, and anti-racist education, particularly in relation to adolescent students.

FOREWORD

George J. Sefa Dei is a renowned educator, researcher, writer, and community worker. He is a Professor of Social Justice Education and Director of the Centre for integrative Anti-Racism Studies at OISE/UT. In June of 2007, he was installed as a traditional Chief in Ghana, the Gyaasehene of the town of Asokore, Ghana. His stool name is Nana Adusei Sefa Tweneboah.

COVER ARTIST

Amanda Kali Bent completed her studies at Ontario College of Art & Design in industrial design. Her work spans from branding and editorial design, to marketing and styling. Through taking the inherent personality and condition of a project into consideration, Amanda creates powerful aesthetics that form a world of their own.

AUTHORS

Raagini Appadurai is a teacher, mentor, and community leader to diverse youth in various educational and community spaces in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Passionate about the development of alternative and equitable platforms of education for young people, and driven by the experiences of her students, Raagini is committed to actively seeking out anti-racism education and its tools to analyze, navigate and

understand processes and issues surrounding systemic racism, identity formation, and power relations within educational spaces. In her work, she is dedicated to educational transformation, social justice, and youth empowerment through an anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, feminist framework.

Sevgi Arslan received her Master's degree in Social Work from York University. Her research interests include effects of colonial education on identity and mind in nationalist and settler societies.

Brieanne Berry Crossfield is currently completing her Master of Education in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT. Her research interests explore systems of race, gender and sexuality in contemporary culture and their impacts on the broad category of Blackness. Drawing on her B.A. in Communication Studies and Women and Gender Studies, her work engages in phenomenological approaches to multiculturalism, diaspora studies, cultural studies and critical anti-racist theory.

Qwyn Charter MacLachlan is a Toronto-based Educator and performer. Her passion for education and artistic expression has led her to investigate artistic intervention as a catalyst for larger educational reform. Qwyn completed her Honours B.A, at the University of Toronto, and her B.Ed. and M.Ed. at OISE/UT.

Chanel Herbert is a Masters of Education student in the Department of Social Justice Education and the Collaborative Educational Policy Program at OISE/UT. Her research interests broadly concern negatively racialized and immigrant youth in urban education systems and stem from her own experience of being a racialized immigrant of Caribbean origin in the Canadian context.

Christina Hutchinson is a fourth year undergraduate student majoring in Sociology and English at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. She is interested in the construction and dissemination of knowledge in colonial academies. Christina's work is centred around how Indigenous language, culture, and spirituality intersect to form resilient identities that survive the threat of the imperial doctrine.

Marie McLeod is an educator. She is dedicated to contributing to the creation of educational opportunities for marginalized students. As a teacher, lecturer, and administrator she has participated in creating emancipatory educational possibilities that assist in poverty reduction. Her research centres interrogation of epistemologies on race and challenges the reproduction of racialized knowledge in educational theories. She is currently a doctoral candidate at OISE/UT.

Katrina P. Rigelhof is a secondary school English teacher currently living and working in England. She earned her education in Canada before moving to England to teach. She obtained her Bachelor of Education from the University of Ottawa

and took part in their Urban Education Cohort. Katrina completed her Masters of Education in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT where she was exposed to different ways of thinking and understanding education in Canada and worldwide. Katrina is largely interested in deficit thinking and student achievement. Her academic work in Social Justice derives its inspiration from Richard R. Valencia, John P. Portelli, and Claude Steele, among several others.

Saynab Xasan is a British-Somali community activist who has been working in anti-racism for the past 15 years in London, England. Saynab has a particular interest in education and the ways in which the hidden curriculum impacts the achievement of Black youth. Her research is aimed at exposing the inequalities in schools and how to decolonise and transform classrooms so they become safe spaces for every child. Saynab decided to take up her Masters of Education in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT, in order to merge her lived experience as a Black woman, with theoretical analysis. Saynab hopes to engage with schools so that they may work more effectively in an equitable manner.

Tamla Young is an educator for the Toronto District School Board, a dancer, community activist and aspiring children's literature writer. She has a vast background in the performing arts and has performed for audiences locally and internationally. She earned a Hons. B.A. in Fine Arts and Cultural Studies from York University has studied Arts Administration and Cultural Management at Humber College and holds a B.Ed. from the University of Windsor. Currently, she is pursuing a M.Ed. degree in Social Justice Education at OISE/UT with an interest in identity development and a persistent goal of instilling anti-racist, anti-biased pedagogies in early learners and her colleagues.